

# The Futurity of Indigenous Languages in Nollywood Movies

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2023.1012025>

Received: 07 November 2023; Revised: 06 December 2023; Accepted: 08 December 2023;  
Published: 09 January 2024

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative research delves into the futurity of indigenous languages in the context of Nollywood movies, employing a dual methodology of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and in-depth interviews. Participants spanning two age groups, 18-36 and 36-70, engaged in the FGD sessions, adding depth and diversity to the study. The research is anchored in the Language Vitality Theory and Cultural Hybridity Theory, providing a robust theoretical framework for exploration.

The study sets forth four primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to scrutinize the audience's consumption patterns of indigenous language films vis-a-vis English language movies in Nollywood. Secondly, it delves into the audience's perceptions and interpretations of the cultural and linguistic dimensions presented in indigenous language movies. Thirdly, the research investigates the factors contributing to the sustained use and relevance of indigenous languages in Nollywood filmmaking. Finally, the study scrutinizes the potential future roles of indigenous languages in the Nollywood film industry.

The research questions, strategically derived from the objectives, guide the inquiry process. Key findings underscore the significance of subtitles in enhancing audience engagement, comprehension, and enjoyment. Participants expressed a preference for subtitles, emphasizing their role in reducing the linguistic barrier and enhancing the overall movie-watching experience.

In conclusion, the study recommends concerted efforts to enhance the quality and authenticity of indigenous languages in Nollywood. Particularly, it advocates for substantial investment in subtitles, recognizing them as a pivotal factor in bridging linguistic gaps and ensuring a broader audience base. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the role of indigenous languages in the ever-evolving landscape of Nollywood, shedding light on both current consumption patterns and potential future trajectories.

## INTRODUCTION

The rich tapestry of Nigeria's cultural diversity is intricately woven into the vibrant narratives of Nollywood, the country's prolific film industry. With over 500 distinct languages, Nigeria's linguistic landscape mirrors its diverse traditions, and Nollywood stands as a powerful medium that both reflects and shapes the nation's identity. This research embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted relationship between Nollywood, Indigenous languages, and cultural identity, with a keen focus on the future.

Nigeria, often hailed as the "Giant of Africa," boasts of a cultural landscape as diverse as its linguistic tapestry, comprising of over 500 distinct languages. This linguistic richness serves as a reservoir for the nation's myriad traditions, adding a unique dimension to the vibrant narratives of Nollywood, the cornerstone of Nigeria's cinematic prowess.

As a nation of remarkable linguistic diversity, Nigeria's languages transcend mere communication tools; they are vessels carrying the essence of diverse cultural expressions. Nollywood, as the cinematic heartbeat of the nation, intricately weaves these linguistic threads into its narratives, presenting a cultural mosaic that resonates with audiences globally. Beyond serving as a mirror reflecting the soul of Nigeria, these languages contribute to the very fabric of storytelling, influencing narratives across genres.

In this exploration, we not only consider the role of indigenous languages within the cinematic realm but also their broader significance in everyday life. Languages encapsulate the collective wisdom, history, and ethos of communities, and Nollywood, with its expansive reach, serves as a conduit for the dissemination of these cultural treasures.

The study aims to contextualize the use of language in Nollywood within the broader sociolinguistic landscape of Nigeria. It seeks to unravel the intricate dance between language, identity, and culture, acknowledging that the linguistic diversity extends far beyond the screens. By incorporating insights from various linguistic spheres, from local dialects to regional languages, the research aims to provide a holistic understanding of how language functions as a dynamic force in shaping cultural narratives.

In essence, this journey into the relationship between Nollywood and Indigenous languages is an exploration of Nigeria's linguistic soul, a narrative that extends beyond the confines of cinema screens into the heart of communities, where languages breathe life into cultural expressions. As we embark on this odyssey, we anticipate uncovering the intricate interplay between Nollywood, Indigenous languages, and the diverse linguistic threads that form the rich tapestry of Nigeria's cultural identity.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In recent years, the trajectory of indigenous languages in Nollywood has raised concerns. The industry, while thriving in terms of production volume and global impact, tends to prioritize marketing, sales, and profit. As a result, issues like content, cultural value, language promotion, and storytelling are sometimes relegated to the background. This shift prompts a critical question: How long before our languages face extinction, much like endangered wildlife?

However, a new wave of filmmakers, often referred to as 'next-generation filmmakers,' is emerging. These individuals are open to innovative business models, from online web series to short films designed for mobile phones and documentaries. At the same time, cultural representation itself is transforming within an interactive, social media-driven environment. (Ryan,2010) Simultaneously, cultural representation is undergoing transformation within an interactive, social media-driven environment.

Language, as a mode of identification, plays a pivotal role. People's language choices often reflect aspects of their identity, and for reasons like illiteracy, identification, and ease of understanding, many individuals prefer movies in their local languages. This preference raises the crucial issue of accessibility and availability of such films.

While English remains a dominant presence in Nollywood due to its colonial legacy, indigenous languages also have a special place. They serve as conduits for promoting and channeling the richness of Nigeria's diverse communities. The success of indigenous language films such as "Living in Bondage" and "Lion Heart" highlights the box office potential of movies produced in local languages.

Nollywood, with its thousands of annual productions, has earned its place as a beacon of African cinema. Yet, questions linger about the future of indigenous languages within the industry. This research aims to delve into the intricate dance between language and choice, cultural representation, and the preservation of linguistic heritage within Nollywood's storytelling.

It was only recently in 2006 that Irapada a complete Yoruba language movie by Kunle Afolayan with English subtitles was premiered in cinemas in Nigeria, when the buzz went out about this movie, it elicited a lot of reactions from people, one of which stated categorically that the movie wouldn't sell. This movie became a block buster, and everyone wanted to watch it regardless of their tribe or geographic location. The

Nigerian movie industry, the third in the world in terms of volume of production, has played a role in reflecting Nigerian cultural values in productions. Some of the box office successes are movies produced in indigenous languages. The success of one of the early video films, *Living in Bondage* which was produced in Igbo, one of the indigenous Nigerian languages, was a good impetus for myriads of 'language films' to be produced in Nigeria. Usua, N. (2018)

As a result of the success that was achieved a lot more movies over time has been produced, beautiful block busters, movies like *Lion Heart*, *Battle on Buka street*, *The Ghost and the Tout*, *Chief Daddy* and a lot more.

As a result of the success that was achieved a lot more movies over time has been produced, beautiful block busters, movies like *Lion Heart*, *Battle on Buka street*, *The Ghost and the Tout*, *Chief Daddy* and a lot more.

Nollywood, Nigeria's prolific film industry, stands as a beacon of African cinema, captivating audiences worldwide with its vibrant narratives, compelling characters, and the unique cultural tapestry it weaves, with the production of thousands of movies produced annually, Nollywood has etched its name in cinematic achievements. However there exists a considerable number of young people who draw inspiration from the contents of media material (Curtis,2012.)

Nigeria, a nation of remarkable linguistic diversity, boasts of over 500 distinct languages, a reflection of its rich cultural and diverse traditions. Nollywood as both a reflection and shaper of Nigerian society, has grappled with the bougous task of language representations. While English, the colonial legacy remains a dominant presence in Nollywood films, indigenous languages have always held a special place, promoting, channeling, the richness of Nigeria's diverse communities.

This research embarks on an exploration of the multifaceted relationship between Nollywood, Indigenous languages, cultural identity and a delve into the future. It also delves into the heart of Nollywood storytelling, examining the intricate dance between language and choice, cultural representation, and the preservation of linguistic heritage.

When we take a look at the number of local/Epic movies that carry local undertones, for instance *Ajoche*(2018) *Itura*(2022) *Jimeji*(2017) *Diiche*(2023) showing on African magic showcase, the movies still visibly struggles from language choice, we seek to unravel the narratives, the dialogues and the scenes that echo the futurity of indigenous languages in the Nollywood movie industry.

Within the frame of Nollywood films, languages are more than just words, they are vessels of culture, carriers of history and bridges to understanding. According to Getalem & Armaye(2015) the influence of film has resulted to the extent that all countries are inevitably experiencing greater informational and cultural exchange with the rest of the world and therefore subjecting themselves to foreign influences. They can convey the nuances of emotions, the power of traditions and the beauty of diverse worldviews, where English often assumes the role of lingua franca of cinema.

## **Statement of Problem**

Nollywood as Nigeria's prominent film industry plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural narratives and reflecting the diverse linguistic tapestry of the nation. Within this vibrant cinematic landscape, the use and portrayal of indigenous languages has emerged as a critical concern. While indigenous languages hold the potential to preserve cultural heritage and foster authentic storytelling, they also contend with challenges of marginalization and adaptation in the face of globalized cinematic norms dominated by English.

The central problem addressed by this research lies in the tension between enduring significance of indigenous languages as cultural treasures and evolving dynamics of language use within Nollywood

movies. This study aims to unpack the following issues such as language erosion. English often takes precedence in cinematic narratives, indigenous languages are at a risk of erosion, which leads us to asking very important questions to what extent do Nollywood movies contribute to the preservation or erosion of indigenous languages.

### Research Objectives

1. To analyze audience consumption of indigenous language films in comparison to English language movies in Nollywood.
2. To examine how audience perceives and interpret cultural and linguistic aspects presented in indigenous language movies in Nollywood.
3. To investigate the factors that contribute to the sustained use and relevance of indigenous languages in Nollywood filmmaking.
4. To analyze future prospects of indigenous languages in Nollywood film industry.

### Research Questions

1. To what extent does audience consume indigenous language films in comparison to English language films in Nollywood?
2. How does audience perceive and interpret cultural and linguistic aspects presented in indigenous language movies?
  - What is the potential future role and influence of indigenous languages in Nollywood film industry?
1. What are the prospects of indigenous languages in Nollywood filmmaking?

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

### Language Use in Nollywood

Man seeks to be heard and understood (Ewurum and Chukwu, 2021). Hence, there is the undisputable need to communicate to fellow man, bringing in the need for language use. No doubt, Language is at the heart of all things human (O'Grady, Archibald and Katamba, 2011). In regard to this, language is employed in every activity of man and this confirms what Downes (2008) states – “So much of what keeps people and societies together depends crucially on language”. Simply put, language is the indicator of history and self-identification (Solanke, 2006). Language according to Yusuf (2012) remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing issues and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes. Ewurum and Chukwu (2021) describes language as the most versatile medium of communication among mankind in totality, possessing the most significant role in the regulation and control of society.

And so lays the thin thread connecting language and Nigerian films, including the industry it falls under. Giwa (2014) mentions that the Nigeria film industry, also known as Nollywood, is Africa's most prevalent movie activity in both the number of productions and value, roughly making production of 1,000 to 1,500 movies annually. Nowadays, Nollywood films graces our screens at home or offices with media content, dialogue, storyline, characters and relevant costumes. Moudio (2013) also states that the Nollywood produces 50 movies per week, second only to India's Bollywood – more than Hollywood in the United States. The Nigerian film industry has been identified as one of the top five growth industries and has been selected as one of the key activities to produce economic growth for the country (Mba, 2006).

The Nigerian Film Industry, also known as Nollywood, is the second-largest film industry in the world and accounts for 5% of the country 's Gross Domestic Product l(GDP) (Hyde, 2020). Moudio (2013) estimates

that Nollywood produces around 50 films weekly and around 2,500 films annually, making it second to the Indian Film Industry, also known as Bollywood, which produces over 2,500 films annually. Whereas, the Cinema of the United States, also known as Hollywood, produces over 700 films annually, coming third after Nollywood. Highet (2010) also exemplifies the reach and access of Nollywood films and access to them in African countries, the United States, United Kingdom and many other countries.

From distribution to production, Nollywood film producers connected to the diaspora early and had a storyline that incorporated immigrant communities and films with subtitles in English, thereby increasing the viewership as well as the revenue for the films (Obayiuwana, 2011).

Just as water is needed for every human digestive activity, so does Nollywood films employ indigenous languages for better audience response and reception. The Ethnologue of World's Languages totaled Nigerian Languages into 525, showing that Nigeria consists of hundreds of ethnic groups since many of her indigenous languages are ethnic-based (Ethnologue, 2019). Nigeria has many languages in existence since many ethnic groups are co-existing (Akinsola, 2020). Hausa is the largest group with 25.1% of the Nigerian population, followed by Yoruba (21.0%), Igbo (18.0%), Ijaw (10.0%), Kanuri (4.0%), Fulani (3.9%), Ibibio (3.5%) and Tiv (2.5%), while other minority ethnic groups constitute the remaining 12% of the Nigerian population (WorldAtlas 2019). Kayode (2020) also highlights the major languages spoken in Nigeria include Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba, as they are the dominant languages in Nigeria. Ethnicity is intrinsically related to language diversity that characterizes the Nigerian linguistic environment (Adeyinka and Akinsola, 2017). Although the Nigerian film industry is heavily influenced by political, religious and economic factors; language diversity has exerted unrefutable influence on all aspects of the industry. Nollywood films are highly influenced by the diverse languages in Nigeria, and this has resulted to the consequent use of indigenous languages in Nollywood films. Therefore, it can be established that Nigerian films have been regional or ethnical-oriented right from its developmental stage. The validity of this relies on the basis that regional films are produced in indigenous languages, showcasing regional culture just as language remains a key identity of an ethnic group (Akinsola, 2020). Ehineni (2015) states that the deployment of language in this domain is overwhelmingly influenced by the necessity to effectively communicate messages to the Nigerian audience which in itself is very diverse. Similarly, Oyewo (2003) extrapolates that language as an integral part of a people's culture and communication is not only a unifying factor but also a vital determinant to the success and acceptability of the various genres of Nollywood films.

### **Use of Indigenous Languages in Storytelling and its Challenges.**

Iseke (2013) exemplifies storytelling as a practice in indigenous cultures that sustains communities, validates experiences and epistemologies, expresses experiences of indigenous people and nurtures relationships for the sharing of knowledge. For Fernandez-Llamazares and Cabeza (2017), storytelling is the art of using words and actions to reveal the elements and images of a story, while encouraging the listener's imagination.

To establish a common ground, it is also best to grasp a quick understanding of what indigenous language mean. Adedeji (2014) provides a brief explanation by referring to indigenous language as a language spoken of belonging or connected with a particular place or area which one is talking about or with the place one lives. Adeniyi and Bello (2006) simply states that any language aboriginal to the people of a place is indigenous to them. Language, whether indigenous or foreign, are indispensable tools in the life of an individual because there is no aspect of human activities that can be successful without the effective use of language (Ayodele, 2013).

As quoted in Adedun (2010), the latest statistics from the Nigerian Film and Video Censors' Board (2007 – 2008) reveals that video films are only produced in six of the county's languages – Nigerian English, Yoruba, Hausa, Bini, Ibibio and Efik. Indigenous stories have often been handled down over generations



through oral history, and are preserved as a collective experience (Parker et al, 2007; Ryan, 2015). Despite the need to preserve languages, Adedun (2014) citing Salawa (2014) suggests that indigenous languages are not highly esteemed like in Nigeria, where English remains the major vehicle of power, progress and the media.

Bisschoff (2012) states that the appeal that media content has is because of its relevance to audiences in narratives, language or style. This brings the constant challenges impeding the use of indigenous languages in Nollywood films closer to our knowledge. A major challenge is the preference for English language by audience. The dominance of English language in Nigeria has naturally relegated the use of the indigenous languages (Ajepe and Ademowo, 2016). Orji & Udeze (2021) asserts that the misguided past policies have treated native language as a part of the problem of underdevelopment, which was supposed to be solved through the introduction of a dominant language that stood for modernity and development. As noted by Ogunmodimu (2015):

“Today, English has grown to become the official national language of Nigeria and continues to play important roles in the nation as the language of education, media, religion, as well as the language of politics, governance and law”.

This has heavy implications on Nollywood, leaving an affected quality of the indigenous languages used by Nigerians – it is never pure since there is always a mixture with phrases of English or switching from a local language to English sporadically. For example, the *Engligbo* concept which refers to mixture of English and Igbo language for effective communication.

Benson, Anyabelechi and Ariole (2017) note that the multiplicity of indigenous language paves way to create another challenge that affects the use of indigenous language in the Nigerian film industry. Benson, Okere and Nwauwa (2016) supports this, with a perfect reason that points out to the multi-lingual and multicultural nature of Nigeria. Although, Nigeria has between 250 and 400 languages, none of the languages has been considered worthy of adoption as national language. (Ogunwale, 2013).

### **Audience Reception and Language Choice**

Orji and Udeze (2021) states that language choice is a careful selection of word, phrase, clause or sentence of another language within the speaker’s linguistic repertoire. Language choice is subject to two categories of factors: preferences and constraints (Agbedo, 2011). For instance, an individual with reasonable fluency in several languages would always choose to speak his mother tongue wherever possible, this is because it is the language most familiar and comfortable for such person.

However, David (2006) argues that language choice is triggered by factors such as social status, gender, educational attainment, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural and urban origin, speakers, topic, place, media and formality of the situation.

Ferrer and Sankoff (2004) find that the language preference of a speaker is influenced by dominant languages. Dominant languages, in some ways, influences the possible language choice of a source or decoder. In the Nigerian multilingual context, language choice often favours the use of English language, since it is the dominant and official language of the country. Moreover, it makes more sense that a large number of factors influence language choice, and many factors may work either with or against each other, producing a complex web of interaction, which makes the task of describing any one language choice event extremely difficult (Agbedo, 2011).

Meanwhile, audience reception of Nollywood films is intertwined with the language choice exhibited in such films. Elegbe and Fadipe (2017) examined audience preference for Yoruba films and how they have

promoted their cultural and behavioural values. It was reported in the study that the audience favoured certain Yoruba films, casts, producers and themes, as such factors are indices that determined audience preference for Yoruba movies.

According to Akpabio (2007), audience attitude to Nollywood films can be determined by probing the relationship between audience views and those expressed by critics and experts. Similarly, Onuzulike (2016) juxtaposed two audiences – Nigerians in Nigeria and Nigerians in South Africa to ascertain their perception of aspects of Nigerian movie productions, popularly known as Nollywood. Although the two groups favour the depiction of Nigerian/African cultures over other themes, Nigerians in South Africa disfavor the reality of Nollywood movies for reasons of repetition, poor quality and the supernatural. In addition, Umezinwa's empirical research, the perceptions of selected respondents about Nollywood movies and found there is high exposure and high preference for Nollywood films, unlike its foreign counterparts.

Meanwhile, Akinsola (2020) concludes that English and regional Nollywood does not influence Nollywood reception preferences among selected individuals in Ibadan, as the reasons for their preferences, according to the thematic analysis of the filed notes, were far from ethnicity. Despite the linguistic experience of an audience, some would rather watch an English Nollywood film than watch a regional one. This could also be partially accounted for by their linguistic reality, which predisposes them to be affiliated to more than one ethnic group. This depicts vividly how language intrinsically relates to thoughts and connects to provide a certain behavior.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the Language vitality theory and cultural hybridity theory. The tenets of this theory will help in situating and explaining this study properly.

### **Language Vitality Theory**

Vitality, which has provoked some controversy in the literature, has also been widely adopted by very different approaches as an umbrella term to denote the long-term sustainability of a group. Scholars in linguistics, sociology, psychology, education, anthropology, and beyond have contributed much to the concept, helping to educate and raise awareness as to why languages die out and the effects of such languages dying out (Smith, Ehala & Giles 2017).

In comprehensive terms, Language vitality theory is demonstrated by the extent that the language is used as a means of communication in various social contexts for specific purposes. The most significant indicator of a language's vitality is its daily use in the home. It also features as an integral component of ethnolinguistic identity theory (e.g., Giles & Johnson, 1981), which was developed to predict when ethnic groups accentuate or attenuate their distinctive linguistic and communicative features in interaction.

Mohamed & Hashim (2012) state that vitality of language refers to the ability of a language to live or grow. Yagmur (2011) agrees that the Language vitality theory and its accompanying instruments provide a broader and more inclusive framework for the investigation of language maintenance and shift. It draws attention to dominant language, and to a broader reality, that marginalization could be an important factor in language vitality.

The language vitality of a particular ethnic group can be analyzed using the nine criteria of language vitality, outlined in the UNESCO Expert Meeting in March, 2003 (Brenzinger et al. 2003). The nine criteria include intergenerational language transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, trends in existing language domains, response to new domains and media, materials for language education and literacy, language attitudes and policies, community members' attitudes toward

their own language, and lastly, the amount and quality of documentation (Brenzinger et al. 2003, 7–17).

The theoretical development of language vitality or shift is worth reconsidering given that the dominance of English language over lesser-known cultures and small languages, even in the Nigerian film industry. By applying Language vitality theory to this study, we might expect variance and difference among speakers. As stated earlier, Nigeria has over 500 languages and hundreds of ethnic groups. Similarly, speakers ideally not only strongly value their language, but they also know in which social domains their language is to be supported. Simultaneously, the use of indigenous languages in Nollywood movies can function as a test of language vitality and a mirror of the country's real commitment to language diversity and ethnicity.

### **Cultural Hybridity Theory**

Kraidy (2006) describes cultural hybridity as the intermingling of people and media from different cultures is a communication-based phenomenon. According to Marotta (2021), the cultural hybridity theory is a contested idea that has been understood in essentialist and nonessentialist terms. One of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in postcolonial theory, hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization.

It has been used to describe the experiences of ethnic individuals who have similar, but different experiences of living across multiple cultures. This is what contributes to the development of a hybrid consciousness that transcends these differences because living-in fosters an alternative worldview not available to those living on either side of the cultural border. According to Burke (2009), contact, interaction, and encounter between two different cultural groups construct a mixture of hybridization of both cultures over time. For example, Nigerian cinema movies travels the world more than Africans.

However, in regard to the futurity of Indigenous language in Nollywood movies, the cultural hybridity theory will better explain why and how certain films put out their content in Nigerian English to indirectly show the dominance of this language choice in the country. Similarly, it explains why movies that employs the use of indigenous languages are less desirable and less effective. Burke (2009) points out how the concept of hybridity offers a harmonious image of what is obviously disjointed and confrontational, including the probable ignorance of one's original culture.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology involves identification of data sources, collection of data and consequently analysis of data collected with a view to tackling the research problems stated earlier in every research work. therefore, it is concerned with the presentation of methods and the procedures for executing this study. Consequently, the subheadings addressed in this chapter include: the research designs, area of study, population of study, sample and sampling technique, instruments for data collection, pre-test and validation of research instrument, administration of instrument of data collection and methods of data analysis. This study employs a qualitative approach. It uses Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the futurity of indigenous languages In Nollywood films. This approach allows for in-depth insights from diverse participants.

### **Sampling**

For the focus group discussion, purposive sampling method was used to select 20 participants from diverse tribes and cultures in Nigeria. The selected participants were selected to represent the older generation and the younger generation for a full representation of the old and new, we had participants from age bracket 16-35 and also ages 36-80. Four separate sessions were held to accommodate the no of participants for the



FGD.

### Interviews

The interviewees were selected using purposeful sampling technique to ensure a range of perspectives. Key informants included one filmmaker, one scriptwriter, one actor, one language expert. Approximately 4 interviews were conducted for the purpose of this research.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### Focus Group Discussions

#### Discussants' Demographics

A total of 20 discussants participated in the four discussion sessions – 10 discussants per session (i.e. group). For each group, four participants were within the following age brackets each: 18 – 35 years, 36 – 70 years and above. Similarly, for each group, four participants possessed (as their highest educational qualification) senior school certificate or less, while three possessed a degree, diploma or certificate. Also, while four participants in each group were urban dwellers, three were rural dwellers.

#### Demographics of the FGD Participants

Variables	Items	Frequency
Age	18 – 30 years	10
	31 – 70 years	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>
Educational Qualification	Senior School Certificate or less	5
	Degree, Diploma or Certificate	15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>
Residency	Urban	12
	Rural	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

- Audience consumption of indigenous language films in comparison to English language films in Nollywood?

### 1. To what extent is the audience consumption of indigenous language films in comparison to English language films in Nollywood?

The respondents were exposed to the questions that sought to determine their level of exposure, preferences acceptance and consumption of indigenous movies to English language movies in Nollywood movies, the data gathered from our FGD shows that majority of the participants of ages 18- 30 readily prefer English language Nollywood movies while majority of participants from ages 36-70 prefer indigenous language movies. Most of the participants of the age of 18-35 cited several reasons for these choices ranging from being able to flow and concentrate better with English language movies, to subtitles reducing the magnitude of meanings attached to words. Our interviewees also suggested same response, that production of English language movies is a lot easier and more seamless.

Furthermore, the FGD's gave credence to the findings of the interviews as majority agreed to preferring English language movies to indigenous movies.

**Moderator: what kind of movies do you watch, is it those spoken in English or those spoken in indigenous languages?**

Participant 1: English

Participant 10: English and Igbo

Participant 12: Igbo

Participant 20: Yoruba

80% of respondents indicated that they preferred English language movies.

The researcher went ahead to inquire why their choices on the preferred languages most of the participants said because they had a better understanding of English, while a few preferred the indigenous languages because they either want to learn new languages or want the language vibe only indigenous languages give. Some of the responses includes:

Participant 20: Igbo language because it's the only indigenous language I understand.

Participant 5: Yoruba because there is a connection I enjoy in Yoruba movies; I would also prefer other languages.

Participant 12: For me the curiosity to know my language.

Participant 16: Igbo movie because they are more cultural.

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Furthermore, the FGD's gave credence to the findings of the interviews as majority agreed to preferring English language movies to indigenous movies.

**Preference for Indigenous Language Movies:** Some participants showed a preference for indigenous language movies. Their reasons were diverse and included a curiosity to learn the language and a desire to connect more deeply with their culture. This preference is indicative of cultural hybridity, as individuals are consciously engaging with their cultural roots while consuming media.

The responses from the 12 participants show a nuanced interplay between language vitality and cultural hybridity in the context of film consumption. While more participants preferred English language movies, those who favored indigenous language films did so for reasons related to cultural connection and identity. This complex interaction of factors underscores the dynamic nature of film preferences and their relationship with language and culture. It also highlights the importance of considering both theories in understanding audience choices in the realm of indigenous and English language films.

The data collected from our Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) aimed to gauge participants' exposure, preferences, acceptance, and consumption of indigenous movies compared to English language movies in the Nollywood industry. The results revealed interesting patterns based on age groups:

**Age Divide in Preferences:** A notable trend emerged, showing that participants between the ages of 18-35

predominantly favored English language Nollywood movies. Conversely, participants aged 36-70 demonstrated a stronger preference for indigenous language movies.

**Reasons for Age-Based Preferences:** The participants in the 18-35 age group provided several reasons for their preference for English language movies. They mentioned feeling more at ease and focused while watching English movies. Additionally, they pointed out that subtitles in indigenous movies sometimes diluted the depth of meaning associated with dialogue.

**Interviewees' Consistency:** Interestingly, during interviews, a similar pattern emerged, with interviewees echoing the preference for English language movies. They emphasized that the production of English language movies seemed smoother and more accessible.

The data collected through FGDs and interviews underscores a distinctive age-related divergence in preferences within the Nollywood movies with language and age as significant influencing factors.

## **2. Audience perception and interpretation of cultural and linguistic aspects presented in indigenous language movies.**

However there exists a considerable number of young people who draw inspiration from the contents of media material (Curtis,2012.)

Our interviewees who consisted of the script writer, movie director, a producer and an actor all shared the same view that from the feedback gotten from movies either produced or directed by them the audience are in complete awe of the productions. They also stated that most importantly subtitles are prioritised so non-speaking language watchers can be able to enjoy the movies as well. They also stated that these movies are also been sought after as they make more money from production of indigenous languages.

Furthermore, to give more insight to the thoughts of our interviewees, the FGD asked participants pertinent question to drive at a conclusion. Most of the participants were of a contrary opinion to what the interviewee suggested. They do not think our culture and indigenous languages are given enough recognition and even promoted.

### **Moderator: How do you perceive the portrayal of indigenous language in Nollywood movies?**

Participant 1: They most times portray the bad side of the culture, which is not really our reality, we have beautiful things about our culture which they do not portray.

Participant 4: we have very poor subtitling; they are always never in sync.

Participant 8: there is always a mixture of Igbo and English, especially in Igbo movies, actors always trying to funkilize the Igbo language is chaotic.

The researcher went ahead to ask more questions for more insight and understanding of the research question.

Moderator: Are you satisfied with how these languages are spoken and portrayed in movies?

Participant 5: I am not really satisfied with how the Igbo language are not spoken well in movies; they tend to modernize the Igbo language.

Participant 4: The subtitling is the biggest challenge; the actor is saying something else subtitle is saying something else.

From the responses of all participants the Yoruba language can be said to be doing better in terms of portrayal, but subtitling is the major challenge of most indigenous movies.

**Subtitles as Prioritization:** The participants, particularly the viewers, emphasized the significance of subtitles. Subtitles were seen as crucial for non-native speakers to enjoy indigenous language movies. This aligns with the Language Vitality Theory, as it indicates an awareness of the importance of language accessibility and understanding.

**Awe and High Demand:** The interviewees, who are insiders in the movie industry, shared a positive view of indigenous language movies. They described the audience's reaction as being in "complete awe" and noted the high demand and profitability of these films. This suggests that indigenous language movies hold vitality in the film industry, attracting substantial viewership and financial success.

**Divergent Opinions:** However, the majority of participants (viewers) expressed contrasting views. They believed that indigenous cultures and languages are not adequately recognized and promoted in these films. Some participants felt that the portrayal of culture in these movies tends to focus on the negative aspects. This indicates a critical perspective and suggests that these movies might not fully represent the vitality of their respective languages and cultures.

**Challenges in Language Usage:** Participants raised concerns about language usage, particularly in the context of Igbo language films. They noted issues such as actors phoneticizing the language and creating chaos. This highlights the challenge of maintaining the purity of indigenous languages in film.

### **3. Potential future role and influence of indigenous languages in Nollywood film industry?**

#### **Preservation of Culture and Heritage:**

The participants' responses indicate a unanimous belief that indigenous languages in movies play a pivotal role in preserving Nigerian culture and heritage. The insights shared by Uche and Fortune emphasize how these films serve as educational tools, offering a window into cultural practices, traditions, and even daily life. This aligns with the Language Vitality Theory, which emphasizes the role of languages in preserving cultural identities.

#### **Cultural Promotion:**

Fortune's comment underlines the role of indigenous language movies in promoting Nigerian culture. Through the portrayal of elements like food, languages, and dressing, these films contribute to the broader representation and celebration of cultural diversity. This aligns with the theory's concept of languages being carriers of culture and history.

#### **Challenges in Viewing Experience:**

The challenges highlighted by participants, such as difficulties with subtitles and language comprehension, shed light on potential barriers to the widespread acceptance of indigenous language movies. Augustin and Ada's experiences indicate that mismatches between subtitles and actions can affect the overall viewing experience. These challenges, if unaddressed, could impact the continued success of indigenous language films.

#### **Resilience of Indigenous Language Movies:**

The participants' optimism about the future resilience of indigenous language movies aligns with the

Language Vitality Theory. The theory suggests that languages can thrive and adapt, even in the face of challenges. The belief in the enduring popularity of these films indicates a positive outlook for the continued influence of indigenous languages in Nollywood.

#### Cultural Connection and Identity:

The participants' observations about people seeking to reconnect with their cultural roots and learn native languages point to a broader societal trend. Indigenous language movies are seen as facilitators of this cultural connection, contributing to individuals' sense of identity. This aligns with the theory's emphasis on languages as vital components of cultural expression and identity.

#### Continuous Demand:

The participants' anticipation of a continuous demand for indigenous language movies reflects the sustained appeal of these films. This aligns with the Language Vitality Theory, which recognizes that languages can maintain relevance and importance within specific cultural contexts. The enduring popularity of these films suggests a positive trajectory for the future role and influence of indigenous languages in Nollywood.

Moderator: Do you believe indigenous languages in movies play a role in preserving Nigerian culture and heritage? why? or why not?

Uche: it plays a role in preserving our culture and language, it was through indigenous cultural movies i got to learn more about my culture and tradition and i got to see most of the things in my culture through these movie.

Fortune: it promotes our culture through the portrayal of our food, languages, dressing, in the movies produced.

#### **4. Moderator: Have you ever encountered challenges watching indigenous language in Nollywood and how did it affect your viewing experience?**

Augustine: it affected me, watching a Yoruba movie because i could not understand the Yoruba i had to change the movie.

Ada: most times the subtitling in a movie don't correspond with the acting in the action and i didn't like it

Vivian: An actor and how he uses his language in a movie has affected me in a way that when i see him in a movie "Igbo" i change the movie.

Ada: most times the subtitling in a movie doesn't corresponding with the action and i don't like it.

Resilience of Indigenous Language Movies: A significant portion of the participants expressed optimism about the future of indigenous language movies in Nollywood. They believe that these films are here to stay and will continue to hold a prominent role in the industry. This aligns with the Language Vitality Theory, which suggests that these languages are not only surviving but thriving in the context of film.

Cultural Connection and Identity: 80% of Participants noted that many people are increasingly interested in reconnecting with their cultural roots, learning their native languages, and aligning with specific ethnic groups. This suggests that indigenous language movies play a crucial role in facilitating this cultural connection and fostering a sense of identity.

Continuous Demand: The participants' belief that these movies will always be sought after reflects the



enduring demand for indigenous language films. This is in line with the Language Vitality Theory, as it underscores the continued importance and influence of these languages in the film industry.

The responses from the participants collectively suggest a positive outlook for the future role and influence of indigenous languages in Nollywood films. The Language Vitality Theory supports this perspective by highlighting the resilience and vitality of these languages within the context of film. The growing interest in cultural connection and identity through these films, along with their sustained demand, indicates that indigenous languages are expected to maintain and even enhance their presence and impact in Nollywood. This aligns with the theory's premise that languages can thrive and evolve within specific cultural contexts.

### **5. Factors that contribute to the sustained use and relevance of indigenous languages in Nollywood filmmaking.**

The research question investigates the factors contributing to the sustained use and relevance of indigenous languages in Nollywood filmmaking. The responses gathered from participants, including both viewers and industry professionals, reveal critical insights as over 80% of our respondents suggested factors like better scripting, production of quality movies, correct subtitling.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

- **Audience Consumption of Indigenous vs. English Language Films:**

The data gathered from both the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and interviews revealed a generational divide in audience preferences. Participants aged 18-30 predominantly favored English language Nollywood movies, citing better flow and concentration. In contrast, participants aged 36-70 leaned towards indigenous language movies. English proficiency, subtitles, and the ease of production were key factors influencing language preferences.

- **Audience Perception of Cultural and Linguistic Aspects in Indigenous Language Movies:**

Interviews with industry insiders indicated a positive reception to indigenous language movies, with a focus on prioritized subtitles for non-speakers. However, FGD participants expressed concerns about the portrayal of indigenous cultures, citing a tendency to showcase negative aspects. Subtitling inconsistencies emerged as a common issue, particularly in Igbo movies.

- **Potential Future Role and Influence of Indigenous Languages in Nollywood:**

A majority of participants expressed optimism about the enduring significance of indigenous movies. The trend of individuals seeking to connect with their roots and languages suggests a sustained demand for such films.

- **Factors Contributing to the Sustained Use and Relevance of Indigenous Languages:**

Participants highlighted the need for improved content, accurate subtitling, realism, and engaging storytelling. Suggestions included enhancing actors' skills, using suitable locations, and employing professional makeup artists. The older demographic believed that indigenous films could become a valuable resource for language learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings underscore a nuanced landscape where language preferences in Nollywood are shaped by

factors such as age, language proficiency, and cultural connection. While challenges like subtitling inconsistencies persist, the potential for indigenous languages to play a significant role in the future of Nollywood remains robust. The industry could benefit from addressing specific concerns raised by audiences to enhance the overall viewing experience.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Enhance Language Quality and Authenticity:

To ensure the sustained use and relevance of indigenous languages in Nollywood, filmmakers should prioritize language quality and authenticity. This includes accurate pronunciation, proper language use, and the employment of native speakers when possible. By maintaining the integrity of indigenous languages, films can better connect with audiences and contribute to language vitality.

### 2. Invest in Subtitling and Accessibility:

Filmmakers should invest in quality subtitling to make indigenous language films accessible to a broader audience, including non-native speakers. Proper subtitling ensures that the linguistic and cultural nuances are not lost, making the films more engaging and informative. This accessibility can help attract a wider viewership and promote language sustainability.

### 3. Incorporate Realism and Contemporary Storytelling:

Indigenous language filmmakers should strive to create realistic and engaging narratives that resonate with contemporary audiences, especially the youth. By blending traditional cultural elements with modern storytelling techniques, filmmakers can bridge the gap between cultural heritage and modern entertainment. This approach can help maintain the relevance of indigenous languages in the film industry.

### 4. Promote Language Learning Initiatives:

Indigenous language films can play a role in language preservation and education. Therefore, it's essential to promote these films as valuable resources for language learning. Educational institutions and language programs can collaborate with filmmakers to use these films as teaching tools. Such initiatives can contribute to the continued use and learning of indigenous languages.

By implementing these recommendations, Nollywood can ensure the futurity of indigenous languages in its movies, preserving cultural heritage and language vitality while engaging a diverse and modern audience.

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