

# Exploring Cultural Variation In Traditional Greetings: a Comparative Study of Iwaro-Oka and Ikare Akoko Communities in Ondo State, Nigeria

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**Abstract.** This study explores the cultural variations in traditional greetings between the Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko communities of Ondo State, Nigeria, highlighting their socio-linguistic and cultural significance. Rooted in Yoruba culture, greetings transcend mere pleasantries, serving as vehicles for expressing respect, social hierarchy, and cultural identity. The study uses qualitative research methods to examine variations in greeting practices, comparing phonological, lexical, and syntactic differences while preserving the shared cultural essence. Data collected from elders in both communities emphasise the context-specific forms of greetings, morning, afternoon, and evening salutations, as well as their unique linguistic adaptations like "Emooku ojumo" in Ikare and "Ewin-karo" in Iwaro-Oka.

Politeness Theory and Speech Act Theory serve as theoretical frameworks, revealing that greetings are performative acts fostering social cohesion and maintaining respect. Non-verbal elements, such as kneeling or prostrating, further illustrate Yoruba greetings' communal and hierarchical nature. Despite the linguistic divergence, both communities are culturally committed to fostering interpersonal relationships and upholding social values.

The findings indicate that while globalisation and modern influences have shifted traditional practices, these communities continue emphasising the cultural importance of greetings. The study underscores the need for preservation efforts, recommending documentation, inclusion in educational curricula, and promotion through modern media platforms to maintain these practices' linguistic and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, this comparative study demonstrates how greetings, as socio-linguistic tools, reflect the dynamic interplay between culture and language. By documenting these practices, the research contributes to understanding and preserving Yoruba cultural traditions in the face of modernisation and global linguistic influences.

**Keywords:** Greetings; Yoruba Culture; Respect; Social Hierarchy; Linguistic Variation; Cultural Identity.

## INTRODUCTION

Greetings are fundamental aspects of human communication, deeply rooted in cultural con-

texts. They serve as social rituals that establish and maintain community relationships, encapsulating the essence of social interactions. Greetings

carry symbolic meanings in every culture and reflect social norms and values. In the Yoruba culture of Nigeria, greetings hold a particularly significant place as they are not merely forms of welcome but expressions of respect, social hierarchy, and cultural identity. This study focuses on the greetings of Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, two prominent towns in the Akoko region of Ondo State, Nigeria. By understanding the nuances of these greetings, we gain valuable insights into these communities' social fabric and cultural practices.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a greeting is something you say or do to welcome somebody. However, in Yoruba culture, a greeting transcends this simple definition. It is a fundamental way to express warm affection and respect for one another. Greetings occur in various contexts, including interactions between husbands and wives, children and parents, siblings, neighbours, and friends. In Yoruba society, greetings reflect the community's values and are vital to daily life [1].

One distinctive feature of Yoruba greetings is the inclusion of a smile, which conveys warmth and friendliness. Even amid everyday activities such as eating, a Yoruba person will often invite others to join with the phrase "E wa jeun," meaning "Come and eat" [2]. This practice highlights the communal nature of Yoruba culture, where hospitality and inclusivity are highly valued.

Respect is a cornerstone of Yoruba greetings. A well-cultured Yoruba boy will greet his parents or elders by prostrating on the floor, while a girl will kneel. This tradition is deeply ingrained in Yoruba culture and serves as a physical manifestation of respect. Elders typically acknowledge these greetings with warm responses such as "Pele Omoluwabi," meaning "Welcome, my dear child" [3]. This interaction emphasises the mutual respect and affection that underpin Yoruba social relationships.

Respect in greetings is common across many African cultures, not just among the Yoruba. In Yoruba land, people place a strong emphasis on respectful greetings. For example, individuals must not stand while greeting elders, as doing so is frowned upon and may lead to admonishment. This practice underscores the importance placed on social hierarchies and the appropriate demonstration of respect within the community [4].

Yoruba greetings often begin with "E," a marker of respect when addressing someone older. Common examples include "E kale" for "Good evening," "E pele" for "Sorry," and "E ku ise" for "Well done" [5]. "E" symbolises respect and deference to the person being greeted. This linguistic feature is a testament to the deeply embedded cultural norms governing Yoruba society's social interactions.

Personal experiences and cultural heritage play a significant role in shaping one's understanding of greetings. Recalling childhood memories, such as visiting a grandmother in Ikorodu, can highlight the importance of greetings in Yoruba culture. During such visits, a grandparent might respond to a child's prostration with "Oriki," a praise that celebrates the family's lineage. This practice of "Oriki" is another unique aspect of Yoruba culture, emphasising the importance of family and heritage in social interactions [6].

In contemporary times, people are noticeably changing the way they perform greetings. Influenced by modernity and evolving social norms, the younger generation often adapts traditional greetings with a more "psychedelic" style. Boys may bend halfway instead of fully prostrating, and girls might curtsy with a slight bend rather than kneeling completely. Despite these changes, the essence of respect and affection in greetings remains, although there is a concern that the traditional forms might be fading [7].

Preserving these greeting customs is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and continuity. Greetings are more than just a social formality; they convey deep respect and affection, core values in Yoruba and broader African cultures. The saying in Yoruba land that "after God, comes your parent" highlights the high regard for elders and the importance of showing respect through greetings [8].

As a Yoruba grandparent, there is a duty to uphold and pass on these cultural practices to future generations. The act of greeting with respect is a significant cultural legacy left behind by ancestors, and it is essential to keep this tradition alive. Through greetings, people perpetuate the values of warmth, respect, and community, ensuring that the cultural heritage of the Yoruba people continues to thrive [9].

In conclusion, this study aims to explore the intricacies of greetings in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-

Oka Akoko, examining how these practices reflect the broader cultural and social dynamics of Yoruba society. By delving into the various forms and contexts of greetings, we can better understand their role in maintaining social cohesion and cultural identity in these communities.

*Brief History of Ikare Akoko.* The history of Ikare reveals a rich and complex origin story intertwined with myths, migration, and power struggles. Ikare, located in the Akoko region of Ondo State, Nigeria, is said to have been founded by Prince Agbaode, one of the numerous children of Oduduwa, the progenitor of the Yoruba people. Agbaode, known as the Owa Ale, left Ile-Ife around the 13th century with family members during the dispersal of Yoruba princes from Ile-Ife, establishing new settlements. "Owa Ale" translates to "a ruler who does not succumb to problems," reflecting Agbaode's strong character and resilience as he confronted other princes while dividing their father's heritage, notably crowns.

The migration journey of Agbaode and his people took them through various towns, including Ifon, Ikere-Ekiti, and Ado-Ekiti, before finally settling in a transit location near present-day Ikare. Some historical accounts suggest the name "Ikare" was derived from the presence of a tree known as Igi-Akere, home to many weaver birds, in the area where they settled. Another theory holds that the name originated from the phrase Ikaore, meaning "wicked friend", about a power struggle between two leaders during the early days of the settlement. Over time, Ikaore was corrupted to Ikare.

Ikare's traditional rulership has long been controversial, particularly between the Owa Ale and the Olukare families. While the Owa Ale is believed to have led the initial settlement, the Olukare family later became influential, leading to a power struggle. According to one account, the ancestor of the Olukare family, Umar Etimogbo, a migrant from Biba Emirate in Northern Nigeria, settled in Ikare during the reign of the 8th Owa Ale, Orukusuku. Initially a non-native, Umar was settled in the lowland area of Ikare and was later appointed as the Owa Ale's messenger during the colonial indirect rule system. Over time, Umar Etimogbo's position evolved, leading to the recognition of the title "Olukare" by colonial authorities, a title which ultimately sparked a longstanding kingship tussle between the two ruling families.

The power struggle in Ikare mirrors similar historical conflicts in other Yoruba towns like Ado Ekiti and Ikere Ekiti, where early ruling houses were gradually relegated to secondary positions in local governance. The historical narrative of Ikare showcases a blend of migration, cultural identity, and leadership contests that continue to shape the town's political landscape.

*Brief History of Iwaro Oakland.* Iwaro, located within the greater Oka region, lies on a scenic plateau between latitude 3.5N and 4.60N and longitude 3.30E. Oka, the administrative centre of Akoko South West Local Government Area in Ondo State, is bounded by various towns, including Epinmi, Ipe, Akungba, Supare, Oba, and Ikun. Okaland covers about thirty square kilometres, mainly comprising a derived savanna scattered with forests. The plateau's undulating hills form part of the Kukuruku range, giving the area its topography. Iwaro, a central settlement within Okaland, is an integral part of the Oka people's rich history, shaped by its geography and resilience.

The history of Okaland, and by extension Iwaro, is rooted in migration and settlement. The name "Oka" is derived from "Okarufe," meaning Oka-Ife, symbolising the connection between Oka people and their ancestral roots in Ile-Ife, the spiritual homeland of the Yoruba people. Centuries ago, Oka people embarked on a migratory journey from Ile-Ife, passing through Ijeshaland and Ekitiland before reaching the vicinity of Imesi in the present-day Ekiti State. They eventually split into two groups: one led by Asin and another by Okikon. These groups took different paths, with Okikon's followers settling in the eastern part of the Oka hills, known today as Okaroke, and Asin's group settling in the southern region, called Okaodo. Over time, these groups merged into the Siru community, which forms the backbone of Oka.

During the inter-tribal conflict, particularly against the Nupe and Edo invasions, Okaland's strategic location on the hills provided it with natural defences, making it an unconquerable stronghold; this earned the region a reputation for military prowess and became a haven for refugees fleeing neighbouring war-torn areas. The resilience and strength of the Oka people drew numerous settlers and refugees, some of whom were absorbed or displaced by the land's original inhabitants.

The people of Iwaro and Okaland, primarily subsistence farmers due to limited arable land, cultivate crops such as yams, maize, and cassava. They also venture into the production of cash crops like cocoa, coffee, and rubber. Over the years, many residents have diversified into commerce and trades such as carpentry and bricklaying.

Touristically, Oakland, with its picturesque hills and cool climate, has long attracted visitors. The Oka hills, mainly known for their captivating formations and cooling breezes, became a favourite spot for colonial British administrators, who established a rest house on the mountain. The presence of natural springs, such as the Asawa Spring at the foot of Ojomirin Hill, adds to the town's charm, with its clean and cold water often likened to processed water. Today, the hills continue to be a pilgrimage site with spiritual significance, particularly at Oke-Maria, where the Virgin Mary is a testament to the area's religious and historical importance.

In conclusion, Iwaro, as part of the larger Okaland, represents a microcosm of Yoruba history and resilience. Its combination of historical migration, strategic geography, cultural significance, and tourism potential underscores its unique place within Ondo State's heritage.

Scholars have overlooked mainly the specific greetings of different towns within the Akoko region despite their importance in Yoruba culture. This gap in the literature leaves a significant part of the cultural heritage undocumented. By examining the greetings in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, this study aims to fill this gap and contribute to the broader understanding of Yoruba social customs.

The main objectives of this study are:

- 1) To document and analyse the various forms of greetings used, Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko were used.
- 2) To compare and contrast the greetings of the two communities.
- 3) To explore the social and cultural significance of these greetings within each community.

## Literature review

Greetings in African cultures are prominent in daily interactions and cornerstone of social etiquette, respect, and communication. Across di-

verse African societies, greetings are linguistic expressions imbued with significant cultural and social meanings. When foreigners visit African communities, they often learn a few phrases of greeting to blend into the social environment, emphasising the importance of mastering appropriate greeting behaviours. While learning the words is essential, understanding the sociocultural norms that underpin these greetings is even more critical, as communication in African societies often transcends mere vocabulary and is deeply intertwined with respect for customs and traditions.

People in African societies often use greetings to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships; this aligns with Austin's Speech Act Theory, which categorises greetings as 'expressive' within the domain of illocutionary acts [10]. According to Austin, these speech acts express one's feelings toward the hearer rather than convey literal meanings. For instance, in many African contexts, the greeting "How are you?" is a formality that expects a polite response, usually indicating well-being, regardless of the individual's emotional or physical state; this parallels greetings in other cultures, where expressions like "I'm fine" are conventional responses, even when the speaker is not feeling well [11].

However, unlike in many Western cultures, where greetings may be seen as perfunctory and often overlooked, greetings in African societies hold profound significance. They are not only expressions of politeness but also represent an individual's social upbringing. Failure to greet appropriately in African cultures, especially younger individuals toward elders, is often considered a sign of poor upbringing or lack of manners. In this regard, greetings are a marker of an individual's cultural and familial background, reflecting their adherence to societal norms and values [12].

Firth's concept of greetings as a system of signs that convey covert messages is particularly relevant in African cultures, where the greeting rituals often convey unspoken respect, humility, and social order. In many African communities, younger individuals are expected to approach elders with a respectful greeting, usually accompanied by physical gestures such as bowing or kneeling, especially in Yoruba culture. The greeting is not just a verbal exchange but a demonstration of social hierarchy and respect for age and status. This interaction goes beyond mere words,

as non-verbal cues such as tone, gestures, and body language play a significant role in communication [13].

Authors [14] politeness theory is also crucial in understanding the role of greetings in African cultures. According to this theory, greetings function as face-saving acts, where individuals strive to maintain the dignity of both the speaker and the listener during interactions; this is evident in how greetings are structured to avoid embarrassment or discomfort in African societies. The ritualised nature of greetings ensures that social harmony is maintained and no party feels disrespected or slighted; this is particularly important in communal settings where social bonds are highly valued, and the act of greeting strengthens these connections.

Despite the universality of greetings as a communicative act, they are highly culture-specific, particularly in Africa, where each community has its distinct way of greeting. For instance, in the Igbo society of Nigeria, greetings vary depending on the time of day, the status of the individual being greeted, and the occasion. It is common for elders to be greeted with specific phrases and gestures, such as "Ndeewo" in the morning or "Kedu" for general inquiries about one's well-being. These greetings are often accompanied by a handshake or bow, signifying respect and acknowledgement of the elder's authority [15].

In the context of Akoko, where Ikare and Iwaro Oka Akoko are located, greetings are deeply rooted in the traditional culture and are essential for fostering social relationships. In these communities, young people are expected to greet their elders every morning and throughout the day as a sign of respect; this is particularly significant in maintaining social harmony within the family and community. Failure to adhere to these greeting customs is often interpreted as a lack of proper upbringing, reflecting poorly on the individual and their family. This social expectation highlights the importance of greetings as a fundamental aspect of cultural identity and social cohesion in Akoko and other African societies.

Greetings are not limited to verbal expressions but often involve non-verbal communication. In some African cultures, greetings are accompanied by physical gestures such as handshakes, hugs, or even a hand kiss, depending on the social context and individual relationship. In many societies, such as the Hausa of northern Nigeria, physical contact during greetings may be re-

stricted due to religious or social norms. For instance, Muslim men and women may avoid shaking hands with members of the opposite sex as a sign of modesty and respect for religious customs [16]. These cultural nuances in greeting behaviours illustrate African societies' complex interplay between language, culture, and social norms.

Moreover, the role of greetings in African cultures is not static but has evolved, especially with the influence of modernisation and globalisation. In urban areas, greetings may be more casual, with younger generations adopting Western-style greetings such as a simple wave or nod of acknowledgement. However, in rural areas, traditional greeting customs remain strong, and individuals continue to follow established protocols, especially when interacting with elders or in formal settings. This dynamic reflects the tension between modernity and tradition in African societies, where greetings serve as a site of negotiation between old and new ways of life [17].

In conclusion, greetings in African cultures are more than just a formality; they are vital to social interaction, reflecting cultural values, social hierarchy, and respect for elders. While the words used in greetings may seem simple, the underlying cultural norms and expectations make greetings a complex and meaningful act. As foreigners interact with African communities, learning the words and appropriate greeting behaviours is essential for successful communication and social integration. Understanding the cultural specificity of greetings can help reduce misunderstandings and foster positive social relationships in African settings. Furthermore, as African societies evolve, greetings will likely continue to bridge tradition and modernity, maintaining their significance in rural and urban contexts.

*Strength and Gap in Literature.* This research demonstrates significant strengths in exploring greetings within Yoruba culture, particularly in the Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko communities. One of its primary strengths lies in the structured application of Politeness Theory, which serves as a robust framework for interpreting how greetings function in Yoruba society. Focusing on Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, the research effectively highlights how greetings operate beyond simple social exchanges, reinforcing social bonds, hierarchy, and mutual respect.

The emphasis on politeness within greetings aligns well with the core values in Yoruba culture, particularly the demonstration of respect and acknowledgement of social positions. This analysis sheds light on how greetings in Yoruba culture are critical for managing 'face', the public self-image of both the greeter and the greeted. The study examines how Yoruba people use honorifics and specific linguistic choices in both Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects, emphasising the language's role in respecting social status and maintaining harmony.

Another strength of the research is its focus on contextual influences, recognising that greetings vary based on the time of day, social status, and the relational dynamics between individuals. This context-sensitive approach captures the depth of Yoruba greetings, showing how speakers carefully adapt them for formal and informal situations, including settings where age, kinship, and rank influence interactions. By grounding the study in these dimensions, the research offers a rich, culturally attuned framework for analysing greeting customs in the two communities.

This research thoroughly explores greetings as complex socio-linguistic acts embedded in Yoruba cultural practices. Its strengths lie in the detailed theoretical grounding and nuanced understanding of social context. It is a valuable foundation for the comparative analysis of Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko greeting customs.

*GAP in Literature.* The linguistic study of greetings in Yoruba dialects, particularly those of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka, remains under-researched. Scholars have extensively studied the broader Yoruba language and its regional variations but know little about the unique nuances of greetings within these two communities. In Yoruba culture, greetings are critical in social interactions, functioning as markers of respect, signifying the time of day, and reinforcing social hierarchies. Despite their cultural importance, the specific features of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka greetings have not been thoroughly examined in academic literature, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these dialects reflect and preserve cultural identity.

This lack of research becomes even more complicated because scholars have not codified the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects. Unlike the standardised Yoruba language, which has a well-established alphabet and written system, these dialects remain primarily oral. This absence of a

formal written system presents challenges for documentation and preservation. Authors [18], in his seminal work *Decolonising the Mind*, argue that the imposition of colonial languages like English during and after colonialism has marginalised African languages, leading to their gradual erosion. He emphasises the importance of indigenous languages as carriers of culture and identity, a perspective that aligns with the need to preserve dialects like Ikare and Iwaro-Oka through codification.

Similarly, author [19], in *Language and Exclusion: The Consequences of Language Policies in Africa*, discusses the neglect and marginalisation of African languages that are not codified or officially recognised. He notes that these languages are often excluded from education, governance, and media, making them vulnerable to extinction; this mirrors the situation of the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects, which, without formal codification, lack the resources and infrastructure needed for their preservation and transmission to future generations. Bamgbose's emphasis on the consequences of excluding Indigenous languages from formal spaces resonates with the challenges these dialects face in maintaining their cultural significance.

The growing influence of globalisation, hybridity, and modern technology further exacerbates the situation. As Western education and digital communication expand, many native speakers of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects, especially those without formal education, increasingly incorporate English into their daily interactions. Author [20], in *Globalisation and the Language Question in Africa*, explores how globalisation has accelerated the dominance of English in African countries, leading to the displacement of local languages. He argues that English, as a global language, directly threatens smaller, non-codified languages and dialects, a phenomenon evident in Ikare and Iwaro-Oka. The gradual replacement of traditional Yoruba greetings with English greetings like "Good morning" and "Hello" highlights the linguistic shift brought about by globalisation.

The work of the author [21] further supports the argument for the codification of African languages. In *African Languages for the Mass Education of Africans*, the author stresses the importance of codifying and institutionalising African languages to prevent their extinction. He argues that these languages' lack of written systems makes them vulnerable to erosion, as they

cannot be effectively taught or documented; this is particularly relevant to Ikare and Iwaro-Oka, where the absence of codified dialects limits the ability to preserve their unique linguistic features, including greetings. Prah's call for the urgent codification of African languages is crucial for ensuring the survival of dialects currently under threat.

Moreover, author [22], in *The Sociolinguistics of Globalization*, delves into the effects of globalisation on more minor languages and dialects, noting that the rise of global languages like English has contributed to linguistic hybridity and the marginalisation of non-dominant languages. Author [22] emphasises that digital communication, in particular, accelerates this shift as younger generations increasingly favour global languages in online and everyday interactions; this is evident in the case of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka, where English greetings are becoming more prevalent, especially among younger speakers who are more exposed to Western education and digital platforms. Blommaert's work highlights the challenges of globalisation and technology in maintaining linguistic diversity, a key issue for these Yoruba dialects.

Incorporating English greetings into the everyday lives of native Ikare and Iwaro-Oka speakers is not merely a linguistic shift but a broader cultural transformation. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's argument that language is a vehicle for culture is particularly relevant here, as replacing traditional greetings represents a loss of cultural identity. Authors [19-21] suggest that codifying and preserving these dialects are essential to counteract the forces of globalisation and linguistic homogenisation. These dialects may continue to erode without codification, leaving future generations disconnected from their linguistic and cultural heritage.

In conclusion, the gap in the literature on Ikare and Iwaro-Oka greetings, coupled with the absence of a codified written system and the increasing influence of globalisation, highlights the urgent need for further research and preservation efforts. The authors' work [18-22] provides a strong foundation for understanding the broader implications of this linguistic shift. It underscores the necessity of codifying these dialects to ensure their survival. Without intervention, the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka may be lost to the pressures of modernity and global influence.

## Theoretical Framework

1) Greetings and Yoruba Culture. In every society, culture plays a significant role in shaping interactions, including verbal exchanges like greetings. In the Yoruba culture of Nigeria, greetings form an integral part of communication, symbolising respect, social status, and interpersonal relationships. The culture of the Yoruba, particularly in communities like Ilorin, Ikare, and Iwaro, encapsulates shared knowledge that enables people to interpret each other's verbal acts. Authors [23] describe culture as "a body of shared knowledge," emphasising that it includes verbal acts in both spoken and written modes. Similarly, the author [24] notes that shared conventions in language help people "interpret" each other's utterances, making verbal exchanges more meaningful.

Greetings in Yoruba culture are deliberate acts, not just expressions of pleasantries. Author [1] describes greetings as fulfilling social obligations and establishing interpersonal relationships. These acts follow specific cultural rules and conventions. In Yoruba, greeting rituals differ based on age, status, and context, reflecting the intricate system of politeness and respect embedded in the culture.

This theoretical framework applies Politeness Theory to explore how Yoruba greetings function within pragmatic contexts. This theory aids in understanding the linguistic nuances, such as face-saving strategies and politeness maxims, especially within the dialects of Ikare and Iwaro, Yoruba-speaking communities.

2) Politeness Theory and Yoruba Greetings. As authors [14] proposed, the Politeness Theory is another crucial theoretical framework that can be applied to Yoruba greetings. According to the theory, politeness involves the management of one's face and one's public self-image. This concept is paramount in Yoruba cultures, and greetings preserve the face of the speaker and the hearer.

Authors [14] distinguish between two types of face: positive face (the desire to be liked and appreciated) and negative face (the desire to maintain autonomy and freedom from imposition). Yoruba greetings often navigate these two aspects of the face, especially in hierarchical relationships. For example, a greeting directed at an elder, such as "Bàbá, Ẹ kààbò" (Father, welcome), is designed to enhance the elder's positive face by showing respect and acknowledgement. Sim-

ultaneously, it avoids imposing on the elder's negative face, as the greeting carries no direct request or demand.

Cultural norms intertwine politeness with greetings in the context of Ikare and Iwaro dialects. For instance, using honorifics and deferential terms in greetings is a way of managing face. The politeness strategies used in these dialects can be categorised under the positive politeness strategies proposed by [14], such as showing respect, acknowledging status, and expressing solidarity. Negative politeness strategies are also prevalent; this is evident in how Yoruba people often use formal greetings to show deference, especially when addressing elders or people of higher status or greeting from a distance.

Author [25] politeness, formality, hesitancy, and camaraderie rules also apply to Yoruba greetings. Formality is seen in the use of honorifics and respectful language forms, such as "È" (plural/respect form) instead of "o" (singular form). Hesitancy, or allowing the addressee freedom to respond in their own time, is evident in Yoruba greetings, where the initial greeting does not impose any immediate action or response. Camaraderie, or the creation of solidarity, is achieved through communal greetings like "È káàárò gbogbo yín" (Good morning to all of you), which fosters a sense of belonging and community.

Author [26] The Politeness Principle, which includes maxims like tact, generosity, and modesty, is also relevant in Yoruba greetings. For example, the tact maxim-minimising imposition on others is observed in how greetings are structured to avoid being too direct or imposing. Yoruba people often use indirect greetings or acknowledgements to maintain social harmony and avoid face-threatening acts.

3) Context in Yoruba Greetings. The role of context in pragmatics, particularly in greetings, is significant. Context encompasses the physical, social, and cultural environment in which a communicative event occurs. In the case of Yoruba greetings, context determines the form and content of the greeting.

Author [2] identifies several types of context that influence communication, including physical, sociocultural, linguistic, and psychological contexts. Yoruba greetings are highly context-dependent. For instance, the time of day (physical context) affects the type of greeting used: "È káàárò" for the morning, "È káàsán" for the afternoon, and "È

kúlẹ" for the evening. The social context, such as the relationship between the interlocutors, also plays a crucial role. Younger people use more formal greetings when addressing elders, while peers may use more casual forms.

Sociocultural context is critical in Yoruba greetings, as the greetings reinforce cultural norms of respect and social hierarchy. In the dialects of Ikare and Iwaro, specific greeting forms may differ slightly in phonetic structure but maintain the same underlying cultural values of politeness, respect, and social order.

The psychological context, which includes the interlocutors' mental states and emotions, also influences greetings. For instance, greetings may vary in tone and formality based on the speaker's emotional state or the event's nature. For example, a greeting at a funeral would be more sombre and formal than a greeting at a wedding or social gathering.

In summary, the theoretical frameworks of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and contextual pragmatics provide valuable insights into the role of greetings in Yoruba culture, particularly in the Ikare and Iwaro dialects. These greetings are not merely verbal exchanges but are performative acts that reinforce social hierarchies, express respect, and foster interpersonal relationships. Applying these theories helps unpack the linguistic and cultural complexities inherent in Yoruba greetings, demonstrating how they function as crucial tools for social interaction in these communities.

## METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design to examine the greeting patterns in two Yoruba-speaking communities, Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, in Ondo State, Nigeria. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to capturing the sociocultural nuances of greetings as they express respect, hierarchy, and social relationships. Focusing on one elder from each community, who were purposefully selected as custodians of traditional customs, the research ensures an in-depth exploration of these practices. The elders, recognised for their extensive knowledge of cultural and linguistic traditions, provide insights that illuminate the similarities and differences in the greeting patterns of their respective communities.

Data collection relies primarily on oral interviews conducted in Yoruba, ensuring that the participants can fully articulate the nuances of their traditional greetings. The interviews include demonstrations of greetings across different social contexts, such as interactions with elders, peers, and younger individuals, as well as special occasions. These sessions are audio-recorded to capture authentic pronunciation, intonation, and expressions. The recordings are transcribed and translated into English to make the data accessible to broader audiences while preserving its original cultural essence. Additionally, the elders explain the contexts, cultural meanings, and taboos associated with each greeting, enriching the study with detailed contextual information.

The data is analysed using a comparative approach, focusing on the social structures, hierarchies, and values reflected in the greeting patterns. This analysis highlights the elements of the shared and distinct greeting in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko. To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the researchers pre-test the research instruments with a knowledgeable speaker from a nearby town. Ethical considerations are integral to the study, with informed consent obtained from participants, assurance of confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity maintained throughout the research process. These measures ensure the findings are robust and respectful of the studied traditions.

*Data Presentation and Analysis.* This chapter presents the findings and discusses greeting practices in the Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko communities. This research reveals how deeply ingrained greetings are within these Yoruba communities, reflecting a structured social etiquette that conveys respect, acknowledges social hierarchy, and fosters interpersonal relationships. The data, gathered through interviews with community elders, captures the variations in greeting forms sensitive to time, social status, and the relational dynamics between individuals.

A key element in these findings is the community-specific linguistic distinctions, particularly in how morning, afternoon, and evening greetings vary between Ikare and Iwaro-Oka. For instance, while standard Yoruba might use familiar forms like "E kaaro," Ikare Akoko's greeting "Emooku ojumo" and Iwaro-Oka's "Ewin-karo" each demonstrate phonetic adaptations unique to each community. The analysis also uncovers ad-

ditional layers of meaning within the greetings, tailored for different social interactions and occasions.

The findings highlight the use of non-verbal elements, such as gestures of bowing or kneeling, emphasising the multi-dimensional nature of Yoruba greetings. This chapter's analysis provides insight into how these communities use greetings to uphold cultural values and social cohesion, reinforcing the significance of traditional practices amidst modern influences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

*Findings from Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko Dialects of the Yoruba Language.* As previously noted, African communities, including those in Nigeria, place a high value on greetings and consider them an essential aspect of social etiquette. Similarly, the people of the Akoko region hold greetings in high regard, having developed their own culturally specific forms of greeting, much like other African societies that uphold strong moral values. The saying "charity begins at home" aptly captures the importance placed on greeting customs, as parents in these communities instil this practice in their children from a young age to ensure they grow up with the appropriate social manners that align with community expectations.

In a typical family setting, a child is expected to greet their parents and elders upon waking up each morning. This practice extends to every interaction the child has throughout the day, both within the family and the wider community. The expectation is that children should demonstrate respect through greetings whenever they encounter others, regardless of the time of day. In the Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka communities, these greeting practices are deeply embedded in social interactions, reflecting a shared cultural ethos. The elders in these communities reveal how they perform greetings, showcasing the traditional norms upheld within each dialect.

1) Different Greetings at Different Times. In the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects, greetings vary depending on the time of day and specific occasions throughout the year, similar to other Nigerian languages and communities, whether major or minor. In these communities, people have distinct ways of greeting one another in the morning, afternoon, and evening, as well as during special seasons or events. These greetings are

tailored to reflect the appropriate time and context, demonstrating the cultural importance of acknowledging the passage of time and the significance of seasonal changes.

a) Morning Greetings. The first of them is the greeting in the morning in the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects. One greets by saying:

Ikare	Emooku ojumo
Yoruba	Èku aro
Iwaro-Oka	Ewin-karo
English Language	Good morning

b) Greetings in the afternoon. Secondly, the greeting in the afternoon, which starts from noon, one will say:

Ikare	Emokasan ooo
Yoruba	Èku Osan(ekaasan)
Iwaro-Oka	Ewin-kasan
English Language	Good afternoon

c) Greetings in the evening. Thirdly, is the greeting in the evening, which usually starts from 4:00 pm, one will say:

Ikare	Èku iyaleta
Yoruba	Èku Irole
Iwaro Oka	Ewin-kaale
English Language	Good Evening

d) Asking after someone's well-being. After expressing greetings in all these forms at the appropriate time, the next thing is to ask about the health or the well-being of the person you are greeting in these ways because that is the African way according to custom and tradition; this shows that you care about the person you are greeting, while failing to do so may make others assume that you are inhuman and arrogant.

	Asking:	Answering:
Ikare	Bo juu ri omosan	Bi ren ri ileha boju de ri
Yoruba	Bawo ni	mowa kpa
Iwaro-Oka	Sara lere-re/keetiri	Alafia mo hae kere ikuhe tiri
English Language	How are you? How is everything?	I am fine, thank you!

e) Random Greetings at different periods

Ikare	Yoruba	Iwaro-Oka
Akú eji	Akú ojo yii o	Aku ojo yii o
Akú ègbelè	Aku Ògbelè	Aku òdà yii
Akú ogilinti	Akú otútù	Aku aféré/otutu
E kú ojin alé	E ku irole	E ku irole
Sé e ríre pa?	Sé e r'éran pa/	Owó á de o

Èé gúnlé ayò o	Àrèpa 'tògún o	Ònà gbooro o	Ònà gbooro
Àroko	Àroko bódún de o	Àseje o	
bódún de o			

Greeting the Elderly and the Young. People in these two Akoko towns sacredly respect older individuals. The significant difference in the greetings of the elderly and the young is using pronominals.

A conversation is presented thus:

Mr. A: Baba ebook ojumo (good Moring, Baba)

Mr. B: eee (Okay)

Mr. A. bi ren ri (how is everything?)

Mr. B: omosan adupe lówó olórun

Mr. A. Odigba (goodbye?)

Mr. B, lokabo (go and come back safely)

2) *Sociolinguistic Discussion of Ikare and Iwaro-Oka Greetings.* Greetings play a vital role in a people's social interaction and cultural identity, and this is particularly true in Yoruba-speaking communities. They are more than a form of courtesy; they establish social connections, show respect, and convey well-being. This section provides a socio-linguistic discussion of the greetings in the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects, two closely related yet distinct dialects spoken in Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria. The goal is to analyse the similarities and differences in these greetings and assess their relation to standard Yoruba greetings.

a) Morning Greetings. Morning greetings are among the most structured greetings in Yoruba culture, and both Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects reflect this cultural emphasis. In Ikare, people say "Emooku ojumo" to greet in the morning, whereas in Iwaro-Oka, the equivalent greeting is "Ewin-karo." Compared to standard Yoruba, which uses "Èku aro," the phonological differences are immediately noticeable. The Ikare version, "Emooku ojumo," seems to retain some semblance of the standard form, albeit with additional morphemic segments ("Emoo-" instead of the more straightforward "Èku") and the inclusion of "ojumo," which translates to "day" in Yoruba. On the other hand, "Ewin-karo" in Iwaro-Oka bears minimal resemblance to the standard "Èku aro." this indicates a significant phonological divergence, likely influenced by the tonal and conso-

nantal shifts specific to Iwaro-Oka speech patterns.

The divergence observed in the morning greetings indicates how dialectical variations can evolve due to geographical separation and sociocultural influences. Despite the lexical differences, all three versions, Ikare, Iwaro-Oka, and Yoruba, share a semantic core that conveys a wish for a good morning or the start of a productive day. Thus, while the forms differ, the cultural function and pragmatic use remain aligned.

b) Afternoon Greetings. Afternoon greetings follow a similar pattern of divergence and convergence. In Ikare, the expression is "Emokasan ooo," while in Iwaro-Oka, it is "Ewin-kasan." The standard Yoruba form is "Èku Osan" or "Ekaasan." Here, the Ikare variant retains closer morphological ties to the standard Yoruba, especially in using the prefix "Emo-" and the suffix "-ooo," which amplifies the greeting's politeness and emphasis. The Iwaro-Oka version, "Ewin-kasan," again shows more phonological variation from both Ikare and Yoruba; this might be attributed to Iwaro-Oka's unique phonotactics and vowel harmony patterns favour such alterations.

From a socio-linguistic perspective, the greetings in both dialects maintain the fundamental cultural practice of acknowledging the time of day, a critical aspect of Yoruba greetings. However, the varied lexical choices and phonetic forms suggest that the two communities, while culturally related, have developed distinct speech patterns that might influence their social identities and perception of language purity.

c) Evening Greetings. The differences in evening greetings offer another layer of comparison. Ikare speakers say "Eku iyaleta" to wish someone a good evening, while Iwaro-Oka speakers say "Ewin-kaale." Standard Yoruba uses "Èku Irole." The Ikare variant is somewhat surprising, as it diverges significantly from standard Yoruba and Iwaro-Oka. The prefix "Eku" is retained, but "iyaleta" might indicate a localised expression not found in other Yoruba-speaking regions. In contrast, Iwaro-Oka's "Ewin-kaale" maintains a structure similar to its morning and afternoon greetings, reflecting a consistent phonological shift within the dialect.

These distinctions highlight a key socio-linguistic point: while greetings are universal and serve similar purposes across related dialects, local variations emerge due to historical and environ-

mental factors. The Ikare community's divergence might stem from its closer interactions with non-Yoruba groups or internal innovations. At the same time, Iwaro-Oka retains a systematic phonological variation that sets it apart from Ikare and Yoruba. Nonetheless, speakers uniformly preserve the respectful tone and function of the greetings across the three varieties.

d) Asking After Well-being. An essential feature of Yoruba greetings is the follow-up inquiry about the recipient's well-being. In Ikare, phrases such as "Bo juu ri" and "Bi ren ri" ask how someone is doing. Similarly, Iwaro-Oka employs "Sara lerere/keetiri" and "Kere ikuhe tiri" for the same purpose. The standard Yoruba uses "Bawo ni?" and "Bawo ni nkan?" which are relatively straightforward. The Ikare phrases "Bo juu ri" and "Bi ren ri" have close semantic ties to Yoruba but differ in syntactic structure and phonological realisation. The Iwaro-Oka forms, on the other hand, reflect a more distinct lexicon and syntax, making them stand apart from both Yoruba and Ikare.

The differences in these forms illustrate the impact of micro-linguistic variables such as localised lexicon, tone, and phraseology. While a Yoruba speaker, with some effort, can understand the Ikare forms, the Iwaro-Oka forms might pose a more significant challenge, thus hinting at a more pronounced dialectal separation. However, the cultural imperative to inquire about a person's health and happiness after the initial greeting remains strong in all dialects, underlining a shared cultural value despite linguistic differences.

e) Random Greetings at Different Periods. Random greetings such as "Akú eji," "Akú ègbelè," and "Akú ogilinti" are unique to Ikare and bear a slight resemblance to standard Yoruba. Iwaro-Oka uses similar expressions like "Aku ojo yii o," "Aku ògbelè," and "Aku aféré/otutu," which also diverge phonetically from both Ikare and Yoruba. These random greetings are context-specific and are often used to acknowledge specific environmental or social conditions, such as cold weather ("Aku aféré") or particular times of day ("Aku ègbelè" for early morning).

These expressions provide insight into how language adapts to reflect environmental realities and social customs. The fact that both dialects have unique expressions not found in standard Yoruba suggests that Ikare and Iwaro-Oka have preserved certain archaic forms or innovated

new ones based on their specific needs. However, the use of "Akú" in both dialects, akin to its use in standard Yoruba, indicates a common origin and shared cultural understanding.

### Discussion of Differences and Relation to Yoruba

The differences between Ikare and Iwaro-Oka greetings are primarily phonological and lexical. Iwaro-Oka consistently demonstrates a pattern of vowel insertion and tonal shifts that set it apart from Ikare and standard Yoruba. These differences might stem from historical isolation or intentional differentiation as a marker of local identity. Ikare, on the other hand, retains a closer morphological and lexical similarity to Yoruba, suggesting a more substantial influence from standard Yoruba or less linguistic divergence over time.

From a socio-linguistic perspective, both dialects are variants of the more prominent Yoruba language family but reflect distinct identities and social realities. While semantically aligned with standard Yoruba, the greetings reveal nuanced cultural expressions unique to each town. Therefore, while Ikare and Iwaro-Oka greetings are related to Yoruba, they also show enough variation to be considered distinct dialectal manifestations of the language.

Overall, this analysis underscores the rich linguistic diversity within the Yoruba language and highlights how greetings serve as a lens through which we can understand the interplay between language, culture, and social identity in these communities.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of greetings in the Ikare and Iwaro-Oka dialects reveals similarities and distinctions that reflect the linguistic and cultural variations within the Yoruba-speaking communities of Akoko, Ondo State. Although both dialects belong to the more prominent Yoruba language family, their unique phonological and lexical attributes distinguish them from one another and standard Yoruba. One significant feature that ties these dialects to the wider Yoruba-speaking community is the consistent use of the prefix "Eku" in their greetings. This trait has earned the Yoruba people the nickname of "Eku Eku people." This characteristic prefix appears in most Yoruba greetings, whether it is morning, afternoon, evening, or even random greetings acknowledging various activities or conditions such as "Eku aro" (Good morning),

"Eku osan" (Good afternoon), or "Eku irole" (Good evening).

"Eku" is a cultural marker of politeness, respect, and shared identity among the Yoruba. Even in dialectal variants such as Ikare and Iwaro-Oka, where the phonetic and syntactic forms differ, the essence of "Eku" is preserved, demonstrating its significance in Yoruba socio-linguistic practices. While the forms may vary, "Emooku ojumo" in Ikare and "Ewin-karo" in Iwaro-Oka, the prefix retains its pragmatic function of acknowledging the time of day and showing deference.

This study thus highlights how greetings are more than mere linguistic expressions; they reflect deep-rooted cultural values and identities. Despite minor phonological shifts and lexical innovations in Ikare and Iwaro-Oka, the core Yoruba value of respect and recognition of others, encapsulated in the ubiquitous use of "Eku," remains unaltered. As such, the Yoruba people, whether speaking standard Yoruba or its dialectal variations, are indeed "Eku Eku people," as their greetings invariably begin with this culturally loaded expression, symbolising unity in diversity.

### CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on the socio-linguistic investigation of greetings in two Yoruba-speaking communities, Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, located in the Akoko region of Ondo State, Nigeria. The research examined the forms, contexts, and cultural significance of greetings within these communities, highlighting their role in maintaining social order, expressing respect, and reinforcing cultural identity.

The study began by providing a comprehensive review of the literature on greetings in African cultures, emphasising the importance of greetings as a cornerstone of social etiquette and a reflection of cultural values. It explored the linguistic, social, and pragmatic features of Yoruba greetings, showing how they encapsulate respect for social hierarchy and promote interpersonal harmony. In particular, the study analysed the differences and similarities between the greetings used in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, illustrating how these variations reflect shared cultural norms and localised linguistic features.

Chapter two outlined the theoretical framework, drawing on Politeness Theory to analyse how greetings function as performative acts that es-

establish and maintain social relationships. The study also used contextual pragmatics to understand how the context shapes the meanings of greetings. Chapter three detailed the research methodology, which included qualitative interviews with elders from both communities to document and analyse the distinct greeting patterns. Chapter four presented the findings, highlighting how the greetings in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko serve as vehicles for expressing social respect, acknowledging social status, and strengthening communal bonds.

The findings revealed that greetings in both communities vary depending on the time of day, the social status of the addressee, and the specific context of interaction. Morning, afternoon, and evening greetings were identified in both dialects, each carrying particular linguistic features that differentiate them from the standard Yoruba forms. For example, Ikare speakers use "Emooku ojumo" for "Good morning," while Iwaro-Oka speakers say "Ewin-karo," illustrating distinct phonological and lexical variations. The study also showed that greetings for elders, peers, and children differ in both communities, reflecting Yoruba culture's deep-rooted respect for social hierarchy.

Overall, the research underscored the cultural importance of greetings as a means of maintaining social cohesion and expressing the values of respect and communal living. It also highlighted the risk of erosion of these traditional forms due to the influence of modernity and the adoption of Western-style greetings by younger generations.

The study concludes that greetings are a vital component of Yoruba sociocultural practices, serving as more than mere expressions of politeness. In Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko, greetings are integral to everyday communication, embodying the values of respect, humility, and social order. They are tools for acknowledging social status, reinforcing community bonds, and transmitting cultural values across generations.

The variations observed between the greetings in Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko reflect dialectal diversity and a shared cultural foundation. While the communities use different linguistic forms to greet at various times of the day, the underlying cultural purpose of expressing respect and fostering interpersonal connections remains consistent. These differences, however, are not arbitrary but are shaped by historical,

geographical, and social factors unique to each community.

One significant conclusion from the study is that greetings as markers of respect and status are critical to Yoruba social interaction. For example, when greeting elders, younger people are expected to use specific honorifics and physical gestures, such as kneeling or prostrating, to convey deference. Both communities deeply emphasise respect and social etiquette in their language and cultural practices.

However, the study also identified a shift in greeting practices among the younger generation, influenced by urbanisation, globalisation, and modern education. Western-style greetings like "Hello" and "Hi" are becoming more common, especially in urban settings, posing a risk to preserving these traditional greeting customs. If this trend continues, there is a danger that the rich cultural meanings embedded in these greetings may be lost, leading to a diminished appreciation of Yoruba cultural heritage.

Based on the findings and conclusions, the study offers the following recommendations to preserve and promote the traditional greeting practices of Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko:

- 1) Documentation and Archiving of Traditional Greetings: There should be a systematic effort to document and archive the traditional greeting forms of Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko; this can be achieved through audio-visual recordings, written transcriptions, and digital archiving to create a repository of these linguistic practices for future generations.

- 2) Incorporation into Educational Curriculum: Educational institutions in the Akoko region and other Yoruba-speaking communities should incorporate lessons on traditional greetings. Teaching these greetings in schools would help raise awareness among young people about their cultural significance and promote their continued use in everyday interactions.

- 3) Promotion through Community-based Programs: Local cultural groups, community leaders, and traditional institutions should actively promote conventional greetings. Organising cultural events, seminars, and workshops focused on the significance of greetings can help revitalise interest in these practices among the younger generation.

4) Use of Modern Media to Promote Traditional Practices: Given the influence of digital media, radio programs, social media, and television shows can promote traditional greetings. Creating short videos, audio clips, or social media posts showcasing the correct use of conventional greetings would help engage younger audiences and make these practices more accessible and relatable.

5) Encouragement of Intergenerational Communication: Families should encourage intergenerational communication where elders share stories and practices related to greetings with younger family members; this would preserve the greetings, strengthen family bonds, and reinforce cultural identity.

6) Development of Bilingual Educational Materials: Bilingual (Yoruba-English) educational materials, such as dictionaries, phrasebooks, and language apps, should be developed to facilitate the learning of traditional greetings among both Yoruba and non-Yoruba speakers; this would be particularly useful in diaspora communities where the younger generation may have limited exposure to the language.

7) Creation of a Cultural Preservation Fund: The community could establish a cultural preserva-

tion fund to support the documentation and promotion of traditional greetings. This fund could provide grants for research, community-based projects, and educational initiatives to preserve the conventional linguistic practices of Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko.

8) Encouragement of Local Scholars to Conduct Further Research: Local scholars and linguists should be encouraged to conduct further research on the dialectal variations and social functions of greetings in other Yoruba-speaking communities; this would help build a more comprehensive understanding of the role of greetings in Yoruba culture and contribute to broader efforts to document and preserve the language.

In conclusion, Ikare Akoko and Iwaro-Oka Akoko greetings are more than verbal exchanges; they reflect a complex system of cultural values and social norms. Preserving these traditional forms is essential for maintaining the cultural identity and heritage of the Yoruba people. Through the recommendations outlined above, it is hoped that the conventional greeting practices of these communities will continue to thrive, ensuring that they remain an integral part of Yoruba cultural expression for generations to come.

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