



Using Folk Songs as a Learning Medium for Children (Aged 4-9 Years Old) in Contemporary Ibibio Society

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Abstract

This paper discusses the values and lessons embedded in Ibibio traditional songs/music as learning mediums for children. The focus on children has been motivated by the globalising society where foreign models – language and culture have asserted their dominating influence on children through television and other modern media. As an ethnographic study, primary data were collected in four months of oral interviews and participant observation involving children (aged 4-9 years) in selected schools in Akwa Ibom State. In addition, the study utilises practice-led design in interrogating the importance of oral literature as a source adaptable for lessons for young minds. This paper looks at the importance of encouraging children to learn about their culture, especially the moral values that govern the Ibibio Society amid the degenerating cultures of modern society. Theoretically, the paper engages with constructivism theory, a participatory learning approach, which makes learning an interesting and exciting process. Therefore, this paper advocates for using morally inclined songs for children's upbringing in contemporary Ibibio society.

Keywords: Ibibio, Oral Tradition, Folk Songs, Decolonisation, Learning, and Drama

Introduction

Songs represent one of the ways by which people express their emotions, feelings and culture. It is the most expressive of all art forms because it tells the story through its lyrics or texts clearly and vividly. Songs and music have lived with men from ancient to contemporary times. As Eboro (2023:13) observes, “songs in Africa have survived as long as the existence of an African man”. This indicates that as long as man has existed and will exist, there will always be songs sung based on or themed on different occurrences, happenings or experiences (man goes through) in life. Songs appear as one of the most vital instruments that regulate the activities of human society. One of the most outstanding functions of songs is that they help in preserving the culture of a people. As Eboro (2023) notes further, we should “look at music in a traditional African setting as a representation of people's culture, a replica of their pattern” and *modus operandi* of life. Hence, songs have been an integral part of African society, and no society has ever existed without incorporating songs into their daily activities, be it religious, cultural, political, economic, personal or health-wise. Udoh (2015) advances that traditional song is a communal art, which voices the expectations, sentiments, legends, myths, taboos, proverbs and the history of its people. This proves that songs cannot be separated from a people or a culture because it is an important part of a people's lives. So many societies would have lost their norms and values if they were not preserved in the songs of such societies. Therefore, songs are vital preserving and propagating tools of the society's norms, values and specific cultures. Therefore, helping such societies to spur up arguments, regulate social behaviours and disagree with social ills. Singing songs is an art that pervades social lives and is essential in sustaining community life. It helps foster and strengthen social relationships

among people. Through songs, members of a society co-exist in peace, thereby driving people's commitment to support one another and live in a peaceful society. Of course, this is the main reason the article focuses on folk songs.

The Ibibio Ethnography

This study's primary site is among the Ibibio-speaking people of South-eastern Nigeria who live in the modern-day Akwa Ibom State. They are the fourth largest ethnic group after the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo ethnic groups in Nigeria. Among the Ibibio, kinship is patrilineal, and the importance of family is emphasised. Ibibio men, women and youths are grouped in age sets. They are a peace-loving people who believe in a Supreme Being called *Abasi* (God) or *Obod* (Creator) who created all things (Esen, 1982; Ekong, 1988; Williams, 2013). Traditionally, Ibibio society consists of communities that are made up of large families with blood affinity, each governed by their constitutional and religious head known as *Obong* (King), such as *Obong Idung*, *Obong Ekpuk*, *Obong Ufok*, etc., with other elders in his leadership team (Amadume 2020; Forde & Jones 1962). On indigenous knowledge resources and performances that exist in the Ibibio repertory, Inyang (2017, p. 63) observes that:

There are various performances and cultural displays which constitute the indigenous theatre of the Ibibio people. These manifest in a rich diversity of multi-dimensional performances and artistic expressions in the forms of oral narratives, music, dances, folklores, songs, drama, visual elements, crafts, among others.

Ibibio indigenous knowledge resources and materials are oral in expression, embracing various forms by which people through the ages have re-created their fears and hopes, their joys and sorrows and the changing seasons of their lives on earth. The oral traditional forms include myths, which underscore the people's worldview, legends and narratives of historical interest, fictional tales, and songs of praise and abuse (Udoh, 2015). Storytelling is still relevant among the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State. Despite development in formal education, this traditional art remains vibrant. In addition to its recreational value, it is a powerful communicative medium that reflects the history, social organisation, religious beliefs and ancestral beliefs of the Ibibio people. Inyang (2017, p. 65) states that, "Ibibio people are a culturally sophisticated people and so still maintain a strong alliance with their cultural practices even in the face of the massive onslaught of globalization". There is a repository of the values and worldview, social attitude, which promotes group cohesion and cultural community.

Considering the extant pieces of literature on Ibibio music and culture, the challenging piece is the preservation or sustainability of these traditions and cultural mores before they become completely extinct or are made obsolete by modernity. This paper aims to locate the modus of generating further knowledge about indigenous knowledge as a useful resource in education through the initiation of programmes that would encourage the young ones to learn their indigenous language and culture creatively. The method proposed and exemplified in this study is the introduction of folk songs in dramatised forms. By this method, young participants' interest might be ignited to use and speak the Ibibio language and socialise using indigenous songs of their culture. Exposing them to these resources is intended to create a learning opportunity, which would become personal lessons as well as equip them with the skills to further create stories based on the values or themes learned from listening or taking part in these creative learning sessions.

In so doing, Ibibio children can become active participants in the events in their community or society through oral, creative and literary activities because folk songs are useful, for instance, in sharpening young minds and cultivating the use of spoken words to recapture and preserve the history and culture of the people. In the folk songs, they learn about the social environment through the contents of riddles, proverbs and folktales. Thus, folk songs become important in cultural education as they play a vital role in the preservation of the people's history and traditions.

Although many researchers have demonstrated that children's knowledge and values are useful in the society, emphasis in research has mostly favoured the adult, as little opportunity has been created to hear children's views on different themes in society. When attempting to describe and understand it, scholarship on childhood and children's folklore has looked less closely at what children make of their folkloric practices (Jaleta, 2011, p. 271). She further argues that children also, in their own way, actively interpret folk cultures as they are exposed or given the opportunity to talk about them. Interestingly, the disappearing activity of tales by moonlight as modern media has orchestrated diverse avenues to replace traditional models. Therefore, this study engages children to reflect on the morals of former generations while also analysing the social complexities of their immediate environment. This knowledge is essential to the social, educational, environmental and spiritual health of the society. It is expedient to revisit the past, learn from it, adopt both old and new ways and use that knowledge to create connectivity, unity, collaboration and tolerance that may enable the society to run smoothly and enhance a better future.

Research Paradigm and Method Used

This study adopts a qualitative method or paradigm of inquiry. The qualitative paradigm is an umbrella term that refers to different ways and techniques of making meaning from the social world. It seeks to understand the meaning of people's responses and knowledge as they are constructed (Hammond & Wellington, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). By describing, interpreting, and acknowledging the meaning of issues in our society, qualitative study creates room for data to be drawn from a multiplicity of sources. Research could be engaged in a variety of ways in seeking answers to questions and in understanding the experiences of the people in the society. There are different research strategies engaged in different studies under a qualitative paradigm in meaning-making (Knowles & Cole, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Neuman, 2014). Therefore, this study adopted an ethnographic approach that entails the use of a variety of data sources in seeking to understand Ibibio indigenous knowledge resources and for data collection and analysis. Hammersley (2013:47) describes an ethnographer as

one who participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period, watching what happens, listening to what is said or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts-gathering any available data that can illuminate the emerging focus of inquiry.

The study was interested in understanding and interpreting the experiences of a selected group of children (aged 4-9 years) from Ibibio society, how they construct knowledge and make meaning of their experiences as children from Ibibio society. The primary instrument in the data collection includes unstructured interviews, group discussion and participant observation. Because of the nature of the study, the sampling technique used was a non-probability sampling method (Marshall, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Neuman, 2014). This was done because the focus of the study was on Ibibio children (aged 4-9 years) who could speak both

Ibibio and English, but Ibibio is their first acquired language. The reason for the age choice was to test a sizeable number of Ibibio children who could clearly speak or express their ideas and opinions in the language of the culture.

This study drew its sample from three public primary schools located in Uyo metropolis in Akwa Ibom State, South-Eastern Nigeria. Children comprising both boys and girls (aged 4-9 years) from the Ibibio ethnic group in the southeastern part of Nigeria were selected for the study. The selection of the sample size was based on voluntary participation. Sample sizes were drawn from pupils from primary or grade three to primary five classes in these schools. From School A, the total number of voluntary participants who were interested in taking part in the study before the selection was 10. From School B, the total number of voluntary participants who were interested in taking part in the study was 8. From School C, the total number of voluntary participants who were interested in taking part in the study was 12. The total number of participants who voluntarily indicated interest to be part of the study was 30.

The data collection process began in the very first week of the fieldwork process. Descriptive field notes were taken from the very beginning of the practice-led sessions. The contents included the description of the day-to-day activities, the nature of the practice-led sessions, time spent, venue of the practice-led sessions and both formal and informal responses of the participants to the activities. The teachers' and school proprietors' responses were also included. The behaviour of the participants and the research assistant's activities, and the researcher's observations during the process, were also recorded. In addition to the field notes, an attendance register was created to track the performance and consistency of participants throughout the duration of the research and observations of participants' attitudes and responses. The core practice-led sessions carried out day to day were video recorded and photographed for analysis and observation purposes. The last session was held in the Model Theatre Studio of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Uyo, to bring all the participants together to assess the process since the previous sessions were held at individual schools. Informal group discussions form part of the data collection process for this study. Participants' comments during the evaluation and interactive sessions became a source of obtaining valid information. The facilitator took notes of their verbal and non-verbal interactions and expressions that were relevant to this study, since informal discussion is designed for the expression of opinions and ideas.

Creative Engagements and Dramatic Experiences as Learning Models

Nigeria has a vibrant culture of using drama in various capacities as a medium of learning with learners of different age groups, either formally or informally. Historically, the return to cultural heritage has resulted from a post-colonial inclination to reclaim lost traditions due to colonial invasion and relics of colonialism, which seems to have built resilience towards entrenching foreign cultures. Thus, dramatic activities have been carried out in different parts of Nigeria—in schools, prisons, orphanages, markets and churches—as a means of education under different nomenclatures (process drama, drama in education, creative drama and applied drama). Drama is used yearly in educating young learners in different schools in Akwa Ibom State. For example, the Department of Theatre and Film Studies at the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, uses drama annually as a learning medium for young learners in two streams: Saturday Playhouse and Drama-in-Education programmes.

As an active practitioner in the activities mentioned above, I have also sought ways of engaging not only young learners but children on different topics using drama and play-crafting methods (games, improvisation, storytelling, role-play, dances, spoken words, poems, songs and rhymes). According to Water *et al.* (2015, p. 8), “drama-based learning focuses on understanding self, others and the subject of the drama”. Hence, by finding a suitable dramatic engagement that best suits the learners in an Ibibio context, drama and play-crafting activities have been adapted in this research. Thus, children (ages 4-9 years) were the main focus of this study. My research strategy required that the group of participants get used to my presence and start to act naturally around me as I observed and took part in creating and sharing their experiences. Though the period of observation was short, I was able to observe the attitudes and responses of participants while working with them and to observe their emotions and feelings about the subject matter (folk songs). Since observation was a versatile method, it took place in natural settings, which enables learning to occur in real-life situations (e.g. the classroom or the playground) (Creswell 2007; 2014). This observation aided the knowledge of how participants perceived certain issues in their culture. Because the research was conducted in an informal learning setting, the participants acted and reacted naturally to creative activities with the researcher to examine the importance of indigenous knowledge materials in learning.

As already stated, the primary activity in this research was using drama-based activity carried out with a group of approximately 30 children, aged between 4 and 9 years, all pupils of selected primary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Their invitation into a creative and improvisational process with the researcher for three hours per day for three days a week for four months was intended to test their responses to precolonial learning models compared to Western formal learning. It should be noted that the individuals employed in this research are not the focus of my study, although they are central to the practice and principles being explored. The individual background, demographics and life experience of each learner were not studied explicitly or quantitatively, although their context as Ibibio children growing up in a rapidly globalising area of southeastern Nigeria was a necessary criterion. Engaging in these exploratory activities was to enhance an understanding of the ongoing practice in the development of oral tradition and the crafting of learning materials from the Ibibio context to make recommendations and offer strategies and methods for future practitioners in both formal and informal learning environments for children.

Traditional Education: Oral Tradition Revisited

The dominance of television programmes for children, especially animation or cartoons, has created a modernity that seems to relegate indigenous oral traditions and their mode of delivery. Oral tradition in traditional societies has a definite purpose of instructing people in principles of right or wrong using materials transmitted by either word of mouth or by customs and practices. These knowledge systems formed sources from which parents, grandparents and elders drew materials for lessons to the younger generation. They used oral traditions to lay the foundation for the moral and aesthetic upbringing of children in their families and community. Various forms of oral tradition from which these lessons are drawn include folktales, proverbs, riddles and games, and they reflect, for example, the Ibibio society and culture from which they are drawn. Most folklores focus on aspects of African culture that highlight morals, bravery and relationships, which serve as an avenue for informal education and entertainment of children in traditional African societies, as this current study hopes to illustrate.

In predominantly oral societies, cultural knowledge, beliefs and values are expressed and transmitted through language, storytelling, songs, myths and proverbs. These modes of communication are an important means of understanding the cultural context of behaviour (Chilisa, 2012). As Kizza (2010, p. 7) rightly notes,

African oral tradition is also an encyclopaedia of the various people's histories, cultural experiences, traditions, and values; a record of their feelings, attitudes, and responses to their experiences and environment and a tool for preserving and disseminating that knowledge both internally and globally. This summarizes the concepts and identity of a people.

Traditional education in the African context has sought to instil desirable attitudes, dispositions, skills and habits in children by recounting the oral traditions of the community. Oral traditions, according to Higgs (2002, p. 33), "played an active part in Africans' everyday life and were a vital educational force in supplying accounts of a group's origin and related precedents to present-day beliefs, actions, and codes of behaviour". Oral narratives, all over the world, set the pace for writing literature. They are an integral part of every human culture, as Ogundokun (2015, p. 179) has observed. Hence, oral narratives help to affirm and validate spiritual realities and experiences because they are stories that stand out in various forms as a means by which serious human experiences (like premature death, diseases and other problems of natural disasters) are recollected and told to future generations. However, regardless of how these stories are perceived in the 21st century, most of them have created a worldview that appeals to the artistic, moral and psychological being of the African.

Africans have a rich tradition, which remains one of the avenues for educating their people. However, with the influences of modern media, new ways of life are counteracting African ways and have continued to negotiate African knowledge systems, even when oral tradition has existed and remained one of the ways by which African value systems are transmitted to the upcoming community members. Oha (2008:22) notes that, "African belief systems, attitudes, modes of worship, traditional more, communal expectations and cultural affinity are transmitted through oral traditional methods like storytelling and other forms of recourse". Africans and Nigerians, in particular, are blessed with enormous traditional educational resources and materials such as anecdotes, proverbs, epigrams, folktales and songs from the cultural background that could offer some of the best materials for children's upbringing and development, which must necessarily be revisited. Agogbuo (2018, p. 100) observes that since "there was no formal education where children could be taught their culture, the communities developed their way of inculcating values in their young ones and preserved their identity as groups through the oral traditions that were handed down from generation to generation". Thus, training children based on indigenous knowledge becomes a building tool for their identity later in life. To collaborate with traditional education, Fafunwa (1974, p. 16) highlights six fundamental goals in educating, raising and teaching children in Africa:

- 1) To develop character,
- 2) To inculcate respect for elders and those in positions of authority,
- 3) To develop intellectual skills,
- 4) To acquire specific vocational training and to develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour,
- 5) To develop a sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs, and

- 6) To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large.

These socio-cultural values, attitudes and practical skills are embedded in different forms/genres of oral tradition for children's lessons. Given the values enumerated above, this paper suggests that adapting them in the 21st century may keep the society functioning and safe for every member of the society to co-exist peacefully.

The Use of Folk songs as a Learning Medium

Songs are important aspects of African oral traditions; they help in preserving a people's history and tradition. They are a commentary on people's lives, events and the aspirations of the society or those of the singer/singers. The content and lessons are taken from the environment, social events, political events and other activities. Songs constitute the artistic expressions that illustrate a people's perception of what they believe and value communally (Kizza, 2010; Ekpa, 2012; Inyang, 2017). Through folk songs, people express their emotions. According to Chilisa (2012, p. 146):

The social functions of songs go beyond the aesthetics; it (*sic*) also plays a didactic role in teaching about social morality, societal values, and customs. Hence, they can be used to reconstruct lessons from the history of a people. Folk songs are also important to cultural education as they play a vital role in the preservation of the people's history and traditions. Many lessons, historical and traditional events and activities that are important to the culture of the people are accurately reflected in the songs.

To the Ibibio, songs are a part of their daily activities because the songs express attitudes to life: hopes, fears, thoughts and beliefs mirroring the worldview. These songs are a good source of current information in the community because their lyrics express the happenings in the social, religious and political spheres as well as the different moments or phases of the society's history. Through folk songs, children internalise many lessons. By memorising and singing these songs, they become personal lessons. An example of Ibibio folk songs that I learned in secondary school is *Eka Udo* (Udo's mother). This song tells a complete story (an Ibibio folktale) about an only child called Udo who was over-pampered by his mother. The pampering led to problems in his life as he became a spoilt brat whose conduct and behaviour brought shame to both his family and the community. The folk song has a clear message about the values of being a good child to one's parents, especially one's mother, because in Ibibio society, it is believed that a good child is raised by the mother with the influence of the father. Thus, children are trained to be responsible and to make their parents and society proud as they grow up. The lyrics of *Eka Udo* are as follows:

<i>Ekong nke—o</i>	Our story time is here
<i>Nke ekong abasi-o</i>	(The chant and responses for storytelling)
<i>Ekong aka, ekong ayong</i>	
<i>Ekong isimaha udim kpa eyio abasi</i>	
<i>Oto Ikpong oyom nkok –o</i>	Whoever plants cocoyam needs harvest,
<i>Ado awann oyom eyen-o</i>	S/He who marries needs a child,
<i>Eti nyen ado mkpo inemesit</i>	A good child is a source of joy.

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<i>Idiok enyen adi mkpo mfuho eka</i>	A bad child is sorrow to the mother
<i>Eyen ekedo okod odubok Iko eyen ke ntang ami Ikot nnyin ekpan utong Ekop sikitibede Ke obio ete nnyin abasi</i>	A Child grow to be a breadwinner This is the story a child Our people, please pay attention, Listen to what had happened In the land of God, our father.
<i>Mma kied akeba---o Ake ba die-o Akeyong aba nte mma-o Ekesi kod Eka Udo</i>	There was a woman, How was the woman? She was like the woman, She was called Udo's Mother.
<i>Eka Udo Enye amanie eyen-o Eyen kied kpodkpod- Enyen ima eka-o Eke kood Udo- Udoma</i>	The Mother of Udo, She has a child, Her only child The lovely child of a mother, And called Udo-Udoma (not real name).
Chorus	
<i>Oooooo!oooo!</i>	O, (Wailing)
<i>Kop ikpong eyen-o</i>	Listen to the only child,
<i>Kop mbuk udo -o</i>	Hear, the story of Udo
<i>Kop eyen ima eka do</i>	Hearken, the mother's pampered child.
(It is a long song; this is a summarised version for the purpose of this study.)	

Analytically, the text is the story of a child called Udo who was over-pampered by his mother. The story has it that he refused to obey good values and ended up stealing because his mother never saw anything wrong with his actions. Later, he got caught stealing and brought shame (sorrow) to his family and community. In other words, a good child is a blessing, but a bad child is a disgrace to his people. As demonstrated in the song tale, children learned the social norms and values, the language, idioms and Ibibio proverbs through folktales and songs. Some songs tell a whole story or describe a series of related events and build social mores in the children. Comparatively, children imbibe features and values illustrated in dramatic engagement, be it on television, live or participatory. Therefore, the interests of children must be widely considered in this whole process of dramatic engagement in order to allow them to learn about life generally, but most importantly, so they become balanced individuals as they engage with life.

Creative Activities Used for Play-crafting for Learning Experiences

There are a variety of traditional games, folk tales, folk songs, proverbs and riddles in Akwa Ibom State, which are part of the rich repertoire of the Ibibio culture (Nkanga & Sampson, 2013). For an Ibibio child, games, storytelling and songs are part of communal life and learning, experiences, and recreation. But the selection of these songs is based on themes relevant to the children's audience and lessons. Indigenous knowledge resources inculcate good values in children and youth. One of its purposes is to raise a socially, mentally fit and well-behaved

individual in society. There are several creative activities, including improvisation, dance, drama, storytelling, and games, but this paper considers improvisation as one of the activities that was used for the learning process with the participants.

Improvisation is used frequently in dramatic activities. This is when participants speak and move spontaneously in a creative imaginary situation and actively explore human relationships. It provides a genuine context for speaking and listening, interaction and characterisation, especially for young learners. The stimulus for improvisation can be from a text, a theme, a historical event, a social issue or simply an idea (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003, p. 44). By engaging in improvisation, young learners are exposed to a play-making process, which involves a group of children devising a scene from a story or discussing with the purpose of learning. Hutcheon (2006, p. 7) observes that dramatic improvisation is concerned with what we discover for the group and ourselves when we place ourselves in human situations containing some element of desperation. This process allows one to learn through experience. Improvisation is key to creativity; it is one way of bringing new moments, situations, and atmosphere into learning (John, 2004, p. 10). This activity allowed participants to work together as guided by the researcher as they learned to concentrate, collaborate, and participate in the playful but improvisatory activities. Since children love to play and understand the language of play, they were allowed to improvise imagined actions from the Ibibio folk songs. Actions such as the sounds and movements of the animal characters were depicted.

The improvised sessions were divided into three phases or sessions each day: warm-up, main activity, and evaluation. An attendance list was created to check attendance and consistency throughout the period. Before the activities began each day, participants who attended the sessions did introductions among themselves (there was a getting to know the participants and familiarity session with members of the group). At the closing session, the facilitator assessed what the participants knew about the Ibibio culture. How many could speak Ibibio fluently? What were their thoughts about their language? What morals (honesty, respect, discipline, self-control, obedience, hard-work, humility) they know and are exposed to, and what they feel about such morals. This was to evaluate if learning had occurred before and after the improvised sessions. These questions are duly given attention in the next section.

Ibibio Traditional Folk Songs in a Creative Drama Context for Learning

Indigenous Ibibio folk songs were taught to the participants. The aim was to allow them to learn about their language playfully and dramatically. This indeed captured their interest and brightened up their mood. The songs used in the practice-led sessions had different values and themes. Each participant picked lessons from the songs. (See texts and transcriptions below.)

Adiaha Udo

Ibibio Folk Song



A - dia-h'U do a - ta i - diok, a - yen; A - dia h'U - do a - tre u - tong e - yen; A - dia - h'U - do a - ta i - diok e - yen; N - kpan fi ke nkpo unyi - me - ke, a - ma - nam tu - tu eme - nye - ne e - nying.

Figure 1: Sample Musical Excerpt of Adiaha Udo

The song *Adiaha Udo* (Udo's first daughter) was taught to the participants at the different schools. The story in the song is about a disobedient child who refused to change her bad attitude and character. She became known in the community as a spoiled and disobedient child. The song admonishes *Adiaha Udo* to leave her naughty ways, and because she refuses, she has earned a bad name in the community. This invariably means she was not raised properly. This song was dramatized, with different roles given to different participants.

1. Adiaha Udo (Udo's first daughter)

Adiaha Udo, ata idiok enyen
Adiaha Udo, are utong enyen
Nkpan fi ke nkpo afo unyimeke
Amanam tutu emenyene enyin

Udo's first daughter, a bad child indeed,
 Udo's first daughter, a stubborn child,
 I've warned you to change, you refused
 You've done till you have a name.

2. Mfem Oyoro Oyoro Oyoro

Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro
Mfem isiyoroke ke obio unen

The roaming cockroach
 The cockroach is roaming
 The cockroach is roaming and roaming,
 The cockroach is roaming and roaming,
 The cockroach does not roam in the community chicken

Life is a risk because chickens love eating cockroaches. There was a demonstration of movement and actions as the participants took turns roleplaying the chicken and cockroaches in their actions.

3. Nne Mmi (My Grandmother)

Nne Mmi

Ibibio Folk Song

Figure 2: Sample Musical Excerpt of Nne Mmi.
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This Ibibio song teaches about body parts in the Ibibio language and was also improvised by both the researcher and the participants using movements and gestures in the demonstration process made in an active learning process that got all the participants actively engaging with this activity. Participants learned the names of the different body parts in the Ibibio language via the song by touching the different body parts as mentioned in the song. The researcher made sure they understood the body parts both in Ibibio and English languages, respectively.

Call: *Nne mmi nsisine ke esit abang iman yoho-yoho*

Response: *Nne mmi nsisine ke esit abang iman yoho-yoho*

Call: *Enyene iwuot*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene eyiin*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene iwo*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene inua*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene ubok*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene ukot*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Enyene isiin*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini*

Call: *Nsisine ke esit abang Nne*

Response: *ayaya tinini nne ooo ayaya tinnini eee.*

Interpretation of the Folk Songs as Learning Experiences

An important aspect of the study was demonstrated in allowing the participants to interact with the folk songs, which brought an opportunity for negotiation, interpretation, and reconstruction of Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials both at an individual and at a group level. This, in my observation, gave further insight into the importance of the relationship between language interpretation and who they are, based on their reaction and responses to the play-crafting process. Being Ibibio children, they attempted to create stories that were relevant to them. For example, the song *Nne Mmi* constructed its meaning on naming body parts, had a wider interpretation than *Mfem*. But the most beneficial interpretation was the songs as illustrated, because the children were able to use their ideas in the creative process. Hence, allowing play and dramatic forms within teaching and learning could be a vehicle for learning and negotiation between the language and the identity of the learners. This stood out during the play-crafting sessions.

However, not all participants were receptive and open to the idea of indigenous knowledge at the beginning of the practice-led sessions. Some children had different personalities, temperaments, and responses to issues based on these idiosyncrasies. Some children responded immediately to the activities as we began; for others, it was a gradual process. Gradually, those who were reserved at the beginning adjusted to the activities because it was play-based. By teaching the participants, they could personally engage and identify different themes and interact with Ibibio as a language. Allowing the children to improvise

with the characters in the folktales, role-play their own plays, and play the games from Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials became an active process for the participants. Although the general observation showed that the study was a play-based activity, it is worth noting that the children were more inclined to the sessions when they noticed it was musical, which allowed for free expression and unhindered participation. The musical aspect of the activities was captivating and exciting. There was a deep display of inherent talents in these young participants, as the tunes ignited their ability to recall themes and re-imagine the stories they listened to and tell a new story that reflected the culture of Ibibio society. The drudgery in the sessions was noticeable as the children were asked to write their own stories and make contributions in the different sessions, which highlighted how children can contribute to what happens in the society. Writing the stories in English was more regarding than in Ibibio, which took a longer time. Taking them through the practice-led sessions allowed participants to construct their own meaning from the experience. It made the learning process meaningful and culturally relevant to them as their cognitive, emotional, creative, physical, and social skills were actively and positively enhanced during the creative activities.

Teamwork and Collaboration as a Learning Model in Constructivism Theory

The study so far has been anchored on Constructivism Theory, as highlighted in the participation and activities of the children in all the sessions. Their participation was divided into three focused groups to work together on the task of learning different folk songs, writing stories and roleplaying the characters from different themes (disobedience, stubbornness and stealing), which they identified as unacceptable behaviours in the Ibibio society from the folk songs. Working together and collaborating as a team with other participants from different schools allowed the children to foster relationships and network-building to dissolve individual differences. Because they came up with three results to the task assigned to them, they voluntarily chose the roles they played without imposition. By working as a team, participants were learning skills of listening, discussing, understanding, debating, and exploring ideas among themselves to arrive at a decision that was acceptable to all members of the group. The objectives were to listen, learn and share ideas, and the children were given the opportunity to display what Ibibio indigenous knowledge meant at their own level as children. They were able to construct new knowledge (which is relevant to them) and new stories from existing folktales in the Ibibio traditional repertoire. In addition, they identified with the stories and the themes found in the stories. What stood out, for me, as a participant was the attempt to bring in new ideas to the creative process. Of course, the children were excited that they were able to make some contributions in the roles they played, which made the learning process a very practical one for both the participants and the researcher. The impact of this creative space and their experiences made the meaning personal to each learner.

More importantly, part of the aims of this study were to introduce children to Ibibio indigenous knowledge material and to create an interest in their cultural heritage. The aim was not to get them fluent in the Ibibio language but to start a process of gaining their interest. They identified Ibibio words from the indigenous materials and asked to know Ibibio words that were not familiar to them, and asked questions about them from the folktales they listened to and participated in through the creative enactment. For example, using the folk songs, the following questions were asked:

Participant A: *Nsido ubok* (What is hand?)

Participant B: *Nsido Ukut?* (What is leg?)

Participant C: Nsido iwuot? (What is head?)

Participant D: *What is a cockroach in Ibibio?*

Participant E: What is *Adiaha*?

Participant F: What does *Mfem Oyoro* mean?

Participants responded by constructing their own knowledge from their personal experience. They learned that speaking Ibibio does not limit their possibilities in the global space, but their identity should be acknowledged. Looking back at the repertory and picking out relevant themes to play with ignited their interest in the history of the culture they belong to and its significance to everyday living and activities. Improvising with the folk songs offered the participants the opportunity to step out of their reserved and individualised spaces. The level of confidence in the participants, especially in those who were withdrawn initially and displayed signs of timidity, was boosted because they were allowed to express their views and share their ideas in a safe space. Some became outspoken at the end of a practice-led session. Bringing them together as a team where everyone had something to offer strengthened their confidence level during the activities.

Closing Remarks

This research was motivated by a desire to see what can be taken from our indigenous culture to develop the minds of children who have experiences with modern media, while promoting cultural identity models for posterity, the future, with a specific emphasis on the Ibibio society of Southern Nigeria. The experiment has gone a long way to justify the resourcefulness of our folk materials as resources for education and personal development. In light of this, the conclusion has been made that governments and policymakers should give drama a prominent place in the school curriculum because of its enormous value in allowing pupils to learn about their culture and tradition. It is the position of this paper that greater emphasis should be placed on how our education system can be transformed to become a model and instrument for inculcating not only knowledge of but also respect for and empathy with our culture, making it an inclusive learning process in consonance with the local culture and learning environment. As this study has demonstrated, children enjoy learning through creative modelling and play. Through innovative playmaking, children learn to control themselves and share power, space, and ideas with others. Thus, planned and purposeful activities might strengthen social skills of children during early childhood and school, and improve their strategies for solving social problems, interacting with other children, and skills for understanding others' feelings (Güven & Adigüzel 2016, p. 57). Dramatisation involving songs generally offers a special opportunity for children to be creative about learning and to learn in a creative way. Children's imaginative potential can lead them to new knowledge and perspectives not available to them in any other activity (Hallssey, 2016:52).

The cultural values of the different African societies should not be devalued or disrespected on the altar of modernity. What the world needs is a greater integration of indigenous cultures and values, which should be promoted as part of humankind's diversity and multiculturalism. As this study has demonstrated, there is a need for a greater number of research studies focusing on children. This is so because African children have been affected negatively by the trending media and technology, as they imbibe foreign cultures that are subtly introduced. Thus, African studies need to decolonise all forms of knowledge systems to create a balance in cultural trajectories between the indigenous and foreign. This study has illustrated how constructivist learning in contemporary Ibibio society could become the norm, where

children should be guided through past experiences to share their thoughts as well as contribute or express their ideas about their culture by using various creative and aesthetic forms (dance, arts, storytelling, drama and music). This study concludes that the use of folk songs as a learning medium is quintessential and brings together various creative and aesthetic forms. Thus, contemporary research within the Ibibio culture should focus on cultural identity while engaging with other research problems. This ethnocentric perspective about their society and what could be done to solve the identity crisis would contribute considerably to the contemporary Ibibio society.

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