

Marriage and the Expression of Linguistic Identity in Edo (Benin)

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Abstract

Language is obviously and undeniably a vital tool and not only is it a means of communicating thoughts, ideas, feelings, opinions and needs, language but also a tool in the hands of our ancestors via which cultural norms, values, friendships and economic relationships, have flourish. Festivals, rituals and ceremonies particularly, marriage ceremonies are conducted via language. This paper examines the different terms used during marriage ceremonies in Benin. The focus is on the language used during traditional marriage ceremony in a typical Benin environment and how this is used to project the identity of the people. The data for the research were collected through interviews and observation (participant observation during traditional marriage rites in Benin), especially in the area of the ceremonies. The researchers employed audio recording and writing, the data were drawn principally from established personalities in the Benin society. This work has helped to bring to limelight the intangible cultural heritage of the Bini people in ceremonies like marriages and the style of language employed in the different stages of the ceremony.

Keywords: Marriages, Identity, Benin, Edo (Benin) Variation

Introduction

Language generally tends to be made up of many different varieties. And the terms and expressions used in this language of traditional marriage are many which in the context of situation of the occasion are a variety of Edo language spoken in Benin City. Edo has become predominantly linguistic and ethnic labels referring in scope to the language and people of the entire Benin Division. In addition, Edo however, has served as the indigenous name for the city (Agheyisi, 1986). The name Edo (the old name for Benin) is used by some writers to

cover all the languages of the Eḍoid group of languages, but a writer like Greenberg, on the other hand, did not use the name Eḍo at all in any of his classifications, but merely listed the languages of the group by their individual names, using Bini for 'Eḍo' language. Melzian in his famous dictionary of the language refers to the Eḍo language as Bini following various controversies which are not relevant to his work. The Eḍo language was properly suggested at the 1974 seminar on Eḍo language which took place at the University of Lagos that the designation 'Eḍo-Bini' be used in formal writing to eliminate its confusion with the language group (Egharevba 1956, 1966). With this agreement, 'Eḍo' was freed to be used or referred to as a single language only. It is also very important to point out that 'Eḍo' is intended to refer to an 'Eḍo'. That is a speaker of Eḍo is also a Benin person.

The Eḍo language is today spoken natively throughout Benin as it was spoken in most of the territory conterminous with the Benin Division of the former Mid-Western State of Nigeria which has now been demarcated into OrEḍo, Ego, Ikpoba-Okha, Ovia-North-East and Ovia-South-West. These constitute the permanent core of the Benin metropolis today and are the geographical area of the paper's focus as already mentioned.

Literatures

Language allows its speakers to talk about anything within their realm of knowledge in the sense that language impose different perceptions of the world on their speakers or predispose them to look at the world in certain ways which is the case with the Eḍo language. Adejnu (2000) argues that different varieties of a language serve specific functions in communication in which they are used. Variety for him is therefore described as any form of a language which can be identified in a speech community.

Trudgill (2004) claims that language varies not only according to social characteristics of the speaker but also according to the social context in which he finds himself. He posited his claims by saying that the same speaker uses different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. He was actually saying that contextual constraints also affect language use in a community whether in the form of songs or words in that community.

In Eḍo, the forms used in communication differ according to place and purpose for which they are used. For instance, the forms of words and songs used for burial ceremonies to a large extent differ from that used in marriage ceremonies in Benin society.

In the work of Austin (1955), the appropriateness in the use of language in respect to the circumstances one finds his/herself is an essential ingredient of language use. To him, there must exist an accepted conventional procedure, and that procedure too must include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances and further, the particular person and circumstance in a given case, must be appropriate for the invocation of

the particular procedure involved.

This therefore finds expression in the fact that the meaning of an expression is deduced from its use such that the same speakers used different linguistic varieties in different situations and for different purposes. Thus, even when the speaker knows other varieties of such language, he does not use a particular variety where he is supposed to use another. This view stresses that in speaking generally, it is always necessary that the circumstances in which utterances occur should be taken into consideration which in some ways is appropriate to the term used.

The Edo marriage system evolved from the culture of the two types of marriage practiced in Nigeria. These two types of marriages are called monogamy which is a voluntary union for life between a man and a woman. While the second is the polygamous marriage which is the union of a man to two or more women (wives).

Theoretical Orientation

This study employed the social variationist approach to language adapted from the work of Holmes (2008). Language variation is a popular approach to language in social settings and several researchers have shown interest in the theory of variation studies. Variability in a language is within everyone's experience of using and listening to the language and most people show some degree of interest in it. Despite this, linguists have until quite recently, and in many branches of language paper have been treated as if they were wholly or mainly invariant entities or as if the variability that does not exist within them were unimportant, accidental or inessential. Variability within a language or dialect and variation across languages have not been centrally concerned in the dominant linguistic theories of this our recent times, this was the position of James (1998). According to him, a major reason for recent advances in variation studies is technological. Before tape recorders and computers became easily available, students of spoken language had to rely on single word citation forms and on memory. Over the years however, much attention has been devoted to collecting tape recorded data in situations that are as "naturalistic" as possible such as during marriage ceremonies in Benin traditional settings.

James (1998) also claims that language is inherently a variable as a number of structural levels in phonology, morphology and syntax in particular. Phoneticians frequently points out that no two utterances of the same word by the same speaker are ever exactly alike and it is also recognized that some variation in sound pattern may be structured.

Another important issue put forward by this scholar James (1998) is that variation also has something to do with social class, event or context.

Holmes (2008) explains social classes as one of the implications of language variation. Milroy also talk about it in his own way as it contributes immensely to language

change in his own words. Social network and social class represent different orders of generalization about social organization class and this account for the hierarchical structure of society (arising from inequalities of wealth and power). Whereas, network deals with the dimension of solidarity at the level of the individual and his or her everyday contacts. An attempt has been made to link the two concepts together (marriage and language) in a sociolinguistic model by causing the notion of “network ties”.

Holmes divided variations into different types. She believes that no two people speak exactly the same way, simply because, there are infinite sources of variation in speech. What this opinion tells us is that variation occurs in almost every aspect of the language. For example, some features of speech, however are shared by groups and become important because they differentiate one group from another. The point here is that just as language separates or unifies different group of people, so also are the speech characteristics within a language used to identify a group of people.

This approach is approach for the discussion of the subject matter of this paper as it is the most suitable account for the variation of Edo words used during traditional marriage ceremonies. Most of the words used during marriage ceremonies would mean something different if the same words are to be used in a different context or for a different event. Take for instance, the words used during burial ceremonies can never mean the same thing during marriage ceremonies.

Social variation is a situation whereby variation occurs in the speech pattern between classes of people within a territory. Holmes (2008) put forward some examples between the upper class and the lower class in England to justify such variation as a person who speaks regional accent in England was most unlikely to belong to the upper class. Upper class people had an upper-class education. Also, the dropping of [h] or normally refers to [h] – dropping by Holmes (2008) which posited that only uneducated people drop their [h]s, there are other arguments of the [h] dropping but in this contemporary time, the arguments is that top social class in England drop the [h] at the beginning of words like, hotel and herb.

Methodology

In this paper, we are interested in the data collection from the original source which will help to reveal the terms and expressions of elders and Edo people in the conduct of traditional marriage ceremonies. The data collection methods are field notes and audio-recordings through participants’ observations. The field note represents the most realistic pictures of the presence of variation and change in the language use of the elders and singers of Edo during marriage ceremonies. Notations is the process of making brief written notes no other tools except paper and pen are needed which makes this method easily accessible. This method

gives the possibility to slot data into categories that correspond to elements that enjoy the special attention in the research.

Language use in Traditional Marriage Ceremony

This section presents and analyses the data employed in this paper. It however examines the words and objects employed in the Edo marriage ceremonies as well as present their linguistic meaning. In addition, all other linguistic activities taking place during the ceremony are also discussed.

Based on the orientation of this paper, a word is the minimal meaningful unit of a language which is capable of making meaning on its own. What this implies is that words or items called words in this paper are those which have distinct meanings of their own. In Edo however, words are referred to as “*emwe*” and they could be classified into three basic classes, namely:

- (i) *Okpota* meaning “weighty talk”: these are words in Edo language used by elders and they have specific meaning different from their usual everybody meaning. Thus, the meaning of *okpota* (*weighty talk*) words are not easily understood by younger people. The elders use *okpotato* hedge and mitigate in their utterances.
- (ii) *Ihaze* meaning “less words”: introduced by the native speakers and understood by ‘individual users alone’. The aim of such words are to create comic relief in the listeners as they are used most times to create rhythm in literary piece, as can be seen in the work of Evbima Ogie, “kokoye” where he used “*TupepeTupepe*”.
- (iii) *EmweKekan* “Ordinary words”: these are normal words used in the language where there is no specific or specialized meaning in their use. These are words used in making speech all to time and are also the generally understood words of writing. They are easy to understand by all. The words below play a dominant role in Traditional marriage ceremony in Benin society.

4.1 Names of words and Items in the language, Associated with Marriage ceremonies

There are certain items employed during a marriage ceremony in the Edo community.

They are presented below:

- **Names of Participants**

Participants are the persons who participated in the marriage rites and are presented in the data below:¹

- (a) *Ovbiha*: ‘Bride’

- (b) *Ọdọvbioha*: ‘Bride groom’
- (c) *Evbibiomọ* ‘Parents of both bride & groom’
- (d) *Ọkaẹgbẹ* ‘Family heads’
- (e) *Ẹgbẹenoberha*: ‘families of both the bride and groom in regards to the father’
- (f) *Ẹgbẹenobiye*: ‘families of both the bride and groom in regards to the mother’
- (g) *Ukekun*: ‘a little girl that accompany the bride to her matrimonial home’
- (h) *Ọsuọha*: ‘a matured woman that escort the bride to hr matrimonial home’
- (i) *Avbọse* : ‘friends of both the bride and groom’
- (j) *Avbegbe*: ‘families of both the bride and groom combined’
- (k) *Ibiẹguae*: ‘relations to the bride’
- (l) *Odibo*: ‘Negotiator’
- (m) *Okhuo*: ‘woman’
- (n) *Okpia*: ‘man’
- (o) *Ọsuomwan*: ‘middle man’
- (p) *Ọdọ*: ‘husband’
- (q) *Iye-ọdọ*: ‘mother-in-law’
- (r) *Orue*: ‘mate (co-wife)’
- (s) *Enikaro*[: ‘fore runners/forefathers’
- (t) *Erha-ọdọ*: ‘father-in-law’

- **Names of Instrument**

These have to do with the means by which the event is carried out or performed. It is actually a tool or implement employed during the period of singing of songs. They are presented in the data below:

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- (a) *Ukuse*: ‘maracas’
- (b) *Ẹgogo*: ‘gong’o
- (c) *Ẹma* : ‘drum’

These instruments are used to represent the joyous mood that is typically activated during the occasion of a marriage in the Edo (Benin) society.

- **Names of Items used in the Occasion**

During a marriage ceremony, certain items or objects are employed which are different from those of a burial or naming ceremony. The items are presented below:

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- (a) *Ivie*: ‘beads’
- (b) *Evbu*: ‘special cloth for the bride’
- (c) *Okuku*: ‘a kind of hair style for the bride’
- (d) *Oroka*: ‘wedding ring’
- (e) *Odigba*: ‘grooms bead’
- (f) *Akpolo*: ‘waist bead’
- (g) *Orhue*: ‘native chalk’
- (h) *Ivin*: ‘coconut’
- (i) *Evbeḡ*: ‘kolanut’
- (j) *Anyo*: ‘drink’
- (k) *Emwieho*: ‘ear ring’
- (l) *Igho*: ‘money’
- (m) *Ukpḡḡofua*: ‘white cloth’
- (n) *Oḡḡḡ*: ‘palm wine’
- (o) *Agbada*: ‘groom’s gown’
- (p) *Ebuba*: ‘bride’s wrapper’
- (q) *Emwinurhu*: ‘neck lace’
- (r) *Igho-uhunmwu*: ‘bride price’
- (s) *Eḡḡmwḡn*: ‘brass bangles’
- (t) *Urro*: ‘wooden pallet’

● **Names of Gift Items taken to the Brides New Home**

After the marriage ceremony, the bride is meant to take certain gift items that are bought by her family to her husband’s house. These gift items are given to her to begin her marital role as a wife.

4.

- (a) *Olo*: ‘grinding stone’
- (b) *Urro*: ‘wooden pallet’
- (c) *Ero*: ‘knife’
- (d) *Ekuye*: ‘spoon’
- (e) *Owe*: ‘broom’
- (f) *Opia*: ‘cutlass’
- (g) *Epoḡu*: ‘cooking pot’
- (h) *Uwawa*: ‘cooking pot (clay)’
- (i) *Ekpḡtin-ukḡḡn*: ‘box of clothes’

- (j) *Ukpu*: ‘cup’
- (k) *Ekpamakun*: ‘plates’
- (l) *Igioko* : ‘chair’
- (m) *Uzokpo*: ‘deep bowl’
- (n) *Akhe*: ‘drinking pot’
- (o) *Egbedin*: ‘drum (for water)’
- (p) *Ughamwa*: ‘axe’
- (q) *Adogan*: ‘casted iron for making fire’
- (r) *Ofigbon*: ‘oil’
- (s) *Oguomwadia*: ‘house help’.

- **Symbolism of some of the Items**

Most of the items employed during a marriage ceremony are symbolic as they are employed to represent certain acts, meaning or character. They include:

Ivie: ‘beads’

This is used in traditional marriage ceremony in Edo as it symbolizes pride and independence of the bride, such that it serves as a kind of independent separation of the bride from her parents to live on her own with her husband.

Igho: ‘money’

This term used in this aspect is that which referred to the money given to the bride’s mother which symbolizes appreciation by the groom such that if it is not done, the bridegroom may be looked on as an ingrate.

gho-Iuhunmwu: ‘bride price’

This symbolizes that the woman is given as a wife and not as companion and not as a slave or maid.

Ibięgae: ‘bride’s relative’

During the ceremony, six persons are usually arranged before the elders of both families, where the bride makes it the seventh person. These six persons are usually the bride’s relatives which symbolizes the six days of the week and the introduction of the bride makes it the seventh day of the week which indicates the bride’s supremacy and control of the home.

Ogoro: ‘palm wine’

This symbolizes preparedness of the groom’s family for the occasion and it is usually provided by the groom.

Evbe: ‘kolanut’

This symbolizes peace while the presentation during the ceremony symbolizes hospitality.

Uro: ‘wooden-pallet’

This is synonymous with the white man’s tray which symbolizes finesse when used to serve the kolanut.

Anyo: ‘hot drink’

It is used for libation. It symbolizes the acceptance of the groom’s family by the bride’s family as well as the items the former brought for the marriage.

Onwo: ‘honey’

This symbolizes sweetness in the marriage and it is mostly used after the bride has been given to the groom.

Okuku: ‘hair style’

It symbolizes the traditional attire of marriage done in traditional ways.

Orhue: ‘native chalk’

This item is symbolic as it stands for peace, happiness and purity. Unlike the item Ibi (black chalk) which stands for mourning and other sad events.

Other expressions used during marriages in the Benin society:

Gbere – igue: joining of bride and groom. In this context, the joining differs in some way from the joining done in the church.

The spokesman ‘osumwa/odiaowa’ calls out the bridegroom and performs the needed ceremony.

Songs used during Benin traditional marriage

	Benin	English
1.	Esiwo siwo Esiwo	celebration celebration celebration
	Esiwo siwo, esiwo x2	celebration celebration celebration x2
	Aghabiomọ eta ghoghọ	the birth of a child brings joy
	Aghariokhuo eta ghoghọ	the marrying of a wife brings joy

- Esiwo siwo, esiwo celebration celebration celebration
2. **Ediṅ** **older ones**
 Ediṅ ediṅ o older ones, older ones
 Ediṅ mwen simwin enoyan owa older ones protect the landlord of this house
 Enamię la vbę dṳbere ise to enable us have access to it another day Amen
 Enamię la vbę dṳbere ise...x2 to enable us have access to it another day Amen x2
3. **Ugiomo Mado** **Ceremony of a child**
 Vbaghi ru vbe dian o What is going on here
 Ugiomṳ mado vbe rhan o...x2 it is the ceremony of a child...x2
 Ugiomṳ mado vbe rhan o...x2 it is the ceremony of a child...x2
 Ugioghogho mado vbe rhan o it is the ceremony of happiness
 Ugiorhonmwen made vbe rhan o it is the ceremony of marriage
4. **Vbṳkhin Oyęmwęṳ** **what is it, it is happiness**
 Vbṳkhin Oyęmwęṳ what is it, is happiness
 Iwe vbṳkhin oyęmwęṳ I say what is it, it is happiness
 Oyęmwęṳ omṳ, oyęmwęṳ the happiness of a child, it is happiness
 Oyęmwęṳ igho, oyęmwęṳ the happiness of wealth, it is happiness
5. **Avba Eņęvbo** **who are the people**
 Avba eņęvbo, Avba eņęvbo na kha who are the people, who are the people in question
 Imamwan nṳ o...x2 we are the ones
 Oko, ma ṳ eyiotṳ nṳma giowade please, we the foundation preventing the house
 from falling

6. **Erhovbioha** **Bride's Father**
 Erhovbioha enorhenegbe Efewedo the responsible bride's father, wealth extend it greetings
 Ieukpakon ovbiuwa, Ivbe rieyore
 Efewedo wealth extend its greeting
7. **Ovbiõha Zowere** **Bride Take a Step Forward**
 Ovbiõha zowere, gboghodo...x2 Bride take a step forward, majestically...x2
 Enudo riuwa gboghodo come and take wealth, majestically
 Enudo riutomwen gboghodo come and take long life, majestically
 Ovbiõha zowere, gboghodo bride take a step forward, majestically
 Ovbiõha zowere, bride take a step forward
 Iwenu zowere...x2 gboghodo I say take a step forward...x2 majestically
8. **Ovbiõha mwen Zowegie** **My Bride Make a Royal Step**
 Ovbiõha mwen Zowegie My bride make a royal step
 Zowe nerha ze, zowe niyue ze like that of your father and mother
 Odafen ovbiõha zowegie o bride's husband, make a royal step
 Zowe nerha ze, zowe niyue ze like that of your father and mother
9. **Qnailele O** **This is my choice**
 Qnailele onabile...x2 this is my choice..x2
 Qnailele o this is my choice
 Qnailele ovbiõha mwen o this is my choice of a wife
 Qnailele o this is my choice

Qgha khonwe silivie yegbe	if you like, decorate yourself with beads
Qnailele o	this is my choice
Qgha khonwe silekan yegbe	if you like, decorate yourself with expensive beads
Qnailele o	this is my choice

The songs presented above are used to express the moods of both the bride's parents and the groom's family in the course of the marital ceremony. This is one of the identity projectors of a marriage in the Edo (Benin) society, as the songs employed during this ceremony are employed only during the occasion and not for any other events like naming, burials, festivals and so on.

- **The Spoken Form**

Under this aspect, we realized the spoken forms of all the items which are usually uttered during the occasion. It was discovered that while some items in traditional marriage ceremony in Edo society are similar, some are totally different from their ordinary usage. It was also discovered in the course of investigation that some of these items have direct relationship with what they mean, in marriage ceremony, others have indirect relationship.

- **Similarities in Meaning**

When the meaning of some terms in traditional marriage ceremony were compared with their everyday use in Edo language, it was observed that the meaning of the terms was similar. These are represented in a tabular form below:

Table I: Comparison of terms used in Marriages and Everyday Usage

S/N	Term	Meaning in Marriage	Meaning in Everyday Usage
(a)	Evibiomọ	Parents of both the bride and groom	Parents
(b)	Okaegbe	Head of both families	The head of one's family

(c)	Egbe-noberha	Families of both the bride and the groom in regards to their father's side	Family, siblings, from one's father's side
(d)	Egbe-nobiye	Families of both the bride and groom in regards to their mother's side	Family, siblings, from one's mother's side
(e)	Avbose	Friends of both the bride and groom	Friends
(f)	Ibieguae	Males and females relations of the bride	Youth in the household
(g)	Odibo	Negotiator	A delegate or message
(h)	Akpolo	Waist bend for the bride	A string of bead worn around the waist by girls
(i)	Enikaro	Forerunners	Those who came in from the ancestors or pioneers
(j)	Ukponofua	White cloth	White cloth

The meaning of the above words both in traditional ceremony and everyday usage are similar so that even a non-participant in traditional marriage ceremony will understand them wherever they are used. The meaning of the terms remains the same even though they are used in different context other than traditional marriage ceremony.

- **Differences in Meaning**

The differences in meaning can be seen when the meaning of some terms used in traditional marriage ceremony are compared to the everyday use of these same words in other contexts. Consider the examples below:

Table II: Terms used in marriages and Everyday Usage

S/N	Terms	Meaning in Marriage	Every-day Meaning
(a)	Iku	Bands of musicians or dancers	Small bids of crumbs left over or rubbish garbage
(b)	Evbu	Cloth for the bride	Dew, morning mist

(c)	Igho-uhunmwu	Bride price	Tax paid by every head of the population, hence the name
(d)	Osuomwa	Middle man	Leader of persons or shepherd
(e)	Ukhue-gbe	Long life	Human life
(f)	Osuoha	A matured woman who escorts the bride to her matrimonial home	Meaningless or one who escort catarrh
(g)	Ukekun	A little girl that accompany the bride to her matrimonial home	Someone who plants waist (meaningless)

The meanings of the above items are different. The terms and meanings can only be understood by someone who has the knowledge of the terms used in traditional marriage ceremony in Bini. The term will mean different things in different contexts. The differences in their meaning are brought about in the context of situation. For instance, these terms in traditional marriage ceremony will mean totally different things from what they mean in naming ceremony or burial rites.

The term igho-uhunmwu for instance, mean a different thing from everyday usage of the language in the sense that igho-uhunmwu in traditional marriage ceremony means the amount of money paid by the groom to the bride's parents as a seal for the marriage. This seems completely different from what it means in everyday use when it refers to the tax paid by every head of a family as implied here.

- **Direct Relationship in Meaning**

A direct relationship in meaning is when a term in traditional marriage has a direct relationship with what the word means in the Edo language or what it means to the ordinary person. That is, someone who does not know anything about traditional marriage ceremony in Bini society. Such persons can interpret the meaning of such terms without facing any difficulty. We cannot then say that these terms are restricted to this occasion alone in the sense that their meaning is the same everywhere. It is used because of the direct relationship in meaning.

Consider the following words in the table below:

Table III: Words that have Direct Relationship in Meaning

S/N	Terms	Participants in Marriage	Non-participants
(a)	Ugie-omọ	A term used to refer to the marriage ceremony	A general term for palace ceremony is usually ugie while omọ means child or appellation of Oba. In general usage, it mean's Oba's ceremony.
(b)	Osuomwa	This refers to an intermediary or a middle man who stand between the two families concerned & he is usually related to the groom	This refers to a leader of persons or shepherd of group of persons
(c)	Iku	A group of dancers or singers who are usually engaged to perform during an Edo traditional marriage ceremony	This refers to a garbage or refuse
(d)	Okuku	A kind of hair style usually made by the bride during the ceremony	Traditional method of hair dressing by women in the Edo society which is worn mostly by women of royal connections (Oba's wives)
(e)	Oroka	This refers to a small band of precious metal often with valuable stones used to distinguish the married couple from the unmarried (i.e. wedding ring)	A small circular band of precious metal worn on the finger which could be worn by anybody for the sake of beauty

(f)	Evbu	This is used to refer to the special cloth made for the bride by the parent during the ceremony	This is used to refer to a kind of moisture that is usually found very early in the morning (i.e. dew)
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A survey of the terms listed above will reveal that there is no direct relationship between their meaning in Edo language and their meaning in traditional marriage ceremony in Edo. This indirect relationship which I mentioned earlier simply implies that there is no link whatsoever between what they mean in traditional ceremony and what they mean to the layman who encounters the terms and ascribes a different meaning to it.

Consider the following examples from the table:

- (a) Evbu: this, for a layman means moisture found in the early morning. In traditional marriage ceremony however, evbu is not moisture, rather it is referred to a special cloth made for the bride by her parents as she is preparing for marriage.
- (b) Oroka: to a layman, is something that is worn by persons of all kinds whether married or unmarried, simply because its serves to beautify the finger of those wearing it. Because of the beautification, some people in the society distinguish themselves from all other who are not members of their cult. It could be seen that societies of different orientation has its own oroka which every member is expected to use in distinguishing themselves from others who are not members. But in traditional marriage ceremony, oroka is a small circular band of precious metal often with valuable stones that is presented by the groom. It is two of the same type which is shared among the bride and the groom where the bride puts that of the bridegroom on his finger and the bridegroom puts that of bride on the finger. The use of oroka therefore has an indirect relationship with the meaning in everyday usage.
- (c) Osuomwa: the layman will refer to this term as a leader of persons or that which serves as a shepherd of group of persons. But in traditional marriage ceremony, it does not refer to a leader or a shepherd but refers to a middle man whose intention is to stand between the two families during the course of the ceremony for a peaceful resolution. He is usually the groom's family member or friend of the groom's family.

Therefore, it has an indirect relationship in meaning which it means in everyday usage.

- (d) *Okuku*: for a layman, it is believed that this refers to the traditional method of hair dressing by a woman who has a royal connection some of which are still worn on ceremonial occasion by such women of royal connections, i.e the Oba's wives and children. But in traditional marriage ceremony, this is a kind of dressing done by the bride to distinguish herself from every other woman present during the occasion and this does not give the bride a royal connection.
- (e) *Ugie-omọ*: this term to a layman means ceremonies such as iguẹ festivals, ugiama, and so on. Simply because omọ means an appellation of the Oba which makes a layman to think that it is a celebration by the Oba. But in traditional marriage ceremony, the term is used to refer to the occasion of marriage which has nothing to do with the Oba.
- (f) *Iku*: this to the layman simply means garbage or refuse found in dirty places or pits. But traditional marriage ceremony refers to it as a group of singers who are usually hired by the groom to perform while the occasion is on. So in context, it equally means something totally different from everybody usage.

Conclusion

So far in this paper, we presented data to help examine language use in Edo marriage ceremonies as well as the items employed. However, we also examined some expressions used during the marriage ceremony. It is however noteworthy to add here that based on the language used as well as the items employed, marriage ceremonies in Benin is a joyful and interesting event as its end use is to bring about unity and love between the two families involved. It is finally posited in this paper that the expressions used to convey the different ceremonies, rituals and rites in marriages are a projection of social identity in the Edo (Benin) linguistic community.

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Identity Discourse in Noviolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*

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Abstract

Discourses on identity formation are replete with how rejection and acceptance in a particular society goes a long way in determining a person's self-esteem and sense of accomplishment. This paper interrogates unstable identities in the Africans domiciled in the diaspora. By adopting Karen Horny Strand of Psychoanalysis, it investigates the nexus between personal identity and collective identity and how both are problematized and constituted. The paper uncovers that identity for the African immigrant living in the diaspora is a construct, an idea of contestation that changes in response to the reality in the Diaspora. Identity for the immigrants is a strategy for survival in cases of hostility, racism in the Diaspora or disillusionment of the reality in Africa for the African immigrant living in the diaspora.