

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Language plays a very important role in human society. It is not only a means of communication but also a way through which people express their identity, build relationships, and carry out daily activities¹. One of the most interesting places to study how language is used in everyday life is the market. Markets are social spaces where people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds meet to buy, sell, and interact. The language used in such environments revealed much about social relationships, power, and identity.

This study focused on how sellers and buyers use language in some markets in Ado Ekiti. Ado Ekiti, the capital city of Ekiti State, is an active commercial center in southwestern Nigeria. People from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds meet there daily for trade and other social interactions. The dominant language in Ado Ekiti is Yoruba, but English, Pidgin, and other local languages are also commonly used, depending on who is speaking and the situation.

In such a multilingual setting, language choice becomes a social and communicative strategy. Sellers and buyers often switch between languages to achieve different purposes to show respect, to express solidarity, to make themselves understood, or to persuade buyers². For example, a trader may use Yoruba when speaking to a fellow Yoruba person, switch to Pidgin when dealing with a buyer from another ethnic group, and use English when trying to sound educated or professional. These patterns of language use are known as language practices and are influenced by factors such as age, gender, education, ethnicity, and social status.

Sociolinguistics, which is the study of the relationship between language and society, provides the framework for this research. It helps explain how social factors influence the way people use language in different contexts³. In market interactions, sociolinguistic concepts such as code-

switching, code-mixing, language choice, and language attitudes can be used to understand why people use certain languages in particular situations^{4,5}.

Previous studies in Nigeria and other African countries have shown that markets are rich sites for studying multilingual communication. They are places where languages come into contact and new speech patterns emerge. However, there has been little detailed research on how language is used specifically in the markets of Ado Ekiti. Since Ado Ekiti combines both traditional and modern lifestyles, its markets provide a good setting to examine how local and national languages interact in daily communication. Multilingual interaction in the selected markets of Ado Ekiti shows how language, commerce, and cultural identity are closely connected⁶. Sellers and buyers often use Yoruba, English, and Pidgin to communicate, negotiate prices, and build good relationships during market transactions. This flexible use of language helps them conduct business smoothly while also expressing a sense of shared culture and belonging. The market therefore serves as a space where language is used not only for economic purposes but also to maintain social ties and cultural values. The presence of different languages in these markets also highlights the need for government and policymakers to support language policies that value indigenous languages alongside English. In this way, the study of language use in Ado Ekiti markets helps to explain how language contributes to trade, strengthens cultural identity, and promotes social unity within the community.

This research examined how sellers and buyers in selected markets in Ado Ekiti use language. The aim was to identify the languages commonly used, the reasons behind their use, and how these choices reflect broader social and cultural realities. Through this study, we can better understand how language functions in a typical Nigerian multilingual setting and how it contributes to social interaction, identity, and economic life.

1.1.1 Language and Society

Language is one of the most important aspects of human life and social existence. It is not only a tool for communication but also a means through which people express identity, culture, and

belonging. Every human society depends on language to organize relationships, convey ideas, and maintain social order. The study of the relationship between language and society is known as sociolinguistics, which examines how social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and occupation influence the way people use language in different contexts.

In any community, people do not speak in the same way all the time. The way an individual speaks often changes depending on where they are, who they are talking to, and what they are talking about. For instance, a teacher may use formal English in the classroom but switch to Yoruba or Pidgin when speaking casually at home or in the market. These choices reflect the speaker's awareness of social relationships, respect, and audience expectations.

Language also serves as a symbol of identity and group membership. The choice of language can show where a person comes from, their level of education, or their social class. In Yoruba-speaking communities such as Ado Ekiti, speaking Yoruba in public spaces often reflects cultural pride and solidarity, while switching to English may indicate education, modernity, or prestige. In multilingual settings, people frequently switch between languages a phenomenon known as code-switching or code-mixing to suit particular communicative goals or social relationships.

Sellers and Buyers in the Masaka Market of Nasarawa State regularly use Pidgin and other local languages to communicate effectively¹¹. The study found that code-switching is not only common but also socially useful, as it helps to bridge communication gaps among speakers of different mother tongues. Similarly, the study on multilingualism in Saki (a border town in southwestern Nigeria), observed that despite the presence of multiple languages, Yoruba continues to play a dominant role in social and economic life¹². This shows that local languages can remain strong even in multilingual environments where other languages are present.

Language use is also influenced by attitudes and perceptions. Research was conducted among adolescents in Oyo State and found that while English is often associated with education and prestige, Yoruba remains a valued language of identity and everyday interaction¹³. This suggests that many Nigerians, especially the younger generation, navigate between traditional and modern

identities through language choice. Similarly, the sociolinguistic patterns of business names in Lagos and found that business owners often use English or mix it with Yoruba to project prestige, professionalism, or cultural identity¹⁴. These findings demonstrate how social factors and language attitudes shape people's linguistic behaviour in both formal and informal economic settings.

Language and society are also linked through issues of power and policy. In Nigeria, English is regarded as the official language and is used in education, government, and business. However, the dominance of English in formal domains has limited the development and use of indigenous languages, even though they play vital roles in everyday communication⁶. This imbalance reflects broader social inequalities, where access to English often determines access to education, employment, and social mobility.

Sociolinguistic studies have also shown that language is constantly changing as society changes. Urbanization, migration, education, and digital communication have all influenced how Nigerians use language today. Many people mix English, Yoruba, and Pidgin in daily speech, creating hybrid forms of communication that reflect both local and global influences⁵.

In summary, language and society are deeply connected. The way people use language reflects their social realities, cultural values, and group identities. In market settings such as those in Ado Ekiti, language choice, switching, and mixing are not random, they are socially meaningful acts that help people build relationships, negotiate meaning, and succeed in business. Studying these language practices therefore provides valuable insight into how social life operates in a multilingual Nigerian context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the important role markets play in reflecting community language use, there is limited research that focuses specifically on how language is used in Ado Ekiti markets. Previous sociolinguistic studies in Nigeria have examined language use in classrooms, media, and urban markets like Lagos and Ibadan^{8,10}. Yet, smaller towns such as Ado Ekiti, where traditional and modern communication patterns coexist, have received little attention.

Furthermore, there is insufficient understanding of how social variables such as gender influence language use in these informal settings. For instance, male and female sellers may use language differently to attract buyers, negotiate prices, or establish authority. These gendered linguistic patterns, though common, are often overlooked in sociolinguistic analysis.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the language practices of stakeholders in selected markets in Ado Ekiti. It aims to identify the types of language used, the social meanings attached to them, and how gender influences these linguistic choices. The research also seeks to reveal how multilingual communication functions as both a social and economic strategy in the marketplace.

By examining these issues, the study intends to fill the existing gap in Nigerian sociolinguistic literature and contribute to a better understanding of how language operates as a tool of identity, interaction, and social cohesion in everyday market life.

Language is one of the most powerful tools humans use to express ideas, build relationships, and maintain social order. In multilingual societies like Nigeria, people constantly navigate between different languages such as English, Yoruba, and Pidgin to achieve effective communication in various social settings. The market, as a central meeting point for people of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, serves as one of the richest sites for studying language use in everyday interaction.

In Ado Ekiti, market communication goes beyond the exchange of goods; it involves social negotiation, identity expression, and the display of cultural values. Sellers and buyers employ different language strategies such as code-switching, code-mixing, borrowing, and use of local expressions to build trust, persuade buyers, and maintain social harmony. However, these language practices are not uniform. They vary depending on social factors such as gender, age, and social status.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine language use in selected markets in Ado-Ekiti. The objectives are to:

- i. identify the languages used by market stakeholders in the selected markets;
- ii. outline the language strategies applied by stakeholders in the selected markets, and
- iii. describe the socio-cultural factors that influence language use in the selected markets.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the languages used by stakeholders in the selected markets?
- ii. What are the language strategies used by the stakeholders in the selected markets?
- iii. What are the socio-cultural factors that influence language use in the selected markets?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to the investigation of language practices among sellers and buyers in selected markets within Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. It focused specifically on how language is used for communication in the market setting and how gender influences these language practices. The study examined key sociolinguistic features such as code-switching, code-mixing, choice of language, forms of address, and speech acts used by male and female sellers during market interactions.

The research did not cover all markets in Ado Ekiti but focused on a few selected major markets that represent the linguistic diversity and social dynamics of the area, such as Oja Oba Market, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. These markets were chosen because they attract people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making them ideal for sociolinguistic observation.

The study was also limited to face-to-face communication between sellers and buyers during normal business activities. It did not extend to written forms of communication such as signboards, rice tags, or social media marketing. The analysis was based on data collected through observation, interviews, and recorded conversations among sellers and buyers within the chosen markets.

Geographically, the study is confined to Ado Ekiti, which serves as the capital of Ekiti State and a major commercial hub in southwestern Nigeria. The findings, therefore, may not be generalized to all markets in Nigeria but will provide insight into language use and gendered communication patterns in similar Yoruba-speaking market settings.

Conceptually, the study focuses on the sociolinguistic relationship between language and gender in a multilingual environment. It does not attempt to examine economic, political, or psychological aspects of market interactions except as they relate to linguistic behavior.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to a deeper understanding of how language functions in everyday social and economic interactions, particularly in the context of Nigerian markets. By focusing on Ado Ekiti, the research provides new insights into how people use language as a tool for communication, identity, and social connection in a multilingual environment.

First, the study is academically significant because it adds to the growing body of knowledge in sociolinguistics, especially in the area of language and gender. Many existing studies in Nigeria have focused on language use in schools, media, and formal institutions, but very few have examined informal market settings where trade, culture, and gender relations shape communication. This study therefore fills an important gap by showing how linguistic choices reflect gender roles and social hierarchies in everyday speech.

Second, the study is important for understanding language use in multilingual societies. In Ado Ekiti markets, sellers and buyers communicate across different languages, mainly Yoruba, English, and Pidgin. By analyzing these interactions, the study provides valuable information about how people manage multilingual communication to achieve understanding, cooperation, and success in business transactions.

Third, the findings of this study have practical value for educators, sociolinguists, and policymakers. For educators, it offers real-life examples of how language is used in natural contexts, which can be useful for teaching sociolinguistic concepts. For sociolinguists, it provides data that can help explain how gender influences communication in Nigeria's informal economy. For policymakers and language planners, the study highlights the importance of recognizing indigenous languages like Yoruba in promoting social cohesion and economic participation.

Finally, the study will serve as a reference material for future researchers interested in sociolinguistic studies, especially those dealing with language, gender, and market communication in Nigeria and other African contexts. It will also encourage further research into how social factors continue to shape language use in diverse and evolving societies.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

In the course of this research, there were some limitations, which should be mentioned.

To begin with, the study was limited to three markets in Ado-Ekiti, namely Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. Although these markets are central and highly active, it was discovered that they might not represent all the linguistic practices of other small Yoruba speaking communities in Ekiti State. The results, thus, can be interpreted primarily in the setting of these chosen markets. Qualitative data collection methods were adopted, which included interviews and observations. Though these approaches provided us with the possibility to gather rich and detailed experiences, it was also observed that some sellers and buyers were either hesitant to speak freely or provided the answers that appeared to be socially acceptable but not very honest. This could have restricted the quality of some of the information provided.

There were certain language and translation issues because participants frequently switched between Yoruba and Pidgin English when talking, and the researcher could not always manage to record the precise cultural connotations of some Yoruba proverbs, idioms, and phrases. The noise in the crowded marketplace affected the clarity of the translation of the audio recording, but this was not a problem to the totality of the research findings.

Despite these setbacks, it is assumed that this research has presented some valuable information on language use in Ado-Ekiti markets, and it forms a baseline that other researchers can use in the future.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

Bargaining

Bargaining refers to the interactive process of negotiating prices and reaching an agreement between sellers and buyers. In this study, bargaining is viewed as a major communicative event where participants use various linguistic and non-linguistic strategies such as repetition, politeness, humor, and persuasion to achieve their goals.

Code-Switching

Code-switching is the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a single conversation or speech event³. In this research, code-switching refers to the way sellers and buyers in Ado Ekiti markets shift between Yoruba, English, and Pidgin to communicate effectively and achieve specific social or business goals.

Code-Mixing

Code-mixing refers to the blending of elements from two or more languages within a single sentence or phrase. It differs from code-switching in that it often occurs within the same grammatical structure. In this study, code-mixing is observed when speakers combine Yoruba and English expressions in one utterance, such as “E wa buy fresh tomatoes o, very cheap!”

Communicative Competence

Communicative competence is the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social situations. It involves knowing not only the grammatical rules but also when, how, and to whom to speak. In Ado Ekiti markets, sellers demonstrate communicative competence through politeness, greetings, and tone adjustment.

Contextual Cues

Contextual cues are verbal and non-verbal signals that guide the interpretation of meaning in communication. In the market setting, cues such as tone of voice, gestures, code choice, and facial expressions help speakers convey intention and emotion effectively.

Cultural Context

The cultural context, in this respect, entails beliefs, values, norms, and practices that support the social environment in which a people happen to be. The cultural contexts in this study are the cultural attitudes such as the traditional gender roles in the Yoruba society and certain cultural norms, which also equally dictate linguistic practices in the market places. The importance of appreciating such cultural contexts is significant in the realization of the intersection between language and gender in Ado-Ekiti markets because the use of language by men and women in Ado-Ekiti markets occurs along definite boundaries of cultural expectations.

Flattery and Praise

Flattery and praise are verbal strategies used to express admiration or respect toward buyers or fellow sellers. In this study, they are seen as persuasive tools that build rapport, maintain harmony, and influence buying decisions.

Example: “*Beautiful sister!*” “*Chairman*”

Interactional Sociolinguistics

Interactional Sociolinguistics is a theoretical approach developed that focused on how meaning were created and interpreted through context, tone, gestures, and cultural knowledge. It provides the framework for this study by explaining how sellers and buyers use contextual cues to achieve understanding and cooperation.

Gender

Gender refers to the social and cultural roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male or female in a particular society¹⁶. In this study, gender is viewed as a social factor that influences how men and women use language in market interactions. for example, in their tone, politeness, and choice of words.

Gendered Language

Gendered language refers to the distinct ways men and women use language in expressing themselves, shaped by social roles, cultural expectations, and communicative norms.

In this study, gendered language captures the linguistic differences observed between male and female sellers and buyers in the selected markets of Ado Ekiti.

For instance, female sellers often employ polite forms, flattery, and expressive tones to persuade or maintain harmony, while male sellers tend to use assertive or direct speech to establish authority and confidence during bargaining.

These linguistic variations highlight how gender identity and social perception influence speech patterns, politeness choices, and negotiation styles in market interactions.

Haggling

Haggling, also known as bargaining refers to the process of negotiating prices between buyers and sellers in market settings. It is not merely an economic activity but also a complex communicative event where participants use language strategically to achieve social and transactional goals. In multilingual societies like Nigeria, haggling provides a rich context for exploring how language serves persuasive, relational, and identity-related functions ^{22,23}.

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Language Practices and Use

Language practices refer to the actual ways people use language in their daily interactions. It includes the choice of language, the way people mix or switch between languages, and how they use speech to achieve communication goals¹. In this study, the term refers to how sellers and buyers use Yoruba, English, and Pidgin in the market setting. Language use refers to the practical application of language in daily communication. In this study, it covers how market participants employ different languages and styles for negotiation, persuasion, and relationship building within Ado Ekiti markets.

Language Choice

Language choice is the selection of a particular language or dialect in communication. In this study, it refers to the decision by sellers or buyers to use Yoruba, English, or Pidgin English based on factors such as the participant's background, relationship, or purpose of the conversation.

Language Strategies

Language strategies are the intentional ways in which speakers use language to accomplish communicative or social goals. In the selected markets, these include bargaining tactics, humor, greetings, repetition, code-switching, and politeness aimed at achieving effective transactions.

Level of Education

Level of education refers to the formal academic qualification or schooling attained by market participants. It influences linguistic choices, fluency, and the preference for using English or Yoruba in market interactions.

Market Discourse

Market discourse refers to the language used in the marketplace for economic and social interaction. It includes the speech patterns, greetings, persuasive language, and negotiation strategies employed

by sellers and buyers. In this study, market discourse focuses on how language is used for buying and selling, maintaining relationships, and expressing identity in Ado Ekiti markets.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism is the ability of individuals or communities to use more than one language in communication. In the context of this study, it refers to the coexistence and interaction of Yoruba, English, and Pidgin in market conversations.

Oja (Market)

Oja means a market in Yoruba. Yoruba market places like those located in Ado-Ekiti are places of trade, social scene and information exchange. These are venues of gender performance and bargaining by means of language. They play a significant role in the context of examining the way in which the gendered discursive practices of the sellers and buyers are informed in the process of examining the marketplace as a particular social and economic space.

Prestige Language

Prestige language refers to a language or variety regarded as socially superior or associated with education and status. In the context of this study, English functions as a prestige language in Ado Ekiti markets, often used by educated sellers or buyers to display refinement and class distinction.

Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. It examines how social factors such as gender, age, occupation, class, and culture influence the way people use language in different contexts⁴. In this study, sociolinguistics focuses on how sellers and buyers in Ado Ekiti markets use language and how gender affects these language practices.

Social Class

Social class denotes the social and economic ranking of individuals within a community. It affects linguistic behavior, particularly the choice between Yoruba, English, or Pidgin English, as higher-class speakers may prefer prestige forms to assert status.

Sociocultural Factors

Sociocultural factors are the social and cultural influences that shape language use. In this study, they include gender, age, social class, and educational background, which determine how individuals communicate in the marketplace.

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Endnotes

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

Language is one of the most important aspects of human life and social existence. It is not only a tool for communication but also a means through which people express identity, culture, and belonging. Every human society depends on language to organize relationships, convey ideas, and maintain social order. The study of the relationship between language and society is known as sociolinguistics, which examines how social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and occupation influence the way people use language in different contexts.

In any community, people do not speak in the same way all the time. The way an individual speaks often changes depending on where they are, who they are talking to, and what they are talking about. For instance, a teacher may use formal English in the classroom but switch to Yoruba or Pidgin when speaking casually at home or in the market. These choices reflect the speaker's awareness of social relationships, respect, and audience expectations. It also serves as a symbol of identity and group membership. The choice of language can show where a person comes from, their level of education, or their social class. In Yoruba-speaking communities such as Ado Ekiti, speaking Yoruba in public spaces often reflects cultural pride and solidarity, while switching to English may indicate education, modernity, or prestige. In multilingual settings, people frequently switch between languages a phenomenon known as code-switching or code-mixing to suit particular communicative goals or social relationships.

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Gendered language practices bears the cultural assumptions, values and power structures of the people who use it. These patterns are not always noticeable to native speakers, yet they influence how people think about gender roles and who should be allowed to hold some positions.

Gendered communication within the market is highly significant in the process of defining transaction relation, power relation and social identity; in which they are usually colorful and high power locus of social interaction. This approach has been refuted by the sociolinguists who opine that men and women do not speak alike and their use of language could be as a result of being socialized to talk and act this way and it would determine how each gender would be perceived and react in situation of a conversation¹. Such differences can even be escalated within the market scenario where negotiation is a prerequisite and conviction and assertion takes place to sustain in the competitive economic world.

The cultural environment of the Yoruba dominated Ado-Ekiti markets presents a complex scenario as far as languages are concerned as there will be interaction between English, Yoruba and the Pidgin. More suitable is the fact that gender participation in the Yoruba community would vary and would traditionally be unique and could be reified in the framing of utterances, appellations, courtesy actions as well as negotiation actions. It has been found out that women use more speech types, which relate to politeness and solidarity in the whole. Men are however more aggressive and dominant in the gender relations². This has on more occasions been transferred to the marketplace arena where the female sellers may be influenced to either play the submissive or commanding role to attract and maintain the market. Alternatively, men sellers were also permitted to use competitive language or dominating language.

Additionally, the space is not an impartial arena of discussion; the market is designed by the power relationships, which, nevertheless, are economic and symbolic at the same time. Several of the available literatures point out that not all varieties of languages and styles are equally more legitimate and powerful than others in multilingual and socio-economically stratified societies such

as the markets of Ado- Ekiti, where code switching (between Yoruba and English) assumes a determining factor in the achievements with gender being another complicating factor³.

This study will be done to examine how the male and female sellers and buyers use the language in doing their dealings in three markets in Ado-Ekiti and how the language variations can be used to embrace the larger gender codes in the society besides how the linguistic variations influence the economic exchange. The research will also help in the arguments when it comes to gender, language and money behavior in African cities where informal economies attributed to them are linguistically not only diverse in a broad way but also socially important.

This chapter reviews concepts and ideas that are central to this research. It discusses the nature of language, sociolinguistics, and how language operates in society, especially in market settings. The chapter also explains key ideas such as language choice, code-switching, gender and language use, and communication strategies. The review provides the theoretical and conceptual background for understanding how people in Ado Ekiti markets use language in daily interactions.

2.1.1 Concept of Language

Language is one of the most important features that distinguish humans from other creatures. It is a system of communication made up of sounds, symbols, and rules used by people to share ideas, express emotions, and build relationships. Language allows people to transmit culture and values from one generation to another.

Scholars have defined language in different ways. According to Edward Sapir, language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols. This shows that language is not just a tool for communication but also a social product created and maintained by members of a community.

In every society, language performs many functions. It is used to greet, persuade, teach, joke, and show respect. In market environments, language plays a key role in bargaining, advertising goods,

maintaining relationships, and creating trust between sellers and buyers. Therefore, language is not only a communication tool but also a social bond that connects people.

2.1.2 Concept of Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society. It explores how social factors such as gender, class, education, and age influence the way people speak and the choices they make when communicating. Sociolinguistics shows that language varies according to context, situation, and participants. Scholars such as John Gumperz, Dell Hymes, and William Labov, who believed that to understand language properly, one must also study the social situations where it is used, developed the field. Sociolinguistics therefore looks at how people use language in real-life situations, such as in schools, workplaces, and marketplaces.

This study adopts the sociolinguistic perspective because markets are social spaces where people from different backgrounds interact daily. Understanding the language used in such settings helps to show how social meanings, relationships, and identities are created through communication.

2.1.3 Language and Society

Language and society are closely connected. No society can exist without language, and no language can exist without people who use it. Language reflects the values, culture, and identity of the people who speak it.

In many communities, including Ado Ekiti, the way people speak reflects their social status, occupation, and level of education. For example, sellers may switch between Yoruba, English, and Pidgin depending on the buyers they are addressing. This shows how language helps people to adjust to social situations and build relationships. Language also helps in maintaining social order. Through greetings, respect forms, and politeness strategies, people show hierarchy and maintain harmony. In the market, this can be seen when sellers use honorifics, terms of endearment, or playful banter to appeal to buyers.

2.1.4 Language Use in Market Contexts

Markets are among the most linguistically rich environments in any community. They are places where people of different ages, backgrounds, and social classes meet and interact daily. The market

therefore serves as a microcosm of society, reflecting its linguistic diversity and social norms. In Ado Ekiti, sellers and buyers use different languages such as Yoruba, English, and Pidgin, depending on the situation. Yoruba is often used because it is the dominant language of the area and helps to create a sense of belonging. English, on the other hand, may be used to show prestige or education, while Pidgin serves as a language of solidarity, especially among people of lower socioeconomic class or between strangers who do not share the same mother tongue.

The way sellers use language in the market is not random. It is shaped by their goal of selling goods, building relationships, and keeping buyers. Therefore, language use in markets is both communicative and strategic.

2.1.4.1 Language Choice and Code-Switching

Language choice refers to the decision speakers make about which language to use in a particular situation. In multilingual communities like Ado Ekiti, people often choose between Yoruba, English, and Pidgin depending on who they are speaking to and what they want to achieve.

Code-switching happens when speakers alternate between two or more languages in a conversation. This is a common feature of market interactions. A trader may greet a buyer in Yoruba, switch to English when discussing price, and end with a Pidgin expression to create humor. This helps the trader to appear friendly, respectful, and persuasive at the same time.

Code-switching serves several functions it can mark identity, signal group membership, express emotions, or make speech more effective. It also helps sellers manage communication barriers, especially when buyers come from different linguistic backgrounds.

2.1.4.2 Gender and Language Use

Gender is one of the most important sociocultural factors that influence language use. Men and women often use language differently based on social expectations and cultural norms. Women, for instance, are usually expected to speak more politely and use forms of address that show respect or warmth. Men, on the other hand, may prefer more direct and assertive forms of expression.

In the markets of Ado Ekiti, gender influenced how sellers interacted with buyers. Female sellers often used more greetings, compliments, and emotional appeals to attract and retain buyers. Male

sellers tended to use humor, confidence, or playful banter. These differences reflected broader social expectations about femininity and masculinity in Yoruba society.

Gender differences in language also relate to power and social roles. Since many women in Ado Ekiti markets are self-employed sellers, language becomes a tool of empowerment and negotiation. Through effective language use, they are able to create friendly business environments and sustain economic independence.

2.1.4.3 Communication Strategies in Market Interaction

Communication strategies are the methods people use to achieve successful communication. In markets, these include greeting, praise, humor, repetition, persuasion, storytelling, and the use of proverbs or traditional expressions.

Sellers in Ado Ekiti markets often began interactions with greetings and blessings to create goodwill. They also used praise or flattery to make buyers feel valued. Humor and playful talk were used to ease tension during bargaining and to create a friendly atmosphere. Repetition and emphasis helped to reinforce key points or convince hesitant buyers.

These strategies are not random; they are part of the cultural knowledge shared by members of the community. They help to maintain smooth interactions, build trust, and ensure continued patronage. The effective use of communication strategies also shows how market interactions serve both economic and social functions.

2.1.5 Language Practices

Language practice is central in markets since it creates trust, assists in settling any disagreement between sellers and their buyers and the building of friendships. The linguistic landscape of Ado-Ekiti market in the Southwestern section of Nigeria that is oriented on the commercialization of urbanity provides insight into the phenomenon because different languages (Yoruba, Pidgin and English) can be applied demonstrating how the local culture responds to the pressure of the society¹⁶. The reference offered is that of using the female sellers who commonly deploy in creating a rapport with the clientele through the utilization of stories and proverbs, but the male trader would resort to straight messages and efficiency¹⁷.

The language used in the Ado-Ekiti market is one of the key instruments of the transaction along with the preservation of the relationships. It implies that the current literature review covers such issues as greetings, bargaining, forms of addresses, code-switching, and technologies of advertisements, which have been applied in the given context. The review offers contemporary knowledge of such practices based on the research that was carried out in 2015 to the current date¹⁷. The issue of gender employments of language especially in market places has been a recent worry in the circles of academia. Such investigations involving sellers in Southwestern Nigeria generated gendered patterns in a abrupt way: the female sellers were affiliative in terms of the number of affiliative speech (involving compliments and anecdotes associated with a relational purpose), whereas the male sellers were transactional¹⁸. The similar observations were made when describing the gendered language in the public space, where it was expressed that the gendered language was subject to the fact that men are more domineering in the process of negotiating as compared to other women; the female language is symbolized by the language of compliance⁴.

According to the language practice studies performed in market places, adaption is important in relation to the cultural and language setting. The application of code-switching in the Nigerian markets which was captured in the questionnaires shows that local languages utilized by the sellers is common and blends with the Pidgin and English language in their effort to acclimatize the heterogeneous buyers¹⁴. Gender difference was also noted in the research where it was established that women exploit the code switching as a relationship strategy more than men do. Though the research study on Ado-Ekiti is limited, it has been able to support the fact that linguistic diversity is an important aspect; proverbs and idiomatic expressions are the most important pointers in building up trust (female sellers) and power (male sellers)¹⁹.

2.1.5.1 Greetings in the Marketplace

When starting communication in the Ado-Ekiti market place, the mechanism of greetings could not be avoided and thus defines the pattern of further communication. This exchange of words was even a typical phrase that is verbally exchanged between the sellers not merely, because it is a polite verbal exchange, but also as a methodological strategy, that is meant to attract potential

buyers. On the part of the sellers (Hawkers, e.g.), greetings like "E kaa ro ooo" (Good morning), or "Se aje nwa"/"Se aje nwogba" (How is business?) are applied as a means of attracting passers-by that create a friendly environment coupled with readiness to do business. The behavior can be connected with the Yoruba social order in which the concepts of respect and community have been promoted in the culture. Social-pragmatic interpretation of hawking in Ado-Ekiti portrays the reality that this genre of greeting forms part of the instruments that sellers use in attracting the attention of individuals to the product they are hawking²⁰.

2.1.5.2 Bargaining Strategies

The bargaining in Ado-Ekiti market is viewed as an acceptable norm that has standard modes of offering and counter offering between the individual buyers and the sellers. This is the successful execution of the linguistic competence and educated knowledge of the existing cultural norms²¹. In majority of the cases, sellers start this process by quoting a price, which was at the second tier of the assumed spectrum that was based on the assumption of negotiating the progression. Bidders, therefore, offer low opening bids, and they do it with a purpose of entering into a contract of satisfactory quality according to buyers and sellers. In this phase, language is prominent in the center because actors enter the scene with other flattery techniques, humour and notion of justice in controlling what is happening. The best example is the fact that the seller adopted the locution, "Ó dá a lénu ó dùn létè" (It is tasty in the mouth) in order to underscore the quality of the product and hence justify the price being offered and at the same time appealing to the buyer.

The marketplace is a theater of economic activity in which prices are actively constructed in a process that is much more complex than mere bargaining. It is a multi-dimensional sociolinguistics act within the vibrant markets of Ado-Ekiti like Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. A ritualized dance of offer and counteroffer incorporates economic calculation with cultural finesse, psychological acumen and performed identity. The bargaining in this case is not a confrontation between the parties but a socially approved game with unwritten rules. The end is not only to get a good price but also to reach a compromise that is acceptable to all parties and does not harm social relations or the dignity of everyone involved. The tactics of sellers and buyers are highly

gendered, culturally coded, and display a high level of awareness of human interaction, and the marketplace is a living laboratory to study pragmatic communication and economic anthropology. The basis of any bargaining experience is the greeting ritual, which sets the social structure of the subsequent negotiation. This is done by a cautious use of honorifics, kinship terms and respectful words that place the interaction in a pseudo-familial setting. This is the first and most important strategy, the first stage, aimed at establishing a rapport and a feeling of obligation. A buyer who is called by a family name is indirectly persuaded to pay the same respect in the negotiation. This step can also be used to quickly judge the buyer, as the trader can look at the dress, speech and demeanor of the buyer to determine the socio-economic status, level of bargaining experience and mood. The trader is informed by this diagnosis about the opening price, which is a strategic anchor, but not a fixed price. The buyer at the same time evaluates the stall, the quality of the product and the attitude of the trader to decide how to bargain. This two-way, unspoken calculation is the precondition of the verbal exchange that follows.

The bargaining process itself is a well-coordinated dance of speech acts in which the price quoted can be the most insignificant part of the communication. The actual negotiation takes place in the form of a variety of linguistic and paralinguistic strategies. A plea to sympathy and commonality is a standard tactic of sellers, particularly women. That is how to explain about things or personal circumstances such as it is more expensive to travel or family commitments. It is a femininity-based performance, founded on performances of nurturance and relationality, which moralizes the transaction by finding the desired price in economic necessity coupled with social support. This tactic usually goes hand in hand with compliments and flattery to raise the self-image of the buyer and make him feel important and appreciated to be more willing to compromise.

Male sellers often use the tactics that enact scripts of masculinity through power, reasonableness, and assertiveness. Their strategy is less based on personal narrative than on appeals to objective facts and quality. They also focus on the value of products as inherent and use proverbs to give their stand a traditional wisdom. The other popular masculine appeal is scarcity appeals that generate a sense of urgency. Male sellers are more likely to make direct and rational refusals when

the bid is low, and to frame the refusal as good business rather than an obstinacy of their own, and they do their bit as rational suppliers.

The strategies of buyers represent an inverted reflection of trader strategies. The other most popular type of opening is pretending a small lack of interest or talking about some non-existent disadvantages to reduce the perceived value and then make prices. Counter-offers tend to be much lower than asking price to expand the bargaining zone. The buyers can use the relational capital to remind the sellers of the relationship that exists and can say that they are regular buyers or have low budgets to require deep discounts. The negotiation is carried out by a series of offers and counter-offers; every concession is performed in a slow and performative way. Sellers could breathe deeply and then lower prices a little with expressions that strengthen individual relationships and calculated economic actions. Humor is often used as a tactic to take the edge off and keep the air friendly.

The end of bargaining is ritualized as much as its start. Successful negotiations typically result in a collaborative act of fulfillment and not in exchanges. When sellers accept prices, they usually bless them, and buyers may say thanks and return later, thereby reinforcing social relationships that have been put to the test but have been made stronger by economic exchange. Even unsuccessful negotiations that leave buyers walking away are usually handled in a polite manner so that relationships are not spoiled in future dealings. This highlights the importance of the main objective not only to individual sales but also to the continuation of commercial relationships in the community.

Simply put, bargaining in Ado-Ekiti marketplace is the art of masterful communication and social intelligence. It is a unity process, in which economic reason is not able to separate cultural norms and psychological intuition. The strategies of sympathetic stories, authoritative rationality, or relational appeals are performative actions that create gendered and cultural identities in the present moment. The market is a platform through which community values; respect and interdependence with each other are continually played out via the seemingly basic process of price agreement. It shows how the workings of traditional commerce are not a cold, impersonal mechanism but a very

human, social and cultural institution. It is a highly prized art to learn this complicated dance, and it is a measure of a high level of material worth and human identification.

2.1.5.3 Forms of Address and Politeness

The use of appropriate forms of address is essential in maintaining politeness and respect during marketplace interactions²². Terms such as "sister," "babe," and "ma" are commonly used to address buyers, fostering a sense of familiarity and goodwill. The term address also may be applied to disclose the social relationship between the interlocutors. For instance, addressing a buyer as "sister" may create an informal and friendly atmosphere, while "ma" conveys a higher level of respect and formality. A phenomenological analysis of the language of the market would observe that such address forms can be used in establishing a rapport as well as in transacting business¹⁷.

2.1.5.4 Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

The language spoken within the Ado-Ekiti marketplace is the code-switching and code-mixing which is taken into consideration because the society is a multilingual society. The members frequently interchange between the Yoruba, Pidgin, and English to adapt to the interlocutors, express their unity or fulfill some communicative needs. To illustrate, a vendor might speak Yoruba to provide a cultural point of contact between him and a buyer but then switch to English or Pidgin when negotiating the price or any other facts about the product ^{8,14}. It has worked well because most players in the market can effectively utilize language usage in a contextual way, which would ensure communication between them is enhanced. The research has established that the practices have been found to be effective in regulating the social interaction and effective communication in the marketplace.

The marketplace is a dynamic linguistic environment in which the strategies of communication change based on a variety of social, economic, and cultural needs. The language of the busy markets in Ado-Ekiti is not fixed but embraces fluidity through code-switching and code-mixing. They are not just linguistic interactions but a bargaining tool that sellers and buyers employ to negotiate within the multi-layered social systems in order to contact and to transact economic activities. Code-switching can be defined as the process of switching between languages in a

discourse, whereas code-mixing can be defined as the process of mixing linguistic elements of different languages in one utterance. They combine to create an elaborate communicative repertoire that is indicative of the multilingual marketplace and its actors.

Ado-Ekiti markets linguistic ecology can be defined as the presence of Yoruba, Pidgin, and English languages that have multiple functions and convey certain social meanings. Yoruba is a culturally authentic and respectful language with good social relations and traditional expression. A nonstandard lingua franca, Pidgin is an egalitarian and informal lingua franca that crosses both ethnic and social boundaries. English is a field of courtesy and status, which is traditionally linked to education, power, and money. Buyers and sellers can easily switch between these languages and adjust the language they use to the needs of a particular interaction. This fluidity is not random but contains certain identifiable patterns, which are related to the perceived social status of the interlocutor, age, ethnicity, and the context of the transaction in question.

Strategic code-switching has a variety of functions in the market. The negotiation of social relations and power relations is one of the main functions. When a trader addresses an old buyer in Yoruba with honorifics and respectful pronouns, he or she is aware of the age and status of the buyer and respects the cultural norms of respect to the elderly. On the other hand, when changing to the Pidgin with a peer or a younger buyer, one feels like a comrade and the social distance can be minimized, leading to a more casual bargaining atmosphere. English can be used to appeal to authority or expertise, especially in speaking about the technical side of products or quality. Linguistic flexibility allows the participants to take on different social roles, and to switch between being respectful juniors, friendly equals, or knowledgeable experts depending on the situation.

Code-mixing is another form of linguistic complexity, in which components of other languages are mixed together in individual utterances. It is generally common when speakers want to convey ideas that are not directly translated in a particular language or when the speaker wants to convey sensitive meanings that are not limited by language. A trader can use English words to explain some objects or actions and integrate them into Yoruba frameworks of grammar to create a hybrid phrase that can effectively provide the correct information. Pidgin is often used as a matrix

language whereby the words of both Yoruba and English have been integrated to form a rich language mix that represents the multicultural marketplace. The symptom is communicative competence and creativity, rather than the failure to use language.

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Code-switching and code-mixing are driven by more than social negotiation and include practical economic factors. Sellers are aware that linguistic flexibility can be used to improve their business performance by attracting different buyers. A trader that can switch languages is culturally competent and relatable, which can attract buyers of other ethnicities or social classes. The effective exchange of product features, prices and transactional information and the simplification of the bargaining process is also made possible through code-mixing and the reduction of misunderstandings. The practices also play face saving roles during negotiations, allowing parties to soften refusal, reduce conflict, or even imbue the process with a sense of humor by playing with language.

Code switching and code mixing skills are acquired and mastered through socialization in the market environment. Little sellers are taught not only the economic side of their business, but also the linguistic tricks that help them to communicate successfully. They also note how language choices are used by experienced sellers to fit various buyers and how language choices affect negotiation and relationship construction. This learning process is mostly implicit and is learned by being involved in the day-to-day activities in the market and not through instruction. Consequently, sellers gain an intuitive sense of what language or language mix to use in particular circumstances, clients, and transactional objectives.

The code-switching and code-mixing that is prevalent in the Ado-Ekiti markets can be attributed to the augmented sociolinguistic inclinations in the multilingual communities. Such practices challenge monolingual ideologies that characterize languages as discrete and bounded systems, but rather provide language as a dynamic resource speakers can draw on to achieve communicative goals. The market is a microcosm where the world forces represented by English and the local ones represented by Yoruba and the regional relationships represented by the Pidgin interplay. Such a convergence of languages forms a special communicative space that is both local and global. The issue of code-switching and code-mixing in Ado-Ekiti markets is an advanced language practice that helps actors to negotiate the multidimensional social and economic environment of marketplace relations. The practices enable building relationships, bargaining power, economic exchange,

and expressing culture in creative and adaptive language. The inter-language fluency stream is an indicator of the multilingual nature of the community and an expression of the communicative ability and strategic dexterity of speakers. Rather than indicating language confusion or deficiency, code-switching and code-mixing are instances of how human communication is resourceful and dynamic in a diverse range of social contexts. The marketplace is therefore a monument to the creative manner in which the users of language employ their linguistic resources to fulfill the requirements of their social and economic surroundings.

2.1.5.5 Advertising Techniques

During the advertisement of their products, the sellers in the Ado-Ekiti market place are adopting a combination of linguistic and rhetorical styles²³, some of which can be listed to include the use of catchy or memorable phrase, proverbs and hyperbolic statements of showing how good a given product is. For instance, a food vendor might proclaim, "Iyán re o" (This is pounded yam), "Agbado fe ru lai" (Corn is available/ready) implying superior quality to entice buyers. The forms of advertising like this greatly depend on the cultural background and could not exist without the common knowledge and values. Using the socio-pragmatic analysis of the language of hawking in Ado-Ekiti, it can be observed that besides being captivating, this type of method is entertaining and involves the potential buyers as well. Gender is one of the most important parameters that determine practices of language in market. It has been established that female sellers apply more politeness strategies than male sellers who are more inclined to being forthright and assertive through the use of language in the effort to foster the development of a cordial relationship with the buyers to increase the rate at which sales occur²⁴. These differences point out to the social expectations and norms within the society with regards to gender and communication generally. The study of politeness norms of Pidgin confirms the idea that women are more likely to be concerned about the wellbeing of relatives than men who could be most concerned about the efficiency of the move²⁵.

Marketplace in Ado-Ekiti is a very lively economic hub of trade, socialization and language is not only a medium of communication but also an aspect of gender relations and culture²⁶. The market place in Ado-Ekiti has been examined in the literature to determine gender differences in language use in terms of politeness strategies, bargaining language, and advertising language. The new understanding of the topic is given in the review as the conducted studies cover the period between 2015 and the present moment. Market strategies of politeness determine how buyers relate to their sellers in the market place. It has been determined by researchers that females are more likely to use politeness techniques in comparison with males and most frequently positive politeness strategies are applied in order to achieve some social contact. Conversely, men will be in the position to express themselves more concretely which they as a society are supposed to do as far as the masculinity factor is concerned²⁷.

One of the most repeated processes is evident in the Ado-Ekiti markets, which entails the utilization of gender as a major variable to decide which bargaining procedure would be employed. Women marketers should also employ persuasive words and emphasis quality of the goods that should make the buyers convinced. For instance, a hawker might advertise by stating, "*Fine yam*", "*Fine plantain*", "*Fresh bread*" to create a positive impression and entice buyers. This strategy implies that the language will be used tactically in the effort to shape the buyer perceptions and decisions. The Nigerian media uses the ad language which is predisposed to mirror and reify socially constructed gender stereotypes^{28,29}. In one of the research works that were carried out on the Nigerian newspapers and magazines, advertisements were discovered to be laden with gender stereotyping in the way the female bodies were more exposed compared to the male ones as they were mainly portrayed as beautiful people. This implies that there is a gender bias in ad text where in women are seen as sex objects hence the need to ensure greater gender-neutral portrayals in the media³⁰.

Code-switching or changing of languages or dialects is common in Ado-Ekiti markets and it performs many functions of communication. Even though not much literature review has been done on the issue of gender difference in code switching in relation to the context, it is found that the

strategy is being employed both by men and women sellers to meet the needs of various buyers, and to conduct business. Through language or dialect, social relationships and power can be displayed and a seller can adhere to change his or her speech to an extent he or she thinks is desired by the buyer¹⁴.

2.1.5.6 Gendered Language Practices in Other Nigerian Contexts

Although there is no research already conducted on the usage of gendered language in the markets of Ado-Ekiti, it would be useful to reflect on other research studies that have been done within Nigeria. The Ubang language group as an example is a very explicit linguistics phenomenon of a duality of men and women wording with the same meaning of the objects defined by men and women, which is specific to the enduring gendered linguistic order. This is not directly linked with the market place practices but this falls in the bigger picture of the gendered language use in Nigeria³.

These differences in language use in Ado-Ekiti markets in relation to gender are problematic in the sense that they involve politeness, bargaining strategies, language of advertisement and code switching. It is not only economic practice assisted by such language practices but the transmission and enforcement of gender norm in the society through such language practices. To realize the same, it is critical to understand the dynamics among language, gender and commerce in the Ado-Ekiti market place⁵.

Gendered language practices in the Nigerian market places are far more complicated than the case in Ado-Ekiti and is a complicated interplay of language practices and regional, ethnic and socio-economic factors. In the various market ecosystems of Nigeria, language serves as a key negotiating instrument not only in price negotiations, but also in social identity, relationship, and in power negotiations. They are taught routines of broader cultural practices and demands that are reflective and imposing of gendered roles and allows subversion and alteration. The gender enactment of language in these commercial spaces illustrates that economic practices are inseparably connected to social and cultural reproduction and provides an insight into the subtle mechanisms by which Nigerians negotiate multiple identities in search of livelihood and

community.

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The culture of Islam and strict gender segregation in Northern Nigerian markets, particularly Hausa-dominated ones such as the Kantin Kwari Market in Kano or the Monday Market in Maiduguri, dictates the language contact in these markets. The Hausa language in these environments tends to represent stratified social systems with men usually dominating wholesale and long-distance trade and women dominating retail and small-scale food markets. Direct, authoritative linguistic style is also typical of male sellers, who refer to one another using formal address terms and make religious references to gain credibility and trust. The women sellers who operate in smaller social frames are more likely to employ indirect persuasion tactics involving proverbs, jokes, and kinship language in building relational networks without infringing cultural decency. Hijabi veiling also makes it even harder to communicate linguistically, as women have to acquire an extra level of paralinguistic communication in the form of tone modulation, gesture, and eye contact to counteract the loss of facial expression.

Another trend of gendered linguistic practices can be seen in the South-Eastern markets, particularly the Onitsha Main Market or Ariaria International Market, which is Igbo speaking. The economic strength and language aggressiveness of Igbo women sellers are well known and, in many ways, do not fit the Western stereotypes of female speech as naturally submissive. Women in such environments often use high-tone, emotive language structures, tactical code-switching between Igbo and Pidgin and performative insults in their market rhetoric. This violent approach has multiple functions: it leaves a mark on the market, it announces the competitive advantage, and it satisfies a kind of femininity that values economic success and linguistic virtuosity. In these settings, male sellers tend to use more calculative, information-oriented language, with a greater emphasis on product specifications, market trends, and business logistics than the relational emphasis of the female-dominated trading industries.

The history of trade and cultural exchange between South-South Nigeria and the rest of the world can be observed through the maritime markets of Port Harcourt, e.g., the Oil Mill Market, or Calabar, e.g., the Marian Market. In this case, gendered language practices have borrowed the aspects of various ethnic groups such as Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, and Ogoni to form distinctive language

hybrids. In such markets, women are usually multilingual and can alternate between indigenous languages, Pidgin and English to suit different buyers. Their speech patterns are often focused on group values, group bargaining tactics, and low-key negotiation strategies that maintain relationships with buyers in a repeat transaction. Male merchants, especially those working in the profitable seafood and importation industries, tend to develop their own trade language and use more aggressive pricing terminology, as they are placed in larger economic systems.

Gendered language practices in Southwestern Yoruba markets outside Ado-Ekiti, including the Balogun Market in Lagos or the Bodija Market in Ibadan, are both consistent with traditional patterns and responsive to modernity in the city. Although the application of kinship terms and proverbs is still common, especially among the older sellers, younger market women are gradually incorporating traditional Yoruba polite address with modern business English and digital communication forms. The impact of Pentecostal Christianity has brought new religious linguistic features into the market relations, and both men and women have used prayer language and references to the Bible in their business language. In these urban contexts, male sellers are likely to acquire technical language concerning imports, electronics, and fashion trends, and apply their knowledge to demonstrate power in more competitive market places.

In all these contexts, there are trends, but there are also large differences. Market women are always more linguistically flexible and able to code-switch, and these are skills that they have acquired out of necessity because they have to work across a variety of buyer bases and supply chains. They are likely to be good at relationship language techniques that build buyer loyalty and community networks. Male sellers tend to speak more specialized, technical language, which is concerned with knowledge and experience within the market. But these generalizations obscure a great deal of individual variation and the ever-changing nature of practices as markets react to technological change, economic pressures and changing gender norms.

With the emergence of the digital marketplace by WhatsApp, Instagram, and Jumia, new conditions of gendered language practices have been introduced. Female sellers have quickly learned to apply

relational language techniques to the online setting through the use of emoticons, voice notes, and customized messages to preserve the interpersonal relationships that are essential to their business performance. Male sellers tend to be technical in product description, specifications, and formal business language in the online environment. However, the digital changes have also brought with them the possibilities of linguistic creativity and gender performance not just in the context of the traditional rules that enable sellers to produce market personalities that are often radically dissimilar to their offline linguistic practices.

All these gendered language practices in Nigerian market places are used together to demonstrate how economic spaces are spaces where social identities are negotiated and performed. It is through language that sellers find their way through intricate crossroads of gender, ethnicity, class, and religion in the quest to survive and thrive economically. The persistence of certain gendered patterns suggests the existence of well-established cultural norms and structural inequalities, and the flexibility and hybridity of such practices suggest the agency of market actors in the formation of their linguistic and economic worlds. When analyzing these dynamics, it is important to note the general trends that unite the practices of market language in Nigeria and the particular local contexts that assign them their meaning and purpose.

The analysis of such practices leads to more general insights into the functioning of language in postcolonial economies, where various linguistic codes and cultural traditions overlap in social contexts that rapidly transform. It demonstrates that gendered language strategies are not only the outcomes of the existing social order, but also the drivers of economic performance and social opportunities. With the marketplaces in Nigeria continuing to transform due to technological innovation, urbanization, and economic transformation, the gendered language practices in the marketplaces will certainly be changing, and thus, new forms of linguistic expression will emerge that will not only represent the changing gender dynamics but also the cultural values that remain constant.

2.1.6 Markets as Sociolinguistic Spaces

The markets can be spoken of as a specific sociolinguistic arena as the language is not used as the means of communication only, but also of identity and power.

The Dialectical differences and prevalence of Yoruba Markets bring up a microcosm of society and therefore, it is exposed to the abundant processes of the linguistic and cultural processes³¹.

Markets no longer represent economic transactions or economic arenas but are viewed as areas of activity in the sociolinguistic practice where language plays a central role in determining the social practices and identities in addition to the cultural practices. With the help of the theoretical concepts, empirical researches and cultural narratives, the market will be discussed as a complicate sociolinguistic place in the literature review to show to which extent the interaction between the language and the space of the market can be considered a complicated process¹⁰.

Markets do not only share economic space of economic activity but also share a social-linguistic space of sociolinguistic activity where language is a harsh form of communication, identification forming and also a form of interaction. Ado-Ekiti is the headquarters of Ekiti state located in the south western region of Nigeria and presents a good case study of such language and societal interaction that take place through the markets. This paper explores the multifaceted roles of language within Ado-Ekiti's marketplaces, drawing upon recent studies to illuminate how linguistic practices shape and are shaped by the social and cultural contexts of the market environment^{1,19}.

Markets are much more than economic centers where goods and services are traded. They are dynamic social linguistic spaces in which language, culture and social structure meet and engage each other in complex ways. In places like the Ado-Ekiti markets, all transactions go beyond the exchange of commodities to include the exchange of social identities, relationships and cultural norms. These busy venues are living laboratories where linguistic diversity, communicative practices, and social hierarchies are reenacted, put to the test, and confirmed repeatedly. The marketplace is a miniature society, in which the subtleties of human relationship are magnified and in which language is both a means of trade and a means of social integration.

Multilingualism and code-switching are sociolinguistic features of adaptive markets that mediate different interactions. Sellers and consumers easily switch languages and dialects, using Yoruba as the language of cultural solidarity, Pidgin as lingua franca between ethnic and social boundaries, and English to indicate education or formality. Linguistic flexibility of this nature is not incidental but strategic in that it allows participants to establish rapport, to assert authority or to show cultural competence. Our speech is a marker of respect, closeness or social status and every interaction is a mini-act of self. Language is a form of social capital in this context and the capacity to negotiate successfully and establish a sustainable economic relationship is greatly influenced by fluency in many codes.

Such spaces extend the communication beyond the verbal exchange to include a rich variety of paralinguistic and nonverbal communication. The tone of voice, volume, pacing, and intonation are meaningful and in many cases, interpretation of words is influenced more by the tone of voice than by the words. Confidence or urgency can be conveyed by using an aggressive voice, and confidentiality or comfort can be conveyed by using a soft voice. Body language, facial expressions and gestures also contribute to the richness of communication, as a smile can turn a bitter negotiation into a pleasant conversation and a wave of the hand can end a deal without uttering a single word. The corporeality of market communication, the closeness of speakers, the manipulation of objects, and the choreography of movement, form a multimodal discourse in which meaning is produced by the combination of several communicative modalities.

Language is always negotiated in social interactions in the market. Honorifics, kinship terms and polite formulations reinforce social structures, and the patterns of communication are age-dependent, gender-dependent, ethnicity-dependent, and socioeconomic status-dependent. The young sellers usually treat the elders with respect, use respectful pronouns, and do not confront them. Gender performances are articulated differently in terms of communicating with women in more relational language and men in more authoritative language. These patterns are not just a mirror of social realities but a productive and reproductive activity as members of social networks practice language that re-establishes their roles in the social network. The market is therefore a

place where social order is exhibited and produced in the daily conversation.

The time aspect of communication further complicates market communication. Relationships are either short-lived, transactional relationships or long-term, negotiation relationships. Buyers and sellers build up communicative pasts that influence their interactions, and mutual references and expectations make subsequent transactions easier. The pace of market communication changes with the time of the day, between the rush of the busy times and the slower pace of the slower times. The language also depends on the time and the greetings and questions depend on the time of the day and the urgency of the communication. The elasticity of this time allows the participants to move with the changing market conditions.

Markets as economic institutions provide the arena in which language is directly used to support commerce. The art of persuasion, bargaining and selling is perfected with practice and observation. To market their products, sellers create their own vocabularies to characterize their products using words that emphasize quality, rarity, or value. Consumers are trained to interpret such descriptions, to tell the difference between actual evaluations and persuasive overstatements. The language of pricing is a game in itself, and first, second and third offers, and final prices are not only concerned with economic values but also with communicative acts in a negotiated encounter. The ability to trade in the market is more about language skills than it is about business skills and economic success is directly related to good communication.

Besides playing an economic role, markets are also cultural reproduction and innovation places. Old sayings, folk wisdom, and jokes are spread like wildfire and relate modern communication to culture. New forms of language arise and are disseminated and creative expressions and new terms become popularized by their frequent use. The market becomes the store of cultural knowledge, the stories are told, the news is spread, and the values shared by the community are discussed. It is this aspect of culture that makes markets not only a relevant trading place but also a significant social institution that sustains the life of the community.

The patterns of communication are also affected by the geographical location of the markets as various regions adopt various communication methods. The tight corridors in the middle promote short and effective communication, whereas the less noisy areas on the periphery of the center permit more time and elaborate discussions and negotiations. The space is also a factor in the interaction between people, and this is where the language activities are bound to the space. This space language combination creates a very specific interesting communicative space that members are trained to competently maneuver through.

Markets are also learning environments where communicative competence is learned through participation. Beginners watch and copy the ways of their more experienced colleagues and learn the language and social conventions of the marketplace over time. Likewise, buyers become familiar with the norms of market interaction by practicing the interaction, and they become increasingly skilled negotiators and relationship builders with time. This socialization process is what guarantees the survival of the market culture, where knowledge is transmitted through practice and not through teaching. The market is therefore an informal school whereby sociolinguistic skills are learned and perfected.

Finally, markets are complicated sociolinguistic convergences of language, society and economy. Communicative practices are affected by cultural values, social organization, and economic needs in these domains. The multilingualism and nonverbal and tactical use of language that is so eminent in markets presupposes the adaptive ingenuity of mediators of different interactions. In their daily communicative interactions, market participants, in addition to exchanging economically, also build social relationships, negotiate identities as well as maintain cultural traditions. The sociolinguistic space of markets may be examined as a way of understanding how established language mediates human experience and how individual action is connected to larger social and economic systems.

2.1.6.1 Linguistic Diversity and Multilingualism

A rich tapestry of languages, reflecting the city's diverse ethnic composition, characterizes Ado-Ekiti's markets. Although the use of the Yoruba language is dominant, there are also other languages like the English language, Pidgin as well as the Hausa language, and this makes it easy to

communicate between the sellers and the buyers whose linguistic backgrounds are diverse. It is a multicultural setting, and the code-switching and code-mixing are quite helpful indeed to break the language barrier and achieve communication¹². As such, hawkers would use some Yoruba and English or Pidgin to attract more buyers and make the selling process more effective. Application of socio-pragmatic approach of hawking in Ado-Ekiti demonstrates that such are some of the linguistics gimmicks used by the sellers in persuading and retaining buyers.

Markets are included among cultural encounters with language being used as an exchange medium of economics and social display of sophistication. The primary markets in Ado-Ekiti comprise Oja Oba, Bisi Market and Oja Agric and they constitute a dynamic diversity linguistic landscape¹⁹. The Oja Oba and Bisi market are places of converging many different languages such as the Pidgin, English, Hausa and other minor dialects although the official language of the region is the Yoruba language. This multilingualism is not merely a communicative necessity; it is a strategic resource and an indicator of the city's evolving sociolinguistic landscape³³.

Multilingualism

Multilingualism refers to the ability of individuals or communities to use and interact through two or more languages in everyday communication¹⁰⁶. A sociolinguistic phenomenon reflects not only linguistic competence but also social adaptability, identity negotiation, and communicative versatility. In multilingual societies like Nigeria, language choice is rarely random; context, purpose, audience, and social relations shape it. Ado Ekiti, as the capital city of Ekiti State, provides a typical example of a multilingual setting where diverse linguistic repertoires intersect daily especially in public spaces such as markets.

In the context of the selected markets Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric multilingualism manifests in the simultaneous use of Ekiti Yoruba (the dominant indigenous dialect), English (the formal and prestige language), and Pidgin (the language of informality and solidarity). Sellers, buyers, and transporters move fluidly across these linguistic codes to achieve specific communicative goals. For instance, a trader may greet a buyer in Yoruba to establish familiarity, switch to Pidgin to bargain freely, and finally use English to signal politeness or status when

dealing with educated buyers.

Recent studies have emphasized that multilingualism in Nigeria is not a simple coexistence of languages but rather a strategic and adaptive linguistic practice. Speakers in Southwest Nigeria employ multilingualism as a means of social negotiation and inclusion, enabling them to navigate ethnic diversity and maintain interpersonal relationships¹⁰⁷. Similarly, It was by a scholar observed that market participants in Masaka, Nasarawa State, shift between languages to achieve bargaining success, using Pidgin to express solidarity and Yoruba or English to appeal to different social categories of buyers¹⁰⁸. These findings mirror the sociolinguistic realities of Ado Ekiti markets, where language alternation and flexibility play central roles in ensuring effective communication across social divides.

The Interactional Sociolinguistics theory provides a useful framework for understanding multilingualism in the marketplace. It suggests that meaning in interaction is co-constructed through linguistic and contextual cues, and speakers draw from their multilingual repertoires to align, persuade, or create social meaning. In Ado Ekiti markets, sellers often employ multilingual speech patterns not only to communicate but also to perform social roles such as being polite, humorous, authoritative, or deferential. For example, a trader may jokingly address a young buyer as “oga mi” (“my boss”) in Pidgin to flatter him, or switch to English expressions like “Madam, I’ll give you a good price” to show respect and sophistication. These speech choices are socially meaningful and help sustain buyer relations.

From a broader sociolinguistic view, multilingualism in Ado Ekiti markets is sustained by historical, educational, and economic factors. The spread of English through formal education and administration has positioned it as a language of prestige, while Yoruba remains the language of ethnic identity and solidarity. Pidgin, on the other hand, acts as a linguistic bridge that cuts across class and ethnic boundaries, fostering inclusivity among people of different educational backgrounds. This linguistic coexistence contributes to the communicative richness and flexibility of market interactions.

Multilingualism in Nigerian communities serves pragmatic functions such as politeness,

persuasion, and identity marking. In market contexts, it enables participants to adjust speech to the social profile of the interlocutor be it gender, age, or educational status¹⁰⁹. For instance, younger sellers often use more respectful Yoruba expressions when addressing older buyers, while educated sellers may incorporate English expressions to index refinement. These variations in speech behaviour illustrate how multilingualism reflects and reinforces sociocultural hierarchies within the market domain.

Moreover, multilingualism contributes to the economic vitality of the markets in Ado Ekiti. Sellers who are linguistically versatile can attract a wider range of buyers by accommodating different speech preferences. A multilingual trader is perceived as approachable and socially intelligent, thus fostering stronger buyer–seller relationships. As noted, multilingual competence is increasingly seen as a form of linguistic citizenship, allowing individuals to participate fully in the social and economic life of their communities¹¹⁰.

However, multilingualism in Ado Ekiti markets is not without challenges. It can sometimes lead to miscommunication, especially when interlocutors misinterpret contextual cues or perceive code choices as disrespectful. Nevertheless, these occasional breakdowns are often managed through humour, clarification, or pragmatic repair strategies further demonstrating the dynamic and adaptive nature of multilingual discourse.

In summary, multilingualism in the selected markets of Ado Ekiti is a complex sociolinguistic reality characterized by functional language distribution, social adaptability, and pragmatic negotiation. It is both a reflection of Nigeria’s linguistic diversity and a communicative resource that sustains everyday economic and social interactions. The phenomenon illustrates how language choice in marketplaces is not arbitrary but socially informed, contextually grounded, and functionally purposeful.

2.1.6.2 The Dominance of Yoruba and Dialectical Variation

The lingua franca in the markets of Ado-Ekiti is Yoruba and this gives the sellers and buyers a reference point in regard to culture. Yoruba, which is used in the markets, is, however, not monolithic. It consists of the standard Yoruba, the Ekiti and hybridized form of the language, which have developed through contact with the non-native speakers and also the urban slangs³⁴. The sellers to suit various buyers can adapt the deep dialectical form of the language. The given sort of dialectical adaptability improves the speech of people and expresses a dynamic sociolinguistic setting. The conversational use of Ekiti dialectal forms like “*şe o mó pé ojà yí lo da ju?*” (do you know this market is the best?) or “*ẹ wá ra a*” (come and buy) contribute authenticity and local pride and would help native buyers trust the indigenous trader²². The use of local idioms and speech registers is also used as a culture marker in that it allows locals to differentiate between locals, newcomers, or migrants.

Yoruba is the language of communication, economic intercourse and cultural manifestation in the Ado-Ekiti market places especially Oja Oba, Oja Bisi and Oja Agric. This is a unitary, but non-unitary, form of government that is marked by abundant dialectical diversities which express the socio-cultural and historical distinctiveness of the area. The Yoruba used in these markets has its own phonological, lexical, and syntactic peculiarities that are peculiar to the Ekiti dialect and that coexist with Standard Yoruba and other regional forms. It is a microcosm of heightened Yoruba cultural and linguistic action, a language space in which language represents an index of identity, social solidarity and economic presence.

Yoruba has been ruling these markets since it is the language of everyday life, business and socialization of majority of the population. It can be applied not only to the communication sphere, but also to the establishment of trust, price bargaining and enhancement of communal relations. Yoruba helps sellers and buyers alike to find their way through the mazes of the market, whether it is greeting rituals or bargaining tactics. The popularity of the language also makes economic participation affordable to local people, even those who do not speak English or Pidgin well. It is also in this way that the transactions take place and that the market transactions are less ambiguous

and thus more efficient and more social.

In spite of the general supremacy of Yoruba, dialectical diversity is a characteristic of the linguistic situation of the markets of Ado-Ekiti. The phonological peculiarities of the dialect, including pronunciation of some vowels and consonants, make Ekiti dialect different among other Yoruba dialects, including Ijebu, Oyo, or Ibadan. In the illustration, a word that would be pronounced with a tonal accent in Standard Yoruba can be pronounced with a more melodic accent in Ekiti. There are also lexical variations, and special terms and phrases peculiar to the area are frequently used in the marketplace. They are not exceptions in the language, but they are used as a signifier of local identity and cultural pride, in a manner that enables sellers and buyers to identify themselves as a member of the Ekiti people.

The contact of the Ekiti dialect and the Standard Yoruba in the market is dynamic and situational. Although the local dialect is used in most informal communication between locals, Standard Yoruba can be used in some cases where clarity or broader intelligibility is necessary, such as talking with sellers or buyers in other Yoruba-speaking areas. Such fluidity enables speakers to move between linguistic registers according to the requirements of the situation and reflects a high level of metalinguistic awareness. This skill of switching dialectical variants and Standard Yoruba is especially useful to sellers who want to attract a wide range of clients, as it allows them to establish a connection with local and non-local clients.

Further, the dominance of Yoruba and its dialects in the markets of Ado-Ekiti substantiates the importance of the language as the carrier of cultural information and activities. Ekiti dialect proverbs, idioms and oral traditions are a common feature of market discourse, and add richness to interactions and a sense of historical resonance and cultural depth. These aspects of speech not only underpin economic transactions, but also the social norms and values of respect to the aged, the importance of community, and the preservation of local heritage. This way language is used to preserve and pass cultural identity to the next generation.

It is interesting to note how Yoruba and its dialectal forms have managed to survive the forces of globalization and the impact of other languages such as English and Pidgin. Although these languages exist in the market, especially in communication between educated elites or non-Yoruba speakers, they have not reduced the centrality of Yoruba. Rather, they complement each other, and a multilingual environment in which Yoruba is the anchor is formed. The language maintenance endows the native languages of the past decades with the significance of the local economies and culture in the context of the communities being integrated into the systems at national and international levels.

And finally the dialectal and Yoruba form, typical of the Ado-Ekiti markets, and the manifestation of the complexity of association in language, economy and culture. Yoruba and Ekiti in particular, is the blood of market relations, it is the instrument of communication, it is the instrument of creating trust and strengthening bonds of community. The Yoruba dialectal diversity complements these relations, and gives the people in question a sense of identity and belonging. In this respect, the Ado-Ekiti markets are not only financial markets, but also cultural and rich sites where language and culture meet as an expression of the richness of Yoruba in the area.

2.1.6.3 Pidgin as the Bridge Language

Pidgin language serves a role in the conduct of business across ethnicity and language barrier especially among the non-Yoruba buyers, including the Hausa sellers, Igbo immigrants and visitors of other Nigerian states. It is not complex, is neutral, and thus it forms an ideal line of communication between the parties in the negotiation and informal communication processes. Examples of such expressions are “Wetin you wan buy”? “Na correct tin I dey sell” or “Make I give you beta price” is a common occurrence on a market day in the Ado-Ekiti markets and it is spoken together with Yoruba either to emphasize something or to persuade you¹. Pidgin is not very formal, but rather casual and cordial in form and it can eliminate hierarchy between trader and buyer³⁵. The linguistic inclusiveness helps the market to absorb different people and a feeling of belonging even among the non-indigenes³⁶.

2.1.6.4 English as a Language of Prestige and Formality

English has not been used in the daily bargaining process but it has been widely used where there are educated consumers, premium goods, or in the courts of law like in receipts and contracts. Such circumstances are also associated with English as a language of modernity, credibility and status³⁷. The ability to speak English especially the young sellers is used to identify themselves as professional and cosmopolitan especially when selling to buyers who are considered elite or outsiders. Signs and advertising in English can be also found in order to have a more civilized effect. In other situations, even when English is not the language of discourse as it is with Yoruba or Pidgin, market stalls will have signs posted up that read Fresh Fruits Here, Wholesale Only or POS Here³⁸.

Within the colorful and multilingual ecology of the Ado-Ekiti market places, language acts as a means of communication, as well as, a symbol of social identity, economic status, and cultural capital. The English language holds a special prestige and formality status among the available linguistic resources, such as Yoruba, Pidgin, and English. Not only is it strategic, intentional, and often symbolic, but it is also reflective of the greater socio-economic hierarchies and ambitions. Whereas Yoruba, the language of cultural unity and daily communication, or Pidgin, the lingua franca of convenience and availability, is spoken in the realm of authority, education, and exclusivity, English is spoken in the realm of authority, education, and exclusivity. Such categorization of words speaks much about what merchants and consumers think and expect, and English is a key to being admitted to certain social and economic groups.

The English language in the market is usually associated with the education and social mobility. Any sellers who use the English language in their communication are often seen as more learned, global, or professionally successful. This is not a shallow conception, but one that is consistent with larger social correlations between English and formal education, institutional power, and elite position. In a society where quality education is still not equally distributed, speaking English fluently or even using English phrases in one or two sentences is a visible sign that one has acquired some degree of schooling or social exposure. This can be an economic benefit to the

sellers, because a buyer might relate the use of the English language with better quality products, professionalism or credibility. An entrepreneur, speaking about the quality of clothes imported or about the technical features of the electronic equipment, can use English to emphasize his/her professionalism and to justify his/her words.

English is also used as an instrument of controlling formal and high-stakes communication. English is commonly used as a language of negotiation in a transaction where a lot of money is involved, like when buying a high-value electronic, luxury textile, or high-value agricultural produce. Its use introduces an element of seriousness and professionalism and slightly transforms the relationship and informal world of Yoruba or Pidgin into the transactional and formal world of English. This language change may be used to depersonalize the communication so that both sides can concentrate on objective factors such as price, quality, and terms of sale without the emotional overtones that may be present when languages that are more personal are used. A buyer who is negotiating to purchase a generator set or a consignment of office furniture might speak English to prove that he or she knows business and to ensure that the contract is accurate and precise.

The formal nature of the English language can also be seen in the written and bureaucratic use of English in the marketplace. Promotional materials, signs, product labels, and receipts with English text are not uncommon, especially in areas of the market that serve more affluent or educated buyers. Merchants dealing in imported goods or branded products tend to label their goods in English to attract a certain clientele and to conform their products to international standards. Likewise, when conflicts emerge and need to be mediated by market authorities or documented, English is the language of record. This strengthens its position as a language of law, governance and institutional authority, and further solidifies its prestige.

However, there are complications and contradictions to the use of English. It can be an expression of power and prestige, but when it is excessively or abusively exercised, it can also drive away buyers who do not speak the language. Sellers are thus forced to walk the fine line, and employ English in a manner that will appeal to some clients without seeming elitist or out of touch with the local community. It is in this context that code-switching is a necessary skill. A trader can initiate a

discussion in Yoruba to establish a rapport, switch to Pidgin to negotiate in a less formal manner and then switch back to English to seal the deal or discuss details. This is because their language is flexible and they can appeal to a large number of buyers without losing their credibility and accessibility.

The status of English is also a measure of larger national and global hierarchies. In Nigeria, English is still the official language of government, education, and corporate business, and its primacy in these areas is bound to percolate into the real world, such as the marketplace. To most people, being able to speak English is not only a functional ability, but a sign of social mobility and contemporary status. This is particularly true of younger sellers and buyers who tend to think more in terms of English as a language of opportunity and connectivity in a more globalized world. Their ability to speak English, sometimes mixed with Yoruba or Pidgin in creative blends, is a pointer that they desire to belong to the wider economic and cultural systems outside the locality.

However, it is also worth noting that the value or vitality of indigenous languages is not reduced by the prestige of English. Yoruba is the spirit of the market, the language of feelings, tradition, and daily solidarity. Pidgin is the great equalizer, and it cuts across ethnic and educational lines. English has a niche in this linguistic ecosystem: it is the language of formality, prestige, and aspiration. Not the ability to replace other languages but the ability to add another layer to the rich tapestry of communication that is the Ado-Ekiti marketplace.

To put it simply, the English language is used as a prestigious, official language in Ado-Ekiti markets, and it represents the dreams of education, professionalism, and global connectedness. It is strategic and contextual, and it reproduces and supports social and economic hierarchies. However it is dynamically related to Yoruba and Pidgin which also have other different but overlapping functions. Their combination forms a multilingual space in which sellers and buyers negotiate their roles in a shifting world, not only through language but also through identity, relationship, and negotiation. The place of English here highlights the historical relationship between language, power and aspiration in modern Nigerian society.

2.7 Interethnic Communication

Linguistic accommodation is not a phenomenon occurring scarcely amidst the trading population of Ado-Ekiti since they are ethnolinguistically disparate. Meat sellers of the Hausa language, cloth sellers of the Igbo and yam sellers of the Tiv language will usually make use of fundamental Yoruba or Pidgin phrases in order to communicate properly to buyers⁴⁰. Conversely, Yoruba consumers will learn basic greetings or trade related words, depending on the other language in Nigeria such as the Hausa word “Sannu “ (Hello), or “Ndewo” (hello in Igbo) to establish rapport between a trader and buyer³⁹.

This accommodative behavior is not only functional, but it is also a solidary, mutually respectful and a negotiated identity in a multilingual world of the urban Nigerian life¹⁸. Gender also has its presence in terms of linguistic diversity in the Ado-Ekiti market. The majority of the women involved in the informal retail trade appears to have superior levels in multilingualism, as they have more chances of communicating with buyers of different nationalities and backgrounds⁴⁴. The flexibility of the use of Yoruba, Pidgin, and, sometimes, English allows them to cross social boundaries, resolve conflicts and reach more buyers. In the case, men who are mainly engaged in wholesale production or commodity based business make less use of languages in their daily activities that is a factor of gendered division of labor and exposure to language³⁶.

2.1.7.1 Challenges of Linguistic Diversity

It is good despite the fact that there is also a challenge of linguistic diversity. Disputes on prices, improper buyer relationship or loss of reputation due to miscommunication, language barrier and accents. One may also state that the language can be appropriated to either exclude or dominate especially when the native speakers of their language mock the accent of the non-native speakers or even withhold information intentionally^{35,57}. The English-speaking trend and online media are also gaining grounds and can eclipse the old sellers who are illiterate or computer illiterate.

2.1.7.2 Language and Social Interaction

Language is a reflection of both social affiliation and cultural activity and market is a microcosm in the society. The greeting (all of it), the hailing as well as the banter in the market itself is culturally loaded implying that it has the connotations of respect, social superiority and social relationships³⁶. The honorifics and nice words used in Yoruba during the transaction process is a pointer to the overall attitude of respect and social cordiality among each other. Moreover, the language, which is used, can identify whether individual is in-group or out-group, and buyer-seller relationship. In the other scenarios, the sellers can learn the language or the dialect used by the buyers to introduce a feeling of familiarity and trust thus easing the transactions¹⁹. Language is one of the most important aspects of human life and social existence. It is not only a tool for communication but also a means through which people express identity, culture, and belonging. Every human society depends on language to organize relationships, convey ideas, and maintain social order. The study of the relationship between language and society is known as sociolinguistics, which examines how social factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education, and occupation influence the way people use language in different contexts. Language and society are also linked through issues of power and policy. In Nigeria, English is regarded as the official language and is used in education, government, and business. However, the dominance of English in formal domains has limited the development and use of indigenous languages, even though they play vital roles in everyday communication. This imbalance reflects broader social inequalities, where access to English often determines access to education, employment, and social mobility. Sociolinguistic studies have also shown that language is constantly changing as society changes. Urbanization, migration, education, and digital communication have all influenced how Nigerians use language today. Many people mix English, Yoruba, and Pidgin in daily speech, creating hybrid forms of communication that reflect both local and global influences⁵². In any community, people do not speak in the same way all the time. The way an individual speaks often changes depending on where they are, who they are talking to, and what they are talking about. For instance, a teacher may use formal English in the classroom but switch to Yoruba or Pidgin when speaking casually at home or in the market. These choices reflect

the speaker's awareness of social relationships, respect, and audience expectations. Language also serves as a symbol of identity and group membership. The choice of language can show where a person comes from, their level of education, or their social class. In Yoruba-speaking communities such as Ado Ekiti, speaking Yoruba in public spaces often reflects cultural pride and solidarity, while switching to English may indicate education, modernity, or prestige. In multilingual settings, people frequently switch between languages a phenomenon known as code-switching or code-mixing to suit particular communicative goals or social relationships. Ado-Ekiti market is a complicated ecosystem in which the most important tool of social and economic communication is the language. Within the busy world of Oja Oba, Oja Bisi and Oja Agric, communication is not about transferring information but about performance that creates social realities, strengthens cultural norms, and supports economic transactions. Language in this case is a means and a stage through which members can negotiate identities, build trust and social hierarchies as they carry out their daily business. Culturally defined scripts that determine how speakers place themselves within the context of others by making linguistic decisions guide the complex play of interaction. Such patterns of communication show the way language is used as social action, to produce and reproduce the very structure of marketplace society, in each greeting, negotiation, and parting.

In this regard, social interaction is dictated by strongly embedded cultural codes that value respect and relationship making. The first interaction between people determines the character of all further communication, and certain linguistic signs determine relative roles in society. The perceived social status, gender and age have an immediate effect on the use of address forms, pronouns, and grammatical structures. Younger speakers always use honorific and deferential grammar and language to address older people, and more elaborate politeness strategies may be extended to people of higher economic status. These linguistic differences strengthen social stratifications, and generate deferential patterns of engagement. The marketplace is therefore a platform where social order is constantly enacted and re-enacted by everyday language practices that members of the marketplace know and anticipate.

The interpersonal element of marketplace communication is most evident in the ornate address and

reference systems. Speakers use kinship terms liberally, establishing metaphorical family ties that come with social commitments and expectations. The language selections make the commercial transactions personal and therefore the economic transactions are placed in the wider social contexts. Relational language use establishes implicit contracts among participants, which include mutual responsibilities that are not confined to the transaction at hand. Such linguistic structuring of relationships is especially significant in negotiations where competing interests need to be resolved within collaborative structures. Relationship building language is a social lubrication that minimizes friction in economic relationships and provides channels through which conflicts can be resolved.

Economic negotiations are not straightforward in terms of language and social strategy. Bargaining is a very formalized speech event that has set patterns and anticipated participant actions. Negotiation language is predictable in patterns of offer and counteroffer, and certain linguistic signs of seriousness, flexibility, or finality. The participants use different rhetorical strategies such as flattery, humor, appeals to reason, and statements of personal suffering. These forms of language reflect a developed idea of social psychology and influence. The negotiation process shows that language can be instrumental and at the same time carry out social functions as parties strive to attain economic goals without compromising social harmony and personal dignity.

Gender is one of the main factors that affect linguistic behavior in interactions in the marketplace. Men and women tend to use various communicative modes that indicate and affirm social requirements. These differences are reflected in topic selection, conversational patterns, persuasion techniques and conflict management styles. Gendered language patterns are manifestations and constructions of social reality because speakers enact culturally anticipated identities through their language. They are not pre-determined performances, but are stretchy and flexible as speakers haggle over more complex social scenarios. The gendered aspects of marketplace language demonstrate how larger social formations are instantiated in daily communication practices even as they permit individual agency and strategic self-presentation.

The social interactions are further complicated by the fact that the Ado-Ekiti marketplace is

multilingual. The participants constantly switch between Yoruba, Pidgin, and English based on the situational and relationship factors. It is a strategic device of controlling social distance, self-formation and communication between various groups of individuals speaking the language. Coding-switching skills are a good example of social and linguistic capital, as speakers can easily switch between various social situations. That the market place is multilingual is not an indication of past trends in interaction, but a current reality of social life, a living document of cultural interaction and adjustment. The dynamism of the social interaction in the culturally diverse environment is highlighted by the elasticity of the language of the participants.

Conflict and cooperation are two extremes of social interaction that are controlled by the means of language. Price, quality, or contractual disagreements are settled via well-established discursive practices that permit the articulation of disagreement without breaking social relations. The mitigation, face-saving and third party intervention ritual are the linguistic forms of special conflict management. On the other hand, language promotes collaboration by making statements of assent, understanding, and common intent. The rhetoric of conflict and cooperation demonstrates the way social order is achieved through a communicative practice that balances the self with the unity of the community.

The linguistic interaction is affected by the physical space of the marketplace in its arrangement and organization. The spacing of stalls, walkways, and shared spaces establishes certain contexts of communication that influence the use of language. There are various speech events that occur in various locations in the market, where quick transactions are made in the crossroads, and slow conversations are made in the less busy markets. The acoustic context influences the vocal production and the visual clues are significant contextual data to read the speech. The material conditions of the marketplace are therefore internalized into linguistic practices, as the participants adjust their communicative practices to the physical conditions, and at the same time define such spaces through their interactions.

There are also language patterns in which communicative practices exist in different times of the day and days of the week. The morning meetings can be supply chain and wholesale deals oriented

and the afternoon meetings can be retail sales and buyer relations oriented. The seasonal changes introduce variations in the subjects, the people involved and the communicative requirements. The market rhythm is observable in the language cycle, the participants of which coordinate their speech with larger time units. These time dimensions of interaction show how language is contained in and reacts to more general patterns of social and economic action.

The language of the marketplace is not only useful in the sense that it serves practical functions that are instantaneous but also serves the functions of identity building and community building. By means of their language use, the participants place themselves in social networks and claim group memberships. The common language use fosters a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose in the market players. The marketplace is therefore a community of practice in which social identities are negotiated and reinforced in the course of everyday interaction. Language is a marker and a maker of social identity, in the sense that it reveals existing categories, but also enables their change through creative use and adaptation.

The technological revolution has brought about new aspects of the relationship in the market place and mobile phones and digital mediums have provided new communication mediums. These technologies have changed the traditional patterns of interaction and have introduced new forms and practices of language. Now the participants have to struggle with the face-to-face and mediated communication, and have to adjust their linguistic strategies to the various channels. The digitalization of communication is the most recent development in the continuous process of adapting language in the marketplace to new social and technological realities.

The Ado-Ekiti marketplace as a social and linguistic practice can be didactic with regard to the operation of communication under certain cultural and economic conditions. The trends identified present both universal and culturally specific practices of human interaction. The marketplace is a microcosm wherein the larger social formations, cultural ideals and economic realities are expressed in the daily use of language. These complicated interrelationships can only be understood by paying attention to the details of linguistic practice and placing those practices in broader social, economic, and historical contexts. The ever-changing language of the market place reflects the

human resourcefulness and flexibility of translating the message to the social demands and reaching the attainable objectives. Language and society are also linked through issues of power and policy. In Nigeria, English is regarded as the official language and is used in education, government, and business. However, the dominance of English in formal domains has limited the development and use of indigenous languages, even though they play vital roles in everyday communication. This imbalance reflects broader social inequalities, where access to English often determines access to education, employment, and social mobility.

Sociolinguistic studies have also shown that language is constantly changing as society changes. Urbanization, migration, education, and digital communication have all influenced how Nigerians use language today. Many people mix English, Yoruba, and Pidgin in daily speech, creating hybrid forms of communication that reflect both local and global influences⁵².

In summary, language and society are deeply connected. The way people use language reflects their social realities, cultural values, and group identities. In market settings such as those in Ado Ekiti, language choice, switching, and mixing are not random; they are socially meaningful acts that help people build relationships, negotiate meaning, and succeed in business. Studying these language practices therefore provides valuable insight into how social life operates in a multilingual Nigerian context.

2.1.7.3 Language approach and Cultural Preservation

The linguistic landscape of Ado-Ekiti's markets is also influenced by language policies and efforts toward cultural preservation. In 2019, the government of Ekiti state banned the usage of English during the traditional festivals and focused on the introduction of native languages and cultural heritage maintenance⁴⁰. The policy begs the question of the globalization and culture preservation and whether the need to achieve the balance between the global and the local linguistic identity is necessary. Ado-Ekiti's markets epitomize the concept of sociolinguistic spaces, where language serves as a conduit for economic activity, social interaction, and cultural expression. These markets are multilingual and fluid linguistics and therefore show a sign of intricate interaction of language, identity and society. The cultural richness of Ado-Ekiti cannot be achieved without learning and

admiring these sociolinguistic processes other than establishing policies that can be able to embrace linguistic diversity and cultural heritage^{41,42}.

2.2 Theoretical Frameworks

Interactional Sociolinguistics

The Interactional Sociolinguistics Theory developed by Gumperz guided this study. The theory focuses on how people use language in real-life conversations to create meaning and interpret each other's intentions. It explains that communication is not just about the words used but also about how those words fit into social and cultural contexts⁵⁰.

According to him, people rely on contextual cues such as tone, gestures, shared knowledge, and cultural expectations to interpret meaning during interaction. These cues help speakers and listeners understand each other's intentions beyond the literal words spoken. When people come from different backgrounds, misunderstanding may occur if contextual cues are not shared or interpreted correctly.

This theory is particularly relevant to market interactions in Ado Ekiti because communication in the market depends heavily on shared cultural understanding. Sellers and buyers use local expressions, greetings, jokes, and proverbs that carry specific meanings within the Yoruba cultural context. These linguistic behaviors help to create familiarity and trust, which are essential for successful transactions.

Interactional Sociolinguistics also explains how language use can reveal social identities such as gender, age, or class. In the market, sellers adjust their language based on who they are speaking to. For example, they might use polite forms for older buyers or humorous tones with familiar ones. Such flexibility shows that meaning is negotiated in social interaction, not fixed.

The theory therefore helps to interpret how language functions in the markets of Ado Ekiti not only as a tool of communication but as a social act that maintains relationships, expresses culture, and supports economic exchange.

2.2.1 Speech Acts and Politeness Strategies

Indirect speech and politeness also exists in Ado-Ekiti market and women use this form to ensure

that they secure the relationships and status with their buyers. For example:

- i. Use of honorifics like "Ma" or "Sir" to show respect.
- ii. Using mitigated requests or softening devices such as, "e joor" (please), ensures that they structure their requests in a friendly manner.

These are the conventions of calling by women, among the polite, respectful and deferential in the society. They are however tactical and the women employ them in making sales, gaining rapport as well as gaining moral authority in a very competitive field.

Male and female sellers in Ado-Ekiti markets also employ the use of humor, and code-switching (between Yoruba and English or Pidgin) as a means of identity construction and power. The inequality in the dominance of the use of the words

- i. Market rhetoric/ Semiotics
- ii. Develop closeness to the buyers or togetherness.
- iii. Disguising the assertiveness with jokes is also proper to limit the perceived aggression.

This forms part of their gender performance that seems to be submissive or not power threatening but at the same time dominating in the interaction.

It has been noted that there exists a variation of perception between men and women in terms of bargaining manner:

- i. Men are more likely to use direct, confrontational, or assertive styles ("I can't pay more than that, Final!"), which reflect societal expectations of masculine dominance.
- ii. Women too are violent, and tend to give way to emotion and efforts at social relationship, e.g. appeals on grounds of shared misfortune or shared honour:

"Eje ka ra nkan o ti awon omo wa o je" (let us help our children eat something today).

These tactics reflect the "performance of nurturing femininity" presenting themselves as caretakers in need of communal support while still engaging in calculated economic negotiations⁴⁷.

The functional difference is in sold goods and a method of their communication:

- i. There are more women in foodstuff and household items and more talk and appeal to emotions.
- ii. The higher the value of the item (e.g. electronics), the more the high value items tend to be

dominated by men (where the language involved in transactions is more often transactional and impersonal).

This segregation plays the part in gendered language use since the female speech is believed to be caring, modest and emotional and the male speech rational and dominating. The women in Ado-Ekiti markets also use proverbs, idioms, and metaphors when referring to tradition and wisdom as a strategy that enables women to gain discursive power in the context of the patriarchal society where women have limited capacity to gain formal power⁹⁸.

Example:

“Oba ti ko toju awon eeyan e, kii pe l o ri ite” (A king who does not care about his people will never last on the seat).

It was symbol of wisdom and social consciousness because it was a woman who employed it to warn the buyers or sellers. One can find more cultural explanations on gender roles in the language practices of the women and men in Ado-Ekiti markets. They are however not cast in concrete, but are and could only be bargained upon questioned and redefined in day to day interaction process. The gendered speech acts of women in the market are reactive and dramatic in trying to correct the past and present economics action.

The linguistic practices observed in Ado-Ekiti's markets extend beyond the transactional; they play a pivotal role in shaping social perceptions of gender⁹⁸. The recurrent use of gendered metaphors and speech patterns can reinforce societal norms, subtly influencing how individuals perceive and enact gender roles both within and outside the marketplace. This does not just mean the applicability of the critical examination of ordinary language as a field of reproduction and possible modification of culture. Applying Feminist Linguistic Theory to the study of Ado-Ekiti's marketplaces reveals the intricate ways in which language functions as a vehicle for expressing, negotiating, and challenging gender norms. It is also the gendered nature of the linguistic behavior in such commercial sites where we come to understand more of the social constructs that they are based on as well as being guarded by the daily interactions²⁷.

2.2.2 Convergence and Divergence

Convergence is a phenomenon that defines adaptation of people who make their speech to be much closer to the speech of the person with whom they communicate. This can involve accent-matching, words, language speaking or changing. The need or to create solidarity may all be a push toward convergence. An example is that of a trader in a market place scenario who would use Yoruba or Pidgin when addressing a nearby buyer to help establish familiarity with each other to develop trust³³.

On the other hand, divergence refers to the state whereby the speaker is deliberate about the use of differences in language between him or her and the interlocutor. This is the one that is normally used to claim an identity, to express disapproval or strengthen social borders. An example would be a highly educated trader in Ado-Ekiti who might just speak only English as a display of high status or that he is not equal to the low rank buyers. Divergence is therefore a strong tool of countering the in-group and out- group actions and can be applied to perpetuate the status quo in terms of social hierarchies, which may be based on gender, class and education.

2.2.3 Power Distance and Language Use

Power Distance (PD) is a measure of how unequal distribution of power is accepted and expected by the weaker members of the society. In hierarchical cultures such as Nigeria, hierarchical relationships are valued and usually supported by language²¹. For example, in the Ado-Ekiti marketplace, junior or younger sellers (particularly in a female context), tend to use honorifics, deferential tone and indirect speech when communicating with elders or male superiors. The respect of authority and age is part of the culture and the same has been incorporated into this linguistic behavior and accommodating strategies that seek to uphold social harmony^{48,49}.

Masculinity vs. Femininity

In this dimension, the researchers are questioning the extent to which a culture values traditional masculine attributes (such as competing, competitive, and achievement) in comparison to feminine qualities (such as nurturing, cooperative, and quality of life)⁵⁰. In the Nigerian setting (that is high on the masculinity aspect), it could be that assertive language is more appropriate in masculine-type

interactions^{51,52}. The female sellers, however, tend to utilize female speech patterns that suit culture, which are indirectness, empathically, and talk about relationships. The latter patterns are not solely individual choices; they are gender norms that are accepted in the culture and those can influence the way women and men talk in the commercial sphere.

In addition, the societal values tend to encourage such language usage patterns. A woman who adopts assertive, "masculine" language may be seen as overstepping her bounds, while a man who uses soft, accommodating language might be perceived as weak⁵³. In this way, gender language practice in the markets is institutionalized based on the masculinity-femininity axis to such an extent as to indicate the fact that communication is the mere reflection of the broad cultural ideologies⁵⁴.

Individualism vs. Collectivism

Markets are very dynamic trading zones not only in terms of economic negotiations but also in terms of social and linguistic negotiation.

Nigeria can be viewed as a highly collectivist society and culture which gives collective attention to the collective integration of the family and community against the freedom of the individual. This is true to the language spoken in the market place where language in most instances is affected by relational concerns. For example, sellers frequently use inclusive pronouns like "we" rather than "I," reinforcing a sense of communal belonging and shared experience. This collectivist ethos is particularly evident in women's interactions, where mutual support and emotional bonding are emphasized through storytelling, greetings, and collaborative negotiation⁵⁵.

It is also implied due to the collectivist ethics that face and conflict avoidance can be used in the interpersonal communication. This hence makes the Ado-Ekiti market language to be indirect and diplomatic particularly in the case of the women who are culturally supposed to make sure that peace and harmony is maintained in their relationship²⁴.

High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

High-context and low-context cultures offers insight into communication styles within different cultural settings. High context cultures use contextual information, non-verbal cues and common knowledge as the key attributes of communication as opposed to the low context cultures that

deploy clear verbal communications. This difference is vital when targeting the market because it will dictate the methods to be used in advertising, mode of negotiation and negotiation strategies with the buyers⁴⁴. In high context cultures, advertisements are often rather symbolic and indirect communication may be used whereas in low context cultures it is better to be straight forward and to the point.

2.2.4 Linguistic Marketplace

The language in the linguistic market place is presupposed by the fact that; language can be used as a kind of capital in the social market where various linguistic expressions have a varying value. In the context of a market environment, it is used to describe how some of the manifestations or varieties of language may accumulate benefits or costs to the social/economic dominance and well-being. For instance, proficiency in a dominant language or dialect may enhance a vendor's ability to attract a broader buyer base, while the use of a minority language might limit market reach but Strengthen ties within a specific community⁵⁶.

The linguistic marketplace, this concept has come to be known as the fact that language can be used as a symbolic capital that can be gained and diminished, according to social situation of use⁵⁷. As is the case with the literal market, the varieties, styles of speech and language choices are bought and sold at various social spheres. Language market does not imply neutrality; the social relations that prevail in the society like classes and gender, ethnicity and power, as they exist, are reproduced in the market of language.

The metaphorical and literal use of linguistic market place would be effective in the scenario of the traditional market like the one of Ado-Ekiti. It must be said that the linguistic marketplace also is the resistance space and identity building. The verbal interaction among the sellers, buyers, apprentice and passersby is continuous and the language is used in strategic terms to either seek the buyers, establish rapport, establish authority or establish solidarity. In such a setting, the value of a particular language variety or register depends on factors like the interlocutor's age, social status, or gender²².

To illustrate, it is mainly during the process of conducting daily payments and informal

negotiations that usage of the language Yoruba as the primary local language in Ado-Ekiti is observed as being a necessity. To address a higher client, to demonstrate education or to elevate the perceived social status of a trader English or Pidgin may however be used⁵⁸. In switching between codes, the sellers may adopt a more welcome sounding style in the case of women sellers and a more assertive or commanding tone in the case of men sellers to sustain the commercial authority or expertise.

The empirical studies have revealed that market place women will tend to use language to create webs of relations and networks of community membership and may even regularly engage in speech of affect, storytelling and greeting rituals using those to produce social capital in the community^{59,60}. The agency between the drivers is neither contingent nor context-specific and performative but, instead, is ascertained as a determination of the expectations in the market space as well as roles played by individuals in the space. In this way, markets as linguistic marketplaces become a useful tool through which to theorize the exchanges between the language, gender and power through the day-to-day economic practices⁶¹.

Market Language Cultural code being perceived as a case in point, women sellers can also utilize irony, proverb and the rhetorical questions to defy the male authority or to claim their own expertise especially in such highly competitive trade realities such as the market place⁶². In that regard, the market place is a discursive arena where the ideologies of gender are being rewritten as well as negotiated and sometimes subverted.

Conversely, individualistic cultures might aspire to have more brands, which emphasize on individual achievement and individualism²⁶. It leads to the emergence of the fact that any linguistic decision is not neutral, as it always exists within a larger social system especially in multicultural and linguistically diverse contexts such as Ado-Ekiti.

2.2.4.1. Cultural Influences on Consumer Behavior

Culture significantly influences consumer action including choice, purchase and reaction to marketing appeal⁶³. Dimensions of culture have been observed to influence online purchase in a

great way. Considering the above, the high uncertainty avoidance cultures, the consumer might not be ready to make online purchases since they perceive their shopping as a risky endeavor and want to get intimate details about the product and assurances. Conversely, the cultures with low Uncertainty Avoidance level might not come off as so hesitant to do online and use novel forms of purchase.

Power is also represented by the proximity with the entrances or the central corridors to the market. The strength of the cross-cultural dimensions revealed in an exploratory study was that, the national culture has major influence in the buyer engagement with the brands⁴⁴. In a collectivistic society, buyers pay extra attention to the community based brand communication and stay loyal to those brands that promote social harmony. In accordance with the provision of social meanings, facial expression, posture and even the physical closeness is also utilized. The specified semiotic variables help the sellers to appeal to the clients, establish their authority, exchange status and convey values.

2.2.4.2 Semiotics and Market Language

The construction of meaning and the interpretation of the market communications can be better comprehended utilizing the science of signs and symbols, the semiotics. The semiotics of sign and symbol communication gives a critical view in which the process of production and perception of meaning in the marketplace can be comprehended⁶⁴. The marketplace in the traditional markets of Ado-Ekiti is not just about the use of verbal message, it is about gesturing, visual symbols, positioning of the products, dressing, and even silence all of which carry cultural implications attached to it. Culture, advertisement code, realizing the semiotics of market language in Ado-Ekiti therefore does not only show how the sellers communicate, but it also shows how they construct identity, how they gain power and how they sustain social harmony at a commercial hub⁶⁸. In market places of Ado Ekiti such as Oja Oba and Oja Agric, how market spaces are organized and how they are presented is symbolic. The merchandise location, stalls decoration and application of certain colour schemes are not random, it is in order to get some sort of buyers or to demonstrate status or some form of specialization. Take the case of a seller who wraps his/her merchandise in

fine patterned Ankara cloth or garnishes his/her stall with plastic flowers or glistening wrappers, he/she is not being aesthetic, he/she is sending the message of interest, wealth and a sense of wanting to please the buyer⁶⁵.

The market of Ado -Ekiti is highly idiomatic and coded linguistically in terms of use. A large number of stalls around these high traffic areas are often long-established stalls, or stalls whose social relations with the Ìyáló-loja or with associations with local sellers are good. These functions can be discussed as status symbols and creators of credibility and both of them are important in consumer behavior. Nonverbal communication plays a central role in the market's semiotic system. One can utilize hand gestures to attract attention, to indicate credibility or to diminish price concerns used by the vendors. As one example, in the local markets of Ado-Ekiti it is a widespread custom to place a hand on the chest as one says a phrase which can be translated as, you know me now, and by this our intention is clear as we want to be taken as sincere and appeal to people as being familiar⁶⁶. In the same way, the dramatic shrug, or the hand-waved exaggerated gesture made during a bargaining process is also a culturally specific method of softening a rejection or furthering a form of politeness during negotiation. These physical cues are even more compelling in a scenario where the speech was restricted to a simple oral communication because of extreme noise, multiculturalism or even discretion³⁹. When the vendor leaned forward to talk to you, it may either be an indication that he/she is an open person or that he/she needed a walk as well as direct eye contact may be showing that he/she is modest or submissive.

2.2.4.3 Market Language and Symbolic Expressions

Other semiotic strategies that may be used include switching codes between English, Yoruba or Pidgin that is social contextual and audience suggestive. The expressions that are commonly used by sellers today include the use of indirect expressions, Yoruba proverbs, and the use of idiomatic expressions that they use to express their values, agree on issues and decorum amid the negotiations. Sayings such as “*òjà l’á n tà, eba mi ra mummy*” (help me buy it Ma.) or “*haba buyer, mi o ri ra ni eye yen*” (I didn’t buy it at that price) are used to guide the buyer or in instances of a hard bargain to indicate restraint⁶⁷. These are linguistic codes and act as symbolic capital as they are used to

distinguish the experienced trader among the novices and ensure a cultural authenticity to the transaction⁶⁸.

The buyers will be addressed as Yoruba when they are aged, culturally deep-rooted and in English or Pidgin when young or in the name of modernity³⁹. On this section, language will act as a signifier on its own as it will render out identities and will distort interpersonal relations. Not merely tools, but also transparency, legitimacy and preparedness, signboards, weighing scales and cash boxes. The vendors are also semiotic in their dressing since they depict either professionalism, religiosity or their orientation in the society. Ado-Ekiti has female sellers that are dressed in coordinated aso-ebi (uniform traditional garments) especially on big market days or festivals. This portrays a sign of solidarity, seniority or group membership of groups of individuals in the market. Conversely, the men who represent the sellers would be expected to don western style outfits like collared shirt or even suits to bring out formality and seriousness in business.

Other than visual and verbal messages, the Ado-Ekiti market environment also communicates through the sound and smell. Most sellers use jingles, chants, or praise singing in an attempt to attract attention. Tones of repetitive descriptions of goods, e.g. “ewà t o gbona!” (hot beans!), or “tomati to se se jolo!” (tomatoes perfect to use in jollof!), serve as a kind of rhythmical mnemonic, as well as stressing out the freshness of the commodity or their compatibility with each other⁶⁹. Smells are also semiotically triggered, e.g. spices, fresh goods or incense stimulates sensory impressions and, consequently, affects buyer perception. On the other hand, unpleasant odors may assume the semiotic meaning of decaying, disorder, or neglect and this will lead to a negative influence on the behavior of the purchaser. A semiotic analysis of the language of Ado-Ekiti market demonstrates highly stratified circumstance of communication and use of words is not the only thing that communicators use. The body language to spatial arrangement, the proverbs to the attire, the sellers and the buyers too are always writing a culture or negotiating with identities at the market. It is significant to recognize these systems of indications well in the appreciation of the manner in which commerce is culturally fixed, the perpetuation of trust and the markets become a part of the economic system as well as symbolic community¹⁸.

2.2.4.4 Cultural Norms in Advertising

The semiotic analysis indicates that the advertisements are loaded with the codes of culture that deliver some meaning to the target audiences. The most important factor in cross-cultural marketing is the familiarity with these codes since their misinterpretation might result in a communication breakdown like in the case of the color symbolism, where in one culture white may mean purity but in another culture, it may be mourning. Marketers should thus be sensitive to such cultural differences so that their messages are conveyed in the appropriate manner^{23,40}. The way the marketing messages are designed and perceived varies because of the high context and low context communication. Advertisement in high contexts cultures may be based on tacit message and storytelling and visual appeal to convey whereas in low-context culture; advertisement is based on very direct and elaborate communication^{70,86}. This realization helps the marketers organize their campaigns in such a way that they reach the cultures using their expressive ways of communication⁷³.

2.2.4.5 Social and Cultural Dimensions of Market Expansion

The most commonly resisted development projects of modern nature as in the case of modernization of Oja Oba, introduction of satellite markets etc. occur when they interfere with the accepted cultural practices.

The need to diversify into other sectors of culture requires the knowledge about the social and cultural aspects that affect the market processes. The research on market expansion is normally conducted basing on the economics and infrastructure including assessments such as revenue growth, spatial growth and technology application. However, in a pre-modern economy like that of Ado-Ekiti, the growth of the market is embedded within the social and cultural reality extremely well. Not only is markets a site of exchange, but also a sociocultural institution, in which the realm of custom, identity, relations between sexes, religion and community structure are unified in the formation of the basis of economics. The creation of the markets in Ado-Ekiti should, therefore, be analyzed in consideration of the logics of the culture that justifies the activities of the market and its impact on the relations between the sellers and buyers.

Ritualized language, this is one of the ways in which the culture is portrayed. The attempts to modernize the market through the introduction of standardized prices, controlled hygienic conditions or electronic payments can be considered a form of foreign domination that overlooks some local customs⁷⁴. Such a clash of interests refers to the necessity to find culturally sensitive ways of developing the market that implies the involvement of traditional authorities, the accommodation of local social stratification, and gradual as opposed to abrupt changes in market paradigm. The growth in the markets of Ado-Ekiti cannot just be referred to as an economic demand or urbanization process but the process can be described as a sociocultural process that is accompanied by the traditions of the community, gender, religion and informal governance^{75,76}.

One factor that should be taken into consideration as far as the interpretation or the modification of this growth is concerned is the cultural set up under which these markets are run. Such a cultural analysis would not just outline the trends of the market behaviour but would also outline the understanding of sustainable and inclusive market development strategies.

Markets as Social Institutions

Markets particularly Oja Oba, Oja Bisi and Oja Agric is not only economic site but also a social convergence of family, community and traditional governance of land and land boundaries combine. This type of leadership assists a lot in ending vendor wars, arranging clean-ups within the community, and communicating with the local government. The markets have traditionally changed along with the sociopolitical hierarchy of the town under the supervision of palace authorities and market queens (Ìyálojà) ⁴⁸. The growth of the markets is therefore dependent on communal choices, cultural events and traditional rituals that legitimize space occupation, vendor's qualification and successor as market leadership.

The market activities will be culturally oriented due to such a social embedding. In an illustration, market days are not arbitrarily set and as a rule tend to be pegged on the indigenous calendars, and religious factors⁶⁶. Market expansion is negotiated not only with the urban planning agencies but also with custodians and consideration is given to the spiritual and ancestral aspects of trade.

Social Dynamics of Market Expansion

Gender is the most crucial component in determining the social determinants of market expansion²³. Women take the lead in the trading processes as well as in the leadership of the markets in Ado-Ekiti. The role of Ìyálojà (mother of the market) is a culturally acceptable leadership position and is empowering to women, in an otherwise patriarchal society⁶⁶. Instead of formal contract and regulatory systems, informal trust, patronage, and reputation are used more than others are. Nevertheless, despite the fact that women are also found in the market governance arena, they are still subjected to the emotional and social stressors due to the cultural expectations. The competition can also be spatially extended into the market and this is not being enjoyed disproportionately to the female sellers who do not have the capital advancements to expand at the same level as the male sellers⁴⁵. Secondly, the entry of new sellers into the market will bring new cultural tensions especially when it is young to contest the traditional norms of respect, hierarchy, and communications⁷⁷.

Religion, Identity, and Market Behavior

The other major cultural influence shaping the growth of the markets in Ado-Ekiti is religion⁷⁶. In the area, Christianity, Islam and Yoruba traditional religion existed and all these have an impact in the manner, in which the markets are conducted, identities of the market vendors and consumer confidence. Religious vendors have been known to show various religious symbols at their stalls, greetings that are religious-based (e.g. God bless you, my buyer) and even prayer constant or fellowship sessions during market hours. Religious identity is used as a source of inclusion and exclusion as the markets continue to grow where the patronized and the trusted make the business involved in economic transactions. This religious aspect also takes the form of market closure during the religious holidays, the formation of faith based business communities whereby the ability to access capital, and offer communal assay to the expansion ventures is achieved⁷⁵. The religious aspect is however, disruptive when the expansion ventures are seen to discriminate against other religious or ethnic groups.

Ritualistic Language Use

Some of the market places using language are of ritualistic nature thus bringing in some culture

rules and social trends⁴⁰. An example is the honorifics used by language, greetings among other statutory utterances expressed in transactions, which could be used to establish trust, respect and social ranking. These are performance language in action and they constituted inseparable elements of social life of the market communities and helped to provide continuity and integration of cultures³³.

Symbolic Power and Language Legitimacy

The correlation between gender, culture and language can be located in Ado-Ekiti markets.

Gender, in this case, is a very influential factor that defines not only which language should be used but also the power and trustworthiness of the speaker⁷⁸. Linguistic tactics help sellers to bargain with the social rules, create credibility and competitive advantages. For example, the choice of language, whether Yoruba, Pidgin, or English often depends on the target buyer, the trader's socioeconomic status, and the context of the interaction. The empirical fact of gendered language that can be used in the Ado-Ekiti markets shows the level to which gendered language has travelled to affect the consumer behaviour and gender representation.

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

Several studies, both in Nigeria and internationally, have examined how language is used in social and market contexts. These studies provide background and evidence for understanding language use in Ado Ekiti markets.

The use of communicative strategies in Yoruba markets was found that sellers employ humor, repetition, and code-switching as persuasive tools during bargaining⁵². Similarly, it was investigated gendered language use among sellers in Ekiti markets and discovered that female sellers used more greetings and polite expressions than their male counterparts⁵³.

Linguistic variation in southwestern Nigerian markets. Their findings revealed that market discourse often reflects cultural norms of respect and hierarchy, as sellers use honorifics and traditional address forms to maintain social order⁵⁴.

Earlier studies by international scholars have also supported these observations. Gumperz showed that people in multilingual settings rely on shared sociocultural cues to make meaning in everyday

talk. Sociolinguistic behavior is shaped by social factors such as gender, age, and class, which determine how people choose words, tones, and languages⁵¹.

Language use in multilingual communities and concluded that people draw on linguistic resources differently depending on power relations and social networks⁵⁶. These findings are relevant to Nigerian markets, where language use also reflects social status and relationships between sellers and buyers.

In the Nigerian context interactional patterns in Calabar markets and noted that sellers use culturally embedded discourse strategies to appeal to buyers⁵⁷. Likewise, it was observed that Yoruba market interactions are rich in politeness strategies and conversational routines that enhance social harmony⁵⁵.

The present study builds on these earlier works but focuses specifically on Ado Ekiti, where sociocultural factors such as gender, class, age, and education play a central role in shaping language use. By analyzing these interactions, the study contributes new insights into how everyday market communication reflects broader patterns of Nigerian social life.

2.3.1 Buyer Perception and Language of Gender

Linguistic and gendered messages determine the attitudes of the buyers towards the sellers. Studies show that female sellers who adopt stereotypically "feminine" speech styles such as politeness, humor, and soft persuasion are often perceived as more trustworthy and approachable⁹¹. Conversely, male sellers who use authoritative and direct speech styles are more likely to be viewed as knowledgeable and experienced. Gendered language refers to the adoption of a word, phrase or use of a tone, which is specific to a particular gender. The combination of the gendered language and the buyer perception has drawn a mega amount of interest among scholars mostly in subjects related to marketing, advertising, and consumer behavior. The manner with which language is utilized in the Ado-Ekiti markets is suggestive of how knowledge of the language can be used to empower and dis-empower the gender representation in the trade. The understanding of how the buyers perceive such a language is needed before effective communication strategies are put in place to capture the buyers with such diverse profiles³.

2.3.2 Gendered Language in Advertising

The gendered language can also be applied in advertisements to reach a responder in addition to shaping their thoughts of the subjects other than causing stereotypes in the society.

Although the conventional marketing strategies continue to be gendered to some extent, social development and market needs tend to shift gradually back towards the more universal and neutral gendered advertising language⁷⁸. Gendered language in advertising has been used long to attract towards a particular demographic and in the case of Ado-Ekiti, a place with a hectic lifestyle and hectic markets, the gendered language is an asset in advertisement. In the conventional market of Ado-Ekiti, sellers modify the message in marketing based on gender of the consumers. A product related to the acts that households undergo like the cooking ingredients or household items will have the language which would be attractive to women since they would base their language on perfect for mothers or a must have in the home. In the meantime, words are used to sell economic products like luxury products or electronics, and these words always suggest strength and power, thereby appealing to male gender⁷⁴. In addition, gender roles in the Ado-Ekiti culture can influence the language of commercial advertisement. The female gender is perceived to be homemakers and nurturing and male gender as providers. These ingrained societal roles influence vendors' choice of words, creating a distinct pattern of gendered advertising within local markets. However, certain companies are breaking these stereotypes because they are appealing to words that are inclusive in an effort to make sure that they attract as many buyers as possible. Global trends of gender-neutral advertisement has been shaping the marketing strategy in Nigeria and in Ado-Ekiti in the past few years. The progressive sellers are currently re-packaging their sales so that they can be more appealing to the people by setting their eyes on the quality of the product as opposed to gender attractiveness. With the heightened conscious of the consumers that are characterized by the developments of the recent past, it can be expected that the markets will experience some significant changes in the market language that would bring a more balanced system of advertisement. The markets at Ado-Ekiti can serve as a good case example on how the gendered language in advertising can be used not only to reflect but also to impose the cultural norms⁸⁹.

Language does not only represent gender, it is also constructed and recreated through the marketplace, particularly in the market where the sellers form a culturally diverse community in terms of trading. These strategies also encompass the gendered representation that defines the manner in which the vendors talk, the way buyers accept the messages, as well as the way the feedback is delivered through oral and written means. Ado-Ekiti as a vibrant economy in southwest Nigeria is quite diverse in its market practices in which language is a major contributor to the construction of gender representation⁹⁰. Not only do the vendors, consumers, and the advertisers themselves develop a linguistic landscape that is re-affirmative, confrontational or accommodating to the societal gender norms. The linguistic technique of gender representation in marketplace does not only signify the cultural values but it is also a determining factor towards the consumer behavior. The sellers at the markets in Ado-Ekiti are inclined to fluctuate the standard of communication related to the gender of the potential client. For example:

Directive Speech: The speech of male vendors is more directive in nature and contains commands, e.g., “Buy this now” or “This is the best deal”.

Emotional Appeal: The language employed in the goods marketed to the women is usually linked to care or comfortable or anything domestic like perfect at home or gentle on the skin. This linguistic variation confirms the traditional gender roles that display what is part of the social norm of either male or female gender. In addition to spoken communication, the vendors trying to appeal to people of both genders⁹¹. These use the ways of nonverbal communication include:

Body Language: The merchants in the market can vary their body language when involved in either female or male buyer.

Tone and Pitch: A brighter tone on selling can equally be used to sell to women and a raised and authoritative role can be used to sell to men.

Even though, traditional gender marketing still exists in Ado-Ekiti, there are some indications of change to a more inclusive perspective of advertising. The Proverbs and Codes and Other manufacturers tend to pay more attention to the quality and the usefulness of the products without any connections to gender specifications as the reflection of the much wider society changes⁹².

Gender Bias buyer reaction Examining the discourse, marketing, and communication with the consumers, it is possible to learn much about the interactions of language, business, and gender relationships. In the light of the further development of advertising, the case studies of the marketplaces in Ado-Ekiti may be subjected to the contribution of linguistic shifts on the way to a equal and more inclusive world of consumers⁹³.

2.3.3 Linguistic Choices and Gendered Roles

The inclination in Ado-Ekiti market set-up is that there exists parallelism of the linguistic behavior and gender roles in the society. Female sellers who constitute a high percentage of the local markets such as Oja Bisi and Oja Agric. employ the examples of linguistic measures that depict emotional labor and communication of relations. They heavily employ honorifics, kinship words and inclusive pronouns to find a rapport and minimize perceived hostilities in business-related negotiations³⁵. Common examples include expressions like *e jowo* (please), *e ba mi se* (help me), and *omo mi* (my child) are some of the examples of attempts to dilute demands and create social balance.

This compliance in communication does not go without relevance, this gentleness in communication is a tactic and it relies on gender norms: women should be caring, well, and empathetic⁹⁴. On the contrary, the male sellers use more authoritative speech acts, and they rely on command language and transactional brevity. Such language style is not threatened of being considered rude, since masculine aggressiveness is acknowledged socially⁸⁰.

The Functions of Proverbs and Cultural Norms

The cultural norms on the discourse of the market place reinstates the gendered ideologies and in some case subliminally programs the perception of male and female sellers⁹⁰. In others, female sellers are applying these codes in order to solicit sympathy or to build a respectable image another hallmark of the ambivalence of language, a medium of both subordination and action.

The idiomatic expressions and proverbs are most important in the representation of gender. Patriarchal norms are also imbibed by the Yoruba proverbs in the Ado-Ekiti market places. Proverbs such as, a woman is not the head of the home “*obirin ki i se olofin ile*” (a woman is not the head of the home) or “*oko lo ni aya*” (the husband owns the wife) , are still popularly quoted

regarding business leadership or decision making⁹⁸. Whereas some vendors defy such proverbs, others invoke it to make pleas on the buyer emotions or to justify their actions in the market. The biases of gender and the control they have on the perception of services and products in relation to the reviews and other contents, which can be created by the buyers⁹³. A research study undertaken to compare language and visual aspects of Clinique skincare products in masculine and feminine advertisement established that, the language and visual aspects used in male and female product adverts show sharp difference. The advertisements presented to the male audience were usually less wordy and simple in language but the advertisements presented to the females were more wordy and emotive. These strategies not only reflect but also perpetuate traditional gender roles, influencing consumer preferences and expectations⁹⁵. Research indicates that gendered marketing cues can significantly affect consumers' perceptions of a brand's competence and warmth¹⁵. An experimental study revealed that gender cues activate different perceptions, which subsequently influence purchase intentions. Using the example of masculine language in marketing, it can be observed that the marketing is competent and the feminine language perhaps warm with each stereotype-favoring consumers due to their gender stereotypes⁹⁹.

Markets as Informal Vs buyer Experience

Generally, there is no formal regulation of the informal markets in Nigeria and in consequence, they become prone to the manipulation of the highly internalized social norms⁵⁴. When it comes to serving the buyers the women sellers in Ado-Ekiti have experienced treatment differently. Based on ethnographic studies and interviews, buyers tend to be more aggressive in negotiations with female vendors and the former tend to show greater likelihood to post negative reviews on social media more promptly⁴⁴. In addition, females display emotional tolerance, patience, and politeness, which are hardly requested by their male peers.

This language question in the market review, which reifies the patriarchal anticipations, is underscored by research¹⁰⁰. In other words, the language in the market reviews may discount the female sellers based on their tone rather than the male sellers based on the quality of the product or price. This means that the measuring of service is no longer deemed to be in objective examination

but falls in the category of gendered expectation.

Communication Styles and Gender Expectations

Communication is thick with the performative and transactional language at the market places of Ado-Ekiti such as the Oja Oba, Oja Bisi and Oja Agric. The sellers, particularly women apply persuasion strategies to attract buyers in culturally coded ways, such as, *omo mi, ba mi ra a*. (my child, come buy this item) or *iyami, edakun e ba mi ra oja* (mummy, please patronize me), using gendered etiquette and respect hierarchies⁴⁶. This gendered communication represents both comparatively, male sellers would tend to be more explicit in their language, in addition, they would not necessarily be expected to play the roles of being polite or caring⁴⁸.

Respectability and modesty or humility are often the community norms that constrain the women in the market; when a women protest or otherwise refuses to be overcharged she is usually led as a rude or not a lady, whereas a man would be given the compliment of being tough or being a good businessman. This inequality is not only undesirable in the way business is done but also in the way vendors will be recalled and ranked among their buyers particularly in the websites where the words cannot be erased.

In summary, this chapter reviewed key concepts and theories that form the foundation of this study. It discussed the nature of language as a social tool, the principles of sociolinguistics, and the close relationship between language and society. The chapter also examined how language functions in market contexts, including language choice, code-switching, and communication strategies.

Gender, age, class, and education were identified as major factors influencing how language is used in market interactions. The Interactional Sociolinguistics Theory provided the framework for understanding how meaning is negotiated through shared cultural and contextual cues.

The empirical review revealed that both Nigerian and international scholars have shown interest in how language functions in social and economic environments. However, few studies have focused specifically on the markets in Ado Ekiti. This study therefore fills that gap by showing how local sellers use language to not only sell goods but also to express cultural identity, maintain social relations, and sustain economic activities.

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Chapter Three

Research Methodology

This chapter points out the methodological framework adopted during investigation on language use in some marketplaces within Ado-Ekiti. It gives the description of research design, sample population, sampling strategies, data collection, and data collection ethics.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design within a sociolinguistic framework. The design was considered appropriate because the study sought to explore and describe how language is used in natural social settings specifically, in market interactions among sellers, buyers, and other stakeholders in Ado-Ekiti. The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to capture authentic linguistic behaviours, communication strategies, and sociocultural factors that influence language use in the marketplace.

The descriptive design was employed to allow for a detailed examination of language practices as they occur naturally, without manipulation or control of variables. Through this approach, the study focused on observing, recording, and analyzing real-life conversations and communicative patterns in the selected markets Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. The aim was not to test a hypothesis but to provide an in-depth understanding of how social factor such as gender, age, education, and social status shape language choice and interaction in a multilingual market environment.

Data were collected using participant observation and semi-structured interviews, both of which are consistent with qualitative sociolinguistic research methods^{3,4}. This design provided flexibility for the researcher to interpret meanings, identify recurring language patterns, and relate them to the social context in which they occurred. The combination of descriptive and qualitative approaches made it possible to generate rich, contextually grounded insights into the dynamics of language use in Ado-Ekiti markets.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised market stakeholders in three major markets in Ado-Ekiti: Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. These markets were selected because they represent the most

vibrant commercial centers in the city and attract a diverse population of sellers and buyers from different linguistic, educational, and social backgrounds. The markets serve as contact zones where various languages such as Yoruba, English, and Pidgin are actively used for transactional and interpersonal communication.

The study population included sellers, buyers, and transporters who engage daily in communicative exchanges within these markets. These participants were considered suitable because their interactions reflect authentic patterns of language use, negotiation, and social relations that are central to the study's sociolinguistic focus. The population therefore represents a cross-section of individuals who participate directly in language-mediated economic activities within the Ado-Ekiti market environment.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

From the general market population, thirty (30) respondents were selected as the sample for this study. The respondents were drawn from the three selected markets: twelve (12) from Oja Oba, ten (10) from Oja Bisi, and eight (8) from Oja Agric. The sample consisted of twenty (20) women and ten (10) men, reflecting the gender distribution that characterizes most Nigerian markets, where women dominate trading activities. The age of respondents ranged from 25 to 60 years, with varying levels of education, including individuals with no formal education, primary and secondary school leavers, and a few with tertiary qualifications.

The purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the participants. This technique was chosen because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select respondents who could provide rich and relevant information about language use and communication patterns in the marketplace. The selection focused on individuals who were actively involved in market interactions, linguistically competent in Yoruba, English, or Pidgin, and willing to participate in the research. This non-probability method was appropriate for the qualitative nature of the study, which emphasizes depth of understanding rather than numerical representation ⁵.

Through this sampling approach, the researcher ensured adequate representation of different market roles (sellers, buyers, and transporters), genders, and linguistic backgrounds, thereby providing a balanced and realistic overview of language use in the selected markets.

3.4 Description of Research Instruments

Observation

Observation was employed as one of the major instruments for data collection in this study. It enabled the researcher to gather firsthand information on how language is naturally used by market participants during their daily interactions. Through direct observation in the selected markets Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric the researcher recorded communicative behaviours such as greetings, bargaining, joking, and code-switching among sellers, buyers, and transporters.

Both participant and non-participant observation methods were used. As a participant observer, the researcher mingled with market participants, occasionally engaging in informal conversations to better understand the flow of communication in real contexts. As a non-participant observer, the researcher discreetly observed interactions without direct involvement, to minimize bias and ensure natural language behaviour.

The observation focused on identifying languages used, speech patterns, negotiation styles, and sociolinguistic variables such as gender, age, and social status. Field notes were taken systematically, and relevant utterances were recorded in a notebook for later analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to validate responses from interviews and to capture spontaneous language use that could not be obtained through verbal questioning alone.

Observation is a vital qualitative research tool because it provides authentic and context-based evidence of social interaction, enabling researchers to interpret meanings behind communicative acts within their natural settings¹⁰.

Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interview served as the second key instrument for data collection. This tool was used to elicit detailed information on language use, communicative strategies, and sociocultural influences among market stakeholders. The interview guide consisted of twenty (24)

open-ended questions divided into sections corresponding to the objectives of the study.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face in the respondents' preferred language (Yoruba, English, or Pidgin), allowing flexibility and accurate expression. Each session lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. With the consent of the participants, an audio recorder was used to capture the interviews verbatim, ensuring that participants' responses were accurately preserved for later transcription and analysis. Audio recording was particularly useful in capturing tone, code-switching, and other paralinguistic cues that written notes alone could not fully represent. In addition, brief field notes were taken during and after each interview to record nonverbal expressions and contextual observations that complemented the audio data.

The semi-structured interview format allowed for both structure and flexibility, enabling the researcher to ask predetermined questions while probing further into participants' responses when necessary. This method was considered appropriate because it encouraged open-ended discussion and offered deeper insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics of the markets. It also facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how sellers and buyers use language for various communicative purposes such as negotiation, persuasion, and maintaining social relationships.

3.5 Validity and Reliability of Research Instruments

In qualitative research, ensuring the validity and reliability of data collection instruments is crucial for the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. For this study, multiple strategies were employed to establish the accuracy, consistency, and dependability of the observation and interview instruments.

Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. To enhance the validity of the research instruments, the interview guide and observation schedule were developed in alignment with the specific objectives of the study identifying the languages used, outlining communicative strategies, and describing sociocultural influences on language use⁸.

Before the main data collection commenced, two lecturers in the Department of Languages and

Literature, Lead City University, who provided constructive feedback on the content and structure of the questions, subjected the instruments to expert review. Their suggestions helped to refine ambiguous or overlapping items, ensuring that each question was clear, relevant, and aligned with the study's objectives.

Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted in one small market outside the main study area to test the suitability of the instruments. The pilot study helped the researcher identify potential difficulties in question wording, time management, and respondent comprehension. Adjustments were subsequently made to improve the clarity and effectiveness of the instruments before they were administered in the selected markets.

The validity of the study was further strengthened through triangulation, achieved by combining two methods observation and semi-structured interviews. This methodological triangulation ensured that data collected from one source could be crosschecked and corroborated with evidence from another, thereby enhancing the overall accuracy and credibility of the findings.

3.6 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability concerns the consistency and dependability of the research instruments and the procedures adopted. To ensure reliability, the researcher using the same interview guide to maintain uniformity across sessions conducted all interviews personally. Each participant was asked similar core questions, though flexibility was allowed for follow-up probes. This approach minimized interviewer bias and maintained a consistent flow of discussion.

The audio recordings of the interviews helped to preserve participants' exact responses, tones, and expressions, preventing information loss that might occur through memory or incomplete note-taking. The recorded data were transcribed and reviewed several times for accuracy and completeness.

Additionally, the researcher maintained a detailed field journal where observational notes and reflections were documented immediately after each session. This systematic documentation ensured that data were consistent and verifiable. To further enhance dependability, the researcher used member checking by occasionally summarizing or paraphrasing participants' responses during interviews to confirm the accuracy of interpretations.

Through these measures, the study achieved a high level of validity and reliability, ensuring that the findings genuinely reflect the linguistic realities and sociocultural practices of language use in the selected markets of Ado Ekiti.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of this study to ensure that the rights, dignity, and privacy of all participants were adequately protected. As the research involved direct interaction with human participants, the researcher adhered to the fundamental principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality as recommended in qualitative research ethics^{5,8}.

Before data collection began, the purpose of the study was clearly explained to all participants, and their consent was obtained both verbally and in writing. The participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or negative consequence. This ensured that participation was based on free and informed choice.

To maintain anonymity, the names of participants were not recorded in the final report. Instead, pseudonyms or codes were used in all transcriptions and analysis to conceal personal identities. Confidentiality was also upheld by ensuring that all information obtained was used strictly for academic purposes and was not disclosed to third parties. Data, including audio recordings and field notes, were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

Furthermore, participants were assured that their responses would be treated with respect and used solely to achieve the objectives of the research. Care was also taken to conduct all interviews and

observations in a non-intrusive and culturally sensitive manner, respecting the norms and values of the market community.

By adhering to these ethical principles, the researcher ensured that the study maintained integrity, credibility, and respect for human participants, in line with accepted academic and sociolinguistic research practices.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through two main qualitative instruments observation and semi-structured interview over a period of two months. This duration was considered appropriate to allow the researcher to adequately familiarize herself with the market environment, establish rapport with participants, and capture the natural flow of communicative practices at different times and on different market days.

Observation Process

The researcher conducted systematic observations across the three selected markets: Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric. Observation sessions were carried out on both regular and peak market days, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., to capture variations in communicative patterns throughout the day. The researcher observed different categories of market stakeholders sellers, buyers, apprentices, and transporters focusing on their language choices, interactional styles, and bargaining strategies.

Both participant and non-participant observation techniques were used. As a participant observer, the researcher interacted with sellers and buyers by engaging in informal conversations and participating in light trading activities to gain insider perspectives. As a non-participant observer, the researcher maintained a discreet distance to watch interactions naturally unfold without influencing participants' behaviour.

Notes were taken throughout each session, documenting key linguistic and non-linguistic features such as language switching, politeness expressions, gestures, tone, and humor. These notes were later organized into observation sheets for analysis. The observations provided valuable contextual information that complemented the interview data, offering deeper insights into how language

functions as a social and transactional tool in the marketplace.

Interview Procedure

Following the observation phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 respondents drawn from the three markets. The participants included both sellers and buyers of different ages, genders, and educational backgrounds. The interviews were carried out face-to-face at participants' shops, stalls, or other convenient locations within the markets to ensure comfort and natural responses.

Each interview lasted between 15 and 25 minutes and was conducted in the participant's preferred language Yoruba, English, or Pidgin. Before each session, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was obtained for both participation and audio recording. The researcher used an audio recorder to capture participants' responses verbatim, while also taking brief field notes to document contextual details such as tone, gestures, and body language.

The semi-structured interview format provided flexibility, allowing the researcher to follow the prepared interview guide while probing deeper into issues that emerged during the conversation. This approach ensured that both the research objectives and the participants' lived experiences were thoroughly explored. The data collected from the interviews were later transcribed, categorized, and analyzed according to the study's thematic concerns.

Justification for Duration and Method

The two-month period of data collection was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher sufficient time to observe market activities under different conditions including busy days, quiet periods, and price fluctuation seasons thereby ensuring that the data reflected the dynamic and diverse nature of market communication. The combination of observation and interview methods provided a triangulated approach that enhanced the validity and reliability of the study's findings.

Therefore, combining multiple qualitative instruments such as observation and interviews allows for a deeper, more holistic understanding of social interactions and communicative behaviours within their natural settings⁹.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for this study through observation and semi-structured interviews were analyzed qualitatively using thematic analysis. This method was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to identify, interpret, and report recurring patterns or themes within the data. The analysis focused on uncovering the linguistic behaviours, communicative strategies, and sociocultural factors influencing language use among market participants.

Preparation of Data

The first stage of analysis involved the careful organization of raw data. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, capturing both verbal and notable nonverbal cues such as laughter, pauses, and tone of voice. Transcriptions were checked several times for accuracy and completeness. Field notes and observation records were also reviewed and merged with the transcribed interview data to provide contextual understanding of language use within the market environment.

Coding Process

The second stage involved coding the data. Each transcript and observation note was read repeatedly to identify meaningful units of information related to the research objectives. Codes were manually assigned to segments of data that represented specific linguistic behaviours (e.g., code-switching, greeting, joking, persuasive speech, or politeness). These codes were then grouped into broader categories that reflected key aspects of market communication. For instance, codes relating to multilingual interaction and language choice were placed under “Language Use Patterns,” while those reflecting negotiation tactics were grouped under “Language Strategies.”

Thematic Development

In the third stage, patterns among the coded data were examined and themes were developed. The major themes were guided by the study's three research objectives:

- i. Languages Used by Market Stakeholders,
- ii. Language Strategies Applied in Market Interaction, and
- iii. Sociocultural Factors Influencing Language Use.

Each theme was analyzed in relation to existing sociolinguistic theories and previous studies to establish connections between observed behaviours and scholarly perspectives. Representative excerpts from interview transcripts and observation notes were presented in Chapter Four to illustrate key findings.

Interpretation of Findings

Finally, the themes were interpreted within the sociolinguistic framework, drawing insights from theories of language choice, code-switching, and language and social interaction. The analysis emphasized how market participants used language as a social and economic tool to express identity, build relationships, and achieve communicative goals. The findings were discussed with reference to relevant literature to highlight both consistencies and deviations from existing studies. The qualitative and interpretive nature of this analysis allowed the researcher to move beyond mere description to a deeper understanding of the social meanings and cultural implications of language use in the selected markets. Thematic analysis offers flexibility and depth in uncovering patterns of meaning within qualitative data.

Endnotes

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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

4.1 What are the languages used by stakeholders in the selected markets?

The first objective of this study was to identify the languages used by market stakeholders including sellers, buyers, transporters, and apprentices in the selected markets (Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric) in Ado Ekiti. Data obtained through direct observation and semi-structured interviews revealed a multilingual linguistic environment where several languages coexist and are used for different communicative purposes.

The dominant languages across the three markets are Yoruba, Pidgin, and English, with traces of Igbo, Hausa, and other minority languages such as Igala, Edo, Urhobo, and Tiv. The choice of language in each interaction largely depends on factors such as the participants' ethnic background, familiarity, social status, and type of transaction being conducted.

1. Yoruba as the Dominant Language

Yoruba emerged as the most frequently used language in all three markets. This dominance reflects the linguistic and cultural identity of Ado Ekiti as a Yoruba-speaking environment. Most sellers and buyers were native speakers of Yoruba, making it the lingua franca of market communication. Typical greetings and expressions in Yoruba were frequently heard during observation. Examples are:

“È kaaro oo, se alaafia ni” (Good morning, hope you are doing good)

“È ku ojumo o oni asan wa o” (good morning, it shall be well with us today)

“È kú àtàárò o, se aje nwa? (How is sales going?)

“Atajere oja o” (Market will move today)

These greetings are not merely transactional; they carry cultural meanings that express respect, familiarity, and goodwill important values in Yoruba social life.

Furthermore, Yoruba is used to express emotions, cultural idioms, and persuasive appeals during bargaining. For instance, a trader said:

“Aunty mi, ebami wo oja mi, Ayo le bale o”

Translation: (Buy my goods aunty, you will meet home with joy),

To appeal to the buyer’s emotions and moral values.

Thus, Yoruba serves as a cultural and relational language, used not only to exchange goods but also to reinforce social bonds and mutual trust between sellers and buyers.

2. Ekiti Yoruba Dialect

Ekiti Yoruba refers to the kind of Yoruba spoken in Ekiti. It is a distinct dialect of the Yoruba language spoken predominantly in Ekiti State, including in Ado Ekiti, where the selected markets (Oja Oba, Oja Bisi. and Oja Agric) are located. It exhibit unique phonological, lexical, and sociolinguistic features, which influence how sellers and buyers communicate.

In the context of Ado Ekiti markets, Ekiti Yoruba is not merely a medium of transaction; it functions as a marker of local identity, solidarity, and cultural knowledge, playing a central role in bargaining, persuasion, and interaction.

A trader in Oja Oba greets a returning buyer:

“*Inokun ooo, eye seun, kin fe bami ra?*”

Translation: “Good morning, mummy seun, what do you want to buy?”

The use of “*eye seun*” (mummy seun) reflects local affection and social closeness. Greetings in Ekiti Yoruba signals shared identity and social cohesion, important for establishing trust before bargaining begins.

3. Pidgin as a Bridge Language

The second most widely used language is Pidgin English, commonly referred to as “Pidgin.” It is employed when the participants do not share a common first language. Pidgin functions as a bridge language, promoting inclusivity and understanding across ethnic boundaries.

For example, based on observation, an Hausa seller interacting with a Yoruba buyer are the following conversation ensued:

Buyer - “*How far Aboki na, How market?*”

Seller - *"Madam, wetin you wan buy?"*

Buyer - *"You get water melon?"*

Seller - *"How much you wan buy?"*

Seller - *"I go give you better price."*

These utterances were frequent, especially in situations involving strangers or non-Yoruba speakers. The use of Pidgin is often accompanied by gestures, smiles, or laughter, which help to establish rapport and a friendly atmosphere.

According to Interactional Sociolinguistics, such language choices serve as contextualization cues that help both parties interpret the social intent behind the message whether it is persuasion, friendliness, or negotiation.

4. English as a Formal or Prestige Language

English is less common in day-to-day bargaining; it is used in situations requiring formality, clarity, or prestige. Sellers often switch to English when addressing buyers who appear educated, elite, or unfamiliar with local languages.

Even though Yoruba (especially the Ekiti dialect) is the main language spoken in Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric, English also plays an important role. In Ado Ekiti markets, English is seen as a formal and respected language. People often link it with education, civilization, and higher social status.

English is not the language most sellers use every day, but it is used in special situations especially when sellers want to show respect, appear professional, or attract certain types of buyers. The use of English shows how people use language to express social position and identity.

From observation and interviews, English is mostly used in specific situations, not all the time. Sellers and buyers speak English when:

- i. Talking to educated or high-class buyers.
- ii. Selling expensive or imported goods.
- iii. Speaking with non-Yoruba buyers who do not understand the local dialect.
- iv. Trying to sound polite, trustworthy, or modern.

v. Writing advertisements or labels for their products.

Therefore, English in the markets is more of a prestige or image language used to show class and respect rather than for everyday talk. Examples of English Use in the Markets

Example 1: Showing Respect and Politeness. At Oja Agric, a trader greets a well-dressed buyer:

“Good morning, sister. You are welcome. How can I help you today?”

The seller uses English to sound polite and professional. The choice of language helps to show respect and create a formal relationship with the buyer.

Example 2: Promoting Products with English Words. A fabric seller at Oja Oba advertises her goods and she said:

“Mummy this gown is from turkey, High quality guaranteed!”

The word, high quality is used to make the goods sound expensive and modern. The use of English helps to create a sense of quality and class.

Example 3: English as a Common Ground. A Yoruba seller speaking with an Igbo buyer at Oja Agric said:

“Madam, I assure you, you can trust me. This is original”

Both the seller and buyer speak different native languages, they use English to understand each other better and also serves as a neutral language that connects people from different ethnic groups.

Example 4: To Show Education Level and Status. During an interview, a seller at Oja Oba said:

“I like to speak English because it shows I went to school. buyers respect you more when you speak it.”

To this seller, English is not just a language it is a symbol of education and social respect. Speaking English makes her feel confident and respected by others.

In these markets, people use English strategically to fit certain situations. According to Interactional Sociolinguistics, speakers choose their language based on the kind of relationship or impression they want to create. When sellers use English, it shows a change in tone from casual Yoruba to formal communication. Switching to English helps speakers sound educated and polite, and sometimes gives them more bargaining power. English also carries social meaning it tells

others that the speaker is literate, urban, or of a higher status. In this way, English does more than just help people communicate it helps them create an image and manage social relationships.

5. Igbo and Hausa as Supporting Languages

The study also revealed occasional use of Igbo and Hausa, mostly among migrant sellers and buyers who come from southeastern and northern Nigeria. These groups use their native languages either among themselves or when interacting with people who share similar backgrounds. From the field observation, an Hausa trader said:

“Nawani.” (How much?)

Such linguistic diversity illustrates the presence of ethnic pluralism within Ado Ekiti’s trading community and supports the view that markets are sites of intercultural contact and communication.

6. Other Minority Languages

Beyond the dominant languages, a few minority languages such as Igala, Edo (Benin), Urhobo, and Tiv were also occasionally observed. Migrant sellers speak these languages or visiting buyers from neighboring states like Kogi, Edo, Delta, and Benue.

Although their use was relatively infrequent, it highlights the linguistic heterogeneity and regional integration of trade networks in Ado Ekiti. For example, an Igala yam seller at Oja Oba was once heard alternating between Yoruba and Igala while addressing a Yoruba buyer, demonstrating code-switching for effective understanding.

This supports the Interactional Sociolinguistics perspective that shared contextual understanding and the need for communicative success guide language choice in conversation.

The findings revealed that language use in Ado Ekiti markets is multilingual, context-dependent, and socially constructed. Stakeholders select languages based on mutual intelligibility, relationship, and communicative goals.

The dominance of Yoruba underscores its role as both a cultural and identity language, while the flexible use of Pidgin and English illustrates speakers’ linguistic adaptability. The occasional

appearance of Igbo, Hausa, and minority languages confirms that these markets are microcosms of Nigeria's linguistic diversity.

In line with Interactional Sociolinguistics Theory, language in this setting functions not only as a medium of exchange but also as a means of constructing social meaning, negotiating relationships, and maintaining interpersonal harmony.

Thus, the multilingual patterns observed in Ado Ekiti markets reflect how communication serves both economic and sociocultural purposes within a complex network of human interaction.

4.2 What are the language strategies used by the stakeholders in the selected markets?

Findings from the fieldwork conducted in Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Oja Agric in Ado Ekiti revealed that sellers and buyers employ several language strategies to achieve communicative goals such as persuasion, bargaining, solidarity building, and politeness and all others. These strategies reflect how language functions as a social tool, shaped by the participants' intentions, relationships, and situational contexts a key concern of Interactional Sociolinguistics. These are the language strategies employed as observed and analyzed in the markets.

1. Use of Persuasive Language

Market sellers often employ persuasive and polite language to influence buyers' decisions during negotiation. For example, a seller may say, *"Madam, I'll give you the best price because you're my regular buyer."* This strategy appeals to the buyer's emotions and creates a sense of familiarity and trust. Polite expressions and positive reinforcement in market interactions help to maintain social harmony and encourage successful bargaining outcomes¹.

Market sellers frequently use polite and persuasive language to influence the buyer's decision. This includes using promises, and soft tones to appeal to emotions.

These are some of the conversations observed in Oja Oba:

"Buy it now, your children will love it"

"This cloth will make you standout in church"

“Brother mi, I will do you well; my products are good.”

“My buyer, look here now: I get better market today o.”

“Oga, please try it, you will come back for more.”

These strategies reflected the sellers awareness of social and emotional dimensions of communication. Through language, they not only sold products but also maintained relationships, created humor and affirmed shared cultural identities. In addition, persuasive statements created a sense of value and trust¹.

2. Nonverbal Communication and Gestures

Sellers and buyers use nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and body movement to complement spoken language. These cues often carry persuasive force. The examples below shows some of the nonverbal communication and gestures observed in Oja Oba, Oja Bisi and Oja Agric. A buyer frown and act disinterested to make the seller lower the price.

Some of the buyers were smiling, nodding and pretending to walk away (“acting as if leaving”) often prompts the seller to call the buyer back with a reduced price. These are subtle ways of influencing bargaining outcomes through language².

3. Code-Switching

Code-switching is one of the most common communicative strategies. Sellers and buyers shift between Ekiti Yoruba, English, and Pidgin depending on the interlocutor and the communicative purpose. This helped them to reach a wider range of buyers and to adapt to different social levels.

For instance, it was observed that sellers and buyers would begin with English,

“Good morning madam” and then switch to Yoruba or Pidgin to make bargaining easier.

A tomatoes seller at Oja Oba addresses a buyer:

“Madam, I have jollof rice today, o de dun ganni.”

Here, the trader alternates between Yoruba and English to sound friendly and persuasive. English terms like *“o de dun ganni”* enhance the appeal of the product. Code-switching allows the trader to

appear both local and sophisticated, thus broadening her appeal to different social groups. During market interactions, sellers and buyers often switch languages from one language to the other such as Yoruba, English, and Pidgin to build rapport and ensure understanding. Code-switching makes the conversation friendly and relatable. A woman in Oja Bisi said,

“she speaks the two languages at times when its necessary. She said most times it was intentional but so that the person will understand” such as:

“My friend, its too high now now, reduce am, abeg.” (English + pidgin)

“Baba mi; I wan buy meat.” (Yoruba + Pidgin)

From this interview, it shows that strategic language choice reduces social distance and enhances cooperation between market participants.

4. Code-Mixing

Unlike code-switching, code-mixing involves inserting words or expressions from one language into another within the same sentence.

At Oja Bisi, a cloth seller said:

“Aunty, this Ankara na limited edition o, you no go see am anywhere again.”

The blending of Pidgin and English creates familiarity while maintaining a sense of novelty. The phrase “limited edition” elevates the product’s status, while “you no go see am anywhere” keeps the tone conversational and engaging.

5. Greetings and Politeness Strategies

Findings from the fieldwork reveal that politeness strategies play a central role in the linguistic interactions that take place between sellers and buyers in the selected markets of Ado Ekiti. These strategies reflect the social norms, cultural expectations, and communicative competence of the market participants. The data show that both sellers and buyers employ various forms of politeness to maintain social harmony, show respect, and achieve their transactional goals without threatening the interlocutor’s face (self-image). Sellers often began their interactions with warm greetings such

as “*E kabo ma*” “*Good morning sir*” or “*My buyer, welcome!*”. These greetings showed respect, created a friendly atmosphere, and encouraged buyers to buy.

Politeness aims at creating solidarity and social closeness. It is evident in the way sellers use endearing or kinship terms such as “*Baba mi*” “*Sister*,” “*Oga*”, “*Brother mi*”, “*Egbon*”, “*Mummy*,” “*Uncle*,” and “*My buyer*” to address buyers. These expressions function as solidarity markers, softening the transaction and appealing to shared social ties.

“*Baba mi, jo binu, things are expensive now.*” (my father, please don’t be angry, I can’t go beyond that price.)

“*Uncle mi, Ejor e ba mi ra a sir.*” (Uncle, please buy it from me sir)

In this example, the trader’s use of “*Baba mi*” and the polite appeal “*jo ma binu*” depict positive politeness aimed at reducing tension and encouraging empathy. Such expressions not only sustain social cohesion but also encourage repeat patronage, as politeness contributes to buyer loyalty. The inclusion of “*E joo*” (please) and the respectful address “*sir*” conveys deference, minimizing the force of the request. politeness is particularly common among younger sellers addressing older women or men, reflecting Yoruba cultural norms of respect through linguistic form.

The patterns of politeness in Ado Ekiti markets demonstrate that language use is deeply embedded in social and cultural structures. Politeness strategies reflect gender roles, age hierarchies, and social class distinctions. Female sellers, for instance, tend to employ more positive politeness features such as terms of endearment and expressive empathy, while male sellers often use direct yet respectful forms to assert authority and efficiency. Educated sellers often mix English polite expressions (“please,” “sir,” “ma”) with Yoruba honorifics, showing a blend of languages that results from their social advancement and level of education.

In summary, politeness strategies in Ado Ekiti markets are not simply linguistic habits but social performances that sustain relationships, promote economic success, and reinforce cultural values of respect, humility, and communal harmony.

6. Praise as a Strategy for Interaction

The findings from the fieldwork reveal that praise is one of the most prominent interactional strategies used by sellers in the selected markets in Ado Ekiti. In the sociolinguistic context of the marketplace, praise performs multiple communicative and social functions. It is not merely an act of flattery but a strategic linguistic device used to attract buyers, strengthen interpersonal relationships, and influence purchasing decisions.

Sellers employ praise to create solidarity, express appreciation, and reduce social distance between themselves and their buyers. In most cases, praise is delivered spontaneously and often takes the form of compliments, terms of admiration, or positive evaluations of a buyer's appearance, taste, or purchasing habit.

The following are the forms and functions of Praise in Market Interaction;

i. Persuasive Device

Praise functions as a powerful persuasive strategy during bargaining. By commending a buyer's sense of style or purchasing choices, sellers appeal to the buyer's ego and subtly encourage patronage.

The below illustration shows the interaction between a seller and a buyer.

“Chairman, you sabi better things! This one go fit your fine skin.”

Here, the trader's use of “you sabi better things” and “fine skin” is an intentional linguistic move to compliment the buyer's taste while simultaneously promoting the product. The strategy enhances emotional connection and encourages purchase decisions without overt pressure.

ii. Solidarity Strategy

Praise is also used to build interpersonal rapport and sustain long-term relationships. Many sellers use praise to acknowledge familiar buyers, reinforcing loyalty and familiarity.

This is an example from Oja Oba market:

“Sister mi, you too dey like good things; na you go make my day o!”

This expression combines warmth and gratitude, affirming the buyer's positive identity and maintaining a cordial trading relationship.

iii. Politeness and Face-Saving Device

In bargaining situations, especially when rejecting a buyer's offer, praise often serves as a face-saving mechanism. Instead of bluntly disagreeing, sellers use praise to soften refusal and maintain harmony. The excerpt below shows an example in Oja Agric.

"Aunty wa, you be my good buyer o, but that price no go do at all."

The compliment "you be good my buyer o" cautions the rejection and keeps the conversation polite and cooperative.

iv. Cultural Expression of Respect

Praise also carries cultural significance in Yoruba interactional norms. In Yoruba culture, praise is a valued speech act associated with respect, gratitude, and social warmth. Sellers frequently employ Yoruba praise forms such as "*Ẹ kú oja*" (well done) or "*Ẹ ṣeun o*" (thank you) to show appreciation, especially after sales.

Examples from Oja Bisi, Oja Agric and Oja Oba. Some women were observed saying these to one another in these three markets.

"Ẹku oja o, se aje n wogba?"

(Well done ma, Hope There was sales today?)

"Ẹ ṣeun o, iya rere, ẹ maa pe wa maa ra oja."

(Thank you, good mother, may you live long to continue buying from us.)

Such expressions demonstrate how praise intertwines with cultural politeness and positive affect.

The use of praise as a strategy for interaction highlights the affective and relational dimensions of language in the Ado Ekiti markets. Praise operates as a verbal currency that sustains market relations and symbolizes respect, warmth, and community belonging. It also reflects gendered

communication patterns, as female sellers are observed to employ praise more frequently and elaborately than their male counterparts often linking it to emotional appeal and empathy.

Furthermore, the use of praise signifies a blend of traditional Yoruba communicative values and modern commercial strategies. Through praise, sellers not only project their linguistic creativity but also demonstrate their ability to adapt language to serve both economic and social purposes.

Flattery as a Strategy for Interaction

Flattery is a recurrent linguistic strategy used by sellers during bargaining and other transactional interactions. While praise generally expresses genuine admiration or appreciation, flattery, in this context, is a deliberate communicative strategy used to influence the interlocutor's decision or emotional state. It is a performative act designed to enhance persuasion, maintain harmony, and stimulate patronage in the highly interactive market environment.

Sellers use flattery to appeal to buyers' self-esteem and to make them feel valued or admired. The following are the forms and functions of Praise in Market Interaction.

i. Flattery Persuasive and Manipulative Strategy

Flattery often functions as a tactical linguistic tool used to persuade buyers to buy goods or accept higher prices. It is a subtle form of manipulation that relies on positive emotional appeal. A woman at Oja Oba was stated how she always adopt this strategy to her buyers when they come to her shop by saying:

"Aunty, you are too beautiful; this cloth go even make you finer!"

"My beautiful sister, this dress will fit you; and you will look like a big girl in it."

In these examples, the sellers use compliments that exaggerate the buyer's appearance or status to influence their buying decision. Such flattery creates a positive emotional environment that reduces resistance and encourages compliance.

ii. Flattery Solidarity and Familiarity Strategy

In many cases, flattery is employed not only to persuade but also to establish familiarity and maintain cordial relations. The data show that sellers often flatter returning buyers as a way of strengthening bonds and showing appreciation. A trader at Oja Oba was stated how she always adopt this strategy to her buyers. she said:

“Ehh!, my best buyer don show! You always bring me good luck.” “ I have missed you seriously o”

This type of flattery strengthens social ties, making the buyer feel special and valued. It reflects a relational function of language in market communication.

The use of flattery in Ado Ekiti markets reflects how language functions as a tool of social and economic negotiation. It demonstrates the intersection of language, culture, and commerce, where communicative competence determines economic success. Flattery serves both instrumental and interactional purposes: instrumentally, it helps achieve sales goals; interactionally, it fosters goodwill and emotional balance in social exchanges. Moreover, flattery reveals gendered patterns of speech. Female sellers tend to employ flattery more frequently and expressively, often focusing on buyers' appearance and character, while male sellers use flattery in a more subtle or humorous manner, focusing on status and success. This variation highlights the role of gender in shaping communicative behaviour in the marketplace.

Moreover, flattery reveals gendered patterns of speech. Female sellers employed flattery more frequently and expressively, often focused on buyers' appearance and character, while male sellers use flattery in a more subtle or humorous manner, focused on status and success. This variation highlights the role of gender in shaping communicative behaviour in the marketplace.

Finally, flattery has represented a form of linguistic performance, in which speakers consciously manipulate language to achieve desired social and economic outcomes. It reinforces the broader sociolinguistic observation that market discourse in Ado Ekiti is both transactional and relational, combining economic motives with cultural expressions of warmth, respect, and mutual recognition.

Humour and Playful Banter as Strategies of Interaction

Humour played a strong role in the market communication. The findings obtained from the fieldwork reveal that humour and playful banter are important interactional strategies used by both sellers and buyers in the selected markets in Ado Ekiti. In sociolinguistic terms, humour refers to the use of language to create amusement, ease tension, or strengthen social relationships, while playful banter involves light teasing, witty remarks, and verbal exchanges intended to entertain or establish familiarity.

In the marketplace context, where interactions are fast-paced and competitive, humour functions as a social lubricant, reducing tension and fostering cooperation between participants. Sellers use humour and playful banter to not only attract buyers but also to maintain friendly relationships, negotiate prices, and create a relaxed communicative atmosphere that facilitates business transactions. For instance, a trader said: *"You want me to sell it for free?"* to make the buyer smile while maintaining their price. This created a sense of shared enjoyment and cultural familiarity.

The roles of humour and playful banter as interactional strategies in the communicative use of market participants are as follows:

i. Humour Establish Rapport and Solidarity

Humour and banter are frequently used to build interpersonal closeness and a sense of belonging between sellers and buyers. They serve as positive politeness strategies, signaling friendliness, informality, and social warmth.

At Oja Bisi, a meat seller jokes below:

Trader: *"Ah, Aunty mi, you don come again? my alaroro buyer?"* Buyer:

(Laughed). *"I have come o"*

Trader (Laugh): *"Make sure you buy everything from me today!"*

This playful exchange shows how both trader and buyer use humour to reduce formality, build social connection, and make the bargaining process enjoyable. The laughter and exaggerated compliments create a mutually supportive interactional environment.

ii. Humour Soften Bargaining and Disagreement

Humour is also a strategy for mitigating disagreement during price negotiation. When a buyer offers a low price, a trader responded jokingly rather than confrontationally, thereby reduced potential conflict.

At Oja Oba, an okrika woman was observed joking with a buyer below:

Buyer: *"How much last, don't chase me now."*

Trader: *"If I tell you last price, you go run go house!"*

Here, humour was used to defuse potential tension and maintain politeness even in disagreement. Instead of rejecting the offer directly, the trader employed a humorous exaggeration that made both parties laughed and sustained harmony.

iii. To Display Wit and Verbal Skill

In Yoruba culture, as in much of Nigeria, verbal dexterity and humour were signs of intelligence and social competence. Many sellers used humour to display their linguistic creativity and quick thinking, which helped them command attention and earned respect in the marketplace. The following interactions ensued at Oja Bisi:

Trader: *"This cloth go fine on you, you resemble one celebrity in our village!"*

Buyer: *"omo... see whining"* (Laughed)

Trader: *"Whinning how,? This your face don show am already!"*

This light-hearted dialogue reflected verbal play and strategic humour that not only entertained but also flatters the buyer, making them more likely to buy.

iv. To Attract and Retain buyers

Sellers consciously used humour to create a lively and welcoming market environment that encourages patronage. The data shows that buyers returned to sellers who make them laugh or treat them kindly.

At Oja Oba a trader shouted from afar and said:

Trader shouting playfully: *“Fine aunty, come buy from me o! pick your own, no pay!”*

Such statements are hyperbolic jokes meant to attract attention, project confidence, and established goodwill.

v. To Reinforce Social and Cultural Norms

Humour in the markets draws from Yoruba cultural expressions, proverbs, and idiomatic language, reflecting the community’s shared worldview. Yoruba humour relies heavily on indirectness, metaphor, and exaggeration, which make communication engaging and contextually rich. A trader in Oja Agric and Oja Bisi said:

Trader: *“ojo aje loni o, e ma se fa aje lese!”* (Today is Aje’s day, don’t offend the goddess of wealth by pricing too low!).

Trader: *“Eni ti ko ba ra oja mi, ko ni jeun lala!”* (Whoever doesn’t buy goods won’t eat tonight!).

This humorous exaggeration is both playful and persuasive, invoking traditional beliefs to make the buyer feel involved in a shared cultural experience.

The use of humour and playful banter as interactional strategies in Ado Ekiti markets underscores the socio-pragmatic richness of market discourse. These communicative acts serve multiple sociolinguistic functions: they facilitate rapport building, conflict management, and social bonding, while also reflecting the community’s collective linguistic identity.

Humour, in this context, is not random amusement but a strategically deployed communicative tool. It is influenced by factors such as gender, age, education, and social familiarity. Female sellers tend to use humour to create warmth and relational closeness, while male sellers often employ witty or teasing humour to assert dominance or camaraderie.

Furthermore, humour contributes to the construction of a positive social atmosphere where economic activities blend seamlessly with social interaction. It mirrors the Yoruba cultural value of *ìrèpò* (togetherness) and *ìtẹ̀rība* (respectful friendliness), emphasizing that communication, even in commerce, must remain socially grounded and emotionally intelligent.

Use of Proverbs and Idioms as Interactional Strategies

Proverb were used to add wisdom, humor and cultural depth to conversation. For example, a trader said “*E ru ni baba, ona lo jin*” which mean (A slave originated from somewhere but the place is far)

In Yoruba sociolinguistic tradition, proverbs (òwe) and idioms (àlàyé or àsà) are repositories of wisdom and social values, often used to reinforce arguments, persuade interlocutors, or soften disagreement.

Their usage in the marketplace reflects the deeply rooted oral culture of the Yoruba people, where communication is not merely transactional but also performative, symbolic, and relational. The strategic use of proverbs and idioms transforms ordinary bargaining exchanges into acts of cultural performance, enabling speakers to display intelligence, social awareness, and verbal creativity.

4.3 What are the socio-cultural factors that influence language use in the selected markets?

The study revealed that several sociocultural factors influenced the way sellers and buyers used language in the selected markets. These factors included gender, age, level of education, and social class. Each of these shaped how people spoke, the words they chose, and the kind of relationship they built during market interactions.

1. Gender

Gender played an important role in how people communicated in the markets. The findings showed that male and female sellers used language differently because of cultural expectations and social roles. Female sellers were generally more polite, friendly, and emotional in their speech. They used kind and caring words to make buyers feel respected and valued. For instance, a female trader at Oja Agric said she sometimes called one of her regular male buyers “*iyawo mi*”(my wife) or

“*Oko mi*” (my husband) to make him laugh and encourage him to keep buying from her. Another trader at Oja Bisi said she often used words like “*aburo mi*” (my younger one) or “*padi mi*” (my friend) to show affection and friendliness.

These examples showed that women used language not just to sell goods but also to build trust and long-term relationships with buyers. Their way of speaking reflected Yoruba cultural beliefs that women should be gentle, respectful, and peaceful in communication.

Male sellers, on the other hand, were found to be more direct and firm in their speech. They focused more on the business aspect of the conversation. Some male sellers used humor to make their points, especially when buyers complained about prices. One trader jokingly said, “*Ah! Does she want me to give it free?*” when a buyer told him the price was too high. This kind of response helped to reduce tension while also showing confidence. It was also observed that female sellers switched between Yoruba, Pidgin, and English more often than men to make sure everyone understood them. They were more flexible and friendly in communication, while male sellers were more focused on negotiation and results.

In conclusion, gender shaped how people used language, with women using it to express care and build relationships, and men using it to show confidence and control.

2. Age

Age also had a strong influence on language use in the markets. The study found that older and younger sellers communicated differently based on their experiences and social upbringing.

Older sellers from observation preferred to speak Yoruba and used polite greetings and honorifics to show respect. Expressions like “*E kaabo ma*” and “*E kaaro sir*” were common among them. They believed that polite speech brought blessings and showed good manners.

Younger sellers, however, were more relaxed and modern in their speech. They mixed Yoruba, English, and Pidgin freely, especially when talking to young buyers. They also used slang and jokes to make conversations lively. For them, mixing languages made communication easier and more appealing to a wider group of people. Older sellers sometimes complained that young people no longer spoke Yoruba with the same level of respect. However, the younger sellers believed that

their way of speaking helped them relate better with modern buyers. In short, age determined how formal or casual communication was. Older people were more traditional and respectful in their speech, while younger people were more flexible, using language that reflected modern life and exposure to the media.

3. Level of Education

The level of education of sellers and buyers also affected the way they spoke in the markets. Educated sellers often used English or mixed it with Yoruba to sound polite and knowledgeable. They used English greetings like “*Good morning, sir*” or “*You are welcome, ma*” before switching to Yoruba to continue the discussion. This made them appear respectful and professional.

Less educated sellers mostly used Yoruba or Pidgin English. They preferred simple, direct communication and focused on making buyers understand them clearly. Their main goal was to make sales, not to impress with grammar.

Educated sellers were also more careful with their speech. They avoided rude words and used polite expressions to show respect. They easily adjusted their language to fit different buyers speaking more English with educated buyers and Yoruba or Pidgin with others.

Sellers with less education relied more on humor, flattery, and friendly Yoruba expressions to appeal to buyers. They used language to build closeness and trust rather than to show formality. Overall, the study found that education helped sellers to communicate in a more flexible and polite way. It also influenced their choice of words and their ability to switch between languages depending on the situation.

4. Social Class

Social class was another factor that influenced language use in the markets. The way sellers spoke often reflected their level of wealth, confidence, and social standing.

Sellers who belonged to a higher social class or who sold expensive goods tended to use English or a mix of English and Yoruba. They did this to show that they were educated and successful.

Their speech was often calm, polite, and formal. Buyers who spoke English also saw them as professional and trustworthy.

Sellers from lower social classes, especially those selling cheaper goods, mostly used Yoruba and Pidgin. Their communication was lively, full of jokes, and very expressive. They often used friendly terms like “*my friend*,” “*sister*,” or “*mama*” to build quick relationships with buyers. From the observation, buyers also adjusted their speech depending on whom they were speaking to. Many used English with sellers they considered educated or rich, but used Yoruba or Pidgin with those who seemed to be from their own social level.

The study showed that English was used to express status and prestige, while Yoruba and Pidgin showed friendliness and belonging. No matter their class, sellers used language to achieve understanding, attract buyers, and maintain social relationships. In summary, the study found that sociocultural factors such as gender, age, level of education, and social class strongly influenced how people used language in the markets.

- i. Gender shaped politeness and the level of friendliness in speech.
 - ii. Age affected the level of formality and traditional respect.
 - iii. Education influenced language mixing and the use of polite forms.
 - iv. Social class determined how people used language to show confidence, prestige, and belonging.
- These findings showed that language in Ado Ekiti markets was not used at random. It reflected people’s backgrounds, experiences, and social positions. Through their language choices, sellers and buyers expressed who they were, how they related to others, and what they valued in their community.

This chapter presented the data collected from three selected markets in Ado Ekiti: Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Agric Market. The aim was to describe and analyze how sellers and buyers used language in their daily interactions. The data were presented in line with the study’s three research questions: The data were organized thematically and supported with examples drawn from field observations and interviews with sellers and buyers. The presentation followed the framework of Interactional

Sociolinguistics, which explains how language use is influenced by social context, shared meaning, and cultural background.

The research covered three major markets in Ado Ekiti Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Agric Market. These markets were selected because they represent the economic and linguistic diversity of the city.

Oja Oba is the central market and the largest, attracting sellers and buyers from across Ekiti State and neighboring towns.

Oja Bisi is a popular foodstuff and household goods market known for its interactive bargaining and mixed-language communication.

Agric Market, located near the state capital's outskirts, is dominated by farmers and middlemen who bring agricultural produce from nearby villages.

Each market reflected the multilingual and multicultural character of Ado Ekiti. Sellers came from different linguistic backgrounds mainly Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and minority groups while buyers ranged from students and civil servants to artisans and farmers.

The data were presented both descriptively and illustratively. Descriptive presentation explained patterns observed, while illustrative presentation used direct quotations from participants to show how language operated in context.

The information was gathered through participant observation, audio-recorded interviews, and field notes taken during market visits. The data were transcribed, translated where necessary, and grouped according to major themes reflecting the research questions. Quotations were presented in their original language with English translation in parentheses.

The study involved 30 participants: 18 sellers and 12 buyers. Out of these, 20 were female and 10 were male. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 65 years. Educational backgrounds also varied, from those with no formal education to university graduates. The tables below show a summary of the participants' demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Sellers	Buyers	Total
Male	6	4	10
Female	12	8	20
Total	18	12	30

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Range

Age Range	Sellers	Buyers	Total
20 - 35 years	8	5	13
36 - 50 years	7	4	11
51 years and above	3	3	6
Total	18	12	30

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Level

Educational Level	Sellers	Buyers	Total
No Formal Education	5	0	5
Primary/Secondary	9	5	14
Tertiary	4	7	11
Total	18	12	30

The tables above show that most sellers were women between the ages of 30 and 50, and that the educational levels varied. This diversity affected how language was used in their daily communication.

This data shows that the dominant language in all the selected markets is Yoruba, being the

indigenous and most widely understood language in Ado Ekiti. However, Pidgin and English were also used, especially when interacting with non-Yoruba speakers. Other languages such as Igbo and Hausa were used occasionally among sellers from those ethnic backgrounds.

For instance, a trader at Oja Bisi explained:

“I use Yoruba most times, but if I notice my buyer doesn’t understand, I switch to Pidgin so that we can understand each other.”

This showed that language choice depended on the buyer’s background and the need for effective communication. The presence of multiple languages illustrated the multilingual nature of the markets, where sellers used language as a flexible tool for business, identity, and social connection. Sellers employed several language strategies to attract buyers, build relationships, and negotiate sales. The most common strategies observed were praise and flattery, humour, code-switching, repetition, politeness, and proverbs.

For example, one female trader at Oja Agric said: “I call some buyers oko mi (my husband) just to make them laugh and to make sure they come back.”

Another trader remarked jokingly:

“Ah! Does she want me to give her for free?” when a buyer complained that her goods were expensive. Such utterances reflected how humor and flattery were used to reduce tension and create friendly rapport.

Additionally, repetition was used for emphasis and persuasion. A trader might repeatedly say,

“Buy it now, buy it now, you will not see this kind again,”

To emphasize the uniqueness of her product.

These strategies aligned with the principles of Interactional Sociolinguistics, showing that meaning is not just in words but also in the social cues and intentions behind them.

The study revealed that language use in the selected markets was influenced by several sociocultural factors, notably gender, age, social class, and level of education.

Gender: Female sellers tended to use more polite and emotional expressions, such as terms of endearment (aburo mi, oko mi, padi mi), to appeal to buyers’ emotions. Male sellers, on the other

hand, often used more direct or joking expressions, focusing on bargaining strength and familiarity.

Age: Younger sellers often mixed English and Pidgin with Yoruba, while older sellers relied mostly on Yoruba and proverbs to express wisdom and experience.

Education and Class: Educated sellers used English and code-switching to present themselves as knowledgeable or “modern,” while sellers with less education stuck to Yoruba or Pidgin for accessibility.

For example, a young female trader said:

“Good morning ma, E jor, come and see my fresh tomatoes.”

This code-mixed greeting reflected both politeness and her educational exposure.

These findings showed that sociocultural identities strongly influenced language choice and communication style in the market.

Context played an important role in determining how sellers communicated. Language choice changed based on the relationship between buyer and seller, the type of product, and the emotional tone of the interaction. Sellers adjusted their language to suit the mood friendly, persuasive, humorous, or serious depending on the buyer’s attitude. This supported the Interactional Sociolinguistics view that meaning in conversation depends on shared background knowledge, situational cues, and cultural expectations.

In summary, this chapter presented the data gathered from three major markets in Ado Ekiti. The data revealed that language use in these markets was multilingual, strategic, and context-dependent. Yoruba, Pidgin, and English were the main languages of interaction, while sociocultural factors such as gender, age, education, and class influenced language choice. Sellers creatively used linguistic strategies such as humor, flattery, repetition, and code-switching to attract buyers and sustain social relationships. The findings provided the foundation for the next chapter, which analyzed and discussed these patterns in relation to the study’s theoretical framework and research objectives.

4.4 Influence of Context and Relationship

The study found that the context of interaction and the relationship between sellers and buyers also

influenced language use. Sellers spoke differently to regular buyers than to first-time buyers. With regular buyers, they used informal greetings, jokes, and nicknames such as “My buyer,” “*awemi*” (means my friend in Ekiti dialect) “*Oremi*,” (my friend) or “*Mama Tobi*.” However, when speaking to new buyers, sellers were more formal and polite until familiarity was established. In heated bargaining situations, language could become firmer, but humor was often used to ease tension.

This showed that market communication depended on the level of relationship and social closeness between participants, a key concept in interactional sociolinguistics.

4.5 Summary of Findings

Research Question One: The main languages used were Ekiti Yoruba, Yoruba, English, and Pidgin. Yoruba dominated because it was the common language of the community, while Pidgin and English served as bridge and prestige languages.

Research Question Two: Sellers used strategies like greetings, flattery, humor, repetition, persuasion, and code-switching to attract buyers and maintain relationships.

Research Question Three: Sociocultural factors such as gender, age, level of education, social class, and context shaped how people spoke. Women were friendlier, men were firmer, older sellers more formal, younger ones more relaxed, educated sellers more polite, and social class influenced the choice of English or Yoruba.

In general, language use in Ado Ekiti markets was shaped by social relations, shared cultural knowledge, and communicative goals.

4.6 Discussion in Relation to Interactional Sociolinguistics Theory

The findings of this study supported the ideas of Interactional Sociolinguistics³. The frequent use of code-switching, humor, greetings, and shared cultural expressions confirmed that meaning in communication depended on social context and shared understanding between speakers.

sellers and buyers did not simply exchange words they exchanged social meanings. Every joke, greeting, or switch between languages carried a social message about respect, familiarity, or persuasion.

The findings also agreed that language use in everyday settings reflects power, identity, and belonging. In the market, sellers used language to position themselves as friendly, trustworthy, or authoritative depending on who they were speaking to².

Therefore, market interaction in Ado Ekiti demonstrated how language functions not only as a tool for trade but also as a reflection of the community's cultural values and social relationships.

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Endnotes

1. Akinwotu, A., O. Akinola, and O. Adegbenro. *Language and Culture in Market Discourse: A Sociolinguistic Perspective on Yoruba Speech Events*. Ibadan: **University of Ibadan Press**. 2025
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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

This chapter presents the summary of the study, the major findings, and conclusions, contributions to knowledge, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. The discussion was based on the results of the data analysis in Chapter Four and addressed the three research questions guiding the study. The study employed the Interactional Sociolinguistics Theory by John Gumperz, which explains how meaning in communication is constructed through contextual cues, shared cultural knowledge, and situational appropriateness. This theoretical approach guided the interpretation of how sellers and buyers in Ado Ekiti markets used language to achieve various communicative goals. The study titled “A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Language Use in Selected Markets in Ado Ekiti” examined the multilingual and interactional dynamics of communication among sellers, buyers, apprentices, and market leaders in three major markets Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, and Agric Market. The study sought to identify the languages used by market stakeholders, the language strategies they employed, and the sociocultural factors that influenced their language choices.

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study. Data were collected through interviews and direct observation of communicative practices in the markets. The analysis revealed that communication in the selected markets was not only a commercial activity but also a social and cultural exchange where language served both transactional and relational purposes.

The findings revealed that the Ekiti dialect of Yoruba, English, and Pidgin were the dominant languages of communication in the selected markets. Yoruba served as the primary medium of interaction due to its cultural relevance and the fact that most stakeholders were native speakers. English and Pidgin were used as supplementary languages, especially when dealing with non-Yoruba speakers or buyers of higher social standing. Educated sellers often combined English politeness markers with Yoruba honorifics, reflecting linguistic hybridity influenced by education and social mobility. This demonstrated that language use in the markets was context- driven and

motivated by the need for understanding, inclusion, and persuasion.

The study also revealed that sellers and buyers employed a range of pragmatic and communicative strategies to maintain social harmony, attract patronage, and negotiate successfully. These strategies included greetings, politeness, praise, flattery, humor, joking, code-switching, and the use of kinship terms. For instance, a trader at Oja Bisi mentioned that she sometimes called a buyer “*aburo mi*” (my younger one) or “*padi mi*” (my friend) to show familiarity and affection. A trader at Agric Market narrated that when buyers complained about prices, she would jokingly ask, “*Ah! Do you want me to give it free?*” Similarly, another trader addressed a regular male buyer as “*Oko mi*” (my husband) to make him laugh and ensure continued patronage. These examples showed that humor, endearment, and politeness were used to reduce tension, express friendliness, and build lasting relationships.

It was also observed that code-switching and code-mixing were common strategies used to enhance understanding and adapt to the linguistic identity of the interlocutor. Through these strategies, sellers managed to balance business communication with social warmth and cultural etiquette, demonstrating how market language operated within broader sociocultural norms.

The study found that gender, level of education, social class, and age significantly influenced the choice and style of language among market participants. Female sellers tended to use more emotive and polite expressions, while male sellers were often more direct and assertive. Educated sellers switched more easily between English and Yoruba, often incorporating English terms to display status and sophistication, while less-educated sellers relied more on Yoruba and Pidgin for ease of communication.

Age also played a crucial role: older sellers preferred traditional Yoruba honorifics and culturally appropriate greetings, whereas younger sellers used more slang and informal expressions, influenced by modern communication patterns. Social class further shaped language use, as sellers of higher economic standing displayed linguistic forms that reflected prestige and confidence, while others focused on building rapport through informal and friendly speech.

These findings confirmed that language use in the markets was not random but socially conditioned. The interactional choices of sellers reflected their awareness of cultural norms and social relationships.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that language use in Ado Ekiti markets was a reflection of social, cultural, and economic realities. Communication among sellers and buyers was guided by mutual understanding of sociocultural expectations and shared linguistic norms. Language was used not only to conduct transactions but also to express identity, show respect, and maintain interpersonal relationships.

It was further established that the linguistic behavior of market participants illustrated the principles of interactional sociolinguistics, as meanings were co-constructed through context, tone, humor, and politeness. The multilingual nature of the markets represented a blend of tradition and modernity where Yoruba symbolized cultural continuity, English reflected education and prestige, and Pidgin bridged linguistic diversity.

In essence, the market functioned as a microcosm of society where language served as a social tool for negotiation, persuasion, and identity construction. This confirmed that language in everyday life is a vital means through which individuals build relationships, reinforce cultural values, and sustain community harmony.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- i. Sellers and market stakeholders should be encouraged to appreciate the multilingual nature of their communicative environment and develop proficiency in the three dominant languages Yoruba, English, and Pidgin to enhance understanding and inclusivity.
- ii. Market associations and local authorities should organize communication workshops to sensitize sellers to the importance of politeness, humor, and respect in their dealings

with buyers.

- iii. Efforts should also be made to preserve Yoruba cultural expressions such as greetings and honorifics, as they promote respect, unity, and cultural continuity.
- iv. Language policy planners should recognize the practical roles that indigenous languages play in informal economic activities and integrate them into broader discussions of language policy and community development.
- v. In addition, both male and female sellers should be encouraged to adopt gender-sensitive and respectful language practices to foster cooperation and positive interaction in market settings.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has contributed to the understanding of language as a tool of social interaction within informal economic spaces. It provided empirical evidence that market communication is not merely transactional but also relational and symbolic. The study deepened the application of Interactional Sociolinguistics to a Nigerian context by demonstrating how language choices are influenced by sociocultural factors such as gender, age, class, and education. It also highlighted that language use in the markets of Ado Ekiti represents a unique form of linguistic creativity, where sellers display adaptability and social awareness through their speech.

The research has thus enriched sociolinguistic knowledge by showing that the market space functions as an interactive linguistic community governed by social norms, cultural values, and shared communicative strategies.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

This study focused on language use in three selected markets in Ado Ekiti. Therefore, further research could expand the scope to other Yoruba-speaking communities or compare language use across different ethnic or urban settings. Future studies could also examine non-verbal communication strategies such as gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice in market interactions.

Researchers could explore the impact of digital technology and social media on trading language, as many sellers now engage buyers through online platforms. Another area of interest would be a longitudinal study on how modernization and educational advancement continue to shape market language practices. Additionally, gender-based ethnographic studies could be conducted to further understand how male and female sellers negotiate identity and power through language use.

This study affirmed that the marketplace in Ado Ekiti is more than an economic center; it is a linguistic and cultural arena where speakers express identity, build relationships, and sustain community ties through language. Language in this context is both a means of communication and a reflection of cultural heritage, revealing the intelligence, adaptability, and social awareness of the people.

The study ultimately demonstrated that market interactions offer valuable insights into how language operates as a living social phenomenon, reflecting the dynamic interplay between culture, communication, and human relationships.

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EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED WITH DATES:

Lead City University, Ibadan 2023 – till date
Lead City University, Ibadan 2016 – 2019
Community High School, Orin-Odo, Ikole-Ekiti 2011
Ife Oluwa Model College, Iyin-Ekiti 2010

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS OBTAINED WITH DATES:

Master of Arts (M. A) in English & Literary Studies (Thesis) In view
Bachelor of Arts (B.A. Ed) English 2019
West African Senior School Certificate 2011
West African Senior School Certificate 2010

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION OBTAINED WITH DATES:

Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) 2019
Associate Member, Institute of Personality Development & buyer
Relationship Management 2019

CONFERENCE/SEMINAR ATTENDED:

Entrepreneur Conference, Lead City University and Rocworld
Consulting Services 2019

WORK EXPERIENCE:

August 2012 – January 2013

Community High School, Iyara-Ijumu, Kogi State

Class Teacher

DUTIES

Educated students through lesson planning and curriculum development
Assessed students learning and progress
Collaborated with administrative units
Facilitated learning by delivering classes

September 2014 – July 2016

Golden Triangle Nursery and Primary School, Ago-Aduloju, Ado-Ekiti

Class Teacher

DUTIES

Taught, prepared lesson plans and curriculum
Administered tests/examinations and evaluated results
Assisted with the smooth running of the school by working with the administrative units
Conducted assigned classes at scheduled times
Planned and implemented effective classroom management practices

September 2017 – March 2018

Community High School, Challenge, Ibadan

Class Teacher

DUTIES

Planned and prepared appropriately the assigned topics
Conducted assigned classes at scheduled times
Planned and implemented effective classroom management practices
Promoted students' intrinsic motivation by providing meaningful and progressively challenging learning experiences

December 2019 – October 2020

Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo, Ondo State

Office Assistant (NYSC)

DUTIES

Answered telephones, routed calls, took messages and correspondences
Opened and routed incoming mails
Distributed correspondences and other materials to department staff/faculty
Copied and duplicated materials as requested
Established, maintained and processed files, records and other documents

September 2021 – January 2023

Sunshine Diamond International School, Ibadan

Class Teacher/Head, Nursery Dept.

DUTIES

Developed an effective education programme to meet all students requirements
Designed and implemented lesson plans
Ensured compliance to all students learning styles
Performed assessment of all students being taught
Maintained confidentiality of all students' records
Ensured compliance to all school systems and board of education policies

February 2023 till date

Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti

Admin. Officer

DUTIES

Answered telephones, routed calls, took messages and correspondences
Opened and routed incoming mails
Distributed correspondences and other materials to department staff/faculty
Copied and duplicated materials as requested
Established, maintained and processed files, records and other documents

Part-Time Lecturing – Language and Communication Department

Crafted personalized learning experiences to unlock students' full potential
Facilitated the development of critical thinking and communication skills
Nurtured a passion for learning and a lifelong love of language

Empowered students to become confident and successful communicators

JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Impoliteness in selected Headlines of Court and Crime Columns in the Nigerian Tribune: By Esther Senayon, Ph.D and Babalola O. A., Lead City University, @ Editorial Board of the Lead Journal of Languages and Literature, (LJLL) Vol.2, N0. 1, 2024.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Background Information

1. What is your name (optional)?
2. What is your age range?
3. What is your occupation in the market (trader, buyer, transporter, etc.)?
4. How long have you been trading or participating in this market?
5. Which market do you operate or shop in Oja Oba, Oja Bisi, or Oja Agric?

Section B: Questions Related to Objective One

6. What languages do you usually speak when interacting in the market?
7. Which language do you use most frequently when talking to buyers or sellers?
8. Do you sometimes switch between languages while trading? If yes, why?
9. Are there particular situations or people that make you change from one language to another (for example, from Yoruba to English or Pidgin)?
10. Do you think the choice of language affects how successful a transaction is?

Section C: Questions Related to Objective Two

11. How do you persuade buyers to buy your goods or to agree to a price?
12. What common expressions or phrases do sellers and buyers use when bargaining?
13. Do sellers use any jokes, greetings, or praise names when negotiating?
14. Are there times when you use nonverbal strategies (e.g., gestures, tone, or body language) to communicate during bargaining?
15. How do you make your speech friendly or respectful to encourage buyers to buy from you?

Section D: Questions Related to Objective Three

16. Do men and women speak differently when negotiating in the market? In what ways?
17. Does age influence how people speak or the kind of language they use in the market?
18. Do you think a person's level of education affects the language they choose during trading?
19. How does social status or class affect the way, sellers and buyers interact?

20. Are there cultural values or norms that guide how people should speak in the market?
21. Do you think respect, seniority, or familiarity affect how language is used in market communication?

Section E: Closing Questions

22. In your opinion, why do you think people use different languages or mix languages in the market?
23. How important do you think language is to successful trading and buyer relationships in the market?
24. What do you think can be done to improve communication among sellers and buyers?

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