



The Predominance of the English Language and the Fate of Yoruba Language in Social Media Space: Literature of Internet Practices

Rashidat Olamidayo AJAKAYE

Department of Language, Arts and Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria.

KEYWORDS:

English Language, English Dominance, Yoruba Language, Social Media, Digital Literature, Internet Practices

WORD COUNT:

194

CORRESPONDING EMAIL ADDRESS:

Rashidat.ajakaye@lasu.edu.ng

ORCID NUMBER:

0009-0008-3416-9214

ABSTRACT

The digital space is assumed to increasingly privilege the Nigerian official language, English. Yet, the heavy use of the lingua franca on the social media handles without cognizance of already existing indigenous languages poses a challenge of identity to mother tongues. Social media platforms have become reliable sites that individuals and groups select for easy communication, global acknowledgement and self-reflection. This paper investigates, admits and queries the linguistic imbalance between the usage of English Language and the Yoruba Language on the technological space through the critical analysis of the circumstances of the Yoruba Language on the internet practices. The lingua franca is a borrowed unifying language amongst distinctive cultural groups and not the native language. Through sociolinguistic and post-colonial theoretical framework, the study discusses how internet practices expose the gradual silencing of Yoruba expression in digital interactions. Importantly, the study emphasises the accelerating visibility and passion for the media space and its resultant threat to Yoruba cultural and communicative standards. Ultimately, the research demands for intentional and participative reawakening and transmission of Yoruba identities in the globalized social media world through aspects like: communication, education, digital practices, media policy, production and other notable aspects.

HOW TO CITE

Ajakaye R.O. (2026). The Predominance of the English Language and the Fate of Yoruba Language in Social Media Space: Literature of Internet Practices *International Journal of Educational Perspectives*, 14(1), 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19558456>



Introduction

In the most recent years, the digital space has held irrefutable importance to human beings, groups and movements. This arises from the in-built satisfaction that digital avenues feature. Users are attracted to its comprehensive and mobile marketing ability. Priscilla (2024) submits that the digital space has extremely changed the patterns of individual and groups' interaction, learning and expression. Rawnsley (2024) agrees that digital technologies portray civil tools of collaboration, mobilisation and protest. The significant return of the social media spaces is the growth of democratic practices and political opinions. Notably, Vanguard (2025) discovers that 85% of people in Nigeria have access to smartphones. Hence, the domineering effect of digital items upon mankind. The digital space hails from a non-African environment and there is unavoidably an existing set of minds to lead in its usage. The social media is one of the most common participants of the digital life. Toochukwu (2023) explains that social media is a computer based technology that supports the exchanging of thoughts, perspectives and information through virtual networks and communities. Some of them are Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Whatsapp and many others. It is also mandatory to note that the traffic of the social media from Nigeria particularly is professional. Olaito (2025) submits that youth, corporate entities and start-up entrepreneurs have used it to develop interest of potential customers and maintain their growth of the proposed values.

Alade (2017) also adds that the social media has made various aspects of human activities measurably easy, such as creation, generation, dissemination, evaluation and feedback of information. It is common for Nigerians to ignore the existence of indigenous languages even while communication exists between two or more persons from an intra-cultural group. The English Language occupies a prominent position as the official language, language of education, judiciary

and commerce. The purpose of the lingua franca is exceeding the primary margins of purpose while even those that share same mother tongue employ the English Language. Resultantly, the potential relevance of the indigenous languages of Nigeria is being threatened.

Without argument, the Yoruba Language is one of the most widely spoken dialects in the world (Adewole, 2026). In fact, it is spoken by other countries outside the African continent. Also, native speakers of the Yoruba tongue enjoy exchanging pleasantries which defends the vocal and sociable nature of the language. The language is culturally and socially structured as it reflects a meaningful percentage of social hierarchy and community values. Owolabi (2006) agrees that the Yoruba Language comprises about twenty dialects with a standard variety which all diverse speakers of varying dialects understand satisfactorily. Definitely, Yoruba Language falls in the majority and not otherwise. Several countries aside Nigeria speak it due to its natural and social importance. Some include: Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, United Kingdom, Brazil, Cuba and the Caribbeans (Trinidad and Tobago).

Language is a tool of communication and it represents the attitudes and properties that surround the particular first speakers. Therefore, the lexical combinations found in a language represents the activities, attitudes and values within the environment of recognised first users of the language. Daniel Everett (cited in Corporate Language Training, 2020) agrees that language is simply culture and culture is simply language; both aspects are intertwined. Language is a cultural tool that generally relates a community's values and ideals. In fact, social pragmatics of a person's upbringing influences a person's linguistic ability, sense of thoughts and usage of received knowledge. Fabusoro (2022) finds out that English Language takes dominance even in bilingual literacy practices in Yoruba-speaking homes. If bilingualism cannot be maintained on this vocal



phase, the possibility of it being met on the digital space is low. This might eventually cause an erosion of cultural values, extinction of traditional knowledge and endangerment of less spoken language (Yoruba Language). Therefore, there is a need to revive the vitality of the Yoruba Language.

Balogun (2024) avers that more than half of the world uses social media. The social media is a comfortable instrument to report literature, especially as literature treats thematic occupations. Even with the widest level of fiction, literature is never extremely far from the society. Rajathi & Kelamani (2020) discusses digital literature to be an electronic means of engaging scholars and other interested minds to create products. Literature wins a deep and far-reaching root in the social network. These might include e-books, blogs, webpages, audio-graphics and many others. Yoruba linguists and other local speakers make use of the internet; commitment of Yoruba can be significant to the world of cultural heritage.

Cultural identity is exposed, calculated, managed, built-upon and marketed to foreigners when the literature of members of the society is passionately reflecting the situations of the latter. Literature embodies a philosophy of reality, not divorced from the community and is committed to promoting the good of the society. Yusuff, Adetomiwa & Adedeji (2020) recommends that for every nation to enhance technological development, the mother tongue plays a significant role. Therefore, there is a boiling need to Yorubanise stories with indigenous expression, styles and literary ethics. Hence, this paper investigates the dying use of Yoruba on modern social platforms through the literature of internet practices.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two theories. These theories are Language Maintenance and Reversal of Language Shift (LMRLST) and Cultural Identity Theory (CIT).

Fishman (1991) records that the language maintenance and reversal of language shift theory is a sociolinguistic framework that occurs when a bilingual or multilingualism community features individuals or groups that continue to employ their first language and also adapting to the factual circumstances that require another language. Fishman (1991) adds that language shift is a linguistic situation of language transfer and replacement where a first language is ignored or left unused for the second official language that seems to be in the major part of the society. This theory would be relevant by primarily picking social media as the domain for its measurement. It shall hereby be checked if Yoruba is under-utilised at the embrace of official language.

As a supplementary hand, Yang, Zhao & Liu (2021) expose that cultural identity theory is a model raised by Stuart Hall for the earliest recorded period. Hall (cited in Hussey, 2014) explains cultural identity to be national identity. This development added a belief that cultural identity has to be continued for the enjoyment of one's culture. The identities share historical traces that sum up the overall nation. The concept of cultural identity is a force that carries the prestige of a country. Chen & Mendy (2021) agree that this theory embodies a large range of social structured aspects that affects the knowledge and experiences of a person's social world. This includes: race, socio-economic status, ability, gender, ethnicity and more. Communication is an essential tool to measure one's level of core belongingness to a group.

For this paper, the theory of language maintenance and reversal of language shift theory would be jointly used in partnership with cultural identity. Both would be employed in assessing if Yoruba is being preserved or threatened by an extreme language shift. These theories would be relevant in realising the purpose of this study; in which is saving Yoruba Language from the relative undervaluation on the global routes. Both



frameworks shall be employed for taking materials from the literary narratives of internet practices to marshal the study.

Topical Internet Practices and the Threatened Circumstances of the Yoruba Language

The literature of the internet practices is seriously making noticeable efforts to counter the multi-ethno-linguistic properties of Nigeria. With the broad socio-political, economic and cultural system within Nigeria, native speakers of Yoruba (especially youths) have limited the beneficial force of linguistic diversity on the digital space.

Major Absence of Yoruba in Intracultural Communication

It has been a common attitude of Yoruba native speakers to engage English language in communication with one another. The English language is only the official language and instrument that unifies Nigeria during multi-cultural connections. Nigerian locals adopt several dialects of English Language to make communication simple and convenient. Ogundare, Olagoke & Igweike (2024) admit that English language is a tool for unity and national development for Nigeria; one must be united to develop through discussions, deliberation, initiations and implementations. Yet, this notion has not been employed to meet its primary motive. The educated and uneducated speak the lingua franca to intimidate the illiterates and claim being schooled respectively. Another obstructive practice of the supposed values of Yoruba language on digital space is the mixing of Yoruba and English from non-calculative communicative style of internet participants. Many Yoruba speakers fail to regard the earliest reason for code-switching. Amuda (1994) accounts that code-switching participants are not aware of the language used at that time of speaking as the speakers are concerned about content of the utterance. This entails that the speakers have not found the suitable lexical item to suit the preceding linguistic choice and therefore

uses another language to reach the course of exact intention and understanding.

For instance: Mo ti pe mummy àti daddy, mo fẹ carry ojà mi...

All these code-switching utterances are redundant because the preceding language has an existing suitable item for the sentence intention. Check the complete chain of thoughts and Yoruba-like prestige if switching is avoided here: *Mo ti pe mummy àti daddy, mo fẹ carry ojà mi...*

Howbeit, here is another statement that requires code-switching:

Àntí mi sọ pé summer wà ní ọdò wọn lóhùn-ún - Tundé, mọ nńkan tó ń se, procrastination (ifipamó isẹ síwájú, itèsíwájú pèlú àisẹ, isiyèméjì) ó dáa. ilú Nàìjíríà ti fi godfatherism (àgbà tó ń dá tó ń ran ọmọ lówó nípa iselu, olùdámọ̀ràn alákkòso tó ń pàşẹ) parí Ìdìbò, ó wù mí láti ní ẹyẹ penguin (penguin bird) nínú ilé mi.

The code-switchings here are relevant because the Yoruba narratives do not have a single word that can generate and eventually command the meaning that the borrowed English words intend.

Death of Yoruba Diacritics

It is also noteworthy that major percentage of Yoruba speakers (especially youth) on the media environment type Yoruba without taking cognizance of the intonation marks that direct the efficient reading of the indigenous text. Adekunle (2023) accounts that Yoruba is a tonal language—such as: do (lowest tone), re (neutral tone) and mi (highest tone). The meaning of a group of letter combination can mean three or more meaning if not well intonated by the initiator of the message. Agoke (2024) admits that tones in Yoruba are phonemic for they generate dynamic interpretations. If tone marks are absent, accurate meaning would be resultantly disturbed. – m



For instance:

*Òwò (do-do)*_ trade

*owó (re-mi)*_ money

*owó (re-mi)*_ hand or arm

Hence, acute accent, grave accent or unmarked accent can be communicated. Sentential structures can be more unpredictable than a reader can imagine.

For instance:

Mi ò ní ilẹ̀ (land)

Mi ò ní ilé (house)

Hence, the death of tonal marks in using Yoruba is one of the setbacks of promoting the heritage and continuity of the language on the global space. A lot of people use the internet space and assume false domineering utilities of the social media ambience. The internet keyboard especially on phone comprises the varying tonal marks of the Yoruba language after the application has been downloaded. Ergo, there is no tangible factor that should reflect negative or hindering consequences to the feasible stretch of Yoruba Language on the internet.

Underestimation of Yoruba Linguistics

It is common that the indigenous languages of Nigeria have been underrated and Yoruba has not been an exception. Fabunmi & Salawu (2005) citing Omamor (2003) points that Nigeria's National Education Policy (1977) promulgation states that children should be taught with their mother tongue. There have been several discussions and development on this policy. In fact, it rose to JSS3 in 2022. Yet, all these laws have not been implemented as teachers fail to use the Yoruba Language in serious discussions.

As a result, the elders and youth use the Yoruba Language for slangs, argots and humorous linguistic items. Swift (2025) defends Yoruba as a language of wisdom, culture, tradition and heritage of the people. This entails that Yoruba Language has instrumental and regulatory functions. Yet,

native speakers of the Yoruba fall on the English Language as though the former does not carry exemplary roles. For instance, the assessment of the chat between a lady and her boyfriend below:

Tunde: How are you doing girl?

Sola: I am cool, just feeling heat.

Tunde: Why haven't you been picking my call? I miss you.

Sola: Lóri iró!

Why should Yoruba Language be invited only when something unserious is about to take a linguistic effect? This is a common style of the recent users of the technological space. Some others are: *Lám̀bà, lóri iró, etièkò, şakarà, kò lè work, ò şé...*

Inferior Reaction to Digital Prompts

The literature of internet activities also encompasses the presence of certain linguistic reminds that recognise the global strength of English and stimulate the transfer of other languages to English Language. Instead of native Yoruba speakers maintaining the preceding linguistic choice, these speakers feel inferior and click the internet prompt. This examination of this internet story reflects a poor reaction from an inferior psychology. Most Yoruba speakers who respond to this internet prompt often become agents of loss of meaning, loss of culture, cultural insensitivity, loss of medical or marketing contexts, unintended information, financial loss and a host of others. Importantly, when Yoruba Language is unnecessarily translated into English Language to suit English media prompts, the credibility of the Yoruba Language to maintain an effective position on the internet zones is threatened and closer to global death. Hence, the best way to transform and develop the worth of the Yoruba Language to the world is through the busy internet spots.

Importantly, Yoruba words have been often translated to English Language. Yet, it would have been better to invite English items to the Yoruba case. The dependence of Yoruba linguistics to



make sense in only English and not its original form would be halted. Adeola (2020) mentions some like: *kópù* from cup, *fòdùn* from phone, *bóólù* from bowl, *Tẹlífisàn* from television and some other words from Hausa: *Alúbòsà* from *Alubosa*, *Wàhálà* from *Wahala*, *Alùbàrikà* from *Albarka*, *Àlàáfìà* from *Lafiya*.

Loaning words is the best style to fit proverbs to suit the internet trends. Yoruba thick proverbs can also generate simple and complex versions of their proverbs to enable the understanding of Yoruba-like linguistic associations. For instance,

Ilé Ọba tó jó, ẹwà ló bùsì (complex).

Ilé Ọba ti jó, irètí n bọ (simple).

In the light of the mentioned, if there is a need for the translation as the publication or digital piece might be in English first. Yoruba should be displayed originally as a beautiful supplement to the English products. The Yoruba proverb should be in association with the English; hereby, regarding Yoruba as the initiator.

The Moral Injury of Language Shift

Individuals and groups who use the internet have occupied it with indecent use of English Language for the Yoruba Language has the strength of commanding extreme textual meaning. For instance: “*I am hungry*” in Yoruba is “*Ebi n pa mí*” and “*You are crazy*” in Yoruba is “*O ti ya wèrè*”. In fact, Yoruba use “e” to show respect at the subjective case while “yin” is used for same function at the objective case; whereas, the English Language uses “you” for both the subjective and objective case. This intense meaning from the Yoruba Language is avoided in order to escape annoying and indecent acts. The English Language has a tone that is blunt, harsh or somewhat mild at decisional levels.

Achebe (1965) discusses tensions between English and indigenous languages. He found out that

English is a language that measures intellectual prestige. This however, disrespects the existing relevance of other native languages. In fact, Yoruba internet users have adopted the abrupt orthographic adaptation and modification of Yoruba names to fit in the English lexical appearances and phonetics. For instance, Rashidat becomes Rashy on Instagram, Shola becomes Sholly on Facebook, Yetunde becomes YT on TikTok and many others. This has often been a deviation from the positively cultural and sacred outcomes of these names. When these names lose the morality and decency that they command: there is a rise of more indecent practices on the internet spots. Stanford University (2019) reports that language is a primary means of unconscious disclosing of the way we handle social, cultural and psychological phenomenon. The changing of these Yoruba names affects various aspects of our lives on the internet. They include dressing, provocative utterances, valueless internet contents and other sundries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The heavy dependence of Yoruba speakers and linguists on the English Language has positioned Yoruba on a weak fate on the digital space. The series of the internet practices effectively reflect the gradual erosion of the Yoruba Language in social media space. These practices of the internet include the absence of Yoruba Language between intracultural language, the use of the Yoruba Language without tonal marks, consistent inferior reaction to internet English translation requests, demonstration of injurious changes to sensible Yoruba names and others. All these are gradual displacements on the internet zones; they disturb Yoruba from its position as an independent and conventional language that has an existing linguistic system. The literature of internet patterns threatens the linguistic fate and cultural identities of the Yoruba language. The technological environment presents avenues to either expand or reduce the prestige of any language in the world. With adequate foregrounding of declining



interplays of Yoruba usage, the research recommends practical interventions that can encourage Yoruba's stability in the well-trafficked internet communication. Yoruba speakers must confidently and meaningfully use their language to ginger global security through communication, learning, digital presentations, advertisement strategies, reduction of anglicisation and many others. In order to reduce further marginalization and adjust the dying fate of the Yoruba Language on social media spaces, this research paper therefore, recommends that:

1. Both the educated and uneducated Yoruba speakers should make use of their native language during serious intracultural communication on social media platforms with the relative use of tonal marks. This would secure the global prestige of Yoruba linguistics.
2. Several efforts should be made to actively address the dying integrity of Yoruba through the preservation of Yoruba names, digital presentations, retelling of cultural stories that are relevant to trends of the societal situations.
3. Intellectual and humanitarian services in communities should be documented by contacting software developers, cultural custodians and digital practitioners who shall employ Yoruba Language effectively and professionally.
4. Government should establish and implements policies that would naturalise the acquisition of fluent Yoruba speaking and competent writing. This would promote Yoruba technological literary where youth can run blogs, podcasts, digital literature, online Yoruba encyclopedia and other reviving sundries that would earn Yoruba a distinguished space on the digital space.
5. It recommends that Yoruba language should be fully encouraged as a functional

digital language from the activities of social media platforms and digital contents.

6. There should be a productive collaboration among linguists and language institutions on the creation and promotion of a standardised Yoruba digital orthography that would be user-friendly. They should pay deliberate concentration on tonal marks for stress-free maintenance of linguistic authenticity.
7. Through expanded interdisciplinary research expansion, linguists, digital humanists and sociologists should be encouraged to explore how Yoruba language shapes power relations, identity formation and technological engagement.
8. The legitimacy and international strength of Yoruba digital contents can be given global positioning through Yoruba speakers in diaspora by actively engaging in promoting Yoruba online through co-operative projects.

References

- Achebe, C. (1965). *English and the African Writer*. Transition, 18, 27-30
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2934835>
- Adekunle, E. (2023). *Yoruba Tone Marks*. Scribd.com
<https://www.scribd.com>
- Adeola, A. J. (2020). *Yoruba Loan Words: How Languages Evolve*. Medium.com
<https://medium.com/@aremuadeola97/yoru%CC%80ba%CC%81-loan-words-how-languages-evolve-53718d03713c>
- [Adewole, I. F. \(2026\). *Yoruba, One of the Best Languages in the World*. University of Ibadan. https://ui.edu.ng/content/yoruba-one-best-languages-world-adewole](https://ui.edu.ng/content/yoruba-one-best-languages-world-adewole)
- Agoke, A. (2024). *Yoruba Dictionary: Proficiency-Based Dictionary of Yoruba Language*. L&S Instructional Design Collaborative. University of Wisconsin-Madison: Press Books
- Alade, A. M. (2017). *The Social Media and the Nigerian Society*.
https://www.academia.edu/33362611/THE_SOCIAL_MEDIA_AND_THE_NIGERIAN_SOCIETY



- Amuda, A. A. (1994). *Yoruba/English Conversational Code-switching as a Conversational Strategy*. Jstor.org. https://www.legit.ng/1131525-10-uses-english-language-nigeria.html#google_vignette
- Balogun, B. A. (2024). *Proper Use of Social Media in Teaching and Learning of English Language in Nigeria*. Ogun State
- Chen, Y. & Mendy, M. G. (2021). *Cultural Identity*. Oxford Bibliographies. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199756841/obo-9780199756841-0254.xml>
- Corporate Language Training, (2020). *More than Words: How Language Affects the Way We Behave*. <https://www.gofluent.com/us-en/insights/corporate-language-training/how-language-affects-the-way-we-think/>
- Fabunmi, F. A. & Salawu, A. S. (2005). *Is Yoruba an Endangered Language? Nordic Journal of African Studies 14(3): 391-408*
- Fabusoro, A. T. (2022). *Home Bilingual and Cultural Literacy Practices of Yoruba Heritage Speakers towards Identity Maintenance in the Midwest United States*. Ideals. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/125243>
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Hussey, I. (2014). *Note on Stuart Hall's "Cultural Identity and Diapora"*. Socialist Studies. Journal of the Society for Socialist Studies. <https://doi.org/10.18740/S4QP4S>
- Ogundare, F. J., Olagoke, C. O. & Igweike, O. M. (2024). *Repositioning English Language Education for Unity and National Development in Nigeria*. Essays in Honour of Professor Bandele Adeboye Sogbesan. Ogun State: Tai Solarin Federal University of Education
- Olaito, Y. (2025). *Social Media in Nigeria*. Scribd. <https://www.scribd.com/document/38471055/Social-Media-in-Nigeria>
- Omamor, A. P. (2003). *Of Linguistics, Knowledge and Service to the Nation, Inaugural Lecture*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
- Owolabi, K. (2006). *Genetic Relationship and History*. ScienceDirect. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/yoruba>
- Priscilla, C. (2024). *The Power of Digital Space in the Society*. Carril. <https://www.carrilagency.com/en/blog/the-power-of-the-digital-space>
- Rajathi, R. J. & Kelamani, S. (2020). *Digital Literature: A Literary Trend of the Twenty First Century*. International Journal of Advanced Research (IJAR). <https://www.journalijar.com/article/35464/digital-literature:-a-literary-trend-of-the-twenty-first-century/>
- Rawnsley, G. D. (2024). *Soft Power in the Digital Space*. Oxford Academic <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/55819/chapter-abstract/436586217?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- Stanford University. (2019). *The Power of Language: How Words Shape People, Culture*. Stanford Report. <https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2019/08/the-power-of-language-how-words-shape-people-culture>
- Toochukwu, O. W. (2023). *Broadcasting Commission and Social Media Regulation in Nigeria*. Business Day. <https://www.google.com/amp/s/businessday.ng/opinion/article/broadcasting-commission-and-social-media-regulation-in-nigeria/%3famp>
- Translate Swift (2025). *Yoruba Language*. Translate Swift Certified Translation Experts. <https://translateswift.com/languages/yoruba/>
- Vanguard. (2025, September). *Smartphone Penetration in Nigeria Soars: 140 million Users Expected by 2025*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/09/smartphone-penetration-in-nigeria-soars-140-million-users-expected-by-2025/>
- Yang, B., Zhao, D. & Liu, L. (2021). *An Analysis of Hall's Theory of Cultural Identity and its Application in Flipped Class*. East University of Heilongjiang, Harbin, China
- Yusuff, A., Adetomiwa, A. & Adedeji, O. (2020). *Yoruba Language Development and Digital Communication: Ability, Capacity and Capability*. Unilag Journal of Humanities, 8(1&2), 179-192)