

The Benefits of Digital Culture and Language

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Abstract

Digital culture and language encompass the means, mode, and style in which modern-day technologies impact upon cultural practices, languages and communication. The crossroads of these fields have transmuted how people act together towards others or with others, create, and use pieces of information in common. This study aims to analyse the benefits of digital language and culture. The problem that warrants this study is to ascertain the role of digitalisation in strengthening the local/weak languages and cultures amid the dominant ones. The methodology this study employs is analysis. Significantly, this study is important because every person lives within a linguistic and cultural environment, and technological improvement in these areas is tantamount to improving the human condition. Research findings reveal that the dominant languages of the imperial masters, English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish, still subdue the local languages and make them insignificant and unrecognizable on the global stage. Finally, this study submits that the efforts to digitalise as many cultures and languages as possible are notable great feats in the right direction, which help revive and strengthen many local cultures and languages already at the extinction threshold. Digitalising local languages and cultures is an excellent way of putting them on the global platform, facilitating easy access to their knowledge, learning, and appreciation by an unprecedented number of interested individuals and groups of people, furnishing everybody with communication opportunities, irrespective of cultural, geographical, or linguistic boundaries.

Keywords: Creativity; Culture; Development; Digitalisation; Globalisation; Language.

Introduction

The foundations of linguistic and cultural diversity lie in ages past; however, in recent times, human beings are now digitizing these varied languages and cultures to avoid the very local/weak ones among them becoming extinct. The digitalisation of languages and cultures

has brought human life into continuous development. New digital technologies have changed how people interact, how experiences are shared and disseminated, and how realities are laid out and perceived. This development is now constant because every day, children are born into this digital age. They grow up with these new digital technologies. Their lives and development continue under the influence of these technologies. Hence, it is inconceivable that digitalisation, which influences human beings from an early age, does not affect the languages that form the basis of human societies and cultures. These cultures are the sum of the values that societies have revealed in the historical and social development process (Emine Roc, 2022, 31).

In contemporary times, digital trends are increasingly interloping with the world of language, culture, and arts, involving diverse aspects of languages, cultures, media, and information technologies, and shaping new forms of communication. The new possibilities now made by ICT – global connectivity and the rise of networks – challenge our traditional ways of perceiving culture and language, extending it to digital culture and language. Therefore, language and culture in the present time should be understood as open and dynamic processes based on interactive communication, and one can no longer think of them as enclosed systems that make up a “cultural and linguistic mosaic” with other similar or diverse cultural and linguistic systems. The ICT, especially the Internet, has given these interrelations a new dimension, by changing our relation towards knowledge and knowledge society, by intensifying the flow of services, and by engineering a new perception of linguistic and cultural creativity (Uzelac and Cvjeticanin, 2008, 3).

The Concept of Culture in General

The word *culture* is derived from the Latin noun “cultura,” which means “cultivation” or “tillage”. Before the fall of the Western Roman Empire, “cultura” encompassed not only agricultural practices but also the training of the mind and spirit, demonstrating a wider perception of cultural evolution, including arts, education, and social customs. The same word is equally applicable in various Romanic languages where it maintains the exact spelling and meaning related to the cultures and customs of a society or a particular group of people. Culture is simply the total of the attainment of any specific period, race, or people, including their implements, handicrafts, agriculture, economics, music, art, religious beliefs, traditions, language, and story (*The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*, Encyclopedic Edition). According to Lut and Starenkova, “culture can be a sensitive topic. Speaking about a person's culture often provokes the same type of reaction as speaking about his/her mother. Most people have a deep protective instinct in relation to the culture they consider their own, and, though they may even criticize it bitterly themselves, they may become easily angered if someone from outside the culture dares to do so” (2022, 68).

It is a composite and compound concept encompassing elements like values, customs, beliefs, norms, behaviour, and so on, which a group of people share in common. These elements form the identifying features and practices of a particular group of people or society. Those elements are equally acquired by man as a member of society. Every culture undergoes development and evolution. It can change significantly across different spatial locations, areas, and historical contexts. In cultural anthropology, culture as a subject of study deals with a set of results of human social activities in all spheres of life and all factors that constitute and govern the way of

life of a nation, class, or group of people in a certain period of time. It studies the progress of culture in all its constituent parts: the way of life, visions of the world, mentality, national character, and results of spiritual, social, and working activities of a particular people. It delves into the incomparable human capacity to develop culture through communication, including speech, and considers the huge diversity of human cultures, their interactions and conflicts or points of differences (Lut & Starenkova, 69). This interaction of culture and language plays a significant role in human development.

The Concept of Language in General

The English word *language* is derived from Latin “lingua,” which means *language* and *tongue*. It is good to note that the Romanic languages, that is, those languages that descended directly from Latin, share exactly or almost exactly the same word for “language” and “tongue”, they include: French – “la langue”; Italian – “la lingua”; Portuguese – “a lingua”; and Spanish – “la lengua”. Again, each of these words is preceded by a feminine definite article: “la” or “a” as the case may be, which means that each word is feminine in gender in these languages, even in Latin. No wonder in English, one’s original language or the language of one’s nurturing environment is referred to as one’s *mother tongue*. So, every language is a mother, capable of giving birth to other languages.

Language is the expression and communication of emotion or idea between human beings by means of speech and hearing, the sounds spoken or heard being systematised and confirmed by usage among a given people over a period of time. Also, it is the words that form the means of communication among members of a single nation or a group during a given period (*The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language*, Encyclopedic Edition). It is an organised system of communication that employs spoken, signed, or written symbols to evince or convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas among members of a social group. It is qualified by its capricious and vagarious nature, implying that the relationship between symbols and the idea or message that they intend, express, or signify is conventional, that is, following accepted customs, proprieties, or standards, and not inbuilt, integral, or intrinsic.

Language accomplishes numerous purposes, including communication, emotional release, and identity expression. Furthermore, it is ordered and regulated by grammatical rules that prescribe how symbols can be put or added together to express meaning effectively. It is a tool employed to transmit information, gain knowledge, construct social identity, express feelings, emotions, and ideas (Banga & Suri, 2015, 182). Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society (182).

The Role of Language in the Growth of Culture

Even though language is an aspect of culture, so to speak, every language plays a distinctive and unparalleled role in the growth and development of any culture. It functions not simply as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for transmitting people’s identity and values. It is one of the essential means of the progression, development, and evolution of human civilization and culture. Here are some key ways in which language shapes or regulates cultural growth.

Knowledge Transmission: It is through language that science, art, customs, and traditions can be handed down from generation to generation. In other words, we continuously acquire our concepts and categories throughout our lives from our own culture or the group culture to which we belong (Shaheedzooy & Muhib, 2022, 117). Storytelling, literature, oral tradition, and so on depend heavily on language as an instrument for expressing and communicating historical tales, cultural heritage, moral lessons, and so on.

Aiding/Facilitating Social Reciprocal Actions: Language heightens social interaction, breeding, furthering, and nurturing human relationships, community ties, alliances and coalitions. Through speech, even for informal exchange of views, ideas, or information, individuals share their experiences and build up social coherence and ways of getting together. These built-up human interactions impart a lot to the evolution of a culture, permitting an interchange and a give-and-take of ideas and practices (Pakaja, 2023, 50).

Artistic and Creative Demonstration/Presentation: Language is a basic instrument in the arts, permitting creative display through poetry, literature, and performance or public presentation for entertainment. Artistic language has the capacity to communicate different emotions and cultural critique, improving the diversity, depth, and profoundness of a particular culture. Artistic display, no doubt, more often than not, suggests collective memories of a people, social issues, and cultural milestones, all in a bid to heighten cultural growth.

Culture Preservation: When a particular language is at the threshold of defunctness, extermination, or extinction, the related culture is not free. It can become susceptible to extinction; because the essential organ that gives it life is weak. So, there is a need for language regeneration, not only for the sustenance of language and linguistic diversity, but also to maintain the cultural prolificacy connected to those languages. Revival of moribund languages can result in bringing cultural practices and identities back into life, activity and prominence (Banga & Suri, 2015, 187-190).

The Concept of Digital Culture

Digital culture involves how digital technologies and the internet act upon, determine, regulate, shape, and transform the practices, norms, values, interactions, and mutual reciprocal actions of individuals and communities. It covers the behaviours and exercises shaped by technologies in people's daily lives, and how these technologies regulate communication, work, and social interactions. "If we look at the digital environment we live in today, we see that digital technologies have surrounded us. It is present in almost all aspects of our lives" (Uzelac, 2008, 11). Digital culture has important aspects like content creation and sharing, community and social interaction, and the influence of algorithms. Digital culture has a key element, social media, which helps develop and nurture individual expression. Digital culture is important for organisations experiencing digital qualitative change, shift, or transmutation, as it enhances creation, invention, and adaptability. It exemplifies a shift or move towards a more reciprocally connected, interrelated, and technology-driven society that constantly undergoes development or evolution with regard to gradual improvement and progress in digital media.

In addition, communication is always implied whenever culture is being discussed. Many scholars have pointed out that “each society constantly recreates itself through communication by constantly redefining its collective reality, its culture, and culture is a memory, collective memory, dependent on communication for its creation, extension, evolution and preservation” (Foresta, Mergier & Serexhe, 1995, 19). Knowledge has always been transmitted, communicated, embedded, and preserved through people’s cultural communication structures and available technologies, including digitalisation and documentation; they have always been important elements that enabled and facilitated these processes of creating, sharing and preserving people’s cultural memories (Uzelac, 10).

The Concept of Digital Language

Digital language embraces several methodologies and technologies that facilitate language learning and communication in a digital environment. Digital language research laboratory uses multimedia instruments to promote listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, offering interactive messages and subject matters and real-time supervision for learners. In addition, digital language equality handles the issue of inequalities or differences in some respects in digital support across languages, stressing that many languages are without the basic digital resources. It gives easier access to information and services, emphasizing the need for all-inclusive digital backup and collaboration for all languages. Technological innovations such as machine translation tools and language learning programmes have dramatically changed language use and communication patterns. The machine translation tools facilitate communication between different languages, enhancing interaction between the learners and speakers of other languages. The emergence of different language learning apps advances the dissemination and acquisition of new languages, encouraging linguistic diversity and intercultural communication. Language digitalisation is driving linguistic change, shaping the evolution of the world’s languages in new and unprecedented manners (Anthony & Tramboo, 2023, 368).

The Benefits of Digital Culture and Language

There is no doubt that digital language and culture have positively transmuted the way human beings communicate, create, disseminate, diffuse, and share information. So, its evolution has become very beneficial and relevant to human development intellectually, socially, and so on. These are some benefits connected to digital culture and language.

Digitalisation and Greater Access to Information: The internet offers immense amounts of knowledge and resources, making data and information more available than earlier on when they were not in existence. Today, networked PCs, a basic physical capital necessary for communication and creation of meaning, are good enough tools with much bigger capacities than the big mainframe computers of the past. Most people in the better-developed countries can afford to have access to them. By using ICT, users can produce, store, copy, modify, send, and receive digital artefacts and information. As average PC and network connections are not very expensive, this has led to the lowering of production and distribution costs and the availability of new communication and delivery channels. The rapid growth of the Internet, in terms of its users and the availability of information and services that can be accessed through it, shows the importance of activities taking place in the virtual domain (Uzelac, 2008, 13-14).

Digitalisation and Heightened Communication – Worldwide Connectivity: Digitalisation has triggered many changes in the last two decades. Prompted/actuated by globalisation processes, the innovations in information and communication technologies, everybody can create and present the created work more easily and find audience (Primorac & Jurlin, 2008, 71). Digital stumps make instant communication easier across geographical boundaries, advancing worldwide agreement, interaction, perception, and understanding. Audio, images, texts, and videos can all be utilised to transmit messages, thereby promoting diverse modes of communication and facilitating abundant and comfortable expression.

Digitalisation and Authorisation/Empowerment of Marginalised Voices: Digital culture offers a platform for the people who have less than adequate representation, the under-represented, to voice out their needs, experiences, and views. Social media can be a means to call for support for social reasons. It helps the people relegated to a lower or outer edge in societies worldwide earn recognition, visibility, and push for their rights. Also, it serves as a cultural unifier and homogeniser despite deep social stratifications within the nation state (Popovic, 2008, 46).

Digitalisation and Enhancement of Artistic Creativity/Innovation: The world has witnessed a lot of models emerging not only in free Software production, but also all over the network information environment. One of the best examples is “Wikipedia,” an online encyclopedia, collectively written and edited in more than a hundred languages by thousands of anonymous volunteers around the world, whose writings are motivated by Wikipedia’s sacred norm: a neutral point of view (Medak, 2008, 63). Digital culture and language open the door for new means of expression. In these regards, digital instruments permit new forms of artistic, creative, and planned undertakings that coalesce various disciplines. Digital platforms can bring together input and feedback from a significant audience, nurturing invention and innovation through cooperative efforts.

Digitalisation and Documentation of Language for Development/Evolution: Many languages that have very few speakers are already under the threat of extinction due to not being properly represented in the common information network. This threat has even magnified because some languages, especially English, French, and Spanish, have taken up a large part of the usage area in the common information network (Henrichsen, 1998, 35). The Global Language Digitalisation Initiative is taking important steps in this regard. The total number of languages spoken globally is estimated to be around 6000 – 7000. However, it turns out that only about 1000 of today’s spoken languages have been digitalised. This implies that around 5000 of today’s spoken languages are not represented on the shared computing network. Consequently, these languages that are not yet digitalised are put under pressure by the above-mentioned three dominant ones, and they are very likely to fall out of use (Dijk, 2012, 45).

To avoid this problem, the Global Language Digitalisation Initiative is leaving no stone unturned to annihilate language barriers in the information network through expert translators (Dijk, 45). These efforts are made solely for linguistic concerns. The initiative not only permits many languages to become visible in the common computing network, but also provides big companies the opportunity to reach people who speak the language (Emine Koc, 2022, 34). So, this digital initiative aids in the documentation and revival of languages that are at the threshold of extinction, facilitating their survival, didactics, and pedagogy. Also, the

internet enhances the development of new forms of language, such as internet slang terms, new dialects, argots, cant, jargons, lingos, patois, and vernaculars, reflecting the present cultural style or vogue.

Digitalisation of Education and Foreign Language Learning: It is not an exaggeration to say that digitalisation, especially the common information network, provides many benefits and opportunities that were not there before. The provision of foreign language education to an unprecedented number of students globally not only improves the educational sector but also means more financial input for real and legal persons who offer foreign language education. Many thanks to the online foreign language courses offered on that digital platform. Now, more people can access foreign language learning compared to the past. Interestingly, this golden access is possible even from the most remote places the common information network can reach. This implies energy, time, and financial gain for foreign language learners. Every interested individual has the opportunity to access foreign language courses from the comfort of his/her home (Emine Koc, 34-35).

Nevertheless, the incredible opportunities provided by the common information network to foreign language learners are not restricted to these. Discussion rooms that exist in the common information network are very tireless in providing limitless communication opportunities to all, irrespective of geographical, linguistic, or cultural boundaries (35). Also, digital culture has inspired and overturned formal education in all its ramifications by offering access to online learning platforms for academic programmes, courses, lectures, and resources from global learning institutions. Interactive learning with interactive instruments engrosses and engages students in new and easier ways of learning, making education more accessible and gratifying. Unlike before, when these things were not available.

Digitalisation and Broadened Business Opportunities: The ICT and digital networks are necessary infrastructures that support globalisation processes, and they are used to support global markets and production processes, enabling central control and coordination over dispersed production units. Businesses have always tried to ensure that digital development does not have any disruptive technology effect on their established mode of working. Industrially organized businesses are trying to ensure that while the physical/technological realities change, the social arrangements remain the same (Uzelac, 14). Digital language and culture have produced new markets, e-commerce, and business models that hit or stretch out to interested audiences in any part of the globe. The springing up of digital tools has boosted remote work opportunities, widening job availability and chances for many qualified individuals.

Digitalisation and Cultural Interchange – Diversity of Perspectives: Cultural diversity “is nurtured by constant exchanges and interactions between cultures” (UNESCO, 2005). The world is becoming more interdependent, and there is a fast evolution of new and various approaches to cultural diversity. The aim is to enhance cultural specificities as the foundation for intercultural communication (Cjeticanin, 104). Digital platforms facilitate cultural interchange where people can share their radically distinctive practices, beliefs, stories, and traditions. Artists, filmmakers, musicians, and creators can work together regardless of location. This act of working jointly across cultures results in intercrossed forms of artistic

creations and cultures. Also, digitalization brings worldwide access to information and opportunities for cultural preservation through technology. Therefore, modern educational management practices should coalesce the use of technology with conscious efforts to preserve and respect local languages and cultures (Safar *et al*, 2023, 146).

Digitalisation and Community Building: The internet gives people access to discover and link up with others who share similar interests, like YouTube, Facebook, and so on. By so doing, supportive networks are built up across the globe. This online community can summon or rally around shared issues, energetically and dynamically, making positive social changes and creating awareness. So, digital culture and language are the greatest global phenomena of the twenty-first century. They are interesting trends because they have to do with access to everybody by everybody. The digitalisation here is unlimited. It helps people to overcome barriers and borders, and offers them a “second life” in virtual spaces. Regardless of linguistic orientation, cultural background, traditions, religion, gender, and ethnicity, people can get together and exchange experiences, ideas and knowledge through the Internet (Varbanova, 2008, 167).

Digitalisation and Adaptability/Resilience—Rapid Reaction/Response: Digital communication makes it very possible for quick information to spread, especially during sudden unforeseen crises, usually involving danger, that require immediate action. For instance, natural disasters include the overflow of water from the river, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes/twisters, and so on.

Challenges of Digital Language and Culture

Despite the benefits of digital language and culture, some challenges can crop up. Some digitalised languages may face erosion, whereby the digital media may alter or falsify, in grammar and vocabulary, the digitally preserved traditional languages, making possible the egression of “Internet languages,” which constricts emotions, feelings, ideas, and opinions into abbreviations thereby trimming down the linguistic splendidity, abundance, and beauty. Also, there may be the problem of dialectical variations – everyone desiring his/her own dialect to be prioritised. The solution to this is that every language has a standard one. The standard ones should take pre-eminence over the dialects. The spirit of understanding becomes necessary. Again, a global digital platform may enhance cultural homogeneity, that is, global cultural uniformity, which can result in the demise of cultural identity. Therefore, there is a need for constant availability of problem-solving platforms to ensure a responsible and meaningful culture and language use in the digital age (Anthony & Tramboo, 368-369).

Conclusion

This research has revealed the profound impacts of digitalization and modern technologies on the development of language and culture, and the benefits accruing therefrom. It has stressed the fact that digitalisation is the process of changing from an analogue layout to digital layout in order to facilitate the production, management, preservation, or distribution to the general public. Also, it has been shown that culture and language are means of expression that reflect the worldviews, values, and identity of a group or society. In addition, it has been argued that digitalisation of language and culture has combined with the use of modern technology aiming at conserving local languages and cultures, as well as developing holistic communication in a

progressively interconnected world (Safar *et al*, 2023, 146); though presenting a few challenges.

Finally, it has been indicated that the dominant languages, English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, subdue the local languages and make them insignificant on the global stage. However, efforts to digitalise as many cultures and languages as possible help revive and strengthen many local cultures and languages that are already at the threshold of extinction. Digitalising local languages and cultures helps to put them on the global platform, facilitating easy access to their knowledge by an unprecedented number of people who are interested, irrespective of cultural, geographical, or linguistic boundaries. Meanwhile, the presence of these languages in the common information network heightens the probability of living alongside dominant and subordinate languages and cultures in the future. Human beings are created equal, so should their cultures and languages be, because language and culture tell a lot about the identity of a particular people. During the colonial era, the English, French, Portuguese and Spanish people were the major colonial masters. Till today, the influence of their languages and cultures is still strong. Therefore, digitalisation aims to bring local languages and cultures into the limelight to ensure social egalitarianism through culture and language.

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