Digital Preservation and the New Orality: Using ICT to Teach Indigenous Drama and Poetry

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the preservation and pedagogical transmission of Zezuru drama and poetry in Zimbabwe. Historically, indigenous oral arts termed "orality" have relied on face-to-face communal performance, a method increasingly threatened by urbanization and the digital divide. This study examines the concept of the "New Orality," wherein digital platforms such as social media, podcasts, and mobile applications serve as modern "performance firesides" for the Zezuru culture. Focusing on the Zezuru communities in the Marondera District, the research explores how ICT can bridge the gap between traditional heritage and the contemporary classroom. By digitizing performances of *nduri* (poetry) and *mutambo* (drama), the study argues that educators can create a "living digital archive" that preserves the linguistic nuances and paralinguistic features such as tone, rhythm, and gesture that are often lost in written transcriptions. The methodology utilizes a qualitative, action-research approach, observing the integration of digital indigenous content within Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL) frameworks over one academic term. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and cultural practitioners, focus group discussions with students, and analysis of digitized performances. The research posits that ICT does not replace tradition but rather provides a decolonial tool to resist the hegemony of Western digital content. Findings indicate that students exhibited higher levels of engagement and expressed increased cultural pride when indigenous drama was presented through interactive digital media. Furthermore, the study identifies that digital preservation allows for a "transnational orality," connecting Zezuru diaspora youth with their linguistic roots. However, sustainability is constrained by infrastructure gaps, limited teacher training, and digital access disparities. The research concludes that for Zezuru literature to remain vibrant, pedagogical practices must evolve to embrace ICT, ensuring that the "New Orality" continues to function as a site for identity formation in a globalized world.

Keywords: Digital Preservation, New Orality, Zezuru Drama and Poetry, ICT in Education, ODeL, Marondera District, Cultural Heritage.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous oral arts, encompassing drama and poetry, have historically functioned as primary vehicles for knowledge transmission, identity formation, and conflict transformation in African societies (Finnegan, 2012). Among the Zezuru people of Zimbabwe, oral forms such as *nduri* (poetry) and *mutambo* (drama) are traditionally performed in communal settings, where linguistic nuances, tone, rhythm, and gesture convey cultural meaning that written texts often fail to capture. This mode of transmission, termed "orality," relies on face-to-face interaction and embodied performance within community firesides (Ong, 1982).

However, rapid urbanization, migration, and the dominance of Western digital content have threatened the continuity of these practices. Younger generations increasingly engage with globalized media, creating a disconnect from indigenous linguistic and artistic heritage (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). In response, this study investigates the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in preserving and pedagogically transmitting Zezuru drama and poetry. It examines the concept of "New Orality," wherein digital platforms such as social media, podcasts, and mobile applications function as modern "performance firesides" for cultural transmission. By digitizing performances and integrating them into Open Distance e-Learning (ODeL)

frameworks, educators may create a "living digital archive" that preserves paralinguistic features often lost in transcription.

This research focuses on Zezuru communities in the Marondera District to explore how ICT can bridge traditi-

onal heritage and contemporary classrooms. The study argues that ICT does not replace tradition but may serve as a decolonial tool to resist the hegemony of Western digital content and foster cultural pride among learners.

1.1 Background of Study

The preservation of indigenous oral literature has been a persistent challenge in postcolonial Africa. Colonial education systems prioritized written English literature, marginalizing indigenous languages and oral forms (Zimunya, 1982). While written documentation has attempted to capture oral arts, scholars note that transcription strips performances of tone, gesture, and audience interaction, diminishing their pedagogical and cultural value (Finnegan, 2012).

Globally, digital preservation has emerged as a response to cultural erosion. UNESCO (2013) advocates for the use of digital technologies to safeguard intangible cultural heritage, emphasizing that digital platforms can enhance accessibility and intergenerational transmission. In Africa, projects using mobile phones, podcasts, and video archives have demonstrated potential for revitalizing oral traditions among diaspora and local youth (Mabweazara, 2010). This phenomenon aligns with what this study terms "New Orality"—a digitally mediated form of orality that replicates communal performance in virtual spaces.

In Zimbabwe, the Open Distance e-Learning framework provides an institutional pathway for integrating indigenous content into curricula. Yet, limited research exists on how ICT can be used to teach Zezuru drama and poetry while preserving linguistic and performative integrity. Preliminary evidence suggests that interactive digital media may increase student engagement and cultural pride, and enable "transnational orality" by connecting diaspora youth with their linguistic roots (Mugari & Sigauke, 2020).

This study addresses the gap by employing a qualitative action-research approach to examine the integration of digitized Zezuru performances within ODeL. It contributes to debates on decolonizing education, digital heritage preservation, and the evolving nature of orality in the 21st century.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Zezuru drama and poetry in Zimbabwe have historically been transmitted through face-to-face communal performance, a practice rooted in orality that preserves linguistic nuances, tone, rhythm, and gesture essential to cultural meaning (Finnegan, 2012). However, urbanization, migration, and the dominance of Western digital content have weakened intergenerational transmission, leading to a decline in youth engagement with indigenous oral arts (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Written transcriptions used in formal education often fail to capture paralinguistic features, resulting in a loss of performative and cultural integrity.

While Information and Communication Technology offers potential for digital preservation and pedagogical transmission, its application in teaching Zezuru *nduri* and *mutambo* remains limited and underexplored, particularly within Open Distance e-Learning frameworks in the Marondera District. Without deliberate integration of ICT as a "New Orality" platform, Zezuru oral arts risk further marginalization, and opportunities to foster cultural pride, identity formation, and transnational connections with the diaspora remain unrealized. There is a need to investigate how ICT can be effectively used to preserve and teach Zezuru drama and poetry while maintaining the authenticity of oral performance.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. To examine how ICT platforms can be used to digitize and preserve Zezuru drama and poetry performances, including paralinguistic features such as tone, rhythm, and gesture.

2. To explore the effectiveness of integrating digitized indigenous content into ODeL frameworks for teaching Zezuru drama and poetry in the Marondera District.

3. To assess the perceived impact of ICT-mediated indigenous content on student engagement, cultural pride, and identity formation among Zezuru learners.

4. To investigate the role of digital platforms in enabling "transnational orality" by connecting Zezuru diaspora youth with their linguistic and cultural roots.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How can ICT platforms be used to digitize and preserve Zezuru drama and poetry performances, including paralinguistic features?

2. How effective is the integration of digitized indigenous content into ODeL frameworks for teaching Zezuru drama and poetry in the Marondera District?

3. What is the perceived impact of ICT-mediated indigenous content on student engagement, cultural pride, and identity formation?

4. What role do digital platforms play in enabling "transnational orality" for Zezuru diaspora youth?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review is organized according to the four research objectives to examine how ICT mediates the preservation and teaching of Zezuru drama and poetry.

2.1 ICT for Digitizing and Preserving Oral Arts

Oral literature relies on performance, where meaning is carried through voice, gesture, and audience interaction (Finnegan, 2012). Traditional transcription strips these elements, leading to loss of cultural context. Digital technologies offer a way to capture multimodal aspects of performance. UNESCO (2013) emphasizes that digital archiving of intangible cultural heritage preserves not only content but also the context and dynamics of performance. Studies on African oral arts show that audio-video recordings, mobile applications, and online repositories can create "living archives" that maintain tone, rhythm, and gesture (Mabweazara, 2010). However, challenges remain regarding infrastructure, digital literacy, and long-term data preservation, particularly in rural areas with limited connectivity (Ngulube, 2012). This objective builds on the argument that ICT can act as a preservation tool that complements, rather than replaces, communal performance.

2.2 Integrating Digitized Indigenous Content into ODeL

Open Distance e-Learning frameworks have expanded access to education in Africa, but content often reflects Western epistemologies (Mugari & Sigauke, 2020). Integrating digitized indigenous drama and poetry into ODeL addresses the need for culturally relevant pedagogy. Action research in Zimbabwean schools indicates that when learners engage with indigenous content through digital media, comprehension and retention may improve because the material resonates with their linguistic and cultural background (Zimunya, 1982). Theories of multimodal learning support this, showing that combining visual, auditory, and textual modes enhances understanding compared to text-only instruction (Kress, 2010). The challenge lies in aligning digital content with curriculum standards and ensuring teacher capacity to facilitate its use.

2.3 Impact of ICT-Mediated Indigenous Content on Engagement and Cultural Pride

Engagement in learning is heightened when students see their culture reflected in educational materials (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Studies on digital storytelling in Africa report increased student participation and cultural pride when indigenous narratives are presented through interactive media (Mugari & Sigauke, 2020). This aligns with decolonial education theory, which argues that reclaiming indigenous knowledge systems counters the hegemony of Western content and strengthens identity formation (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). In the Zezuru

context, presenting *nduri* and *mutambo* through video and audio platforms allows learners to experience performance aesthetics that written texts cannot convey. However, engagement depends on the quality of the digital resource, accessibility of devices, and teacher mediation.

2.4 ICT and Transnational Orality

Migration and globalization have created dispersed Zezuru communities, raising questions about cultural continuity among diaspora youth. The concept of "transnational orality" describes how digital platforms enable dispersed communities to maintain linguistic and cultural ties (Appadurai, 1996). Social media, podcasts, and YouTube have been used by African diasporas to share oral performances, folklore, and language lessons, creating virtual firesides that sustain identity across borders (Mabweazara, 2010). For Zezuru youth abroad, access to digitized drama and poetry provides a link to their heritage and a means of language maintenance. The literature suggests that ICT does not replace traditional orality but extends it into new spatial and temporal contexts.

2.5 Conceptual Framework: Positioning the "New Orality"

The concept of "New Orality" as employed in this study requires careful positioning within existing scholarship on mediated orality. Ong (1982) distinguished between primary orality (cultures untouched by writing) and secondary orality (cultures shaped by electronic media such as radio and television). The present study extends this framework by examining tertiary orality—the digital mediation of oral performance through interactive, user-generated platforms. Unlike secondary orality, which is characterized by broadcast transmission, the New Orality involves participatory, bidirectional engagement where users can create, share, and remix cultural content (Mabweazara, 2010).

This study's contribution lies in examining how this New Orality operates within the specific context of Zezuru cultural transmission in Zimbabwe. While existing literature addresses digital preservation of African oral arts broadly (Ngulube, 2012) and the use of digital media by diaspora communities (Mabweazara, 2010), limited empirical research examines the intersection of ODeL pedagogy, indigenous language instruction, and digital heritage preservation in Zimbabwe. By grounding the analysis in the Zezuru context, this study provides context-specific evidence of how digital platforms may function as sites for cultural continuity, identity formation, and pedagogical innovation.

The framework distinguishes between three related but distinct activities: (1) digital documentation—the recording and archiving of performances; (2) educational distribution—the integration of digitized content into teaching and learning; and (3) sustainable preservation—the long-term maintenance and community ownership of digital archives. This study primarily investigates the first two activities, with implications for the third.

2.6 Summary of Literature

The literature indicates that ICT has potential for preserving and transmitting indigenous oral arts, enhancing pedagogical engagement, and sustaining transnational cultural ties. However, most studies focus on broad African contexts or on written documentation. Limited empirical research exists on the specific use of ICT to teach Zezuru drama and poetry within ODeL settings in Zimbabwe. This study addresses that gap by examining the practical integration of digitized Zezuru performances and their perceived impact on learners in the Marondera District.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative action-research design to investigate the role of ICT in preserving and teaching Zezuru drama and poetry. Action research is appropriate when the aim is to intervene in a social context, generate practical solutions, and produce knowledge through iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014). The design allowed for the collaborative development and testing of digitized indigenous content within Open Distance e-Learning settings in the Marondera District.

3.2 Philosophical Orientation

The study was guided by an interpretivist philosophy, which emphasizes understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of participants within their cultural and historical context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This approach aligns with the study's focus on orality, cultural meaning, and the lived experiences of Zezuru learners and educators.

3.3 Research Site and Context

The research was conducted in the Marondera District, Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. Marondera is a semi-urban district with a predominantly Zezuru-speaking population. Two schools participated in the study: one rural primary school and one peri-urban secondary school. Both schools are registered ODeL examination centres and serve communities where Zezuru is the dominant home language. The schools were selected based on accessibility, willingness to participate, and existing infrastructure for digital learning (including at least intermittent internet connectivity and access to tablets or computers).

3.4 Participants and Sampling

Participants were purposively selected to include diverse perspectives on the integration of digital indigenous content into ODeL. The sample comprised:

- **Teachers (n=6):** Three teachers from each school, all with experience teaching Shona literature and/or Zezuru cultural studies. Teaching experience ranged from 4 to 18 years.
- **Students (n=24):** Twelve students from each school, drawn from Forms 2 and 3 (approximately ages 14-16). Students were selected to represent a range of academic abilities and levels of engagement with indigenous literature.
- **Cultural practitioners (n=4):** Two *mbira* players, one storyteller, and one *nduri* performer from the local community, all with expertise in Zezuru performance traditions.
- **Diaspora youth (n=3):** Zezuru-heritage youth aged 18-25 residing in the United Kingdom and South Africa, recruited through community networks and social media.

Purposeful sampling was employed to ensure information-rich cases that could illuminate the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015).

3.5 Intervention and Action Research Cycles

The action research component was implemented over one academic term (approximately 14 weeks, from January to April 2023). The intervention proceeded through three iterative cycles:

Cycle 1 (Weeks 1-5): Planning and Initial Implementation

- Collaborative planning meetings with teachers to identify curriculum entry points for digital indigenous content.
- Recording of *nduri* and *mutambo* performances by cultural practitioners using smartphones and tablets.
- Development of lesson plans integrating digitized performances into ODeL modules.
- Initial classroom implementation with observation and field notes.

Cycle 2 (Weeks 6-10): Reflection and Adaptation

- Review of Cycle 1 observations and teacher feedback.
- Identification of challenges (connectivity issues, storage limitations, student device access).
- Adaptation of content delivery: introduction of WhatsApp-based sharing for students with limited classroom connectivity; creation of offline viewable content on school tablets.
- Continued implementation with refined materials.

Cycle 3 (Weeks 11-14): Consolidation and Evaluation

- Final implementation round.
- Focus group discussions with students.
- Semi-structured interviews with teachers, cultural practitioners, and diaspora youth.
- Member checking of preliminary findings with teacher participants.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through four methods:

1. **Participatory Observations:** The researcher observed 18 classroom sessions (six per cycle) where digitized *nduri* and *mutambo* performances were integrated into lessons. Observations focused on student engagement, interaction with digital content, and preservation of paralinguistic features. Field notes were recorded during and immediately after each session.

2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with teachers (n=6), cultural practitioners (n=4), and diaspora youth (n=3). Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and explored perceptions of ICT as a preservation and pedagogical tool, challenges encountered, and observed changes in student engagement.

3. **Focus Group Discussions:** Three focus groups with students (n=8 per group) examined experiences of learning through digital indigenous content and its perceived impact on cultural pride and identity. Discussions were conducted in Shona and lasted approximately 45 minutes each.

4. **Document and Media Analysis:** Digitized performances, lesson plans, and ODeL platform content were analyzed to assess how well linguistic and performative elements were preserved. This included review of 12 video recordings and 8 audio recordings created during the intervention.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step process: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Audio and video recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were coded in NVivo 14. Coding was conducted inductively, with codes organized into themes related to preservation, pedagogy, engagement, and transnational orality. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal throughout the analysis process to document analytical decisions and potential biases.

3.8 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through member checking (preliminary findings shared with teacher participants for verification), peer debriefing (regular discussions with a colleague not involved in the study), and maintaining an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thick description was used to provide detailed contextual accounts of

ICT integration and learner experiences. Credibility was strengthened by prolonged engagement in the field over one academic term and triangulation across observations, interviews, and documents.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Zimbabwe Open University Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: ZOU/REC/2023/017). Permission to conduct research in schools was granted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Mashonaland East Province. Informed consent was secured from all adult participants and guardians of minors. Assent was obtained from student participants. Cultural protocols were observed when recording performances, including consultation with community elders and cultural practitioners regarding appropriate use of recorded material. Participants had the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Data were anonymized using pseudonyms and stored securely on password-protected devices. Recordings of performances were shared only with participant consent and were not disseminated beyond the research team without explicit permission.

3.10 Researcher Positioning

The lead researcher is a Zezuru-speaking educator with experience teaching Shona literature in Zimbabwean schools. This insider position facilitated access to communities and understanding of cultural nuances but also required reflexive attention to potential biases. The researcher maintained a reflexive journal to document assumptions and positionality throughout the study. Regular peer debriefing sessions provided external perspectives on data interpretation.

3.11 Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size is small and context-specific, limiting generalizability beyond the Marondera District. Second, the research was conducted over a single academic term, which may not capture longer-term patterns of engagement or sustainability. Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported perceptions of engagement and cultural pride; independent measures of learning outcomes were not employed. Fourth, infrastructure challenges (intermittent electricity, limited connectivity) affected the consistency of implementation across sites. Fifth, the researcher's dual role as facilitator and observer may have introduced observer bias, mitigated through peer debriefing and member checking. Finally, the study did not systematically assess long-term preservation outcomes or the sustainability of community-driven archiving initiatives.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 ICT for Digitizing and Preserving Zezuru Drama and Poetry

Participants reported that digitizing *nduri* and *mutambo* performances using video, audio, and mobile applications captured linguistic nuances and paralinguistic features often lost in written transcription. Teachers noted that recordings preserved tone, rhythm, gesture, and audience interaction.

Teacher 2 (Peri-urban secondary school, 12 years' experience): "When we watch the video of *mbira* performance, students can hear the actual sound of the instrument, see the dancer's movements. When we read the text, it's flat. The digital recording brings it alive."

Cultural Practitioner 1 (*Nduri* performer, 20 years' experience): "The way I pause, the way I raise my voice—these are part of the poem. If you only write the words, you lose the poem's spirit. The video keeps the spirit."

Analysis of the digitized performances confirmed that recordings captured paralinguistic elements including pitch variation, rhythmic patterns, and gestural components that written transcripts could not represent. For example, in a recorded *nduri* performance, the performer's use of rising intonation at specific points was identified by students as conveying emotional emphasis not evident in the written text.

However, challenges included inconsistent electricity, limited broadband, and lack of storage capacity in rural schools.

Teacher 5 (Rural primary school, 8 years' experience): "Sometimes the power goes off and we can't show the videos. We have to use the generator or postpone the lesson. It disrupts the flow."

Teacher 1 (Rural primary school, 18 years' experience): "We only have four tablets for the whole class. Students have to share, and some don't get to see the video clearly."

These findings support UNESCO's (2013) position that digital technologies can safeguard intangible cultural heritage by capturing multimodal performance elements. Finnegan (2012) similarly argues that written documentation alone erodes the performative essence of oral arts. The findings extend Mabweazara's (2010) work on African digital archives by showing that mobile-based recordings can function as modern "performance firesides" for Zezuru communities. The infrastructure challenges align with Ngulube's (2012) findings on digital preservation barriers in Sub-Saharan Africa, indicating that technological access remains a constraint to scaling the New Orality.

4.2 Integration of Digitized Indigenous Content into ODeL

Teachers integrated digitized Zezuru performances into ODeL lessons using WhatsApp, Google Drive, and school tablets. Students engaged more actively with content when it combined video, audio, and subtitles in Zezuru. Teachers reported perceived improvements in comprehension of poetic devices and dramatic conventions compared to text-only lessons.

Teacher 3 (Peri-urban secondary school, 6 years' experience): "When I taught *nduri* using only the textbook, students were bored. They couldn't understand why the poet used certain words. But when they watched the performance, they said, 'Oh, now I see why.' The visual made it clear."

Student 7 (Form 3, peri-urban school): "Watching the video helped me understand the poem better. I could see the performer's face and how he changed his voice. It was not just words on paper."

However, teacher training emerged as critical for effective integration.

Teacher 4 (Rural primary school, 4 years' experience): "I know how to use WhatsApp, but I don't know how to make a lesson with videos. We need training. Otherwise, we just show the video and that's it."

Teacher 6 (Peri-urban secondary school, 10 years' experience): "Some teachers use the tablet just to keep students quiet—they show a video and sit down. But that's not teaching. We need to know how to ask questions, how to connect the video to the lesson."

These results align with Kress's (2010) multimodal learning theory, which posits that combining visual, auditory, and textual modes enhances meaning-making. Mugari and Sigauke (2020) found similar outcomes in Zimbabwean schools, where digital storytelling increased retention of Shona oral literature. The findings suggest that ODeL frameworks provide a pathway for decolonizing curricula by embedding indigenous content in formats familiar to digital-native learners. However, without pedagogical support, ICT risks being used as a mere repository rather than a teaching tool.

4.3 Perceived Impact on Student Engagement and Cultural Pride

Focus group discussions revealed that students expressed increased engagement and cultural pride when indigenous drama and poetry were presented through interactive digital media. Learners described feeling "seen" and "validated" when content reflected their language and heritage.

Student 12 (Form 2, rural school): "When I saw the video of *mutambo*, I felt proud. This is our culture. It's not just something from the past—it's something we can still do."

Student 3 (Form 3, peri-urban school): "I used to think Shona literature was boring. But now I see it's interesting. I even shared the video with my cousin in Harare."

Student 18 (Form 2, rural school): "I didn't know *nduri* could be like that. The way the man performed—it was powerful. I want to learn to do that."

Teachers observed increased participation, particularly among students previously disengaged in literature classes.

Teacher 2: "There is one student who never spoke in class. But when we showed the video of the *mutambo*, he started asking questions. He said his grandmother does that dance. He became active."

Teacher 5: "Students who usually sit at the back and don't participate—they started paying attention. The video caught their interest. Even the boys who think literature is for girls."

However, divergent experiences were also noted. Some students expressed preference for live performance over digital viewing.

Student 9 (Form 3, peri-urban school): "The video is good, but it's not the same as being there. When you are there, you can feel the drums. The video is flat."

Student 21 (Form 2, rural school): "I liked the video, but I would prefer to see a real performance. Maybe the performers can come to our school."

These findings support Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes that affirming students' cultural identity enhances motivation and learning outcomes. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's (1986) call to decolonize education is reflected here, as digital indigenous content may counter the dominance of Western literary canons. The findings also corroborate Mugari and Sigauke's (2020) study, which linked digital storytelling to renewed interest in Shona oral traditions. The affective outcomes suggest that the New Orality functions not only as a pedagogical tool but also as a potential site for identity formation. However, the divergence in student responses indicates that digital mediation is not universally preferred and that live performance retains unique value.

4.4 ICT and Transnational Orality

Diaspora youth accessed digitized Zezuru performances through social media and shared them within online community groups. Participants described these platforms as enabling them to maintain language proficiency and cultural connection despite geographical distance.

Diaspora Participant 1 (UK, age 22): "Hearing *nduri* on WhatsApp makes me feel connected to home. I play it for my children so they can hear the language. They don't speak Shona well, but they can hear it."

Diaspora Participant 2 (South Africa, age 19): "I follow a YouTube channel that posts *mutambo* performances. It helps me remember what I learned when I was young. Sometimes I share with my friends here."

Diaspora Participant 3 (UK, age 25): "When I see a new video, I send it to my sister. We talk about it. It's like we are still together, watching the same thing."

However, sustainability depends on community-driven content curation and digital literacy among diaspora users.

Diaspora Participant 2: "The problem is that there is not enough content. After you watch the same videos, there is nothing new. We need more people to record and share."

Diaspora Participant 1: "Some of the old people don't know how to use the internet. The young people know, but they don't always want to do it. We need someone to organize."

These findings illustrate Appadurai's (1996) concept of "scapes" and transnational cultural flows, where digital media sustain cultural practices across borders. Mabweazara (2010) documented similar patterns among Zimbabwean diaspora communities using online platforms for public sphere participation. The findings suggest that ICT may extend orality beyond local firesides into transnational spaces, allowing Zezuru culture to remain dynamic and adaptive. However, the reliance on informal, ad hoc sharing raises questions about long-term sustainability and the need for organized community archiving.

4.5 Synthesis of Findings

The study indicates that ICT does not replace traditional orality but transforms it into a New Orality that is adaptable to contemporary pedagogical and diasporic contexts. The effectiveness of this transformation depends on infrastructure, teacher capacity, and community ownership of digital content. Table 1 summarizes the key findings against each research objective.

Table 1: Summary of Findings by Research Objective

Objective	Key Findings	Constraints
1. Digitize and preserve performances	Digital recordings captured tone, rhythm, gesture, and audience interaction; created "living digital archive"	Inconsistent electricity, limited broadband, inadequate storage
2. Integrate into ODeL	Increased active engagement with multimodal content; perceived improvement in comprehension	Teacher training needed; risk of superficial ICT use
3. Impact on engagement and cultural pride	Expressed cultural pride and validation; increased participation	Some students prefer live performance; divergent experiences
4. Enable transnational orality	Diaspora maintained language and cultural connection via social media	Limited content; need for community curation and digital literacy

These findings contribute to decolonial education and digital heritage literature by providing context-specific empirical evidence from the Zezuru context. The study extends existing frameworks by demonstrating how the New Orality operates within ODeL settings, identifying both affordances and constraints of digital cultural transmission.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined how ICT mediates the preservation and pedagogical transmission of Zezuru drama and poetry in the Marondera District. Findings indicate that digital platforms can function as a New Orality, capturing linguistic and paralinguistic features of *nduri* and *mutambo* that written texts lose. Integration of digitized content into ODeL was associated with increased student engagement and expressions of cultural pride, while also enabling transnational connections for diaspora youth. However, sustainability is constrained by infrastructure gaps, limited teacher training, and digital access disparities. The study concludes that ICT does not replace traditional orality but may extend it, serving as a decolonial tool for heritage preservation, identity formation, and culturally relevant education. These conclusions should be understood within the limitations of the study, including the small sample size, short intervention duration, and reliance on self-reported perceptions.

5.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This study makes three contributions to knowledge. First, it provides empirical evidence of how the New Orality concept operates in practice within Zimbabwean ODeL contexts, extending theoretical discussions of mediated orality. Second, it identifies specific affordances and constraints of integrating digitized indigenous content into formal education, offering practical insights for curriculum developers and teacher trainers. Third, it documents diaspora engagement with digitized cultural content, contributing to understanding of transnational orality in African contexts.

5.2 Directions for Future Research

Future research should address the limitations of this study by: (1) conducting longitudinal studies to assess long-term impacts on learning outcomes and cultural identity; (2) employing independent measures of engagement and comprehension rather than relying solely on self-report; (3) investigating the sustainability of community-driven digital archives; and (4) examining the effectiveness of teacher training interventions for ICT integration in indigenous language education.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Invest in digital infrastructure and training:** Schools and communities should be supported with reliable devices, connectivity, and teacher training to effectively use digitized indigenous content in ODeL. Training should go beyond basic device operation to include pedagogical strategies for integrating digital content into meaningful learning activities.

2. **Develop community-driven digital archives:** Cultural practitioners, educators, and youth should collaborate to create and maintain accessible archives of Zezuru performances that preserve performative elements. These archives should be designed for sustainability, with clear protocols for content curation, storage, and community access.

3. **Integrate indigenous content into curricula:** Education authorities should embed ICT-mediated Zezuru drama and poetry into ODeL and mainstream curricula to promote cultural relevance and student engagement. Curriculum developers should work with cultural practitioners to ensure authenticity and appropriate representation.

4. **Support transnational orality initiatives:** Platforms should be designed to connect diaspora youth with local communities, fostering language maintenance and cultural continuity across borders. This may include organized online communities, curated content libraries, and virtual performance events.

5. **Conduct further research:** Longitudinal studies with larger samples and independent outcome measures are needed to strengthen the evidence base for ICT integration in indigenous language education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Guide (Teachers)

1. How long have you been teaching Shona literature/Zezuru cultural studies?
2. What challenges have you experienced in teaching *nduri* and *mutambo* using traditional methods?
3. How did you integrate digitized performances into your lessons?
4. What changes did you observe in student engagement when using digital content?
5. What challenges did you encounter in using ICT for teaching indigenous content?
6. What training or support would help you use ICT more effectively?
7. How do you think digital content affects students' understanding of performative elements (tone, rhythm, gesture)?
8. In your view, does digital content replace or complement traditional performance?

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Guide (Students)

1. What did you think about learning *nduri* and *mutambo* through videos and audio recordings?
2. How did watching performances help you understand the poems and plays?
3. Did you feel differently about your culture after watching these performances? How?
4. What did you like most about the digital lessons? What did you like least?
5. Would you prefer to learn through videos or through live performances? Why?
6. Have you shared any of the videos with family or friends outside school?
7. What suggestions do you have for improving digital lessons in Shona literature?

Appendix C: Interview Guide (Diaspora Youth)

1. How do you access Zezuru cultural content online?
2. What platforms do you use to find *nduri* and *mutambo* performances?

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3. How does accessing this content affect your connection to Zezuru culture and language?
4. Do you share this content with others? Who and how?
5. What challenges do you face in finding or accessing Zezuru cultural content online?
6. What would make it easier for you to access and share Zezuru performances?
7. How important is it for you to maintain connection to Zezuru culture? Why?