


Preserving the Yoruba language: strategies, challenges, and prospects

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ARTICLE INFO	Abstract
<p>Keywords: <i>Indigenous language preservation, Yoruba language, cultural identity, language policy, linguistic sustainability.</i></p> <p>©2025 Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International</p> 	<p><i>The preservation of indigenous languages is critical to sustaining cultural identity, transmitting traditional knowledge, and promoting linguistic diversity in an increasingly globalized world. This paper examines the Yoruba language-one of Africa's most widely spoken indigenous languages-and explores the strategies employed for its preservation, the challenges impeding these efforts, and the prospects for its sustainable development. Drawing on a multidisciplinary approach, the study analyzes educational policies, media representation, digital technology integration, community-based initiatives, and the role of governmental and non-governmental organizations in safeguarding the language. Despite the Yoruba language's historical significance and wide usage in Nigeria and the diaspora, it faces gradual erosion due to the dominance of English, urbanization, and intergenerational language shift. Challenges such as inadequate curriculum implementation, lack of digital resources, limited official recognition, and declining interest among younger generations are highlighted. However, emerging opportunities-such as the development of AI-based language tools, Yoruba language apps, social media platforms, cultural festivals, and mother-tongue instruction in schools-offer renewed hope for revitalization. The paper argues for a more integrated and inclusive language policy framework, investment in technological innovation, and active community participation as essential to ensuring the language's survival. Through critical analysis, the study contributes to the broader discourse on indigenous language preservation and proposes context-sensitive strategies that are adaptable for other minority languages. Ultimately, preserving the Yoruba language is not merely a linguistic concern but a cultural imperative for safeguarding the heritage and identity of its speakers.</i></p>

Introduction

The Yoruba language, one of the most prominent languages in West Africa, is widely spoken by the Yoruba people, who are primarily located in Nigeria, but also in neighboring countries such as Benin and Togo. With an estimated 45 million native speakers, Yoruba is not only a linguistic marker for the people of Yoruba descent but also a powerful cultural and social force within the regions it is spoken. Yoruba, a member of the Niger-Congo language family, falls under the Kwa branch of the Volta-Niger languages. It has many dialects, which vary based on geographical location, but these dialects are mutually intelligible, allowing for seamless communication among Yoruba speakers across different regions (Janson, 2002).

The historical and cultural significance of the Yoruba language is deeply rooted in its ability to carry the oral traditions, philosophies, rituals, and historical narratives of the Yoruba people. Yoruba is a language rich in proverbs, idioms, and metaphors, all of which encapsulate the values, beliefs, and worldviews of the Yoruba community. These linguistic features are crucial for the preservation of Yoruba culture, as they serve not only as a means of communication but also as a repository for the community's history and moral teachings (Awoniyi, 1982).

Culturally, Yoruba is intertwined with religious practices, particularly within the context of Yoruba traditional religions, such as the worship of Orisha (spiritual deities). The language plays a significant role in rituals, ceremonies, and worship, with incantations and songs often being recited

in Yoruba. Yoruba's cultural footprint extends beyond Nigeria through the global spread of the diaspora, particularly through the transatlantic slave trade, which dispersed Yoruba-speaking people to places such as the Americas and the Caribbean. In these regions, elements of Yoruba language and culture have survived and evolved, influencing local languages, music, and religious practices. In the Americas, especially in Cuba, Brazil, and Trinidad and Tobago, Yoruba has been a central influence on Afro-descendant cultural identities and the development of spiritual traditions like Santería, Candomblé, and Vodun (Peel, 2003).

The global presence of the Yoruba language is thus not limited to its native geographic areas. Yoruba is also increasingly spoken in diaspora communities across Europe, North America, and the Caribbean, where the language is used to foster a sense of identity and continuity with cultural roots. The prominence of Yoruba in the digital age, particularly through social media, online platforms, and mobile applications, continues to expand its global reach, making it not only a cultural marker but also an active participant in contemporary global communication (Akinmade, 2010).

The Yoruba language, like many indigenous languages around the world, faces significant challenges in terms of preservation. These challenges stem from both internal and external forces that threaten the survival and vitality of the language. This study seeks to address the urgent need for preserving Yoruba, considering its cultural, social, and historical importance, especially in light of the rapid globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of global languages such as English.

One of the primary threats to the Yoruba language is the increasing dominance of English in Nigeria and other parts of the world where Yoruba is spoken. In Nigeria, English is the official language and is used in government, business, education, and media. The widespread use of English, coupled with its association with modernity, social mobility, and access to global opportunities, has led to a decline in the use of indigenous languages such as Yoruba, particularly among younger generations. The pervasive use of English in educational institutions has resulted in many Yoruba speakers opting to use English as their primary mode of communication, thereby neglecting their mother tongue (Bamgbose, 2000).

In addition to the influence of English, urbanization poses a significant threat to the preservation of the Yoruba language. The migration of young people from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities has led to a shift in language practices. In urban centers, where there is a higher concentration of non-Yoruba speakers, the use of Yoruba often diminishes in favor of more widely spoken languages. As communities become more cosmopolitan, the generational transmission of Yoruba becomes less frequent, with younger generations increasingly unable or unwilling to speak the language fluently (Smith, 2008).

Another major challenge in preserving the Yoruba language is the lack of comprehensive language policies and educational frameworks that support the language's growth and development. Although Yoruba is recognized as one of the major languages of Nigeria, it is often relegated to the status of a secondary language in educational institutions. The Yoruba language is taught sporadically in schools, and even where it is offered, it is often not given the same priority as English or other subjects. The absence of a standardized orthography and the lack of resources for effective teaching and learning materials further hinder the language's development (Awoniyi, 1994). This educational neglect is compounded by the limited use of Yoruba in formal settings, such as in the judiciary, politics, and other key societal institutions.

Technological advancements, while offering some opportunities for language revitalization, also present challenges for the Yoruba language. While the digital age has seen the rise of mobile apps, social media platforms, and online resources promoting Yoruba language learning, the development of these resources is still in its infancy. Many of the technological tools and applications that could be used for language preservation are underdeveloped or unavailable, and there is a lack of coordinated effort to ensure that Yoruba is effectively integrated into digital platforms (Akinmade, 2010).

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for the preservation and revitalization of the Yoruba language. The global spread of Yoruba-speaking communities, particularly through migration and the African diaspora, presents an opportunity for the language to flourish outside its traditional home. The Yoruba language has the potential to play a central role in fostering a sense of identity and community among the Yoruba diaspora, particularly through the promotion of cultural and linguistic heritage (Peel, 2003). Additionally, the rise of social media platforms has created a new space for language practice and exchange. Many Yoruba speakers, especially the youth, are increasingly using social media to communicate in their mother tongue, creating a space for the language to thrive in contemporary contexts. The use of Yoruba in online conversations, blogs, music videos, and podcasts can contribute to the language's relevance in modern society (Smith, 2008).

Moreover, the development of language technologies such as mobile applications, online dictionaries, and automated translation tools offers new ways to engage with the Yoruba language. These tools can help preserve the language by making it more accessible and easier to learn for younger generations, both within Nigeria and in the diaspora (Bamgbose, 2000). The importance of preserving the Yoruba language cannot be overstated. Language is not merely a means of communication but also a vehicle for cultural transmission, identity formation, and social cohesion. For the Yoruba people, the language is intrinsically linked to their heritage, worldview, and religious practices. The loss of Yoruba would signify the erosion of a rich cultural legacy that has withstood centuries of change and adversity. Preserving Yoruba is not just about safeguarding a language; it is about ensuring that future generations maintain a connection to their cultural roots and continue to thrive within a globalized world.

Theoretical Framework: Language Preservation and Revitalization Theories

Language preservation and revitalization are complex, multifaceted processes that have been the subject of considerable academic discourse. These processes are crucial in safeguarding the cultural, social, and historical aspects embedded in indigenous languages. Theoretical approaches to language preservation focus on understanding the factors that contribute to language shift, loss, and revitalization, with a particular emphasis on sociolinguistic theories related to language policy, social dynamics, and cultural transmission. This section explores key theoretical approaches to language preservation and revitalization, with a focus on their relevance to the Yoruba language context.

Language Shift and Sociolinguistics Theories

Language shift refers to the process by which speakers of one language gradually abandon it in favor of another, often more dominant language. The shift occurs across generations, with younger speakers opting to use the dominant language instead of their mother tongue. A prominent sociolinguistic theory that addresses this issue is the Language Shift Theory, developed by various scholars such as Fishman (1991) and Gumperz & Hymes (1972). Fishman, in particular, focuses on the dynamics of language maintenance and shift, offering the concept of intergenerational transmission as a central factor in language preservation. According to Fishman, when a language is transmitted from one generation to the next, it has a higher chance of survival, but when the younger generation begins to prefer the dominant language, the shift towards language loss is inevitable.

In societies where bilingualism is prevalent, the process of language shift often begins when speakers choose the dominant language (often for reasons of economic mobility, education, or social status) over their indigenous language. Gumperz & Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of diglossia, which refers to the use of two languages or dialects within a society, where one is considered high-status (often the dominant language), while the other is low-status (the indigenous language). In such contexts, the low-status language, such as Yoruba in Nigeria, faces the risk of becoming increasingly marginalized, and over time, it may no longer be used in formal or educational settings.

The Yoruba language, like many other indigenous languages, faces the threat of language shift due to its association with lower socioeconomic status, while languages like English are regarded as a symbol of social and economic advancement in Nigerian society. This language shift is evident in urban areas, where English has become the language of instruction in schools, and many younger Yoruba speakers prefer to speak English in public life (Bamgbose, 2000). The shift is often compounded by the lack of formalized teaching of Yoruba in schools, making the younger generation less likely to acquire proficiency in the language.

Language Policy and Planning

Language policy and planning refer to the deliberate efforts made by governments or institutions to manage and regulate the use of languages in society. The theory of Language Policy and Planning is rooted in the understanding that governmental and institutional decisions on the status and use of languages play a critical role in shaping language dynamics within a society. According to Cooper (1989), language policy can influence language maintenance or shift by determining which languages are used in education, administration, media, and public life. There are two major types of language policies: status planning and corpus planning. Status planning focuses on determining which languages will be given official recognition and promoted for use in key societal functions such as education, government, and media. Corpus planning, on the other hand, concerns itself with the development of the language itself, including the standardization of orthography, creation of new vocabulary, and development of language learning resources.

In the context of Yoruba, language policy in Nigeria has historically prioritized English as the language of government and education, while indigenous languages, including Yoruba, have often been relegated to the status of minority languages. This policy has resulted in the marginalization of Yoruba in formal settings and its gradual decline in urban centers, where younger generations increasingly prefer English (Smith, 2008). Despite this, Yoruba has a rich literary tradition and an established written orthography, making it a candidate for corpus planning interventions that could help revitalize the language.

However, the lack of comprehensive language policies aimed at preserving indigenous languages in Nigeria is a significant barrier to the revitalization of Yoruba. The Yoruba language needs a more robust status-planning approach, where its use in education, media, and public life is formally supported by government policy. A more inclusive language policy would not only preserve Yoruba as a vital tool of communication but would also enhance its cultural and social value (Bamgbose, 2000).

Cultural Transmission Theories

The theory of cultural transmission posits that language is a vital medium through which culture, traditions, and worldviews are passed down from one generation to the next. Linguistic anthropologists, such as Whorf (1956), argue that language is an essential part of cultural identity, as it shapes how individuals think, perceive the world, and interact with their environment. Cultural transmission is particularly important in the context of indigenous languages, as it enables the continuity of cultural practices and communal identities.

The transmission of Yoruba culture is inherently tied to the language, as many cultural expressions, including proverbs, songs, folktales, and religious practices, are encoded in the Yoruba language. The use of Yoruba in these cultural contexts ensures that important aspects of Yoruba identity, history, and moral values are preserved. For instance, Yoruba proverbs, which are often used in daily communication, reflect the philosophical worldview of the Yoruba people and are a means of imparting wisdom across generations (Awoniyi, 1982).

In the face of modernity and the dominance of global languages, cultural transmission is under threat, as younger generations may no longer have the same interest in learning and using the

language. As Fishman (1991) suggests, the break in intergenerational transmission of the language significantly weakens cultural continuity, leading to a loss of not only the language but also the accompanying cultural identity. This challenge is especially relevant in urban areas, where the younger Yoruba-speaking population is increasingly adopting English, thus weakening the cultural link provided by the language.

The theories discussed above are highly relevant to the situation of the Yoruba language, providing a framework for understanding the challenges it faces and the strategies that could be employed for its preservation and revitalization. Language shift is a central concern for Yoruba, as the language is increasingly displaced by English, particularly in urban centers and educational institutions. The younger generation's preference for English, seen as the key to upward mobility, is a classic example of the language shift dynamic identified by Fishman and Gumperz. This trend threatens the intergenerational transmission of Yoruba, particularly as the older generation continues to speak the language, but the younger generation gravitates toward English.

The application of language policy and planning theories to the Yoruba language context underscores the need for a more proactive approach to language preservation. Yoruba, like many indigenous languages, requires targeted status planning and corpus planning to enhance its use in formal and educational settings. The absence of comprehensive governmental support for Yoruba, both in terms of its inclusion in educational curricula and its promotion in public life, has contributed to its gradual decline. As Bamgbose (2000) argues, without a shift in policy to prioritize indigenous languages, languages like Yoruba are likely to face continued marginalization.

Finally, the theory of cultural transmission highlights the deep connection between language and identity within the Yoruba community. The erosion of Yoruba in everyday use, especially among the younger generation, threatens the preservation of Yoruba culture and values. The loss of Yoruba would not only be a linguistic tragedy but would also signify the loss of a vital cultural heritage.

Historical Background

The Yoruba language belongs to the Niger-Congo language family and is predominantly spoken by the Yoruba people in West Africa. It is one of the largest indigenous languages in Africa and holds a significant position among the languages spoken in Nigeria. The origins of Yoruba are traced back to the ancient Yoruba civilization, with archaeological evidence and historical accounts suggesting that the Yoruba people have lived in the region that is now southwestern Nigeria for several millennia (Adegbija, 2004). Yoruba is believed to have developed from an early proto-West African language, evolving over time to incorporate various dialects and influences from neighboring languages and cultures (Bamgbose, 2000).

Yoruba civilization has a rich historical and cultural heritage, evidenced in its ancient kingdoms, such as Ife and Oyo, which were centers of political, religious, and artistic influence in West Africa. The Yoruba language has historically been used in governance, trade, religion, and education.

The development of written Yoruba was a significant milestone in the preservation of the language. In the 19th century, Christian missionaries and scholars, most notably Samuel Ajayi Crowther, played a pivotal role in developing Yoruba orthography, which is still in use today (Bamgbose, 2000). Crowther's work in transcribing Yoruba into the Latin script was instrumental in making Yoruba more accessible in written form, thus facilitating literacy in the language. Since then, the Yoruba language has undergone significant development, with several dictionaries, textbooks, and literary works contributing to its scholarly richness.

Current State of the Yoruba Language

As of the 21st century, Yoruba is estimated to be spoken by over 45 million people, primarily in southwestern Nigeria, but also in parts of neighboring countries such as Benin, Togo, and even as

far as the Americas. Yoruba is one of the four major languages in Nigeria, alongside Hausa, Igbo, and English, the latter of which serves as the official language of the country (Adegbija, 2004).

Geographically, Yoruba is widely spoken in Nigeria's southwestern states, including Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Ondo, and parts of Kwara and Kogi. The language has a number of dialects, with some variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, but they remain mutually intelligible, particularly in urban areas where people from different regions interact (Smith, 2008). However, while Yoruba is still widely spoken in the home and community settings, its use in formal institutions such as schools, government offices, and corporate environments has decreased significantly. English has become the dominant language in education, business, and public life in Nigeria, with Yoruba being used less frequently in these spheres. This shift is particularly noticeable in urban areas where the younger generation, especially in larger cities like Lagos, increasingly favors English, both in spoken and written communication. (Adegbija, 2004).

The language is also increasingly under pressure from global languages, particularly in the context of modern technological advancements, urbanization, and globalization. As a result, Yoruba faces the threat of language attrition, with younger speakers becoming less proficient in the language, particularly as they are increasingly exposed to English and other global languages through education, media, and technology (Bamgbose, 2000).

Cultural Significance

Yoruba language plays a central role in maintaining the cultural identity, traditions, and heritage of the Yoruba people. Language is not just a means of communication but a vital vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge, history, and social values. Many Yoruba cultural practices, including religion, rituals, and ceremonies, are deeply embedded in the language. For example, Yoruba is used in the practice of traditional religion, where religious texts, songs, prayers, and rituals are conducted in the language. This reinforces the connection between the language and the people's spiritual identity (Oyeleye, 2013).

The Yoruba language is also integral to the transmission of proverbs, which are an important part of the Yoruba worldview. Proverbs often encapsulate the wisdom, morals, and values of the Yoruba people, and they are used in everyday conversation to offer guidance and instruction. Yoruba literature, particularly oral literature, includes a wealth of folktales, poems, and songs, all of which are expressions of the cultural and philosophical underpinnings of the society. The language, therefore, serves as the medium through which knowledge about the past is passed down to future generations (Adegbija, 2004).

Moreover, Yoruba music, theater, and art are heavily influenced by the language, with Yoruba songs, chants, and poems often performed at cultural festivals, religious ceremonies, and social gatherings. These artistic expressions not only entertain but also serve to strengthen communal bonds and ensure the continuity of cultural practices. The importance of the Yoruba language in maintaining cultural identity cannot be overstated, as it provides the foundation upon which the cultural identity of the Yoruba people is built and sustained (Smith, 2008).

Strategies for Yoruba Language Preservation

One of the most critical strategies for preserving the Yoruba language is the integration of the language into formal education systems. Although Yoruba is taught in some Nigerian schools, its status in the educational curriculum is far from adequate. There are calls for the government to make Yoruba a compulsory subject at the primary and secondary school levels, alongside other major Nigerian languages, to ensure its continued use by younger generations (Bamgbose, 2000). Incorporating Yoruba into the educational system will help instill pride in the language and culture, as students will not only learn the language but also understand its historical and cultural significance.

Curriculum development for Yoruba at the tertiary level is also essential for the language's preservation. Universities and higher institutions should offer degree programs in Yoruba language and literature to nurture experts in the field, who can contribute to the development of textbooks, dictionaries, and academic research that further enriches the language (Smith, 2008).

With the rise of digital technology, one promising avenue for Yoruba language preservation is the integration of technology into language learning and teaching. The development of mobile apps, online platforms, and AI-based language tools can make learning Yoruba more accessible and engaging. Applications such as Duolingo, Memrise, or dedicated Yoruba apps can make language learning more interactive, especially for younger people who are familiar with digital tools (Adegbija, 2004).

Social media also offers a platform for Yoruba language promotion. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow Yoruba speakers to engage in discussions, create content, and share cultural practices, all in their native language. By creating and sharing Yoruba content online, speakers can help maintain and increase the global visibility of the language (Oyeleye, 2013). Moreover, AI-based solutions like machine translation and speech recognition can contribute significantly to the preservation of Yoruba. These technologies can aid in developing automated translation tools, allowing speakers of Yoruba to communicate more effectively with non-speakers and facilitating the inclusion of Yoruba content in global digital spaces (Bamgbose, 2000).

Cultural festivals and events are vital tools for Yoruba language transmission. Festivals such as the Odua Festival, which celebrate Yoruba culture, provide opportunities for speakers to engage with the language and reinforce its cultural significance. Media outlets, including radio stations, television channels, and film production in Yoruba, are also essential in maintaining language visibility. By broadcasting in Yoruba, these platforms make the language more present in everyday life, giving it relevance and appeal (Adegbija, 2004).

Government policies play a pivotal role in the preservation of the Yoruba language. The Nigerian government has a responsibility to implement policies that promote the use of indigenous languages in schools, media, and public life. These policies should prioritize the development of Yoruba language resources, including textbooks, dictionaries, and educational materials. Additionally, official recognition of Yoruba in the same vein as other national languages, such as Hausa and Igbo, could increase its status and usage (Bamgbose, 2000).

Challenges in Preserving the Yoruba Language

The dominance of English in Nigeria, both in public and private spheres, poses a significant challenge to the preservation of indigenous languages, including Yoruba. English, being the official language, is widely used in government, education, business, and media. Consequently, there has been a shift from indigenous languages to English, especially in urban areas. The younger generation, particularly in cities like Lagos and Abuja, often prefers English over their native languages due to the perceived prestige and global utility of English. English has become a symbol of modernity, social mobility, and access to opportunities, leading many to believe that proficiency in Yoruba may limit their prospects (Adegbija, 2004).

The pressure to adopt English, especially in educational institutions where it is the primary medium of instruction, further marginalizes Yoruba. In schools, Yoruba is often relegated to the status of an elective subject rather than a core language of instruction, thereby limiting its exposure to younger generations (Bamgbose, 2000). This shift towards English, driven by globalization and urbanization, undermines the vitality of Yoruba, as many children grow up in environments where English is the dominant language of communication.

Furthermore, in Nigeria's increasingly globalized economy, English serves as a tool for international engagement. The rise of English in Nigeria's business, political, and academic spheres has led to a scenario where Yoruba, alongside other indigenous languages, is increasingly regarded

as less valuable. This perception has contributed to the weakening of Yoruba language skills among younger speakers (Adegbija, 2004).

The preservation of the Yoruba language is hindered by a significant lack of resources. One of the key issues is the shortage of appropriate educational materials in Yoruba. While there are some textbooks and learning aids available, the quantity and quality of such materials are insufficient, especially when compared to those available for English. The lack of well-developed Yoruba language curricula in primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions contributes to the decline in proficiency in the language.

Another challenge is the insufficient number of qualified trained educators who are proficient in Yoruba. Many teachers are inadequately trained to teach Yoruba effectively, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels. The devaluation of the language within the formal education system also means that teachers often lack the necessary support, training, and teaching materials to engage students in meaningful language acquisition (Oyeleye, 2013).

In addition, technological infrastructure for teaching Yoruba is also lacking. While technological tools such as mobile apps, AI-powered language tools, and online platforms have proven effective in promoting language learning in many parts of the world, these tools are largely absent for the Yoruba language. The lack of technological investment and innovation in Yoruba language education has created a significant barrier to the language's sustainability in the digital age (Oyeleye, 2013).

The Nigerian government's language policies have largely neglected the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages like Yoruba. Although the National Policy on Education advocates for the use of mother-tongue instruction at the primary school level, in practice, this is rarely implemented effectively. The policy fails to provide the necessary resources, funding, or infrastructure to support the use of indigenous languages in education (Bamgbose, 2000). In many schools, the teaching of Yoruba and other indigenous languages is optional rather than compulsory, and the quality of instruction remains subpar due to a lack of trained teachers and adequate materials.

Prospects for the Yoruba Language

Despite the challenges, there are several emerging opportunities for the revitalization of the Yoruba language. One of the most promising areas is the integration of technology into language preservation efforts. The rise of language learning apps, AI-based language tools, and online platforms offers significant potential for promoting Yoruba, especially among younger generations. For example, the development of mobile apps and interactive platforms dedicated to teaching Yoruba can make learning the language more engaging and accessible, particularly for children and teenagers who are more likely to use these technologies (Oyeleye, 2013).

AI-driven tools, such as speech recognition software and machine translation systems, can also facilitate the wider use of Yoruba in digital spaces. These technologies can help bridge the gap between Yoruba speakers and the global digital economy, allowing Yoruba speakers to communicate more effectively with non-speakers and ensuring that Yoruba remains relevant in the technological age (Bamgbose, 2000).

Cultural events, music, dance, and literature play a vital role in revitalizing the Yoruba language. Festivals such as the Odua Festival and the Eyo Festival celebrate Yoruba culture and provide opportunities for language use in a communal setting. These events, which often feature Yoruba songs, dances, and performances, offer a platform for the language to be celebrated and transmitted to younger generations. Moreover, Yoruba literature, including novels, plays, and poetry, can serve as a powerful medium for showcasing the richness of the language and promoting its continued use (Oyeleye, 2013).

Cross-cultural collaboration is another promising avenue for promoting the Yoruba language. Partnerships with international organizations, scholars, and diaspora communities can help elevate

the status of Yoruba and increase awareness of its cultural and linguistic significance. Collaborative research efforts can also contribute to the development of resources such as dictionaries, textbooks, and language learning tools, which can aid in the revitalization of Yoruba (Smith, 2008).

The Yoruba diaspora, particularly in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Brazil, can play an instrumental role in preserving the language. By supporting Yoruba language programs in universities and cultural centers abroad, the diaspora can help ensure that Yoruba is passed down to future generations in a global context. Additionally, international academic collaborations can facilitate the exchange of ideas and resources for Yoruba language preservation, further strengthening its position as a global language (Oyeleye, 2013).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding and preserving the Yoruba language, a key cultural and linguistic asset of the Yoruba people. As one of the major indigenous languages spoken by millions in West Africa and across the diaspora, Yoruba plays a vital role in maintaining the cultural identity, traditions, and heritage of its speakers. In a rapidly globalizing world where the dominance of English and urbanization pose challenges to the survival of indigenous languages, the need for a comprehensive study on the preservation of Yoruba is more pressing than ever.

One of the most significant contributions of this study is its focus on the preservation of cultural identity through language. Language serves as a core element of cultural identity, and for the Yoruba people, it is deeply intertwined with their traditions, religious practices, and worldview. Yoruba is not just a means of communication but a vessel of cultural knowledge, containing rich oral traditions, folklore, and historical narratives that have been passed down through generations.

The study is also significant because it offers critical insights into the state of education and its role in language preservation. In many educational systems, indigenous languages such as Yoruba are marginalized in favor of dominant languages like English. The Yoruba language faces a decline in formal education settings, where English is often prioritized as the primary language of instruction. This study will inform educational policies, helping policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers design more effective strategies for integrating Yoruba into the formal educational system. It will advocate for the inclusion of Yoruba as a compulsory subject at various levels of education, from primary to tertiary institutions, emphasizing the importance of mother-tongue instruction. By doing so, it seeks to ensure that future generations of Yoruba speakers learn and embrace their language, thereby safeguarding it from extinction.

Another key aspect of the study is its exploration of technological integration in language preservation. In the current digital age, technological tools like language apps, online platforms, and artificial intelligence (AI) provide exciting opportunities to promote the teaching and use of Yoruba. These technological advancements can overcome many of the barriers to language learning, particularly in urban areas where traditional methods may be less effective. This study will lay the foundation for future research on how digital tools can be harnessed to preserve and revitalize the Yoruba language. By incorporating technology into language education, Yoruba can be made more accessible to younger generations who are increasingly reliant on digital devices for learning and communication. The potential for AI-based language learning tools to facilitate interaction with the language further enhances its relevance in today's tech-driven society.

Furthermore, the Yoruba diaspora, which spans across continents such as North America, Europe, and South America, holds significant potential in language preservation. This study will explore the role of the diaspora in revitalizing Yoruba, emphasizing the importance of cross-cultural partnerships between local Yoruba communities and global networks. Collaborative initiatives, such as cultural exchanges, international academic partnerships, and diaspora-led Yoruba language schools, can strengthen the efforts to preserve the language globally. By harnessing the power of the

Yoruba diaspora, which has a vested interest in maintaining connections to their cultural roots, the study highlights an important avenue for broadening the scope of Yoruba language preservation.

Recommendations

- ✓ Government should reform policies to make Yoruba compulsory at all school levels and fund language recourses.
- ✓ Develop high-quality textbooks, apps, and AI tools for Yoruba learning.
- ✓ Support community-based initiatives such as workshops and festivals\
- ✓ Involve the Yoruba diaspora, through academic and cultural exchange.

Conclusion

The Yoruba language stands at a crossroad: facing decline under the weight of globalization, yet holding vast potential for revitalization. Its preservation requires deliberate action in education, policy, technology, and cultural practice. By strengthening, interpersonal transmission, leveraging digital tools, and fostering global collaboration, Yoruba can continue to thrive as a living heritage. Safeguarding Yoruba mot only a linguistic responsibility but also a cultural imperative for sustaining the identity, values, wisdom of its people.

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