

A Review of *Ìṣura Òrò Yorùbá - A Comprehensive Yorùbá Thesaurus.* Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2025. 415 pages, ISBN: 9789789189120 (paper cover) \$50.

Ọlalere Adeyemi

Department of Linguistic and Nigerian Languages

University of Ilorin, Nigeria

adeyemiolalere@yahoo.com

Yorùbá language Thesaurus, until the birth of this book, had not received an appreciable attention of language experts, lexicographers and language engineers among others, there are many dictionaries in Yorùbá that have been written by language experts right from the time of Bishop Ajayi Crowther in 1843 till date but *ÌṢURA ÒRÒ YORÙBÁ: A Comprehensive Yorùbá Thesaurus* is the first descriptive thesaurus, which contains “vast array of synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms which, according to the author reflects the splendor of Yoruba language” (p. ix). This book is intended to serve as a repository of Yoruba language, and a rich trove of words, meanings and context, to serve as a comprehensive linguistic resource that provides a structured collection of synonyms and other categories in the Yoruba language. The objectives of the book were to: facilitate better communication; improve natural language understanding accuracy; support language learning and promote literary and creative writing. The stated objectives are laudable, achievable and clear enough.

The book has 400 pages with 35 chapters which the author grouped into three parts. Part 1 contains the background to the study, conceptual and theoretical frameworks with detailed description of the meaning and origin of Thesaurus which he traced to the 18th century and the revision of Peter Mark Roget in 1852 which has been improved upon through revisions, expansions, formation and incorporation of new words till this age of digital technology and internet which has transformed the way thesauri are created and used.

He also reviewed the existing works on Thesaurus in English and African languages. While many works have been produced in English medium, African languages have poor representation, while the teaching and learning of synonyms are grossly absent in African linguistics. He however, reviewed the few articles on Igbo synonyms by Obiora, Efik language synonyms and dictionaries by Bishop Ajayi Crowther first dictionary in 1843, Adewale-Somadhi (2001) and Fakinlede (2003) among others. The last section of part 1 is on his research methodology and methodologies for lexical data collection which adequately and clearly explained his research design and its compatibility with digital technology.

Part 2 of the book is exhaustively devoted to the description of semantic categorization and influencing factors in writing a Thesaurus. Concepts such as semantic categorization, absolute synonyms, partial synonyms, near synonyms, were fully explained. The author also explored the factors that affect construction of synonyms such as interference, language borrowing- intra and inter lingual borrowing, dialectical and phonological variants of a single lexical entity, affixation, reduplication, compounding, multi-word verb constructions, phrasal verbs, periphrastic expressions and semantic precision. Other subtopics described in Part 2 of the book are background of lexicographer, colloquialism, polysemy, layered synonym networks, contextual flexibility in polysemy, homonymy and hyponymy. The review of the concepts provides a solid background to the compilation of Yoruba Thesaurus.

Part 3 contains the thesaurus, appendix, months of the year, bibliography and table of figures. 643 words, each indented and positioned beneath the headword and its associated key-related terms- synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms. With the publication of this book, Philip Akoda has successfully positioned Yoruba language for global connectivity in the age of digital technology. Many interested lovers of indigenous languages will be able to access the Yoruba language with effortless ease. Also, a brief inventory of the Thesauri books on indigenous languages in Nigeria, reveals this book has successfully broken new grounds in African language compilation of Thesauri. However, to make this assertion authentic, there are lots of corrections to be made by the author when the book is revised for a new edition:

- i. Error of tone marking on the title of the book- ÌŞURA is wrongly written instead of ÌŞŪRA which means ‘treasure’
- ii. Atúmòsòyìbó instead of Atúmòsòyìníbó p.xii, p.6 ;
- iii. Edùn instead of Èdùn , p.46

- iv. Ààkìtàn instead of Àkìtàn, ààtàn, p.46, 48,49;
- v. Àálẹ̀ n see ịgbálẹ̀ (There is nothing like that in Yorùbá , p.47;
- vi. Àfẹ̀írí n ịṣíjú p. 64 In standard Yoruba, it is Àfẹ̀ẹ̀rí and not àfẹ̀írí;
- vii. Àgbèègbè n àyíká instead of àgbègbè, p.74;
- viii. Ífàtikò instead Ífàtikò p.81;
- ix. Ìjampata instead of ịjanpata, p. 96;
- x. There are many strange words coined by the author which are not in Yorùbá vocabulary for example: òrìyà , p. 28, instead of òyìyà/òòyà. The popular word for vaccine is abéré àjèsára and not 'òkí' 'Gba òki is not in standard Yorùbá rather, it is Gba abéré àjèsára to mean take a vaccine. Immunization means Gbíg-ba abéré àjèsára; Abolétà/Aṣẹlétà, p.55-56 are coined by the author, the traditional craft of thatching roofs with materials such as palm leaves were not done by professional carpenters but by individual farmers or helpers. There is nothing like * Aṣẹlétà in Yorùbá rather we have Akanlétà/ Kápẹntà which is a borrowed word from English. *Aparí ejó p.58 to mean someone who settles disputes and make judgement is coined by the author, the standard Yorùbá is Onílàjà while Onídàájó/adájó is the judge. The word *Adẹrùnbani does not exist but Adẹrùbanip. 52. *Adàrán p.59 – a person who has committed a crime is another strange word, in standard Yorùbá, it is called Òdàrán and not adàrán. *Asàgbè,*Asogbin (a planter, someone who cultivates and plant crops..P.74). No words like that describe a farmer as asàgbè/ asògbìn exist in the language rather the word Àgbè is used for farmers but to distinguish a cocoa farmer from a yam farmer, it is àgbè / ọlógbìn kòkó/ìṣu. *Agbómi, p. 75, used to describe aquatic is ambiguous, it may mean carrier of water or someone who stole water. Thus, the Yoruba would say Agbénú-omi/ èdá inú omi.*Àìgbóogì p.83 used to refer to someone who lacks knowledge or wisdom is coined by the author .The Yorùbá would rather call someone who lacks wisdom /knowledge aláìgbón or aláìníláákàyè, aláìnímò, aláìmòye. Other words used in the book such as *Ajẹnilẹ̀re p.90 to mean eye-witness, *agbipò ẹni, p.92, *Akùṣé to mean painter and all the words used in page 100 are coined words that do not have meaning in Yoruba . *Eléèwò in-

stead of Ajèèwò, *Onírúgúdù, p.100 to mean someone who causes significant disorder or chaos is also a coined word different from the Yoruba word Adárúgúdù and not *onírúgúdù. There is no word like *Asàgbé to mean a beggar, rather, it is Alágbe or Aşagbe p.101, No word as *Alágbègbè rather, Aláduùgbò to mean neighbour, p.102. One who repays kindness with harm is Afibişólóore and not *Afibi san oore. The standard Yorùbá would not call one who squanders wealth as , *Alánàábàjé, Alánàdànù or nàwónàwó p.105, rather, they would the person Àpà, onínàà-àpà or amùşùà while Nàwónàwó is someone who spends money and necessarily a waster.

- xi. There are many sentences used by the author that are ungrammatical and do not follow the standard Yoruba word order. See examples in page 36 * Ó gbà owó (he accepted the money) instead of Ó gba owó. *Awon èrò dà wálẹ̀ láti òkẹ̀ (The crowd swept down the hill), dà wálẹ̀ , the verb phrase can only be used for objects and not human, instead Àwọn èrò já wálẹ̀ láti òkẹ̀. P. 49 *Wón lo ààrò láti gbóná irin nàà (They used the furnace to heat the iron). Wón kí í gbóná irin, wón máa n pón irin ni. P.53* Ìjọba nàà jẹ̀ nibèrù fún gbogbo àwùjọ (The government was feared by the community) Àwọn ará ilú/àwùjọ bẹ̀rú ijọba nàà/ Ìjọba nàà jẹ̀ èrùjẹ̀jẹ̀ fún ará ilú/àwùjọ; *Ó láàánú fún obirin nàà (he felt sympathy for the woman) p.132 instead of : Ó bá obinrin nàà kẹ̀dùn/ Ó bá obinrin nàà dárò.
- xii. Poor Orthography: Many of the words written in Yorùbá have wrong spellings, poor word divisions . See for example: p.108 * ìjògbòn instead of ìjàngbòn, p.110 * angeḡeli for angels instead of Àngẹ̀li, p.112 *Kòribẹ̀ instead of Kò rí bẹ̀, p.115- Òkọ̀tó (Cone) instead of Òkòtó, p.140, Lòdìlòdì to refer to actions done in a contradictory or inconsistent way instead of Lòdìlòdì, p.140 *Dógóngó instead of ‘dé góńgó’ and the words under the appendix p.395 it is better to write the months of the year in English first, then in Yoruba, separate the joined words- Oşukíní – Oşù kíńí, oşù kejì etc.

Despite all the errors identified in the book, the book presents systematic methods of analysis and tries to bring the language to modern digital technology Apps, thus, Philip Akoda’s initiative is be applauded. It is a book that must be read by all scholars of African linguistics and Yoruba language.