Voices unheard: The struggle of indigenous language journalism on Nigeria's media landscape[1]

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Abstract

Journalism can be deemed successful when the receiver of the message understands what is being circulated. This is especially possible when the message being disseminated to the receiver is in a language familiar to them. This study examines the factors responsible for the lack of development of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. The study specifically sought to investigate the social, linguistic, and economic factors that inhibit the growth of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria, studied the consequences of media policies and regulations on indigenous language journalism, and assessed the dearth in education and its influence on the non-development of indigenous language journalism. The study was anchored on the cultural imperialism theory and adopted the exploratory research design. Interviews and document analysis were the data collection methods**.** Non-probabilistic, purposive sampling was employed for the research. Twenty-four interviews were conducted to collect data from journalists and officials of the Lagos State Ministry of Information and selected Chief Orientation and Mobilization Officers (COMO) of the State Directorate of the National Orientation Agency. Systematic content analysis (SCA) was used to analyse interview transcripts. Additional themes were proposed based on insights emerging from the data, expanding, separating or combining existing themes as needed. The study found that the dominance of

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English as the official language and the nonviability of indigenous language journalism from sociolinguistic and economic factors are challenges for indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. Findings also show that journalists' lack of language competence in indigenous languages, the predominance of the English language over indigenous languages in journalism practice, and the lack of a framework for education were the bases of contention related to the underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism. The study concluded that the shift of the language towards English, driven by its perceived prestige and domination in numerous areas, offers a substantial barrier to the expansion of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. It recommends the creation and execution of policies that recognise the value of indigenous languages and promote their preservation and development, especially in journalism.

Keywords
Indigenous languages, indigenous language journalism, journalists, language policy, language competence, sustainability.

Introduction
Nigeria has a multiplicity of ethnic groups and languages. The nation has a rich cultural heritage and diversity, making it distinctive in terms of identities and traditions. Thus, indigenous languages constitute a multiplicity and critical aspect of Nigeria's cultural heritage. However, despite this linguistic diversity, Nigerian indigenous language journalism has consistently lagged. The underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism has been significantly shaped by the historical setting of Nigeria's colonial past (Falola, & Heaton, 2008; Ndinojuo et al., 2020). English was established as the language of government, instruction, and the media during the colonial era. As a result of linguistic encroachment, native languages were suppressed and a hierarchy where English was seen as superior was established. The use and acceptance of indigenous languages in official and formal areas, including media, were severely restricted and limited to informal contexts. Due to their perceived trustworthiness and ability to give fair opinions of newsmakers and actors, the public prefers to obtain their information from traditional newspapers (Jamiu et al., 2022).

Based on the population statistics made available by Statista (2025), Nigeria has a population of 237.5 million. The country is categorized as one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse countries in the world. Nigeria is a linguistically diverse country with over 500 languages (Maikanti et al., 2021), but many languages are currently endangered. "As predicted by scholars, as

many as 60 to 90% of the world's languages, about 6.900 of them, are at risk of extinction within the next 100 years" (Maikanti et al., 2021). As it relates to English speakers, which happens to be the official language, the degree of fluency and literacy levels depend on use and exposure. The major ethnic groups in Nigeria include Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. In terms of size, Hausa is the largest (when including second-language speakers), followed by Yoruba and Igbo. There are several media outlets in Nigeria, ranging from radio to television and print outlets. There are community or state radio stations that broadcast exclusively in indigenous languages. Stations like *Amuludun FM* (Yoruba) and *Orisun FM* (Yoruba) transmit primarily in the local language.

Language is essential in the diverse population's identity, culture, and social interaction. Nigerians are generally firmly attached to their "own" language, often linked to ethnic and regional identity (Okunogbe, 2024). For many, their mother tongue is a source of pride and a medium for expressing their cultural heritage. However, attitudes towards language use in social contexts may differ. Urbanization, education, and globalization have led to the widespread use of English, the official language. This is especially true in formal and public sector environments. English is seen as the language of power, prestige, and economic opportunity, but this contrasts with some who find the native language less valuable in these areas (Salomone, & Salomone, 2022). Many Nigerians, especially in rural areas or specific ethnic groups, are committed to preserving their local languages.

Indigenous language journalism entails the practice of reporting and distributing news in the native language of a particular ethnic group rather than the dominant or official language, such as English. This form of journalism plays a vital role in maintaining cultural identity. It encompasses forms of media designed and produced by indigenous communities, serving as an essential means of cultural expression, communication, and political participation. These media institutions may include newspapers, radio broadcasting, digital platforms, and television programmes created by indigenous peoples to meet their specific social, political, and cultural needs. They serve as an effective platform for political self-determination (Nsereka, & Papamie, 2021). It allows indigenous communities to express their concerns, influence policy, and challenge outside forces that often undermine their interests. Indigenous language journalism ensures the transmission of cultural knowledge through its expression, promotes coverage, and ensures effective communication within Nigeria's linguistically diverse society (Odiboh et al., 2018; Owolabi, 2021). While some news organizations translate news from English to indigenous

languages, others do everything in indigenous languages, from news production to presentation. A good example of such a station is *Faaji FM*, located in Lagos, Nigeria.

Scholars have studied the business models of indigenous newspapers (Salawu, 2006, 2012, 2013), the enduring challenges of indigenous publishing, and the contributions and potential roles of indigenous journalism and newspapers (Buthelezi, 2016; Onyenankeya, & Salawu, 2019; Oyesomi et al., 2020; Wa Mberia, 2015). Scholars have also identified some challenges facing indigenous language journalism (Daramola, 2013; Onyenankeya, & Salawu, 2019; Salawu, 2006; Sunday et al., 2018; Tanjong, & Muluh, 2006; Vinck, 2006; Yusuff, & Osunnuga, 2018). However, few studies have examined the struggle of indigenous language journalism on the Nigerian media landscape. Although previous research has focused mainly on examining the challenges faced by indigenous language journalism, the factors that have led to its decline have not been investigated; thus, a study of this nature is needed. The study underscores the challenges that hamper the development of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. It specifically aims to identify the social, linguistic, and economic factors that hinder the development of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria, examine the impact of media policies and regulations on indigenous language journalism, and investigate the role of education in contributing to the underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. The authors believe that the findings will have important implications for indigenous newspaper publishers, communication researchers, technology experts, and journalists involved in indigenous language journalism.

Media policies and regulations on indigenous language journalism in Nigeria

Language practices, values, and management choices are all included in its language policy (Bernard, 2004). Along with deliberate attempts to mould language practices through strategic planning, management, and implementation, it also represents a set of attitudes regarding language usage. Every legal document in Nigeria is derived from the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, and any document that deviates from it is deemed invalid. While admitting the presence of other Nigerian languages, the Constitution designates English, Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba as official languages. Furthermore, Nigerian residents have the right to obtain information in any Nigerian language thanks to the Freedom of Information Act of 2011 (Obiora, 2025).

On the procedures and schedules for putting this clause into effect, the Act does not provide information. One document that focuses on the broadcasting community is the Nigerian Broadcasting Code (2014). Languages used in local communities must be given priority by community broadcast services, according to this rule. This suggests that English and Nigerian, especially the languages spoken in the nearby area, should be used for broadcasting. Public and private broadcasting stations are free to select the languages they believe are appropriate for their viewers, though this clause does not always impose a linguistic requirement on them. This serves as a supplement to the Nigerian National Language Policy (2023), a significant Federal Government of Nigeria project that establishes rules for the official usage of several languages in the country.

The policy's media provisions, particularly those pertaining to radio transmission, highlight the necessity of coordinated initiatives to support the efficient use of Nigerian languages in traditional broadcasting. According to Article 8 of the policy, broadcast media companies are required to make sure that at least 60% of their shows are presented in Nigerian languages that are widely spoken in the communities they serve. The number of languages that must be utilized in broadcast stations is not specified by these national regulations, even if they allow the inclusion of Nigerian languages, particularly those spoken in the near vicinity of media outlets.

Theoretical framework

Cultural imperialism theory

The notion of cultural imperialism was created in the 1970s to describe the state of the media at the time. According to Sengupta and Frith (1997), cited in White (2001), the nature of the media at the time, including print, radio, and television, promoted a one-way top-down transmission system from the dominating country to the dominated country. This theory resulted in a passive public and robust media. This condition led to complaints of media/cultural imperialism/marginalization and an imbalance in news flow worldwide. Unavoidably, these cries sparked demands for a new world information and communication order. Therefore, according to Boyd-Barrett (2019), cultural imperialism is the process by which the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any country is individually or collectively subject to significant external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries, without a proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country affected.

Scholars like Fanon (1965), who emphasized how colonial powers used media and cultural tools to dominate and reshape colonized societies' consciousness, critically developed this idea. The theory was further developed by Schiller (1969); in 1976, he contended that international media flows, particularly from the United States, helped to solidify ideological and economic dominance over developing countries. Particularly in the context of the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), these issues were at the center of global discussions in the 1970s and 1980s. The structural disparities in media ownership and representation around the world were highlighted by seminal reports like UNESCO's Many Voices, One World (1980), popularly known as the MacBride Report, and the conclusions of the 1981 Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Africa in Yaoundé (ICSCP, 2004). These initiatives directly challenged the predominance of Western-centric narratives in international communication by advocating for more equitable communication systems that value cultural diversity and support indigenous media production.

According to cultural imperialism theory, a society enters the modern world system when its dominant stratum is drawn to, coerced, compelled, and occasionally bought into modifying its social institutions so that they reflect, or even advance, the beliefs and structures of the system's dominant centre (White, 2001; Vysotskaya, Yanishevskaya, & Lobanova, 2024). According to this point of view, the dominance of one country by another is the essence of cultural imperialism, and multinational media organizations offer the ideal setting for this. White (2001), in support of another assumption of cultural imperialism, states that the media plays a vital role in constructing culture. Cultural imperialism has a broader scope and encompasses various dimensions beyond media, including education, language, religion, lifestyle, and consumer culture. The focus of this study is specifically on the *media and communication* dimension, often referred to as *media imperialism*, as it pertains directly to the mechanisms through which cultural dominance is exercised and sustained on the contemporary global communication landscape.

The theory is an important framework, as English dominates the media, limiting the visibility and use of indigenous languages and making it more difficult to preserve and revive them. Although global media corporations do not control Nigeria's media landscape, the use of English language as a communication medium undervalues the significance of indigenous languages. This not only prevents the growth of journalism in indigenous languages but also feeds the cycle of underrepresentation and cultural acculturation.

Cultural imperialism theory is relevant to understanding the struggle of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria's media scenario, as it highlights foreign languages, especially English dominance, that shape media narratives and materials. In Nigeria, where there are over 500 indigenous languages, cultural imperialism manifests itself through the marginalization of native languages in the mainstream media, where foreign languages often receive more attention, resources, and platforms. This inequality limits the representation of indigenous cultures and voices, eroding linguistic diversity. The dominance of English is due to historical colonial heritage and global media influences, reducing indigenous languages. Cultural imperialism theory helps analyze how journalism contributes to the comprehensive process of linguistic and cultural assimilation, and how indigenous languages promote indigenous identity in the face of global media pressures to preserve local heritage. pressures the practice of journalism faces.

Methodology

Research design

For this study, an explanatory research design was used. Explanatory research seeks to connect ideas to foster an understanding of causes and effects regarding a particular phenomenon and includes methods to examine why and how a phenomenon occurs (Moyo, 2022). The explanatory research design was chosen to understand the challenges faced by indigenous language journalism and the policies governing journalists' activities in this sector. The interview was the data collection method used for this study. The interviews focused on stakeholders and various agencies related to journalism. The interview method also allows flexibility and adaptability, which helps the researcher tailor the questions and trends that arise or additional information (Lim, 2024). This elasticity is important when considering the peculiarities of gender, sociocultural complexities, and technology. These factors make a clearer comprehension of the distinctions and the importance of a study of this nature.

The research location is in Lagos, Nigeria. The state is well-situated for this research. It has a variety of ethnic designs, is officially recognized as the commercial centre of Nigeria and is home to many indigenous language media (K ngb , 2020). Some indigenous language media outlets in Lagos include *Alaroye* and *Akede* newspapers, *Radio Lagos*, *Faaji FM*, and *Bond FM*, which also broadcast in indigenous languages. Owolabi and Hassan (2023) emphasize the importance of promoting cultural and historical identity to the diverse population of Lagos through various sources of indigenous language media,

including printed media, radio, and television stations. These outlets, which provide news, entertainment, and educational information, especially in Yoruba, show that the importance of Lagos as a melting pot of cultures is highlighted through the interaction of trade dynamics and linguistic media (James et al., 2023).

Sample

Non-probabilistic, purposive sampling was employed for the research, with the initial participants referring the researchers to others interested in participating (snowball sampling). The same method was used to select government officials and publishers of indigenous language journalism materials.

Twenty-four interviews were conducted to gather data for this study from journalists, including those working for indigenous language newspapers, officials from the State Ministry of Information in Lagos State, as well as selected Chief Orientation and Mobilization Officers (COMO) of the State Directorate of the National Orientation Agency (see *Table 1*). These interviews were conducted to reveal the problems, failures, and limitations of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. The respondents were explicitly chosen following the principles of qualitative research, highlighting the importance of gathering many viewpoints to understand the topic under study (Gentles, & Vilches, 2017). Respondents were interviewed in English. The age and socioeconomic standing of the participants guaranteed the data's quality, since it correctly reflected the stakeholders' demographic profile. Data were verified by reviewing the transcripts to ensure that the questions asked during the interviews and discussions produced the desired results.

Table 1

Sample distribution

Interviewees	**Number**
Journalists, including those working for indigenous language newspapers	8
Officials from Lagos State Ministry of Information	8
Chief Orientation and Mobilization Officers (COMO) of the State Directorate of the National Orientation Agency (NOA)	8
Total number	**24**

Source: Authors.

Data analysis

Systematic content analysis (SCA) was used to analyze interview transcripts. Building on the framework established by Franzosi (2008), following the methods outlined by Amu et al. (2017), the analysis involved categorizing similar responses into groups and different topics to help deepen the understanding of the data. Social scientists and researchers in communication studies commonly use SCA to examine various sources, including literature, field notes, and interview transcripts. Using clear coding guidelines, SCA allows the researcher to condense large amounts of text into smaller content categories. The transcripts were carefully read to identify existing themes. As the analysis progressed, additional themes were proposed based on insights emerging from the data, expanding, separating, or combining existing themes as needed. This iterative process ensured a detailed and comprehensive representation of the participants' views. This is supported by the rigorous framework recommended by Bamidele and Pikirayi (2023), which emphasizes the importance of flexibility in developing themes to collect qualitative data efficiently.

Results

A thematic analysis was conducted across several questions to explore the different opinions and perspectives of the respondents on the struggle for indigenous language journalism on Nigeria's media landscape. Respondents were asked to share their opinions based on study objectives. Thematic analysis of the responses revealed several key themes related to the study.

Dominance of English as the official language

The results of the interviews affirmed that indigenous language journalism faced challenges and stiffened competition due to the dominance of the English language. Respondents averred that the growth of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has faced challenges due to the dominance of English as the official language. In the view of one respondent (a journalist):

Indigenous language journalism has contested mainstream journalism, whose dominant language is English. The dominance of English has limited the representation of indigenous language journalism.

The interviewees added that the historical setting of English supremacy in Nigerian language policy can be understood from the perspective of British colonization, which had a critical role in defining the country's linguistic environment. A COMO from NOA noted that:

The popularity of the English language in Nigeria limits cultural expression and identity. This in most situations, reclaims our rich cultural heritage to the background.

Respondents also noted that many media institutions, including radio and television stations, frequently use untrained personnel who need more skills and understanding to communicate effectively in indigenous languages.

The economic non-viability of indigenous language journalism

The interviewees noted that the economic sustainability of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria is a vital element that significantly impacts the country's development. However, the journalism in the indigenous language in Nigeria has declined over the years due to the dominance of English-language media outlets. Additionally, economic constraints such as lack of funding and financial assistance have hampered its expansion. The decline in indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has been attributed to a few historical events. To buttress this, a respondent (journalist) observed that:

The economic non-feasibility of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria is due to limited funding. The number of readers is small. The preference for English-language media hampers the development of a stable drive for indigenous language media to thrive. This and the lack of institutional support hinder the sustainable development of the market for indigenous language media.

Additionally, respondents noted that a key influence is the British colonization of Nigeria, which led to the prevalence of the English language across almost all areas of human endeavour, including the media. This development has affected indigenous language journalism.

Lack of trained journalists

The place of indigenous languages in cultural preservation cannot be overemphasized. Laying credence to this, an interviewee (a journalist) noted:

A shortage of professional journalists proficient in indigenous languages poses a challenge to advancing indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. Journalists are trained in the English language, which hinders them from being able to produce good content in their indigenous dialects. This limitation not only affects the potency of indigenous language journalism but also metamorphoses into dormant voices that are unable to project the needs of hinterland communities.

The respondents noted that the lack of trained journalists confines their capacity to report and cover news in native languages effectively, resulting in errors and misinterpretations in indigenous language journalism. As a result,

the credibility of this type of journalism must be improved, undermining the trust of the audience. Putting credence to this, a respondent (journalist) noted that:

The targeted educational programs and workshops should focus on developing journalism skills in indigenous languages. Media organizations and universities can work together to provide specialized training, emphasizing journalists' language proficiency and integrity, bringing about a new generation of indigenous language journalists.

The respondents agreed that the lack of trained journalists who can read and write in these indigenous languages poses a challenge to developing and advancing indigenous language journalism. They also stressed the need to train journalists in local languages to improve their language skills in these languages.

Language competence of journalists towards indigenous languages

The respondents noted that education is critical to developing language and literacy skills. Individuals may not achieve the essentials of engaging in journalism effectively if the educational possibilities in indigenous languages are restricted. Journalists who are proficient in their native language can effectively produce content in that language. Effective communication with sources, interview subjects, and the audience requires language competency. An interviewee (Journalist) noted that:

The linguistic proficiency of journalists in indigenous languages in Nigeria is a significant obstacle to developing indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. This is because many journalists are more fluent in English than their native language. This lack of ability affects the quality and accuracy of the content, making it difficult to appeal to local audiences and accurately reflect cultural nuances and fluency in the native language.

The national primary education policy requires that indigenous language be used as the medium of instruction during the early years, usually the first three years. At the secondary level, indigenous languages are offered as elective courses, though their accessibility may differ depending on the area and available resources. Although English is the primary focus, bilingualism is common, and the original language enhances everyday English. Training journalists in indigenous languages in higher education is becoming increasingly popular in the community. Although there is little official training in indigenous language journalism, the role of media is especially pertinent to rural populations and regional concerns like agriculture.

Lack of access to education and media infrastructure

Respondents agree that access to quality education in indigenous languages can be difficult, particularly for those in remote locations or low-income families. This inhibits their ability to participate in journalism and contributes to the growth of indigenous language media. The development of the media infrastructure required for indigenous language journalism is influenced by education and literacy. This inhibits their ability to participate in journalism and contributes to the growth of indigenous language media. The development of the media infrastructure required for indigenous language journalism is influenced by education and literacy. A journalist told that:

The lack of quality education and media infrastructure in many parts of Nigeria dramatically hinders the development of indigenous language journalism. Many local communities lack the resources to train journalists in their native language. Media organizations often do not have the tools or platforms to produce and distribute content in these languages. This difference creates a cycle of disadvantage, in which native-language media encountered problems in thrives due to limitations in education and infrastructure.

They added that a lack of infrastructure impedes the growth and accessibility of indigenous language journalism. The availability and visibility of the English-language media infrastructure can affect language preferences among journalists and the public.

Discussion

The findings of the study affirmed that indigenous language journalism faced challenges and stiffened competition due to the dominance of the English language. The growth of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has faced challenges due to the dominance of English as the official language. The economic sustainability of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria is a vital element that significantly impacts the country's development. However, indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has declined over the years due to the dominance of English-language media outlets. Furthermore, economic constraints such as a lack of funding and financial assistance have hampered its expansion. However, realistic options exist to improve the economic feasibility of this type of journalism in Nigeria. The decline of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has been attributed to a few historical events. For instance, Salawu (2006) notes that only some African languages are currently written,

particularly in the print media, and readers generally do not favour the existing (African) indigenous language newspapers.

Indigenous language journalism in Nigeria is critical to cultural preservation. According to Tshabangu and Salawu (2022), indigenous languages serve as a communication medium and carry cultural knowledge, customs and identity. Nigeria, a varied country with more than 500 spoken languages, considers indigenous language journalism a vital tool for preserving and promoting cultural heritage. These communities effectively share their stories, history, and viewpoints with a larger audience through newspapers, radio programs, and online channels in indigenous languages. This type of journalism enables the diffusion of information and facilitates the expression of indigenous perspectives, preventing the marginalization or erasure of indigenous voices and experiences. Furthermore, indigenous language journalism empowers local communities by giving them a platform to discuss important topics and challenge mainstream narratives that frequently ignore their concerns. Nigeria may nurture cultural diversity, strengthen social coherence and ensure the preservation of its rich cultural history for future generations by recognizing and supporting indigenous language journalism (Oyedele, & Hungbo, 2021; Adesina et al., 2018; Folayan et al., 2018).

However, indigenous language journalism in Nigeria has various problems, the most significant of which is the need for more skilled journalists. According to Mohammed (2019), the absence of indigenous language journalists is a crucial barrier to developing and maintaining indigenous language journalism. It is worth noting that Nigerian journalists often speak English better than indigenous languages. This limitation limits their ability to report and cover news in native languages effectively, resulting in mistakes and misinterpretations in indigenous language journalism. Okon et al. (2022) as well as Adesina et al. (2020), also agree with the general challenges newspapers face in Nigeria. As a result, the credibility of this type of journalism must be improved, undermining the trust of the audience. Aspiring journalists can acquire the language skills needed to properly communicate and report on challenges in indigenous communities in a culturally sensitive manner (Salawu, 2013).

Findings from this study demonstrate the significance of laws that regulate the media in advancing indigenous languages in Nigeria. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as well as educational policies, projects the need to promote indigenous languages, bringing to the fore the significance of various cultural identities and social inclusion. The constitution mandates the development of languages for national integration and cultural diversity. The

Constitution mandates the development of languages for national integration and cultural diversity. At the same time, the National Education Policy advocates using indigenous languages in primary education to learn and strengthen cultural heritage. However, the implementation by state agencies has been inconsistent. Adegbija (2004) discusses the impact of media policies and legal guidelines on indigenous language journalism in Nigeria in his analysis of the challenges of current language planning. Nigeria has had complicated and diverse linguistic environments, with more than 500 indigenous languages spoken at some point. However, indigenous languages were marginalised in media spaces as an instantaneous result of English supremacy due to the legitimacy language and the residual impact of colonialism

Findings also show that the obstacles to competing with English-language media for indigenous language journalism are diverse, including dominance problems, restricted sources, and linguistic changes. These barriers underscore the critical need for guidance and investment in indigenous language journalism as an excellent way to preserve and promote indigenous cultures and languages (Molale, & Mpofu, 2020). The problems of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria to compete with English-language media can be traced mainly to media policies. Whether deliberate or unintentional, these policies have produced an unfair playing discipline that harms indigenous language journalism. As a result, the rich cultural legacy and perspectives contained in indigenous languages are frequently overshadowed by the dominance of the English language media.

The findings of this study show that education is critical in developing language competence and literacy skills. Individuals may not achieve the essentials of engaging in journalism effectively if the educational possibilities in indigenous languages are restricted. The development of a qualified pool of journalists in indigenous languages can be hampered by a lack of education and literacy in indigenous languages (Ajepe, & Ademowo, 2016). Proficiency in an indigenous language enables journalists to create content in their indigenous language effectively. Journalists can conduct interviews, gather information, and write news articles or reports using the specific linguistic nuances and cultural context associated with the indigenous language. Education and literacy programmes that emphasize indigenous languages can contribute to the development of proficient journalists capable of producing quality content (Salawu, 2008). Language proficiency is essential for effective communication with sources, interviewees, and the audience.

Language proficiency affects access to information in indigenous communities. In Nigeria, where English is often the language of formal

education and official communication, English learners have greater access to information sources, including government documents, academic publications, and online resources (Obinyan, 2010). This linguistic disparity can limit the availability of reliable information in indigenous languages for people who can only understand their indigenous language, impeding the development of indigenous language journalism (Ugwu, 2020). Although the implementation varies, teaching indigenous languages in elementary and secondary school curricula is common throughout Nigeria. This can contribute to a progressive reduction in the usage and promotion of indigenous languages, particularly in journalism. Individuals may prefer to utilize English for journalistic reasons, as they gain proficiency in English through formal schooling, resulting in a drop in demand for indigenous language journalism (Olaopa, 2025). As a result, when English becomes the preferred language for media consumption and production, there is a decrease in demand for indigenous language journalism. Indigenous languages are sometimes used with incorrect grammar, pronunciation, and spelling. The lack of publishing houses, broadcasting facilities, and other media outlets that cater to indigenous languages may be due to a lack of educational resources and support (Motsaathebe, 2023).

The cultural imperialism theory holds sway in this study because it proposes that dominant cultures impose their values, language, and norms on subordinate cultures. This often erodes indigenous traditions and language. The dominance of English in Nigeria's media is a prime example. Because it marginalizes local languages and their languages are representative in the mass media industry, English is the official language as the primary medium of news and communication, creating barriers for many Nigerians who are more proficient in their mother tongue. This linguistic dominance hampers the growth of Nigerian indigenous language journalism, limiting the growth and impact of local languages. For example, the main media plays little role; thus, cultural richness and diversity are still low. This development promotes the dominance of the English language and reinforces cultural imperialism by making younger generations less likely to be interested in speaking their native languages.

Conclusion and recommendations

The decline in the advancement of Nigeria's indigenous language journalism has been attributed to many reasons. The study has demonstrated that language proficiency, language change, unequal access to education, lack of media infrastructure, and market demand all hamper the advancement of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria. These interconnected factors shape the country's

indigenous language journalism landscape. Language proficiency is crucial to the development of indigenous language journalism since it allows journalists to create content and engage with local communities more effectively. However, the language shift towards English, which is driven by its apparent status and domination in many sectors, is a major barrier to the expansion of indigenous language media. The underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism is worsened by unequal educational access, which limits the possibilities for aspiring journalists from marginalized communities and creates a skills and knowledge gap.

Market demand and feasibility also contribute to the underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism, as advertisers and sponsors frequently choose English-language media because of its wider reach and more extensive consumer base. The study concludes that the struggle for indigenous language journalism on the Nigerian media landscape is enormous. The study concludes that social, linguistic, and economic factors impede Nigeria's underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism. These elements include the predominance of English as the official language, the lack of qualified journalists, and the economic viability of indigenous language journalism. Additionally, media laws and policies have a significant impact on Nigerian indigenous language journalism. The underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism is impacted by these media policies and regulations; the policies suppress indigenous language journalism; thus, they struggle to compete with English-language media. The role of education that influences the underdevelopment of indigenous language journalism in Nigeria also plays a key role. This is so because the language competence of journalists toward indigenous languages is limited.

Based on the conclusion above, the following recommendations can be made. First, there is a need for the government to come up with policies that address the peculiarity of indigenous languages to promote their sustainability and expansion. Second, efforts should be put in place to advance education and literacy programmes that foster the development of indigenous languages. Third, authorities, such as the government and private individuals, should prioritize indigenous language infrastructure for the development of indigenous language journalism. These infrastructures should include, but not be limited to, the establishment of publishing houses, broadcasting facilities, and Internet platforms in native languages. They should also provide resources to support the establishment and maintenance of indigenous language media companies. Lastly, public understanding of the value of journalism in indigenous languages

should be increased. By actively consuming and promoting indigenous language content, audience involvement and support for indigenous language media can be boosted. In addition to giving the audience a sense of pride and ownership, this can raise demand for journalism in indigenous languages.

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