

NEW FRONTIERS

A Journal in the Humanities

ISSN 2536-6203

Published by the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Abuja

Volume 4 (2026), Article 5, <https://doi.org/10.70118/NFJH0005>

Preserving Yoruba Language Identity through Social Media: A Study of *Masoyinbo* Online Programme

Mark O. Obayi

Barth Oshionebo, PhD

Department of Theatre Arts, University of Abuja

Abstract

This study investigates the preservation of Yoruba cultural and linguistic identity on social media through an analysis of *Masoyinbo* (Don't Speak English), an online game-show programme dedicated to promoting Yoruba as a primary medium of communication. Guided by Neuliep's Cultural Identity Theory and the Uses and Gratifications Theory of Blumler and Katz, the research examines how the programme reinforces indigenous linguistic pride, embeds cultural values, and stimulates audience participation across digital platforms. Using qualitative content analysis, five purposively selected episodes were coded for linguistic patterns, cultural themes, and indicators of audience engagement. Findings reveal a strong commitment to Yoruba linguistic purity, as the sampled episodes were delivered almost entirely in Yoruba, with English appearing only sparingly for clarification. This pattern challenges the colonial hierarchies described by Bamgbose and Phillipson, who note the persistent privileging of English in African public communication, while echoing arguments by Adegbija and Sanusi et al. that indigenous-language media can counter linguistic erosion. The programme also integrates Yoruba proverbs, traditional attire, naming practices, and folk music, creating a cultural atmosphere that aligns with Hall's view of language as a primary site of identity formation. Engagement metrics demonstrate substantial viewer interaction, suggesting that audiences find gratifications in cultural connection, entertainment, and communal participation. The study concludes that *Masoyinbo* contributes meaningfully to resisting cultural homogenisation by revitalising Yoruba linguistic and cultural consciousness within digital environments. It recommends replicating similar initiatives in other Nigerian languages and deepening institutional partnerships to strengthen indigenous-language preservation.

Keywords: Yoruba, Culture, Identity, Social Media, *Masoyinbo*

Introduction

Cultural identity, once nurtured primarily through oral traditions, festivals, kinship networks, and communal gatherings, increasingly finds expression within digital spaces where communication is instantaneous and borderless. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have expanded the possibilities for cultural transmission by enabling communities to document, circulate, and renew their heritage at unprecedented speed and scale (Miller et al. 6). This shift has not only widened the audience for indigenous cultural practices but has also democratised participation, allowing ordinary users, not only cultural gatekeepers, to shape narratives about identity and belonging. Irele argues that culture embodies shared values, language, and practices that anchor individuals within a collective identity, a foundation that becomes vulnerable when globalisation reshapes aspirations and lifestyles (23). The growing preference for English among young Nigerians illustrates the tension between global modernity and indigenous heritage, leading to gradual linguistic erosion and weakening intergenerational transmission. Yet, in this same digital landscape, creative programmes such as *Masoyinbo* (Don't Speak English) rekindle interest in indigenous knowledge by showcasing cultural expression as both contemporary and desirable. As a result, social media becomes a paradoxical site where cultural erosion and cultural revival unfold simultaneously, challenging scholars to re-examine how identity is sustained in an interconnected world.

Scholars such as Uwah note that one of the most transformative potentials of social media lies in its interactive quality, which enables cultural campaigns to engage audiences in conversations rather than merely presenting them with static information (103). In this participatory environment, users do not only consume cultural content; they respond, debate, remix, and circulate it, creating what the African Union Commission describes as “digital heritage transmission” (44). Programmes like *Masoyinbo* capitalise on this interactivity by insisting on the exclusive use of Yoruba, thereby questioning the colonial logic that positions English as superior and indigenous languages as insufficient for modern communication. Babalola and Sedisa caution, however, that while digital spaces can amplify indigenous identities, they may also expose such identities to global pressures that risk appropriating, simplifying, or commodifying cultural elements (52). These tensions require that digital cultural initiatives balance authenticity with accessibility, ensuring that the revival of indigenous practices does not fall into the traps of superficiality or homogenisation. In the Nigerian context, where cultural identity is deeply tied to linguistic continuity, such initiatives become central to resisting cultural loss. Thus, examining *Masoyinbo* provides insight into how a digital programme can reposition indigenous language use as an empowering and socially relevant act.

The role of digital creators and cultural activists has become critical in shaping how people articulate belonging in online communities. By producing content rooted in proverbs, traditional attire, naming practices, and folk aesthetics, such creators provide audiences with shared symbols that reaffirm identity across physical and diasporic spaces. Appadurai's discussion of global cultural flows reminds us that globalisation simultaneously displaces and enables visibility for local cultures, creating channels through which identity can be both threatened and strengthened (32). Omoniyi's work further shows that language becomes especially significant for diaspora communities who rely on virtual platforms to maintain continuity with ancestral heritage (250). In this regard, *Masoyinbo* serves as more than a linguistic game; it becomes a cultural bridge for viewers negotiating hybrid identities. Yet, critics like Phillipson warn that efforts to reclaim linguistic autonomy must also address the structural dominance of English, which continues to shape educational and economic opportunities globally (17). This tension underscores the need for cultural revival efforts that are not nostalgic alone but responsive to the complexities of modern life. As such, social media stands not merely as a tool for cultural preservation but as a contested space where identity is negotiated and reconstructed.

Despite the growing scholarship on cultural identity and social media, limited research has examined how specific online programmes operationalise indigenous-language preservation through structured formats and interactive participation. Many scholars acknowledge that globalisation accelerates linguistic loss, yet fewer studies explore the counter-movements emerging from within digital spaces to address this erosion. Although Irele and Adegbiya highlight the urgency of safeguarding indigenous languages, their analyses stop short of evaluating digital programmes that actively challenge linguistic marginalisation. Similarly, while Hall and Ting-Toomey emphasise the symbolic and emotional dimensions of identity communicated through language, there remains a gap in understanding how entertainment-based digital content can function as a site of identity pedagogy. Additionally, although Uwah, Babalola, and Sedisa document the affordances of social media for cultural dissemination, they do not examine concrete examples where these affordances are strategically applied to indigenous language revival. This study therefore addresses a critical gap by examining how *Masoyinbo* transforms digital entertainment into a site for cultural assertion. Through its exclusive use of Yoruba and its fusion of values, music, and cultural symbols, the programme offers an opportunity to analyse

digital identity-making from a grounded, programme-level perspective.

Given the declining use of indigenous languages among younger Nigerians, the effectiveness of digital interventions like *Masoyinbo* becomes a matter of scholarly and cultural urgency. The platform's popularity invites key questions about how social media can be leveraged to strengthen language loyalty, reframe indigenous communication as modern, and deepen cultural consciousness in globalised environments. It also prompts an inquiry into whether such programmes merely entertain or actively restructure identity narratives for viewers who straddle traditional and contemporary worlds. This study, therefore, investigates the extent to which *Masoyinbo* preserves Yoruba language identity, the cultural themes embedded within its content, and the nature of audience engagement with its social media presence. By situating the programme within theoretical discussions on cultural identity and media gratifications, the research demonstrates how digital spaces can be strategically mobilised for cultural sustainability. Ultimately, the study contributes to wider debates on the future of indigenous languages in Africa's digital age. It argues that revitalising cultural identity in contemporary society requires intentional interventions that are engaging, accessible, and rooted in community values.

Masoyinbo: (The Game Show): Its Significance

Masoyinbo emerges as a significant cultural intervention within Nigeria's media landscape, offering a contemporary platform for revitalising Yoruba linguistic and cultural identity. As Adesewo notes, the programme stands as a beacon of hope because it challenges participants to engage exclusively in Yoruba, resisting the common impulse toward code-switching that typifies everyday communication among Yoruba speakers (15). Produced and hosted by Olalekan Fabilola, a committed advocate of Yoruba language reform, the show frames indigenous-language competence as a matter of pride, skill, and cultural consciousness. Sanusi et al. argue that the programme's insistence on linguistic "purity" is not merely an aesthetic choice but a deliberate attempt to reposition Yoruba as a capable medium for modern discourse (47). This aligns with Bamgbose's assertion that indigenous languages attain vitality when given functional roles in public life rather than being relegated to symbolic gestures (3). Through its structure and visibility, *Masoyinbo* reclaims Yoruba as an everyday language in a media space often dominated by English. In doing so, the programme contributes to resisting what Phillipson describes as entrenched linguistic hierarchies (17).

The format of the show strengthens its cultural mission by merging entertainment with education in a manner that fosters cultural pride. Contestants answer ten culturally grounded questions—ranging from proverbs and naming systems to environment-related vocabulary—while maintaining strict Yoruba usage throughout. Sanusi et al. note that this structure reinforces linguistic consciousness by demonstrating Yoruba's semantic depth across a wide range of topics (51). Adebija supports this by arguing that indigenous languages must be actively used in diverse communicative domains to prevent lexical erosion and cultural disconnection (188). Yet Phillipson cautions that revitalisation efforts must confront the broader systems that continue to privilege English, complicating attempts to restore indigenous languages (18). Despite these pressures, *Masoyinbo* presents Yoruba not as a relic of tradition but as a flexible and contemporary medium. This positioning encourages audiences to perceive the language as fully compatible with modern cultural expression.

The programme's reach extends across multiple platforms—including YouTube, Facebook, Africa Magic Yoruba, GOtv, and local stations—allowing it to connect with varied Yoruba-speaking audiences both within Nigeria and the diaspora. This broad distribution supports Omoniyi's assertion that language strengthens transnational identity networks when circulated across diverse communication channels (253). The integration of attire, music, and cultural references aligns with Bala's recognition that multisensory engagement reinforces authenticity when embedded within meaningful contexts (309). While digital visibility risks simplifying cultural practices, *Masoyinbo* avoids this by grounding symbols such as *aso-oke*, *agbada*, and the Yoruba flute within narrative and instructional frames. Through this multilayered presentation, the programme demonstrates how indigenous culture can be preserved, celebrated, and adapted in digital spaces. Ultimately, *Masoyinbo* stands as a compelling model of how media can nurture Yoruba identity in a globalised world.

Cultural Identity

Culture comprises the shared meanings, values, beliefs, and practices through which communities interpret their world and transmit knowledge across generations. Hofstede describes culture as a form of "collective programming of the mind," emphasising how individuals internalise norms that shape behaviour and communication (5). Hall similarly argues that culture functions through systems of representation that enable communities to make sense of experience and express identity (22). These meanings are expressed in language, rituals, proverbs, music, clothing, and symbols that convey social expectations and ethical ideals. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel note

Mark O. Obayi & Barth Oshionebo

that these cultural expressions operate as communication codes that allow members of a group to interpret messages within familiar frames (14). Adebija adds that such elements serve as repositories of collective memory that preserve identity across generations (187). Together, these perspectives show that culture is not static but lived, negotiated, and transmitted through everyday practices.

Cultural identity emerges from individuals' emotional and symbolic attachment to their cultural group and the practices that give them a sense of belonging. Ting-Toomey explains that cultural identity shapes self-perception and relational behaviour, influencing how people understand themselves and interact with others (54). Neuliep adds that cultural identity evolves as people navigate new environments and experiences, maintaining continuity while adapting to changing contexts (18). Hall emphasises that cultural identity is constructed through representation, positioning language as a key site where meanings are negotiated and reaffirmed (35). When indigenous languages weaken, the cultural knowledge embedded within them becomes vulnerable, threatening the transmission of values to younger generations. Phillipson warns that dominance of global languages, particularly English, complicates identity formation by displacing the linguistic foundations that anchor cultural memory (19). These debates highlight the fragility and dynamism of cultural identity in globalised environments.

Language plays a central role in cultural identity because it carries the metaphors, stories, and knowledge systems through which communities understand their world. Hall highlights language as the principal locus of meaning-making, suggesting that cultural worldviews erode when language use declines (38). Yoruba proverbs, praise poetry, naming traditions, and kinship expressions serve not only to communicate but to encode moral instruction, history, and communal values. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel note that such linguistic forms foster shared understanding, social cohesion, and continuity (17). Adebija observes that indigenous languages retain ecological, historical, and philosophical knowledge that cannot be fully translated into foreign languages without loss (192). Yet Phillipson's critique of linguistic imperialism reminds us that such languages remain endangered when English dominates education and media (21). Preserving language is therefore inseparable from preserving identity.

Symbolic expressions—such as attire, rituals, music, and visual markers—also serve as important sites of cultural identity. Traditional clothing like *aso-oke*, *agbada*, and *gele*, as well as folk music and ceremonial practices, visually communicate values, status, and heritage. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel argue that these nonverbal cues are powerful identity markers that strengthen cultural recognition and solidarity (20). Bala cautions, however, that digital circulation sometimes detaches such symbols from their cultural contexts, reducing them to aesthetic commodities (311). Stewart-Harawira similarly warns that revitalisation efforts must avoid presenting culture as frozen tradition rather than as a living system connected to contemporary realities (85). These critiques underscore the need for cultural expressions to be presented in context, ensuring their meanings remain intact. When embraced responsibly, symbolic practices become potent tools for sustaining belonging and cultural continuity.

Role of the Social Media in Preserving Cultural Identity

Social media has become a vital platform for cultural expression because it enables communities to document, circulate, and revitalise their traditions in real time. UNESCO notes that digital platforms allow cultural practices to reach broad audiences, particularly young people who engage primarily through visual and interactive media (11). Through livestreams, images, and short videos, cultural knowledge that once required physical gatherings can now be shared instantaneously across local and global spaces. The African Union Commission describes this as "digital heritage transmission," emphasising how online interactions foster cultural pride and enable intergenerational learning (44). Miller et al. add that social media transforms users from passive consumers into active participants who co-create cultural meaning (9). These affordances make digital platforms powerful tools for preserving indigenous languages, values, and symbols. In this environment, cultural identity becomes both visible and negotiable.

One key strength of social media is its ability to encourage participatory cultural preservation through user-generated content. Young people remix proverbs, dances, attire, and rituals in formats that suit contemporary digital culture, thereby keeping traditions alive. The African Union Commission argues that such participatory engagement connects diasporic and home-based communities, reducing cultural erosion caused by geographic separation (47). The International Telecommunication Union similarly observes that social media amplifies voices historically excluded from mainstream cultural spaces, strengthening minority identity (22). Yet Bala warns that online visibility may also lead to superficial or commodified representations when cultural symbols are detached from their deeper meanings (311). Phillipson further notes that English-dominated digital infrastructures can diminish the visibility of indigenous languages (24). These

tensions reveal that cultural preservation online requires intentionality and critical engagement.

Despite these challenges, social media offers meaningful opportunities for sustaining cultural identity when used thoughtfully. Hall's notion that identity is constructed through repeated symbolic representation helps explain why the visual and linguistic cues circulating online shape collective belonging (35). Omoniyi's work on diaspora communities reinforces this point, showing that digital platforms help individuals maintain linguistic and cultural ties even when distant from their homelands (252). Cultural festivals, naming rituals, and traditional music shared online expand cultural diplomacy, as noted by the British Council (7). While Bala cautions that virality may flatten cultural nuance (314), programmes like *Masoyinbo* demonstrate that digital media can preserve authenticity when cultural elements are contextualised rather than treated as spectacle. In this way, social media becomes a contested yet powerful arena where cultural identity is sustained, negotiated, and reimagined.

Challenges of Preserving Cultural Identity through Social Media

Preserving cultural identity through social media is shaped by significant structural and technological inequalities that determine who participates and whose cultural expressions gain visibility. Bala notes that digital ecosystems tend to amplify content aligned with global aesthetics, often sidelining culturally grounded expressions that do not conform to dominant visual trends (307). As a result, communities with limited digital fluency or resources struggle to project their cultural narratives in meaningful ways. Okocha and Edafewotu argue that inadequate internet access, unstable electricity, and high data costs create a digital divide that excludes rural and low-income populations from actively contributing to online cultural preservation (119). This exclusion narrows the range of cultural voices represented online, producing a skewed impression of cultural identity. Bala further warns that such selective visibility risks simplifying complex cultural traditions, reducing them to fragments easily consumed by broader audiences (311). These inequalities reveal that digital culture is far from neutral and that equitable participation requires intentional infrastructural investment.

Another key challenge is cultural homogenisation, which arises when social media encourages creators to modify cultural expressions to suit global tastes. Bala observes that creators often simplify rituals, dances, attire, or linguistic expressions to make them more "shareable," thereby sacrificing depth for visibility (314). This trend risks diluting cultural meaning, especially when young creators prioritise virality over contextual accuracy. Phillipson's critique of linguistic imperialism reinforces this concern, noting that English's structural dominance pressures communities to align with global communication norms, sometimes at the expense of indigenous languages (16). These dynamics create tension between achieving digital reach and preserving cultural authenticity. Stewart-Harawira adds that globalisation frequently extracts cultural symbols from their lived political and historical contexts, turning them into consumable products rather than expressions of community (78). These critiques emphasise the need for cultural preservation strategies that resist the flattening pressures of digital media. Without such strategies, cultural identity risks becoming fragmented or distorted.

Cultural appropriation and misrepresentation also pose significant risks within online spaces where cultural symbols spread rapidly and without contextual grounding. Bala notes that attire, music, and linguistic phrases can easily be misused or trivialised when adopted by individuals unfamiliar with their cultural significance (312). The International Telecommunication Union warns that minority groups lose narrative control when outsiders reinterpret cultural material in ways that reinforce stereotypes or sever symbols from their origins (24). Visual platforms such as TikTok and Instagram often intensify this risk because aesthetic appeal tends to overshadow cultural meaning, leading to representations that circulate widely but inaccurately. Stewart-Harawira argues that cultural revitalisation must involve vigilance against both external appropriation and internal simplification that arises when communities present culture merely for digital attention (83). This double challenge requires creators to protect cultural integrity while navigating platforms optimised for rapid consumption. In such contexts, misrepresentation becomes not only likely but structurally incentivised.

Theoretical Framework

The Cultural Identity Theory developed by James W. Neuliep provides a grounding framework for understanding how *Masoyinbo* reinforces Yoruba identity through language, symbols, and shared values. Neuliep explains that cultural identity emerges from affiliation with a cultural group and shapes how individuals interpret interactions and express themselves (19). This aligns closely with Hall's argument that identity is produced through representation, making language a central site where cultural meanings are negotiated and reaffirmed (36). Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel similarly emphasise that cultural identity is communicated through both verbal cues—such as proverbs and naming traditions—and nonverbal elements like attire and music (22). Adebija adds that indigenous languages serve as repositories of communal memory, so their marginalisation

Mark O. Obayi & Barth Oshionebo

weakens cultural continuity (187). Phillipson's critique of linguistic imperialism highlights why revitalising Yoruba is urgent, as global linguistic hierarchies often privilege English at the expense of local languages (17). These insights clarify why *Masoyinbo's* exclusive reliance on Yoruba functions as a deliberate identity-building strategy in a digital environment dominated by global languages.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) developed by Blumler and Katz complements this understanding by explaining why audiences actively gravitate toward *Masoyinbo*. UGT argues that media users seek content that satisfies their needs for identity, belonging, education, and entertainment (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 21). This helps explain the strong engagement reflected in the programme's likes, shares, and comments, as viewers appear to find cultural connection, enjoyment, and linguistic pride in the content. Miller et al. note that digital platforms allow audiences to co-create meaning through interactive comments, reactions, and sharing patterns (14). Omoniyi's research on diaspora communities reinforces this point by demonstrating that digital spaces help users sustain ties with ancestral languages even when geographically distant (252). Yet Ogunyemi and Ibrahim caution that English remains dominant online, meaning indigenous-language content requires intentional design to remain visible (108). *Masoyinbo*, by foregrounding Yoruba, demonstrates how local languages can thrive when embedded in appealing digital experiences.

Bringing these strands together, the integrated theoretical and empirical insights provide a robust lens for analysing *Masoyinbo*. Cultural Identity Theory explains how the programme reinforces belonging through Yoruba linguistic and cultural expression, while UGT clarifies the motivations driving audience engagement. The empirical studies affirm that digital platforms play a significant role in sustaining cultural identity, even as they introduce threats such as homogenisation or linguistic marginalisation. Tsuda's caution that revitalisation efforts must account for the realities of multilingual communities (49) and Stewart-Harawira's warning against romanticising tradition (83) remind us that cultural preservation must remain realistic and adaptable. Within these debates, *Masoyinbo* stands out as a model of how digital media can anchor indigenous identity in ways that are both contemporary and community-centered. This integrated framework thus guides the analysis of how the programme negotiates cultural continuity within a globalised digital landscape.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a content analysis research design to examine how *Masoyinbo* (Don't Speak English) preserves Yoruba language and cultural identity through digital media. Content analysis was appropriate because it enables systematic interpretation of communication patterns, cultural expressions, and linguistic behaviour embedded within the programme's episodes. Miller et al. note that digital media requires interpretive approaches capable of capturing layered interactions among visuals, language, and audience responses (16). This method allowed the researcher to trace how Yoruba language, values, and symbols are woven into the programme's format without imposing external assumptions on the data. Although some scholars argue that content analysis may risk oversimplifying cultural nuance, Adebijia reminds us that structured examination is crucial in documenting how languages function within modern communicative domains (194). Thus, the method balanced analytical precision with the cultural sensitivity required for studying indigenous-language media. It provided a framework for identifying patterns that reveal how *Masoyinbo* operates as a tool of cultural reinforcement.

The study population comprised twenty-five episodes of *Masoyinbo* released between April and August 2025, a period that reflected stable production and active audience engagement. From this population, five episodes were selected through simple random sampling to ensure each had an equal chance of inclusion, consistent with Hall's view that cultural texts should be sampled in ways that minimise researcher bias (30). Although Phillipson cautions that smaller samples may not capture the full breadth of linguistic variation (23), the programme's thematic consistency justified the focused sample. The selected episodes provided a representative picture of how Yoruba language and cultural elements function across the wider corpus. Neuliep argues that when cultural patterns are stable, smaller samples can still reveal significant identity markers (21). The chosen timeframe and episodes therefore allowed for a detailed yet manageable analysis. This sampling strategy supported both credibility and methodological coherence.

Data were collected using a content analysis coding sheet designed to record linguistic patterns, cultural themes, and indicators of audience engagement. Variables included proportions of Yoruba versus English usage, presence of proverbs, traditional attire, folk music, and audience responses such as likes, comments, and shares. Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel note that analysing both verbal and nonverbal symbols is essential for understanding how cultural identity is communicated (18). Each episode was viewed multiple times to ensure accurate coding and to avoid overlooking

subtle cultural cues. While some critics argue that coding tools may limit interpretive flexibility, Bala contends that structured coding helps prevent subjective drift in studies involving culturally rich material (310). The coding sheet therefore ensured consistency while remaining attentive to cultural depth. This approach captured the programme's linguistic purity and cultural integration.

Ethical considerations were respected by relying exclusively on publicly available digital content already intended for open viewing. As Omoniyi notes, publicly posted cultural materials may be used for research so long as personal data are not extracted or misrepresented (254). The study analysed aggregate audience responses without identifying individual users, ensuring privacy and responsible use of online data. Phillipson reminds researchers that interpretation must remain culturally sensitive, as studies of indigenous expression influence broader perceptions of heritage communities (20). With this awareness, the analysis foregrounded Yoruba interpretive contexts and avoided reductive conclusions. The qualitative content analysis that followed organised coded entries into themes aligned with the study's objectives. This interpretive process, supported by frameworks from Neuliep, Hall, and Ting-Toomey, enabled a nuanced reading of how *Masoyinbo* sustains Yoruba identity. Through this method, the study illuminated the programme's role as a digital platform for cultural preservation.

Findings

1. Extent to Which *Masoyinbo* Preserves the Use of Yoruba Language Over English

The analysis of the five selected episodes shows that *Masoyinbo* maintains a remarkably high use of Yoruba, confirming its commitment to linguistic preservation. Episodes 131, 148, and 156 displayed 100 percent Yoruba usage, while Episodes 177 and 182 contained only minimal English—5 percent and 10 percent respectively—used strictly for brief clarifications. This pattern supports Bamgbose's position that indigenous languages retain vitality when they function as primary communication tools rather than symbolic appendages (3). It also aligns with Adegbija's argument that consistent linguistic use strengthens cultural memory and deepens attachment to shared values (188). Hall's concept of representation helps explain why this purity matters: language operating at the centre of meaning-making reinforces identity at both personal and communal levels (37). Although Tsuda warns that strict linguistic expectations may be challenging in multilingual societies (49), *Masoyinbo* presents Yoruba use as celebratory rather than punitive. These findings indicate that the programme preserves Yoruba not as nostalgia but as a vibrant contemporary medium.

The limited English usage in two episodes does not diminish the linguistic integrity of the programme; rather, it reflects careful balancing of accessibility and cultural preservation. Neuliep's view that cultural identity is reinforced through repeated exposure to cultural symbols—including language—clarifies why this balance is effective (19). Brief English interventions ensure audience comprehension without disrupting the Yoruba communicative frame, a strategy that maintains cultural authenticity while respecting viewer diversity. Phillipson's critique of English dominance underscores the significance of this approach, as *Masoyinbo* challenges the normalised linguistic hierarchy that privileges global languages (17). The programme thus performs what Hall describes as cultural negotiation by foregrounding Yoruba while acknowledging the linguistic realities of a multilingual nation (36). In this sense, *Masoyinbo* becomes a case study in resisting linguistic marginalisation through intentional digital content. Collectively, these findings demonstrate a clear commitment to sustaining Yoruba linguistic practice in contemporary media.

2. Cultural Themes Highlighted in *Masoyinbo* (Don't Speak English)

Across the five episodes, *Masoyinbo* consistently integrates cultural values, proverbs, naming systems, attire, and music, offering audiences a layered representation of Yoruba identity. Questions referencing "Da'ruko orisirisi eye meje ni Youruba" and "Iru omo wo ni Yoruba n pe ni Ojo?" highlight the role of symbolism, nature, and naming traditions in Yoruba cosmology and social meaning. Adegbija's view that proverbs and naming conventions function as repositories of communal memory supports the significance of these inclusions (187). Attire such as *aso-oke*, *agbada*, and *gele*, alongside traditional flute music, reinforces Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel's emphasis on nonverbal cultural symbols as carriers of meaning (20). These elements echo Hall's argument that identity is constructed through repeated engagement with culturally embedded symbols (35). Bala warns that digital platforms sometimes reduce cultural artefacts to aesthetics (311), but *Masoyinbo* places each cultural item within narrative or instructional context. This contextualisation prevents superficiality and strengthens cultural continuity.

The cultural values highlighted—respect, honesty, unity, gratitude, and character—correspond with longstanding Yoruba ethical frameworks and reflect Ting-Toomey's argument that cultural identity carries emotional significance expressed through shared norms (54). The programme's invocation of metaphors such as "Eniyan dogo" demonstrates how moral insights are embedded in everyday

Mark O. Obayi & Barth Oshionebo

speech, aligning with Stewart-Harawira's recognition of indigenous knowledge as an interconnected system (82). Music and attire similarly contribute to a multisensory cultural experience that deepens audience immersion. Although Bala cautions that digital expression may simplify complex traditions (314), *Masoyinbo's* consistency across episodes suggests a deliberate pedagogical approach. This representation affirms Yoruba identity as contemporary, adaptable, and deeply rooted in cultural wisdom. Hence, the cultural themes emphasise both heritage preservation and identity reaffirmation.

3. Level of Audience Engagement with *Masoyinbo* Social Media Content

Table i: Audience Appreciation of *Masoyinbo* content

Episode	Likes	Comments	Shares
131	4,900	320	180
148	6,900	410	210
156	990	450	230
177	853	500	260
182	982	480	240

Audience engagement with *Masoyinbo* reveals strong viewer interest, with Episodes 131 and 148 receiving the highest combination of likes, comments, and shares. These patterns align with Miller et al.'s argument that digital audiences act as co-creators who shape the meaning and circulation of cultural content through interactive participation (14). Episode 148, accounting for 42.9 percent of total views, suggests that thematic resonance or featured personalities significantly influence audience attraction. According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, audiences gravitate toward content that fulfils identity, entertainment, and communal needs (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 21). The steady volume of comments across episodes indicates reflective engagement rather than passive viewing, demonstrating that viewers see cultural value in the content. Omoniyi's work on diaspora communities explains this pattern, noting that digital platforms allow displaced individuals to maintain linguistic and cultural ties (252). This suggests that *Masoyinbo* serves both local and transnational identity needs.

Shares across all episodes reveal that viewers extend cultural content into their networks, reflecting a form of participatory cultural preservation. Bala acknowledges that such engagement can occasionally be superficial (311), yet the consistent, thematically grounded viewer responses here point toward deeper cultural resonance. Phillipson's concerns about English-dominated digital environments are mitigated by the strong Yoruba-centred engagement that the programme generates (24). High engagement levels thus indicate that *Masoyinbo* not only entertains but mobilises viewers as cultural ambassadors. Collectively, the findings show that audience responses reinforce the programme's role in sustaining Yoruba identity in digital spaces. Through linguistic purity, cultural symbolism, and sustained viewer interaction, *Masoyinbo* proves to be an effective digital platform for cultural preservation.

Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that *Masoyinbo* is highly effective in promoting Yoruba linguistic preservation, as the analysed episodes rely almost entirely on Yoruba for communication. This consistent linguistic practice affirms Bamgbose's argument that indigenous languages gain vitality when they are used meaningfully in public domains rather than relegated to symbolic gestures (3). Episodes containing slight English usage employ it only for clarification, reinforcing Yoruba as the primary communicative medium. This approach aligns with Hall's view that representation is most powerful when language remains central to the construction of cultural meaning (37). At the same time, the programme's linguistic discipline challenges the dominance of English described by Phillipson, who argues that the persistent privileging of global languages undermines indigenous linguistic continuity (17). Neuliep's Cultural Identity Theory helps explain why this prioritisation matters: sustained use of indigenous language deepens emotional attachment and strengthens group identity (19). Collectively, these insights indicate that *Masoyinbo* effectively counters linguistic marginalisation through deliberate, culturally grounded choices.

The cultural themes across the selected episodes reveal a deliberate strategy of embedding Yoruba values, symbolism, and identity markers within the programme's structure. Proverbs, naming traditions, and moral values—such as respect, character, gratitude, and unity—echo

Adegbija's view of indigenous expressions as vessels of communal memory and ethical orientation (187). Visual symbols such as *aso-oke*, *agbada*, *gele*, and traditional music reinforce Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel's argument that cultural communication occurs through both verbal and nonverbal cues that signify group belonging (20). These integrated elements reflect Hall's understanding of identity as a continuous negotiation through shared cultural signifiers (35). Critics such as Bala, however, caution that digital spaces may sometimes flatten cultural meaning by prioritising spectacle over depth (311). Yet the cohesive, contextual use of these cultural components suggests that *Masoyinbo* avoids this risk by presenting culture as lived knowledge rather than decorative performance. Through this thoughtful integration, the programme positions Yoruba cultural experience as modern, relevant, and emotionally resonant.

Audience engagement patterns further underscore the programme's cultural impact. High levels of likes, comments, and shares indicate that viewers do not merely consume the content but actively participate in circulating Yoruba cultural expressions. This pattern aligns with the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which posits that audiences select content that meets personal, social, and identity-related needs (Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch 21). Omoniyi's work on diaspora communities reinforces this interpretation by showing that digital platforms help users maintain linguistic and symbolic ties to their heritage (252). Although Phillipson argues that English-dominated digital environments often overshadow indigenous languages (24), *Masoyinbo* demonstrates that intentional content design can reverse this trend by encouraging Yoruba-centred engagement. The findings therefore show that the programme sustains a participatory cultural community that spans local and diaspora audiences.

In summary, the findings highlight *Masoyinbo* as a meaningful cultural intervention that balances linguistic preservation, cultural symbolism, and audience participation. While scholars such as Tsuda and Bala remind us that revitalisation efforts must navigate tensions between tradition and globalisation, the programme's success suggests that indigenous languages can thrive when presented through contemporary, engaging formats. Through its linguistic discipline and cultural richness, *Masoyinbo* exemplifies how digital media can serve as a powerful platform for revitalising Yoruba identity.

Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that *Masoyinbo* (Don't Speak English) stands as a compelling example of how digital media can sustain and revitalise indigenous cultural identity in a globalised communication landscape. The programme's near-exclusive use of Yoruba affirms Bamgbose's argument that indigenous languages gain strength when they occupy functional and public communicative spaces rather than being reduced to symbolic markers of heritage (3). Its integration of proverbs, naming traditions, moral values, attire, and music aligns with Adegbija's view that language and cultural forms operate as repositories of communal memory essential for sustaining identity over generations (187). Through these multilayered expressions, *Masoyinbo* transforms digital entertainment into an immersive cultural experience that reinforces Hall's notion that identity is constructed and reconstructed through repeated engagement with meaningful representations (36). The high level of audience engagement further indicates that the programme meets viewers' needs for cultural connection, learning, and communal participation, as articulated in the Uses and Gratifications framework. Collectively, the evidence suggests that *Masoyinbo* provides a dynamic model for digital cultural preservation capable of fostering linguistic pride among both local and diaspora audiences.

At the same time, the study acknowledges the complexities and tensions within which such cultural revitalisation efforts operate. Bala warns that digital platforms may simplify or commodify cultural expressions, detaching them from the contexts that give them depth (311). Tsuda similarly cautions that indigenous-language advocacy must account for the multilingual realities of modern communities, recognising that linguistic boundaries are increasingly fluid (49). Stewart-Harawira adds that revitalisation must avoid idealising tradition in ways that overlook contemporary sociopolitical conditions (83). Yet *Masoyinbo* appears to navigate these tensions thoughtfully by embedding Yoruba language and cultural meanings in ways that remain accessible without sacrificing substance. Its digital format demonstrates that indigenous identities can adapt to new media environments while retaining authenticity, offering valuable insight into how cultural continuity can be supported in a globalised world. The programme's success also highlights the importance of intentional design and contextual sensitivity when adapting cultural material for digital audiences.

Given these insights, the study underscores the need to extend similar indigenous-language initiatives beyond Yoruba to other Nigerian languages, including Igbo, Hausa, and minority linguistic communities. Such efforts resonate with Bamgbose's call for indigenous languages to occupy meaningful roles across Nigeria's cultural and educational institutions (4). Partnerships with schools, universities, and cultural organisations would further strengthen this work by integrating digital cultural content into formal and informal learning spaces. Enhancing

Mark O. Obayi & Barth Oshionebo

interactivity—through live discussions, cultural challenges, and language-based tasks—can deepen audience engagement and sustain participatory cultural communities. Ultimately, *Masoyinbo* demonstrates that digital media, when intentionally and sensitively curated, can anchor cultural belonging and resist the forces of linguistic and cultural erosion. Its example affirms that the future of indigenous-language preservation lies not in resisting the digital age, but in shaping it with purpose and cultural confidence.

Works Cited

- Adegbija, Efurosibina. "Language Policy and Planning in Nigeria." *Current Issues in Language Planning*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2004, pp. 181–246.
- Adeiza, Grace, and Chinedu Onwuasoanya. "Social Media and Participatory Cultural Preservation in Africa." *Journal of Digital Heritage*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2023, pp. 45–59.
- Adesewo, Jide. "Masoyinbo: Reviving Yoruba Identity Through Language and Learning-Game." *Our Nigeria News Magazine*, 2025.
- African Union Commission. *Digital Heritage and Cultural Transmission in Africa*. African Union, 2022.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Babalola, David A., and Nthabiseng Sedisa. "Digital Heritage and Contemporary African Identity Formation Through Social Media." *e-Bangi: Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, 2024, <https://ejournals.ukm.my/ebangi/article/view/88138/0>.
- Bala, A. V. "Digital Media and Cultural Identity: Exploring Intersections, Impacts, and Challenges." *Gusau Journal of Sociology*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2024, pp. 305–317.
- Bamgbose, Ayo. "African Languages Today: The Challenge and Prospects for Empowerment Under Globalization." *Selected Proceedings of the 40th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*, Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2011, pp. 1–14.
- British Council. *The Role of Culture in Digital Diplomacy*. British Council, 2022.
- Hall, Edward T. *Beyond Culture*. Anchor Books, 1995.
- Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Sage, 1997.
- Hofstede, Geert. *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill, 1991.
- International Telecommunication Union. *Social Media, Inclusion, and Cultural Visibility*. ITU, 2021.
- Irele, Abiola. *Culture and Identity in Modern Nigeria*. Spectrum Books, 2019.
- Kanno, Yasuko. *Negotiating Bilingual and Bicultural Identities: Japanese Returnees Betwixt Two Worlds*. Lawrence Erlbaum, 2003.
- Katz, Elihu, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch. "Uses and Gratifications Research." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 37, no. 4, 1974, pp. 509–523.
- Masoyinbo. "Masoyinbo Episode One Hundred and Thirty-One: Exciting Game Show Teaching Yoruba Language and Culture." *YouTube*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfynG8SNcUo>.
- Masoyinbo. "Masoyinbo Episode One Hundred and Forty-Eight with Taaoma: Exciting Game Show Teaching Yoruba Language and Culture." *YouTube*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGsTg1nmqoY>.
- Masoyinbo. "Masoyinbo Episode One Hundred and Fifty-Six: Exciting Game Show Teaching Yoruba Language and Culture." *YouTube*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oos06BINJDU>.
- Masoyinbo. "Masoyinbo Episode One Hundred and Seventy-Seven: Exciting Game Show Teaching Yoruba Language and Culture." *YouTube*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSR3D6rfw-o>.
- Masoyinbo. "Masoyinbo Episode One Hundred and Eighty-Two with Prince: Exciting Game Show Teaching Yoruba Language and Culture." *YouTube*, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1irO1bSs19A>.
- Miller, Daniel, et al. *How the World Changed Social Media*. UCL Press, 2016.

Neuliep, James W. *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*. 3rd ed., Sage, 2006.

Ogunyemi, Bosede, and Lukman Ibrahim. "Digital Platforms and the Preservation of Indigenous Languages Among Nigerian Youths." *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2021, pp. 101–118.

Okocha, Daniel O., and Edesiri Edafewotu. "Bridging the Digital Divide in Nigeria." *Journal of Development Communication*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2023, pp. 112–126.

Okorie, Nelson, Kehinde Oyesomi, and Abiodun Salawu. "Social Media and the Promotion of African Cultural Heritage Among Nigerian Youths." *Journal of African Media Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2022, pp. 345–360.

Omoniyi, Tope. "Language and Identity in Diaspora Communities." *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2015, pp. 248–265.

Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Samovar, Larry A., Richard E. Porter, and Edwin R. McDaniel. *Communication Between Cultures*. 7th ed., Wadsworth, 2010.

Sanusi, B. O., S. M. Taiwo, and D. A. Shekete. "Masoyinbo and Yoruba Language Preservation in the Digital Age: A Study of Digital Gratification and Diaspora Engagement." *African Journal of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2025.

Stewart-Harawira, Makeke. *The New Imperial Order: Indigenous Responses to Globalization*. Zed Books, 2005.

Ting-Toomey, Stella. *Communicating Across Cultures*. Guilford Press, 2019.

Tsuda, Yukio. "Hegemony of English: Strategies for Linguistic Pluralism." *Hegemony of English and Global Communication*, edited by Robert Phillipson, Routledge, 2007, pp. 45–62.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. *Culture and Digital Transformation Report*. UNESCO, 2023.

Uwah, Idorenyin. "Social Media and the Promotion of African Languages." *African Communication Research*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2020, pp. 101–120.