

Surviving Possibilities of Indigenous Languages and the English Language in Intercultural and International Communication

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Abstract

Existing studies on language preference in the social media context and especially among netizens have been rare; hence, this study explores preference for language use by selected literate Nigerians on social media platforms, with a focus on the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages and the role of English as a passport to international and intercultural communication. The study aims to determine whether indigenous languages can serve as a viable means of communication in global contexts, and to verify the extent to which English facilitates international and intercultural communication. A descriptive quantitative research design and purposive sampling technique were employed to gather data from 500 randomly selected netizens in the Yorùbá-speaking states of Southwest Nigeria, namely Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti. The research adopted Phillipson's (1992) Linguistic Imperialism Theory as referenced in Oluwadoro. (2020), Gumperz's (1985) Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and Kachru's (1982) Three Concentric Circles of English use as its theoretical framework. Phillipson believes that linguistic imperialism perpetuates inequality and marginalises local languages, while Gumperz avers that language use is shaped by social context and power dynamics. The findings of the study revealed that local languages can be used to interpret technical and scientific thoughts, which is a symbol of it occupying a unique space on social media platforms. Thus, netizens (over 50%) employ code-mixing and code-switching as innovative language tools, and local languages like Yorùbá have potential in online spaces, particularly in cultural and social contexts. The survey also revealed that the English Language is the favourite language of an overwhelming 491/500 netizens on selected social media platforms. While the reasons for this is attributed to its official status, convenience, global relevance, and educational benefits. The study also found that English is considered essential for international and inter-cultural communication, respondents (99.2%) agreed that it helps Nigerians to connect with the outside world while (1.8%) disagreed. Additionally, (94.6%) believed that social media platforms have amplified the dominance of English. Out of those surveyed, 464 (93.0%) concurred that netizens on social media platforms should be able to communicate in English while 35 (7.0%) disagreed. Overall, the study highlights the

importance of English in online communication in Nigeria, while also acknowledging the potential of indigenous languages.

Keywords: Preference, social media, indigenous languages, language choice, lingua franca

Introduction

Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok have created online communities where users may share as much personal information as they want with other members. However, global communication has become challenging due to the challenges posed by cultural, linguistic, and geographic diversity. This is because important information from one part of the world may be simultaneously and clearly shared with people in other part of the world via, texts, images and video clips; thanks to the internet, sometimes referred to as globe wide web. Communication challenges arise when interacting with members of different countries, cultures and languages for business, personal tourism, or educational reasons. Such interactions are often problematic due to language barriers especially for those living in remote areas who have even less contact with speakers of other languages, thereby ensuring only basic communication would be the most difficult. In such cases, the intermediate or link language- English is always used. Consequently, English was the most widely used language for Internet content as of January 2023, accounting for around 59% of all domains. With 5.3% of online material, Russia came second, followed by Spanish-language content with 4.3% (Petrosyan, 2023).

However, despite the widespread adoption of social media in Nigeria, a multilingual country with over 500 languages (Blench, 2012), there is a dearth of research on language use and preferences on these platforms. While social media has become an integral part of daily life, with many literate Nigerians using these platforms to connect with others, share information and express themselves (Ajani, 2007), the factors influencing language preference on social media remain understudied. The use of English as a lingua franca and the emergence of indigenous languages on social media raise important questions about their surviving possibilities and potential as a passport to international and intercultural communication (Igboanusi, 2002), which have not been adequately addressed in existing research. Therefore, this gap in literature highlights the need for further investigation into language preference and the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages, such as Yorùbá (spoken in South-Western, Nigeria) and the English language in intercultural and international communication on the social media platforms in Nigeria.

Relating Intercultural and International Communication

Intercultural communication refers to a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or the effects of culture on communication. It involves the wide range of communication process and problems that naturally appear within an organization or social context made up of individuals from different social, ethnic, religious and educational backgrounds. In effect, intercultural communication seeks to understand how people from different countries and culture act, communicate, and perceive the world around them.

Undoubtedly, intercultural communication also focuses on the recognition and respect of those with cultural differences. Its goal is for a mutual adaptation between two or distinct cultures rather than complete assimilation. Similarly, it is the idea of knowing how to communicate in different parts of the world and thereby promotes the development of cultural sensitivity and allows language use for emphatic understanding across different cultures. This, intercultural communication competence is essential for navigating diverse cultural contexts. (Oyewole, 2018)

International communication, on the other hand, refers to communication across national borders, often involving governments, organizations, and individuals. (Thussu, 2019) However, it is also a complex and multifaceted sub-field within the major field of communication and media studies. It consists of the issue of culture and cultural commodification, (the turning of cultural products into commodities), the diffusion of information and news broadcasting by empires around the world, and the challenges faced by the developing world in the light of the processes. Mohammad, (2005)

The interdependency between different nations of the world and the competition between the international and multinational companies and organizations compel international communication. When individuals, cultural groups, country or state feel the need to be seen, heard and recognised within and outside their territory, international communication becomes crucial to achieve this. Before, the existing traditional media such as Television, Radio, Newspaper and films promote and facilitate international communication. In today's digital age, the flow of contents across social media platforms has grown exponentially, boosting international communication, more and more of which is being conducted through new technologies.

Moreover, the intersection of intercultural and international communication is critical in today's globalized world (Bhabha, 2018). Nigerian famous writer and nobel laurel, Chinua Achebe (2019) highlights the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness in international communication. Thus, effective intercultural

communication can facilitate international understanding, cooperation and development (Akindele, 2017)

Furthermore, intercultural communication can be challenging due to language barriers, cultural differences and stereotypes (Gudykunst&Tiny-Toomey, 2018). The benefits of it, involves a deep understanding of cultural nuances, language and context. Hofstede (2017) developed frameworks for understanding cultural differences and their impact on communication.

In international communication, technology played a significant role in bridging geographical and cultural gaps. (Castells, 2018). Relatively, Ayoade (2020), notes that social media transformed the way people communicate across culture and borders. Apart from the challenges posed by intercultural and international communication, they both offer opportunities for cultural exchange, collaboration and mutual understanding. To achieve these goals, there is a need for critical thinking and cultural sensitivity among different nations of the world.

Lastly, intercultural and international communication are complex and dynamic fields that involve a deep understanding of cultural differences, language and context. Effective intercultural communication has a significant impact in today's globalized world.

Research Problem

The media landscape encompasses traditional outlets like magazines, cinemas, radio, newspapers, television, as well as social media platforms. Traditional media have garnered significant academic attention due to its early adoption (Anwar & Ali, 2021). Nigerian scholars such as Clark (2013), Akujobi (2019), Oluwadoro (2020), Abubakar (2020), Amin (2020) and Patel S.R. (2021) have contributed to this area of study.

However, with the surge of social media, researchers like Opeibi (2016), Igboanusi (2017), Awonusi and Adebileje (2019) have shifted focus to language use on social media platforms. What is central to all of them? They all acknowledged the superiority of English over indigenous languages in communication media. Despite this, there is a need for further investigation into the intersection of indigenous languages and English in online communication particularly in the Nigerian context.

This study, therefore, aims to explore preference for language use by netizens and the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages alongside English for international and intercultural communication, addressing a research gap in the existing literature. By examining the dynamics of language use in online spaces, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on language, cultural identity, contexts and linguistic diversity in the digital age.

Aim and Objectives

This study aims to investigate the role of language in facilitating international and intercultural communication in Nigeria, with a focus on the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages and the use of English as a lingua franca. The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. Determine the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages as a passport to international and intercultural communication in Nigeria.
- ii. Verify if the English language is a viable passport to international and intercultural communication.

Indigenous Languages in Nigeria

Indigenous languages are deeply rooted in one's immediate environment and mother tongue. People tend to feel more comfortable and at ease when interacting in their native languages. According to Nwadike, indigenous languages play a vital role in preserving community literature, history, geography, and civics through various forms of expression, such as stories, songs, dances, myths, and legends. These languages also guide youth towards achieving their personal and societal expectations. Indigenous languages are inherently linked to the environment in which they are spoken, serving as a treasure of self-identity and a vital indicator of history and self-identification (Solanke, 2006). With over 500 indigenous languages, Nigeria's linguistic landscape is rich and diverse. According to Olaoye (2009) cited in Olaoye (2013), indigenous languages perform essential functions in child development, including instrumental function, interactional function and regulatory function.

Nigeria's indigenous languages can be broadly classified into two categories: Niger-Congo and Afro-Asiatic (which includes Tchado-Semitic) and Nilo-Saharan (which includes Sudanic) (Blench, 2012; Ethnologue, n.d.). The Hausa language, spoken predominantly in Northern Nigeria, has over 63 million speakers and is also spoken in other African countries, including Niger, Ghana, Chad, and Sudan (Blench, 2012). The Kano dialect is widely accepted as the standard for Hausa (Buba, 1997).

The Yorùbá language, spoken mainly in South-West Nigeria, has approximately 42 million speakers and is also spoken in neighbouring countries like Benin Republic and Togo, as well as in countries like Brazil, Cuba, and the United States (Akinjogbin, 1998). The Oyo dialect is widely used as the standard for Yorùbá.

The Igbo language, spoken in South-East Nigeria, has around 35 million speakers, including speakers from other tribes (Emenanjo, 2015). The Owerri dialect is often used as the standard for Igbo. Although Igbo is not widely spoken as a second language by other minority groups in the region, it is still an important language in Nigerian linguistic diversity. According to Blench (2012), Hausa and

Yorùbá can be considered regional lingua franca due to their widespread use among minority groups in their respective regions.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá are considered majority languages, holding significant status in their respective regions. Although not officially recognized as second languages in the Nigerian Constitution, they play crucial roles in governance and education. For instance, these languages are used in state houses of assembly and official events. In education, they serve as mediums of instruction in primary schools, particularly in the first three years.

However, this stratification has raised concerns about inter-ethnic tensions and marginalization of minority languages. According to Ogunmodimu (2015), prioritizing majority languages may inhibit the growth and development of minority languages. The dominance of these majority languages can lead to a form of hegemony, where minority languages are overshadowed.

The Federal Character Principle, enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (Section 14, subsections 3 and 4), aims to promote national unity and fairness by ensuring representation from diverse ethnic groups in governance. The Federal Character Commission (FCC) was established to implement and enforce this principle. By promoting equitable distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructure, the FCC seeks to mitigate marginalization and foster inclusivity.

While the Federal Character Principle has been a step towards addressing these issues, its effectiveness remains a subject of debate. Some argue that it has helped promote diversity, while others claim that it has become a means of recruiting unqualified individuals into the public service, potentially undermining its intended purpose.

Language Choice in Multilingual Communities

According to sociolinguists, language choice refers to the deliberate decision-making process that speakers undergo to select the most suitable language or language variety to use in a particular context (Hymes, 1974; Gumperz, 1982). As noted by Appel and Muysken (2005), in multilingual communities, speakers may choose a language based on various factors, including the interlocutor, setting, topic, and function or goal of the conversation. The identified factors that influence language choice, including topic, social context, domain, personal identity, and attitude (Fishman, 1972; Giles & Powesland, 1975). For instance, individuals may choose to speak in their first language when discussing sensitive topics or interacting with family members, while opting for a more formal language in professional or formal settings. Multilingual speakers often exhibit code-switching, a phenomenon where speakers switch between languages within a single conversation (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This can be influenced by various

factors, including the speaker's linguistic proficiency, social identity, and the context of the conversation.

Effective language choice requires consideration of several strategies, including knowing one's audience, being aware of the context, using clear and concise language, being mindful of tone and nuance, and being respectful and empathetic (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). By adopting these strategies, individuals can communicate more effectively and avoid misunderstandings. Language choice is a complex and dynamic process that is influenced by a variety of factors in multilingual communities (Hoffmann, 1991). As noted by Clyne (2003), individuals consciously select their language according to the situation, their identity, and their relationship with others. Additionally, language choice is a complex phenomenon that reflects identity, history, and social dynamics. In multilingual communities, the language a person chooses to speak can indicate their social status, cultural heritage, or context (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 2006). For instance, in countries like India or South Africa, people may switch between local languages and English, often associating English with education, professionalism, or modernity (Bourdieu, 1991). Historical and political influences shape language choice, with colonial history leaving lasting imprints on language use in regions like Africa and Southeast Asia (Pennycook, 1998). In Nigeria, English was adopted as the official language after independence in 1960, coexisting with local languages like Hausa, Yorùbá, and Igbo (Bamgbose, 1992). While English is used for official matters, indigenous languages are used for traditional festivals, cultural identity, and ideologies (Oyetade, 2001). In multilingual societies, language choice can be a form of resistance, a way to reclaim identity, or assert cultural independence (Scott, 1990). Sociolinguists explore these choices to understand how language functions as a tool for navigating social hierarchies and expressing individual or group identity (Gumperz, 1982). By examining these patterns, we gain insight into the power dynamics and cultural values that corroborate multilingual societies.

Lingua Franca in Intercultural and International Communication

The terms "lingua franca" has become increasingly important in today's globalized world. According to Seidlofer (2011), a lingua franca is a language used for communication among people with different native languages. It can also be defined as a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them. Thus, Akindele and Adegbite (1999:52) defines lingua franca as a language of wider communication which is used in cross-ethnic interaction.

However, lingua franca is used principally to facilitate communication among people from different linguistic backgrounds. English, being neutral, qualifies as a language of inter-ethnic communication in Nigeria. It is therefore 'regarded' as

Nigeria's lingua franca (Ogu, 1992:9). Balogun and Akindele (2021:18) explain this further that English in Nigeria is not an exclusive preserve of any ethnic group, society or culture; it is the language for almost everybody as such as its spread and promotion in Nigeria society. Bamgbose (2019), notes that English plays a significant role in global interactions.

A lingua franca is a great boon in today's interconnected world. Graddol (2018) observes that lingua franca facilitate international communication, trade, and diplomacy. It also provides access to global opportunities, and economic growth (Kachru, 2019). The language may not just be a language of inter-ethnic communication but may also be mass-oriented. That is, it is used by all the sectors of the linguistic community in which it operates. (SeeAkindele and Adegbite 1999: 51-52). Furthermore, it enables people from different cultures to interact, share ideas, and learn from each other. (Pennycook, 2017).

Besides, the use of a lingua franca also pose serious challenges. The dominance of a single lingua franca can lead to language shift and language loss. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015). However, Igboanusi (2017) notes that the use of English as a lingua franca in Nigeria can threaten local languages and cultural identity. Consequently, non-native speakers may face difficulties in expressing themselves effectively (Widdowson, 2018)

To mitigate the challenges of a lingua franca, it is essential to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism. This can be actualized by encouraging the use of local languages and promoting language education that prioritizes communicative competence and intercultural awareness. (Akindele, 2017). Similarly, language support services such as interpretation and translation, can facilitate communication among people from different Linguistic backgrounds.

Conclusively, the use of a lingua franca is both beneficial and challenging. By examining the role of English as a lingua franca, promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism, we can harness its potential while preserving indigenous languages and cultural identities.

Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to systematically collect and analyze numerical data. Specifically, it employed a descriptive research design, which aims to present an accurate account of the demographic information, behaviors, and attitudes of a specific population without any experimental manipulation. To ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the data collected, a purposive sampling technique was used to target individuals most likely to provide meaningful insights. A total of 500 internet users (netizens) were randomly selected from the Yorùbá-speaking states in the Southwest region of Nigeria—namely Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti. Data were collected

using a structured questionnaire disseminated via WhatsApp on Android devices. Participants were fully briefed on the voluntary nature of their involvement and were given the choice to either participate or decline without facing any negative consequences. Furthermore, the study clearly assured participants that all responses would be treated with confidentiality and used strictly for academic research purposes, in line with ethical research standards. The demographic data of respondents—including variables such as age, gender, educational background, and geographic location—were analyzed using frequency counts to provide a summary profile of the sample population. The questionnaire itself comprised 36 items, which were systematically categorized and labeled according to the core objectives of the research to ensure clarity and analytical consistency. Upon completion of data collection, the responses were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 2.5.0. This statistical tool facilitated the extraction of meaningful patterns and insights from the data set, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research problem. The study specifically focused on three social media platforms—YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok—based on their widespread usage and relevance in contemporary digital culture. These platforms were selected due to their status as some of the most visited websites globally in the 21st century. They are particularly noted for their global accessibility, the ability to upload multiple videos or images in a single post, and their dominant use for infotainment purposes—blending both information and entertainment. These characteristics made them especially suitable for the objectives of this study.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the questionnaire administered are presented in tables and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25.0).

The tables below show the analysis of the questionnaire administered.

Table 1: Surviving possibility of the varied indigenous language due to the partial/total negligence by Nigerians while on social media platforms

Items	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
Do you by any means code-switch/code-mix while on social media platforms?	No	172	34.4
	Yes	328	65.6
Do you need your native language to express certain ideas on social media platforms?	No	20	4.0
	Yes	480	96.0
Social media platforms connect the whole world at a single node through the hegemonic use of English	No	33	6.6
	Yes	467	93.4

Local languages value in the global market can be compared to the English language.	Agree	161	32.2
	Disagree	31	6.2
	Neutral	23	4.6
	Strongly Agree	241	48.2
	Strongly Disagree	44	8.8
Local languages may be suitable to interpret technical and scientific thoughts.	Agree	226	45.2
	Disagree	88	17.6
	Neutral	32	6.4
	Strongly Agree	113	22.6
	Strongly Disagree	41	8.2
Total		500	100%

Table 1 presents the surviving possibility of the varied indigenous languages due to the partial/total negligence by Nigerians while on social media platforms. The results showed that about two-third (65.6%) of the study participants code-switch/code-mix while on social media platforms. On whether the dominant usage of the English language aids netizens in reaching a bigger audience, most of the respondents (96%) agreed while 4% respondents disagreed. The majority of the study participants (n=467, 93.4%) agreed that social media platforms connect the whole world at a single node through the hegemonic use of English while the remaining 33 (6.6%) respondents disagreed. Nearly half of the sample (48.2%) highly agreed, 161 (32.2%) agreed, 31 (6.2%) disagreed, 44 (8.8%) strongly disagreed, and 23 (4.6%) were indifferent when asked whether English is the most often used language for international and intercultural communication. Regarding suitability of local languages to interpret technical and scientific thoughts, 113 (22.6%) of the study participants strongly agreed, 226 (45.2%) respondents agreed, 88 (17.6%) disagreed, 41 (8.2%) strongly disagreed while 32 (6.4%) were indifferent.

Table 2: English language as a passport to international and intercultural communication

S/N	STATEMENTS	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
	English language bridges the gap among netizens of	175 (35.0%)	37 (7.4%)	9 (1.8%)	234 (46.8%)	45 (9.0%)

disagreed, 20 (4%) strongly disagreed, and 31 (6.2%) were neutral. Approximately one-third (34.6%) of the study participants strongly agreed that the use of the English language in business sectors determines the standard of international communication, 244 (48.8%) agreed, 56 (11.2%) disagreed, 17 (3.4%) strongly disagreed, and 10 (2%) were indifferent. Similarly, 162 (32.4%) strongly agreed, 237 (47.4%) agreed on whether the English language is the first language in international trade due to its great economic value, 44 (8.8%) disagreed, 23 (4.6%) strongly disagreed, and 34 (6.8%) were indifferent.

Table 3: Responses on reasons for the hegemonic use of English on social media platforms

Items	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
What is your favourite language on social media platforms?	English	491	98.2
	Yoruba	9	1.8
If your choice is English, enunciate the reasons in the boxes below.	A matter of personal interest	55	11.2
	English is associated with class symbol /prestige	60	12.2
	English is the official language in Nigeria	376	76.6
The hegemonic use of English has eased Nigerians of global communication problem on social media platforms.	No	20	4.0
	Yes	480	96.0
Many netizens in Nigeria use the English language for linguistic relativity to the outside world	No	4	.8
	Yes	496	99.2
Do social media platforms enhance the Hegemonic use of English?	No	27	5.4
	Yes	473	94.6
Total		500	100%

Table 3 presents the reasons for the hegemonic use of English on social media platforms. Only 9 (1.8%) respondents named Yorùbá as their preferred language on social media, while almost three-quarters of the respondents (n=491; 98.2%) named English as their preferred language. Out of 491 respondents who reported the English Language as their favourite language on social media platforms, some gave the following reasons: a matter of personal interest (11.2%), English is

associated with class symbol /prestige (12.2%), English is the official language in Nigeria (76.6%). More than three-quarters of the total sample (96%) agreed that the hegemonic use of English has eased Nigerians global communication problem on social media platforms while 20 (4%) disagreed. On whether many netizens in Nigeria use the English language for linguistic relativity to the outside world, nearly all the respondents (99.2%) agreed while less than 1% respondents disagreed. Similarly, 473 (94.6%) respondents agreed that social media platforms enhance the hegemonic use of English while 27 (5.4%) disagreed.

Findings and Discussion

The study's findings indicate that netizens actively utilize code-mixing and code-switching as intentional and strategic linguistic tools in their online interactions, rather than relying solely on English. This linguistic behaviour not only enhances creative expression but also promotes effective communication. Consequently, the research underscores the central role of English in connecting users globally through social media, thereby facilitating a unique and borderless network of communication.

Nonetheless, more than half of the participants acknowledged the value of indigenous languages, such as Yorùbá (spoken in South-Western Nigeria), in interpreting complex technical and scientific ideas. This observation demonstrates the adaptability and significance of local languages in modern communication contexts.

These findings are further validated by statistical results, which reveal that approximately 65.6% of respondents engage in code-mixing and code-switching on social media platforms. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) believe that the use of English enables them to connect with a wider audience, while only 4% disagreed.

In addition, when participants were asked about the suitability of local languages for conveying technical and scientific information, 22.6% strongly agreed, 45.2% agreed, while smaller percentages expressed disagreement or neutrality. These responses highlight the multifaceted dynamics of language use in digital communication.

The study argues that local languages continue to hold significance on media platforms, as users frequently switch between their native tongue and foreign languages. This is particularly evident in the widespread practice of code-mixing and code-switching, where multiple languages are seamlessly combined. Notably, over half of the participants expressed the belief that languages like Yoruba are capable of conveying sophisticated scientific and technical concepts. This finding suggests that local languages not only remain relevant but are also thriving in

digital spaces, especially in regions where Yorùbá is predominantly spoken. Here, netizens tend to embrace their linguistic roots as a core aspect of their identity and online interaction.

Moreover, these conclusions align with earlier research by Fafunwa (1990) and Akinwumi (1991), both of whom demonstrated Yorùbá's potential in the instruction of scientific and technological subjects.

Regarding the second research objective, survey results revealed diverse perspectives on the function of English as a medium for cross-cultural and international communication. While 46.8% of respondents strongly agreed that English bridges linguistic and cultural gaps among netizens, 35.0% agreed, and smaller proportions disagreed or remained neutral.

As a result of these findings, it becomes evident that English has established itself as the lingua franca of the digital era, facilitating communication across different cultures and languages. This widespread adoption is reinforced by Crystal (2011), who asserts that English dominates social media, forums, and websites, enabling global interactions. Consequently, this study argues that English has become the default language for international communication, commerce, and cultural exchange. Its global significance is supported by its economic value and extensive adoption.

Jenkins (2007) similarly emphasizes that English has emerged as the primary global language, facilitating interaction across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This phenomenon is largely attributed to its prevalent use across key domains such as business, science, education, and entertainment. Supporting this, Graddol (2006) identifies English as the language of globalization, enabling participation in the global economy. The adoption of English by numerous multinational corporations as their official language further confirms its dominance.

The study's results also validate the notion that English proficiency is a highly sought-after skill in the job market. Crystal (2003) maintains that fluency in English is often a prerequisite for accessing international markets and securing employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the study suggests that the importance of English in global communication is likely to increase. Ferguson (2007) points out that the ongoing globalization of commerce, education, and communication will continue to strengthen English's role as the world's most widely used language.

Overall, the study confirms that English is a crucial tool for global communication. This supports the views of many language experts who consider English as the global language of the modern age. Given the increasing

interconnectedness of the world, the ability to communicate in English will likely become even more essential.

According to Table 3, the survey of 500 netizens shows a strong preference for English on social media, with 491 respondents (98.2%) choosing English, while only 9 (1.8%) preferred Yoruba. These results support earlier findings by Kachru (2017) and Crystal (2011), who both noted that English has become the most popular language online.

However, considering the linguistic context of South-Western Nigeria, where Yorùbá is widely spoken and holds cultural and political significance, the small number of respondents who preferred Yoruba is not unexpected (Oyetade, 2007). In relation to the second question in table, which examined reasons for the preference of English on social media, the findings revealed that 55 respondents cited personal interest, 60 associated English with social status and prestige, while a significant majority of 376 indicated that they use English primarily due to its official status in Nigeria.

This aligns with Section 51 of the Nigerian Constitution (1977), which declares English as the official language, reinforcing its function in promoting national unity and development — a view also supported by Awobuluyi (1991). Therefore, the official status of English continues to shape language preferences on digital platforms.

Additionally, the argument that English is the most preferred language on social media is further reinforced by the survey results, where 98.2% of respondents chose English over Yorùbá. The key reasons cited include personal interest (11.2%), its connection to class and prestige (12.2%), and its status as Nigeria's official language (76.6%).

Furthermore, 96% of respondents agreed that the widespread use of English has simplified communication among Nigerians on social media, with only 4% disagreeing. Almost all respondents (99.2%) believed that English facilitates communication with international audiences, while 94.6% agreed that social media has amplified the dominance of English. Only a small minority (5.4%) disagreed.

In light of this, it is essential to promote the Yorùbá language in sectors such as education, media, and governance to ensure its survival and growth. Preservation efforts must include documentation, the development of educational materials, and language promotion programmes. Ultimately, these findings offer valuable insights into the factors driving English language dominance and the marginalization of Yorùbá in digital spaces. They also highlight the urgent need

for cultural reorientation and proactive strategies to preserve and promote indigenous languages (Akindele, Afolabi, &Olasunkanmi, 2025).

In conclusion, this research shows that while English remains a dominant force in international and intercultural communication, netizens continue to integrate code-mixing and code-switching as tools for online engagement. Importantly, local languages like Yorùbá retain their relevance, reflecting users' cultural identity and linguistic diversity in the digital age.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The main finding of this research is that English facilitates international and intercultural communication, bridging linguistic and cultural divides. Meanwhile, indigenous languages maintain a significant presence on social media, with netizens valuing and utilizing their mother tongue alongside foreign languages, evident in the prevalence of code-mixing and code-switching. The findings reveal that local languages such as Yorùbá are capable of conveying complex technical and scientific ideas. Using a sociolinguistic method, future research areas might examine other facets of English language hegemony, including language attitudes, identity, multilingualism, and cultural environment. This study's objectives can be further investigated, and new areas of inquiry can be explored, including language policy and planning. Expanding the study population to include diverse geographical areas, age groups, occupations and language preferences can provide more comprehensive insights. Alternative research methodologies, such as post-colonial theory, discourse analysis, language attitude studies, language policy analysis and conversation analysis, can also be applied to this topic. Similarly, future studies can delve deeper into language preferences and practices on social media through in-depth interviews and focused research contexts. Crucially, the English language is a passport to international and intercultural communication, under scoring its importance in online communication. This conclusion aligns with Odebunmi (2020), who also emphasised the significance of English in social media communication.

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