

# The Role of Social Media in Preserving Indigenous Nigerian Languages

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**Abstract:** This research explores the critical role of media in preserving indigenous Nigerian languages, particularly through the integration of technology and social media. As globalization threatens linguistic diversity, innovative technological solutions emerge as vital tools for safeguarding these languages. The study highlights how digital platforms facilitate documentation, education, and community building around indigenous languages. Technologies like mobile apps and online resources enhance language learning, making the process engaging and accessible to diverse audiences. Social media platforms, including Facebook, X, and WhatsApp, are pivotal in fostering connections among speakers, sharing cultural resources, and promoting linguistic visibility. Facebook creates communities that exchange knowledge and resources, while X enhances rapid communication and visibility through interactive campaigns. WhatsApp offers a more personalized communication avenue, enabling real-time conversations and safeguarding privacy in language use. Furthermore, advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning, particularly in speech recognition and translation, enhance the preservation efforts by making language materials more accessible and usable. This research concludes that technology, particularly social media, is instrumental in revitalizing indigenous Nigerian languages by providing innovative avenues for documentation, learning, and community engagement, thereby ensuring their survival for future generations.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Nigerian, Preserving, Indigenous Languages, Platforms.

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## Introduction

Social media has emerged as a significant platform for communication and cultural expression in the 21st century. In Nigeria, where over 500 indigenous languages are spoken, social media is playing a pivotal role in the preservation and promotion of these languages. As globalization threatens linguistic diversity, the digital landscape offers innovative strategies to sustain indigenous languages by fostering engagement among speakers and creating a sense of community (Okuneye, 2021).

Through various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, individuals and groups can share content in indigenous languages, thereby normalizing their usage and enhancing visibility (Adetunji & Obafemi, 2023). This increased interaction can help younger generations connect with their heritage and speak their native tongues, combating the decline of these languages due to urbanization and modernization (Ibidun, 2022).

Furthermore, social media facilitates the documentation and dissemination of cultural artifacts, idiomatic expressions, and proverbs unique to specific languages. Creative approaches like memes, videos, and digital storytelling have allowed speakers to convey their cultural narratives in engaging formats, which can appeal to a broader audience, including those who may not speak the languages fluently (Owolabi, 2023).

Research indicates that social media not only helps preserve linguistic nuances but also fosters a sense of identity and belonging among users (Ajayi, 2022). By promoting indigenous languages, social media serves as a critical tool in resisting the dominance of global languages, ensuring that cultural diversity thrives in an increasingly interconnected world. Therefore, understanding the transformative potential of social media in

Nigerian linguistic landscapes is essential for future efforts aimed at language preservation.

## Importance of Language Preservation

Language preservation is vital for several reasons. Firstly, languages embody the history, traditions, and cultural identities of their speakers (Harrison, 2021). With the extinction of a language, unique worldviews and knowledge systems may also vanish. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), over 40% of languages are at risk of disappearing, emphasizing the urgency of preservation efforts (UNESCO, 2022).

Moreover, languages facilitate social cohesion and identity within communities. They serve as tools for self-expression and transmit cultural values from one generation to another (Crystal, 2020). Language loss can lead to a disconnection from cultural heritage, adversely affecting individuals sense of identity and belonging.

## Overview of Social Media Impact on Language Use

Social media has significantly influenced language use and evolution from 2020 to 2025. Primarily, it has accelerated the adoption and transformation of language through the creation of new slang, abbreviations, and emojis, which often serve as shortcuts to enhance communication (Bryant & Kuehn, 2023). For instance, platforms like Twitter and TikTok have popularized brevity in expression, leading to the emergence of micro-languages that are contextually rich but linguistically condensed.

However, the impact of social media is not solely positive. While it provides a platform for marginalized languages, the



dominant languages, especially English, continue to overshadow minority languages. As social media transcends geographic barriers, it can inadvertently contribute to the marginalization of local dialects (Smith & Davidson, 2024). The influence of global platforms may lead to homogenization of language, resulting in the dilution or loss of linguistic diversity.

Furthermore, social media enables engagement in language revitalization efforts. Initiatives that promote the use of endangered languages online can help foster community solidarity and provide younger generations with accessible resources to learn their heritage languages (Johnson & Garcia, 2023).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory**

The Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, introduced by Giles et al. (1977), emphasizes the social context and the dynamics between languages that influence language vitality. This framework considers factors such as the status of a language, the demographic characteristics of its speakers, and the societal attitudes toward the language. Factors like institutional support, intergroup relations, and community solidarity significantly affect language preservation or endangerment.

### **The UNESCO Language Vitality Framework**

UNESCO's (2003) Language Vitality Framework categorizes languages based on their vitality and endangerment levels. It outlines five factors that help assess language vitality: intergenerational transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, government and institutional language attitudes, and a community's response to language shift. This framework is instrumental in guiding language documentation and revitalization efforts.

### **Theoretical Framework the Framework of Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Language Endangerment**

This framework posits that language endangerment is closely tied to sociolinguistic dimensions, such as language use in different domains, prestige, and identity. According to Lewis and Simons (2010), the external pressures faced by language communities such as globalization and media influence can lead to diminished language usage and transmission, ultimately impacting a language's vitality.

### **Role of Technology in Language Preservation**

#### **Digital Documentation**

Technology enables the recording and preservation of languages through audio and video documentation. This includes the development of apps and software that facilitate the collection of native speakers' stories, cultural knowledge, and linguistic structures (Crystal, 2020).

#### **Online Learning Platforms**

E-learning platforms and mobile applications promote language learning and usage. Resources such as Duolingo and other language-specific apps have made it easier for users to engage with endangered languages in an interactive and accessible manner (Harrison, 2021).

### **Social Media and Community Building**

Social media platforms allow speakers of lesser-known languages to connect and share their culture, further fostering community ties. This interaction can increase the visibility of these languages and encourage younger generations to learn and use them (Yasuda, 2022).

### **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning**

AI technology plays a pivotal role in language preservation by enabling speech recognition and translation services for under-resourced languages. Tools like Google Translate continuously improve their capabilities to include lesser-known languages, thereby facilitating wider communication (Khan & Azam, 2023).

### **Archiving Digital Resources**

Digital libraries and online archives preserve linguistic materials such as texts, audio recordings, and educational resources, making them accessible to researchers and language learners worldwide (Smith et al., 2024).

### **Social Media as a Tool for Language Preservation, Accessibility, and Outreach**

Social media platforms have emerged as critical tools for promoting language preservation, enhancing accessibility, and facilitating outreach. This overview examines Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp, focusing on their contributions to these areas between 2020 and 2025.

#### **Facebook**

Facebook has played a significant role in language preservation by enabling the creation of groups and pages dedicated to specific languages and dialects. These spaces allow users to share resources, engage in conversations, and promote cultural heritage. Furthermore, the platform's features, such as live videos and discussions, facilitate language learning and community engagement (Smith & Smith, 2022). Additionally, Facebook's algorithms can help surface content in minority languages, fostering greater accessibility to diverse linguistic materials (Johnson, 2023).

#### **X (Formerly Twitter)**

X has provided a unique microblogging platform that fosters real-time communication in various languages. The use of hashtags can boost visibility for language-specific discussions and movements, creating a space for users to champion linguistic diversity (Williams, 2021). Notably, campaigns and threads can highlight endangered languages and mobilize users to engage in language preservation efforts. X has also enhanced accessibility through features like alt-text for images and live transcription of tweets, ensuring that content is more inclusive (Garcia, 2022).

#### **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp is distinguished by its emphasis on real-time communication and has become a vital tool for intimate language preservation efforts. Community groups allow for the sharing of linguistic resources, including vocabulary lists and audio recordings, which are essential for revitalizing endangered languages (Moore, 2023). Moreover, WhatsApp's voice messaging feature facilitates pronunciation practice and promotes conversational skills in less-dominant languages, effectively enhancing language accessibility (Truong, 2024). The app's encryption further ensures the privacy of language communities,

fostering a safe space for cultural exchange and dialogue (Chen, 2022).

## Conclusion

Technology plays a huge role in keeping languages alive. It helps us document them, learn them, build communities around them, and archive everything. With tech, we can record and protect languages super carefully using all sorts of media. Online platforms and apps make learning languages easier and more fun for everyone. Social media helps people connect and makes smaller languages more visible, which encourages younger folks to use them. AI and machine learning are key for things like speech recognition and translation, and digital libraries make language materials available everywhere.

Social media is especially important. Platforms like Facebook, X, and WhatsApp each bring something special to the table, helping with language preservation, making languages more accessible, and spreading the word. Facebook helps communities connect and share resources. X allows for quick communication and boosts visibility through campaigns and features that include everyone. WhatsApp is great for more personal language efforts, offering real-time chats and privacy.

## Recommendations

### *Improve AI Language Tools:*

Let's keep making AI tools better for languages that don't have a lot of resources. We should focus on making speech recognition and translation more accurate so more people can communicate and access information easily.

### *Boost Digital Skills:*

We need to start programs that teach people in language communities how to use digital tools. If they know how to use these tools and platforms, they can really get involved in keeping their languages alive.

### *Back Social Media Projects:*

Let's encourage and support using social media to preserve languages by creating helpful resources, funding campaigns, and working with tech companies.

### *Create Content That Matters:*

It's important to focus on making content for online learning and digital archives that is culturally relevant and accurate in terms of language. This makes sure the resources

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