The Tripartite Analysis of God-Based names in Ibibio

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Annotation: these paper-focuses on the tripartite analysis of God-based names in Ibibio in terms of morphological, syntactic and semantic features. The aim of this discourse is to highlight a subclass of personal names in Ibibio that transcend cultural, circumstantial, traditional and spiritual barriers. These Abasi (God) based names reflect how God manifest himself to his people in manifold facets. The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is eclectic in nature comprising principle and parameter theory (PPT) as well as the mentalist theory of meanings (MTM). The data for this study were collected from SS (1-3) students with God-based name in eight secondary schools randomly selected in Uyo and Ibesikpo Asutan Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State. An application of PPT on the data reveals a compounding characteristic of ordered constituents. Besides, these God-based names, as compounds, can be classified into phrases and sentences thereby corroborating the claim that Ibibio is an agglutinating language. Furthermore, the analysis shows that any interchange of the positions or reversal of the constituents in the compounding process may lead to semantic voidness or object change in meanings. In addition, the application of MTM on the data elicits a mental picture of the meanings of specific God-based names in terms of feelings, emotions and belief system in the mind of interlocutors. In conclusion, the findings countersign the belief of an average Ibibio man that there is a strong relationship between Abasi (God) as the creator and man as his creature.

Keywords: Tripartite Analysis, God-Based Names and Ibibio

1.0 Introduction

This paper focuses on the tripartite structural analysis of God-based names in Ibibio with respect to morphological, syntactic and semantic features. The findings will enhance the growth of Ibibio language which is still in its embryonic state and also serve as a resource material for researcher as well as other stakeholders. God-based names constitute a subclass of personal name that is rooted in religious, not necessarily restricted to Christian belief. For instance Mbat-Idiong (dirt soothsaying) is rooted in soothsaying deity while Atakpo is premised in a deity found around Uruan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. In view of the fact that names based on these lesseer gods (deities) are deemed to be satanic and are rapidly skewing toward extinction depending on the family religious inclination, this paper is constrained to discuss only Abasi (Christian God) based names. These based names reflect how Abasi (Supreme God) manifests himself to his people in manifold facets.

1.1 Literature Review

Several researches have been carried out in the area of Nigerian names. Although a lot of literature exists on nominal and personal names in Ibibio, there is little or no publication on Abasi (God)

based names. The non-existence of relevant literature on Abasi (God) based name is premised on the fact that in the past decades, before the aggressive incursion of Christianity based. Invariably, this was in line with common naming practice in many Nigerian communities.

Notably, Essien (1986) under the caption of Ibibio names, made references to religious names based on cultural belief and deities worship practices. Also, Ogie (2002) studied Edo personal names and asserts that they are used to affirm certain aspect of Edo culture. Besides, Agyekeen (2006) investigated Akan personal names and their typology within the perspective of linguistics and anthropology. The findings confirm the notion that personal names reflect important aspects of the culture of the societies. In addition, Isa (2013) construed that naming is a specific Linguistics Arts which is intimately linked with values, traditions, hope, fears of events in the life of the people. Furthermore, Alzumor (2009) avers that the Yoruba people chose names based on their beliefs that such names mirror circumstance and reflect connection with household as well as generational traits.

2.0 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is primarily eclectic in nature comprising principle and parameter theory (PPT) as well as Mentalist theory of Meanings (MTM). This choice is informed by the fact that PPT admits the alignment of morphology and syntax of any local language with the universal principles without any loss of distinctive parameters of God-based names in Ibibio. Whereas mentalist theory is a filtration hypothesis which is in line with the model of Referential theory proposed by Gliuckberg and Danks (1975). Specifically in this paper, MTM views the meaning of any word based name in terms of the feelings, emotions, belief system and mental pictures conjured in the minds of interlocutors.

3.0 Methodology

The data for this paper were collected from eight (8) secondary schools randomly selected from Uyo and Ibesikpo Asutan Government Areas. The researcher solicited the assistance of twenty four (24) classroom teachers in SSS (1-3); three (3) from each school who administered the following questions to all the students with God-based names in SSS 1-3.

a. Why did your parents call you? ....

b. What is the meaning of your name?

c. Do your names influence your behaviour?

As a native speaker of the speech form in discourse, the data so collected were categorized into two files, namely those whose meaning were obvious and those whose meanings were only discernable when they form constituents of either noun or prepositional phrases in any given construction. Since elders are adjudged to be custodian of any growing language the semantics of the data so categorized were presented to two elderly Christian religious pastors for authentication.

4.0 Discussion and Result

In this paper, God-based names are categorized into different sub modules. These are the sovereignty, testimonies, circumstantial, praise/goodnews/thanksgiving, covenant, hope/help/virtue, might/power/greatness, question answering, Advisory/instructional as well as miraculous. These can further be explained through the following representation.

1. Sovereignty Names

In Ibibio, sovereignty names are given to children at birth based on the parent's belief of God's (Abasi) rulership over potential diverse and contrasting competing dark focuses. The following examples depict the supremacy of God in conformity with the prevalent religious belief.

(i)   Ukaraabasi 'The rulership of God'

(ii)   Abasiakara 'God is the controller'

(iii)   Iniubong-Abasi 'The time of God's glory'

(iv)   Abasiubong 'God's of glory'

(v)   Ubongabsai 'God's glory'

(vi)   Nkponikan-Abasi 'God that is greater than all'

(vii) Abasiadoakan 'God is the winner'

2. Testimony Names

Testimony names are usually given to children at birth in demonstration of public declaration of some innate experiences prior to the time of birth. For examples:

(i)   Ufonabasi 'Goodness of God'

(ii)   Abasiofon 'God is good'

(iii)   Abasiono 'God gives'

(iv)   Abasiokopakam 'God hears prayer'

(v)   Abasi-iboro 'God that answers'

(vi)   Ekemudeme-Abasi 'God that is sufficient'

(vii) Iboro-Abasi 'the answer of God'

3. Circumstantial Names

Circumstantial names are specifically given to children with inherent quality or characteristics of particular event(s) antecedent or a prior to the time of birth. Examples are:

(i) Ataima-Abasi 'real love of God'

(ii) Mikpidohoabasi 'if not God'

(iii)Abasianie 'God is the owner'

(iv)Abasiobook 'God nurtures'

(v) Abasiandino 'God the giver'

(vi)Ubokabasi 'the hand God'

4. Praise/Thanksgiving Names

Praise/Goodnews and thanksgiving names are assigned to children in recognition of God's miraculous action. These names include among others:

(i)   Etoroabasi 'Praise God'

(ii)   Abasiodotitoro 'God is worthy of praise'

(iii)   Nyatoroabasi 'I will praise God'

(iv)   Uyaiabasi 'beautiful God'

(v)   Ekponoabasi 'honour God'

(vi)   Ekomobong 'thank God'

5. Covenant Names

Covenant names in Ibibio are depicts God's promise of blessings to be fulfilled subject to the performance of certain laid down conditions. Sometimes it can be agreements between God the parents of the new born children. Besides, these names are given in conformity with a free conscience to redeem a vow or a pledge entered into by parent prior to the time of birth.

(i)   Enwono-Abasi 'promise of God'

(ii)   Ndikponke-Abasi 'I will not leave God'

(iii) Ndaye-Abasi 'I stand with God'

(iv)   Ndiana ye Abasi 'I attach to God'

(v)   Ediomoabasi 'God's covenant

(vi)   Abasi-idikponke 'God will not bandom'

6. Hope/Help/Virtue

Names in this subsection are normally given to children at birth in the hope and belief that God would engrace the recipients to manifest their full semantic (Import) meanings. These names sometimes reflect Plato's, quadruple virtue of justice, temperance, prudence and fortitude or the tripartite theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The following examples justify the belief system.

(i) Nkese-Abasi 'I hope on God'

(ii) Nkebet-Abasi 'I waited for God'

(iii)Unwam-Abasi 'God's help'

7. Might/Power/Greatness

Parents, especially those with strong Christian religious inclinations call their children such names that portray the might as well as the absolute power and greatness of God. Again, this sometimes occurs without prejudice to cultural or lineological heritage of the family. For examples:

(i) Abasi-odu 'God is in existence'

God exist

(ii) Oduduabasi 'the power of God'

 Power God

(iii)Akamba-Abasi 'Great God'

 Great God

(iv)Abasi-amakan 'God has conquered

 God conquered

(v) Abasiakan

 God is winner

(vi) Obot-Abasi 'God's creation

Creation God

(vii) Ukeme-Abasi 'Ability of God'

Ability God

8. Miraculous Names

In this class, names are assigned to children when the circumstances surrounding the child's birth are beyond human comprehension. The meanings of these examples clearly authenticate the claims that these births were affected by obvious and direct divine agencies. Examples are;

(i) Utibe-Abasi 'wonderful God'

(ii) Idionogo-Abasi 'the sign of God'

(iii) Abasi-Idiono 'God of sign'

(iv) Nyoo-Abasi 'miraculous God'

9. Advisory/Instructional

The meaning of names in this category is always instruction with inert ability to advice through the medium of educational information. Examples are:

(i) Ekusin-Abasi 'do not reject God'

(ii) Kubiat-Abasi 'do not condemn God

(iii) Kusin-Abasi do not reject God

(iv) Kufre-Abasi do not forget God'

(v) Kupong-Abasi 'do not leave God'

The formation of God based names in Ibibio is subject to the same standard rules of compounding in linguistics theory. It is pertinent to recall the fact that compounding is a morphological process whereby two or more morphemes are conjoined to create a new word. In view of the fact that God-based names, which can be expressed with or without a hyphen conform to compounding principle, we are therefore justified to consider them as combination of different lexical categories like noun + noun, adjective + noun, noun + noun, noun, adjective + noun + noun, verb + noun.

1. Noun + Noun: God-based name

God-based names in this class are obtained by combining Abasi (God) with any other suitable morpheme. These God-based names are capable of independent existence. For example:

	N	+	N		Derivation
(a)	Abasi	+	Ima		Abasiama
	God	+	love		God of love
(b)	Awo	+	Abasi		Awoabasi
	God	+	love		Man of God
(c)	Ubok	+	Abasi		Ubokabasi
	Hand	+	God		Hand of God
(d)	Abasi	+	Ubong		Abasiubong

	God	+	glory	God of glory
(e)	Abasi	+	unwana	Abasiunwana
	God	+	light	God of light
(f)	Mfon	+	Abasi	Abasiunwana
	Grace	+	God	God of light

(2) Noun + Noun + Noun

This constitute another class of Ibibio Abasi (God) based names structure which admits a combination of three nouns (free morphemes) in its formation. For examples:

	Noun	+	Noun	+	Noun	Derivation
(a)	Eno	+	Ima	+	Abasi	Enoima Abasi
Gift	+	love	+	God		God's gift of love
(b)	Abasi	+	Iboro	+	Akam	Abasi-iboroakam
God	+	answer	+	prayer		answered prayer God
(c)	Abasi	+	Akpan	+	Iko	Abasi-akpaniko
God	+	true	+	word		truthful God

(3) Adjectives + Noun

This set of Ibibio based names is a compound word whose actualization pivots around a combination of an adjective and a noun, where Abasi is the posthead.

	Adjective	+	Noun	Derivation
(a)	Ata	+	Abasi	Real God
Real			God	
(b)	Utibe	+	Abasi	Wonderful God
Wonderful			God	
(c)	Akwa	+	Abasi	Great God
Great			God	

(4) Adjective + Noun + Noun

This module is realized by combining adjective and any two suitable nouns out of which one of necessity be Abasi. For example;

	Adjective	+	Noun	+	Noun	Derivation
(a)	Utibe	+	Ima	+	Abasi +	Utibeima Abasi
Wonderful		love	+	God	+	Wonderful love of God
(b)	Uwak	+	Mfon	+	Abasi +	Uwakmfon-Abasi
Many	+	Grace	+	God	+	Abundant grace of God
(c)	Ata	+	Ifiok	+	Abasi +	Ataifiok-Abasi
Real		Knowledge	+	God	+	Real of God wisdom

(d)   Ata   +   ima   +   Abasi +   Ataima-Abasi

Real   +   love   +   God   +   Real love of God

(5) Verb + Noun

This unit is simply a conflation of Abasi with a dynamic verb. For examples

	Verb	+	Noun	Derivation
(a)	Etoro	+	Abasi	Etoro-Abasi

Praise   +   God   Praise God

(b)	Nkese	+	Abasi	Nkese-Abasi
	Looking	+	God	I was looking unto God
(c)	Mmnenie	+	Abasi	Mmenie-Abasi

I have   +   God   I have God

(d)	Ekom	+	Abasi	Ataima-Abasi

Thank   +   God   Thank God

(e)	Etnghe	+	Abasi	Etenge-Abasi

Fear   +   God   Fear God

(f)	Kubiat	+	Abasi	Ataima-Abasi

Don't condemn   God   Don't conderm God

This class also admits Abasi as the posthead.

The Morphological Structure of God-Based Names in Ibibio

The morphological structure of God-based names is simply, the orderly arrangement of elements in places. God-based name in Ibibio can be written as one word with or without a hyphen. This structure is a combination of different lexical categories like noun plus noun, adjectives plus noun, noun plus noun plus noun, noun plus adjective. Verb plus noun and some aspects of theses issues shall be discussed in detail.

Conflation of God-Based in Ibibio

The formation of God-based name in Ibibio may be a conflation of two or three lexical morphemes. This conflation may be morphologically simple words or morphologically complex words.

Conflation of simple words

Majority of God-based names in Ibibio are free morphemes. By free morphemes, we mean those morphemes that can stand alone yet constitute a meaningful unit. In Ibibio free morphemes constitute independent words. For example Abasi, Ubong, Ima, Inyene, Mfon, Akwa, Ifiok. Single words as the ones listed above are the smallest free morphemes which are capable of independent existence. When joined together, they form compound words (God-based names) as follows;

Uko-Abasi   'Brave God'

Ata-Abasi   'Real God'

Akwaaodudu-Abasi   Great Power of God'

Ubong + Abasi   'God's glory'

Ubok + Abasi   'Hand of God'

Each of these examples has a definite semantic meaning where Abasi is the post-head.

Lexical Morphemes plus Complex Words

This is a combination of lexical morphemes and complex words. The following examples illustrate lexical morphemes plus complex word derivation:

Lexical   +   Complex words

Abasi (God)   +   Ama (loves)   A –   ma   'it is God who loves'.

$3^{rd\,p}$ sgl love

Abasi (God)   +   Ofon (Good)   O –   fon   'God is good'.

$3^{rd\,p}$ sgl good

Abasi (God)   + Ibianake (does not deceive)   I-   bianke 'God does not deceive'.

$3^{rd\,p}$ sgl not deceive

Abasi (God)   +   Odion (bless) O -   diong   'God bless'.

$3^{rd\,p}$ sgl bless

In these examples, specific meanings are obtained where Abasi in the pre-head.

Complex Morphemes plus Lexical Morphemes

Complex Morphemes. The examples are depicted below;

(i)   Eteghe   -   Abasi

 Fear   -   God

(ii)   Ekubiat   -   Abasi

         Don't condemn   -   God

(iii)   Ekpono   -   Abasi

         Honour   -   God

(iv)   Mnikpidoho   -   Abasi

         If not   -   God

It in pertinent to remark that at the morphological level. Any reversal of the position of Abasi leads to symantic voidness of the God-based names.

Syntactic Analysis of Ibibio God Based Names

God based names in Ibibio also fall into syntactic categories: vis-à-vis phrases, clauses and sentences.

A Noun phrase: Within the phrasal category we have noun phrases like

a) Ima Abasi

b) Ubong Abasi

c) Unwana Abasi

Whereas Ima specifies the nature of love, ubong on the otherhand specifies the source of the glory which is God. Uwana refers to the light of God which is not terrestrial in nature.

B Adjective Phrases: This class illustrates phrases in which adjective constitute the head. For example

a) Ataim Abasi

b) Akamba Odudu Abasi

c) Utibe – Ima – Abasi

In example (a), 'ata' – real describes the love of God while akamba qualifies, the noun Odudu – Abasi. Utibe on the other hand describes the nature of the love of God.

Clauses

Mmikipidoho – Abasi'if not God'

Mmikipidoho – Mfonabasi 'if not the grace of God'

Mmikipidoho – ubokabasi if not the hand of God'

Mikpidoho is a novel example of a clause in Ibibio. Whereas mikpi 'if' is a conditional statement 'do' is the main verb while 'ho' in this context means not. It is observed that mikpidoho – Abasi if not God' is the surbodinate class with the convert meaning that depends on a convert clause which exist in the mind of the believers namely the possibility of giving birth successfully.

Sentences

Because of the Agglutinating nature of Ibibio, sentences may appear as a single word but can be categorized into declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences and structures. At this level of discussion, these sentential structures can be analyzed using the principle and parameters theory (PPT) as well as the mentalist theory of meaning (MTM).

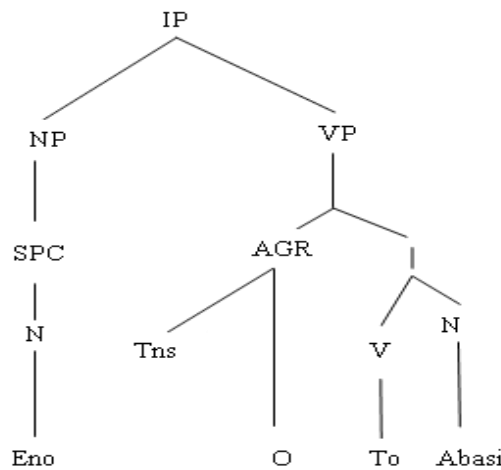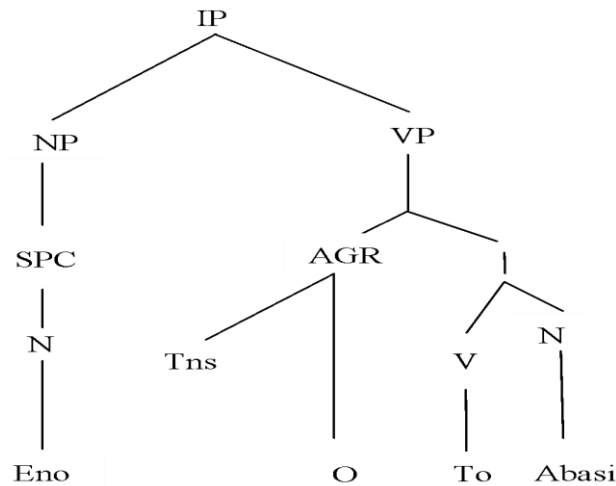**God-Based Name Sentences Structure in Ibibio.**

Declarative sentence structure: This is a sentence in which a statement is made.

(i)   Abasi-ibiaanke   'God is able'

    God does not deceive

(ii)   Abasiekeme   'God is able'

    God is able

(iii)   Abasi-ikponke   'God does not forsake'

    God does not leave

God-Based Name & Declarative Sentences Structure with SVO Structure

(i)   Enoto-Abasi   'God is from God'

(ii)   Abasi-odotitoro   'God is worthy of praise'

In the sentence 'Enoto-Abasi' the subject NP is Eno, 'to' is the verb of the sentences, while Abasi is the object of the sentence. Structurally, this sentence consists of a subject NP, Eno, a verb 'to' and the object NP Abasi, as a major constituent. The verb admits a tense maker (O) and the root 'to'. This sentence can further be represented diagrammatically on (PPT) models as in Fig. 1, which makes explanation easy.

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                        IP
                 NP            VP
                 |
                SPC          AGR        I
                 |
                 N        Tns            V    N
                 |
                Eno          O          To   Abasi
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                        IP
                 NP            VP
                 |
                SPC          AGR
                 |
                 N        Tns            V    N
                 |
                Eno          O          To   Abasi
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These examples are in line with the SVO structures that have covert subject or object, as professed by Essien (1990).

God-Based Names with Imperative Sentence Structure

An imperative sentence in Ibibio necessarily performs the function of making a request or giving a command. Some examples are shown below'

(i)   Ekubiatabasi

(ii)   Kufreabasi

(iii)   Eteghe-Abasi   'Reverence God'

(iv)   Idopise-Abasi   'Be patiently look unto God'.

The above examples indicate that the morphemes 'E', 'Ku', 'I' portray command or obligatory request while 'tenge', 'ise', 'fre', and 'biat', are the verbs while Abasi serves as the object.

God-Based Names with Interrogative Sentence Structure: These are the sentences which naturally ask questions. For example:

(i)   Anietiente-Abasi?

(ii)   Aniebiet-Abasi   'Who is like God'

(iii)   aniekpebiet-Abasi   'Who would be like God'

(iv)   aniekemente-Abasi   'Who is able like God'

(v)   Aniekan –Abasi   'Who can defeat God'

Some of these examples can also be analysed using (PPT) to make the discussion more explicit as shown in Fig. 2
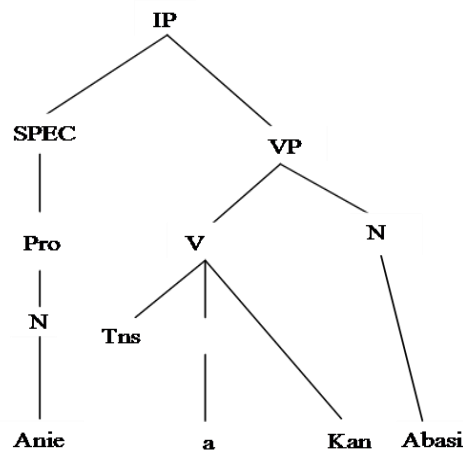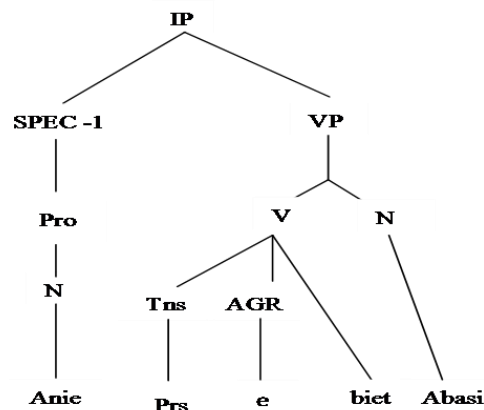
What we deduced from the tree diagrammed above is that in each diagrammed, Anie' (who) which is a pronoun occupies the subject position. It is obvious that the subject of the sentence is the specifer 'Anie to IP while the verb is the complement.

God-Based Name at the Semantic Level

Semantically God-Based names in Ibibio principally portray the meaning and the importance that parents attach to their religious inclinations. For example,

(i)   Mmikpidoho-Abasi   'if not God'

(ii)   Abasi-Akara   'God is the ruler'

(iii)   Abasi-Ifreke   'God does not forget'

Semantically, Mmikpidoho-Abasi 'if not God' shows that without the intervention of God, the birth and actual delivery could not have been possible. In (ii) the name portrays strongly believed that despite all the conflicting forces against the conception, God's supremacy prevailed. In other words, God is the ruler of all the forces that fought and contending during the pregnancy and subsequent delivery of the child. While (iii) means the existence of the fulfilled covenant between God and the parents of the child.

An analysis of these names reveals a strong correlation of the people's belief of God as their creator and their helplessness as his creatures. Also, any interchange of the positions or reversal of the constituents in the compounding process may lead to another meaning or to semantic voidness or object change in meanings. Examples are illustrates below:

(1a)   Ubonabasi   Glory of God'

(1b)   Abasiubon   'God's glory'

(2a)   Idiongo-Abasi   'Sign of God'

(2b)   Abasi-idiongo   God who shows signs (God who shows signs and wonders)

(3a)   uwana – Abasi   Light of God'

(3b)   Abasi – Uwana   ''God that is full of light'

Conclusion

This study focuses on a tripartite analysis of Ibibio God-based names in terms of their morphological, syntactic and semantic structures.

The data so categorized constitute a subclass of personal names that is rooted in religious profundity. An application of PPT and MTM models on these data highlight their internal structures as a highly productive phenomenon. Besides the analysis also reveals that the data exhibit a compounding characteristics of ordered constituents in which some reversal lead to semantic vividness while in some others lead to change of meanings. At clausal level, the categorization shows the existence of very few items despite the wide variety of covert meanings bleed by believers in Ibibio. In addition, God-based names in Ibibio, are derived as a conflation of lexical as well as complex words, which can be classified into phrases, clauses and sentences thereby collaborating the claim that Ibibio is an agitating language and highly productive.

Recommendations

1. The researchers strongly recommended that, religious beliefs, notwithstanding and since names act as catalyst in the ultimate behavior pattern of children, parents should understand the implications of the meanings of names given to their wards.

2. In view of the fact that Ibibio is a rapidly growing language, funds should be made available for researchers and documentation of results.

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