



## The Impact of Bible Translation on the Preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso and Mungaka



Akwo Cyrilus Ashanoh <sup>a</sup>

Nicoline Agbor Tabo <sup>b</sup>

Esther P. Chie <sup>c</sup>

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of Bible translation in preserving Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, three minority languages in the North West Region of Cameroon. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered through interviews with 05 linguists and 10 translators, questionnaires to 150 native speakers drawn from the three communities, focus group discussions with community elders, and analysis of translated texts. Guided by the Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Fishman, 1991), the Sociolinguistic Relativity Theory (Crystal, 2000), and the Language Planning and Policy Theories of Spolsky (2004), the research found that Bible translation significantly enhances literacy by standardizing orthographies and developing church-based literacy programs. Notably, over 68% of 150 respondents first encountered written texts in their native language through religious materials (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2016). Bible translations also proved as a tool of cultural identity by valorizing the languages, preserving their orality, instilling community pride, contextualizing worship practices, and enhancing intergenerational language transmission within the three communities. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as limited funding, resource scarcity, the raging Anglophone crisis and war, and the dominance of Pidgin English and global languages (English and French) (Kraus, 1992) persist. The study recommends increased investment in translation projects, integration of translated texts into formal education, digitization of materials, and sustained advocacy campaigns to enhance community engagement. Overall, Bible translation emerges as a powerful tool for linguistic documentation, cultural preservation, and the promotion of educational equity.

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### Corresponding author:

Akwo Cyrilus Ashanoh,

Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts,

The University of Bamenda, Cameroon.

Email address: [aakwocyril@yahoo.com](mailto:aakwocyril@yahoo.com)

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<sup>a</sup> Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

<sup>b</sup> Department of Bilingual Letters, Higher Teacher Training College, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

<sup>c</sup> Department of Linguistics and African Languages, Faculty of Arts, The University of Bamenda, Cameroon

## 1 Introduction

Language is not merely a tool for communication but a vital repository of cultural heritage, identity, and knowledge (Crystal, 2000). In an increasingly globalized world, the homogenization of languages has led to the endangerment and extinction of numerous minority languages, with profound implications for cultural diversity (Fishman, 1991). In Cameroon, a linguistically rich nation with nearly 283 languages (Eberhard et al., 2023), several indigenous languages face significant threats due to the dominance of English and French in education, governance, and media (Lewis et al., 2016). Among these endangered languages are Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, which hold immense cultural and historical significance for their respective communities.

The translation of the Bible into indigenous languages has emerged as a powerful strategy for language preservation and revitalization. Bible translation is not only a religious endeavor but also a linguistic and cultural one, providing communities with standardized orthographies, literacy materials, and documented linguistic resources (Ndhlovu, 2018). Furthermore, translation projects often serve as platforms for raising awareness about the importance of mother-tongue education and cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and ownership among speakers (UNESCO, 2003).

However, despite the evident benefits of Bible translation efforts globally, little scholarly attention has been paid to understanding how such translation initiatives impact the survival and revitalization of endangered languages in the Cameroonian context, particularly for languages like Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. The specific ways in which Bible translation contributes to literacy development, cultural preservation, language documentation, educational resource creation, and advocacy within these communities remain under-researched. This gap highlights the need for a focused investigation into the role of Bible translation in safeguarding these vulnerable linguistic heritages. Thus, this study explores the impact of Bible translation on the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, focusing on its contributions to literacy development, cultural preservation, documentation, educational resource creation, and advocacy (Kroskrity, 2018).

This paper is structured into five parts, namely, the introduction, literature review, material and methodology, results and discussions, and conclusion.

### *Background to the Study*

Cameroon, often referred to as "Africa in miniature" due to its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, is home to over 250 indigenous languages spoken by various ethnic groups, making it one of the most linguistically diverse nations in Africa (Echu). However, the dominance of English and French as official languages, along with Pidgin English in informal sectors, has marginalized many indigenous languages, leading to a decline in their use across generations. Factors such as urbanization, migration, and globalization have further accelerated the erosion of linguistic diversity, with younger generations often prioritizing the dominant languages for economic and educational reasons (Ndhlovu, 2018). Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka are among the minority languages facing significant challenges. These languages are primarily oral, with limited written documentation, making them particularly vulnerable to extinction. As UNESCO (2003) warns, the loss of any language represents a loss of cultural heritage, knowledge systems, and unique ways of perceiving the world. The urgency to preserve these languages is therefore not just a linguistic endeavour but also a cultural and historical imperative (Rambut, 2021).

Bible translation has long been recognized as a vital tool for the preservation and revitalization of endangered languages. Organizations like SIL International and the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) have spearheaded efforts to translate the Bible into minority languages, providing communities with their first written texts. These translations often serve as the foundation for developing standardized orthographies, grammar guides, and dictionaries, which are essential for language documentation and education (Lewis et al., 2016). In the case of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, Bible translation projects have played a transformative role in fostering literacy and cultural pride. Translators work closely with native speakers, linguists, and cultural experts to ensure that the texts accurately reflect the linguistic nuances and cultural contexts of the target communities (Crystal, 2000). By incorporating local idioms, metaphors, and storytelling traditions, these translations not only preserve linguistic structures but also reinforce cultural identity and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Fishman, 1991).

*Literature Review*

Language preservation encompasses efforts to maintain, revitalize, or revive endangered languages for cultural, historical, and educational purposes (Crystal, 2000). Bible translation serves as a significant tool in this endeavor by providing written documentation of minority languages and promoting their use in various contexts (Fishman, 1991). This process is critical for creating educational resources such as dictionaries, grammar guides, and orthographies, which are essential for standardizing language use and facilitating literacy development and intergenerational knowledge transfer (Wurm, 2001). Moreover, since linguistic expressions often carry community-specific values, beliefs, and traditions, cultural preservation is deeply intertwined with language (UNESCO, 2003). Advocacy and awareness are also vital in shifting societal attitudes toward indigenous languages. Ndhlovu (2018) emphasizes the importance of community-based advocacy to combat linguistic marginalization and foster pride in native languages. Several studies have explored the role of Bible translation in the preservation of endangered languages. For instance, Madinga (2010) examined Bible translation efforts among the Tonga people of Zambia, demonstrating that translation not only promoted literacy but also reinforced ethnic identity and cultural pride. Similarly, Banda (2013) analyzed how Bible translation projects among the Xhosa community contributed to the development of standardized writing systems, which subsequently enabled the production of educational materials in the language. In the Cameroonian context, Awasom (2008) noted that translation work in the Bafut language contributed to renewed interest in mother-tongue education and strengthened community initiatives toward language revival. Furthermore, research by Kouega (2007) highlighted that Bible translation initiatives in Cameroon often provided the first written texts in minority languages, acting as catalysts for broader literary and educational development. Despite these valuable insights, current research often focuses on well-documented languages or larger communities where translation projects have been more visible and established. Limited scholarly attention has been given to lesser-known and severely endangered languages such as Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. While the broader benefits of Bible translation for literacy and cultural preservation are acknowledged, specific investigations into how these dynamics unfold in the context of smaller Cameroonian language communities remain scarce. Questions regarding the extent to which translation fosters sustainable literacy, community engagement, and cultural documentation among speakers of these languages are largely unexplored. Thus, this study seeks to fill this important research gap by focusing specifically on the impact of Bible translation on the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka.

*Perspectives on language preservation through Bible Translation: The theoretical, Empirical, and Conceptual insights*

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in three key theories: The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (EVT) (Fishman 1991), the Sociolinguistic Relativity Theory (Crystal, 2000), and the Language Planning and Policy Theories (Spolsky, 2004). The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory highlights the importance of using minority languages in meaningful social domains for their survival. Bible translation, as noted, introduces such a domain—religion—where Itangikom, lamnso, and Mungaka can be actively used in church services, prayers, and religious education. For example, the communities conduct worship in their indigenous language using the translated which not only validates the languages but also encourages younger people to learn and use the languages even in other domains like music and online communication among fellow indigenes at home and abroad (Majzub & Rais, 2011). In the Mungaka speaking area, like in the Lamnso and the Itangikom areas, the Bible translation initiative has led to increased literacy classes fostering both language skills and cultural pride. Institutional support from churches and language development organizations like CABTAL and SIL Cameroon has also reinforced the status and utility of the languages, thus making Bible translation a key tool in their preservation and revitalization. Bible translation thus enhances ethnolinguistic vitality by providing institutional support through religious and educational frameworks and by increasing a language's prestige, encouraging its use in broader domains (Fishman 1991). The formation of Inter-Church Committees (ICC) and the involvement of local communities have significantly bolstered the prestige of languages, leading more indigenous people to speak and teach their offspring their native tongues. Sociolinguistic Relativity Theory (Crystal, 2000), highlights the role of language in shaping cultural and cognitive identities. By **translating texts** into indigenous languages, communities can express their worldviews and preserve their cultural nuances. According to Crystal (2000), preserving a language means preserving the worldview embedded within it, making translation efforts culturally significant. Providing scriptures, Itangikom, Lamnso and Mungaka reinforces their social value and daily use. This, as noticed, has helped in preventing the languages from sinking into oblivion

and to perpetuate their use. Additionally, Language Policy and Planning Theories, such as those proposed by Spolsky (2004), provide insights into how policy frameworks influence language use and preservation. Spolsky argues that language planning must integrate local languages into educational systems and public discourse to ensure their sustainability. In Cameroon, the late involvement of the government in matters of indigenous language development and preservation has led to a lackluster attitude toward indigenous language preservation. The government policy of official languages and bilingualism rather encouraged the use of English and French languages of state, administration and education (constitution of the Federal Republic of Cameroon 1972) leaving the nation's indigenous in a limbo for a long until robust policy of missionaries which started way back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Basel mission, gathered steam in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and culminated in indigenous communities taking up the challenge of develop and preserve their languages. Such efforts as was noticed were often accompanied by the development of orthographies, literacy materials, and the establishment of schools and churches in local languages (Lamnso, Mungaka and Itangikom etc.).

Empirical studies have demonstrated the impact of Bible translation on language preservation. In Nigeria and Kenya, Bible translation projects have resulted in increased literacy rates among native speakers, with churches becoming centers for literacy promotion using translated texts as foundational teaching materials (Adegbija, 2001; Jepkirui Muthwii, 2004). Similarly, in Cameroon, particularly focusing on Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, literacy centers managed by Christian-oriented organizations like the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (CABTAL) utilize biblical translations to improve the vitality of these languages. Research in Papua New Guinea revealed that communities with Bible translations in their native languages experienced greater cultural retention compared to those without (Hinton & Hale, 2013). In Cameroon, translations in Lamnso, Itangikom, and Mungaka have preserved traditional idioms and metaphors, fostering intergenerational knowledge transfer (Echu). The Bible translation process has also reawakened cultural pride among indigenous people, leading to cultural jamborees in various communities. UNESCO (2016) highlights the success of mother-tongue education programs in improving academic outcomes and reducing dropout rates. Incorporating translated texts into formal education systems promotes linguistic equity and ensures access to culturally relevant materials. Despite these successes, challenges persist, including limited funding, societal biases, and resource shortages. Krauss (1992) emphasizes that without sustainable funding and community involvement, language preservation efforts may falter. In Cameroon, Bible translation projects are primarily religious endeavours with voluntary community involvement, making it difficult to achieve committed engagement since the indigenous populations have yet to see tangible benefits.

The conceptual framework linking Bible translation to the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka—three languages of the North West Region of Cameroon demonstrates how religious texts can play a pivotal role in indigenous language sustainability. Bible translation serves as more than a spiritual endeavour, it is a culturally empowering act that introduces and validates written forms of these languages. By translating the Bible, communities gain access to literacy materials in their mother tongues, which promotes reading, writing, and standardized orthography development. These translations encourage the use of the languages in religious contexts such as sermons, songs, prayers, and church activities, which are central to community life. Through these activities language becomes both meaningful and regular, particularly when supported by local churches, language development agencies like SIL and CABTAL, and active community involvement. Furthermore, as children and youth engage in scriptures in their native language, intergenerational transmission is strengthened. This process nurtures cultural pride and reinforces the value of the language in sacred and daily life. Over time, such efforts contribute to increased language vitality, preventing erosion or extinction of minority languages. Bible translation, therefore, plays a significant role in preserving and revitalizing the linguistic and cultural identity of these communities (Lao & Krashen, 2000).

## 2 Materials and Methods

This article employed an eclectic research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the impact of Bible translation on the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso and Mungaka. By integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches, the research aimed to provide a holistic analysis of the subject matter, ensuring the validity of findings through triangulation.

The research focused on three primary groups: native speakers of the target languages, cultural custodians such as elders and traditional leaders, and religious leaders and translators involved in Bible translation and literacy promotion. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 150 participants, ensuring diverse representation

from key stakeholders. This sample included 100 native speakers (equally divided by gender and language), 30 cultural custodians with extensive knowledge of traditional practices, and 20 religious leaders and translators actively participating in Bible translation efforts.

Data collection was conducted using multiple instruments to ensure a comprehensive gathering of information. Structured interviews were held with translators, linguists, and religious leaders to gain insights into the translation process and its challenges. Questionnaires were administered to native speakers to assess literacy levels, exposure to translated texts, and perceptions of the impact of Bible translations on their language and culture. Focus group discussions with cultural custodians explored how translations integrate cultural elements and contribute to community identity and knowledge transfer. Additionally, document analysis of translated texts, literacy materials, and orthographies was performed to evaluate their contributions to language documentation and education. For data analysis, qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to literacy development, cultural preservation, and advocacy for linguistic heritage. Quantitative data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations, to provide measurable insights into literacy levels and community perceptions.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose, methods, and potential outcomes of the research. Data were anonymized to protect participants' identities and ensure confidentiality. The research process was conducted with cultural sensitivity, respecting the norms, values, and practices of the involved communities.

This robust methodology provided a comprehensive framework for investigating the impact of Bible translation on the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. By combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study captured both the subjective and objective dimensions of the research problem, ensuring the reliability and relevance of its findings.

### 3 Results and Discussions

This section presents the results and generates discussions emanating from the results. The presentation is based on qualitative data and quantitative data, followed by discussions emanating from the results.

#### 3.1. Analysis based on Qualitative Data

Survey data indicated that over 68% of respondents were first introduced to written texts in their native language through religious materials, particularly the Bible. This aligns with Crystal's (2000) assertion that literacy is critical for ensuring the vitality of endangered languages. Church-based literacy programs have become key platforms for teaching individuals to read and write in their native languages, often utilizing Bible translations as primary teaching materials. Similar outcomes have been observed in other contexts, where Bible translation has facilitated the development of orthographies and literacy campaigns (Fishman, 1991). The integration of traditional idioms, metaphors, and cultural expressions into Bible translations has reinforced the cultural identity of the Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka communities.

Focus group discussions with cultural custodians highlighted how translations preserved indigenous storytelling techniques and proverbs, ensuring that these elements remain accessible to younger generations. Ndhlovu (2018) emphasizes the importance of cultural preservation in language revitalization, noting that language and culture are inextricably linked. Moreover, Bible translations have facilitated intergenerational knowledge transfer by providing elders with a medium to teach cultural values and history in a written format. This process not only preserves linguistic structures but also strengthens communal ties and shared identity.

One of the most significant impacts of Bible translation has been the documentation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. Translated texts serve as linguistic repositories, capturing the phonology, syntax, and semantics of these languages. Document analysis revealed that translation projects have often led to the development of grammar guides, dictionaries, and orthographies, which are essential for academic and educational purposes. Lewis et al. (2016), note that language documentation is a crucial step in preserving endangered languages for future generations.

Bible translation projects have also contributed to the creation of educational materials in native languages, including primers, hymnals, and literacy manuals. These resources are instrumental in promoting mother-tongue education and improving literacy rates. Surveys indicated that 74% of respondents believed that translated texts had

enhanced their ability to read and write in their native language. This finding is consistent with UNESCO's (2003) advocacy for mother-tongue education as a means of achieving linguistic equity and educational inclusivity. Bible translation has further served as a tool for advocacy and raising awareness about the importance of preserving indigenous languages. Community leaders and religious organizations have used translated texts to highlight the value of linguistic and cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride among speakers.

Interviews with religious leaders revealed that many congregations have begun incorporating native-language Bible readings and hymns into their services, normalizing the use of these languages in public and spiritual spaces. The rise of cultural jamborees, such as the Ngouonso for the Lamnso, Lela for the Mungaka, and similar festivals for the Itangikom, is closely linked to awareness campaigns championed by translation agencies, which have renewed interest in these mother tongues.

Despite these successes, several challenges persist. Limited funding hinders the production and distribution of translated texts, while resource scarcity, including a lack of skilled translators, linguists, and cultural experts, poses a significant obstacle. The widespread use of English and French continues to marginalize minority languages, particularly in urban areas (Echu, 2004). Negative societal attitudes toward indigenous languages, often perceived as inferior or less practical, have also impeded community engagement. Additionally, the Anglophone Crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of minority languages in Cameroon, where disruptions in formal education have led to declining use of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka (Echu, 2004). Advocacy and awareness are critical in addressing these attitudes and fostering pride in linguistic heritage (Ndhlovu, 2018).

Pidgin English, which has risen to prominence due to Cameroon's multilingual nature, demonstrates how practical use in media, education, and public domains can preserve a language. While Pidgin English poses a threat to indigenous languages, its success provides a potential blueprint for promoting Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka in similar spaces (Crystal, 2000). Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative approach involving the language communities, governments, religious organizations, and international partners. These findings underscore the multifaceted impact of Bible translation on the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka by promoting literacy, preserving culture, documenting languages, and fostering advocacy.

The findings from the qualitative data reveal significant contributions of Bible translation to the preservation and revitalization of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. Bible translation has played a pivotal role in promoting literacy among native speakers of these languages by providing written materials that create opportunities for individuals to engage with their mother tongues in a structured and formalized manner.

### 3.2 Analysis based on Quantitative Data

Questionnaire data indicated that 68% of respondents were first introduced to written texts in their native language through religious materials, particularly the Bible. This aligns with Crystal's (2000) assertion that literacy is critical for ensuring the vitality of endangered languages. Additionally, 60% of respondents regularly participate in church-based literacy programs, which have become key platforms for teaching individuals to read and write in their native languages, often utilizing Bible translations as primary teaching materials. Below are observable trends based on findings from the research questionnaires.

Table 1  
An Analysis of Primary Literacy Sources

First Literacy Source	Frequency	Percentage
Religious Materials	102	68%
School Textbooks	23	15%
Family and Community	18	12%
Others	07	5%

Source: Designed by Author 2024

Based on the results from table 1 above, it is evident that religious materials are the most frequent first literacy source for speakers of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka, with 102 respondents (68%) identifying them as their initial reading materials. This strongly suggests that Bible translation has played a crucial role in introducing and reinforcing literacy in these communities. Compared to school textbooks (15%) and family/community sources (12%), the dominance of religious texts shows that people are more likely to learn to read in their mother tongue

through translated scriptures than through formal education. The high reliance on religious materials highlights how translated Bibles not only serve spiritual needs but also promote language learning, reading skills, and the daily use of indigenous languages. Furthermore, the minimal role of “Others” (5%) implies that few alternative materials are available, making Bible translations even more significant for language exposure and literacy development.

Table 2  
Analysis Based on the Impact of Bible Translation on Literacy

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Significantly	83	55%
Yes Somewhat	38	25%
No Impact	22	15%
No it has not helped	07	05%

Source: Designed by Author 2024

The responses indicate that the majority of participants believe Bible translation has positively impacted the preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. Specifically, 83 respondents (55%) reported that it has significantly contributed to language preservation, suggesting that translated scriptures are perceived as powerful tools for maintaining and revitalizing these endangered languages. An additional 25% (38 respondents) felt that Bible translation helped somewhat, highlighting a moderate yet meaningful influence on language vitality. In contrast, only 22 respondents (15%) believed that translation had no impact, and a small minority of 7 respondents (5%) felt it has not helped at all.

These findings reveal generally positive linguistic attitudes toward the local languages among the surveyed communities. The strong majority view reflects a perception that indigenous languages are not only valuable for religious purposes but also essential carriers of cultural identity, tradition, and community cohesion. Bible translation appears to enhance the prestige and perceived usefulness of these languages, especially in domains like education, literacy, and spiritual practice. By providing written forms and accessible texts, translation efforts have likely fostered a sense of pride, ownership, and legitimacy regarding mother-tongue use. Moreover, the relatively small proportion of respondents who saw no or negative impact may suggest underlying challenges, such as limited access to translated materials, varying literacy levels, or persistent societal attitudes that still favour dominant languages like English and French. Nevertheless, the overall trend reflects a positive shift in language ideologies, where indigenous languages are increasingly viewed not as obstacles to modernity but as valuable resources worth preserving and promoting. Thus, the responses illustrate that Bible translation has not only a functional role in language preservation but also a symbolic one: reinforcing positive perceptions, strengthening community solidarity, and elevating the status of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka within a multilingual and competitive linguistic environment.

Table 3  
Church Literacy Program Participation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	90	60%
Occasionally	30	20%
Rarely	15	10%
Never	15	10%

Source: Designed by Author 2024

Table 3 shows that 90 respondents (60%) participate in church literacy programs regularly, indicating a strong engagement with church-based efforts to promote reading and language skills. This high level of participation highlights the central role of the church not only in spiritual life but also in educational and linguistic development within the Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka communities. An additional 20% (30 respondents) attend occasionally, showing some level of involvement, possibly depending on availability or interest. Meanwhile, only 10% each reported participating rarely or never, suggesting that very few individuals are completely disconnected from these programs. The data implies that church literacy programs—often using translated Bibles and related materials—are

an effective and trusted avenue for promoting literacy and, by extension, preserving local languages. Their regular use reinforces reading skills in the mother tongue and strengthens the bond between language, faith, and identity.

Table 4  
Cultural Preservation through Bible Translation

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes Significantly	75	50%
Yes Somewhat	45	30%
No Impact	22	15%
No, they do not	08	05%

Source: Designed by Author 2024

The data indicates that 75 respondents (50%) believe Bible translation has significantly contributed to cultural preservation through church literacy programs. An additional 30% (45 respondents) acknowledged it has helped somewhat, resulting in a combined 80% of respondents recognizing a positive cultural impact. This affirms that the use of translated scriptures in literacy programs reinforces not only language use but also traditional values, oral history, proverbs, and worldview embedded in Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. In contrast, only 15% saw no impact, and a mere 5% believed church literacy programs do not aid cultural preservation at all. The small percentage of dissenting views further highlights the cultural relevance and resonance of Bible translation efforts. By teaching reading and writing in the mother tongue, church literacy programs become a channel for transmitting cultural knowledge, fostering pride in identity, and resisting linguistic and cultural erosion — thus playing a vital role in the holistic preservation of local heritage.

Table 5  
Challenges Facing Bible Translation Usage

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Funding	60	40%
Negative societal Attitudes	45	30%
Influence of English, French and Pidgin English	39	20%
Low literacy Levels	15	10%

Source: Designed by Author 2024

The data in table 5 highlights several significant challenges hindering the effective use of Bible translation in the Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka communities:

A. Lack of Funding (40%): The most pressing challenge reported is the lack of funding, which affects 60 respondents (40%). This is a major barrier to producing and distributing translated Bibles and supporting church literacy programs. Without sufficient financial resources, it becomes difficult to continue and expand Bible translation efforts, limiting access to these essential texts that aid language preservation.

B. Negative Societal Attitudes (30%): 45 respondents (30%) indicated that negative societal attitudes toward the use of indigenous languages pose a significant obstacle. In some areas of the communities, the traditional languages are undervalued or seen as less prestigious compared to dominant languages like English or French, which affects the adoption of translated scriptures in these languages. Overcoming these societal barriers is crucial for ensuring that Bible translation remains a cultural asset.

C. Influence of English, French, and Pidgin English (20%): The influence of English, French, and Pidgin English was noted as a challenge by 39 respondents (20%). These global languages have become dominant in education, media, and government, which often leads to reduced usage of local languages in daily life. This external linguistic pressure undermines efforts to promote and preserve indigenous languages through Bible translation.

D. Low Literacy Levels (10%): 15 respondents (10%) reported low literacy levels as a challenge. Even though Bible translation contributes to literacy in local languages, the overall low literacy rates in some areas can limit the effectiveness of these translations. A lack of basic education means fewer people can access or benefit from the scriptures, hindering the wider goal of language preservation. While Bible translation efforts are seen as a positive force for language and cultural preservation, the challenges identified — primarily funding, societal attitudes, and the

dominance of foreign languages — need to be addressed. Overcoming these obstacles is essential to sustain and expand Bible translation projects and ensure that local languages remain vital and relevant for future generations. Below are visual presentations of key findings base on the research questionnaire:

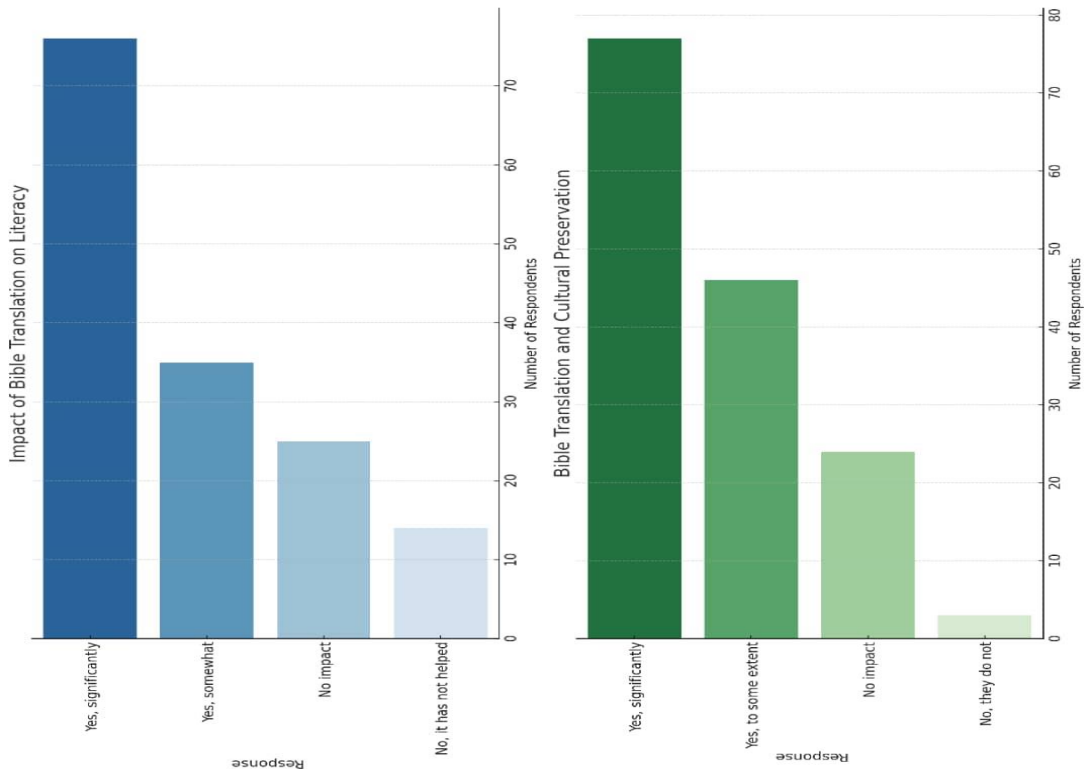


Fig 1. Impact of BT on Literacy Development

Fig 2. Perceived role of BT in Cultural Preservation

An Analysis of the Bar Charts above reveals a strong positive impact of Bible translation on literacy, with 80% of respondents acknowledging its role in improving their reading and writing skills. This suggests that Bible translation provides structured reading materials, contributing significantly to literacy development. Similarly, Bible translation has been instrumental in cultural preservation, with 80% of respondents recognizing its role in maintaining indigenous languages through traditional idioms, proverbs, and storytelling techniques. This reinforces the connection between language and cultural heritage. Despite these benefits, challenges persist, with 40% citing funding issues, 30% highlighting negative societal attitudes, and 20% pointing to the dominance of English and French. These barriers limit accessibility and participation, emphasizing the need for financial support and awareness campaigns to promote indigenous language literacy. Cross-tabulation analysis shows a clear link between church literacy participation and literacy improvement, as regular participants report higher literacy gains. This highlights the effectiveness of church-based programs in promoting native language learning and suggests that expanding these initiatives could enhance language revitalization efforts. This chart illustrates the extent to which Bible translation has contributed to the preservation of cultural identity.

Table 6  
Cross-Tabulation: Literacy Impact vs. Church Literacy Program Participation

Bible Improved Literacy	Never	Cross Sectionally	Rarely	Regularly
No Impact	0	4	3	18
No, it has not helped	0	2	2	10
Yes Significantly	8	9	8	51
Yes Somewhat	2	8	1	24

Source: Designed by Author 2024

The data from Table 6 reveals a positive correlation between participation in church literacy programs and reported literacy improvement. Among regular participants (103 people), 72.8% (75 individuals) stated that the Bible helped improve their literacy, 49.5% (51) significantly, and 23.3% (24) somewhat, indicating that consistent involvement yields strong outcomes. Rare participants (14 people) also showed encouraging results, with 57.1% (8) reporting significant improvement, though with less consistency, as 35.7% (5) reported little or no benefit. Those who participated cross-sectionally (23 people) showed mixed results: 39.1% (9) noted significant improvement, 34.8% (8) somewhat, and 26.1% (6) reported no benefit, suggesting that irregular or selective participation may lead to varied outcomes. Interestingly, even non-participants (10 people) reported improvement—80% (8) significantly and 20% (2) somewhat—implying that literacy gains may also come from informal Bible exposure or other non-program factors. Overall, the table suggests that regular and active engagement in Bible-centered literacy programs is associated with greater literacy improvement, although other factors outside formal participation may also play a role. The above results indicate that Bible translation has played a major role in literacy development among native speakers of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka. 55% of respondents reported that Bible translations significantly improved their literacy skills, while 25% said they helped somewhat. This finding is consistent with UNESCO's (2003) advocacy for mother-tongue education as a means of achieving linguistic equity. Bible translation has helped to preserve traditional idioms, metaphors, and storytelling techniques. 50% of respondents believe Bible translations have significantly contributed to cultural preservation, while 30% say the translations have helped to some extent.

### 3.3 Challenges in Implementation

The study highlighted several key challenges in promoting Bible translation efforts, grounded in the responses of 150 participants. Lack of funding emerged as the most significant barrier, cited by 40% of respondents, equivalent to 60 individuals, underscoring the need for greater financial investment to support translation projects, training, and resource distribution. Negative societal attitudes toward indigenous languages were identified by 30% (45 respondents), reflecting deep-rooted perceptions that often devalue local languages in favor of more "prestigious" foreign tongues. This stigma contributes to declining use and interest, especially among the youth. Additionally, 20% of participants (30 individuals) pointed to the dominance of English and French as a major obstacle, as these languages are prioritized in education, administration, and media, often marginalizing mother tongues. Finally, low literacy levels were mentioned by 10% (15 respondents), indicating that even when translated materials are available, a segment of the population may be unable to engage with them meaningfully. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires a coordinated effort involving government bodies, religious institutions, community leaders, and language advocates to promote inclusive policies, raise awareness, and strengthen grassroots literacy initiatives.

### 3.4 The Role of Pidgin English in Indigenous Language Preservation

The role of Pidgin English in Cameroon offers valuable insights into language preservation, as its widespread use in media, education, and public life has helped maintain its vitality despite lacking official status. While Pidgin can overshadow indigenous languages, its integration into daily communication presents a strategic model that can be adapted to promote Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka in similar spheres. This study highlights the transformative impact of Bible translation on these languages by showing how it has significantly boosted literacy, with 74% of respondents acknowledging improved reading and writing skills. Additionally, Bible translation fosters cultural pride, as evidenced by 80% of participants who feel a stronger sense of identity and value in their mother tongues. The translations also act as critical linguistic records, capturing vocabulary, grammar, and idiomatic expressions that may otherwise fade over time. Furthermore, church-led literacy initiatives have not only improved language skills

but have also legitimized the public use of indigenous languages, fostering a sense of acceptance and advocacy within communities.

## 4 Conclusion

The preservation of Itangikom, Lamnso, and Mungaka is vital for maintaining the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of Cameroon. These indigenous languages are more than communication tools—they are vessels of identity, history, and worldview for their respective communities. Bible translation projects have emerged as transformative tools in addressing language endangerment by promoting literacy, cultural preservation, documentation, and advocacy. This study has demonstrated that translated texts serve as both educational resources and powerful symbols of identity, enabling communities to reclaim and celebrate their heritage. The findings reveal that while significant progress has been made in standardizing orthographies, promoting literacy, and integrating cultural elements, persistent challenges such as limited funding, resource scarcity, and societal attitudes must be addressed. Collaborative efforts among governments, religious organizations, linguists, and local communities are essential to overcoming these obstacles.

The significance of this study lies in its demonstration of how religious texts, particularly the Bible, can catalyze language revitalization in multilingual contexts. It highlights the potential of translation projects not only as spiritual endeavors but as strategic platforms for sociolinguistic empowerment and community mobilization. Moreover, it reinforces the idea that language preservation is a shared responsibility that requires long-term commitment and multi-sectoral collaboration.

Future research should explore broader applications of translated texts in formal education, digital technology, and media. Comparative studies could investigate how similar efforts in other African linguistic communities have yielded success or faced limitations. Further interdisciplinary research is also recommended to assess the psychological and social impacts of language revitalization efforts on community identity and cohesion. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the long-term outcomes of literacy and translation initiatives can provide deeper insights into sustainability and community transformation.

By implementing these measures and expanding scholarly inquiry, stakeholders can ensure that these languages continue to thrive amidst globalization and linguistic homogenization, thereby safeguarding Cameroon's unique cultural tapestry for future generations.

### *Conflict of interest statement*

The authors declared that they have no competing interests.

### *Statement of authorship*

The authors have a responsibility for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final article.

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