

Sustaining and Projecting Nigeria's Minority Languages through Repackaging of Traditional Music Lyrics

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Abstract

It is a common knowledge that in the next fifty years, some endangered minority languages in Nigeria will phase out of existence reducing the gains of language diversity in the country. To synergise ideas and expertise against this awful situation is most timely to curb the fast tempo with which languages disappear. Traditional music in its vocal, instrumental and mixed media varieties is language-based and has evidently been found to preserve the connotation, value and contextual usage of words, language structure, concepts and other related paraphernalia. On this merit, therefore, this paper attempted a new frontier on how traditional music lyrics can be repackaged for the sustenance and enhanced projection of Nigerian minority languages. Data from lyrics of sampled traditional music types of the Ókpè people in Delta State comprised the resource materials for the demonstration of this alternative paradigm in language sustenance. Performance practice, transcription, textual analysis, creative arrangements, technological embellishment, broadcasting, teaching and publishing of research findings were identified as positive models for the documentation and projection of Ókpè traditional music lyrics. By extended inference, it is envisioned that the alarm confronting endangered languages accounting for their underrepresentation in Nigeria's language diversity will not only cease to be, but will achieve the much desired language sustenance, relevance and projection beyond native environment. Governments at all levels, the social media, scholars and culture stakeholders are advised to provide needed endorsement and espousal of this research outcome to solve the millennium challenge of language endangerment.

Keywords: Music Lyrics, Sustenance, Minority Languages, Ókpè Traditional Music

Introduction

There are six hundred and forty-six (646) languages in Nigeria (Uwe Seibert in Yusuf, (2013); - one of the factors why it is referred to as the largest country in Africa. According to Nwodo (2016), there are ten major languages which are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Urhobo, Ibibio, Edo, Fulfulde, Ijaw, Tiv and Kanuri while over 636 others are in the minority category. Sad though, nine languages are no longer in existence, with many others on continuous threat path to follow suit. The enormous challenge currently facing scholarship is more of those still alive than the dead ones; and of principal concern are the ailing category tagged *endangered*.

With the unpleasant experience of the dead languages, concerted effort now, is on how various approaches can be synergised and harnessed to rescue the *endangered* to a comfortable zone. Traditional music and language are two interdependent phenomena and most times, in moments of deadly danger like this, the features of music can be relevant to swim aboard. Traditional music lyrics are component part of indigenous music of a people through which the language is enacted for all generations that come in contact with it. Music carries the language along in its creative performance and when it is properly repackaged in line with contemporary taste, the language is sustained and projected beyond a generation. It is on this premise that a minority Ókpè language in Delta State, Nigeria is sampled to test the effect of repackaging traditional music lyrics as a paradigm for the stabilisation, sustenance and projection of the language beyond its present standing.

The Plight of Minority Languages in Nigeria

When the Nigeria state came into existence in 1900, the language diversity was characteristically robust that some authorities put the number at 646 (ibid) which was a blessing of *Coat of many colours*. Rather than encourage mutual coexistence as the nation progressed, government policies on broadcast, school curricula and national representation favoured and projected bigger language groups and conversely repressed the status of minority counterparts. Factors such as the adoption of the English language and pidgin English as the *lingua franca* in official fora and in the social media like newspapers, internet, and textbooks, also excluded minority languages and affected their routine use.

Politically, minority groups always swallow bitter pills in the Nigerian context. Some of these bitter pills include human genocide from herdsmen attack, religious crises, and governments' bombardment for the protection of her infrastructure; territorial displacement due to ecological factors like flooding and erosion; and pitiable livelihood from the effect of oil exploitation, its attendant pollution and consequent relocation to less linguistically homogenous environments. These awful hurts have extensive tolls on the stability of the languages such that either they are miserably battered or totally wiped out of existence. Expectedly, nine minority languages have totally died in Nigeria and many other languages' lips are set on the edge of the sour grape. However, if these ecological, economic and political setbacks are addressed by relevant authorities and concerned groups of individuals, research endeavours can now find additional solutions to the ailing and unpredictable language conditions of the people such as is attempted in this article.

Language Defined

In Idolor (2016), the following definitions of language were considered:

language is a set of symbols (signifiers) each of which refers to one or more concrete things or abstract concepts. These symbols are combined according to a more or less strict grammar of rules (Dobrian, 1992). According to Ekong (2010), language denotes a system of signs, symbols, gestures or rules used in communicating a meaning, an idea or thought which can be oral, written and through body language which have been assigned acceptable meanings by members of the society which use it. On his own part, O. E. Essien in Ukut (2001) opined that new ideas to be imbibed are made possible through the human communication system, language. Language is the tool with which to think, create, aspire, desire, feel, and express enlarged mental horizon and fulfil that which man is capable of. (Idolor, E. G. https://www.academia.edu/28460199/exploiting_music_potentialsfor_the_effective_teaching.docx).

The bottom-line and indeed the conclusion of these definitions is the communicative and cultural package functions which all addressed in their effort to portray what language is.

Music on the other hand is the systematically combined sound, rhythm, harmony and counterpoint not only pleasing to the ear but also acceptable to the culture where it is created. In the African environment, music is a combination of sound, songs, dance, instrument playing, drama and all related paraphernalia to convey meaning such as instruction, history, local heritage and philosophy to listeners. Thus, apart from very few instrumental performances, a musical composition without text in Africa is hardly accepted

as one. Some instrumental works are even lyrically based that, as the music unfolds, the owners of the culture, can decode the thought-line of the drums like the talking drum (*Iya-ilu*), xylophones (*akpataerhan*), notched flute (*oja*) and other musical instruments. According to Lutz Jancke,

The view (that music and language are different psychological faculties) has been challenged in recent years mainly because of the advent of modern brain imaging techniques and the improvement in neurophysiological measures to investigate brain functions. Using these innovative approaches, an entirely new view on the neural and psychological underpinnings of music and speech has evolved. The findings of these more recent studies show that music and speech functions have many aspects in common and that several neural modules are similarly involved in speech and music (Tallal and Gaab, 2006). There is also an emerging evidence that speech functions can benefit from music functions and vice versa.(from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3338120/>).

The above scientific and psychological presentation by Lutz Jancke shows that music and language have many common psychological features; little wonder why African music is generally not only text dependent but also align with the principle of tonal inflection in order to effectively convey in-built messages. Such messages include ideas of patriotism, love, hate, passion, cultural heritage, and philosophy of life here on earth and the great beyond. Language and music, therefore, are viable tools for effective communication of ideas to listeners, viewers, participants and even generations unborn. Thus, the synergy between language and music in this co-operative scenario has to be adapted for language sustenance.

Ókpè and the Plight of Minority Languages in Nigeria

Ókpè is a territory, people and language. Its territory which lies within latitude 6⁰ and 5⁰ North and longitudes 5⁰ 40' and 6⁰ 25' East (Otite, 1973) is located in the Central Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria. It has a landmass of 500 square kilometres, comprises two hundred towns and villages, and has a population of 302,671 (N.P.C., 2006) spread over two and a half Local Government areas – Okpe, Sapele and part of Uvwie. The 2006 Nigeria population census was not socio-linguistic and therefore casts doubts if all 302,671 people are fluent in the Ókpè language. Various efforts have resulted in the publishing of Ókpè language dictionaries, graded books for schools, translation of hymn tunes; composition of native airs for churches; creative art music compositions, and very recently in 2016, the revised edition of the Ókpè language autography.

The aforementioned efforts notwithstanding, it is not hurray yet for the stability and sustenance of the language considering the domination of larger national, English and Pidgin communication alternatives. There are also factors such as urbanisation, rural-urban migration; inferiority complex of some native speakers; interethnic marriages; limited publicity and utility of documented research efforts, and lack of broadcast advantage. These are in addition to factors earlier identified in this write up as plight of minority languages. It is obvious that this awful situation necessitates the application of all known effective approaches for the sustenance and projection of the language; and hence this paradigm of repackaging traditional music lyrics.

Typologies of Ókpè Traditional Vocal Music

Music is extensively used in routine activities of the Ókpè people and this has not only given rise to different categories and typologies of music but also created a wide repertory in each category. There are many types of music composed with lyrics, which include *Ókpè Disco*, *Ijoro-Owian* (work-songs) of various vocations, *Ijoro-Osia* (folktale songs), *Ijoro-Emovberhe* (children's songs), *Ijoro Iten* (satirical songs), *Ijoro-Ebo* (trado-medical songs), *Kokoma* (secular dance music) and music of life cycle (*Udje akpo*). Each of these and many others have their peculiar structural, lyrical and performance practice characteristics with peculiar uses and functions in the socio-religious lives of the Ókpè people. However, the following traditional music types and their lyrics are sample for this study considering their secular nature, regular performances and scope of their lyrics. The types include *Iphri*, *Emá*, *Igoru*, *Ikpeba*, *Ighophàn*, *Ijúrhì*, and *Sharp-sharp*, are sampled for this study.

Iphri (the oldest music type of the Ókpè people) is a victory song originally performed on the conquest of an additional region arising from inter-ethnic wars for territorial expansion. With the cessation of the wars, *Iphri* music metamorphosed into a dirge for the burial of warlords and in recent times, burial of the famous in Ókpè society. It is a narrative vocal music type sung by a cantor and interspersed with choral responses. The text is always philosophical and below is a popular *Iphri* lyrics by Erhioworhodame Odjokolo:

EDE RE ENE RIE ISI ERORO **Okpe Folk song**
Transcribed by: Emurobome Idolor

Fig 1: Traditional Iphri Music

Okpe Language	English Language
<i>Èdè rene riè isi eroro;</i>	Remember the day of sojourn;
<i>Èdè rene riè isi eroro;</i>	Remember the day of sojourn;
<i>Èdè rene riè isi eroro;</i>	Remember the day of sojourn;
<i>Ogba owian.</i>	Tireless worker!

The lyrics of the above *Iphri* music.

Emá is a royal vocal dance-music type accompanied by *Ekaigen* instrumentation. Of particular significance is its role in the authentication of the status of a newly installed *Okakuro* (traditional Chief) or *Orodje* (Monarch). It is also performed at the burial of important personalities or aged males in a community.

Igorù music, according to Idamoyibo (2006:3), “. . . queries unprofitable habits and actions of [some individuals in a community and], offers useful warning and counsel to Ókpè leaders and followers”. This is a traditional, popular and narrative vocal music type with a major role for the cantor. The lyrics are assessed more on their narrative features

such as facts, sequence, figure of speech, sonority of voice and presentational skill. Its origin dates back to the early 1930s and was popularised both in live performances and in long-play disc recordings. An example of the lyrics of *Igoru* music is as follows:

Ukpechere mi teri
Me merẹ Takpevbiere r'obel' oma
"Arigbe n'ojaja r'uvo ruru me"
Aria mer' ughel!
Enyerẹ Takpevbiere ne itie ore ọsa
Ọsa orhore enyeren ye hworo rhe uvuen owọ
Ọsa oghwa te odo, owọ orho rhue ọsa
Ọsa orho dan, dan, dan, kpare aro ne odo
Ne urhurhomu ọsa okpogho!

I visited *Ukpechere* (a name of a town)
And saw Takpevbiere (somebody's name) weeping
"Imagine my sufferings from the scorching sun"
It is expected!
Takpevbiere's life is likened to that of ọsa (Robin)
Who gathered his belongings into a canoe to sail;
On paddling to the middle of the river; the canoe capsized.
Ọsa hovered, hovered, hovered and helplessly sighted the depth of the river.
Only to sigh!

Eho-ekporo is a traditional religious music of the Ókpè performed during festivals such as *Adene-Ókpè*, *Urhiapelẹ-ame* and *Orime*. It is performed to express appreciation for deities' protection and provisions during a period of time and to solicit for assistance in the years to come. The lyrics of these songs are exclusively sacred.

Ikpeba music type is also known as *Ipayan*. It is the commonest secular/entertainment music among the people in which everybody participates; hence, every town/village owns a set of *Ikpeba* orchestra which includes musical instruments like *Agba*, *Izu-igede*, *Ọmọ-igede*, *Abese*, two *Agogo*, and *Ekpeti* for the accompaniment of the songs. The songs are short sometimes with snappy choral responses that contain lyrics of the people's philosophical and socio-economic world view. Below is a transcription of *Ikpeba* music:

OMAME OMO OYE EVBIE **Okpe Folk song**
Transcribed by: Emurobome Idolor

MM. ♩ = 80

O - ma - m'o - m'e - vbie o - ma - m'o - m'e - vbie Kpe - go - do, - Kpe - go - do, o -
 ma - m'o mie - vbie O - kpe - go - do vbi'e m'i - rhi - rin o - rh'e - mo ye rh'i - ro - ro o
 O - ru - kpo - se - rien ro - vbi'o - mo whu o - rh'o - mo ye n'i - ro - ro O - ma - m'o - m'e -
 vbie Kpe - go - do Kpe - go - do o - ma - m'o me - bie I - ba - b'o O - ma - m'o m'e - vbie -

Fig 2: Okpe Traditional Ikpeba Music

The lyrics of the sampled *Ikpeba* music:

Omame omọ evbie; omame omọ evbie.
 Okpegodo, Okpegodo, omame omọ evbie.
 Okpegodo ovbie emọ irhirin; orhe emoye rhe irorò;
 Orukposerien ro ovbie omọ owhu; orhe omoye ne iroro.
 Omame omọ evbie; Okpegodo, Okpegodo;
 Omame omọ evbie;
 Ibaba-o, Omame omọ evbie;

It is good to bear a good child; it is good to bear a good child.
Okpegodo (name of a parent), *Okpegodo*, It is good to bear a good child.
Okpegodo had nine children; they were not united;
Orukposerien (name of a parent) who had one child; they were united
 It is good to bear a good child *Okpegodo*, *Okpegodo*;
 It is good to bear a good child;
 Ibaba-o! (exclamation), it is good to bear a good child.

Ìghophàn music is a secular narrative type with contemplative lyrics usually performed in social gatherings for entertainment. It grew out of *Igoru* in the 1940s. Egbikume Azano is an exponent of *Ìghophàn* music typology and he popularised it through disc recordings. On the emergence of *Ìghophàn* music, Egbikume Azano sang the following lyrics in a record disc:

Èkparọ: *Ijoro ahuanren re asoro*
Arha he ijoro suẹ awan
Arha sabo jeme tée
Ere ukperhumu na
Ijoro me ne ere idjedje
Mirhe dje rhe otore hin,
Dawandẹ oneye igbe roro ha
Ehwe: *Mine djeyi ha ren akpo rhon*

Cantor: The songs of the past
 In which people were subjects of ridicule

Have become unfashionable.
 In recent times, however,
 My songs have become topical,
 Counselling everyone as appropriate;
 From which individuals should be advised accordingly;

Chorus: I will offer my counsel for everyone to be advised.

Ìjùrhì is a music drama, which enacts aspects of Ókpè culture such as occupation, belief system and patterns of societal values. It is usually a communal affair to organise its performance, but it is also common in contemporary times to find music troupes like *Iyankee* and *Ukoko-Ever Bright* both based in Sapèlè, founded in 1952 and 1958 respectively that specialise in *Ìjùrhì*. Primary, secondary and tertiary institutions, also perform it as part of cultural activities.

Sharp-sharp (Ókpè Theatrical Party) is a secular popular music-drama performed for entertainment. The practice was in line with the vogue of the post World War II period, when operatic theatres emerged and waxed strong as a newer medium of traditional popular entertainment in some West African countries. It is composed in Ókpè language with themes on love and contemporary social issues. Below are the music transcription and lyrics of one of the songs of a lover:

OSE ME RI MI SUN TE OBARO **John Oke**

Transcribed by: Emurobome Idolor

MM., ♩ = 60

O - se me ri mi sun t'ò - ba - ro, gbe n'e - ke - t'ò - keo se - ri me rho. O -
 so n'ò rho ghwa yi bi rho ne me rho sa rha - rhu - mu - u O - ma - me - rho - m'ò yo r'ò -
 sue na na. O - bo r'ò - me - rh'ò - wan y'ò - ro kp'ò - wan. I - bi - bie - suon ye - ne le - lu - suan ye
 Da'ò - bo - ro j'ò - w'u - whuo

Fig. 3: Okpe Sharp Sharp Music

The lyrics of the music are shown below:

Ọse mẹri mi sun tẹ obaro
 Gbe nẹ ekete ọke oseri mẹ rho
 Oso na ọrhọ je ghwai birhọ ne
 Me rha sai rharhumu-u!
 Omamerhome ọye ọro suẹ enana
 Obore ọmerhe ọwan, ọye ọro okpe ọwan
 Bibiesuon ọye elele usuẹ aye
 Da oboro je ọwan, uwhu.

I saw my friend (female) off,
 In a dark late night,
 When it was also threatening to rain,
 To retreat was impossible!

This is the consequence of excitement!
Unrestrained lust after excitement can be dangerous;
Diligence is required to handle such lusts;
A deep-rooted lust can be deadly.

With the emergence of Christianity in Ókpè land in the 1890s, hymns, chants, doxologies, masses, etc. were translated to the Ókpè language. In this part of the World, the traditional church music experiment (*Kirimomo*) championed by Adam Igbedu, received very wide reception virtually in all denominations. The Ókpè language version of this church music was first recorded by Dawanderhie Erhekpaine and his gospel band of Sapele. Later, names like Francis Okpigben, Matzam Egbikume, Diamond Erheraine joined the practice. These artistes have their language peculiarities that yearn for proper documentation and research endeavour in the society.

The need to repackage Ókpè traditional music lyrics.

It has disgustingly been observed, that the rate at which traditional music and its lyrics die due to staled and ineffective means of documentation and transmission. Delay or lack of action plan to arrest the ugly situation may turn the society to a vacuum of traditional music and by extension, its lyrics.

The concept of language repackaging is hinged on innovative ways to reorganise existing language knowledge, practice and skills in tune with global best practices for better appeal and usage vis-a-vis other competing language alternatives such as English, Pidgin English and national languages in the environment with the understanding that society is dynamic and ever changing. Thus, to repackage lyrics in Ókpè traditional music is to provide reliable platforms for preservation, sustenance and presentation of the lyrics designed with ease of access and modern time retrieval devices. It also involves the reworking of original stock for improved and updated version(s) compliant to taste of modern end users.

Contemporary agents of language dissemination have become unimaginably amazing that the orally transmitted practice of lyrics in Ókpè traditional music can hardly be compared. Music and its lyrics are aural and oral arts that fizzle away without notice - the reason why much of music repertory particularly in preliterate era are lost to history; and even when some are memorised, their repeat-performances are hardly the same.

There is therefore, a need to repackage. No doubt, the world has become a global village occasioned by technological breakthroughs that dictate patterns of documentation and the extent to which languages should be repackaged for global accessibility. As we earlier advised elsewhere in Idolor, E. G. (2005), the textual and structural features that identify the music and the owners must not be mortgaged in the name of repackaging, civilisation or intellectualism.

Strategy for Repackaging Traditional Music Lyrics

The music types and items in traditional music repertory are numerous and divergent that models best suitable for each had to be adopted accordingly for repackaging. Another major consideration is the identification of the target population for whom the lyrics are repackaged to ensure suitability, ease of manipulation of model, comprehension of content, and reasonable patronage.

The level of enlightenment of the target population must be considered for the understanding and needed operation of the repackaging model, that, if it is too sophisticated, a percentage of the population that normally would have gained from the effort will be marginalised. Repackaging should go by various and expansive liberal values with interests acceptable to vast majority of people in the society using appropriate language that respects people's norms and ethics devoid of derogatory insinuations and antisocial expressions. A choice must be made of suitable medium of packaging whether through books, print or electronic media, music scores, compact discs, VCDs, DVDs, music games, door bells and children-sitters. In totality, these modern means of documentation should characterise traditional music lyrics with enhanced taste, admiration, receptivity and sustenance.

Finally, the agent of dissemination of the repackaged traditional music lyrics must be identified. While some opt for wheel barrow hawking, bus adverts with sales girls and radio broadcast, others may be suitable for Cable network, television stations and internet hosting. These varieties are subject to the kind of music and personality of consumers. For instance, Mrs Edna Ogholi-Ogosi sang an internationally acclaimed reggae hit album in 1986 titled *Uyo kome* in Isoko language. It was wonderfully heralded and patronised beyond the shores of Nigeria, the language barrier notwithstanding. The music took the Isoko minority language to homes, restaurants, television and radio stations, boutiques, parties and beauty/hair cut saloons, and it elicited music research projects on the lyrics of the album. It was the product of effective packaging. Below are some sampled models for the repackaging of Ókpè traditional music lyrics:

Aural Field Recording: This guarantees authentic documentation of data for the audio archive of the community and it facilitates easy retrieval of lyrics, music and sounds of musical instruments in the future with discrete originality for further studies, creativity, replicated performances and other purposes. In this research, audio-visual/still recording sessions were held with professional singers, dancers and drummers in their natural environment to document accurate performance of the songs.

Transcription is a variety of documentation alternative which involves not only writing down the lyrics, but utilises the staff notation as a platform to document the tones of the music for music literates to access, analyse, appreciate and put to further use. Effective management of this medium serves other useful purposes such as adopting the transcribed pieces as motifs, themes or takeoff points for advanced creativity. Apart from being a reference material for global accessibility and research, it is designed for teaching and learning purposes in institutions keeping lyrical heritage in the hearts of younger generations. The researcher showcased this model earlier in this paper in figures 1, 2 and 3.

Music Analysis deals with the identification and interplay of structural features of music. These features and the sound matrix differentiate one music type from another. Repackaging through this model was adopted in this research to identify music idioms such as form, rhythm, melodic contour, scale pattern, part singing, metre, cadential formulas and vocal range of data collected, particularly as they relate with embedded lyrics. This musicological X-ray of Ókpè traditional songs avails scholars across borders, deeper

understanding of music lyrics of other cultures of the world. These details also encourage the use of sonic idioms for composition and scoring/arranging for voices and musical instruments. For instance, through the analysis of traditional music types and experimentation, this writer developed the theory of *Real Pentatonic Vertical Harmony* in 1994 for the composition and arrangement of songs contextualised in a pentatonic scale.

Textual and Contextual Analyses: In very serious research endeavours in music, textual and contextual analyses of music data are fundamental necessities in musicology and hence it is a repackaging model that facilitates clear understanding of lyrics in traditional music types. In this research, this step was taken after the aural field recording, transcription and structural analysis of collected data. It was observed that Ókpè traditional music lyrics is laden with textual emphasis to educate, criticise, project the people's culture, amplify noble gestures of individuals and above all, entertain audience. Thus, the lyrics are considerably assessed by the amount of wisdom (*ohò*) each composition contains.

Analysts of Ókpè traditional music consider the accuracy and context of lyrics vis-a-vis Ókpè world view, depicting a balance between words of everyday life and metaphorical phrases; how humorous are the remarks and how the diction of the lyrics consists of idiomatic expressions. Creativity is measured on the effective application of figures of speech such as elision, metaphor, simile, digression, fable, proverbs, parallelism, hyperbole, and techniques such as partial or full repetition, lengthening of syllables, and foreign/borrowed words. Virtually all Ókpè words are tonal where words with the same spelling can have two or more meanings by ways of pronunciation for different performance contexts. For instance, *Òsa* means a Weaver bird, *Ósa* means 'he/she is coming', *Òsà* means 'it should hatch' and *Òsà* means 'orange'. Consequently, traditional music compositions respect the principle of tonal inflection of lyrics in the melody and indeed part-singing.

Scoring and Arranging is an expanded creative exercise on either recorded songs or their transcribed versions. Such efforts, somehow, partially removes the music from its initial performance practice. For instance, this writer recorded, transcribed and arranged an Ókpè lullaby titled *Omọ Kube* for Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass voice parts (SATB). Normally, lullabies are sung by one person – the mother of the child, the elder sibling, nanny or a maid – and it is sung in one voice part for the child alone. This arrangement can now be sung in four parts by even one hundred-member choir, performed for adults and even in a concert hall which is an aberration in the traditional context. But come to think of it, in recent times, most mothers not only cannot sing their native lullabies for their children but have adopted alternative baby-sitters with built-in music, thus, abandoning and phasing out traditional lullabies. To save this beautiful lullaby (*Omọ Kube*) and its educative lyrics from dying out of existence, the Scoring and Arrangement model for repackaging was adopted to document, sustain and project it to the wider world beyond the native environment.

Performance Practice Study: This is the research venture into the orthodox presentation pattern of a piece of music - the how, when, where and paraphernalia that goes with its presentation. The adoption of this model of repackaging is to document the performance practice of various Ókpè traditional music lyrics before they disappear from existence. This model keeps the practice in the records and literature for possible retrieval, review and

further creative interpretations in tune with subsequent prevailing tastes and values. Much has been achieved in the field of traditional music lyrics through the efforts of indigenous scholars coming up with in-depth researches in Okpe Disco: A Neo-traditional popular music genre in Nigeria; *Igoru* music: Its philosophical and cultural values; *Ijurhi* music of the Okpe people and its instructional procedures; etc.

Publications: Traditional music lyrics are usually orally stored in the memory of performers and hence it is said that *the death of a great African performer is a big library of facts and ideas razed by fire*. At such instances, great names like Egbíkùme Azano (1884–1985), Èrhiwórhòndamè Odjókòlò (1901–1988), A. C. Kérèwi (1913-1997) and Hon. Òwin Sadjerè (1942–2002) readily come to mind in terms of out-put of ideas and performance presentations. Unfortunately, their preliterate environment robbed them of the advantage of reliable documentation system and media publicity. Hence, in this age, effort in this research was made not only to collect songs from the field but also repackage them through publishing from which the style of presentation especially of minority cultures can receive some recognition in the world’s language cyber-space.

Formal Education: The preservation of Ókpè traditional music lyrics is much of memorisation, routine performances and oral transmission to younger generations which is the system of informal education. Unfortunately, untold volume of ideas has been lost to history as sound leaves no footprints on the sand of time. Songs that survived oral transmission processes have been mutilated over the years due to faulty memory and adverse structural impact of societal change. The researcher had to adopt formal education as an effective instrument per excellence for social reconstruction and development. It is considered a suitable model for repackaging traditional music lyrics. Zoltan Kodaly’s theory in Hungary opines: *if the child misses traditional music in his upbringing, he must come across it in schools* and with the help of the government of his day, his experiment was successful. Going by the example of Kodaly, therefore, effort is now geared towards repackaging Ókpè traditional music for the school curriculum to avail learners the opportunity to sing, dance and play musical instruments in their own language. With the bi-musical approach in place at the tertiary level of education, African traditional music contents and delivery techniques have become uppermost as the purpose of education is to situate facts and enable learners to rediscover their true nature and capabilities.

Social Media: Its typologies are so varied that some specialise in particular fields in which they have carved niches for themselves. The most popular and age-long social media is the print and electronic media, through which many people understand happenings in and around their environments, traditional music lyrics inclusive. To repackage traditional music lyrics for these media options necessitates, most times, out-of-context arrangement infringing on conventional choice of stage, duration, scenery, stage management and even gestures. This moderation to the convenience of the media process had to be compromised within permissible cultural ambit, in order to document and project the linguistic heritage of the Ókpè people.

The internet has become the widest reach of global communication that for any issue, its services are readily available. This strategic model of documentation and language projection was considered necessary for the advantage of Ókpè traditional music

lyrics in this dispensation of internet services. Design and hosting of website pages like *Proudly Okpe; Sapele People; Okpe Union World Wide; Okpe Kingdom; Okpe Union North America; Okpe Dynamic Forum; Okpe Agbamweni; Okpe Voice; Okpe National Congress*; etc. now exist in compliance with the vogue to facilitate the tempo of linguistic sustenance.

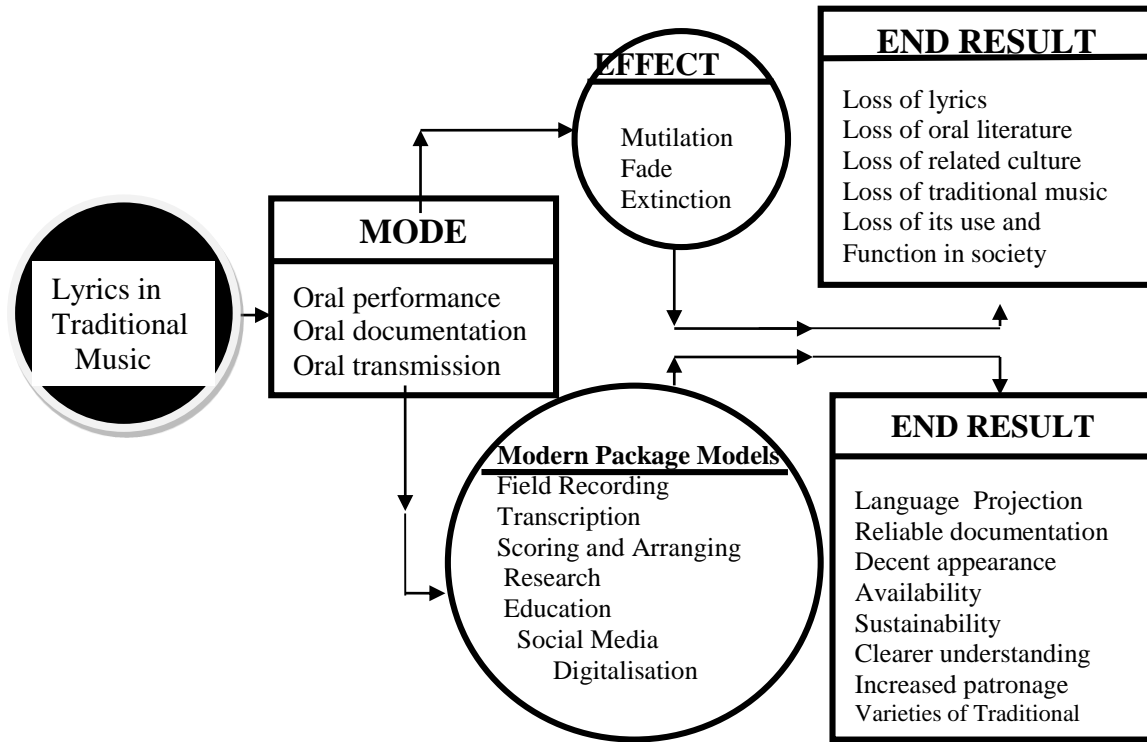


Fig. 1: Idolor 2016 model for repackaging of traditional music lyrics.

Findings in Repackaging of Okpe Traditional Music Lyrics

The following were observed at the end of the research. There was:

- i) better understanding of lyrics in traditional music through there packaged sampled music;
- ii) visible enlargement of repertory containing traditional music lyrics of the society;
- iii) a positive and dynamic disposition of more people towards Ókpè traditional music lyrics some of whom, hitherto, considered traditional music as primordial;
- iv) more receptivity of the lyrics and indeed the language in the sampled songs due to improved packaging;
- v) more and wider publicity of the lyrics and its music through the internet, research publications and creative works than before, thus popularising the lyrics within the ethnic group and projecting the language beyond the native environment;
- vi) a gradual increase in the population that now speak and appreciate the language, resulting in socio-cultural identity and self-esteem;
- vii) an assurance of language sustenance considering the varieties of the repackaging models for diverse settings and age groups;
- viii) an increased number of scholars who accessed the music lyrics through transcribed, arranged, and/or analysed works. Some others had contacts with published scores,

published books, sound archives and researched articles in journals, magazines and newsletters.

Recommendations for Minority Languages in Nigeria

- i) Parents, as a matter of daily routine, should ensure regular speaking of mother tongues and singing of traditional songs in homes. This is the surest approach to language sustenance in any culture. Community leaders should encourage regular traditional music performances and folktale telling sessions in their areas of jurisdictions with emphasis on the didactic essence of the lyrics;
- ii) Local Government Councils are the nearest to the minority ethnic groups in terms of proximity and possibilities of understanding their challenges and should, therefore, take responsibilities for the protection of minority languages, albeit lyrics in traditional music heritage;
- iii) The outcome of repackaging has been observed with positive advantage for languages. It is therefore recommended that Governments, non-governmental agencies and ethnic nationalities should commission research projects on traditional music repackaging to safeguard the music lyrics of minority languages from the threat of extinction;
- iv) Documentation effort for the preservation of data for future reference and studies is a step ahead its oral alternative in terms of reliability and sustainability. Thus, urgent action should be taken for field recordings of lyrics in traditional music and be archived properly to achieve its desired objective;
- v) Repackaged traditional music lyrics must be graded for each strata of the educational system to guarantee effective organisation of experiences for the teaching/learning process;
- vi) Festivals of traditional music performances should regularly be organised by community units and/or the local government administration to keep the heritage alive for natives, tourists and researchers;
- vii) The social media in all its varieties must show determined alignment with minority languages in the coverage and transmission of music programmes/news cast to strengthen unity through cultural varieties;
- viii) Publishing of collected, collated and transcribed traditional songs in various minority languages should be a routine practice in State Ministries of Arts and Culture so that people can sing fluently using the local languages;
- ix) Creative arrangement of traditional music in art form using minority group lyrics should be encouraged as a model of repackaging for possible variety of performance medium to give the language and musician enhanced recognition and receptivity.
- x) International organisations should show consolidated concern for traditional music lyrics of minority languages and assist in effective repackaging that will safeguard them from threat to existence.

Conclusion

This experimental research exercise examined the impact of repackaged traditional music lyrics on the sustenance and projection of minority languages using the Ókpè scenario in Delta state as a case study. Nine possible varieties of repackaging models were identified and applied with proof of exciting positive result. This proved that any heritage that must be relevant to the taste/use of contemporary society has to consider sustenance through repackaging. Agreeably, it identified great inadequacy of needed pilot and substantive musicologists as manpower in some parts of Nigeria to effectuate the research process in some minority languages. It also foresaw the uncertainty of the federal, state and local governments adopting the process with full enthusiasm. These cogs on the wheel of research implementation can be anticipated sometimes, but even if the minimum support

is received and fifty percent (50%) of endangered languages is saved, then the country must count her gains. No doubt, the degree of reluctance to implement the paradigm may subside with observed results in some other geopolitical regions within the country. The paradigm so tested in this study is interdisciplinary which implies that research in music or language can source assistance from relevant disciplines for solutions to some societal problems. Generally, the result of this research proved very positive and could impact greatly on the ailing and hopeless situation of some endangered minority languages in Nigeria.

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