

**THE STRUCTURE OF ITSEKIRI GREETING TERMS**

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**APPROVAL PAGE**

I, **AMOS OGHENESEROME KEKENE**, a student of the department of linguistics studies, University of Benin, with the matriculation number **ART2011135**, have completed the requirements for course work and research for the Bachelor of Arts Degree of the University of Benin. The research work contained in this project is a product of my personal effort and does not contain any previously written or published material that has been submitted in any other degree or diploma program from any university or higher institution of learning.

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**PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATION**

I, **AMOS OGHENESEROME KEKENE** with the matriculation number **ART201135** declare that this work “**THE STRUCTURE OF ITSEKIRI GREETING TERMS**” has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test (with a score of \_\_\_\_\_ %), and does not violate any copyright regulation.

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**AMOS OGHENESEROME KEKENE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, the source of wisdom, knowledge, and strength, for guiding me throughout the course of this research.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This research examines the structure and sociolinguistic functions of greeting expressions in the Itsekiri language. The study was motivated by the urgent need to document and preserve the language, which is gradually becoming endangered due to globalization and language shift.*

*Using Speech Act Theory (J.L. Austin) and Dell Hymes's Ethnography of Communication, the research analyzed Itsekiri greetings at three levels — linguistic (lexical/morphological), interactional (exchange), and sociolinguistic (contextual).*

*Findings reveal that greetings in Itsekiri are not merely polite expressions but are deeply embedded in the culture's values of respect, kinship, and communal harmony. The word "Ere" (meaning "well-being" or "good news") frequently occurs as a greeting initiator, showing that greetings carry a strong illocutionary force of wishing peace and prosperity. The use of appellatives when addressing chiefs or elders demonstrates how social hierarchy and politeness are encoded in language.*

*The study concludes that Itsekiri greetings serve both communicative and cultural functions. It recommends the preservation of these expressions through linguistic documentation, tone-marked dictionaries, and pedagogical materials for native and non-native speakers.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Background of Study**

#### **1.1 The Motivation Behind Studying Itsekiri G**

The major driving force in question is related to the structure of Itsekiri greeting expressions. Documentation and preservation of language could possibly be the likely motivation. Greeting expressions remain one of the most essential parts of any language because they depict stratifications in society, interaction, and values within it. For instance, in the case of the Itsekiri language with very low speakers, it would be very essential to document expressions related to the language in question in order to revive it.

Greeting terms in Itsekiri encompass more than being polite; it is an in-depth study of where language and culture meet with the objective of uncovering the inherent dense context hidden in communication.

The rationale for working on the culture of greeting in the Itsekiri culture arises out of the imperative to document and salvage the language. Language is not only a tool for communication but also the repository or symbol of culture, values, and worldview. Greetings enjoy an elitist status in human interaction because they convey respect, order, and communal attachment. Greetings offer the very first moment in Social Interaction and in the Isekiri culture, Greetings go beyond being simple expressions of politeness to being bearers of meaning that convey ages, gender ideology, kinship, and status. For the Isekiri persons, Greetings serve to define identity and are ineluctably bound to cultural practices and norms of the culture. Greetings take on context in terms of time of day, interpersonal relationships, and cultural group specifics. The analysis and documentation of these Greeting sequences would serve to contribute to cultural preservation, cultural documentation, and preservation of the Isekiri language, an endangered language whose speakers are relatively very small in number because it is on the verge of being endangered due to globalization, language shift, and being vulnerable to language endangerment.

### **[A] Aim and Objectives:**

Aim: This is the purpose for conducting this study on the structural aspects of the Isekiri greeting terms.

### **[B] Object**

- i. The aim is to identify the greeting terms in the Isekiri Language.
- ii. Classify the various forms of greeting terms in the Isekiri Language.
- iii. Study the role of greeting in sociolinguistics in terms of establishing respect, connection, and status.
- iv. Emphasize variations in greeting expressions in terms of context, age, gender, kinship relationships, and social status.

### **[1.2] Research**

- i. What are the various forms of greeting terms in the Itsekiri Language?

ii. How can we develop a pen and paper to identify and classify the greeting terms in Itsekiri language.

iii. Describe the functions of greeting in Itsekiri, such as politeness and expression of respect, solidarity, and hierarchy.

iv. How greeting terms in Itsekiri differ based on context such as age, time of day, gender, kinship, and status.

### **[1.3] Significance of**

It is to examine the structure of greeting terms in Isekiri and their importance to native speakers and concerned scholars.

### **I. Cultural and Sociolinguistic Significance**

1. African Cultures: Greetings in most cultures in Africa, including Itsekiri culture, involve acts of politeness. These involve acts of face, respect, street-wise power relations, and the importance of human relationships. Studying them can reveal a lot about respect, harmony, and community. 2. One major factor in the itsekiri society: Itsekiri: “A good example would be the application of specific greetings in different

settings. “calling” generosity, respect = showing the “heavy importance” of necessary respect.” II. Linguistic Documentation and Preservation

1. Isekiri language: It has been a vocal language with a rich background. It has ties with native communities. 2. Perhaps for the first time: The greeting studies conducted in Isekiri shall offer a linguistic documentation format. This documentation is worthy of preservation. The linguistic field experts and the Isekiri Community can greatly benefit from it. Add to the general concern about preservation of the speech content and linguistic structure. [1.4] Justification of the Study

i. Gaps in Current Research: Despite the existence of linguistic studies on Itsekiri language, there are no structural studies on Itsekiri greeting phrases. The terms are less in vogue in terms of occurrence. The absence can be met by conducting in-depth study to ascertain the grammatical and semantic considerations behind the usage of such terms. This adds to the Overall Corpus of Socio-Linguistics with special data from an unstudied language.

II. Practical Application: The effectiveness in cross-cultural communication relies on the understanding of the Isekiri Greetings. The understanding of Isekiri

Greetings is essential for the benefit of linguists and foreign speakers who must learn to utilize them appropriately in a situation in order to aim for an efficient rapport to avoid miscommunication. The book provides an application of politeness strategies in the language.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **[2.1] Concept of Literature:**

##### **[A] From Linguistic:**

This usually contains a verbal component of the greeting, a time-of-day greeting.

##### **[I] Formulaic and Simple Greetings:**

Often using the word Ere (meaning well-being or good news) at the time of day, e.g. Osòn.

##### **Welfare Queries/Responses:**

Short well-being questions e.g. Wó winoron? (How are you?) with ritual answers such as mowino/ aramini (I'm fine).

##### **Commendation/Appreciation:**

Phrases such as e. bùyè (Well done - singular) or mo dokpe (I am grateful/thank you).

### **Appellatives (Akpulajo):**

It is an extremely respectful structural feature whereby an interlocutor refers to a superior or a high status individual by his appellation or praise name, especially when saluting the Olu of Warri or Chiefs. This is a very important feature that displays deference.

### **[2.2] Past Research:**

#### **.form Linguistic:**

The Verbal Component of the greetings: formulaic and simple greetings using the word Ere, which also means well-being or good news at the time of day e.g. Ewe (Good Morning) or Ewe Osòn (Good Afternoon).

#### **Commendation/Appreciation:**

Phrases such as e. b̀̀s̀̀ - (Well done - singular) or mo dokpe - (I am grateful/thank you).

## **[II] Sociolinguistic Analysis of Greeting Patterns:**

[III] Focus on Social and Contextual Variables: Released and subtle Sociolinguistic Analysis of Isekiri Greeting Patterns. It looks at the underlying linguistic variables that outline the form and content of greetings. [VI] Age: The hierarchical society requires the young to address the older person first. Age is an important control posture in language. [V] Gender: While Gender is minimally that of fact or of Speech Style, all of the first factors interact to affect the value of greeting on the part of particular greeting or paired non-verbal behavior. Greetings vary most by context or getting the context localized to a place greeting from the market place, for example: after work or during a celebratory time. [2.3] The Corpus of the Present Study: i. The morphological or structural analysis of the internal composition of the greeting words. On the large informal or complicated elements in informal standard time of greetings to have the following features: Here, Ere, which was commonly glossed as gains or profits, is used to begin the greeting. .Time of Day: (e.g. Outside Morning, Good Afternoon, Ere (Clearing). Examples Ere òsòn: Good Morning; Ere

òsàn: Good Afternoon Ere alé: Good evening. [ii]Tonal Analysis: Since Isekiri is a tonal language, the research can draw on the use of the tone marking(or Amiukpe) on the greeting words since tone can differentiate meaning even among word's spelled the same.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **[3.0] Theoretical Frame Work:**

The examination of the structural makeup of Isekiri greeting terms can be framed within a synthesis of sociolinguistic and pragmatics. The paradigm will provide the necessary framework to investigate the linguistic structure and the social value of greetings in the Itsekiri language.

### **[3.1] Theoretical Framework Background:**

#### **Laying for the model of Isekiri greeting terms.**

The theoretical framework will be applied in research with regard to particular theories.

### **[3.2] Sociolinguistics: Speech Act Theory**

[3.2] Sociolinguistics: Speech Act Theory/Framework: Speech Act Theory developed by J.L. Austin is a theory with little or some similarity but little overlap to pragmatics. Speech Act Theory provides a logical and sociolinguistic analysis of greetings. The components of

the theory are locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act.

A speech act requires the realization of a speech act greeting.

i. Locutionary Act: The verbal expression such as (well-being) or Ere Osòn (Good Morning).

ii. Illocutionary Act: The force or purpose of the utterance, such as greeting, wishing well, and making contact.

iii. Perlocutionary Act: The effect or influence upon the hearer, such as being made to soon or a counter greeting by the hearer.

iv. Usefulness for the reform, analysis of Isekiri greeting terms and the meaning conveyed by this speech act will help.

v. Determine the main illocutionary force of Isekiri greeting, which is mainly a case of either (wishing well), (asking after state) or (noticing presence).

vi. Identify the composition of the greeting exchange act - what constitutes a complete and socially successful greeting exchange (the formal sequence of speaker, listener and speaker perlocutionary force).

vii. Look at how context (social setting relationship between speakers) predicts the choice of a specific greeting term, which is closely tied to the appropriate perlocutionary effect.

### **[3.3] Sociolinguistic Contextual Analysis (Ethnography of Communication).**

Theory/Framework: Dell Hymes's Ethnography of Communication or EoC Speaking Model represents a fundamental sociolinguistic theory studying the social context of communication.

- i. Setting and Scene: time, place, physical and cultural situation.
- ii. Participants: speaker, hearer, their roles and relationships.
- iii. Ends (goals, outcomes of the interaction).

IV Act Sequence (from cor Order of Events).

V Key (stone, manner, manner).

VI-Instrumentalities - channel, in the interpretation.

VII Genre (type of communication eg. greeting, prayer, laws).

3 Usefulness to the problem: The chapter identifies the structure of Isekiri greetings through the use of the P, S, and N components of the model.

[i] It helps in uncovering the investigating structural elements-lady, posture, politeness markers, lexical choice-by social factors like kinship relationship, social standing, and age among the participants.

ii It helps to map the distribution of greeting terms cross the different settings (e.g. morning vs. evening in the market vs. in a formal chief's court).

iii It uncovers the social norms which condition the expected structural element and utterances in a greeting exchange, necessary to defining its structure.

[3.4] Solving the Problem of Structure. By synthesizing these approaches, inquiry into the structure of Isekiri greeting terms goes beyond mere translation to a more sophisticated analysis of form-function correlation. i. Structure (linguistic): The Speech Act theory helps to structure the analysis of the linguistic building the lexical items

or that block (the locutionary), which looks at the structure of the terms themselves. To give examples, are they full sentences, nominal phrases, or fixed idioms? ii. Structure of exchange (interactional): The two theories combined offer a map of the turn-taking structure in future sequence. Ethnography of Communication details the social rules of the when and to whom one greets, while Speech Act theory details the linguistic act that are involved in successful completion of the greeting exchange.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Analysis and Discussion

#### [4.0] Analysis and Discussion of Isekiri Greeting Terms Structure.

Based on the theoretical model of Speech Act theory and Ethnography of Communication, the structure of Isekiri greeting terms is grouped into three levels: Lexical Structure, Exchange Structure, and Socio-Contextual Structure.

#### [4.1] Data Presentation and Interpretation.

Data samples below illustrate the structural rules of Itsekiri greetings:

[A] Sample Data: Lexical and Exchange Structure. The most common Isekiri greetings follow a predictable initiation-response pattern. The initiation is a question or statement of state of being or activity, while the response is an affirmation or counter-question.

Context/Time	Isekiri Greeting	(Initiation)	Literal	Meaning
(Locution)	Isekiri Response	(Interpretation	-	Illocutionary
Act)	MorningEre OsònGood	MorningWishing		well/making

contact Welfare Wó winoron? How are you? Inquiry into state/making contact

Peace/Confirmation Ning Ogbiwén Sè / Do you have Peace?

E-òn / Ayò (a wish for and question about well-being, makes contact.)

Work/Productivity Kíni gbéné Owún? / What does your heart carry?

Ayò (Joy/Good things) This is expressing effort or an inquiry into productivity/success.

Arrival/Return Okpàà ò Welcome to a returnee/one away

Interpretation: The lexical structure often employs the nouns Ayò (Joy/Peace/Good fortune) a phatic communicator, for both the essence of the initiation and the standard positive responses. This suggests that illocutionary force lies in conveying and wishing communal peace and happiness. The exchange structure is normally short (A-B), but may be extended especially when enquiring after family (from e.g. è bíkí? - How are the People in other states and countries, for instance, could be

interested in or appreciate it very much even now, whereas people at home?)

[B] Sample Data: Socio-Contextual Structure (Politeness Markers):

The greeting structure is highly controlled by the social relationship between the participant (Hymes's P). This happens by way of non-verbal or grammatical instructions, acting as politeness markers.

#### **[4.2] Discussion of Findings**

The structural analysis of Isekiri greeting terms reveals a sophisticated correlation between the linguistic form (locution) and the social functions that are performed, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts- which is strongly mediated by social context.

#### **I. Speech Act Analysis: Illocutionary Force and Exchange Structure**

The exchange of greetings in Isekiri is typically an inherently social, directive Speech Act.

Dominant Illocutionary Force: The principal force is not just "hello" but is mainly to wish well, ask after state, or notice presence, as shown by the frequent use of the morpheme Ere (Well-being/Good News) in time-of-day greetings and the welfare inquiry Wó winoron? (How are you?).

. The Locutionary/Lexical Structure: The expressions often use the root word Àyọ, which is a noun meaning 'Joy/Peace/Good fortune' serving as a phatic commatator. The consistent use of this root word shows that the illocutionary intent of the whole interaction is to wish and express communal peace and happiness.

Exchange (Interactional) Structure: The exchange is a predictable Initiation-Response pattern, constituting a complete and socially successful greeting exchange. Though usually short (A-B), it expands when questions about the family (bíbí?) or state of affairs are included.

ii Sociolinguistic Contextual Structure: Hymes's SPEAKING Model

The framework of the Ethnography of Communication is important for understanding how social factors impose structural variations on the linguistic terms.

P (Participants): This is the most critical variable.

Age/hierarchy This is a hierarchical society, and the younger person should let the older person speak first.

Status/Respect: Politeness markers, which include non-verbal or grammatical instructions, are employed to manage the social relationship. This is clearest in the use of Appellatives (Akpulajo), a highly respectful feature where an interlocutor refers to a superior by a praise-name, especially when saluting the Olu of Warri or Chiefs. This is a critical feature expressing deference.

Kinship: The kinship relationship between participants is a key social factor influencing lexical choice.

S: Setting/Scene. Greetings vary greatly depending on the context or occasion. The model helps to map the distribution of greeting terms across different settings; for example, from morning versus evening, in

the market versus in a formal chief's court. For example, a term like Ere òsòn is strictly time-bound. .N (Norms): The structure is governed by the social norms which condition the expected structural component and response necessary to define the greeting's structure. [4.3]

Morphological and Tonal Analysis: Linguistic Structure The given study therefore integrates a morphological (structural) analysis of the internal composition of the greeting words. The morpheme Ere (which was usually glossed as gains or profits) is consistently used as a greeting initiator. Examples include Ere òsòn, Ere òsàn, and Ere alé, meaning good morning, afternoon, and evening respectively. Since Isekiri is a tonal language, the research needs to make use of a system of tone marking to discuss the bi-morphemic (or Amiukpe) structure of the greeting words. This is very important because similar spellings can have very different meanings depending on their tones.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Summary of Conclusion**

This study was able to successfully investigate the structure and function of Isekiri greeting terms through a synergistic application of Speech Act Theory and Dell Hymes's Ethnography of Communication model. The findings confirm that Isekiri greetings are not mere expressions of courtesy but are vehicles of meaning that are inextricably linked with cultural norms and social hierarchy.

#### **[5.2] Key Findings**

**The structural analysis was successful on three levels:**

##### **1. Linguistic (Lexical/Morphological) Structure**

The Isekiri greeting vocabulary draws its core from terms that denote wishes for good communal well-being:

The morpheme Ere (Well-being/Good News/Gains) operates as the systematic greeting initiator in time-of-day greetings, for instance, Ere Osòn.

The noun Àyọ means Joy/Peace/Good fortune, and is used here as a phatic commatator to emphasize that the illocutionary act is surely to express and elicit communal peace and happiness.

The study confirmed that a tonal analysis was essential to fully understand the bi-morphemic structure since tone can make a difference in meaning.

## **2. Interactional (Exchange/Pragmatic) Structure**

**The greeting exchange follows a precise social formula:**

The illocutionary force of Isekiri greetings is multifunctional, which involves wishing well, asking after state, and noticing presence/accomplishment, e.g., Okpàà ò - Welcome.

. The whole interaction is a socially successful and formally sequenced Locutionary-Illocutionary-Perlocutionary Act.

## **3. Sociolinguistic (Contextual) Structure**

Choice of term is heavily conditioned by Hymes's Participants and Setting/Scene:

Yet, in a social hierarchy, the rule is that in an exchange, the younger person will speak first to an elder.

Deference: The use of Appellatives, Akpulajo, for the Olu of Warri or Chiefs expresses high-status social deference as a structural feature.

Context/Occasion: Greetings vary greatly depending on the context; this confirms the need to map the distribution of greeting terms across different environments.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the evidence that the Isekiri language is endangered and the linguistic complexity of the greetings, the following are recommended:

1. Linguistic Preservation and Documentation: Given the findings on tone, future research should seek to compile a fully tonal-marked lexicon of Isekiri greeting terms. This level of detail is necessary in order to sufficiently document the grammatical and semantic considerations of these words. 2. Pedagogical Application: The documented structure and social rules are to be compiled into a practical guide for non-native speakers, linguists, and researchers. This would

facilitate appropriate cross-cultural communication and allow them to use the terms effectively in a given social situation. 3. Further Sociolinguistic Research: More research needs to be done on the non-verbal elements that serve as politeness markers, such as postures and gestures, to complement the verbal structure, since these elements complete the greeting act.

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