

The Owé Bilingual Dictionary

Bolanle Elizabeth AROKOYO
Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages
University of Ilorin
bolakoyo@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper presents a report on an ongoing documentation, revitalization and description effort of the Owé dialect of Yorùbá spoken in Kabba (and her surrounding communities), in the southern axis of Kogi State, North Central Nigeria. It resulted in the production of the Owé Bilingual Dictionary with an online version which is presently being tested. The paper adopts a simple descriptive approach reporting what has been done in the work. The dictionary was compiled with data collected from native speakers and from other secondary sources over a period of ten years. The researcher is also a native speaker who is intimately connected with the dialect. *Pratt* was the software used to segment the sounds while *Lexique Pro* was used in the configuration, compilation and distribution of the dictionary. The dictionary is a learner's dictionary designed purposely to help the learners of Owé at home and in the Diaspora to learn and relearn the dialect. The paper describes the information provided on each lexeme and also points out some limitations of the software. The language learning and teaching charts developed for Owé which formed part of the appendix of the dictionary were presented. The online dictionary unlike the published counterpart does not have an appendix. We conclude that the aim of the dictionary is to enhance proficiency in the dialect and this can only be achieved when the people are ready to take action and return Owé to the table.

1. Introduction

The survival of any language depends on its everyday use, hence the need for genuine efforts at documenting, revitalizing and describing our languages. The Owé Bilingual Dictionary was published in 2017 by the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages¹⁹. The online version is presently being tested and is hosted online at www.bolanlearokoyo.com/owelexicon. The dictionary is an effort at documenting, revitalizing and describing the Owé dialect of Yorùbá. Owé is spoken in Kabba (and her surrounding communities), in Kabba-Bunu Local Government Area, in the southern axis

¹⁹ Arokoyo (2017)

of Kogi State, North Central Nigeria²⁰. The Owé dialect is spoken by the Owé people. Despite the fact that Owé is a dialect of Yorùbá, the people see themselves more as Owé than Yorùbá, hence the community efforts at preservation and revitalization.

The dictionary, with two hundred and twenty seven pages (227) pages, is a contemporary Owé-English and English-Owé dictionary. It presents the dialect as it is used today with examples and the appendix providing robust information about the dialect. It is a simple learners' dictionary that can easily be consulted by both the young and the old who are interested in knowing more about the dialect. The dictionary is a very reliable tool for both the Owé people at home and in the Diaspora. This paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction, followed by the methodology in section two. Section three presents the structure and the content of the dictionary. In this section, efforts were made to look into the information provided for each lexeme in the dictionary and also a brief excursus into the appendix was taken. Section four examines the online version briefly while section five concludes the report.

2. Methodology

The Owé Bilingual Dictionary is a product of Language Documentation work started since 2003. The dictionary was compiled and published in conjunction with the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages, USA and Owe's Forum. Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages is involved in documenting endangered languages while the Owé's Forum is a Facebook group that encompasses Owé sons and daughters. The forum has transcended beyond the online community and has become a socio-cultural group comprising both the young and the old.

2.1 Data Collection

The data for the dictionary was collected over a period of more than ten years and the elicitation still continues. The Living Tongues' Elicitation File (about ten thousand words) and Thematic Elicitation File (about twelve thousand words, phrases and sentences), the SIL Elicitation File (about two thousand words) and the Ibadan Four Hundred Word List of Basic Items were some of the files used during data elicitation. Owé traditional oral genres and performances like cognomen '*oriki*', masquerade chants '*àbọ́ egún*', proverbs, idioms and abuse '*òghe, ùfẹ̀ àti ogeèbú* etc. also served as sources of our data. Many data were also gleaned from the Owé's Forum Facebook Page and other secondary sources²¹. The researcher is a native speaker of the dialect.

At the beginning of the documentation project, the data were handwritten and later recorded with phones then transcribed and stored. Eventually, most of the data were recorded using *OLYMPUS LINEAR PCM RECORDER LS-10*. After recording, they were transcribed and stored in a retrieval format. The sounds were segmented using *Pratt* and

²⁰ See Arokoyo (2013a, 2013b, 2016)

²¹ Oke, (2016), Samuel (2013), Timothy-Asobele (2013) are some the sources consulted.

stored on the laptop for easy usage on the software (Lexique Pro). The sounds were also stored on a disc. The pictures used in the appendix were taken using *Canon PowerShot A4000 IS Digital Camera and Iphone 5s*. They were then processed, labelled and stored on the laptop, disc and cloud.

2.2 Data Processing and Analysis

The dictionary was compiled using Lexique Pro, a dictionary software developed by Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) in Mali. It runs on Windows XP, Vista and Windows 7. Lexique Pro is a software that helps in language development, improves research, translation and literacy. The software reads data from a Shoebox or Toolbox database and then formatted in an interactive viewer. Lexical entries are displayed in alphabetical order on the screen. The list of words are selected on the homepage by clicking on the corresponding letters of the alphabet.

The lexicon language is Owé which is used as the title of the lexicon on the homepage and the task bar. The gloss language chosen for this dictionary is English with its appropriate language marker. There are many field markers which provide grammatical, semantic, etymological, etc. information about the entries. For every entry in the dictionary, the gloss, part of speech, example sentences in Owé and translation in English were provided. Phonetic forms were provided where necessary as Owé is phonetic. Information on morphology, etymology, variant forms and cross references were also provided where needed. Synonyms, antonyms, variants, etc. were cross-referenced via hyperlinks. Sounds were also provided for some of the entries. The lexicon database was easily edited in Lexique Pro. Editor features include insert new record, copy record, next record, last record, delete record, insert field, paste, cut, undo all changes, undo last change, save all modified changes, etc.

Using the Distribute Lexicon Wizard, the Export to Document and Export to Web Commands were used to create the Owé Bilingual Dictionary and The Owé Bilingual Online version. The required fields that will be displayed in the dictionary were chosen while the page and paragraph setups were also chosen from the command. The Owé version was created by choosing '*Alphabetical Dictionary of lexical entries*' while English version was created by choosing '*Index table based on a gloss language*'.

Lexique Pro is designed to be user-friendly. Once the instructions are properly understood, it can be used very easily. One major drawback of the software is the fact that you cannot tone mark directly on it. This means that entries were copied from Microsoft Word and pasted on the programme. By implication, initial vowels with tones are listed after same vowels on the index table as exemplified in following illustration in (1) with lexemes beginning with vowels /a/ and /i/.

1. a) ayíkùlè n. dung beetle. Mó pa ayíkùlè ìn o. Don't kill this dung beetle.
- b) ayò n. game, type of. À ta ayò. We played ayò game.
- c) ayùn n. saw. Ó mú ayùn ge irin. He used a saw to cut the metal.

- d) àiníteríba n. pride. Àiníteríba kí dàmù rẹ. It is pride that is disturbing him.
- e) àngbẹ n. thirst. Àngbẹ í gbẹ mí. I am thirsty.
- f) àpapọ n. total.[àkpakpọ] Mì fẹ mọ àpapọ rẹ. I want to know the total.
2. a) iyẹ n. feather. Iyẹ eḃelẹ Pigeon's feather.
- b) iyọn n. argument. Iyọn ghin tí pojù kun. Your argument is too much.
- c) iyọkọ n. mother in law. Mò rí iyọkọ rẹ. I saw your mother in law.
- d) iyọ n. salt. Ó ra iyọ. She bought salt.
- e) idọn n. unmarried girl. Idọn kí yẹ gha. She is an unmarried girl.
- f) iràwọ n. star. Iràwọ ti yọ. The star has appeared.
- g) isà n. pot. Ó pọn omi hí inú isà. He poured water inside the pot.

Vowels /ẹ/ and /ọ/ are not listed as separate alphabets in the entries. The double consonants /kp/, /gb/ and /gh/ are also not listed as separate consonants in the entries. These were manually rearranged in the dictionary but not possible in the online version. The software is presently unsupported by the institute (SIL). This means that you might not get any direct help if you run into any problem in the cause of using the software.

3. The Structure and Content of the Dictionary

The dictionary is divided into three broad sections; the front pages, the main dictionary and the appendix. The front pages, made up of ten pages, contain the preliminaries with specific information about the Owé people and the speakers. The map of the dialect area is also provided. The main dictionary is divided into two sections with one hundred and seventy two (172) pages, the Owé-English and the English-Owé version. Each section contains about three thousand words arranged in alphabetical order. Each entry has information about the part of speech, the gloss, example sentence and translation. Some entries also have information about etymology, morphology, cross-reference and pronunciation.

The orthography used for the lexemes, marked as 'lx', is the Standard Yorùbá orthography with tone marks and diacritics where necessary. Glossing, marked 'ge', (meaning general English) is provided for all lexemes. Phonetic information is left out for most entries because Owé, like Yorùbá, is phonetic. Majorly, lexemes with the voiceless labiovelar stops /kp/ are the ones provided with phonetic forms marked 'ph'. Information on the part of speech is provided for every lexeme. Nouns (*n*), verbs (*vb*), adjectives (*adj*), adverbs (*adv*), pronouns (*pron*), conjunctions (*conj*), determiners (*det*) and number (*num*) were identified. Some words also belong to different parts of speech, e.g. *perekete* 'clearly' is both an adjective and an adverb. Information on the morphemes making up complex words are also provided, likewise information on the etymology of some words. Cross references are provided for lexemes with synonyms in the dictionary. Clicking on the cross referenced lexeme on the online version will lead to the synonym. Every lexeme is

provided with example sentences translated into English. These sentences are simple sentences with direct relevance to the lexeme. Let us consider the following examples showing different fields as discussed above.


3. \lx patí
 \ps n
 \ge party
 \bw English
 \xv Ò re patí.
 \xe They went for a party.

4. \lx perekete
 \ps adj, adv
 \ge clearly
 \ph kperekete
 \xv Mò rí i perekete.
 \xe I saw it clearly.

5. \lx gbó
 \ps adj
 \ge old
 \xv Asọ ìn ti gbó.
 \xe This clothe is old.
 \sfc:\audio\data\owe kaba\old.wav

6. \lx adélébò
 \ps n
 \ge married woman
 \cf abilékọ
 \xv Adélébò ki yẹ ghà.
 \xe She is a married woman.

Example (3) shows that the lexeme *pati* is a *noun* meaning *party* and borrowed (*bw*) from English as indicated above. Example (4) indicates that the lexeme *perekete* belongs to two word classes, *adjectives* (*adj*) and *adverbs* (*adv*). The phonetic form (*ph*) */kperekete/* is provided. Sound (*sf*) is provided for example (5) along with other entries as indicated in (7) below.

7.  gbó adj. old. Asọ ìn ti gbó. This clothe is old.

The lexeme in example (6) *adélébò* is cross referenced (*cf*) with its synonym *abilékọ*. This is further exemplified in (8) below.

8. a) adélébò n. married woman. See: [abiléko](#). Adélébò ki yẹ ghà. She is a married woman.
- b) abiléko n. married woman. See: [adélébò](#). Abiléko kí yẹ ghà. She is a married woman.

Different spellings of a lexeme are entered separately and cross referenced as exemplified in (9) below.

9. a) isu n. yam. See: [usu](#); [ihon](#). Ọ he isu. They cooked yam.
- b) usu n. yam. See: [isu](#). Ọ jẹ usu. He ate yam.
- c) ihon n. yam, cooked. See: [isu](#). À dí ihon. We cooked yam.

The lexeme *isulusu* ‘yam’ is also referred to as *ihon* in the dialect. They are all cross referenced.

The fonts for each field are designed and marked differently in Lexique Pro to give room for easy identification of each field. Some fonts are coloured, some are darker, with different sizes. For the dictionary which was published in black and white, the black colour of the font was modified to different shades as seen in example (10). The different colours and shades are however maintained in the online version as seen in example (11).

10. a) à *pron.* we. À ti dé. We have arrived.
- b) àádóta *num.* fifty. Mò ní àádóta naira. I have fifty naira.
- c) àáké *n.* axe. Ó mú àáké já a. He used an axe to cut it.
- d) àánú *n.* mercy. Ó ní àánú. He has mercy.
- e) ààrín *adj.* center. Mú hí ààrín méjèjì. Put it between the two.
- f) àbàdà *n.* cloth, type. À ra àbàda. We bought abada.
- g) àbàhì *n.* decorum. Yá nì àbàhì. He does not have decorum.
- h) àbàhì *n.* dignity. Yá nì àbàhì. He lacks dignity.
11. a) ogún àti ìkòṅ *num.* twenty one. Ogún àti ìkòṅ ki ó rá. He bought twenty one.
- b) Ọhì *adj.* left. Ọwò ọhì ki ẹ gha. She is on the left side.

The English-Owé version has information on the lexical entries and the part of speech of the word. However, example sentences are not provided due to the configuration of the software used for the compilation. Example (12) presents the configuration of the English-Owé version.

12. English- Owé
lot *adv.* kuku
above *prep.* òkè

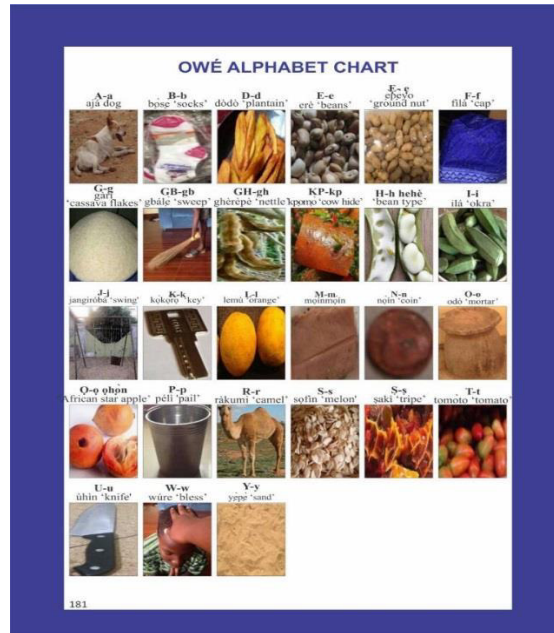
abundance *n.* ọ̀pọ̀`
 abuse *vb.* bú
 accuse *vb.* múbí
 ache *vb.* là
 add *vb.* múkún`
 addition *n.* àropọ̀`
 address *n.* àdirẹ̀ sí
 adolescent, male *n.* gbàrúfù
 adore *vb.* dàmorùn
 afraid *vb.* bàrù

The appendix with twenty four (24) pages, provides language learning and teaching materials for the dialect. The first part provides information about Owé vocabulary including nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, the pronominal system, number, time and season, colours, etc. Sample simple sentences, greetings, proverbs and idioms in the dialect are also provided. Different charts were developed and provided that will aid in the teaching and learning of the dialect. These charts include *alphabet, number, parts of the body, types of animal, food items and fruit*. Some of the charts are presented in (13-15) below.

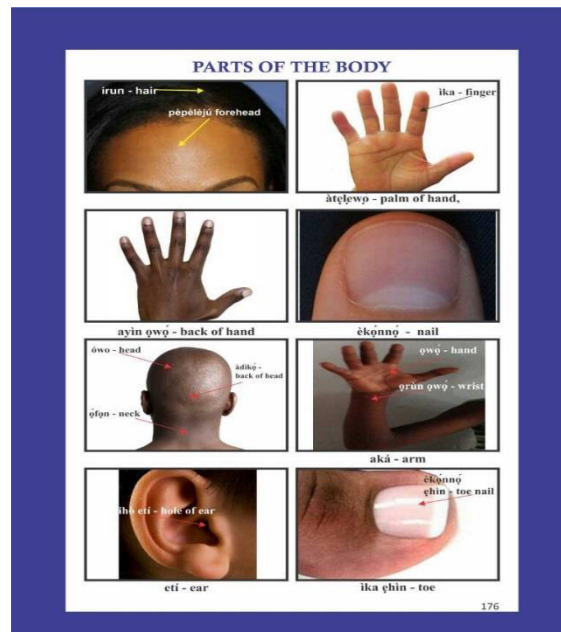
13. Owé Number Chart

| OWÉ NUMBER CHART | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Ìní | 2 Èjì | 3 Èta | 4 Èrin |
| 5 Èrin | 6 Èta | 7 Èje | 8 Èjo |
| 9 Èhùn | 10 Èwa | 11 Okòntà | 12 Èjita |
| 13 Èlala | 14 Èrinlala | 15 Èdógún | 16 Èrindilogún |
| 17 Ètadinlogún | 18 Ejidinlogún | 19 Okòndilogún | 20 Ogún |

14. Owé Alphabet Chart



15. Owé Parts of the Body Chart



Since Owé is a dialect of Yorùbá and therefore cannot be taught in schools, these charts could be mass produced for use in teaching and learning in our homes.

4. Owé Online Bilingual Dictionary

The trial version of the Owé Bilingual Dictionary is presently online at www.bolanlearokoyo.com/owelexicon. It has the Home, Lexicon and English-Owé Commands. Clicking on any command takes you to the specified lexicon. An additional feature of the online version is the presence of sounds but which have not been enabled for the trial version. The sound is similar to what is obtainable in the *Olùkùmi Talking Dictionary*.²² However, not all entries have sounds presently. The online version does not have an appendix. As stated earlier, the data elicitation still continues and with the software, changes, amendments and corrections can be made. Reviews are also possible. With more data, more sound files will also be created.

5. Conclusion

Language is life; it encodes our identity. The survival of any language depends on its everyday use and any efforts made must be backed up by actions. There must be genuine efforts at revitalizing and maintaining our heritage. The Owé Bilingual Dictionary along with the Olùkùmi Bilingual Dictionary²³ started as a simple academic exercise. The dictionary is developed out of the love of a common heritage. It is borne out of the need for a cultural renaissance. The major aim of compiling the dictionary is to enhance proficiency in the dialect and this can only be achieved when the people are ready to take action and return Owé to the table.

6. Acknowledgements

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²² The Olùkùmi Talking Dictionary is an online dictionary by Anderson, Arokoyo and Harrison (2015).

²³ See Arokoyo and Mabodu (2017).

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