

## **Dialects as Text-Style Markers: Insights from *Ifá* Oracular Discourse in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì Dialects**

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### **Abstract**

*Ifá* is believed to be the foundation of Yoruba culture, one of the major divinities which cuts across all Yoruba speech communities. Despite this pedigree, however, scholarly works on the style of *Ifá* texts in relation to Yoruba dialects are rare. This study, therefore, examines style markers in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects as evinced from *Ifá* corpora. Ifa texts available in the Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialect are contrasted with similar texts in Èkìtì dialect for phonological and lexical variations. Findings show that there are variations between the two dialects in the area of tones, words and speech sounds manipulations which serve as markers of style in the two dialects. The shifts however do not result in major semantic variations. The study concludes that dialectal variations serve as style markers of *Ifá* divination discourse through which *Ifá* texts can be appropriately described or differentiated.

**Keywords:** *Ifá*, dialect, stylistics, style marker, language variation

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### 1. Introduction

Language use is not only important in communication among human beings but also with the divinities, ancestors, supernatural beings, and Olódùmare, the Supreme Being. Ifá divination is believed in Yoruba culture to not only be a means by which the mind of God is revealed on issues or challenges facing mankind but also providing solutions to such problems. Ifá is therefore regarded as a

divination system which originated from the Yorùbá people of South Western Nigeria some 2000 years ago. In the course of succeeding centuries, Ifá priests (Babaláwo) have developed the original form bequeathed them by Òrúnmilà, the reforming prophet of the Odùduwà era of Yorùbá history (5000B.C. – 500A.D.) in many ways but have kept its canons essentially unchanged to this very day (Lijadu, 1908 translated into English by Emanuel, 2010, p. ix).

Ifá is not only regarded as a major divinity among the Yoruba, it is a “most universal divinity among the Yorùbá other West African people” (Munoz, 2003, p.179), nations and tribes around the world. Ifá is known to different people by different names around the world. It is called *Fá* among the Fon of Republic of Benin, *Eva* among the Nupe, *Ifá* in Cuba, USA, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Surinam and Togo (Robinson, 2008). Ifá

is considered as the god of divination in Igala culture. It is believed that, Ifá carries messages from the other world to this world. It is also a medium of dialogue between the living and the ancestors” (Negedu, nd, p.5).

In 2005, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed *Ifá* as one of the 86 traditions of the world to be recognised as masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity (Robinson, 2008). By that proclamation, *Ifá* is

canonized in the league of world cultural heritages that deserves preservation. *Ifá*, as a religion, has over time, been of great interest to scholars in different areas of human endeavors, such as literature, philosophy, religion, art and culture. What the Bible is to the Christianity and Quran to the Islam, as sacred texts, is what *Ifá* corpus is to the Yoruba people and their religion.

The name, content and contextual use of *Odù-Ifá*, is universal, being common all-over Yoruba nations. At the same time, all the names and contents of *Odù-Ifá* remain the same. That is, throughout the Yoruba linguistic geographical areas, all the *Odù- Ifá* messages and symbols are coded and transmitted the same way. The sixteen principal and two hundred and forty minor *Odù* are known and referenced by their names. For example, *Èjì-Ogbè* remains the first just as the *Òfún/Òràngún Méjì* remains the last in the primal life experience of the *Odù* universally.

*Odù-Ifá* has its peculiar language and style with which it is described. Such descriptions are realized within various linguistic and literary elements of texts or discourse which, in some ways contribute to the style of the text. The description must be adequate for analysis of all features that possess stylistic significance (Spencer and Gregory, 1964). Different factors influence a choice of language or a variety of language or dialect as a language variation. Language variation can be a form of deviation from the norm. The level of deviation of language elements provides grounds for a style marker in a text. In stylistics “deviant lexical or syntactic variation results in deviant sentences which form an essential element in our response to poetry” (Kòlawòlè, 2012, p.8). The level of deviation is occasioned by the type of text or discourse.

In contrasting the style of a text or discourse with each other, such as undertaken in this study, variations do occur resulting in the style markers of texts. That is, “in stylistic variation (or intra-language variation) switching takes place in a monolingual situation. The change into *formal or informal styles or registers* may be conditioned by three major variables, namely the relationship between speaker-hearer, the subject matter of discussion and the setting discussion” (Şotiloye, 1992, p.194). This means that the choice of linguistic elements in a text or

discourse is related to the use of official or unofficial language, the sender and receiver of the message, the theme of the discourse and the context where the message is divulged.

It has been observed that, style of a text is influenced by the contents and contexts of the text or discourse and the situation the speaker or writer finds himself or herself. That is, “we can distinguish two principal types of language variation: variation according to who you are and variation according to the situation you find yourself” (Alan and Fabb, 1990, p.196). The use of dialects as employed in Èkìtì and Òyó-Ìbàdàn indicate that, both the *Ifá* diviner and the clients have clear understanding of the dialect.

A text such as the *Ifá* discourse text is rendered by the speaker—the *Ifá* oracular priest, who interprets the messages of *Ifá* to the client in an understandable language, so that, “the interlocutors have a common medium of communication” (Şotiloye, 1992, p.198), which is the dialect. Different text is associated with different style that describes the text. A text selects some linguistic elements than another. That is, different texts exhibit different style markers by exploring different stylistic elements.

In this study, there are perceived language and linguistic variations which are occasioned by *Ifá* divination discourse and texts in dialects. Therefore, this study aims to investigate how dialect serves as a language variation or style marker in *Ifá*. The objective of the study is to contrast phonological and lexical variations between Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects within the rubric of *Ifá* discourse.

## 2. Literature Review

The work of Bámisilè (1991) examines Fálétí’s plays within the text-linguistics matrix. The study is based on stylistic elements such as grouping, connection, prominence, coherence and semantic interpretation. Among the literary and linguistic stylistic elements explored in Fálétí’s dramatic plays are archaic words, humour, absolute power, class of distinction and message. Likewise, Àjàyí (1995) employs the text-linguistics approach employed by Bámisilè above to examine *Ofò*- (Yorùba incantation). The work of Ajayi sourced its data from different Yorùbá incantation types and concludes that the structure

of Yorùbá incantation is fixed, with the use of *kì í-* (don't) or *ní í-* (is/do). Ajayi (1995) succinctly puts it that, “we have seen that *ofò* text is loaded with *ní-* and *kìi-* constructions...we suggest that the link has to do with the exceptionless nature of the *ní-* and *kìi-* constructions” (p.118). This implies that, *ní-* and *kìi-* constructions are style markers of incantation texts in Yoruba.

Òkèwándé (2015) examines the cohesion in some Yoruba discourse as style and establishes that every discourse or text selects appropriate words or language for it to be described as being coherent. Selection of such words serve as a cohesive force mediated by the cultural symbols and meanings. Òkèwándé et. al (2015) examine intertextuality and reference as stylistic elements in *oriki orílẹ̀-* totem, *oriki-* panegyrics and *ofò-* incantation and establish the interrelationship among texts or discourse. Such relationship exists in form of text adaptation (partial and full) or content form. That is, no text is self-sufficient or independent. Furthermore, Òkèwándé (2017) examines the stylistic element of informativity in *Ifá* corpus and proverbs and establishes that *Ifá* Corpus and Yorùbá proverbs are content-bound texts, an insufficient linguistic information in a text leads to incoherent discourse. Investigating stylistic elements of *Réré Rùn* dramatic text, Òkèwándé (2019) opines that the use of language and style in indigenous dramatic plays are panaceas to success in dramatic performance and as well as to the performers.

Examining the tones and stylistics of people's reception of Corona Virus among the Yoruba, Òjó and Bólárínwá (2012) established that songs are potent weapon of disseminating information as well as creating awareness to the peoples' empathy and adaptation. Description tones in relation to the Corona Virus are described as “supplicatory, satiric, sermonic, helplessness and optimism” (p.46). This is mediated by employing some literary devices, demonstrating the social, economic, health, religious, education and political effects of the Corona Virus through song mood.

### **3. Yoruba Dialects**

Dialects have been described to be “mutually intelligible form of language that differs in systematic ways” (Emerson, 2007, p. 409). That

is, differences between a dialect and the other can be realized at different levels of linguistic structures such as phonology, semantic and lexis. This demonstrates that, “if dialect is used only in readily definable contexts, it can most conveniently be regarded as a sub-variety of style; a shift of dialect thus turns into a shift of style” (Spencer and Gregory, 1964, p. 60).

Authors and scholars such as Adetugbo (1967 and 1982), Akinkugbe (1976 and 1978), Awobuluyi (1978), Ajongolo (2005) and Adeniyi (2005) categorized Yoruba dialects into different groups, using different parameters. For example, Awobuluyi (1978) identified sound system at lexical level categories and the relevance of a dialect in research as basis to group Yoruba dialects into five. Adeniyi (2005) categorized Yoruba dialects into seven, using geographical areas of speakers, grammar, and intelligibility among the speakers.

Adetugbo (1982) classifies Yoruba dialects into three, namely North West Yoruba (NWX), South East Yoruba (SEY) and Central Yoruba (CY). The Oyo-Ibadan Yoruba is grouped under North West Yoruba (NWX) while Ekiti dialects was put under SEY. Group into South East Yoruba are the speakers of the dialects of Ife-Ilesha, Akure and Ekiti. On the one hand, the choice of these dialects is informed by the fact that the “vast area in which Yoruba is spoken in Nigeria cannot be covered by a single analyst with any degree of comprehensiveness. The analyst will either spread himself too thinly or he would get lost in the mess and welter of data” (Adetugbo, 1982, p.209). On the other hand, Orunmila, the Ifa progenitor lived most of his life in Ekiti. For example, the Yoruba myth accounts that Orunmila first lived in Usi Ekiti, then in Ado-Ekiti before moving to Ile-Ife.

Orunmila's panegyrics supports this myth. *Idi niyi ti won fi n ki Ifa ni Ara Usi, Ara Ado* (Adebayo, 1987, p.14). “This is the reason why Ifa panegyrics reveals he lived in Usi and Ado. This perhaps suggests one of the reasons why the panegyrics of Ifa indicates that Orunmila lived in Usi and Ado.” In another related story on the relationship of Ifa/Orunmila to Ado Ekiti, *Osá Méjì* corpus reveals that, it was the divination profession that took Ifa to Usi Ekiti, he was never related to the town as some people thought. In the corpus, Ifa/Orunmila is described as *omọ olónà-t'ò-yà-réré-Adó Èwí*

*Dialects as Text Style ...*

(Agboolá, 1989, p.141); meaning “the one who trekked towards Adó-èwí”. According to this verse, when people hailed *Òrúnmìlà* as one of the indigenes of Adó-Èwí, he responded that, *ó lóhun ò bá wọn tan n' bẹ̀, ó l'óhun sawo débẹ̀ ni* (Agboolá, 1989, p.141); meaning “he said he was not related to them there, *Ifá* divination only took him there”. However, another Yoruba myth reveals that, Ilé-Ifẹ̀ is where all the divinities descended on their arrival from heaven.

Nígbà tí àwọn òòsà wònyí dé Ifẹ̀ Oòdáyé tán, wọn bèrẹ̀ sí dó sí ibi tí ó wù wọn. Òkè Ìgẹ̀tí ni Òrúnmìlà kókò dó sí kí ó tó wá lọ sí Òkè Ìtasẹ̀...Lẹ́yìn òpòlopò ọ̀dún tí Orúnmìlà ti n gbé Ifẹ̀ Oòdáyé, ó fi ibẹ̀ sílẹ̀ lọ sí Adó níbi tí ó ti pé jùlọ̀ ní òde isálayé. Èyí ló fà á tí a fi máa n sọ wí pé: 'Adó n'ilé Ifá' (Abímbólá, 1977b, p.iii).

After these divinities arrived in Ifẹ̀ they began to live where they wanted. *Òrúnmìlà* first lived at Òkè Ìgẹ̀tí before he moved to Òkè Ìtasẹ̀. After many years at Ifẹ̀ Oòdáyé, he left there to Adó where he lived most of his life. This thus informs the saying that, “Adó is the home of Ifá.

The relationship of *Ifá* to Ekiti is as important as explained above. Therefore, the choice of *Ifá* text style for this study is in order.

Abímbólá observes that *Ifá* corpus should be written in text as expressed orally by the *Ifá* priests. Abímbólá (1968) states the importance of dialect as rendered directly by *Ifá* priests.

*Nínú ìwé yìí òpòlopò ni àwọn gbólóhùn ọ̀rọ̀ tí a kò leè rí nínú èdè Yorùbá ti ilú m̀ìràn àfi ti ilú Ọ̀yọ̀...Kíi se wí pé mo sàdédédé kọ irú ọ̀rọ̀ báwọ̀yí sílẹ̀ lásán ni. Ohun tí ó fà á ni wí pé ni agbègbè Ọ̀yọ̀ ni mo ti kó àwọn esẹ̀ Ifá tí m̀be nínú ìwé yìí jọ, mo sì ní láti kọ ohunkóhun tí nwọn bá wí fún mi sílẹ̀ gégé bí nwọn se wí i gaan (pp. 14-5).*

In this book, there are some words and sentences that are only expressed in Òyó town... Not that -I willingly wrote these words down as such. This is informed by the fact that -the *Ifá* verses were collected from Òyó communities, and I had to write those words exactly as said.

In some texts, due recognition is given to the use of language and styles in relation to the writers and in relation to the texts. The opinion of Abimbola above demonstrates that, the influence of dialect is crucial to the description of a text. This is corroborated by Olatúnjí (1982), when he says,

Ó yẹ kí n şàlàyé nípa ètò iwé yí. Ètò kíkọ Yoruba sílẹ tí mo tẹlẹ nínú iwé yí yàtò sí èyí tí Ayò Bámgbóşé dá lábàá nínú iwé rẹ, *Yoruba orthography* (Ibadan University Press, 1965, p. xi).

I need to explain something about the orthography of this text. The orthography that I adopt is different from the one suggested by Ayò Bamgbóşe in his book, *Yoruba orthography* (Ibadan University Press, 1965).

The two opinions by Abimbola and Olatunji demonstrate the importance of dialects in language use. Such linguistic variation in dialect is occasioned by text style markers in the language.

#### **4. Data and Method**

Collection of *Ifá* corpora in Èkìtì dialect, as contained in Adebayo (1987), is adopted to establish some level of language variations. Linguistic elements of contrast are grouped in relation to their use in the context of *Ifá* divination, since, contextually bound linguistic items function as style markers. Style markers occurring in the same text form a stylistic set for that text (Spencer and Gregory, 1964). It is believed in this study that the shared phonological and lexical linguistic elements in the dialects in contrast will sufficiently describe the style of *Ifá*



*Dialects as Text Style ...*

divination discourse. Since this study is contrastive and descriptive, the data sampled are grouped into two. That is, data are referenced from *Ifá* corpora texts as a standard version represented in this study as *Ọyó-Ìbàdàn* and in *Èkìtì* dialect. *Ifá* text in dialect is very uncommon.

- 1 a. *A díá fún Winnlawè Obìnrin Àjàgùnṣmòlè*  
which casts divination for Winnlawè, the kin of Àjàgùnṣmòlè  
*Hìn Hìn*  
*Níjọ tí ń fomi ojú sògbéré omọ*  
On the day she was crying for lack of children  
*Hìn Hìn* (Author's translation: Sàlámi, 2002, p.719)
- ... *Hẹn ẹn Hẹn ẹn*  
*A dífá fún Ìyèrè...* /which cast divination for Ìyèrè ...  
***Hẹn ẹn Hẹn ẹn*** (Areoyè, 1980, p.74).
- b. Refrain: *An kọomọdé ulé gba in gbongbọn*  
They said the young ones at home should be forcefully wise  
Chorus: ***Hìn-in***  
Refrain: *ín gbongbọn kò sí ní*  
saying there is no force here and there  
Chorus: ***Hìn-in*** (Adebayo, 1987, p.195).
- 2a. *A díá fún Oòduà atẹwọnrọ*  
which cast divination for Oòduà atẹwọnrọ  
(Abímbólá, 1969, p.96).  
***Ló díá fún Onídòko***  
which cast divination for Onídòko  
(Author's translation: Sàlámi, 2002, p.390).
- b. ***Ọ dífá kẹjì Ìwòrì***  
which cast divination for *Èjì Ìwòrì*  
(Ayọlá, 1987, p.64).  
***Lọ dífá k'Ọrúnmilà ọpitàn Ufẹ***  
which cast divination for Ọrúnmila, the Ifẹ historian.  
(Adebayo, 1987, p.64)

3a. *A díá fún Ìgbín*

which cast divination for snail

(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.35)

*Ìgbín ní ñ ràjò tó filé è şerù rù*

The snail is going on a trip and carries his shell a load

(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.87).

... *A jẹ kòkò Ìgbín*

We eat a pot of snails (Abímbólá, 1977b, p.4).

b. ... *Ùgbí méjì Olòkòbò* / Two big snails (Adebayo, 1987, p.153).

4a. *Ire ajé ñ wámi bọ wá*

The good fortunes of commerce are coming to look for me.

*Ire aya ñ wámi bọ wá*

The good fortunes of wives are coming to look for me

*Ire omọ ñ wámi bọ wá*

The good fortunes of children are coming to look for me

*Ire ile ñ wámi bọ wá*

The good fortunes of houses are coming to look for me

*Ire gbogbo ñ wámi bọ wá*

All good fortunes are coming to look for me

(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.165).

b. *Ure ni* / It is good thing

... *ure si ni* / and it is a good thing (Adebayo, 1987, p.64)

5a. *Àkùkọ tó kọ lánàá* / The rooster that crowed yesterday

*Ìkọ ire ló kọ* / Its crowing is of good omen

(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.42)

b. *lú lúgbì un yan àkìkọ dìyẹ* / When he sacrificed hen.

(Adebayo, 1987, p.154)

6a. *A díá fún itú* / which cast divination for

*okọ ewúré* / for itú the husband of she-goat (Abímbólá, 1968, p.29)

*Ewúré méjì abàmú rẹdẹrẹdẹ* / Two big she-goats

(Abimbólá, 1977b, p.11).

- b. ... *í kan a idèrègbè kán an pa..* .  
He says they should bring he-goat and kill it  
*í bẹ̀ l'òun ẹ̀ yan idèrègbè ẹ̀gbẹ̀wá*  
He says he will select a he-goat of two thousand (Adebayo, 1987, p.154).  
... *Èúrẹ̀ aborí kege'* / She-goat, the stubborn (Adebayo, 1987, p.154).
- 7a. *Òtòtòtò / Òtòtòtò*  
*Òròròrò / Òròròrò*  
*Òtòtò là á jẹ̀pà* / separately, one has to eat groundnuts  
*Òtòtò là á jẹ̀mumu* / separately, one has to eat cherries  
(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.1).
- b. *Iwo ní wí òtòtòtò ló í jẹ* / You are the one that says, separately they eat  
*Emi nàà mo wí òròròrò* / I also say it is separately  
*Ó wí òtòtò nà í j'èpà* / He says separately they eat groundnuts  
*Ó wí òtòtò nà í j'ẹ̀mumu* / He says separately they eat cherries  
(Adebayo, 1987, p.151)
- 8a. *Nígbà àwọn ọmọ dàgbà...* / When the children grew up  
*Nígbà ó yá* / After a while (Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.228)
- b. *Lúgbì kì í ẹ̀ bẹ̀...* / when he did that  
*Lúgbẹ̀ ní...* / then he (Adebayo, 1987, p.154)  
*lú lúgbì un yan àkíkọ̀ dìyẹ* / When he sacrificed a cock  
(Adebayo, 1987, p.154)
- 9a. *Ó kọ̀rí sílé Alara* / He went to Alára's house  
*Ó kọ̀rí sílé Ajerò* / He went to Ajerò's house (Abimbólá, 1968, p.89)
- b. *í an ẹ̀ lúli Ajerò* / That which they did in Ajero's house  
*í an ẹ̀ lúli Olójà lójà* / That which they did in the Olójà's market  
(Adebayo, 1987, p.154).
- 10a. *Wón n yin àwọn Babaláwo* / They were praising their Babaláwo  
*Áwọn Babaláwo n yin Ifá* / The Babaláwo in turn praise Ifá  
(Author's translation, Sálámì, 2002, p.170)

*Nwon ni ó rúbọ ọtá méta* / He was told to make sacrifice for three enemies (Abimbólá, 1968, p.124).

- b. *an kee rú* / They said he should offer sacrifice of  
*an kee rú* / They said he should offer sacrifice of  
(Adebayo, 1987, p.154)

## 5. Discussion

In the data presented in section 4, the standard *Ifá* text represented in Ọ̀yó-Ìbàdàn dialect is indicated by (a) while the *Ifá* corpora in Èkìtì dialect is indicated by (b); both analyzed around lexical and phonological variations or shifts. The contrast words are indicated in bold serving as the style markers of *Ifá* texts. It has been observed that those texts with a major stylistic set belong to the same major style (Spencer and Gregory, 1964). Two related texts can also be used to account for some shared linguistic elements. In doing this, “one can compare the text with another texts, to bring more clearly into view distinctive things about it which contrast with the other texts, there should be one variable element; we should try as far as possible to hold everything else constant” (Alan and Fabb, 1990, pp.79-82). In the data earlier presented, phonological and lexical elements in Standard Yoruba are seen as constant and in Èkìtì dialect, as variables. Since the major task in stylistics is,

essentially a per-critical activity, ... to examine precisely what a writer is doing with the language in a particular text - what choices he makes and how he bends or breaks the rules without degenerating into gibberish. In other words, the stylisticians explores the total meaning of a text taking into account all the phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic and contextual cues (Banjo, 1983, p.19).

In the data in section 4, there are phonological variations between Ọ̀yó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects. The variation shows that “phonological choices form a distinct level of style in oral literature” (Geoffrey and

Michael, 1981, p. 130) such as *Ifá* literature. Linguistic items that mark the style in each text is matched against each other as all stylistic analysis are ultimately based on the matching of a text against a contextually related norm (Spencer and Gregory, 1964).

In *Ifá* practice and discourse, there is a set of chants known as *iyèrè-Ifá*. In Òyó-Ìbàdàn, it is marked with *Hin* and *Hen en*. *Ìyèrè-Ifá*. This is the case in *Òsá Méjì* corpus as shown in example (1a). In the Èkìtì dialect, the *iyèrè-Ifá* is marked with *Han-in* as used in *Òwónrín Méjì* in (b). The meanings of *Hin* and *Hen en* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and *Han-in* in Èkìtì are the same, meaning “yes.” It is however noticed that, in some instances, Èkìtì speakers do stress the nasal vowel *in* in *Ìyèrè-Ifá* just as *en* is also stressed in Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialect. This variation arises because, an oral artist does sometimes heighten- pitch and the freedom or liberty to prolong any vowel at any length is to the idiosyncrasies of the chanting artist (Ilésanmí, 2004). Since *Ifá* is an oral genre, it allows for variation in the chorus, especially in the pronunciations of word that show stylistic shifts.

Generally, the structure of the *Ifá* corpus is identified by *A díá fún* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialect, as in *Òyèkú Méjì* and in *Òbàrà Òsé* corpus in (2a). However, this varies with *O dífá kọ* or/and *Ló dífá kọ* in Èkìtì dialect as in *Ìwori Méjì* corpus in (2b). However, both *A díá fún* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and *O dífá kọ* or *Ló dífá kọ* in Èkìtì have the same meaning as “cast divination for.” This statement refers to the first *Ifá* client in *Ifá* divination.

In example 3a, there is phonological shift between the dialects of Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì. This is indicated in *Ògbè* and in *Òyèkú Ìká* corpora. The Òyó-Ìbàdàn uses *Ìgbín* (snail) while Èkìtì calls *Ùgbín*, as indicated in (3b). The variation comes as a result of the Èkìtì dialect which allows the use of vowel /u/ at word initial positions. However, in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and NWY dialects and some dialects of SEY disallows the use of vowel /u/, in initial position whereas in Èkìtì dialect, which belongs to one of the SEY dialects permits the use of /u/ as initial sound. Some dialects under CY and SEY have vowel contrast: i, u, í, ɔ, e, ɛ, o, ɔ, a. In the NWY areas, /u/ does not occur initially in the word whereas it does in both CY and SEY (Adétugbọ, 1982, p. 213–214). The same phonological variation occurs in (4a) and (4b) in *Òdí Ìrosùn*, where *Ire*

(good) is rendered as *Ure* in Èkìtì. There is also a slight stylistic shift the pronunciation of some words between the Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects. This is indicated in (5a) and (5b), where vowels /i/ and /u/ occurred in word medial positions as in *Àkùkọ* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and *Àkìkọ* in Èkìtì dialect.

Another stylistic shift between the Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects is in the lexical variation; which results in lexical differences. Lexical variation has been described to be a common linguistic element of contrast. That is, “the most easily recognized cleavages lie in the lexicon” (Adétugbọ 1982, p. 220). This is the case in the use of lexical words in *Òyèkú Méjì* verse two contained in (6a) and (6b). The Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialect refers to the he-goat as *itú* and the she-goat as *Ewírẹ́*. However, in Èkìtì dialect, it is *ìdérẹgbẹ̀/Ìkérẹgbẹ̀* and *Eúrẹ́*. We noticed here that, there is a lexical variation between what the Òyó-Ìbàdàn calls *Itú* and *ìdérẹgbẹ̀/Ìkérẹgbẹ̀* in Èkìtì dialect though the two words in both dialects refer to the same referent. Phonological variation occurs between *Ewírẹ́* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and *Eúrẹ́* in Èkìtì. While the total sounds are pronounced in Òyó-Ìbàdàn /w/ most of the time is deleted in the Èkìtì dialect. However, this variation does not affect the meaning of the word but employed to achieve fluency in pronunciation.

In addition, there occurs an instance of lexical variation in (7a) and (7b). This is noticed with *là á*, expressed in *Ògbẹ́ Méjì* meaning “usually done.” The Òyó-Ìbàdàn makes use of *là á*, while the Èkìtì prefers, *nà í*. However, both phrases- *là á* and *nà í* have meaning equivalence. In *Ìrosùn Odí* and *Òwónrín Ògbẹ́* corpora as indicated in (8a), *Nígbà*, “when” is expressed in Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialect, while, in Èkìtì dialect in *Ìrẹtẹ́ Méjì*, it is rendered as *Lúgbì* or *Lúgbẹ́* in *Ìrẹtẹ́ Méjì* as in (8b). It is observed that, /l/ and /n/ are allophone of the same phoneme, while /n/ occurs before +nasal sound, /l/ occurs before -nasal sound. However, both *Nígbà* and *Lúgbì* or *Lúgbẹ́* meaning “when” in Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects.

Another stylistic variation between Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì is, in the use of preposition of location, as in *Òkànràn Méjì* corpus in (9a) and (9b). In (9a), the word is formed from *sí + ilé = sílé* “to the house” and a preposition of place, in Èkìtì dialect as in (9b), *ní + uli/ulé = lúli/lulé*, that is, “in the house.” As in (8b), /n/ /l/ are allophone of the same

phoneme. Therefore, Èkìtì dialect replaces /n/ with /l/. There are also lexical variations in the use of third person plural (subject) between Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects. In Òyó-Ìbàdàn *Wòn* or *Nwòn* (in the old orthography) as indicated in *Òsá Méjì* corpus in /10a/ is used. For example, the expression in *Ifá* sacrificial order to the *Ifá* client usually in Òyó-Ìbàdàn as *Nwòn ni ó rúbọ*, that is, s/he was told to make sacrifice. However, in Èkìtì dialect, there is a lexical shift in *an kee rúbọ* as indicated in (10b) *an* is *Wòn* or *Nwòn*, that is, “They” in Èkìtì dialect, while *ni ó* in Òyó-Ìbàdàn is expressed in Èkìtì dialect as *ké e*, meaning “that S/he should.”

The identified lexical or syntactic and phonological variations between Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects demonstrate that, “language users ignore or even reject the choice forced on them by language... substitute their own choices, thus liberating their styles and language itself in the process” (Ọşundare, 1982, p.7). Even though there are lexical and phonological shifts in the language use between Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects however, there exist meaning relationships in the two dialects. It has been established that in a situation where meaning relationships are discernible in texts, such serve as cohesive text.

## **6. Findings and Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated the power of language variation, particularly the phonological and lexical type in *Ifá* corpus of Òyó-Ìbàdàn and Èkìtì dialects. It showed that oral rendition of the *Ifá* corpus in Èkìtì is a variant or sub-variety of the style (cf. Spencer and Gregory, 1964, p. 60). In the various examples presented and discussed, the study showed that there are phonological and lexical parallels between Èkìtì and Òyó-Ìbàdàn dialectal corpus. The variations as indicated in the study result in “subtle differences which invest them with different stylistic values” (Geoffrey and Michael, 1981, p. 128). The variations in styles re occasioned by the fact that languages and dialects have very different status and prestige in different multi-lingual and multidialectal environments.

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