Leveraging Digital Media and Ai for the Preservation of Indigenous Languages in Niger State

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Abstract:
Indigenous languages hold immense cultural significance and contribute to the rich heritage, history, and identity of societies. However, many of these languages are endangered due to the growing influence of dominant languages, media, and education policy. This paper assesses the role of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered and vulnerable indigenous languages in Niger State. A Cross-Sectional Survey Design was used. Drawing upon secondary data, policy documents, and expert opinion, the study highlights the potential of technology to aid in the revitalization and transmission of linguistic heritage to future generations. Purposive Sampling was used to identify and select key stakeholders and individuals who are directly involved. The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire designed on a Likert rating Scale. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Simple Means and Percentages. The result revealed preservation for cultural heritage, with an overall mean score of 2.502 (SD = 1.524). The composite mean score of 2.286 indicates that respondents somewhat agree with the role of these technologies. The result also shows the challenges related to the use of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered or unwritten languages mean score of 3.686. The study concludes by emphasizing that a collaborative approach, involving stakeholders from academia, technology firms, community organizations, and policy makers, is essential for conserving linguistic diversity in Niger State.
Key Word: *Digital media, Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous languages, Preservation, Cultural heritage*

I. Introduction

Language is more than just a medium of communication; it forms a crucial part of a community's culture, knowledge, traditions, and collective memory. Indigenous languages reflect a people's unique view of the world, their relationships, their history, and their understanding of their environment. However, many of these languages are increasingly endangered due to growing pressures from dominant languages, population migration, education policy, and the allure of mass media. Indigenous communities around the world possess a rich tapestry of cultural knowledge, traditions, and languages. The world is home to approximately 7000 languages, but a significant number of these are indigenous and face the threat of extinction; as indigenous communities adapt to modern life, their languages and knowledge systems are increasingly marginalized (Luwum Street, 2023).

These indigenous knowledge systems, often passed down through generations, are essential for the preservation of unique identities and the sustainable management of ecosystems; however, many indigenous languages are currently endangered, with their decline threatening the loss of vital knowledge. In this digital age, leveraging digital media technologies offers a promising avenue for the revitalization and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems and languages (Ajani, Oladokun, Olarongbe, Amaechi, Rabiu, & Bashorun, 2024). In Niger State, numerous ethnic groups speak a rich array of languages, Nupe, Gwari, Kambari, Gade, Kamuku, and many more, many of which are at risk of disappearing. This alarming decline signals not only the erosion of linguistic diversity but also a dramatic weakening of cultural heritage. The preservation of endangered languages is a moral, cultural, and linguistic imperative. Digital media and Artificial Intelligence, when used strategically and responsibly, can aid in conserving linguistic diversity for future generations in Niger State.

The combination of community participation, policy support, educational programs, and technology can enable endangered languages to flourish once again, securing their place in the rich linguistic landscape of the state. This paper focuses on strategies for preserving these endangered languages by leveraging digital media

and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in their documentation, revitalization, and transmission to future generations. This paper focuses on strategies for preserving these endangered languages by leveraging digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies in their documentation, revitalization, and transmission to future generations (Ajani et al., 2024).

Problem Statement

Indigenous languages in Niger State are increasingly endangered due to the growing influence of dominant languages, changing cultural practices, and the effects of globalization. This alarming decline poses a significant threat to the rich linguistic heritage, cultural diversity, and collective identity of the state's ethnic groups. Without intervention, many of these languages may become extinct within a generation, resulting in the permanent loss of traditional knowledge, history, and expression. While previous efforts have been made to document and teach these languages, the process is often constrained by limited resources, poor documentation methods, and a shortage of trained practitioners. Furthermore, the growing popularity of digital media, alongside innovations in Artificial Intelligence (AI), presents a unique opportunity for preserving and revitalizing endangered languages, yet these tools remain underexplored and underutilized in Niger State.

This study, therefore, seeks to investigate how digital media and Artificial Intelligence can be leveraged to aid the preservation of indigenous languages in Niger State. Specifically, it aims to identify the digital media platforms, tools, and strategies that can be used to create, disseminate, and sustain linguistic knowledge; as well as to explore the role of Artificial Intelligence in developing speech recognition, translation, and educational applications to aid the process of revitalization. The ultimate objective is to contribute to the safeguarding of linguistic diversity in Niger State and to enable future generations to appreciate and learn their ancestral languages in a rapidly changing world.

Research questions
1. What are the relevance of indigenous knowledge preservation?
2. What are the impact of digital media and AI in preserving indigenous knowledge?
3. What are the challenges of digital media and AI in preserving indigenous knowledge?
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Objectives of the study
1. Examine the relevance of indigenous knowledge preservation
2. Examine the impact of digital media and AI in preserving indigenous knowledge
3. Identify the challenges of digital media and AI in preserving indigenous knowledge

II. Material And Methods

A Cross-Sectional Survey Design was used. The Design requires that Data be collected at a particular time from the sample, and generalization of findings is then made on the entire Population. The Design was employed because it constitutes an appropriate way of obtaining facts and figures. The study used purposive sampling (also called judgmental sampling) and stratified sampling. Purposive Sampling was used to identify and select key stakeholders and individuals who are directly involved in, or affected by, the preservation of indigenous languages in Niger State, for instance, community leaders, linguistic experts, educators, digital media practitioners, and policy makers. And stratified Sampling to account for variation across the different ethnic groups in Niger State, the population will first be divided into strata based on major ethnic or linguistic groups (such as Hausa, Nupe, Kamuku, and Gbagyi). From each stratum, a representative sample of participants was selected to enable comparison and to account for the perspectives of each group. The main instrument of data collection was a structured questionnaire designed on a Likert rating Scale. Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Simple Means and Percentages

III. Result

Table 1 shows the respondents' perceptions of the significance of preserving their indigenous language. The data are presented in frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. The first item, "Preserving my indigenous language is crucial for retaining our cultural heritage," recorded a mean score of 3.105 (SD = 1.6611), with 29.9% strongly agreeing and 32.1% strongly disagreeing. This shows a somewhat divided opinion on the matter. The majority (30.7%) strongly agreed with the item stating "Indigenous language helps foster a strong ethnic and community identity". This item recorded a mean score of 3.062 (SD = 1.6453), reflecting a similar split in opinion. For the item "The use of the indigenous language strengthens social bonds within the community", 55.0% strongly agreed, yielding a mean score of 2.129 (SD = 1.4777). This suggests that a majority appreciate its role in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, "Indigenous language carries knowledge, stories, and traditions from previous generations" had a strong majority (70.1%) strongly agreeing, with a mean score of 1.674 (SD = 1.2008), indicating strong affirmation of its significance in

preserving historical knowledge. In addition, "The preservation of my indigenous language contributes to educational and intellectual diversity" received strong agreement from 53.6% of respondents, yielding a mean score of 2.226 (SD = 1.5325), implying its role in adding depth and variety to education. Lastly, "Indigenous language preservation helps promote understanding and unity among community members" had 36.4% strongly agreeing, alongside 21.8% strongly disagreeing, with a mean score of 2.817 (SD = 1.6271), reflecting a somewhat divided view. Overall, the composite mean score for all the items was 2.502 (SD = 1.5241), suggesting that the respondents, on average, somewhat agree with the significance of preserving their indigenous language

Table no 1. Relevancy of Indigenous Language Preservation

	ITEMS	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1	Preserving my indigenous language is crucial for retaining our cultural heritage.	111 (29.9)	41 (11.1)	36 (9.7)	64 (17.3)	119 (32.1)	3.105	1.6611
2	Indigenous language helps foster a strong ethnic and community identity.	114 (30.7)	39 (10.5)	37 (10.0)	72 (19.4)	109 (29.4)	3.062	1.6453
3	The use of the indigenous language strengthens social bonds within the community	204 (55.0)	48 (13.0)	31 (8.4)	43 (11.6)	45 (12.1)	2.129	1.4777
4	Indigenous language carries knowledge, stories, and traditions from previous generations	260 (70.1)	39 (10.5)	25 (6.7)	27 (7.3)	20 (5.4)	1.674	1.2008
5	The preservation of my indigenous language contributes to educational and intellectual diversity	199 (53.6)	42 (11.3)	27 (7.3)	53 (14.3)	50 (13.5)	2.226	1.5325
6	Indigenous language preservation helps promote understanding and unity among community members.	135 (36.4)	44 (11.9)	27 (7.3)	84 (22.6)	81 (21.8)	2.817	1.6271
					Overall Mean		**2.502**	**1.5241**

Table 2 shows the respondents' perceptions of the impact of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered or unwritten languages. The data are presented in frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. The first item, "Digital media helps raise awareness about endangered languages," had 39.9% strongly agreeing, with a mean score of 2.822, indicating a somewhat unfavorable view toward its role in awareness-raising. The majority (39.4%) strongly agreed with the item stating "Artificial Intelligence can aid in preserving endangered languages". This item recorded a mean score of 2.787, reflecting a somewhat unfavorable perception. For the item "Digital media enables community members to learn their native language remotely", 43.7% strongly agreed, yielding a mean score of 2.601, which shows a less unfavorable view. Furthermore, "Digital media can foster greater collaboration" received strong agreement from 62.3% of respondents, with a mean score of 1.941, reflecting a predominantly favorable view toward its collaborative role. Lastly, "The growing use of digital media helps standardize and promote previously unwritten languages" had 49.9% strongly agreeing, with a mean score of 2.442, demonstrating a somewhat unfavorable view, yet more favorable than many other items. Overall, the composite mean score for all the items was 2.286, implying that the respondents somewhat agree with the role of digital media and Artificial Intelligence in preserving endangered or unwritten languages.

Table no 2. Impact of Digital Media and AI in Preserving Indigenous Languages

	ITEMS	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	Digital media helps raise awareness about endangered languages	148 (39.9)	43 (11.6)	10 (2.7)	67 (18.1)	103 (27.8)	2.822
2	Artificial Intelligence can aid in preserving endangered languages	146 (39.4)	47 (12.7)	15 (4.0)	66 (17.8)	97 (26.1)	2.787
3	Digital media enable community members to learn their native language remotely	162 (43.7)	47 (12.7)	18 (4.9)	65 (17.5)	79 (21.3)	2.601
4	Digital media can foster greater collaboration	231 (62.3)	42 (11.3)	26 (7.0)	33 (8.9)	39 (10.5)	1.941
5	The growing use of digital media helps standardize and promote previously unwritten languages.	185 (49.9)	34 (9.2)	27 (7.3)	53 (14.3)	72 (19.4)	2.442
					Overall Mean		**2.286**

Table 3 shows the respondents' perceptions of the challenges of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered or unwritten languages. The data are presented in frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations. The first item, "Limited financial resources prohibit the effective use of digital media in preserving endangered languages," recorded a mean score of 3.534, with 43.4%

strongly disagreeing, indicating that financial resources pose a significant challenge in employing digital media for language preservation.

Furthermore, "Shortage of trained technical experts to develop and manage digital preservation tools" had a mean score of 4.127, with 55.5% strongly disagreeing, reflecting a strong view that limited technical expertise constitutes a major hurdle in the process.

The item stating "Digital media platforms may prioritize dominant languages over endangered ones" (mean = 3.431) also shows a somewhat unfavorable view; nearly 39.9% strongly disagreed, implying that there's a concern about platform bias toward dominant languages. Additionally, "Some community members, especially the elderly, may find digital media difficult to use" (mean = 3.445) highlights the challenge related to digital literacy, with 41.2% strongly disagreeing, reflecting the view that many older members may struggle with new technologies in preserving their linguistic heritage.

Lastly, "Digital media may undermine traditional methods of language" (mean = 3.892) shows the highest level of disagreement, with 49.6% strongly disagreeing, implying a strong perception that digital media may undermine traditional practices related to language transmission. Overall, the composite mean score for all the items was 3.686, indicating that the respondents, on average, perceive a substantial number of challenges related to the use of digital media and Artificial Intelligence in preserving endangered or unwritten languages.

Table no 3. Challenges of Digital Media and AI in Preserving Indigenous Language

	ITEMS	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean
1	Limited financial resources prohibit the effective use of digital media in preserving endangered languages.	92 (24.8)	14 (3.8)	30 (8.1)	74 (19.9)	161 (43.4)	3.534
2	Shortage of trained technical experts to develop and manage digital preservation tools	40 (10.8)	8 (2.2)	23 (6.2)	94 (25.3)	206 (55.5)	4.127
3	Digital media platforms may prioritize dominant languages over endangered ones.	98 (26.4)	15 (4.0)	35 (9.4)	75 (20.2)	148 (39.9)	3.431
4	Some community members, especially the elderly, may find digital media difficult to use.	102 (27.5)	10 (2.7)	33 (8.9)	73 (19.7)	153 (41.2)	3.445
5	Digital media may undermine traditional methods of language.	57 (15.4)	11 (3.0)	31 (8.4)	88 (23.7)	184 (49.6)	3.892
						Overall Mean	**3.686**

IV. Discussion

This study investigated community perceptions of the role of preserving their indigenous language in retaining cultural heritage, strengthening community bonds, and fostering understanding and unity. The overall mean score of 2.502 (SD = 1.524) signals a slight disagreement with these propositions, reflecting a growing concern that many community members do not view their indigenous language as a strong vehicle for cultural preservation or community unity. This view resonates with previous studies which show growing disinterest in retaining endangered languages due to pressures from dominant and official languages (Chaika, Sharmanova, & Makaruk, 2024).

Table 1 revealed preservation for cultural heritage (Mean = 3.105; SD = 1.661).The highest mean score was for Item 1 (mean = 3.105), indicating a slight disagreement with the notion that preserving their indigenous language is crucial for retaining cultural heritage. This observation resonates with Sallabank (2013) view that a community's loyalty to its language correlates directly with its perception of its role in preserving its culture. Furthermore, Martens (2023) underscores the danger that when a community disregards its native language, its traditional knowledge, ceremonies, and stories may diminish alongside its eventual linguistic erosion. Fostering Strong ethnic and community identity (Mean = 3.062; SD = 1.645). The community also shows weak agreement (mean = 3.06) that the language helps foster ethnic and community identity, a view supported by Misztal (2010), who maintains that language forms a key component of group solidarity and collective memory. This weak affirmation might reflect growing assimilation pressures or a growing view that other factors, such as religion or geographical ties, are more crucial for retaining their group's unity (Edwards, 2009). Strengthening Social Bonds (Mean = 2.129; SD = 1.478).

This item fell much lower (mean = 2.129), reflecting strong disagreement or uncertainty about the role of the indigenous language in strengthening social bonds. Al Abdely, (2016) highlights the role of shared language in fostering interpersonal relationships and community solidarity; however, this view might be challenged by growing migration, education, and media influence, which enable interpersonal ties without necessarily retaining a common native language (Ryan, 2011). Carrying knowledge, stories, and traditions (Mean = 1.674; SD = 1.201). The highest agreement (mean = 1.674) was for Item 4, which posited that the indigenous language carries knowledge, stories, and traditions from previous generations. This resonates with Jovchelovitch (2019) who state that the vocabulary, expressions, and narrative structures encapsulate a community's collective knowledge, historical experience, and moral lessons. Educational and intellectual

diversity (Mean = 2.226; SD = 1.533). With a mean of 2.226, respondents fell toward disagreement with the view that preserving their language contributes to educational and intellectual diversity. This might reflect policy priorities that predominantly promote the use of a dominant or international language (English or French) in education (Cummins, 2014). Promotion of understanding and unity (Mean = 2.817; SD = 1.627). Lastly, the community weakly disagreed (mean = 2.82) with the notion that their language helps promote understanding and unity among members. This observation diverges from the perspectives of Imran, & Natsir (2024), who collectively argue that shared language can foster interpersonal understanding and reconciliation. The variation (standard deviation = 1.627) signals a division in opinion, reflecting possibly conflicting perspectives within the community itself.

The composite mean score of 2.286 indicates that respondents somewhat agree with the role these technologies can play in preserving endangered or unwritten languages. This resonates with growing perspectives in the literature which suggest that digital media can aid in conserving linguistic diversity (Jovchelovitch 2019). The first item "Digital media helps raise awareness about endangered languages" with a mean score of 2.822, reveals that many respondents are somewhat unfavorable toward its role in awareness-raising. This view might be influenced by limited access to media or low media literacy in some communities (Cummins, 2014). However, this stands in contrast to the view that digital media, particularly social media platforms and multimedia campaigns, can aid in spreading knowledge about endangered languages and their significance (Imran, & Natsir 2024).

Similarly, the item stating "Artificial Intelligence can aid in preserving endangered languages" (mean = 2.787) shows a somewhat unfavorable perception. This might reflect a lack of understanding or awareness about the capabilities of Artificial Intelligence in linguistic data processing, automated transcription, and the revitalization of endangered dialects (Bouchard, 2025). Nevertheless, numerous studies highlight the growing role of Artificial Intelligence, from speech recognition to machine translation, in preserving linguistic heritage (Mammadova, 2024). In contrast, "Digital media enable community members to learn their native language remotely" (mean = 2.601) shows less unfavorable perceptions. This resonates with the view that online platforms enable diaspora communities and younger generations to connect with their linguistic roots, fostering revitalization (Zeng &Yang, 2024). Furthermore, "Digital media can foster greater collaboration" (mean = 1.941) was predominantly viewed positively by the majority of respondents (62.3% strongly agreeing). This is in keeping with the growing consensus in linguistic scholarship that collaboration and networking, facilitated by digital media, can aid community participation and contribute to the preservation of endangered languages (Mammadova, 2024).

Lastly, the item stating "The growing use of digital media helps standardize and promote previously unwritten languages" (mean = 2.442) reflects a somewhat unfavorable view, although nearly 50% strongly agreed. Standardization can aid the visibility, prestige, and eventual revitalization of a language (Imran, & Natsir 2024), yet there is a concern that standardization might undermine linguistic variation or authenticity (Romaine, 2007). Overall, these findings suggest a cautious but somewhat positive view of the role of digital media and Artificial Intelligence in preserving endangered and unwritten languages. The data indicate a growing awareness of their potential but also highlight the necessity for education, community participation, policy formulation, and the responsible application of technology in revitalization initiatives (Mammadova, 2024).

Table 3 shows the challenges related to the use of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered or unwritten languages. The composite mean score of 3.686 indicates a substantial perception among respondents that numerous obstacles exist in employing these technologies for language preservation. This resonates with growing perspectives in the literature that highlight financial, technical, and sociocultural barriers to revitalization initiatives (Mammadova, 2024).

The first item "Limited financial resources prohibit the effective use of digital media in preserving endangered languages"with a mean score of 3.534, reveals that many respondents perceive financial limitations as a significant barrier. This view is supported by the observation of Cormier (2012) that funding for linguistic revitalization is frequently scarce, making the implementation of digital media initiatives challenging. Furthermore, "Shortage of trained technical experts to develop and manage digital preservation tools" (mean = 4.127) stands out as a major challenge. This resonates with the view that preserving endangered languages through digital media and Artificial Intelligence cannot be effective without a pool of trained individuals who possess both linguistic expertise and technical skills (Mammadova, 2024).

The item stating "Digital media platforms may prioritize dominant languages over endangered ones" (mean = 3.431) further underscores structural inequalities within digital media. This observation resonates with Hannaford and Alexander, (2024) view that dominant linguistic varieties often enjoy greater visibility, resources, and prestige, while endangered varieties may remain underrepresented or neglected. Additionally, "Some community members, especially the elderly, may find digital media difficult to use" (mean = 3.445) highlights a significant generational barrier. This view resonates with empirical studies which show that older

generations may lack the digital literacy or confidence to navigate technology, thereby impeding their participation in preservation initiatives.

Lastly, "Digital media may undermine traditional methods of language" (mean = 3.892) reveals a strong concern that the growing reliance on digital media might undermine the authenticity or traditional practices related to language transmission. This concern is well documented by Hannaford and Alexander, (2024) who warn against disregarding traditional methods and ceremonies in the rush toward a predominantly digital approach. Overall, these results indicate that while digital media and Artificial Intelligence hold great potential for preserving endangered and unwritten languages, there are significant financial, technical, structural, generational, and cultural barriers that need to be addressed to maximize their impact. Collaborative strategies, involving community stakeholders, policy makers, and technical experts, are essential for navigating these challenges and ensuring that linguistic heritage is preserved for future generations (Black, 2016).

V. Conclusion

This study investigated community perceptions of the role of preserving their indigenous language and retaining cultural heritage, strengthening community bonds, and fostering understanding and unity. The composite mean score of 2.502 (SD = 1.524) signals a slight disagreement with these propositions, reflecting a growing concern that many community members do not view their indigenous language as a strong vehicle for cultural preservation or community unity. This view resonates with previous studies, which show growing disinterest in retaining endangered languages due to pressures from dominant and official languages.

Furthermore, the composite mean score of 2.286 for the role of digital media and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in preserving endangered or unwritten languages indicates that respondents somewhat agree with their potential. This resonates with growing perspectives in the literature suggesting that digital media can aid in conserving linguistic diversity. However, financial, technical, structural, generational, and cultural barriers must be addressed to maximize their impact. Key challenges identified include limited financial resources, shortage of trained technical experts, and domination by major languages on digital media platforms, low digital literacy, especially among the elderly, and growing concerns that reliance upon digital media may undermine traditional methods of language transmission. Collaborative strategies involving community stakeholders, policy makers, technical experts, and educators are therefore essential for navigating these barriers and ensuring the preservation of linguistic heritage for future generations.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:
1. **Increase funding and financial support:** Allocate financial resources and incentives to aid in the digital preservation of endangered and unwritten languages.
2. **Training and capacity-building:** Develop training programs to equip community members, educators, and technical experts with the skills needed to create, manage, and sustain digital media initiatives.
3. **Platform policy reform:** Implement policy guidelines that promote visibility and representation for endangered and unwritten languages across digital media platforms.
4. **Inclusive digital literacy campaigns:** Provide digital literacy training to community members, especially the elderly, to enable greater participation in preserving their linguistic heritage.
5. **Collaborative approach:** Engage stakeholders, community members, policy makers, linguistic experts, educators, and technical innovators, in designing and executing strategies for preserving endangered and unwritten languages.
6. **Balancing tradition and innovation:** Combine traditional methods of transmission with digital media and Artificial Intelligence to enable a holistic approach that maintains authenticity while embracing modern tools.

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