

Digital Media Interaction and Indigenous Language Preservation in Delta State Tertiary Institutions

*Josephine Omonigho Akporokah and Emujevoke Victor Okagbare

Departments of Arts, School of General Studies, Delta State Polytechnic Otefe – Oghara, Delta State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author. Email: omonighojosephine411@gmail.com.

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This study investigated the extent of use of indigenous languages for digital media interaction and its impact on the preservation of indigenous languages among tertiary institution students in Delta State. The study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional survey design, targeting a population of 65,752 students from nine tertiary institutions in Delta State. A sample of 3,288 students were selected through multistage sampling procedure. Data collection was conducted with a structured questionnaire titled "Digital Media and Indigenous Language Preservation" (DMILP), which had a reliability index of 0.93. Analysis was performed using SPSS statistical tools such as percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The study revealed that English is the predominant language used on digital media, with 98.70% of students using it, followed by slangs/shorthand (88.20%) and Nigerian Pidgin (69.50%). Among indigenous languages, Urhobo (21.30%), Isoko (17.16%), and Ijaw (9.52%) were the most used. The overall use of indigenous languages on digital media was low, with a mean score of 2.29 ± 1.38 . Students reported moderate comfort using indigenous languages on digital media (mean = 2.50 ± 0.70) but found it challenging to express ideas and emotions in these languages (mean = 1.86 ± 1.41). The impact of digital media on indigenous language preservation was mixed, with general agreement that digital media does not significantly help maintain intergenerational transmission or provide adequate educational resources (overall mean = 2.60 ± 1.03). It was concluded that digital media interaction though expected to increase the promotion of indigenous language have rather deteriorated the preservation of indigenous languages in Delta State with English, Nigerian pidgin and slangs overshadowing the students use of indigenous languages in communication. Hence, among other recommendations, tertiary institutions and government must develop and implement digital resources and educational programs that encourage the use of indigenous languages on digital media.

Keywords: Digital media, indigenous language preservation, Interactions, Tertiary Institutions, Students, Delta State

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

In today's rapidly evolving global environment, digital media has emerged as a transformative force across multiple domains, including communication, education, and cultural preservation. The proliferation of digital platforms has revolutionized how information is created, distributed, consumed, and archived (Dahlman et al., 2016). For developing nations such as Nigeria, this digital shift presents both challenges and opportunities, particularly in addressing socio-economic issues and promoting sustainable development (Nowak, 2019).

A critical area of concern is the preservation of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Despite the country's rich linguistic diversity, the increasing dominance of global languages—especially English—and the forces of globalization have led to a steady decline in the use of indigenous languages, particularly among young people in tertiary institutions (Olabde, 2019; Owolabi, 2022; Ukonu et al., 2017). In Delta State, this trend is especially pronounced. The limited and inconsistent use of indigenous languages among students raises serious concerns about long-term linguistic and cultural sustainability (Olabde, 2019).

Digital media usage is pervasive among Nigerian youth. Recent studies reveal that over 80% of students engage with digital media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp on a daily basis (Adeosun and Akinwalere, 2024; Udoinwang, 2024). While these platforms offer potential avenues for promoting indigenous language use, current trends indicate that students primarily communicate in English and Nigerian Pidgin on these platforms (Ukonu et al., 2017). This practice marginalizes indigenous languages, reducing their relevance in everyday digital interactions and undermining their intergenerational transmission.

Despite the increasing influence of digital media, there is a significant gap in empirical research on how these platforms affect indigenous language use and preservation in Delta State. The extent to which students in tertiary institutions engage with indigenous languages on digital platforms—and the implications of these behaviors for language sustainability—remains inadequately explored. This study seeks to fill that gap by critically examining how digital media influences the use and preservation of indigenous languages among tertiary institution students in Delta State (Ukonu et al., 2017).

By focusing on this specific demographic, the study aims to uncover both the challenges and the potential of digital media in supporting linguistic heritage. The findings are expected to shed light on the declining presence of indigenous languages in digital spaces and the consequent risk of cultural erosion.

Furthermore, the study aims to inform strategies that promote the use of indigenous languages on digital platforms, ultimately contributing to broader efforts in cultural preservation and national development.

As internet penetration and mobile technology adoption continue to rise, the potential to harness digital media for language preservation becomes increasingly feasible. This research, therefore, not only addresses a critical gap in the literature but also provides a foundation for policy recommendations and educational initiatives that can leverage digital media as a tool for sustaining Nigeria's indigenous languages and promoting national progress.

Problem statement and Justification

Despite the widespread belief that digital media holds transformative potential for the revitalization and promotion of indigenous languages, emerging evidence suggests that its current usage trends among young people—particularly tertiary institution students in Delta State—may be contributing to linguistic erosion rather than preservation (Minhas and Salawu, 2024; Muchena and Jakaza, 2022; Olabode, 2019). Rather than fostering indigenous language engagement, platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram are predominantly characterized by interactions in English, Nigerian Pidgin, and digital slang, thereby marginalizing

native languages in everyday discourse (Ukonu et al., 2017; Udoinwang, 2022). This phenomenon has accelerated a generational language shift that threatens the sustainability of Nigeria's rich linguistic heritage and undermines national identity (Nowak, 2019). Studies from similar multilingual societies have shown comparable outcomes, as seen in the diminished use of Shona in Kenya and the endangered status of African languages among youth in South Africa and the Amazon (Muchena and Jakaza, 2022; Malatji, 2019; Vallejos, 2014). This growing trend underscores a critical need to assess how the digital environment influences language use and whether it perpetuates or impedes indigenous language preservation.

This study is justified by the urgent need to examine the complex interplay between digital media interactions and indigenous language sustainability in Delta State—a context marked by rich linguistic diversity but increasing digital homogenization. Empirical gaps persist in understanding how often and in what ways tertiary students engage with indigenous languages in digital spaces, as well as the role of online platforms in either facilitating or hindering intergenerational language transmission (Udoh, 2024). In the context of globalization and the growing dominance of digital communication, which continue to exacerbate linguistic vulnerabilities, this study aims to produce actionable insights to inform policy development and educational strategies for indigenous language revitalization.

Drawing on international and local studies advocating for the integration of indigenous language practices into modern technologies and digital repositories, the study contributes to scholarly discourse and practical frameworks that promote cultural resilience. Its outcomes will help shape interventions that not only preserve Nigeria's indigenous languages but also align with global sustainable development goals through inclusive linguistic and digital engagement. The growing prevalence of internet and mobile technology offers a unique chance to utilise digital media for the preservation of languages and the advancement of nations. This article seeks to examine these processes, with a specific focus on the capacity of digital media to save indigenous languages and make a positive contribution to Nigeria's overall progress.

Objectives of the study

This study will investigate the extent to which tertiary institution students in Delta State use indigenous languages on digital media and how this behaviour impacts the preservation of indigenous languages. Specifically, the following objectives will guide the study:

1. Determine the language tertiary students use the most while interacting on digital media.
2. Examine the extent to which tertiary institution students communicate in indigenous language through digital media.

3. Establish the impact of students' digital media interaction on indigenous language preservation.

Research questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What languages do tertiary students use the most while interacting on digital media?
2. What is the extent to which tertiary institution students communicate in indigenous language through digital media?
3. What is the impact of students' digital media interaction on indigenous language preservation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual framework

The concept of digital media

Digital media refers to a diverse array of online platforms and technology that enable the production, distribution, and consumption of material. These encompass digital media platforms, websites, blogs, and diverse multimedia formats. Digital media in modern society plays a multifaceted role, going beyond simple communication. It functions as a means for education, activism, and artistic expression. Within the realm of language and culture, digital media provides novel methods for recording, disseminating, and rejuvenating linguistic legacy. Digital media platforms facilitate the exchange of ideas, stories, and languages among communities, allowing for meaningful conversations and the preservation of cultural heritage (Hamelin and Halawa, 2024; Ajah and Chigozie-Okwum, 2019).

Digital media refers to content that is created, stored, and distributed through electronic means, utilizing the internet and digital technologies. This encompasses text, audio, video, images, and interactive formats, which are delivered via various platforms such as websites, digital media, streaming services, and mobile applications (Siregar, 2022; Vallejos, 2014). The defining characteristic of digital media is its reliance on digital technologies for both production and dissemination, setting it apart from traditional media forms like print newspapers, radio, and television (Nowak, 2019). One core aspect of digital media is its interactivity. Unlike traditional media, which often delivers content through a one-way communication model, digital media allows for two-way interaction between content creators and users (Leonard et al., 2020). This interactive capability is particularly evident in digital media platforms where users can like, share, comment on, and even create content. Digital media also enables real-time updates and instant communication, fostering a dynamic and engaged user experience (Muchena and Jakaza, 2022).

Digital media offers enhanced accessibility and convenience. Content can be accessed from anywhere at any time, provided there is an internet connection (Barrier, 2017). This ubiquitous nature breaks down geographical barriers, allowing information to spread quickly and widely. Furthermore, digital media often incorporates multimedia elements, combining text, audio, video, and graphics to create rich, engaging content that appeals to diverse audiences (Murray et al., 2017).

The role of digital media extends beyond entertainment and communication; it significantly impacts education, business, and social activism. For instance, online courses and educational videos provide flexible learning opportunities, while digital marketing is essential for businesses to reach and engage with customers (Fägerlind and Saha, 2016; Melaiye, 2019). Social movements leverage on digital media to mobilize support, raise awareness, and influence public opinion (Wallerstein, 2023).

The concept of language and language preservation

Language is a systematic arbitrary set of linguistic symbols. Language is a tool in the hands of its users. It is employed by human beings to serve different purposes, and its primary purpose is communication. Language is used to communicate ideas, feelings, information, and many others. Whether in its written or spoken form, language is inevitable in human interaction (Olabode, 2019). Bloch and Trager (1942) define it as "a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates". Sapir (1921) asserts that it is "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". It can be deduced from these definitions that language fosters human interaction. Language is a system of communication that caters for the communicative needs of a particular speech community.

Language preservation therefore involves efforts to maintain, protect, and revitalize languages that are at risk of becoming extinct. Language preservation is a complex and multifaceted concept that requires a comprehensive, adaptive, and context-specific approach. The definitions provided by Vallejos (2014), Muchena and Jakaza (2022), Kibrik (2021), Adam et al. (2022), Siregar (2022a, 2022b), Nowak (2019), Leonard et al. (2020), Palotai, (2019), and Kadirova (2022) each highlight different aspects of this process, from the importance of academic and community collaboration to the need for flexible, dynamic strategies and structured, programmatic efforts.

Language preservation involves a spectrum of efforts aimed at maintaining and revitalizing languages facing the threat of extinction. Vallejos (2014) defines language preservation as the integration of documentation, preservation, and linguistic research, emphasizing a comprehensive, collaborative approach involving both academic

and community-based initiatives. Muchena and Jakaza (2022) describe it as strategies to prevent language loss and promote continued use, focusing on the need for flexibility and adaptability in preserving both traditional elements and modern applications. Kibrik (2021) views language preservation as a programmatic effort, highlighting the role of structured, organized programmes, often supported by governmental or institutional frameworks. Adam et al. (2022) define language preservation through the lens of typological threats, focusing on identifying and addressing specific challenges such as reduced speaker populations and lack of intergenerational transmission. Additionally, Siregar (2022a) underscores the need for context-sensitive strategies that consider unique regional cultural and linguistic contexts, while Nowak (2019) links language preservation to multiculturalism and autonomy, emphasizing its role in maintaining cultural identity and diversity. Leonard et al., (2020) focus on the preservation of linguistic and cultural identity among diaspora communities, highlighting the role of maintaining cultural connections in a globalized world. Palotai et al. (2019) emphasize educational initiatives in diaspora settings, and Kadirova (2022) stresses the importance of preserving linguistic heritage to safeguard national identity. Siregar (2022b) further discusses community involvement and culturally relevant approaches, emphasizing alignment with local practices and values.

These definitions collectively underscore the complexity of language preservation, reflecting the need for multifaceted, context-sensitive, and dynamic approaches. Vallejos' comprehensive strategy points to the importance of integrating academic research with community initiatives, suggesting that effective language preservation requires both theoretical and practical engagement. Muchena and Jakaza's emphasis on adaptability highlights the necessity of balancing tradition with modernity, ensuring that languages remain relevant and functional in contemporary contexts. Kibrik's programmatic approach and Adam et al.'s analytical framework both underscore the need for structured, well-supported initiatives that can systematically address specific challenges and threats to language vitality. The regional and contextual focus presented by Siregar (2022a, b) and the broader social and political dimensions emphasized by Nowak (2019) and Kadirova (2022) suggest that language preservation efforts must be deeply rooted in the cultural and social contexts of the communities they aim to serve. The focus on diaspora communities by Leonard et al. (2020) and Palotai et al. (2019) underscores the importance of maintaining cultural connections in a globalized world, highlighting the role of education and community engagement in preserving linguistic identity. Overall, these viewpoints suggest that effective strategies for preserving endangered languages must be comprehensive, flexible, and responsive to specific contexts, integrating both top-down policy initiatives and grassroots efforts to adequately tackle the complex challenges confronting

language sustainability.

Theoretical framework

Applying the diffusion of innovations theory to digital media, language preservation, and national development

This study is anchored on Everett M. Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory (1962), which provides a robust lens for understanding the interaction between digital media, language preservation, and national development. The theory posits those innovations — such as digital technologies — are communicated over time through specific channels within a social system. Its core elements include the innovation itself, the communication channels, time, and the social system. These components are instrumental in analyzing how digital media, as a contemporary innovation, is adopted and utilized to influence the sustainability of indigenous languages and contribute to broader developmental goals.

In this context, digital media is viewed as an innovation that facilitates the dissemination and revitalization of linguistic and cultural content. The theory supports the notion that digital platforms enable communities to document, share, and promote endangered languages (Vallejos, 2014; Siregar, 2022), which is crucial for maintaining linguistic diversity and cultural identity (Muchena and Jakaza, 2022; Kibrik, 2021). Moreover, the diffusion of digital media enhances national development by improving access to education, digital literacy, and economic participation (Fägerlind and Saha, 2016; Melaiye, 2019). Rogers' theory also suggests that innovations are more likely to flourish in social systems receptive to change — thus, societies that embrace digital media infrastructure and policies experience more rapid progress (Murray et al., 2017; Sutriadi, 2018). Therefore, the Diffusion of Innovations Theory aptly explains how digital media adoption can simultaneously support linguistic preservation and catalyze socio-economic growth, aligning cultural sustainability with national development imperatives (Nowak, 2019; Tomislav, 2018).

Empirical studies

Digital media platforms provide a unique opportunity for the revitalization of indigenous languages by offering a space for their use, dissemination, and learning. For instance, a study by Galla (2016) highlights how digital technology, including digital media, has been instrumental in promoting indigenous language revitalization. The study emphasizes that platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube facilitate the sharing of linguistic content, making it accessible to a broader audience and

encouraging the active use of indigenous languages in everyday communication. Similarly, Edyangu (2021) conducted a case study on the use of digital media for indigenous language preservation in Uganda. The findings revealed that digital media can effectively engage younger generations, who are more inclined to use digital platforms, thereby fostering an interest in learning and using their native languages. This engagement is crucial for the intergenerational transmission of language, which is vital for its preservation. Furthermore, Botangen et al. (2018) found that digital media helps indigenous migrants maintain their linguistic and cultural identities. Their study on the Igorot peoples demonstrated that digital media provides a virtual community where speakers can interact in their native language, share cultural stories, and support each other, thereby contributing to the preservation of their linguistic heritage even when they are geographically dispersed.

Epps et al. (2017), in their study titled “Digital Documentation and the Future of Linguistic Diversity,” highlight a critical challenge in the use of digital media for language preservation. They emphasize that although digital technologies offer innovative avenues for documenting and revitalizing minority languages, they also inadvertently reinforce existing sociolinguistic hierarchies that privilege dominant global languages, particularly English. This linguistic dominance on digital platforms often leads to the marginalization of indigenous languages, as users are more likely to communicate in widely spoken languages to reach broader audiences and enhance their online visibility. Consequently, despite the positive potential of digital tools, the unchecked spread of global languages through these platforms may unintentionally accelerate language shift and cultural erosion among smaller language communities, especially those with limited digital representation. The authors argue for intentional, context-sensitive strategies to counteract these effects and ensure the equitable inclusion of indigenous languages in digital spaces. Amah and Tende (2020) noted that globalization and the pervasive use of English on digital media have contributed to the erosion of indigenous languages in Nigeria, as people increasingly adopt English for digital media interactions. Additionally, Adam et al. (2022) identified that the lack of adequate digital resources and support for indigenous languages on digital media platforms hampers their preservation. Their analysis on the Kensiu language pointed out that many digital media platforms do not support indigenous language fonts or keyboards, making it difficult for users to write and communicate in their native languages. Another negative impact is highlighted by Minhas and Salawu (2024), who found that the content shared in indigenous languages on digital media is often limited and not as engaging as content in global languages. This disparity in content quality and quantity can discourage users from engaging with indigenous languages, further contributing to their decline.

Generally, while digital media holds significant potential for the preservation and revitalization of indigenous languages, it also presents challenges that need to be addressed. Studies by Galla (2016), Edyangu (2021), and Botangen et al. (2018) illustrate the positive impacts, such as fostering intergenerational transmission and maintaining cultural identity. However, the findings of Amah and Tende (2020), Adam et al. (2022), and Minhas and Salawu (2024) underscore the negative effects, including the dominance of global languages and the lack of digital resources.

Empirical studies have revealed both the promise and the limitations of digital media in preserving indigenous languages. Researchers such as Galla (2016), Edyangu (2021), and Botangen et al. (2018) affirm that digital platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube provide invaluable tools for revitalizing indigenous languages by fostering intergenerational transmission and sustaining cultural identity across dispersed communities. These studies highlight how digital media engages younger users and provides a virtual space for linguistic interaction, helping bridge generational and geographic divides. However, despite this optimism, other studies have pointed to significant shortcomings. For instance, Epps et al. (2017) emphasize that digital media can reinforce sociolinguistic inequalities by privileging dominant global languages like English. Amah and Tende (2020) and Adam et al. (2022) further reveal that the absence of technical support—such as indigenous language fonts and keyboards—limits effective digital engagement, while Minhas and Salawu (2024) identify the low quantity and quality of indigenous content as a major deterrent to user engagement.

This report reveals a crucial gap: while the potential of digital media to preserve indigenous languages is well recognized, there is limited empirical focus on how to systematically overcome the sociotechnical and content-related barriers hindering effective utilization. Most studies stop short of offering actionable strategies that address the digital marginalization of indigenous languages in specific cultural contexts. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by investigating how digital media can be strategically employed to promote indigenous language preservation in a way that is inclusive, sustainable, and context-sensitive. It will explore not only the enabling roles of digital platforms but also the constraints that must be addressed—such as content creation, community engagement, and technological infrastructure—to ensure indigenous languages are not only represented but thrive in the digital space.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The researcher adopted a descriptive cross sectional survey design. That is to say that data was collected from a large sample in their natural setting without manipulation (Kotheri and Garg, 2014).

Table 1. Population for the study.

Institution Name	Population
Delta State University, Abraka	36,232
University of Delta, Agbor	9,131
Western Delta University, Oghara	2,516
Calvary Polytechnic, Owa-Oyibo	1,322
Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara	7,897
Bellmark Polytechnic, Kwale	1,514
Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba	3,123
Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar	1,800
College of Education, Edjeba Road, Warri	2,217
Total	65,752

Source: collected through pre-study visits to schools and websites.

Table 2. sample determination using proportionate sampling technique.

Institution Name	Population	Sample Size (5%)
Delta State University, Abraka	36,232	1,812
University of Delta, Agbor	9,131	457
Western Delta University, Oghara	2,516	126
Calvary Polytechnic, Owa-Oyibo	1,322	66
Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara	7,897	395
Bellmark Polytechnic, Kwale	1,514	76
Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba	3,123	156
Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar	1,800	90
College of Education, Edjeba Road, Warri	2,217	111
Total	65,752	3,288

Area of study: This study was conducted in Delta State. Specifically, the study was conducted in nine (9) tertiary institutions consisting of three Universities, three Polytechnics and three Colleges of Education, which include: Delta State University, Abraka; University of Delta, Agbor; Western Delta University, Oghara; Calvary Polytechnic, Owa-Oyibo; Delta State Polytechnic, Oghara; Bellmark Polytechnic, Kwale; Federal College of Education (Technical), Asaba; Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar and College of Education, Edjeba Road, Warri.

Population: The population for the study was sixty-five thousand, five hundred and fifty-two (65,552) tertiary institution students in Delta State (Table 1). This was a composition of the students in the nine institutions included in the study. The population was gotten through their website and admonition offices of the schools.

Sample and sampling technique: The sample for the study was three thousand, two hundred and eighty and eight (3,288). The sample was drawn using multistage sampling procedure including systematic random sampling technique, proportionate stratified sampling technique and cluster random sampling technique. The systematic random sampling technique was used to draw the institutions included in the study. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was used to draw 5% of the population of the students in each school (Table 2). While cluster random sampling was used to draw the participants from each school.

Data collection: The data for the study was collected using a closed ended structured questionnaire designed and validated by

linguistics and communication experts. The instrument was titled Digital Media and Indigenous Language Preservation (DMILP) and sectioned into three (A, B, and C). The section A featured the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Section B consisted of 7 items that was used to garner the languages mostly used by the students in digital media interaction and extent of use of indigenous language in digital media interaction. Apart from the first item, which was structured as a multiple-choice question, the remaining six items were designed using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Very High Extent" (4) to "Very Low Extent" (1). Section C contained 10 items, also structured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" (4) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). These items were utilized to gather data on the impact of digital media on indigenous languages preservation. In all, the instrument consisted of 20 items with a reliability index of 0.93, which according to Saunders et al. (2019), is an excellent reliability score.

Procedures of Data Analysis: The data collected was analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistical tools, which included percentage, mean and standard deviation. These tools were employed to analyse the demographic features and research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Figure 1 revealed the demographic data, which shows the distribution of gender, age, and ethnicity among the surveyed population. In terms of gender, there are 48.40%

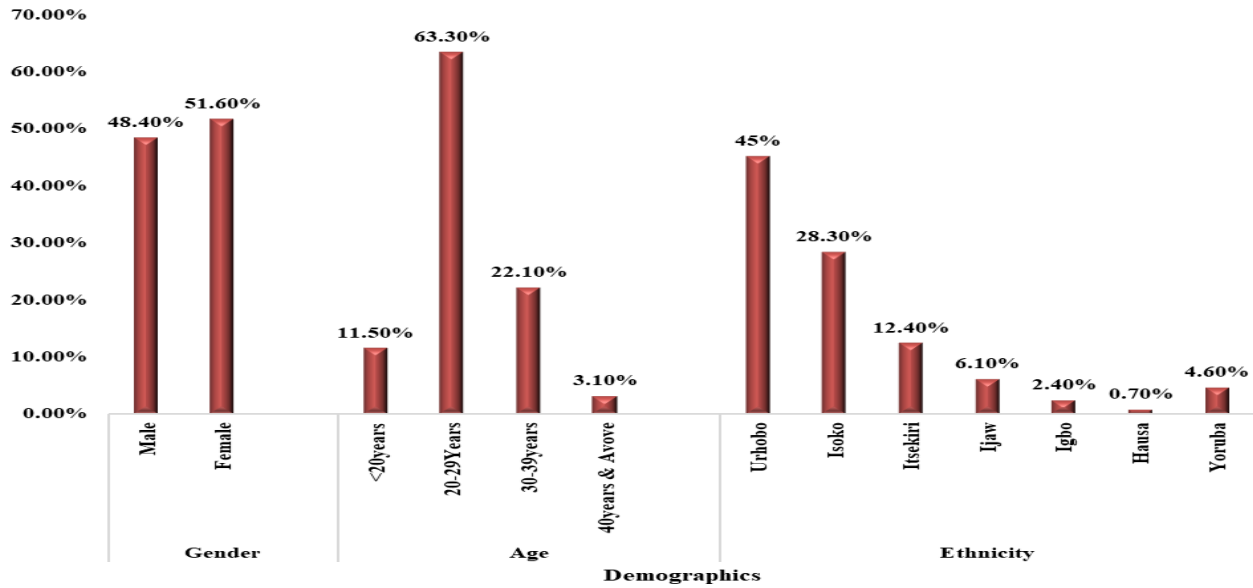


Figure 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

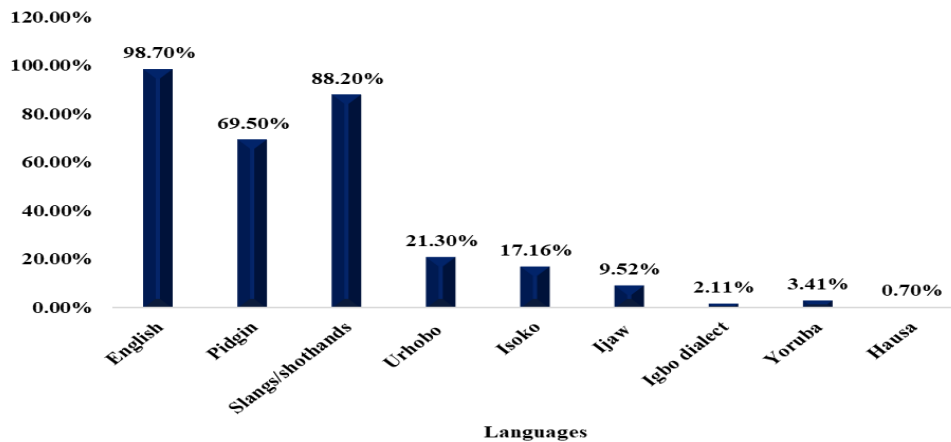


Figure 2. Languages students mostly used while interacting on digital media.

males and 51.60% females. Age-wise, 11.50% are below 20 years, the majority (63.30%) fall within the 20-29 years age bracket, 22.10% are aged 30-39 years, and 3.10% are 40 years or older. This age result was not surprising as MSc and PhD students also participated in the study. Ethnically, the largest group is the Urhobos, comprising 45% of the population. The Isokos follow with 28.30%, while the Itsekiris account for 12.40%. The Ijaws make up 6.10%, and the Igbos constitute 2.40%. Smaller groups include the Hausas at 0.70% and the Yorubas at 4.60%. This demographic breakdown highlights a young and ethnically diverse population, predominantly composed of the Urhobo and Isoko ethnic groups, with a slightly higher percentage of females.

The Figure 2 above shows the frequency (f) and percentage (%) of languages used by students while

interacting on digital media. The most used language is English with 3,245 students (98.70%), followed by Slangs/shorthand with 2,900 students (88.20%) and NigerianPidgin with 2,285 students (69.50%). Among indigenous languages, Urhobo is used by 700 students (21.30%), Isoko by 564 students (17.16%), and Ijaw by 313 students (9.52%). The Igbo dialect is used by 69 students (2.11%), Yoruba by 112 students (3.41%), and Hausa by 23 students (0.70%). This indicates that English is predominantly used, with significant use of Nigerian Pidgin and Slangs/Shorthand.

The Table 3 summarizes the extent to which tertiary institution students use indigenous languages for digital media interaction. The mean score for the overall use of indigenous languages in digital media interactions is 2.29 ± 1.38 , indicating a low extent of usage. Comfort in using

Table 3. Summary of extent to which tertiary institution students use indigenous languages for digital media interaction.

Item	Question	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	mean	St.D
1	To what extent do you use your indigenous language in digital media interactions?	432	652	1652	552	2.293187	1.377
2	To what extent are you comfortable using your indigenous language on digital media?	732	873	1001	682	2.503345	0.698
3	To what extent do you find it easy to express certain ideas or emotions in your indigenous language on digital media?	213	427	1328	1320	1.857968	1.408
4	To what extent do your friends and followers react to posts in your indigenous language?	889	761	1021	617	2.58455	0.765
5	To what extent do you participate in digital media groups or pages dedicated to your indigenous language and culture?	984	992	746	566	2.728102	0.833
6	To what extent has your vocabulary and fluency in your indigenous language improved due to digital media use?	214	453	1587	1034	1.953467	1.443
Aggregate		577	693	1223	795	2.32	1.087

Mean (<2.0: Very Low Extent; 2.0-2.49: Low Extent; 2.5-2.79: High Extent; & 2.8-4.00: Very High Extent).

Table 4. Summary analysis of the impact of digital media interaction on indigenous language preservation.

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.D
1	Using digital media does not help maintain intergenerational transmission of my indigenous language.	1032	764	772	720	2.641119	0.862
2	Digital media decreases fluency in the use of indigenous language among younger generations.	897	945	564	882	2.564781	0.908
3	Digital media interaction weakens my cultural identity and heritage.	564	665	1043	1016	2.236314	0.987
4	Digital media depreciates the student's ability to document and record indigenous language.	771	463	771	1283	2.219586	1.073
5	I do not use my indigenous language daily on digital media platforms.	1003	1324	684	277	2.928528	1.150
6	Digital media does not help preserve traditional knowledge and practices in my indigenous language.	896	993	643	756	2.617092	0.881
7	The use of English language/Nigerian pidgin on digital media decreases the number of speakers of my Indigenous languages	765	1432	654	437	2.767944	1.138
8	Digital media interaction does not help to maintain linguistic diversity by promoting my indigenous language.	934	1082	739	533	2.735097	0.982
9	Digital media does not provide adequate educational resources in my indigenous language.	1234	1076	832	146	3.033455	1.170
10	Engaging with my indigenous language on digital media does not motivate me to learn and use it more.	222	943	1438	685	2.213504	1.187
11	Aggregate	832	969	814	674	2.60	1.034

*Mean (<2.0: Strongly Disagreed; 2.0-2.49: Disagreed; 2.5-2.79: Agreed; & 2.8-4.00: Strongly Agreed).

indigenous languages on digital media has a mean score of 2.50 ± 0.70 , suggesting a moderate extent. Expressing ideas or emotions in indigenous languages is at 1.86 ± 1.41 , showing a very low extent. Friends' reactions to posts in indigenous languages score 2.58 ± 0.77 , indicating a high extent. Participation in digital media groups dedicated to indigenous languages is 2.73 ± 0.83 , reflecting a high extent. Improvement in vocabulary and fluency due to digital media use scores 1.95 ± 1.44 , indicating a very low extent.

The Table 4 summarizes the impact of digital media interaction on indigenous language preservation among tertiary institution students. The overall mean score for

the statements is 2.60 ± 1.03 , indicating general agreement. Specifically, the statement "Using digital media does not help maintain intergenerational transmission of my indigenous language" has a mean of 2.64 ± 0.86 , and "Digital media decreases fluency in the use of indigenous language among younger generations" scores 2.56 ± 0.91 , both indicating agreement. The highest mean is for "Digital media does not provide adequate educational resources in my indigenous language" at 3.03 ± 1.17 , suggesting strong agreement. Conversely, "Engaging with my indigenous language on digital media does not motivate me to learn and use it more" has a mean of 2.21 ± 1.19 , indicating disagreement.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which tertiary institution students in Delta State, Nigeria, use indigenous languages for digital media interaction and the impact of these interactions on the preservation of indigenous languages. The study's objectives were to identify the most frequently used languages on digital media among students, assess extent of using indigenous languages on digital media interaction, and determine the impact of digital media interaction on language preservation. The study reveals that English is the most used language on digital media among students, followed by Slangs/Shorthand and Nigerian Pidgin, with indigenous languages like Urhobo, Isoko, and Ijaw used much less frequently. The extent of using indigenous languages on digital media is generally low, with moderate comfort but very low fluency and vocabulary improvement. The impact of digital media on indigenous language preservation indicates a general agreement that it does not significantly help maintain intergenerational transmission or provide adequate educational resources, highlighting the challenges in preserving these languages through digital platforms.

The findings of this study directly relate to the aim and objectives by demonstrating a significant gap between the use of indigenous languages and digital media interaction among tertiary students in Delta State. Despite moderate comfort levels, the low usage and limited impact on language preservation indicate that current digital media platforms are insufficient for sustaining indigenous languages. This suggests an urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance indigenous language presence and usability online. Based on these results, it is recommended that educational institutions and policymakers develop culturally relevant digital content and language learning tools, promote indigenous language literacy programs, and support community-driven digital initiatives to foster greater use and preservation of indigenous languages in digital spaces.

Though recent digital media developments include the ability to surf the internet in Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba on Google Search Engine (GSE) and the availability of some indigenous language digital media pages including Wikipedia, this study underscores the need for targeted interventions to promote the use of indigenous languages on digital media. Educational institutions and policymakers should develop digital resources and support mechanisms to encourage students to use their native languages online. This could include creating language-specific content, providing language learning tools, and promoting indigenous languages through digital media campaigns. Furthermore, there should be a focus on integrating indigenous languages into formal education and digital literacy programs to ensure that students are comfortable and proficient in using these languages on digital platforms.

The study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may introduce response bias, as students may overestimate or underestimate their use of indigenous languages on digital media. Additionally, the study is limited to tertiary institutions in Delta State, which may not be representative of the entire Nigerian student population. Future research should consider a broader geographical scope and employ mixed methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital media on indigenous language preservation.

Recommendations

In line with the findings and conclusion of the study, the following were recommended:

1. Tertiary institutions and government must develop and implement digital resources and educational programs that encourage the use of indigenous languages on digital media.
2. Create and promote engaging content in indigenous languages through targeted digital media campaigns and community initiatives.
3. Integrate indigenous languages into formal education and digital literacy programs to enhance proficiency and comfort in their use on digital platforms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study revealed the low extent of indigenous language use on digital media among tertiary institution students in Delta State and the mixed impact of digital media on language preservation. While some studies support the finding that digital media does not significantly aid in language preservation, others suggest that with adequate support and resources, digital media can play a positive role. The theoretical and practical implications underscore the need for targeted interventions and strategic use of digital platforms to enhance the preservation of indigenous languages. Addressing the limitations and building on the findings of this study can provide valuable insights for future research and policy development in the field of language preservation.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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