

Creativity in Nigerian language and literature

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Abstract

Creativity from the linguistic and literary perspective centers around words. A proper command of language is therefore needed to express it in every genre of literature. This paper explores the interface expressed between language and literature, especially regarding creativity in popular culture, and current literary, linguistic, and interdisciplinary trends. The paper is guided by the ‘infinity principle’ (Chomsky 1964), which assumes the generation of an infinite number of sentences and thoughts from a finite set of words. The paper is discussed in eight sections. Sections 1 and 2 present the introduction and conceptual explanations. Section 3 presents some new modes of popular culture. In sections 4 and 5, we present some of the new trends in literature and language. Section 6 presents some interdisciplinary trends and some recommendations and concluding remarks in sections 7 and 8.

Keywords: Creativity, literary trends, language trends, interdisciplinary trends.

1. Introduction¹

Language and literature, having survived for countless generations, in every culture of humanity's history, have been expressed by interdependence. One cannot create literature without the vehicle that is language, much the same as language would cease to have its importance if it is not used to create. With the evolution of literature and language, separately,

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the relationship between the two has stayed the same, over the years. Writers, orators, speakers, and anyone who has ever used language to convey meaning, have had the benefit of the orators, writers, and speakers who came before them.

This paper investigates this relationship to better our understanding. Creativity, especially in Africa, is at an all-time boom. With storytelling, drama, songwriting, and other forms of narratives, a more in-depth look at the ways that language and literature move around each other is important to our continued growth and understanding of everything that our culture has to offer.

Creativity is a crucial aspect of language and literature. It allows writers and speakers to express themselves in unique and imaginative ways, creating new and meaningful ideas, and conveying complex emotions and experiences. Creativity in language and literature can take many forms. It includes the use of metaphors, similes, imagery, wordplay, experimental writing, word coinage, etc. Overall creativity is essential in language and literature as it allows speakers and writers to express themselves in unique and memorable ways and it also allows for a meaningful connection between interlocutors.

2. Conceptual clarifications

A keyword in this paper needs some explanation, i.e., ‘creativity’. This is the ability to bring something into existence by way of imagination. Anyone can create anything. People create stories and art. People also create theories and practices. The spectrum of creativity ranges from aesthetic value to functionality. For example, when an artist creates a painting, that is creativity. At the same time, when a janitor comes up with a more effective way to finish the chores that have been assigned, the janitor exhibits creativity. Also, creativity is the ability to use language in new and inventive ways by mixing linguistic elements to reveal new emotions and ideas.

Creativity, from the linguistic perspective, is the ability to generate aspects of language. One of the assumptions linguistics makes about the nature of language is its creativity. Language users invent new words, change the meaning of old words, modify patterns, engage devices like metaphors, etc. These have played important roles in different theories of language. Another aspect of linguistic creativity is the ability to play on words. This is commonly used in advertising and marketing, where companies create memorable slogans and catchphrases. Linguistic creativity is an important aspect of human communication that allows us to express ourselves and connect with others on a deeper level. From a creative perspective, linguistics is not just about following the rules of language. It is an ever-changing process of constant, linguistic creation.

Wilhelm von Humboldt is credited with being the first to propagate the notion that language is a rule-governed system that makes ‘infinite use of finite means’ (Humboldt 1836/1999). Chomsky cited him frequently regarding his formalism of universal grammar, where universal grammar is suggestive of similar categories across languages which speakers use to produce infinite sentences from a finite set of rules (www.newworldencyclopedia.org).

Chomsky (1964) refers to the ‘infinity principle’ of language as the generation of an infinite number of sentences from a finite set of words, which provides human beings with a kind of creative freedom that differentiates them from other animals. With access to an infinite capacity for language, humans can generate sentences they have never heard before.

Linguistic creativity can be seen in poetry, fiction, advertising, and on social media. In these areas, language is used in unconventional ways to achieve specific goals. It could be to evoke emotion, persuade, entertain, or connect with an audience. A key feature of linguistic creativity is the use of figures of speech, such as metaphors, similes, and more. These devices allow speakers and writers to convey complex ideas in more engaging and memorable ways.

In literature, creativity is the ability to craft worlds and characters into existence. When writers pen down or speak words, they are doing more than writing and speaking. They are

creating. From characters to places to societal structures, the writers become creators. Words are their primary tools. The worlds and characters created can only be experienced by others if the writers, or storytellers, use words for expression. Words, spoken or written, form the relationship between language and literature that the writers use. This relationship between language and literature exists in every form of literature, with every language that is spoken or written. Writers must have a proper command of a language, to express creativity.

Literary creativity is the ability to create compelling characters and scenarios that readers are interested in. Language is the device used to create distinctive voices, personalities, and backstories of these compelling characters, as well as setting up scenarios that are real and immersive enough to draw the readers in. Literary creativity takes any number of forms. It could be experimental in the case of challenging traditional forms. Or it could be more conventional in its use of figurative speech. Overall, literary creativity is an important aspect of the human experience that allows writers to explore human complexity in ways that are meaningful and entertaining.

3. New modes of popular culture

New modes of popular culture have emerged over time. This has been facilitated by technology, which has produced a wide range of tools and platforms of operation in response to changing social, technological, and economic conditions. These new modes of popular culture are products of new, human behaviors regarding media production and consumption.

In recent years, social media has risen as a dominant mode of communication and cultural expression. Social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have given people opportunities to communicate globally, in a way never done before. In addition, there has been the rise of streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime, which have fundamentally changed the way we consume media. These platforms allow us to access a

vast array of content on demand, from movies and television shows to original programming created specifically for these platforms.

In this era of video games, we have also been exposed to a new facet of popular culture. These games evolved from simple arcade games into immersive, narrative-driven experiences that rival movies and television shows in terms of storytelling and character development. In the wake of its popularity, online gaming communities have emerged, creating more social and cultural spaces for people to engage with each other around the world.

New modes of popular culture are constantly evolving to reflect the changing attitudes, values, and interests of people around the world. These new modes of popular culture are not only entertaining and engaging but also serve as important cultural artifacts that help us to better understand ourselves and the world we live in.

Everyone is online, these days and so art, literature, and services are exchanged online. There are Apps and software to aid writers on everything, from word count trackers to prompt generators, to writing planners, to world builders. Every possible tool available can be found on the internet. To access the internet and exist in this growing, global culture, people require devices. Most, if not all, of the world, have access to these devices. The presence of these devices has created a facet of human culture on its own that influences the way people interact with each other, in person or through said devices.

Creativity has always moved through places that had never been explored. But in today's world where it is easy to challenge the status quo, people do that daily. In the same way, someone can make music using tables and spoons, writers can write on walls, use lipsticks as pens, and clothes as a canvas. The main aim is to communicate. Whether it is done in a notebook, a laptop, or on a bowl of yam powder, is really up to the storyteller, these days.

4. Literary trends

There are emerging literary trends that are constantly evolving in response to cultural and social developments. Some of the emerging literary trends in recent years discussed in this subsection are most notable. They have been driven by a desire to challenge traditional narratives and explore new forms of storytelling that better reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of modern readers. These trends have incorporated a wide range of themes and styles, reflecting the complexity and diversity of the world around us.

4.1 Fiction

Fiction is any piece of literature that describes a series of events that was created in the imagination of a person. While fiction has not a modern creation, it has evolved through the years. As communication has changed over time, the way that fiction exists in our world today, has also changed. Here are some trends in fiction that exist in modern culture.

Fan fiction: Fan fiction is any piece of fiction that is written by a fan of something that already exists. For example, if a story already exists and someone wants to expand on that story, using the same names of the characters, the places, etc. it would be fan fiction because that work is not an original piece. The characters and the world-building belong to the original author. But in today's literary ecosystem, fans can express themselves by transforming or extending any piece of literature or media they please.

Flash-fiction: This is fiction that is quick and short. Stories exist in forms as short as one hundred words. Stories that do not delve into world-building or character arcs, but go straight to the point, now exist in the form of flash- fiction.

Eco-fiction: This genre explores and depicts the relationship between human beings and the natural world. It deals with issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, and conservation.

Mythopoeia: This is the act of creating new myths. It is used mostly by fantasy writers who need to create worlds from scratch. We have popular myths such as Greek mythology, Egyptian mythology, etc. But with mythopoeia, writers create new gods, new adventures, and new worlds, with which to propagate these new myths.

African myths through today's lenses: With the growing popularity of Western fantasy in Hollywood, (i.e. superhero fiction, myths, and legends) and the globalization of Afrocentrism, African myths are viewed with a more forgiving lens than mere decades ago. In a country like Nigeria where screenplays were once condemned for always including native doctors, such sentiment is not as popular, anymore, in the general market. Even though in academic circles, people tend to gravitate towards more mundane fiction that expresses realistic events and circumstances, the youths and people who read for leisure, are opening more to the idea of consuming African myths. The popularization of African myths in Western media has also played a hand in lessening the stigma of African myths in general. It has given rise to the genre of African Fantasy that is often featured in literature, music, and on screen. Through a modern lens, we have new insights and perspectives into these ancient stories. African mythology is engaged when we explore the themes of social justice and equality. Many myths feature heroes who champion the cause of the marginalized folk in a fight against oppression, injustice, and other ills of society. These themes are particularly relevant today, as we continue to struggle with issues of inequality and social justice on a global scale. African myths also explore the relationship to the natural world. These themes are also relevant today, as we face a growing environmental crisis and the urgent need for greater awareness and action to protect the planet. The relationship between contemporary culture and society also offers insight into the human experience and the challenges faced in daily living, which is something that has also existed in African mythology. By exploring these themes through a modern lens, we gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural richness and diversity of African mythology, and its continuing relevance and significance for our lives today.

4.2 Non-fiction

Non-fiction is any form of media that attempts to report on events that have occurred. In the same way that non-fiction is not exclusive to modern culture, as fiction, it is only discussed in this paper concerning new facets that have sprung up in modern culture.

Public diaries: In the past, people used to write about their thoughts and feelings in secret, documented and hidden in private diaries. But with the advent of sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, etc. diary entries are now public.

Creative nonfiction: This is when craft and style are applied to factual occurrences. Non-fiction books, in the past, often took the form of plain language, but in the modern day, non-fiction writers may adapt styles to garnish the true stories that they tell.

4.3 Children's literature

Any piece of literature created to entertain and educate children (between 0-12 years) using words or pictures is known as children's literature. Children's literature includes picture books, chapter books, middle-grade novels, young adult novels, and non-fiction. This form of literature is characterized by the simplistic terms and ideas displayed by the creators in this genre. This is not to say that children's literature cannot carry heavy topics, but since the primary audience of this genre is children, the topics discussed must be made accessible and understandable to the age group of children that are the target audience. It also includes animated characters and expressions that leave lasting impressions on the children. A popular character in Nigerian children's literature is the tortoise. He is often portrayed as smart, dubious, and selfish. His antics and adventures make the fictional tortoise memorable to the children and because of this, the lessons portrayed in those stories stick with the children long into adulthood, and forever. Children's literature engages and entertains young readers

while teaching important lessons. It teaches them about friendship, kindness, and courage, but more than that, it teaches them how to filter and understand their experiences in the world around them.

4.4 New writing platforms

This is probably the most diverse period of African literature in modern times. Topics range from tradition to fashion, to the experiences in the African diaspora, as well as contemporary topics like climate change, romance, violence, and coming-of-age stories. New African literature also exists in all forms and sizes. We have authors who publish traditionally, such as Chimamanda Adichie who has received critical acclaim, at home and abroad. But we also have authors who have chosen self-publishing on sites such as *Kindle* and are finding themselves on Best-seller lists. In addition to this, we have very young authors, as young as pre-teens, who are publishing their works on sites such as *Wattpad*. These days, teenagers and young adults are a part of the conversation, not just as consumers, but as creators as well. African youths are telling their stories online. They publish their works on sites, creating media to support these works and posting them on social media platforms. Because they spend so much time on their phones, the time that previous generations used in playing outdoor sports, or writing in their private journals, the youth of these days are using to become published authors and garnering large followings across several platforms.

Due to unhindered access to a large audience, there are fewer barriers between the writers and the readers, and fewer people to stop writers from telling the stories they want to tell. As such, we are seeing more authentic African writing that pushes bounds beyond what African writers have ever written about. Many writers are tackling issues like gender, sexuality, race, identity, and social justice, and using their writing to explore the complex and nuanced realities of life in modern Africa. On a continent with as many conservative countries as

Africa, these are topics that would have been, otherwise, stifled if the writers had to go through traditional vetting stages before their work was published or accepted.

In addition to this, some writers are exploring more speculative and futuristic themes, imagining new possibilities for the future of the continent and its people. New writing platforms have made these different forms and styles of storytelling. Many writers are experimenting with hybrid forms that combine elements of traditional oral storytelling with more conventional literary forms, while others are exploring new modes of digital storytelling and interactive narrative. There is also a growing recognition of the diversity and complexity of African experiences and identities. Many writers are challenging stereotypical portrayals of Africa and its people and offering nuanced and multifaceted portrayals of the continent's many cultures, languages, and traditions. The literature of modern Africa is a rich and dynamic field that is constantly evolving and expanding. New voices are emerging every day, and it is an exciting time for African literature and a testament to the enduring power and relevance of storytelling in the African context.

4.5 Literature in indigenous languages

African literature has been written in colonial languages – English, French, Portuguese, etc. There is a current debate on whether African literature should be written in indigenous languages. It is argued by many like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, that writing in the African languages will authenticate the literature written in the indigenous languages. When we think of African literature, we often think of Amos Tutuola's *Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1961), etc. But some literature in African languages has been written in different African languages. A few novels like Nyembezi's *Zulu* (1958) *Mntanami! Mntanami!*, Babinlata's (1991) Hausa *Kulu*, Udonkwak's (2009) *Ibibio Mbak Anyan-idaha*, Iwoketok's *Ibibio Adiahaudo* (2019), etc.

are out there. Unfortunately, works in indigenous languages are not very popular and do not attract much attention from the public.

Indigenous African languages have rich and diverse literary traditions, with many writers producing works in their native languages. They often draw on local cultural traditions and folklore and explore themes like community, identity, and the struggle for social and political justice. Many of these works are focused on preserving and celebrating the unique linguistic and cultural heritage of the communities from which they originate. However, beyond their immediate communities, these pieces of literature remain unknown. The lack of recognition and support for indigenous language literature in some African countries remains a significant challenge. Many writers face barriers to publication and distribution, and there is a shortage of resources and infrastructure to support the development and promotion of literature in indigenous languages.

There is a growing effort to address these challenges and promote greater recognition and support for indigenous language literature in different African countries. For example, in Nigeria, initiatives such as the ANA Indigenous Language Literary Prize, which is awarded annually to writers who have produced outstanding works in indigenous Nigerian languages, are helping to raise awareness of the importance and value of this literature. Additionally, the Nigerian government has established the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN), which is focused on promoting and preserving the country's linguistic and cultural heritage through research, teaching, and publication. A new *National Language Policy* (2022) has been produced, spearheaded by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. It is hoped that with the new National Language Policy, more literature written in indigenous languages will emerge.

5. Language trends

Language, as both a channel and archive of all man's endeavors, has developed several trends, which we cannot exhaust here. Illustrations are drawn of new modes of learning African languages, language documentation, and sign language.

5.1 New modes of learning African languages

Traditional tools for language learning, like textbooks, have been used for a long time. There are new modes of learning African languages. Technology has presented novel ways of instrumental approaches. Some of the tools include computers and other hardware and software. With increasing interest in African languages and cultures, these resources will surely expand and evolve in the years to come. There are many new and innovative modes of learning African languages that are emerging in response to the growing demand for language education and the need for more accessible and engaging language learning resources. Here are a few examples:

Mobile Apps: There are many mobile apps available that offer language learning resources for African languages. These Apps typically offer a range of interactive features, such as flashcards, quizzes, and pronunciation guides, and can be a convenient and effective way to learn a language on the go. We have Apps such as Duolingo that offers courses in a wide range of languages. Many sites like Udemy have language courses in African languages like 'isiXhosa for beginners', 'Mandinka for beginners', 'South African Sign Language for beginners', 'Learn Igbo for beginners', 'Learn the Yoruba language', etc.

Online Courses: They offer a flexible and accessible way to learn new languages from anywhere in the world. Many universities and language schools offer online courses in African languages, and many online language learning platforms offer courses in multiple African languages.

Language Exchange Programmes: Language exchange programmes offer a unique opportunity to practice speaking and listening skills with native speakers of African languages. More than learning a language in a classroom, a new speaker is given the chance to experience the language in a way that will spur their learning and retention process much easier and faster than traditional learning would have done. These programmes typically pair learners with native speakers of other languages who are also learning the first learner's language, allowing both parties to practice their language skills and gain a deeper understanding of each other's cultures.

Language Immersion Programmes: Language immersion programmes offer a more intensive language learning experience, with learners immersed in a language-rich environment where they can practice their language skills in real-life situations. There are many language immersion programs available for African languages, ranging from short-term programmes to long-term study-abroad opportunities.

Online Communities: With the presence of the internet, finding and meeting people from other cultures has become a thing of ease in the present day. Which is why people now have access to native speakers. People no longer have to learn languages alone, when they can go online and join communities that are made up of other fellow learners who are interacting with native speakers, in real-time. Online communities provide a supportive learning environment for learners of African languages. There are many online forums, social media groups, and language learning communities dedicated to African languages, where learners can connect with other language learners and native speakers to practice their skills and share resources.

The Use of Computers: Computers are now commonly used in language teaching and learning. This involves online research, aided by instructors that work with databases and technologically innovative materials built on students' initiative and creativity.

Entertainment: Many young people today are learning languages from other cultures that are not their own, simply because they like the stories that exist in those cultures. For example, the growth of the Korean drama genre has raised the number of worldwide foreigners interested in learning the Korean language. While the dramas may inspire people to take classes, others have watched so many dramas that they have learned languages just from entertainment, alone.

5.2 Language documentation

Documentary Linguistics, also known as language documentation, is a new area. It is based on American Anthropological concerns about the disappearance of Amerindian languages. Boas (1911, p. 60) captures the picture very succinctly when he says that: ‘...much information can be gained by listening to conversations of natives and by taking part in their daily life, which, to the observer who has no command of the language, will remain entirely inaccessible’.

As a theoretical basis language documentation draws from the Anthropological Ethnography of Speaking after Boas (1911), which was developed by Gumperz and Hymes (1964) and streamlined by Urban (1991). It conforms with the times in terms of practice, tools, and products. As a response to the growing crisis of language endangerment, it deals with the record and representation of natural discourse. Since discourse is primary in language documentation, then both description and analysis are secondary products of the record of natural discourse which form the documentary corpus. Descriptive and explanatory materials like grammar, dictionaries, etc. annotate the documentary corpus. Language documentation curates texts, such that they can be both accessed and shared electronically using very special tools. It encourages researchers to collect and record a wide range of linguistic phenomena in genuine communicative situations, and it uses high-quality sound and video recording to make sure that the results are the best possible record of the language.

Language documentation is the process of recording and preserving the unique features of a language. It is important because many languages are in danger of extinction. It involves a variety of methods, including audio and video records of samples of the language being spoken, collecting texts and stories written in the language, and compiling dictionaries and grammar that describe the structure and vocabulary of the language. It provides an opportunity among several others to address the oral forms of African literature. It also provides a methodology to record them, convert them, share them, and store them. Beyond the level of annotation, it creates an opportunity for revitalization, especially in the aspects of endangered literary genres.

One of the most important aspects of language documentation is community involvement. To effectively document a language, it is essential to work with native speakers of the language who have a deep understanding of its unique features and cultural context. Community members can provide valuable insights and expertise that will ensure the language is documented accurately. It also plays an important role in language revitalization efforts. By documenting endangered or threatened languages, linguists and community members can work together to develop strategies for preserving and revitalizing the language, such as developing language teaching programs, creating written materials in the language, and promoting the use of the language in daily life.

Language documentation is a crucial tool for preserving and celebrating the diversity of human language and culture. Through careful documentation and preservation efforts, we can help to ensure that endangered languages are not lost forever and that future generations could learn from and appreciate the richness and complexity of the world's linguistic heritage.

5.3 Sign language

Language and communication exist in both oral and written forms. For you to have a well-rounded command of any language, you must be versed in the speech and writing of said

language. The same goes for sign language and, in this case, Brail. Most African countries, even today, still utilize ASL (American Sign Language) as a nationwide standard. It is what is taught in schools, as well as homes. However, sign language exists in localized variations all over the continent. For example, in a country like Nigeria, villages, and communities have their version of sign language that is accepted and used in the communities. There are efforts to document Nigerian Sign Language (Asonye et al 2018, Asonye et al 2021, Asonye 2022).

Sign language uses a combination of hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements to communicate meaning. It is not universal and varies from one region to another, with some countries having multiple sign languages. Sign language is used by many people who are deaf or hard of hearing as their primary means of communication. It can also be used by individuals who are neither deaf nor hard of hearing. Some people learn sign language as a second language, and others use sign language as a way to communicate with deaf family members or friends.

Worldwide, sign languages all have their unique grammar, vocabulary, and syntax. Some sign languages are based on the spoken language of the region, while others are completely distinct from any spoken language. They are recognized as official languages in many countries, and efforts are being made to promote their use and support their development. In many countries, sign language interpretation is provided for important public events like political speeches, educational lectures, and religious services. In addition, sign language classes are offered in many schools and universities with available resources for individuals who want to learn sign language.

Overall, sign language is an important means of communication for many individuals and communities around the world, and it plays a vital role in promoting greater accessibility and inclusivity for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

6. Interdisciplinary trends

Interdisciplinarity is a collaboration between disciplines marked by increased interdependence between individuals from different disciplines working together on a shared problem. Members of these disciplines communicate throughout a particular project, yet each remains with his/her expertise. According to Gunn (1992, p. 252), interdisciplinarity is ‘the pragmatist’s response to the dilemma of disciplinary essentialism’. It is driven by several factors like educational, social, and economic forces. Interdisciplinary trends relating to languages reflect a growing recognition of the complex and multifaceted nature of language and its influence on our understanding of the world around us. With multiple fields cooperating, researchers can develop new insights and approaches that can offer a better understanding of the linguistic complexities of our globalized world (Udoh 2013). Many new fields have been created from a collaboration between disciplines. Linguistics has combined with several disciplines to birth many new ones. A few of these include:

Language and Cognition: Research in this field explores the relationship between our modes of communication and our way of world perception. It involves fields such as psychology, neuroscience, and linguistics that come together to examine how language shapes our perception of the world.

Language and Technology: This field explores the intersection of language and technology, including the development of natural language processing (NLP) technologies that enable computers to understand and interpret human language. This interdisciplinary approach draws on fields such as computer science, linguistics, and cognitive science to develop new technologies that can facilitate communication and information processing across languages and cultures.

Language and Education: This field examines the role of language in education and how language proficiency affects academic performance and success. This interdisciplinary approach draws on fields such as education, linguistics, and psychology to explore how

language learning can be optimized and to develop new teaching methodologies that consider individual differences in language proficiency.

Language and Society: This field explores the role of language in shaping social identity, cultural practices, and power relations. This interdisciplinary approach draws on fields such as anthropology, sociology, and linguistics to examine how language use reflects and reinforces social hierarchies and to develop strategies for promoting linguistic diversity and social justice.

6.1 Speech synthesis

Speech Synthesis refers to the artificial production of human speech. This is done through computer-generated simulation of human speech as computer technology is used to “construct” human speech from electronic circuits to replace pre-recorded human speech. Speech Synthesis projects involve a team of linguists, phoneticians, computer scientists, and mathematicians working together to develop large portions of artificial speech in a particular language.

This area of interdisciplinarity has made quite some giant strides in the past ten years and its uses have been expanded to include, but not limited to:

Assistance in language teaching and learning as its repetitive capacity provides a good aid to language learning exercises, reading exercises, presentations, and the creation of sounds that cannot be produced by humans in a particular language.

Assistance in the simulation of responses in different virtual environments for the handicapped, grassroots mobilization, and the recreation of an extinct language revitalization project.

Telephone answering service and automated attendant systems and voice response.

Several speech synthesis projects have yielded several fruits across the world. At the University of Uyo, one of such collaborations has contributed to a success story of interdisciplinarity, and it has produced a chain of research projects on the Ibibio language between the departments of linguistics and computer science. The Ibibio speech synthesis project was one of the fruits of the collaboration between the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages and the Department of Computer Science, both of the University of Uyo, and the Department of Linguistics and Literature of the University of Bielefeld, Germany. It was aimed at creating a machine-readable text from a human-readable one, in a Text-To-Speech (TTS) conversion (Ekpenyong et al. 2010). This project had a lot of potential for grassroots development programs, particularly in information dissemination concerning health (HIV/AIDS), agriculture, adult literacy, challenged persons (deaf, blind, and dumb), and challenging environments in conjunction with GIS. The project was funded by the LLSTI Project by Outside Echo UK. This project was coordinated by Roger Tucker and Ksenia Shalnova of Outside Echo UK, under the llsti project (see www.llsti.org).

7. Some recommendations

Interdisciplinarity should be encouraged. We should deliberately strategize and develop interdisciplinary projects even as individuals and specialists in different areas of specialization.

We should look around us and see what problems we can solve as we collaborate and pull our resources and expertise together and interdisciplinary research should be encouraged to solve specific research problems, not for its own sake.

African indigenous knowledge is rich and can contribute to the development of all aspects of life. There is a need for a conscious and strategic framework to integrate it into different aspects of development, riding on the social infrastructure.

Orature depicts the creative impulse of the society it evolves from. This artistic expression including proverbs, riddles, spontaneous poems/songs, folktales, childlore, and a lot of indigenous knowledge systems should be documented. The general observation is that attention has been given to aspects of orature by adults almost to the exclusion of children's artistic expression.

The documentation of the indigenous languages will provide a holistic record of the different genres of literature which when processed through conversion, preservation, sharing, and revitalization will provide wonderful input and insights into the creation of contents and themes in children's literature.

African languages, as both channels and archives of these knowledge systems, should play a central role in this. Most African languages are still in oral form. There is a need to develop writing systems in indigenous languages. The languages should be so developed that they can be used as languages of instruction in schools. They need to be adequately empowered to partake in the interaction characteristic of globalization, especially in the space of flows.

Indigenous languages should be used in literature to write prose, poetry, and drama.

The documentation of the Nigerian Sign language is the beginning of developing it for use in Nigeria. We need to write literature in indigenous languages. Language and literature provide insights into society. Literature is the soul of a society, while language is the archive of society. Such an archive can be oral, virtual, or physical. Our languages have remained oral for too long, and we need to document them.

8. Concluding remarks

African folklore has a lot to lend to the creation of storytelling, especially in children's literature. So far, we are limited to mundane stories with obvious lessons on morality that do not elevate the African child. Unlike Western stories that inform the child that they are

capable of anything they set their minds to, the African world is left with simple stories that speak of drudgery and repetition.

Access to and documentation of African lore opens the door to larger-than-life stories that can educate and inspire the African child. Stories about the ancient and the future, the supernatural and the beyond, give writers of African children's literature the ability to expand the boundaries of the sort of stories that can be told to children. African folklore includes elements of fantasy, history, music, speech culture, and indigenous knowledge system. Children's literature can expand beyond what it is now if African folklore is documented properly.

There is no doubt that some aspects of our collective orature have been put into print. However, much more is yet to be documented. It is also often not considered that both adults and children draw their experiences from the same setting, they employ the same language and discuss the same socio-cultural issues; they express the same hopes and aspirations. The artistic creation of adults together with those of children must be collected, collated, analyzed, and properly documented either for revitalization or for archiving.

We have a rich indigenous knowledge system across the different cultures in Africa, much of which remains undocumented. Even the documentation of what exists is mostly done in languages foreign to the systems. We should write poetry, prose, and drama in our indigenous languages. That way, we will have concrete archives and flesh will be added to the souls of our societies. We advocate for literature in indigenous languages for obvious reasons. A literature approach through language should be explored to deal with our challenges because literature and language are vehicles for development.

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