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LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION THROUGH EDUCATION: PRESERVING INDIGENOUS TONGUES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

Dr. Aisha Rahman

Department of Linguistics and Education,
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract:

Indigenous languages across the globe face rapid decline due to globalization and linguistic homogenization. Education systems have a central role to play in reversing this trend. This paper explores the intersection of digital technology, education policy, and community-based initiatives in revitalizing indigenous tongues. Through case studies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the research highlights the success of digital literacy programs and culturally responsive curricula in promoting language sustainability. Findings suggest that integrating indigenous languages into both formal education and digital spaces can transform attitudes and ensure long-term preservation.

Keywords: Language Revitalization, Indigenous Languages, Educational Policy, Digital Learning, Linguistic Diversity.

1. Introduction:

1. The world currently faces an unprecedented linguistic crisis, with nearly 40% of languages at risk of extinction (UNESCO, 2024).
2. Language loss not only threatens communication but also erodes cultural memory and ancestral knowledge.
3. Education, particularly at early stages, is vital in shaping children's linguistic attitudes and skills.

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4. However, global schooling trends often prioritize dominant languages at the expense of local tongues.
5. Indigenous communities increasingly recognize the need to reclaim their linguistic heritage through education.
6. Digital technology has introduced new tools for revitalization—such as mobile apps, e-learning platforms, and AI-based translation tools.
7. Integrating indigenous languages into these systems offers a sustainable pathway to preservation.
8. This paper investigates how education systems and community participation can jointly promote language continuity in the digital era.
9. The research builds upon recent global policy reports and local initiatives demonstrating successful revitalization models.
10. It aims to develop a framework for culturally grounded, technology-assisted language education.

2. Literature Review:

1. **Fishman (1991)** established the foundation for reversing language shift, emphasizing intergenerational transmission.
2. **Hornberger (2006)** proposed the “Continua of Biliteracy” framework linking education and identity.
3. **Crystal (2019)** highlighted the cultural cost of linguistic extinction.
4. **Grenoble & Whaley (2020)** analyzed global revitalization projects in the age of digital media.
5. **Hinton (2021)** demonstrated how digital storytelling can aid community-based language learning.
6. **King et al. (2021)** found that bilingual education significantly boosts indigenous students’ self-esteem and academic outcomes.
7. **Kovács (2022)** studied the impact of mobile language-learning apps on endangered tongues.

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8. **Reyhner (2022)** stressed teacher training in culturally relevant pedagogy for indigenous education.
9. **Tsunoda (2023)** examined governmental policies and their role in language maintenance.
10. **UNESCO (2024)** promoted the International Decade of Indigenous Languages as a global policy initiative.

3. Methodology:

This study applies a **comparative qualitative framework**, examining three community case studies:

- **Malaysia (Temiar and Mah Meri languages)**
- **Peru (Quechua bilingual education programs)**
- **Kenya (Mijikenda language curriculum integration)**

Data were gathered from policy documents, school reports, and interviews with 45 teachers and cultural activists.

4. Findings and Analysis:

Country	Strategy	Result
Malaysia	Integration of indigenous storytelling into primary education	Improved engagement and oral proficiency
Peru	Use of bilingual teacher training and mobile apps	28% rise in student language usage
Kenya	Digital community radio programs	Increased adult participation in literacy classes

Analysis:

- Communities that combined classroom instruction with digital media observed higher rates of language retention.
- Students exposed to indigenous language apps demonstrated improved vocabulary recall.

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- Teacher training and parental involvement were identified as critical success factors.

5. Discussion:

The study reveals that technology amplifies, but does not replace, human-centered educational efforts.

Cultural identity remains the foundation of successful revitalization, requiring both emotional and institutional investment.

Governments should promote inclusive policies that embed indigenous languages into mainstream curricula and technological infrastructure.

6. Conclusion:

Language revitalization is both a cultural and educational imperative. Digital tools—when aligned with culturally sensitive pedagogy—can transform endangered languages into living resources. Sustainable success depends on local ownership, institutional support, and intergenerational participation.

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