



Jargon in a Discourse Community: An Example in Òfi/Aşò Òkè Weaving Profession

OGUNYALE, Wale J.

Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
University of Uyo, Uyo, Nigeria.
Phone: +2349030295827
Email: waleogunyale@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2517-2362>. I

Corresponding Author : OGUNYALE, Wale. J. (waleogunyale@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT

This study is the first phase of an ongoing research study that aims to document the processes of making òfi or aşòkè(handloom woven fabrics of the Yorùbá) and compile a dictionary of the terms and terminology associated with this traditional occupation of cloth weaving. The data for the study were collected through the master-apprentice model, participant observation, and interviews. The theory adopted for the study is institutional talk, a sociolinguistic approach to the description of the language of a particular group of people who share a communication style or vocabulary. Aşò òkè weavers are portrayed as a discourse community and their jargon is categorized into some lexico-semantic classifications.

Keywords òfi/aşò òkè, discourse community, jargon, institutional talk, specialized dictionary, language documentation.

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AUTHOR'S BIO



WALE OGUNYALE, a graduate student at the Department of Linguistics, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He had a bachelor's degree in English and Education. His ongoing master's degree programme is in Computational Language Documentation. His areas of specialization and interest include natural language processing (NLP), language documentation and description, language teaching, indigenous communication systems, digital lexicography, Internet linguistics or computer mediated communication (CMC), and documentation of indigenous knowledge and occupations (IKOs). He carried out a comprehensive linguistic analysis of CMC or netspeak among Nigerian netizens, capturing its phonological, syntactic, orthographic and sociolinguistic features (available on <https://uniuyo.academia.edu/WaleOgunyale>). He also created a mini illustrated and talking dictionary of Qrɔ, a Lower Cross language spoken primarily in Akwa Ibom State (available on <http://livingdictionaries.app/oron/entries/list>). Also, he completed a phase of documenting the production of aşò òfi/aşò òkè, handwoven fabrics of the Yorùbá; the present article is an output of the documentation project while another is a dictionary of aşò òkè jargon (available on https://www.webonary.org/ofi_weaving/). Currently, He is documenting endangered traditional systems of communication of the Yorùbá, such the town crier medium, ihu (whistle calls), and ààlè (anti-theft signs), in the Òkè Ògùn region of Oyo State.

Introduction

Clothing is one of the basic human necessities and a significant marker of socio-cultural identity. The traditional attire of a people is normally made from their local fabrics. For instance, some native wears of Indians are made from Indian *bandhani* (tie-die textile) and *kanjivaram saree* (silk fabrics); the Chinese make use of their *ling/luo* (twill damask/gauze silk fabrics) and *juan/duan* (silk tabby/satin); Ghanaians utilize their *ahwenepankasa* (print fabrics) and *kente* (woven fabrics) (Snodgrass, 2019). Similarly, the various tribes and ethnic groups in Nigeria adorn clothes fabricated from their local textiles. *Godogodo* (woven material of blue, black, and white stripes) is a fabric for native dresses of the Igede while *apa* (woven material with black and red stripes) is for the Idoma, and *a'nger* (woven material with black and white stripes) is for the Tiv; the Igala adorn a woven fabric known as *achi*; the Igbo use fabrics called *isiagu* (lion-motif print fabrics), *akwete* (handwoven fabrics) and *ekwerike* (thick fabrics); the Ibibio and Efik use *usobo* (men's wrappers from viscos or George fabrics) and raffia; the Yorùbá make indigo-dyed clothing material called *àdìrẹ* and woven fabrics called *aşo òfi* or *aşo òkè* (Clarke, 1988, Ogunshye, 2020, and Oyeniyi, 2016).

The present article is an output from an ongoing documentation¹ of *òfi/aşo òkè* weaving in Ìsẹ̀yìn and Ìbàdàn, with focus on the linguistic features in this occupation. In an area of linguistics called sociolinguistics, language is studied in relation to its features in a particular social situation, context, or group. This research was a study of language use at weaving sheds among weavers, who can be regarded as a social group, or discourse community, which is defined as a group of people who develop and share a process for communication, a unique vocabulary of jargon, and a power structure tied to the source of their community (Borg, 2003). The sociolinguistic term for a variety of language defined according to its use in social situations is register, and this includes occupational language. Occupational language, otherwise known as jargon, refers to special words, phrases, expressions, or slang that are peculiar to experts in a particular discipline, field, or profession (Oha, 2010; Pearce, 2007). This study is essentially an analysis of the jargon used in the Yorùbá traditional occupation of cloth weaving; the jargon was compiled through a language documentation approach. Language documentation is “a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the proper documentation of all aspects of a language or a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community” (Urua, 2010, p. 166).

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Language documentation and indigenous knowledge

Language documentation, otherwise known as documentary linguistics, is a relatively new branch of linguistics: “a field of linguistic inquiry and practice in its own right which is primarily concerned with the compilation and preservation of linguistic primary data and interfaces between primary data and various types of analyses based on these data” (Himmelman, 2006, p. 1). Udoh, Anyanwu, and Osuagwu (2019, p. 36) define language documentation as “the recording and keeping of linguistic primary data and their preservation”. Language documentation, according to McClatchey (2018), is, however, not limited to language; it also encompasses indigenous knowledge (IK). Indigenous knowledge, also called traditional knowledge (TK), refers to skills, information, meanings, purposes, and values that indigenous peoples have gathered, conceptualized, studied, and passed through generations for many years (Community Commons, 2020).

2.2 Register

In sociolinguistics and stylistics, register is a variety of language defined according to social use, such as scientific, formal, religious, and journalistic (Oha, 2010). A type of register is occupational register or jargon, which is the variety of language used by professionals in a particular occupation, such as weaving.

2.3 Jargon or occupational language

Jargon refers to technical words and phrases that are peculiar to a particular occupation (Oha, 2010). These technical words develop because everyday language does not contain appropriate words to describe the activities and processes in the occupation.

2.4 Discourse community

Discourse community is a combination of two terms: discourse and community. Discourse simply means written or spoken language in use. A community is “a group of people who share a particular discourse” (Belkhenchir, 2016, p. 56). A discourse community is, therefore, group of people that is united by the way the members communicate and the things they communicate about.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for this study is Drew and Heritage's Institutional Talk, which refers to communication occurring in institutional contexts such as workplaces (Drew and Heritage, 1992). Institutional talk is an aspect of the study of language and social groups and is specifically applicable to the study of language and occupation. Every profession has its unique communicative styles and elements consisting of jargon, or vocabulary which is, all things being equal, better understood mainly by experts in the profession and

unintelligible to laypeople. At work and in other settings, professionals make use of this technical vocabulary in the course of work-related interactions. Institutional talk posits that jargon is an essential part of occupational networks which is developed to meet the linguistic needs of a group of people working in the same field and which workers in the field learn as they develop their expertise (Nash, 1993). Jargon is also said to be the chief linguistic element that serves as an indicator of professional awareness; for instance, a judge will demonstrate a better knowledge of legal terms than an undergraduate law student or a farmer. Therefore, jargon becomes a marker of competency or professional knowledge.

Institutional talk also asserts that jargon is driven by accuracy of expressions and efficiency of communication: a term refers to a precise entity and this saves experts lengthy expressions (Uwen and Mensah, 2022). On the other hand, jargon and other forms of profession-based communication can create exclusion, alienating 'outsiders' or non-professionals as well as experts with limited technical terms in their professional linguistic repertoire (Adams, 2012).

The theory posits that “work talk” has specific characteristics that make it distinct from everyday conversation. These characteristics are summed up to six elements: Goal orientation, turn-taking rules, allowable contributions, professional lexis, structures, and asymmetry (Drew and Heritage, 1992).

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Methods

The project was carried out through a combination of master-apprentice, participant observation, and interview methods.

The master-apprentice model is the ideal model for vocational trainings and for documenting community practices such as *aşò òkè* weaving. Mosel (2006, p. 119) states that some anthropologists have found that “the best way to work [i.e. document a community practice] is to undertake what is locally understood as an apprentice role”. Moreover, in Yorùbá indigenous educational system, the master-apprentice approach is the principal traditional method through which skills such as *aşò òkè* weaving are passed from a professional (called *anogá*, or a master) to a learner (called an *omogé*, or an apprentice) (Fafunwa, 2004). In this model, the learner/apprentice (researcher) occasionally received direct instruction, training, and guide on how to do something (such as weaving, fixing errors, etc.) from the experts (consultants/master weavers). The one-year apprenticeship started in August 2023 and the researcher has learned in five different weaving sheds: three in Ìsẹ̀yìn and two in Ìbàdàn. The first two months was spent

learning at a weaving shed owned by three master weavers. The researcher normally learns from two weaving sheds simultaneously, by spending three days every week in each one for two to three months.

As a participant observer, I immersed myself in every weaving-related process and activity at the weaving shed (the setting for weaving), observing the working, interactions, and practices of the consultant master weavers and other apprentice weavers as well. This approach cannot be separated from the master-apprentice model because a considerable amount of what apprentices learn from their masters—including jargon—is via observation (Adekola, 2013). As a participant observer, I took note of all the observed phenomena in the course of the training and asked the master weavers to clarify aspects, terms, or expressions that were not clear to me.

Moreover, interviews were conducted once in a while in the course of the research period. Some of the interviews happened at the weaving sheds while some were conducted via phone calls or the social media, especially WhatsApp. The physical interviews were usually impromptu; I may have a question about a term or expression that my consultant weavers used or something I observed them carry out; if I noticed that the weavers were not too busy at the time (for instance, with friends or customers), I asked them questions concerning my observation right on the spot. If they were quite busy, I waited till another time, mostly at the end of the day's work when they would be free to answer my questions. I sometimes had questions to ask about a term or expression I put down in my field note or a style of *aşò òkè* I saw in a movie or on someone; if it was on a weekend when I was not at work, I would send my questions as voice notes in Yorùbá to my consultants or put a phone call through to the one who was not using WhatsApp.

4.2 Sample and Sampling Method

The consultants for this study were professional *aşò òkè* weavers who have had no less than three years of experience in *aşò òkè* weaving. To choose the Ìsẹ̀yìn consultants, I travelled from Uyo to Ìsẹ̀yìn and visited a number of weaving sheds. A weaving shed may be owned by one master weaver or shared by two or more master weavers, who are usually relatives or friends. I chose two weaving sheds that were shared by master weavers and one shed owned by one master weaver. In contrast to Ìsẹ̀yìn, the three consultants in Ìbàdàn were women, two of whom I had known for years in my former area of residence while the other was recommended by a friend who had learned weaving from her. Two of the women weavers used broad looms while one used the narrow-strip loom common among Ìsẹ̀yìn weavers. The consultants, who were equally my master weavers, were: Mr Taofeek Alabi Agbagba (early 50s with over 40 years

of experience), Mr Usman Mustapha Agbagba (late 40s with over 30 years of experience), and Mr Mutiu Mustapha Agbagba (late 30s with over 15 years of experience) (the three are distant cousins from Agbágbá Compound who share a weaving shed in an area far from their compound), Elder Johnson Oḃansọla (late 60s with over 50 years of experience), Mr Kunle Balogun (early 40s with over 10 years of experience), Mr Tunde Oḃajọri (late 20s with 5 years of experience), Mrs Grace Kọmọlafẹ (early 60s with over 30 years of experience), Mrs Olubunmi Oḃotọshọ (early 30s with 5 years of experience), and Mrs Awawu Aminu (late 40s with over 20 years of experience).

4.3 Ethical Issues

Informed consent was sought from every consultant. Because some of the consultants were non-literate, all the consultants (master weavers) gave their consent in oral form which was recorded in audiovisual format. The Ibádán consultants demanded training fees, which I paid. Only one Iṣẹyin consultant demanded a training fee, which I also paid. The other consultants who demanded no training fees were rewarded in kind or cash.

5. Aṣọ Òkè Weavers as a Discourse Community

Aṣọ òkè weaving is an indigenous knowledge of the Yorùbá people which has been passed from generations to generations for centuries. From a linguistic point of view, aṣọ òkè weavers are united by their jargon, which is almost exclusively understood by the professionals. However, some (especially the elderly weavers and youths who started learning weaving from their childhood days and have spent a considerable number of years in the occupation) are more versed in the jargon than those who learned weaving at adulthood for just a few months. For instance, one of my consultants in Ibádán, a graduate who learned aṣọ òkè weaving for six months, knew far less aṣọ òkè jargon than a senior secondary school student in Iṣẹyin who had been learning weaving since he was in primary four. Downs and Wardle (2011, p. 466) claim that while a speech community typically inherits its membership by birth, accident, or adoption, a discourse community recruits its members by persuasion, training or relevant qualification. However, the claim may not be totally applicable to discourse communities in traditional occupations. As in a speech community, (apart from training), membership by birth is also common in a discourse community, especially one formed by

professionals in a traditional occupation. For instance, majority of the weavers I met in Iṣẹyin were “born into the craft of weaving”, and thus learned the aṣọ òkè discourse or jargon from their parents, uncles, grandparents, or other relatives who also served as their masters.

Elements of institutional talk occurred in aṣọ òkè weavers' day-to-day interactions. For example, I witnessed an instance of common goals among Iṣẹyin weavers in October 2023. The prices of threads kept increasing almost every day; in reaction, the weavers, under the umbrella body of *Egbé Aláṣọ Òfi* (Association of Òfi Weavers), declared a week long strike, prohibiting members from purchasing threads. A week after, members were prohibited from weaving, as it was discovered that some weavers were secretly buying threads. Eventually, their goal was achieved as some of the thread sellers brought down the prices of some threads by tokens such as ₦10 or ₦20. Also, turn-taking, allowable contributions, and asymmetry manifested in weavers' interactions. The three elements are interrelated and are best explained via the two aspects of asymmetry: power and role. For example, the master weavers are the authority while their apprentices are the subordinates; among the apprentices, there are ranks or seniority, based mainly on their period of apprenticeship. In the course of their interactions, junior apprentices have far less contribution than their seniors; the same applies to taking turns. In fact, I once witnessed an apprentice earn a slap for interrupting his master.

Moreover, weavers use some special words that denote occupation-specific meanings, which Drew and Heritage refer to as professional lexis or jargon. Acquisition of some specific lexis is one of the main characteristics of a discourse community outlined by Swales (2011). aṣọ òkè weavers, as a discourse community, have over the years developed lexis or jargon to refer to Aṣọ òkè instruments, materials, processes, styles, etc. The primary focus of the present study was on the professional lexis of aṣọ òkè weavers.

6. Analysis and Classification of Aṣọ Òkè Weaving Jargon

A term in this context can be a word or a group of words³. The terms used in aṣọ òkè weaving can be classified into some lexico-semantic groups. This is by no means a hard and fast classification.

²When asked from whom they learned weaving and its jargon, most of the Iṣẹyin weavers responded, “iṣé [iṣé] àbíni bí wani” (it's a craft we were born into) or “I learned it from my father/uncle”.

³A draft copy of the comprehensive, illustrated dictionary of aṣọòkè/òfi which was created from this research project is available on <https://www.webonary.org/of weaving/>

⁴In January 2024, I watched a video clip shot in the riverine part of Ìkálẹ̀; in the video, an Ìkálẹ̀-speaking lady (in her twenties) referred to the boat conveying her as an “òkò”.

6.1 General Yorùbá

These are words or expressions that are apparently adopted from General Yorùbá and given a new referent and meaning by *aşo òkè* weavers.

i. *èrùkó* (cloth beam holder)

An *èrùkó*, also called *àákò*, is a part of the horizontal loom that holds the cloth beam (*agbónrin*). It is a very strong wooden bar with a slant, curved end that makes it look like a hoe haft. The loom part *èrùkó* is apparently named after the hoe haft due to shared resemblance in their designs. While the hoe haft is used for holding the hoe blade, loom's *èrùkó* holds the cloth beam.

ii. *òkò* (shuttle)

Òkò (shuttle) is a weaving tool. It is a wooden, boat-like tool designed to neatly and compactly house the weft bobbin (*àkàwú*) and carry the weft bobbin back and forth while weaving. The instrument resembles a boat, which is also called *òkò* in General Yorùbá. However, “òkò”, meaning a boat or ship, is somewhat archaic in General Yorùbá; having undergone a semantic shift, its new meaning, which is ‘vehicle’, has overshadowed its original meaning. Nonetheless, its original meaning is still in common use in some dialects such as Ìkálẹ̀⁴ and in some records that contain the old form of Yorùbá such as the Ifá Corpus and Yorùbá Bible. Its referent in *òfi* weaving is a relic and a preservation of the original meaning. In essence, studying the jargon of traditional occupations can reveal that there are original Yorùbá words for some innovations, and those words can be adopted in modern science and technology.

iii. *ètù* (a classic *òfi* style)

Ètù is a style of *òfi* whose dominant warp colour is navy blue (or black) with tiny warp stripes of white or blue thread, woven with navy blue weft. This term is ‘borrowed’ from General Yorùbá word “ètù” (guinea fowl). Weavers named the *ètù* cloth after the guinea fowl because the fabric looks like the bird's black and white speckled feathers.

iv. *kẹ̀kẹ̀* (winding machine)

In General Yorùbá, *kẹ̀kẹ̀* is a wheel or bicycle. This word has been adopted by *òfi* weavers to refer to one of their instruments that is used for winding thread. This wooden device has a handle and wheel-like plate; in fact, the modern, welded type actually uses a small wheel.

6.2 Idioms

An idiom is a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit (Crystal, 2008, p. 236). In other words, an idiom

is an expression that tends to behave as a single semantic unit, so that it is usually not possible to re-arrange its elements or insert additional items; besides, its grammatical structures are non-productive: for example, if constituent elements are replaced with items from the same semantic field, the idiom is destroyed. There are a few idiomatic expressions in the jargon of weavers. These include:

i. *gbaakò* (to make a warping or weaving error)

Gbaakò is a phrase in weaving for referring to making an error in the course of warp preparation (*aşo tita*) or weaving. The meaning of this expression cannot be easily predicted from its individual words: “gba” means collect or receive while “akò” means male. The literal meaning of the phrase is “collect or receive a male”, which is rather meaningless in Yorùbá. Besides, another lexical item cannot be used to replace either of the two words in the expression; in fact, one of my consultants, master weaver Usman Agbagba, emphasized that the expression had been passed to him from his grandfathers and fathers, and he had never heard them say “gba abo”, replacing the noun with its opposite, female. Similarly, the verb cannot be replaced with “şe” to comply with the General Yorùbá collocate “şe àşişe” (make an error).

However, *akò*, in its negative meaning as an error, is not exclusive to weaving; in popcorn making (*gúgúrúyíyan*), “ta akò” is an error referring to a popcorn made when the frying sand or oil is too hot, thus getting the popcorn fried too fast on the outside while leaving the inside undercooked or making it explode⁵.

ii. *pa akò* (correct a warping or weaving error)

This is another idiom in *aşo òkè* weaving jargon. Literally, “pa” means kill while “akò” means male. However, in weaving, “pa akò”, often contracted to “pakò”, means to correct or fix a warping or weaving error.

iii. *aşotafà* (a warp that shoots out)

This is an *aşo òkè* weaving idiom that refers to a defect in the warp, specifically the shoot out of one or more warp threads behind the back heddles. The literal meaning of “aşo tafà” is “the warp shoots an arrow”.

6.3 Slang

Slang is an unconventional word or phrase that expresses either something new or something old in a new way (Maurer, 2023). Slang is normally succinct and witty. Jargon used by weavers consists of some slangy words and expressions:

⁵ I used to hear this expression from two elderly aunts whose main job was making popcorn for schoolchildren in my hometown, ÒjéOwóde.

i. *kómáa-roll* (winding machine)

Kómáa-roll is a device for winding weft threads. Its original name is *kèkè*. However, there is a popular song in praise of the Alááfin of Ọyọ, part of whose lyrics is: *Kómáaró, ẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀Alááfin* (Let the *ẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀*⁶ be beaten for the Alááfin keep resounding). Prominent Yorùbá musicians such as Chief Sikiru Ayinde Balogun (aka Barrister) and Chief Sunday Adegeye (aka King Sunny Ade) have made the song more popular, but it ended up a *monde green* and a popular slangy expression: “*kómáa roll*”, popularly rendered as “*kóma roll*”. This slang means people, especially women, should keep whining or rolling their waists to the sounds of music. The slang “*kóma roll*” is adopted by weavers to refer to the winding machine, which is a device that keeps rolling or rotating when winding threads.

ii. *şánáwólé* (sparkling *aşo òkè* fabrics)

Şánáwólé means to make a grand, sparkling entry at an event. It is a popular slangy expression for a party in which celebrants or party-goers make a spectacular entry with fireworks. Weavers have adopted this slang to refer to a fabric whose warp and/or weft include metallic thread called Crantex and radiant plastic thread called shine-shine. This fabric usually glitters or sparkles, hence the name *şánáwólé*.

iii. *ojútó ñşòrò* (sparkling *aşo òkè* fabrics)

Ojútó ñ şòrò is a slangy expression that means making a pass at someone with the eye. This slang is used by weavers as a synonym of *şánáwólé*. The slang is so used because the sparkling fabrics are attention-getters just like passes.

6.4 Code-mixing

Code-mixing is a mix of two or more languages in a conversation. This sociolinguistic term is adopted here to refer to any weaving jargon that is formed from at least two different languages, which in this case are normally Yorùbá and English.

i. *kómáa-roll* (winding machine)

This is made up of Yorùbá “*kómáa*” (it should keep) and English “*roll*”. The term means a device that keeps rolling.

ii. *wáyá-to-wayà* (metallic *aşo òkè*)

A *wáyá-to-wayà*, also known as wire-to-wire or *mètálíkí* (metallic), is a style of *aşo òkè* that is made mainly from metallic threads. In other words, its warp and weft are metallic threads, which are popularly called Crantex. The term is coined from the English word “*to*” and “*wàyà*”, weavers' Yorùbá term for metallic thread.

iii. *cone-to-bánti*

This is a style of *aşo òkè* whose warp is polyester spun yarns and weft is a kind of thick, dyed thread. The term is coined from the English words “*to*” and “*cone*” (weavers' term for polyester spun thread) and “*bánti*” (weavers' Yorùbá term for a thick yarn that is usually dyed black or brown, and is mostly used for weft, but not for warp).

iv. *sán heddle* (to make heddles)

This is a phrase that refers to tying or making heddles. The phrase incorporates Yorùbá “*sán*” (to tie or fasten) and English “*heddle*”. I heard this term only from a graduate woman weaver in Ibádán who learnt weaving broad *aşo òkè* with a floor loom for a few months in a corporate weaving school where instruction was given in both English and Yorùbá; in fact, many of the weaving terms she used (which were barely 30 in total) are English.

6.5 Loanwords

A loanword is a word taken from one language (the donor language) and then incorporated into the vocabulary of another language (the recipient language). Some terms used in *aşo òkè* weaving profession are borrowed from other languages, especially English (the major donor language in Yorùbá *aşo òkè* jargon). Some of the loanwords retain their English forms while others have been modified. However, the loanwords may not necessarily retain the meaning they denote in the donor language. Examples of loanwords in *aşo òkè* jargon include:

i. pack

A pack is the term *aşo òkè* weavers use to refer to a bundle of woven cloth which is made up of eight miniyards. *aşo òkè* are usually sold in such bundles or packs.

ii. *fóómù* (loom seat cushion)

Fóómù is piece of foam or pad placed on the loom seat which a weaver sits on when weaving to prevent buttock pain. It is a borrowing of the English word “*foam*”.

iii. basket (*aşo òkè* eyelet)

Basket is the English name that *aşo òkè* weavers and sellers call *jàwùú*, which is a style of *aşo òkè* fabric with holes created in it at intervals in the process of weaving it.

iv. *sainí* (radiant plastic metallic thread)

Sainí is a kind of tiny, flat, fragile, shiny or radiant plastic metallic thread. It is a borrowing of the English

⁶ *Şẹ̀kẹ̀rẹ̀* is a percussion instrument made from dried gourd surrounded with a net of beads. It is one of the royal musical instruments that is beaten for the Alááfin of Ọyọ.

word 'shining'. It is also called 'shine-shine'. It is so named because of its shining nature.

v. *táásì* (starch)

Táásì is starch in which weft thread is dipped (or which is rubbed on weft thread) in order to make the woven fabric stiff. In Yorùbá, *táásì* is a naturalized form of the English word "starch".

vi. cone

Cotton or polyester spun thread. It is so named because such thread is sold on cones.

vii. cone to cone

This is a style of *òfi* whose warp and weft are cotton or polyester spun yarns.

6.6 Generic Names

A generic name is a trademark or brand name that is used as the generic name for a general class of a product or service. This is otherwise known as proprietary eponym. In the jargon of *aşo òkè* weavers, some brand names are used as general terms for certain products or materials. Examples:

i. Crantex/Krowntex/Crowntex

In *aşo òkè* weaving jargon, Crantex, Krowntex, or Crowntex is a general name for metallic thread or an *aşo òkè* fabric woven with metallic thread. Crantex is much more common than the other two terms. Like the other two terms, Crantex is a trademark for a particular brand of metallic thread.

ii. Top Bond

Top Bond is a brand of adhesive glue which weavers sometimes use for making *òfi* fabric stiff or hard. However, any other brand of glue (e.g. Vinco) used for the same purpose is usually called Top Bond by many weavers.

6.7 Synonyms

A synonym is a word or phrase that means exactly or nearly the same as another word or phrase in the same language. In this study, a synonym is taken as a term that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another term in the jargon of *aşo òkè* weavers, irrespective of its source language. Some synonyms in *aşo òkè* jargon are from the same language, Yorùbá, while some are from English. Examples:

i. *kèkè/kómàa-roll* (winding machine)

Kèkè and *kómàa-roll* are synonymous: both terms refer to the winding machine. However, *kèkè* is the preferable term among *Ìbàdàn* weavers while *kómàa-roll* is the choice term among *Ìséyìn* weavers.

ii. *jáwùú/net/basket/button hole*

All the four terms refer to an *aşo òkè* eyelet style, that is, an

aşo òkè fabric with loom-made eyelets or holes.

iii. *wòòde/lòòde*

Both terms are idioms that refer to the process of weaving a warp stretched out on the weaving ground (*òde*), which is usually about nine metres long.

iv. *saini/shine-shine*

Both terms refer to radiant plastic metallic thread.

v. *òfi oraşo òfi/aşo òkè*

Both terms refer to Yorùbá's woven fabrics. Although *òfi/aşo òfi* is the original term for woven fabrics, it is no longer in popular usage (except among weavers) while *aşo òkè* is much more popular, especially among *aşo òkè* sellers and users/buyers.

v. *òlónà/alápásá*

Both terms refer to *aşo òkè* fabrics that have decorations made on them on the loom, that is while weaving.

vi. *şoşokò/juokò*

Both terms mean to throw the shuttle back and forth into the shed (*enuaşo*) when weaving.

vii. *alášo/olófi*

Both terms are synonymous. They mean an *aşo òkè* weaver or trader.

6.8 Antonyms

An antonym is a word that has the opposite meaning of another word. Some terms in *aşo òkè* jargon have opposite meanings. Examples:

i. *àkàwù tútù/àkàwù gberefun*

An *àkàwù tútù* is a wet or starched weft while an *àkàwù gberefun* is a dry weft that is not starched.

ii. *téjú/séégúsi*

Téjú is a term that is used to describe a smooth, straight, and width-full weave. It is mostly used to describe a weave whose width is up to the required measurement (usually 6.5 inches for narrow-strip weaves). In contrast, *séé gúsi* is a word weavers use to describe a weave that is not smooth and not straight in the edges.

iii. *òfi/kijipá*

Traditionally, *kijipá* (also known as *aşo fèyà* among *Ìséyìn* weavers) is a type of broad and/or thick *òfi* fabric woven by women weavers on an upright single-heddle broad loom. Traditionally, *kijipá* fabrics were regarded inferior to their male-woven counterparts i.e. *òfi* or *aşo aláwé* (narrow-strip weaves); for example, a Yorùbá proverb describes *kijipá* as the cloth for the indolent and

òfi as the cloth for the elderly, urging the elders who cannot afford *òfi* to buy *kijipá* instead⁷. However, *kijipá* fabrics are no longer seen as inferior; they are even more expensive than narrow-strip *òfi* fabrics. Traditionally, *òfi* are fabrics woven by men weavers on the double-heddle horizontal narrow-strip loom, as against *kijipá* fabrics woven by women on the broad loom. In modern times, such gender-based differences are no longer common. Some women weavers now use the narrow-strip loom (e.g. Mrs Kòmólafẹ in Ìbàdàn) while some men weavers also use the broad loom.

6.9 Variants

A variant is a word that has a different form from another word to which it is related. There are a few variants in *aşo òkè* weaving jargon. Examples:

i. *Àkàwú/àkárò/àkà/àkàú* (weft bobbins)

All refer to weft bobbins. *Àkà* and *àkàú* are the short forms of the full forms: *àkàú* is more common among Ìşeyìn weavers while *àkà* is more common among Ìbàdàn weavers.

ii. *hun/wun*

Both mean to weave. These are phonological variants, and both are very commonly used.

iii. *sain-sáin/sainí*

Both refer to radiant plastic metallic thread. The shorter variant is, however, more commonly used.

Weavers have a preference for contracted or shortened variants. For example, *àkàú* and *àkà* are also more common than *àkàwú/àkárò*.

6.10 Polysems

A polysem is a word or phrase that has several meanings. Some terms in *aşo òkè* weaving jargon are polysemous, portraying two or more meanings. Examples:

i. *òfi*

Òfi has about three meanings. One, it refers to the loom. Two, it is a general term for woven fabrics; *aşo òfi* (*òfi* fabric) was probably named after *òfi* (loom), to refer to clothes woven on the loom (*aşo tí a wun lóri òfi*). Three, it used to refer to strip woven fabrics by male weavers as against *kijipá*, broad fabrics traditionally woven by women.

ii. *aşo*

Aşo has several meanings. It refers to the warp, which is the group of threads running the length of the fabric. It also refers to the fell-of-the-cloth, that is, the woven part of a cloth on the loom. It as well refers to woven fabrics in general.

iii. *àkàwú*

Àkàwú is another polysemous term. It means the weft; it also refers to weft bobbins.

iv. *aşoriri*

This phrase means threading, which is the process of inserting warp ends into the heddles (*omú*). It also means slewing, which is the process of inserting warp ends into the reed (*àsà*).

v. *aşo yíyà*

For one, *aşo yíyà* means warp disentangling, which is the process of freeing twisted or entangled warp threads. *Aşo yíyà* also means warp drafting, which is the arrangement or sequencing of warp threads according to threading draft for a particular weave.

6.11 Dialect Words

A dialect word is a word that is used in a particular variety or dialect of a language. Some terms in *aşo òkè* are dialectical:

i. *àákò* (cloth beam holder)

An *àákò* is a part of the horizontal loom that holds the cloth beam. *Àákò* is an Ònkò word for *erúkò* (the hoe haft) and is commonly used by Ìşeyìn weavers, whose Yorùbá dialect is Ònkò. Like the Òyò weavers studied by Clarke (1988, p.11), the only Ìbàdàn weaver consultant (Mrs Kòmólafẹ) who used the horizontal narrow-strip loom called the same loom part *erúkò*, which is a General Yorùbá word.

ii. *sénrin* (warping rod)

Asénrin is a length of iron rod which is used for warp preparation. This is an Ònkò variant of the General Yorùbá “sánrin”. Ònkò, a dialect of Yorùbá spoken in places such as Ìşeyìn, is known for substituting the open-mid back rounded nasal vowel [ɔ̃] (orthographically represented with 'an' or 'on') with its front counterpart [ɛ] (orthographically represented with 'en') insomephonological contexts. In General Yoruba, it is called “sánrin”.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the language of traditional occupations is an area that lexicographers, semanticists, sociolinguists, historical linguists, documentary linguists, and linguists in general should explore. For one, it is an indirect means of documenting indigenous knowledge, skills, and occupations, some of which are endangered. Also, specialized dictionaries need to be compiled as a step to

⁷This is the proverb in Yorùbá: *Kijipá laşo òlẹ; òfil aşo àgbà; àgbàtí ò nítófi a rójúra kijipá* (Owomoyela, 2005, p. 75).

achieving teaching of science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics in native languages; this is because some of the terms used in indigenous occupations can be borrowed into STEM.

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