

CONTRIBUTION OF YORUBA INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE FILM TO CULTURE PROPAGATION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Language is the identity of people and racial recognition. Indigenous language films seem to have been the extant means of language development across ethnic groups in Nigeria. However, the use of indigenous language among the people of Nigeria requires attention because western education has relegated the language of the people to the background through promotion of foreign ones. Some Nigerians prioritise the indigenous language and freely speak it with their children and people. It has been noticed that majority of Yoruba people have replaced communicating with their indigenous language with foreign ones. This trend has signaled the extinction of some indigenous language in Nigeria because people have fanatically stuck to the use of foreign language to the detriment of the local language. Indigenous language films seem to be the antidote to this menace. Many Yoruba language films have promoted the propagation of the language as some Yoruba film makers continue to enforce the use of the language among the growing fans of their films while some have allowed status quo to persist. We have used a Humanistic Regeneration Theory to interrogate the content of this paper. The research paper also adopted qualitative research method and apply content analysis as instrument to explore related media, identified patterns, themes, and meaning of the variables. The researchers purposively chose Mainframe film: *Magun* (2001) among others, which was produced and directed by an astute filmmaker Tunde Kelani, to establish the impact of indigenous language film on the propagation of Yoruba language itself. Kelani's films and that of other few have helped many to use the language more often than not. This same syndrome has been affecting other Nigerian languages, however, this paper chose Yoruba as a case study among other three major languages and recommended for continuation to keep the tide.

Keywords: Indigenous, Language, Film, Propagation, development

Introduction

Language is codified words agreed upon by a set of cultural group to enable them exchange views and ideas. When this language is developed among a set that shares cultural aspiration, it is

therefore, a means to identify them in comity of nations. This type of language is referred to as people's indigenous language. Indigenous language having developed among the people that speak such brand of language becomes an integral part for which they are identified and means to consolidate the inherent cultural heritage of the people. By speaking this language often, the upcoming generation learn it and use it to communicate firstly at home with their parents. This language helps the younger generation to also connect to their cultural roots and heritage. To ensure adequate uniqueness and continuity in a particular community, language becomes the driver and this is done through story-telling and dissemination of values orally.

Film language is the method adopted for narrative expressions which in turn develops the story in plot. Film language (diction) is very important because no film is adjudged successful when the language of expression becomes incoherent before the target audience. That is why Cook (p. 10) describes language as a life wire of every society. For this reason, indigenous language film does portend the only means for communication as the case may be, but an extensive and complex system of knowledge in circulation have made people to put effort in development of language over the millennia. The language people speak has become the central means of identifying the social development and helps in the process of preserving people's cultures. Anyanwu (p. 10) says that without language, there is no society. There is no society truly without language of communication which enables understanding and harmony. It allows people to have opportunity to be viewed globally from the perspective of their visions, aspirations and means for the expression of self-determination.

Indigenous languages are not merely tools for identity and communication; however, they are central to all the indigenous people's identity and means to preserve their cultural aspiration among the comity of nations. Many nations in Africa though have adopted colonial language as lingua franca to enable them have equal share of idea and attainment of national growth. When it first started, it was introduced and embraced with the intent of making the indigenous people to become relevant in the industrial world. It was also branded with developmental view since most indigenous people if not all were not enjoying writer-ability and readability of their local languages apart from speaking it locally. No wonder Eze (p. 3) says language is so important in every aspect of human life. He further mentioned that language is needed in both formal and informal teaching. Notwithstanding, people have achieved the development and propagation of their means for

existent in their own way before colonial master ventured to derogatively malign people's way of life as barbaric. The issue of barbarism made them not to educate people on how to develop their own language into what can be written. The colonial masters clandestinely shortchanged people with believe that foreign language is the only tool available for development. And because of that, schools that were established resulted in breaking the fabric of unity known from aeon among the indigenous people of Africa. People were eventually made foreigner in their own land for inability to speak and line themselves behind the language of their birth.

It has been noticed that the deed of relegation to indigenous language has been done and probably cemented. The colonialism has succeeded in making the indigenous people foreigner in their own land because of majority's inability to communicate in their indigenous language of birth. This syndrome continues to be a chasm that requires attention among the indigenous people of Africa. First language (L1) has no relevance in peoples' education while Second Language (L2) has been approved as the only meal ticket if one must exist. L2 in educational institutions is the only means for communication and if one does not know how to speak and write it well the gate for opportunities to such an individual is closed for life. This promotion made to L2 also made L1 inconsequential no matter how well one is endowed in ability to speak or write it. The acceptance of L2 in totality created a vacuum that requires the Africa people to find lasting solution as many of these indigenous languages are fast going into extinction or oblivion. This research report therefore explored the notoriety attached to speaking and writing of indigenous language and how films that used indigenous language as means to communicate its plot served as veritable tool to revamp the loss.

The collection of data was achieved through observations, examination of both extant indigenous language films and literatures to arrive at the decision. This research article is looking at the role played by indigenous language films in propagating Nigerian languages and cultural heritage too. Tunde Kelani's indigenous language films are used as litmus test to unravel the development of African languages through films shun in local people's languages.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study was to discourage and educate people from approving the superimposition of foreign tongue over the language of the people through the employment of

indigenous language film as panacea to curb the derogation. In achieving this main objective, the study therefore was further guided to:

- i. examine the role of Yoruba indigenous language films in the development and preservation of the Yoruba language.
- ii. assess how indigenous language films contribute to the propagation of Yoruba cultural heritage.
- iii. evaluate Tunde Kelani's Mainframe films as a model for indigenous language promotion in Nigeria and beyond.
- iv. identify the advantages of promoting indigenous language films over foreign language films in Nigeria.
- v. make recommendations for the sustainable promotion of indigenous language films in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review of Indigenous Language Film

Film language is determined at times by the target audience for such a film. Indigenous language film can be classified as ethnographic film. These films come in form of documentary, epic stories, and features that are shot for indigenous people to communicate them in their language. Many films shun in local languages are well patronised by people at the grass-root because such films speak the language of the grass-root. Indigenous language film can be defined as forms of film's expression, conceptualised, produced and circulated by indigenous people, locally or internationally to serve as the vehicle for communication. It also includes cultural preservation, cultural and artistic expression, political self-determination, and cultural sovereignty. The meaning of indigenous language may look simple to comprehend from understanding of language in itself. It could further mean a language that originated in a specified geographical place and was not brought to that place from elsewhere. There are types like substrate or substratum language (that is language influenced by an intrusive language, which may or may not ultimately change it to become a new language), which is a type of language that contributes features to the language of the invading people who in effect impose or force their language on the indigenous or local population despite meeting them on ground with a language. Example of indigenous language is autochthonous (that is language of the local people rather than the language that descended from migrants or colonists), which is a language spoken by native people or a regional

language spoken by the indigenous people. Indigenous language may not be a national language but a language spoken by people and majority of indigenes of an area.

In Nigeria, there are major natives whose language considerable number of populations speak. There are over 500 indigenous languages in the country and more than 250 ethnic groups which made the country one the diverse nation in the world. However, these languages were classified into major 'big three' of Hausa-Fulani (North), Igbo (East), and Yoruba (West) languages (Udo, 2026). In breaking these Nigerian languages down, it is discovered that about 65-80 million people speak Hausa, Yoruba is spoken by about 47-54 Million people, Igbo speakers are about 39-42 million, others are combined speakers of Efik/Ibibio which are numbered about 15 million, Fulfude has about 13 million speakers while Kanuri and Tiv share 5 million each as part of Nigeria indigenous language speakers (Udo 2026, & Zeynep 2026). Apart from these major languages being spoken by millions in each of their categories, there are other minorities whose languages have been subsumed by the so-called major languages in Nigeria (Taiwo, 2020). All of these languages are combined together to form indigenous languages in Nigeria. Indigenous languages are languages that are native to a particular group of people and spoken by the indigenous people living in the locality (Mbaka 2020). Ifejola looks at the issue of language and dialect from another perspective when she says that languages are typically prestigious, official and written, whereas dialects are mostly spoken, unofficial and looked down upon (1). From the foregoing, it is believed that films made with indigenous languages speak to the majority of people and the content of the film affect and effect the behavior of the recipient viewers because, it must also have endeared and exposed them to probably new thing in their language.

Development and Benefits of Indigenous Language Films

Generally, film has been so tremendous to human existence because it contains information. This was proved when Harvey says that film has educated and entertain us nearly 120 years and, although a relative short timespan in the wider scheme of things, it has kept us informed through extraordinary periods of revolution, and reform, helped us sustain our morale through two world wars, tackled changes in social attitudes and perceptions throughout the twentieth century (8). This means that there is no way we chuff aside film in the development of human regeneration. The United Nation (UN) under the forum of United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) consistently draw people attentions to the threats against indigenous languages,

and has pushed for action to promote and protect these languages. UNPFII since 2003 recommended that governments should introduce the use of indigenous language in public schools, in administration and in territories where this is feasible. As a follow-up to this pronouncement, the UN in 2005 mandated that its country offices should make efforts to disseminate their activities in publication with indigenous languages. It goes further to say that this is necessary because at present, 96 per cent of the world's approximately 6, 700 languages are spoken by only 3 per cent of the world's population. Among these are the indigenous peoples that make up less six per cent of the global population which has been rated to be 8 billion (Gerrit 2026), and they speak more than 4,000 of the world's language.

The UN responded to the problem bedeviling indigenous language by setting up the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a focus on reviving the use of indigenous languages. In 2015 General Assembly. At this assembly, aims were set up to ensure equal access for indigenous people in all level of education and vocational training under the Sustainable Development Goals Target 4.5. It was specifically spelt out that the use of indigenous language in education and training must be strongly entrenched to meet the target by 2030. In response to this recommendation from the Permanent Forum in 2016, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Language. UNESCO led the campaign and drew spirited attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages. The campaign went ahead to spell out the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages at the national and international levels (UN Department of Public Information).

The international organisations were poised to the need of revamping the propagation of indigenous language. Harvard Library collated few activities in this direction to exhibit how they are concerned about the extinction of most indigenous languages. There are proofs for promotions of indigenous language film all over the world with the aim of giving identity and transmission of virile cultural heritage of people around the world. It served as language guide for those interested in finding resources on indigenous language in Europe and beyond. Different compilation fora where emphases were put on production of indigenous language film were collated by Harvard Library thus:

- i. *American Indian Film Gallery*: This is online collection of more than 450 films which were about Native Americans. This was hosted by the University of Arizona. The

- collection were dated from 1925 to 2010. The films paraded were in the categories of cultural practices, biographies, public presentation among others (Harvard Library, 2024).
- ii. *Ethnography Video Online, Indigenous Voice*: The films under this category were in documentaries, and shots made by and for indigenous people and communities (Harvard Library, 2024).
 - iii. *Kanopy*: This is a wide-ranging collection of classics, independent films and documentaries. It includes documentaries and movies centering on indigenous stories (Harvard Library, 2024).
 - iv. *Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival 2022 “Ingenuities”*: This festival proudly presented a season of global contemporary indigenous film and media art. The report adds that over the past decades, indigenous cinema has emerged from geographically-scattered centres to become part of a global-linked media network with increasing reach and transnational presence, therefore, ‘ingenuities’ explored how contemporary filmmakers and media artists leverage moving image forms to directly address the politics of identity and representation (Harvard Library, 2024).

The above arrangements at different fora have let out credence into how the world over are concerned about the extinction of the local (indigenous) languages. What stands dismay about the trends remained that, spirited moves to propagate local languages seem not to bother the speakers of these languages like bystanders or far observers. Are there advantages in shunning films in indigenous language then?

Advantages of Indigenous Language Film

The speakers of local or indigenous languages often enjoy hearing information in their language because that is what they are used to. Hearing information directly from indigenous language benefits them so much because, they can understand the content without an employment of an interpreter who may not capture the detail in full. Indigenous language films have several advantages that contributed to the development and preservation of local languages and people’s culture. Some of these advantages include:

- i. *Language Preservation:* indigenous language films help to document and preserve local languages, which are often at risk of disappearing. The Yoruba language vocabularies and jargons for example are restored into circulation most especially for the upcoming generation among the speakers of the language through films produced in the language.
- ii. *Cultural Promotion:* These indigenous language films in Yoruba promote cultural heritage and traditional practices, raising awareness and appreciation for indigenous cultures.
- iii. *Language Learning:* Watching films in local or indigenous languages, for example in Yoruba can help people learn and improve their language skills.
- iv. *Community Engagement:* Indigenous language films often involve local communities in the production process, fostering community engagement and ownership.
- v. *Economic Benefits:* Indigenous language films can generate income and create job opportunities for local communities.
- vi. *Representation and Diversity:* these films provide a platform for underrepresented voices, offering diverse perspective and tell their story that nobody want to tell.
- vii. *Cultural Exchange:* These films produced in Yoruba can facilitate cross-cultural understanding and exchange, promoting global cultural diversity.
- viii. *Education and Research:* These films shunned with indigenous Yoruba language can enhance the education people have about a particular group of people and in turn serve as valuable resource material for research engagements most especially for linguistic and cultural researchers, as well as instructional material for educators in different field of humanities.
- ix. *Empowerment and Pride:* When people from indigenous setting see their language and culture represented on screen, this can empower them and instill pride of their heritage in them. This can also serve as pride for them to be identified within the comity of nations.
- x. *Digital Archiving:* Indigenous language films can be archived or preserved digitally, ensuring long-term retrieval or accessibility and protection of cultural heritage. Several films produced in Yoruba language can be found in this category and many scholars have been retrieving such to boost knowledge acquisition.

By supporting indigenous language films, it is possible for individual to contribute to the preservation or archiving and development of local language and cultures. In addition, collectively everyone can contribute to the promotion of linguistic diversity and propagate the richness of cultural endowment found with local people which remain untapped because of little or no secular education and barrier of channel among the rural people. Despite all these listed good things that are derivable from promoting indigenous language films, does promoting foreign language over indigenous language has any devastating effect? The simple is YES, however, further discussion of this research work surely exposed ineptitude of endorsing foreign language through the theory of humanistic regeneration.

Humanistic Regeneration Theory and Application

The effect of foreign language on the development of local African language requires riot act to revamp or regenerate. For this reason, we want to recall what was termed as *Humanistic Regeneration* theory as the smartest move to get this effected. Humanistic Regeneration theory is a process of bringing back a jaundiced ideal, having allowed a system to be affected by different factors that truncated its successful goal. Regeneration in this context therefore means, the process of replacing or restoring damaged process to its full function. Like living things that regenerate after a noticeable damage done on the process of growth, so also a process can regenerate when the damaged process is identified and a revamping concept is created. Though there is regeneration theory in science, however, the originator of this theory used the same concept to form a Humanistic Regeneration Theory. Humanistic Regeneration is a theory propounded by Idowu Olatunji (2024). It is the theory of redefining, rejuvenating, readdressing and revamping a damaged and decaying process. A process is like human body that keep growing until it reaches a degeneration point. It's often referred to as aging, however when elixir is applied to aging process in human, it rejuvenates the ongoing collapsed body system. When a humanistic system is as well bastardized or experiencing a collapse, it can go through regeneration through the use of a process like elixir in medical parlance. The regeneration elixir in humanity is identifying the problem and find a humanistic solution to it. Humanistic problems fester when scientific solutions is used because humanistic problems should be humanistically resolved. Humanistic Regeneration theory recommends a process that looks like a substance, usually a liquid, with a magical power to cure, improve, or preserve something. This theory is to see to how some extinct or obsolete cultural

assimilation can be brought back, improved, and preserved through the process of regeneration. This includes the creation of a procedural concept that reeducates, which forms a conduit for revamping, reengaging, and rejigging of a jaundiced humanistic process.

Language is one of the humanistic area that promotes social coexistence. The process of language learning is through constant speaking and when it is frequently or regularly spoken, it develops. Many foreign languages go through developmental process because they are attached to commerce, education, technology, and art. Family therefore, plays an important role in humanity and language regeneration. The society is formed from conglomeration of different families which at times may be endowed to speak different languages. Ronald argues that ‘many social functions of the family have eroded, but society has not yet come up with a satisfactory substitute for the psychological role of the family in providing love, self-esteem, and socialization’ (328). This argument drives home the importance of family in the development process of social segment which language is part. Relying also on teachers to develop many humanistic social functions may result to an aberration of process and practice. Despite playing important roles in language development, Ronald goes further to say ‘they (teachers) cannot provide the intense love and individual attention over a lifetime that parents usually give a child. New concepts are easily learnt through enough devolvment of love which is peculiar to family’ (328). Many functions are left for the teachers to effect in the society, however, teachers are those with legal responsibility to take on some of the functions and responsibility of a parents which make teachers to be referred to as *loco parentis*. This is taken from English Common Law in which educational institution are granted to act in the best interest of a learner as the institution deem fit. The second part of this law still grant a non-biological parent to exercise the legal rights and responsibilities of a biological parent if they have held themselves out as parent (Rosen-Molina, 1). It is therefore clear that educational institutions and society by law are legally right to act in inculcating the expectations in a situation where parents are lagging. In the context of Humanistic Regeneration Theory, it applies to redefining the concept for local language learning as it is now a herculean task in nature, because the infiltration of foreign languages are poised to extinct the indigenous forms of expression. Revamping it has to start from homes. It must be encouraged in schools and this theory helps to tread the revamping process with little stress of speaking it for children to learn it easily. This only requires commitment on the part of parents, teachers, entire society, and community leaders to promote its reemergence and regeneration.

Research Methods

This study adopts a qualitative research design. The choice of qualitative methodology is informed by the nature of the research questions, which are concerned with the cultural meanings, language functions, and social effects embedded in indigenous language films. The study relied on two main sources of data: primary and secondary.

Primary data were collected through systematic observation and content analysis of selected Yoruba indigenous language films and texts, with particular focus on the works of Tunde Kelani. The film *Magun* (Thunderbolt, 2001) was purposively selected as the central case study on account of its cultural significance, its exclusive use of the Yoruba language, and the widely acknowledged impact on Nigerian films and Yoruba cultural discourse. The films were viewed and examined for their deployment of Yoruba vocabulary, idioms, proverbs, cultural practices, and values, as well as their overall contribution to language preservation and cultural propagation.

Secondary data were sourced from existing academic literature, comprising books, journal articles, and online resources on indigenous language, film studies, and cultural preservation. These sources were critically reviewed to provide both a theoretical foundation and a comparative context for interpreting the primary findings. The Humanistic Regeneration Theory, propounded by Idowu Olatunji, served as the overarching theoretical framework for analysing and interpreting the data collected.

The data gathered from both primary and secondary sources were analysed using content analysis as instrument. Recurring contents relating to language development, cultural preservation, and the social and economic impact of indigenous language film production were identified and organised as credence for the findings. Findings are presented descriptively, with supporting evidence drawn from the films examined and corroborated by the reviewed literature.

Effect of Foreign Language Films on Indigenous Language

Lingua franca, or dominant language is the language agreed upon as means of communication among the people with diverse languages or with different language groups. It could also be said to mean a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native language are different. The research found that there are several disadvantages for indigenous language and cultural aspirations of the indigenous people when their indigenous

languages are not prioritised. The followings are possible after effect of promoting foreign language over the indigenous one:

- i. *Language Suppression:* The dominance of foreign language film can lead to the suppression of indigenous language, as people may end up prioritising learning the dominant film language for economic or social advancement.
- ii. *Cultural Erasure:* The widespread of foreign language films can contribute to erasure of indigenous cultural identities, as traditional languages and cultural practices are propagated and replaced with the culture of the dominant language culture.
- iii. *Loss of Linguistic Diversity:* The promotion of foreign language as lingua franca in locally produced films can lead to the decline or extinction of indigenous languages, resulting in a loss of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage.
- iv. *Cultural Homogenisation:* Foreign films can contribute to cultural homogenisation, similarity or uniformity as foreign dominant cultures and languages spread at the expenses of indigenous language films like wild fire.
- v. *Power Dynamics:* The imposition of a lingua franca and the use of it for the promotion of traditional films can perpetuate power imbalance. With dominant language speakers holding more power and influence over indigenous communities.

The disadvantages highlighted above shed light on the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous languages and cultures, and recognizing the value of linguistic diversity in a globalised world. Tunde Kelani is a foremost filmmaker who has been known for championing filmmaking in indigenous language, precisely Yoruba. He once said in an interview on a national television that there are some condiment, vocabulary, jargons, expression of cultural details, and situations that cannot be properly expressed with foreign language rather than the language of the people that owns the culture (Kelani on AIT, 2013).

For instance, in Tunde Kelani's film titled *Magun* and translated "Thunder Bolt" in English, he entrenched the culture in which Yoruba indigenous people frowned at promiscuity among the married women. This film was shunned out in 2001 and was directed by Tunde Kelani. Lacing of *magun* on a woman suspected to be having extra-marital affair is one of the check mechanism in doubt among the western medical practitioners. The film emphatically created a verisimilitude of the cultural belief about *Magun* (Thunderbolt) that some people doubt so much.

The film was able to achieve cultural preservation and showcase Yoruba culture, tradition, and mythology. It engenders social commentary by exploring love as a theme that eschewed betrayal and redemption. The film was entertaining because it engaged the audiences with a compelling narrative in people's indigenous language with stunning visuals. It was educative when it highlighted the consequences of disobedience and the importance of tradition. *Magun* (Thunderbolt) film told the story of a young woman (Ngozi) who defies her family's wishes to marry outside their race, leading to a series of tragic events.

Watching this film, viewers eventually can appreciate Yoruba culture, language, and heritage. The film reflected on the importance of tradition and family values while it though created an atmosphere of enjoyment as the story remained captivating all through with memorable characters. Mainframe Films' objective is to produce high-quality culturally relevant content that resonates with Nigerian and international audiences. *Magun* (Thunderbolt) film significantly contributed to the development of Yoruba people's culture and language in several ways. The film showcased Yoruba mythological beliefs, specifically the concepts of *Magun*. It preserved traditional practices which Yoruba customs, rituals, and ceremonies depict. It went further to highlight cultural values by emphasising the importance of cultural reverence among the people no matter their affiliation. The film promoted Yoruba language usage and relevance as it was produced in Yoruba language. It served as means for language documentation and helped in preserving Yoruba language through film, making it accessible to future generations. The film ensured linguistic accuracy by ensuring authenticity by using correct Yoruba dialect and expressions. Through the film the younger generations are encouraged to explore their cultural roots as it revived interest in Yoruba heritage. In the process, the film fostered cultural heritage, linguistic pride of Yoruba traditions and values. The content provided immense cultural education through dissemination Yoruba historical, mythological, and customary accounts dramatically.

Apart from the cultural and language development, the film also had economic impact on the Yoruba people. It empowered local artists through creating opportunities for Yoruba actors, writers, and filmmakers to follow the same trend. It boosted local economy of the people by generating revenue through film production and distribution. It as well promoted cultural tourism as it showcased Yoruba culture to attract interest from global populace. The film did not fail to address social issues among the Yoruba people such as family conflicts and social responsibility.

It encouraged discussions and reflections on Yoruba values and traditions through fostering community engagement. It bridged generational gaps by connecting older and younger generations through shared cultural heritage. To sum it up, *Magun* (Thunderbolt) films' is committed to cultural documentation, language preservation, community empowerment, and artistic expression.

Tunde Kelani as a renowned Nigerian filmmaker, who continues to inspire and educate audiences about Yoruba culture and language. He expressed several reasons for preferring to produce cultural films in indigenous languages instead of English because of the following inexhaustible reasons:

- vi. *Cultural Authenticity*: He believes that using indigenous languages preserve cultural authenticity and ensure that the stories are told in their original form in Yoruba, without compromise.
- vii. *Connection with the Audience*: Kelani wants to connect with his primary audience, the Yoruba people, in their own language, to evoke emotions and create a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage.
- viii. *Language Preservation*: By using indigenous language, he aims to contribute to their preservation and promotion, counteracting the decline of indigenous language use among younger generations.
- ix. *Cultural Pride*: Producing films in indigenous Yoruba language instill cultural pride and ownership among the community, celebrating their unique identity.
- x. *Distinctive Storytelling*: He is of the opinion that indigenous language films offer a distinctive storytelling style, rich in idioms, proverbs, and nuances, which enrich the cinematic experience.
- xi. *Local Resonance*: Films in indigenous languages resonate more with local audiences, making the stories more relatable and impactful.
- xii. *Resistance to Foreign Cultural Assimilation*: By promoting indigenous language films, he resists cultural assimilation and the dominance of English or other foreign languages.

From the foregoing reasons, Tunde Kelani's commitment to producing cultural films in indigenous Yoruba language ensures the preservation and celebration of one of the Nigeria's rich cultural

diversity which Yoruba tribes carry the fair share of its dissemination. Corroborating this, Adeoye says that ‘all creative means of communication that appeal to the visual and auditory senses are regarded as art (for which performing art is a part). The appreciation of art as a critical language has little or no requirement for Western literacy or conventional formality’ (19). This implies that the aim of artistic productions are meant to communicate the intent of the content with an uncompromising understanding by avoiding the use of any foreign translatable language that seem confused to indigenous people. From all indications, it is believed that if achievement in propagation of indigenous language is to be felt, the production of indigenous language films should be encouraged in disseminating and communicating African cultural heritage. This keeps the content intact, original, devoid of bastardisation, and adulterations.

Yoruba language films have successfully preserved the peoples’ culture, revitalize the language use, diversely representative, communal people empowerment, peoples’ economic viability, cultural exchange and understanding. Local language films like Yoruba films allow for educational research in the areas of culture and linguistic, artistic expression and creativity. By promoting indigenous language films, we can celebrate cultural diversity, support language preservation, and empower indigenous communities to share their stories and perspective with the world.

Research Findings

The analysis of Yoruba indigenous language films, particularly the works of Tunde Kelani, produced the following findings:

1: Indigenous Language Films Preserve and Circulate the Yoruba Language

The study found that films produced in Yoruba actively document and circulate authentic language features that are at risk of disappearing from everyday use. These include proverbs, idiomatic expressions, dialect-specific vocabulary, and cultural terminology that carry layers of meaning unique to the Yoruba worldview. In Magun (Thunderbolt, 2001), the language used is not simplified or anglicised for external audiences but is authentic to the cultural context being depicted. This makes the film function not only as entertainment but as a living linguistic record accessible to audiences who would never engage with formal language documentation.

2: Yoruba Films Effectively Transmit Cultural Values across Generations

The study found that indigenous language films transmit cultural values, beliefs, and practices in a manner that formal education rarely achieves, because they communicate through narrative and emotional experience rather than through prescription or instruction. Magun demonstrates this clearly: the cultural logic of the practice it depicts is communicated not by explanation but through lived dramatic consequence. Viewers come away from the film with an understanding of Yoruba cultural values that is experiential rather than merely informational, making the message more durable and more meaningful.

3: Tunde Kelani's Filmmaking Reflects a Deliberate Language Advocacy Strategy

The study found that Kelani's preference for producing films in the Yoruba language is not incidental but is grounded in a clear and consistent philosophy of cultural and linguistic advocacy. His stated reasons, including cultural authenticity, community connection, language preservation, cultural pride, and resistance to foreign cultural assimilation, are consistently enacted across his body of work. This deliberate stance distinguishes his filmmaking from that of producers who may use indigenous language for convenience or local market appeal, and it has produced films that make the Yoruba language feel alive, relevant, and artistically desirable.

4: Indigenous Language Films Generate Social and Economic Benefits

Beyond their cultural and linguistic value, the study found that Yoruba-language films generate tangible social and economic benefits. Kelani's productions have created employment for Yoruba actors, writers, and production crew; generated revenue through film distribution; facilitated community dialogue on social issues such as marital fidelity and family responsibility; bridged generational gaps through shared cultural references; and attracted interest from international audiences, thereby promoting Yoruba cultural heritage globally.

5: Institutional Support for Indigenous Language Films Remains Inadequate

The study found that despite the demonstrated value of indigenous language filmmaking, the broader institutional environment offers little structural support. Government funding for indigenous language film production is minimal, broadcasting policies do not mandate indigenous language content, and distribution networks continue to favour foreign-language productions. The

contributions of filmmakers like Kelani have been achieved largely through personal commitment rather than institutional backing, pointing to the need for systemic policy intervention if indigenous language cinema is to fulfil its potential as a tool for language development and cultural preservation.

Implication of Research Findings

The findings of this study confirm what the existing literature has long argued, that indigenous language films are not peripheral cultural products but central institutions in the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage. What this study adds is a focused account of how that function is performed in practice, through the deliberate choices of filmmakers, the linguistic content of their work, and the cultural and social effects those films produce among their audiences. The finding that Yoruba-language films preserve and circulate authentic linguistic features connects directly with the positions of Anyanwu (2006) and Cook (2010), who respectively argue that without language there is no society, and that language is the lifeblood of every community. Every Yoruba film that documents and disseminates the authentic use of proverbs, idiomatic expressions, and culturally specific vocabulary is, in a concrete way, extending the life of the language and making it available to those who might otherwise never encounter it in its full richness.

The finding regarding the effectiveness of film in transmitting cultural values across generations supports the Humanistic Regeneration Theory's central claim that damaged cultural systems can be deliberately revived through creative and communal intervention. Kelani's sustained career of Yoruba-language filmmaking is, in the theory's terms, an extended act of regeneration: he has identified a damaged process, the erosion of Yoruba language and culture under colonial and postcolonial pressure, and has applied the theory's recommended elixir in the form of culturally committed, linguistically authentic filmmaking.

The finding that Kelani's work reflects a deliberate language advocacy strategy resonates with Adeoye's (2021) argument that the arts carry a critical communicative function that transcends formal literacy. Kelani has understood that the choice of language in filmmaking is not a neutral technical decision but a cultural and political act, and his consistency on this point over several decades represents precisely the kind of sustained human agency that the Humanistic Regeneration Theory recommends.

The finding that institutional support remains inadequate points to the limits of individual agency and calls for the systemic intervention that scholars like Mbaka (2020) and international bodies like UNPFII have advocated. Personal commitment from individual filmmakers is necessary but not sufficient. Language regeneration at the scale required demands policy change, institutional investment, and a broader cultural shift in how Nigerian society values its indigenous linguistic heritage. This study contributes to that conversation by establishing Kelani's filmography as a model of what is possible when creative commitment is sustained over the time, and by identifying the structural conditions that would allow that model to be replicated and scaled.

Recommendations

Indigenous films are contingent to the development of local peoples' languages and cultural heritage. There is need for all hands to come together to promote and develop indigenous language so that such languages can develop the local people to compete at par with their contemporaries with similar local language. Government should provide funding, grants, and tax incentives for indigenous language film production. There is need for the establishment of festivals dedicated to indigenous language films, promoting cultural exchange and recognition. Language preservation programmes should be initiated to document, preserve, and teach indigenous languages. Shunning films in indigenous language offer education and proper cultural training and this can be promoted through workshops, scholarship, and training programmes for indigenous filmmaking. It as well promotes collaboration among artistes during productions, enhances distribution, marketing, community engagement, language comparison and propagation of both language and cultural heritage because of the online presence. The recommendations can be itemised into:

- i. Government at federal and state levels should establish dedicated funding, grants, and tax incentive schemes for indigenous language film.
- ii. Broadcasting policy should include a provision mandating a minimum percentage of broadcast dramatic sessions in Nigerian indigenous languages.
- iii. Indigenous language films should be formally incorporated into school curricula at levels.
- iv. Cultural institutions and government agencies should establish film festivals dedicated specifically to films in indigenous languages

- v. Universities, cultural institutions, and filmmakers should collaborate on language documentation programmes to archive indigenous language expressions, proverbs, and idioms used in film.
- vi. Workshops, scholarships, and mentorship programmes should be established to train the next generation of indigenous language filmmakers.
- vii. Community-level awareness campaigns should be launched to encourage parents, religious institutions, and community organisations to prioritise the use of indigenous languages with children.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the use of indigenous language among the people of Nigeria requires attention because western education has made locally spoken language irrelevant to the people. This as well has been infused into different leaders in Nigeria and the most pathetic aspect of the situation is that teachers have been made to champion the local language relegation. The language of the local people therefore has been conspicuously pushed to the background through promotion of foreign language in disseminating education and cultural heritage rendition. Some Nigerians prioritise the indigenous language and freely speak it with their people. This research paper found that majority of Yoruba people have replaced communicating with their indigenous language with foreign ones and even compelled the upcoming generations to do so. This trend has signaled the extinction of many Nigerian indigenous languages because people have fanatically stuck to the use of foreign language and even shun indigenous language films to the detriment of the local language.

Indigenous language films seem to be the antidote to the extinction of local language menace. Many Yoruba language films have promoted the propagation of the language as Yoruba filmmakers continue to shun film in the local language for the patronage of their fans in attempts to establish the language and culture. Notable among the Yoruba filmmakers is Tunde Kelani. He is an astute filmmaker, who made and continue to make efforts to put the language on an honourable pedestal as most of his films are shun in Yoruba language. His films especially have helped many to use the language, understand many of its jargons, and grammar more often than not. This same syndrome has become noticeable among other indigenous language speakers and filmmakers from other language extractions in Nigeria. The war to propagate Nigerian languages

and African languages at large is the right steps and concern for everyone who endears promoting indigenous cultural and language heritage.

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Filmography

Director: Tunde Kelani. *Magun (Thunderbolt)*. Produced by Mainframe Films and Television Production. Starring: Femi Kayode, Lanre Balogun, Uche Osotule, Ngozi Nwosu, Bukky Ajayi, Larinde Akinleye, Wale Macaulay, Adebayo Faleti, Yemi Solade. 2001.