

Preservation and Promotion of *Nsibidi* Ideograms of African Indigenous Language: What can the library do?

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the preservation and promotion of African indigenous language. African indigenous language has created a lot concern for scholars and other stakeholders around the globe. It is the language that originate from African with no foreign interference. Nsibidi is one the numerous African indigenous language which is said to have its origin among the south-south and southeastern part of Nigeria. Several literatures indicate that there are issues concerning the preservation and promotion of Nsibidi ideogram as part of African indigenous language. In this study, four objectives and research questions were raised and research survey method was used. The population of 506 members of Ekpe society comprising the Efiks, Ejagams, Efuts and Igbos ethnic groups within Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria was used. Purposive sampling techniques was adopted and a sample size of 120 respondents was used for the study. Data was collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire to respondents. It was discovered among others that there is a significant decline in the use of Nsibidi due preference to foreign language and imperialism. Also, that that restriction of Nsibidi ideograms to initiates of the Ekpe society have actually affected its spread and wide usage among the study locale. In conclusion, the study inferred that there are issues bothering on preservation and promotion of Nsibidi ideogram. It was recommended among others that the library should be used in providing services of collecting, organising, educating, and disseminating information on Nsibidi ideogram in order to preserve and promote this peculiar African Indigenous Language

Keywords: *Nsibidi* Ideograms, Preservation, Promotion, Indigenous Language, Africans

Introduction

The indigenous mode of communication, semantic expression and information dissemination using native languages has been an interesting part of African cultural heritage which was developed in Africa and by Africans even before the advent of the Non Africans. According to Effiong (2013) an ancient system of artistic symbols, *Nsibidi* (also referred to as *nsibiri*, *nchibiddi* or *nchibiddy*) debunks the notion that information dissemination in precolonial Africa was accomplished only through oral traditional channels. *Nsibidi* is considered one of the oldest African script forms after the Egyptian hieroglyphics used in

communicating and disseminating ideas, concepts, feelings/instinct, values, history and transmission of cultural heritage.

Several schools of thoughts have lay claims to the origin of *Nsibidi* and it has been like a ‘tug of war’. For instance, Effiong (2013) argue that though it is indigenous to peoples occupying the Southeastern region of modern Nigeria, According to him, *Nsibidi* is more commonly associated with the Ejagham people of southern Cross River State and Southwestern Cameroon, from where it is believed to have spread to surrounding ethnic groups like the Ibibios, Efiks and Igbos, which has influenced their art forms and has continually undergone notable transformation in the process.

On the other hand, Amah (2015) debunk the claim. According to him the Ibibio leaders had a secret society called *Ekpe*. *Ekpe* means leopard or lion. The leadership operated (and still does) in an esoteric manner. Only members are privy to the inner-workings of the group. They developed an elaborate system of logograms through which their ideas, knowledge, and activities were recorded. *Nyibidi* which means turning (going in circles), evolved into *Nsibidi*. He maintained that *Nsibidi* means ‘what is playing’ or, ‘what’s at play’? He further claimed that *Nsibidi* was later adopted as the name for the writings associated with *Ekpe* society. In his conclusion, he asserts that it is true that the Europeans found most of the *Nsibidi* script among the Ekoi, but it is really of Ibibio origin (Amah, 2015).

Furthermore, Ukpong (2022) state that the account of *Nsibidi* as a pictographic script adapting from the Egyptian Hieroglyphics suggests that the present-day Quos may well share same Palestine origin with their Efik contemporaries. It was from the Ouo that the Efik bought into and learned about the technology of *Ekpe* fraternity in which the *Nsibidi* script is considered as a vital part of fraternal proceedings, and as a vehicle of artistic expressions. Ukong (2015) therefore claimed that the Quos are the original owners of *Nsibidi*.

Another scholar Macgregor (1909), also argue that *Nsibidi* originates among the Igbos, He maintain that *uri* or *uli* graphic design is often cited as an offshoot of *Nsibidi*. Macgregor (1909) further states that *Nsibidi* was formed by the Uguakima, Ebe, or Uyanga subgroup of the Igbo people which legend says were taught the script by baboons.

Despite various claims about the origin of *Nsibidi* by different school of thoughts, one thing is common to all of them. All the claims point toward a particular locality or root which is Southeastern region of Nigeria. This buttress the claim that *Nsibidi* is among the most pronounced African indigenous languages that is rooted Africa which has forms part of African cultural heritage. Some scholars have argued that while *Nsibidi* does not

Though *Nsibidi* does not appear to correspond to any single spoken language, it can be believed that it has dismantled linguistic barriers that would otherwise prevent communication between various ethnic nationalities, Based on this premise, *Nsibidi* facilitates social

interactions and enhance cultural diffusion among the various groups that are linked to it within the Southeastern Nigeria and has form part of their culture.

Culture is people's way of life. It can be material and/or non-material aspect, while the materials aspect can be feel and touch the non-material aspect of culture are not. According to Ademowo (2016) non-material aspects of culture are the contingent aspects of culture that must be preserved for the sake of future generations. However, if the non-material aspects of culture must be preserved and communicated meaningfully to the benefit of future generations, it needs the help of language, because language is the vehicle for communicating and transmitting the non-material aspects of culture (Ademowo, 2016).

Whichever form language is expressed –written or spoken- its importance is to express thoughts, feelings, concepts and the world around us as well as exchange information, ideas and knowledge. Language also gives meanings to the economic, socio-political and cultural aspects of people's life which can be used to bring into assessment and made understandable. Language is also seen as an aspect of culture that must exist in order to preserve and communicate culture from generations to generations. Language and culture are inseparable conceptions because no culture can exist or survive without language. In other words, language defines and preserve culture as well as perform the duty of transmitting cultural traits and heritage from generation to generation.

Over the years, scholars have identify language as a key driver to culture. According to Olaoye (2013), languages, whether indigenous or foreign, are indispensable tools in the life of individuals because there is no aspect of human activities that can be successful without the effective use of language. Also, Ayeomoni (2011) maintain that language plays a great role in Culture and societal development because we use language every day in many ways and to meet countless different needs.

Emeka-Nwobia (2015) affirms that the repository of a people's identity and way of life is encapsulated in their language as well as transferred to other people and newer generations, via the means of language. In fact, for effective and complete participation in a society, language is necessary. It is an important instrument in the social order, since people needs it to interact and communicate thoughts, knowledge, experiences, feelings with one another and with the environment. Despite language disparity and diversity, it serves the same purpose to different people.

According to Onwubie (nd) indigenous language is a language of a particular group of people occupying an area use to communicate within themselves which is passed from generation to another. They are famously known of such language by other communities around them. An online Dictionary defines indigenous language as a language that originated in a specified place and was not brought to that place from elsewhere. Anumudu (2014) states

that indigenous language is synonymous with native language, mother tongue and first language, .a language that is original to a people, native to a locality and part of its culture is considered to be an indigenous language.

Meanwhile an indigenous language can be regarded as a native language (written or spoken) that originate from a particular root as part of their culture and used by the indigenous people to communicate. It is in this regard that *Nsibidi* ideograms may perhaps be viewed as part of African indigenous language. Despite its origin, research has shown a decline in the application and usage of African indigenous language in general and *Nsibidi* ideograms in particular. Effiong (2013) disclosed that once taught in schools, *Nsibidi* has experienced significant decline in appreciation and use resulting from the colonial emphasis on Western education and Christian conversation.

Some scholar have argued that libraries and the Librarians have the chance to provide useful and lasting solution to the decline of African indigenous language and by extension the *Nsibidi* ideograms as part of African cultural heritage. This is because library is a store house of knowledge and information. According to Kalu (2020), Libraries provide educative information resource through which useful and enlightening information can get to every segments of the society, library therefore provides a gateway to useful information and knowledge. It is based on this premise that this study investigates the preservation and promotion of African Indigenous Language as it pattern to *Nsibidi* Ideograms of Calabar, Nigeria with a view to ascertain the role library play in its preservation.

Statement of the Problem

Arguably, language and culture have interleaved therefore cannot be easily separated. Investigation have shown that African indigenous language and culture are in dare need of survival while some are going into extinction. Specifically, *Nsibidi* ideograms which is considered one of the most pronounced African indigenous language is not spared of this menace. Though different scholars have different view about its origin, literature have shown that there is a decline in the application and usage of African indigenous language in general and *Nsibidi* ideograms in particular. Despite all efforts made and being made such as its inclusion into the school curriculum in order to recuperate, preserve and spread the use of *Nsibidi* seems to have not yield any better result.

Some school of thoughts are of the opinion that *Ekpe* secret society members who are conspicuously among surviving *Nsibidi*-literate and cryptographers are struggling to ensure that this expressive, pictorial mode is preserved in modern society. But the fact remain that this set of people are segmented and fraternized therefore cannot represent a larger populace that can expand and preserve the *Nsibidi* ideograms. These have created a serious concern in area of African indigenous languages. Perhaps, libraries and librarians might provide succor to

preserve and make known *Nsibidi* ideograms and African indigenous language at large. It is based on this that this study investigates the preservation and promotion of African Indigenous Language with particular reference to *Nsibidi* Ideograms of Calabar and what Library can do.

Objectives of the Study

The following research objectives were raised to guide the study:

- i. determine lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the young ones and its effect on its wide usage
- ii. examine the restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe Society initiates affect its wide usage as an Africa Indigenous Language
- iii. find out the influence of foreign language on African indigenous language of *Nsibidi*
- iv. find what the library can do

Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the following research question were raised

- i. How has the lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the young one affect its wide usage?
- ii. Does the restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe Society initiates affect its wide usage as an Africa Indigenous Language?
- iii. How has the influence of foreign language affect *Nsibidi* usage among the study locale?
- iv. What can the library do?

Literature Review

Nsibidi: An African indigenous inscription

Arguably, *Nsibidi* is believed to have originated in Africa. According to Effing (2013), in its basic form *Nsibidi* relies on abstract and pictographic signs. More specifically, it comprises representations of words and morphemes (logography) as well as representations of ideas and concepts (ideography), which form an extensive vocabulary storehouse. There are thousands of *Nsibidi* signs covering a range of topics and emotions, including romance, warfare, sacred secrets and rites, social institutions, gender relations, family structures and legal hierarchies.

In addition to delineating the human condition, *Nsibidi* serves as a pathway to understanding the linguistic patterns of cultures that have developed and utilized the model. *Nsibidi* is a system consisting mainly of gestures, tattoos, symbols, signs and other markings. The first involved quickly discovering that it is nearly impossible to document accurate information about *Nsibidi*, in any form, without initiation in the ancient *Ekpe/Mgbe* knowledge society. The second fact was that “*Nsibidi*” consists of a complex body of gestures and written communication.

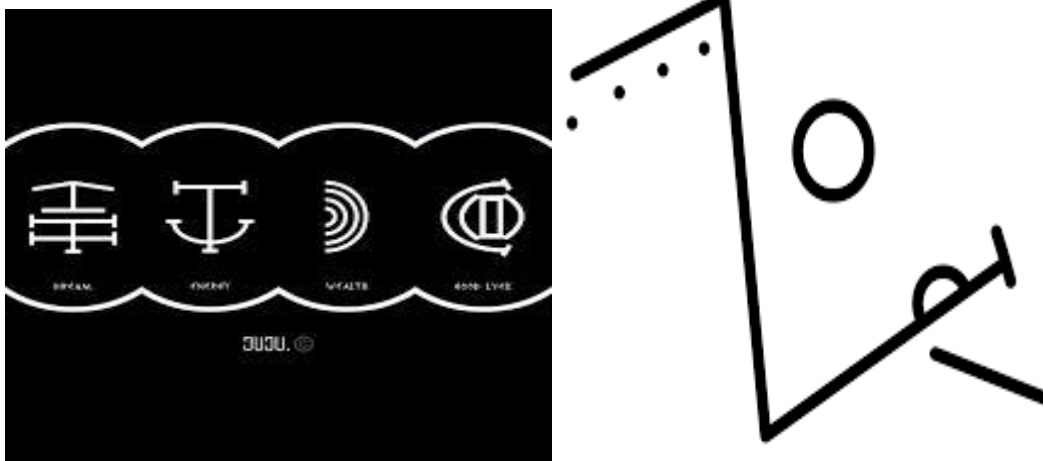


Figure 1: Nsibidi symbols.

Source <https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/>

Though there is no agreed or confirmed agreement on its source and meaning, *Nsibidi* is believed to be several centuries old. Its icons have been found on excavated pottery, ceramic artefacts and headrests dating back to periods ranging between 400 and 1400 CE in the Calabar area of Cross River State. They also appear on walls and buildings, calabashes, swords, brassware, textiles, masquerade costumes, wood and bronze carvings and on human skin as tattoo designs. Interestingly, *Nsibidi* imprints have also been etched on the ground as a means of prompt information dissemination, and have sometimes been outlined through symbolic gestures depicted aurally.

One origin theory curiously claims that *Nsibidi* was devised and taught to respective peoples by baboons (see Macgregor. Another school of thought traces its meaning to the Ekoid

languages (a range of dialects like Ekajuk and Ejagham spoken mainly in Southeastern Nigeria and adjacent Cameroonians regions) where it purportedly means “cruel letter.” The latter is a direct reference to the strict and “cruel” policies adopted by secret societies that customarily had profound knowledge of the practice (Macgregor 1990).

Researchers have been particularly adamant about the initial and primary use of *Nsibidi* by members of the *Ekpe* (leopard) secret society (also known as Ngbe or Egbo), which exists among the Ekois, Efiks, Annangs, Ibibios and Igbos, and in neighboring communities. Wielding extensive political and commercial influence, the leopard society held legislative, judicial and executive powers prior to colonization. Studies show that its members possessed and guarded deeper understanding of *Nsibidi* even though the general public utilized its motifs to various degrees. The *Nsibidi*-layered Ukara cloth of the *Ekpe* society, for instance, signals the wealth, influence and power of titled men and post-menopausal women. Sometimes tied around the waist as a wrapper, large pieces of the cloth are also used to decorate society meeting rooms on special occasions (Effiong, 2013).



Figure 2: Nsibidi ideograms being displayed on the body and Ukara cloth of Ekpe members

Source: <https://okwuid.com/2018/02/07/>

Furthermore, Effiong, (2013) maintain that the *Nsibidi* visuals that typically appear on the cloth include abstract geometric and organic shapes, as well as more recognizable images like that of the leopard, its claws, the crocodile, the lizard, drums, gongs, staffs, feathers and manilla currency, all of which allude to wealth, authority and beauty. Once taught in schools, *Nsibidi* has experienced significant decline in appreciation and use resulting from the colonial emphasis on Western education and Christian conversation.

Effiong (2013) further stated that efforts are being made by pro-African scholars to revive information and knowledge of the medium. Today, secret society members are conspicuously among surviving *Nsibidi*-literate and cryptographers, and continue to ensure that this expressive, pictorial mode is preserved in modern society. Just as several African cultural and artistic paradigms were transported to the New World via the transatlantic slave trade, *Nsibidi* was also carried to Cuba and Haiti where it has survived and evolved into anaforuana and veve iconic representations. *Nsibidi* remains inspirational to the works of contemporary Nigerian artists. Among notable scholars, the work of Ekpuk (2020) portrays one of the leading exponents of the technique as a resource for creativity. His passionate interest in *Nsibidi* is constantly portrayed in his narrative, medley-type creations, which rely heavily on patterns sourced directly from this spectacular language art.

African indigenous language and *Nsibidi* ideograms

Carlson (2003) studies a traditional African written language peculiar to the Ejagham peoples, he suggested that *Nsibidi* can “adapt to new historical circumstances and culture” when transmitted to non-Ejagham societies. Using evidence from fieldwork in villages in five local government areas where Efik clans are located in Cross River State, his study sort to find out if the meanings of key *Nsibidi* signs have changed or adapted when transmitted into a non-Ejagham cultural space in Calabar. The study found out that the transmission from the Ejagham culture to that of the Efik has brought an adaptations and changes in the meaning of *Nsibidi*. And, that through its use in the design of the ukara fabric of the *Ekpe* society, In conclusion, the study uphold that *Nsibidi* has maintained its relevance among the Efik for many centuries because of its ability to adapt to new social and cultural situations, while remaining true to its original identity.

Also, Ajibade, *Ekpe* and Basse (2012) conducted a study on the more than fabric motifs: changed meaning of *Nsibidi* on the Efik ukara cloth. The study adopted interview method basically because the respondents were mostly illiterate. It states among others that among the Ejagham people of the Cross River, extending from the Cameroon to Nigeria’s Cross River Sate, the ukara cloth and *Nsibidi* visual signs are very critical aspects of history, religion and general cultural worldviews. While the ukara cloth is prominent among initiates of the Ejagham’s many Leopard Societies, the *Nsibidi* is a visual language, unspoken but forming the main body of motifs on the ukara fabric design.

African Indigenous Language

African indigenous language boards on the languages that are native to African. It represents the African regular way of communication that involves the use of symbols and sound. Studies have shown that there are diversity of African languages. According to African Language Program at Harvard (2022), the languages of Africa can be broken down into four

large families (phyla), with an additional Austronesian family spoken in Madagascar; the four continental language families are:

Niger-Congo,

Nilo-Saharan,

Afroasiatic and

Khoisan.

The Niger-Congo languages inhabit Western, Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. The most widely spoken languages of Africa, Swahili (200 million), Yoruba (45 million), Igbo (30 million), and Fula (35 million) all belong to the Niger-Congo family. These language families are what is known as African indigenous language, they are not only a tool of communication, but part of African culture heritage and identity. According to Mwilima (2021), Kiswahili, a major Bantu language spoken in East Africa which is part of Niger-Congo family, is the most widely spoken language on the African continent. Furthermore, Niger-Congo, with approximately 1,350 - 1,650 languages is the largest of the four; it is also the largest language family in the world.

Threat to African Indigenous Language

Evidence abound which suggest that African indigenous language is on the decline while some have even gone into extinction. Several obstacles have hindered and still preventing the African Indigenous language from occupying its position within the global frame. UNESCO (2021) states generally that the state of indigenous languages today mirrors the situation of indigenous peoples. In many parts of the world, they are on the verge of disappearance. The biggest factor contributing to their loss is state policy.

Arguably, some governments have embarked on campaigns to extinguish indigenous languages by criminalizing their use – as was the case in the Americas, in the early days of colonialism. Some countries continue to deny the existence of indigenous peoples in their territories, referring their indigenous languages as dialects and accorded less importance than national languages, thereby contributing to their eventual loss. But today, the major influence on the sorry state of their languages is the fact that indigenous peoples are threat themselves (UNESCO (2021)).

In Nigeria, a study by Onwubie (nd) maintain that language is not only a medium of communication but also a matrix through which the culture, value, norms and mores of a people are transmitted. Unfortunately for the African, the Indigenous Language of the continent were as a result of European Imperialist motives subjected to a series distorting and negative influences. Most indigenous African Languages were, therefore imperiled and thus, endangered by the imposition of several European Languages such as English, French, and

Portuguese among others. Notwithstanding, some of these indigenous languages have continued to struggle for survival in the face of these threats.

Onwubie (nd) maintain that the Igbo Language is one of such languages that has been seriously jeopardized and still continues to trudge on. The study of Onwubie (nd) appraises the roles of the Igbo language in the task of preserving the values of the Igbo people. Data for the study came largely from secondary sources. The descriptive and analytic methodologies were utilized. The position of the study is that conscious and sustained awareness is needed if the Igbo language is to survive and remain relevant in the preservation of African values.

A study by Akinkurolere and Akinfenwa (2018) argue that language, irrespective of its status, enables people to communicate and express themselves in any given society but surprisingly the issue of extinction of indigenous languages has not received much attention. Therefore, this research sets out to identify and examine the causes of language extinction, evaluate the current situation of language extinction and give possible solutions to the problem. Essential questions, in relation to the decline of the use of Yoruba Language, using Ile-Ife as a case study, are addressed. In the research, it is revealed that Yoruba language is an indispensable part of the Yoruba culture and Yoruba culture is enriched with enviable values, customs, moral and general way of life. Also, the extent of the decline of the language was discovered.

Library and African Indigenous Language

It is expected that library should play major role the promoting global languages including African indigenous language. A Librarian Peter Lor (nd) conducted a study on preserving, developing and promoting indigenous languages: Things South African Librarians can do. According to the study, a lot of the world's approximately 7000 languages face extinction. While librarians are concerned with how they can serve users speaking indigenous languages and seek materials in indigenous languages as means or tools for reaching out and ensuring the relevance of their services to communities, linguists and language policy experts are concerned with issues of language preservation and development.

Their emphasis is on the languages, which are also of interest to scholars and professionals in a variety of other fields. The study asks how libraries can contribute to the preservation, development and promotion of indigenous languages. On the basis of literature from various fields an attempt is made to construct a holistic conceptual framework for reflection by LIS professionals. Some examples from South African projects are given to illustrate the possible roles of LIS in the preservation, development and promotion of indigenous languages (Peter Lor, nd).

In Nigeria, Oyemike, Anyalebechi, and Ariole (2017) conducted a study, the investigation centered on issues and challenges associated with promoting of indigenous

language by library and information science professionals in Nigeria. The desk research approach involving extensive review of literatures on indigenous language was adopted. The challenges to promoting of indigenous language include: multiplicity of indigenous language, non-proficiency in indigenous languages, non-documentation of indigenous language and the preference for English language.

The way forward for sustainable promotion of indigenous languages highlighted in the paper are: grass root promotion of indigenous language, establishment of centre for Advancement of Indigenous Language in Nigeria. (AILV), promotion of books written in indigenous language, translation of literary works to audio content in indigenous language, inclusion of indigenous language as a compulsory course in library schools in Nigeria. The investigation concludes that library and information science professional occupy a central position in the promotion of indigenous language in Nigeria.

The possible way out of the challenges to African indigenous language

Globally, there have series of attempts to proffer solution to the decline and possible extinction to indigenous language by NGOs, United Nations, Government agencies, the Aborigines etc. Nevertheless, with the growing global recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, the hope that indigenous languages will thrive and spread in spoken and written forms is being rekindled. Many indigenous communities have already instituted their own systems of revitalizing their languages. The Ainu of Japan have set up a learning system where the elders teach the language to their youth. Schools of Living Tradition in different indigenous communities in the Philippines similarly keep their cultural forms, including languages, alive. UNESCO (2021) Most recently, in response to a recommendation from the Permanent Forum in 2016, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them at the national and international levels (UNESCO, 2021)..

Methodology

The study centred on the African Indigenous Language with particular reference to *Nsibidi* Ideograms and what the Library can do. The population of 506 (Source: Field work) members comprising the Efiks, Ejagams, Efuts and Igbos ethnic groups within Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria was used. Purposive sampling techniques was adopted in the study considering the fact that some of population are not lettered, therefore, a sample size of 120 respondents were selected and was used for the study. Data was collected through the administration of a structured questionnaire to respondents, while a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree and Disagree was used to measure opinions and perceptions of the respondents. In addition, face to face interview was conducted with respondents in other to enrich the study. Hence simple tables, frequencies, numbers and percentage were used in the analysis and interpretation of the information collected for the field. Out of the 120

administered questionnaire, 112 representing 93.3% returned and were used for the analysis. The demographic variables were first presented and these include age, and level of education, occupation, and *Ekpe* status. The second part is the presentation of analysis of data in relation to the research questions. In both sections, frequency and percentage distribution of respondents was presented using Tables to show the distribution of the relevant variables.

Decision Rule: Strongly agree and Agree will be interpreted as Agree while Strongly Disagree and Disagree will be interpreted as Disagree.

Research Question1: Does the lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the young ones affect its wide usage?

Table 1: Lack of proper education of *Nsibidi* ideograms

Lack of formal education of <i>Nsibidi</i> ideograms	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	76	67.8
Agree	20	17.9
Strongly Disagree	10	8.9
Disagree	6	5.4
Total	112	100

Field survey, 2023

Table 1 showed the distribution of responses on the lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the young one affects its wide usage with 76 representing (67.8%) of the respondents strongly agree, 20 (17.9%) agree, while 10 (8.9%) and 6 (5.4%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively. By implication, it can be affirmed that lack of proper education of *Nsibidi* ideograms is one of the challenges of African Indigenous Language with particular reference to *Nsibidi* Ideograms.

Research Question 2: Does the restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe Society initiates affect its wide usage as an Africa Indigenous Language?

Table 2: Restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe Society initiates affect its wide usage as an Africa Indigenous Language

Restriction of <i>Nsibidi</i> ideograms to the Ekpe Society initiate	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	58	51.8
Agree	10	8.9
Strongly Disagree	28	25
Disagree	16	14.3
Total	112	100

Field survey, 2023

Table 2 indicated the responses of the respondents on how the restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe society initiates' affects its wide usage. The analysis shows that 58

(51.8%) of the respondents strongly agree, 10 (8.9%) agree while 28 (25%) strongly disagree and 16 (14.3%) disagree. This implies that restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to initiates of the *Ekpe* society have actually affected its wide usage in Calabar.

Research Question 3: How has the influence of foreign language affect *Nsibidi* usage among the study locale?

Table 3: Influence of Foreign language

Influence of Foreign language	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	68	60.7
Agree	8	7.1
Strongly Disagree	10	8.9
Disagree	26	23.2
Total	112	100

Field survey, 2023

Table 3 showed the distribution of responses on the influence of foreign languages on *Nsibidi* Ideograms with 68 (60.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed that influence of foreign language is a challenge to the wide usage of *Nsibidi* ideograms usage in Calabar, 8 (7.1%) agree while 10 (8.9%) strongly disagree and 26 (23.2%) disagree. Based on this, it can be asserted that the influence of foreign languages have negatively influence the wide usage of *Nsibidi* ideograms.

Research Question 4 What can the library do?

Table 4:Library should provide services of collecting, organising, educating, and disseminating information in order to preserve *Nsibidi* as African Indigenous Language

Library services should be used to preserve <i>Nsibidi</i> as African Indigenous Language	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	53	47.3
Agree	32	28.5
Strongly Disagree	18	16
Disagree	9	8
Total	112	100

Field survey, 2023

Table 4 showed the distribution of responses of the respondents, 53 (47.3%) of the respondents agreed strongly that Library should provide services of collecting, organising, educating, and disseminating information in order to preserve *Nsibidi* ideograms as African Indigenous Language, 32 (28.5%) agree, while 18 (16%) strongly disagree and 9 (8%) also disagree. It can be inferred from the table that majority of the respondents agrees to fact that

the Library should provide services of collecting, organising, educating, and disseminating information in order to preserve *Nsibidi* as African Indigenous Language

Discussion of Findings

Based on the analysis on the data collected from the field,

Research question one deals with lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the African indigenous language. The findings indicate that lack of formal education of *Nsibidi* ideograms among the young ones is one of the challenges of African Indigenous Language with particular reference to *Nsibidi* ideograms. This is in line with the study of Effiong (2013) who disclosed that once taught in schools, *Nsibidi* has experienced significant decline in appreciation and use resulting from the colonial emphasis on Western education and Christian conversation. Research question two has to do with the restriction of Africa Indigenous Language of *Nsibidi* ideograms to the Ekpe Society and the effect on its wide usage. The findings reveals that restriction of *Nsibidi* ideograms to initiates of the *Ekpe* society have actually affected its spread and wide usage. This conform to the study of Effiong (2013) which states that it is nearly impossible to document accurate information about *Nsibidi*, in any form, without initiation in the ancient *Ekpe/Mgbe* knowledge society.

Research question three deals the influence of foreign languages on *Nsibidi* ideogram. It was discovered through this study that the presence and use of foreign languages have negatively influence the wide usage of *Nsibidi* ideograms. This is in conformity with the study of Oyemike, Anyalebechi and Ariole (2017) which states that the challenges to promoting of indigenous language include the preference for English (foreign) language in Nigeria among others. Research question four is on what the library can do. Based on the findings, the library will provide services of collecting, organising, educating, and disseminating information in order to preserve *Nsibidi* as African Indigenous Language. This discovery is in line with the study of Kalu (2020) which states that Libraries provide access to educative information resource through which useful and enlightening information can get to every segments of the society, and also provides a gateway to useful information and knowledge.

Conclusion

The Library is a store house of knowledge and one of the most vital institutions where information resources are gathered, store, organised, and disseminate for research, references and gaining of knowledge. Factually, information as to languages are part of library collections which makes the library a custodian of indigenous language. Unfortunately, some libraries especially among the developing countries including Africa have fallen short of their expected roles in preserving and disseminating information about indigenous languages, rather than being front line campaigners in promoting, resuscitating, supporting and proliferating of

African indigenous language, these libraries are occupied with the preferment and preservation of foreign languages at the expense of African indigenous languages including *Nsibidi* ideograms.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The curriculum authority should introduce the formal education of African indigenous languages of *Nsibidi* by including it among the school curricula at all level
2. Restriction of *nsibidi* ideograms to only the initiates of Ekpe society should be discourage via giving free access to *nsibidi* ideogram by all.
3. Influence of foreign language should be checked by in order to preserve and promote indigenous language through the use of African indigenous language such as *nsibidi* as a mother tongue in early teaching and learning.
4. The library should be used in the preservation and promotion of African indigenous languages through the collection, storage, organization, and dissemination of *nsibidi* ideogram literature, symbols and literal materials as an African indigenous language

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