

Revitalising Literature Education through Indigenous Languages and Contemporary Youth Linguistic Practices: A Pedagogical Approach to Enhancing Students' Literary Performance

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Abstract

This paper examines how indigenous languages can serve as effective pedagogical resources for re-energising literature education and enhancing students' literary performance in Nigerian secondary schools. Through qualitative approach, the study draws on existing Literature, curriculum documents and pedagogical theories to explore the relationship between language, culture and literary learning. The study is anchored on culturally sustaining pedagogy which is a theory that advocates for the preservation and integration of learners' linguistic and cultural identities with educational practices. This study argues that literature teachers should encourage students to creatively employ indigenous languages by incorporating proverbs, idiomatic expressions, oral traditions, chants, praise poetry, culturally significant expressions and selected socially recognised digital expressions into creative writing and performance literature. The paper contends that the recognition of indigenous languages as pedagogical resources promotes inclusive and culturally responsive Literature. It suggests that curriculum developers, teacher education institutions and classroom practitioners adopt and culturally sustaining and multilingual instructional strategies that position indigenous languages as dynamic literary resources for teaching, learning and creative production in the digital age.

Keywords: Literature Education, Indigenous Languages, Digital Discourse, Performance Literature, Creative Writing

Introduction

The concepts of language and Literature are intertwined and inseparable in the field of teaching and learning. Language is the primary medium

through which literary values and human experiences are communicated. Literature-in-English as a school subject occupies a significant position especially as it fosters critical thinking, creativity, communication skills and the appreciation of diverse cultural principles. Aside the integrity of written examinations, the subject is meant to cultivate moral values, cultural consciousness and imaginative capacity. Despite the supposed objectives of students' engagements with text, students' literary performance has continued to decline largely due to teaching approaches that do not adequately connect literary activities to learners' socio-linguistic realities. Flavian-Obasi and Obiyor (2019) argue that the dominance of English in Nigeria has contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous languages despite their significant role in preserving cultural identity. They maintain that Literature provides an important avenue for sustaining indigenous languages by embedding local expressions, proverbs, and cultural values within literary texts. Examining Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, the authors demonstrate how the incorporation of Igbo lexical items and expressions enriches literary narratives while reinforcing ethnolinguistic identity. They further contend that writers and educators should encourage the use of indigenous languages in literary production and classroom instruction to ensure their continued relevance. Their study underscores the need to preserve Nigeria's indigenous languages through Literature, although it primarily focuses on language maintenance rather than on pedagogical strategies for enhancing students' literary performance.

Bamiro (1991) reports the assertion that the elites in the country are expected to communicate excellently in English Language. Yet, while English remains indispensable as Nigeria's official language and medium of instruction, it limits the ability of students to appreciate cultural nuances in Literature. Ogoke (2025) agrees that the English Language has been consolidated and given a prominent place not only in the educational system but also in other areas of the Nigerian state. Therefore, there is no doubt that English has become a symbol of power and social status among the country's elites with also being a cohesive force in the multilingual settings in Nigeria. Aside this global opinion, language plays an important role in national development. Olaife (2014) proposes that government and the individuals of any human society should try every possible means to prioritise language and ensure the preservation of its respective languages. In the collaborative discussion

between the City of Matlosana Public Libraries, in collaboration with Unisa Midlands Region and Unisa Library and Information Services (LIS), Ngoepe (2024) raised the need for young learners to develop language skills in their native languages. He highlighted that personal communal narratives are foundational to effective writing (UNISA, 2024). Nzeawu (2018) says one can hardly talk of national development without taking cognizance of language development. This is because language plays a vital role in reasoning, formation of ideas, policies and programmes capable of moving any nation forward. This shows that the development and growth of the society can never be separated from language which links the people together.

Benson, Anyalebechi and Ariole (2017) submitted that indigenous languages are important for the revival of people's identity, culture and experiences. They ultimately project the place of library in language development and this is where creative writing should be a skill that should be stimulated in literature students. They recommend grassroots language promotion, increased access to indigenous-language publications, the translation of literary works into indigenous languages, the use of digital platforms to disseminate literary content, and curriculum reforms that prioritise indigenous languages. Although their study focuses on the role of library and information professionals, these recommendations have important implications for literature education. Literature teachers can adapt these strategies by integrating indigenous-language texts into classroom instruction, encouraging students to engage with literary works in their mother tongues, incorporating digital literary resources into teaching, and promoting creative writing and performance literature that draw on indigenous linguistic and cultural traditions. Such pedagogical practices can strengthen students' literary competence while contributing to the preservation and revitalisation of Nigeria's indigenous languages. Indigenous languages encapsulate proverbs, idiomatic expressions, oral traditions, praise poetry, folktales, songs, and other forms of cultural knowledge that enrich literary interpretation and deepen students' understanding of texts. When these linguistic resources are neglected, students may perceive Literature as abstract, foreign, or disconnected from their lived experiences. The growing use of digital communication has reshaped the way Nigerian youths communicate and interact with language. Adewale and Bank (2020) observe that social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online forums have

become an integral part of young people's daily lives, creating new opportunities for communication, learning, and self-expression. Through these platforms, students encounter diverse linguistic expressions that foster creativity and facilitate cultural exchange. At the same time, the widespread use of abbreviations, emojis, emoticons, non-standard spellings, and informal grammatical structures has raised concerns about their influence on formal language use.

The purpose of this study is to examine how indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices can be harnessed as pedagogical resources for revitalising literature education in Nigerian secondary schools. The study seeks to demonstrate how the purposeful integration of these linguistic resources into literature instruction can make literary learning more engaging, culturally relevant, and meaningful, while enhancing students' creativity, literary appreciation, and literary performance.

Specifically, the study aims to examine the role of indigenous languages in revitalising literature education in Nigerian secondary schools; explore how contemporary youth linguistic practices and digital discourse can be meaningfully integrated into literature teaching without undermining standard language use; and propose culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that combine indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices to strengthen literature teaching, promote cultural consciousness, and preserve Nigeria's rich linguistic heritage.

Review of Related Literature

Literature Education in Nigeria

Literature has long been recognised as an essential component of education because of its contribution to learners' intellectual, emotional, moral, and creative development. Obi (2009) maintains that Literature broadens learners' understanding of life by nurturing qualities such as imagination, empathy, perseverance, creativity, tolerance, and sound moral judgement. Through literary texts, learners encounter diverse human experiences that sharpen their critical thinking and deepen their understanding of themselves and the society in which they live. Obi further observes that learners' responses to Literature evolve alongside their psychological development, suggesting that literature teaching should employ approaches that are engaging and responsive to learners'

social, cultural, and linguistic realities. In today's multilingual and digitally connected society, this requires teaching practices that make Literature more relatable by drawing on learners' everyday linguistic and cultural experiences.

Despite its acknowledged importance, literature teaching in Nigerian secondary schools continues to face several challenges. Ugwu (2022) identifies inadequate instructional resources, poor learning environments, a shortage of qualified literature teachers, students' limited language proficiency, heavy teacher workload, inadequate parental support, and the scarcity of prescribed literary texts as major factors affecting the effective teaching of Literature-in-English. These challenges have contributed to declining students' interest and persistent poor performance in the subject. While the study recommends improvements in educational facilities and instructional resources, it gives little consideration to innovative pedagogical approaches that build on learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This study addresses that omission by exploring how indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices can be integrated into literature teaching to enhance students' literary performance.

Indigenous Languages and Literature Education

Language is inseparable from Literature because it embodies the history, culture, identity, and worldview of a people. Flavian-Obasi and Obiyor (2019) argue that the growing dominance of English in Nigeria has contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous languages despite their importance in preserving cultural identity. Drawing on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck*, they show that the incorporation of Igbo lexical items, proverbs, and indigenous expressions enriches literary narratives while reinforcing ethnolinguistic identity. They therefore advocate greater use of indigenous languages in literary production and classroom instruction. Although the study demonstrates the cultural significance of indigenous languages in Literature, it pays limited attention to their pedagogical value in improving students' literary performance.

Benson, Anyalebechi, and Ariole (2017) similarly stress that the revitalisation of indigenous languages requires deliberate and innovative efforts beyond conventional preservation strategies. They recommend expanding access to publications in indigenous languages, translating

literary works, promoting digital dissemination of indigenous-language materials, and implementing curriculum reforms that give greater prominence to local languages. Although these recommendations were developed within the context of library and information services, they have clear implications for literature education. Literature teachers can adapt these ideas by incorporating indigenous-language texts into classroom activities, encouraging learners to write creatively in their mother tongues, and integrating digital literary resources into teaching. Such practices not only strengthen students' literary competence but also contribute to preserving Nigeria's linguistic heritage. Nevertheless, the study does not examine how indigenous languages can be combined with contemporary youth linguistic practices to improve literary learning.

The importance of indigenous cultural resources is further highlighted by Megbowon and Uwah (2022) who examine the relationship between African Literature and sustainable development. Drawing on discussions of literary works such as Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* alongside Ama Ata Aidoo's *The Housemaid*, they argue that African Literature preserves indigenous values, communal relationships, proverbs, cultural identity, and moral ideals that remain relevant to contemporary society. The authors contend that these cultural resources can contribute to sustainable social development by promoting ethical values, social cohesion, and cultural consciousness. Their study suggests that literature classrooms should expose learners to indigenous cultural elements embedded in literary texts, thereby strengthening students' appreciation of African heritage. However, the study does not explore how these indigenous linguistic and cultural resources can be deliberately integrated with contemporary youth linguistic practices and digital modes of expression to enhance students' literary performance. This study addresses that gap by proposing a culturally responsive approach that combines indigenous languages, creative writing, performance literature, and digital literary practices to revitalise literature education in Nigerian secondary schools.

Contemporary Youth Linguistic Practices and Digital Discourse in Literature Education

The emergence of digital communication has significantly reshaped the linguistic practices of contemporary Nigerian youths. Across social media platforms, blogs, podcasts, spoken-word performances, online

storytelling, and other digital spaces, young people creatively blend English, Nigerian Pidgin, indigenous languages, code-switching, abbreviations, emojis, hashtags, and other digital expressions to communicate ideas and express their identities. Rather than dismissing these evolving forms of communication as merely informal, literature educators can draw on them to stimulate students' interest in literary appreciation, creative writing, and performance literature.

Lionel, Akude, Mariagoratti, and Uchenna (2022) observe that digital technologies have become an integral part of young people's learning, communication, and identity formation. According to the authors, digital environments encourage new literacy practices characterised by abbreviations, emojis, hashtags, code-switching, and other forms of digital discourse that influence how students read, write, and respond to literary texts. They argue that integrating digital technologies into literature education enhances students' creativity, participation, and critical engagement with literary works. However, their discussion pays little attention to the place of indigenous languages within these emerging digital literacy practices. The present study extends this conversation by examining how indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices can be combined to enrich literature teaching and improve students' literary performance.

Similarly, Nawaila (2025) investigates the influence of digital communication on English language use among secondary school students in Bauchi State. The findings reveal that social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and mobile technologies have become central to students' daily communication, shaping their vocabulary, writing conventions, and patterns of language use. While these practices sometimes interfere with formal academic writing, they also create opportunities for language development and increased access to English-language materials. Nawaila therefore recommends that educators should harness digital communication as a learning resource while helping students distinguish between informal online communication and formal academic writing. Even so, the study does not consider how digital discourse can be integrated with indigenous languages to support literature teaching and students' literary development.

Adewale and Bank (2020) also note that social media and online communication platforms have become important spaces where Nigerian youths exchange ideas and develop new patterns of language use.

Although these platforms encourage creativity and cultural exchange, they also popularise abbreviations, emoticons, non-standard spellings, and informal grammatical structures that may influence learners' use of standard English. The authors therefore advocate educational approaches that maximise the benefits of digital communication while maintaining appropriate language standards. Their findings reinforce the need for literature teachers to recognise contemporary youth linguistic practices as valuable classroom resources capable of promoting creativity, literary engagement, and critical language awareness.

Students' Creativity and Literary Performance in Literature Education

Creativity and literary performance are central goals of literature education because they encourage learners to move beyond reading literary texts to interpreting, creating, and performing them. Through Literature, students develop the ability to think imaginatively, communicate ideas effectively, and produce original works that reflect their experiences, values, and cultural backgrounds. Literary creativity is expressed through the writing of poems, short stories, dramatic sketches, and other imaginative texts, while literary performance is demonstrated through activities such as storytelling, oral reading, drama, spoken-word poetry, and other forms of artistic presentation. These experiences deepen students' appreciation of Literature while strengthening their critical thinking, communication skills, cultural awareness, confidence, and creative expression. Consequently, contemporary literature education increasingly advocates learner-centred and culturally responsive approaches that provide students with opportunities to participate actively in both creative writing and literary performance.

Adeosun (2019) supports this view by arguing that one of the primary objectives of Literature-in-English is to develop learners' literary creativity through reading, interpretation, critical analysis, and creative writing. The study emphasises that creativity is not a rare gift possessed by only a few students but a skill that can be cultivated through purposeful teaching strategies. According to Adeosun, classroom practices such as creative writing, brainstorming, role-playing, improvisation, extensive reading, and exposure to a wide range of literary genres help students to think imaginatively and express themselves more effectively. Nevertheless, the study reveals that the development of

literary creativity in many Nigerian secondary schools is constrained by examination-oriented teaching, insufficient instructional time, overloaded curricula, and other institutional challenges that limit opportunities for creative learning. Despite the recognised importance of creativity in literature education, classroom practice in many Nigerian secondary schools still centres largely on the interpretation of prescribed texts and the performance of works written by established authors. Rather than diminishing literary quality, the thoughtful integration of these linguistic resources can enrich creative expression, enhance authenticity, and make students' works more engaging for both the writers and their audiences. This approach positions students not merely as consumers of Literature but as emerging writers and performers who can contribute meaningfully to the development of Nigerian Literature.

This position is consistent with Thomas (2005), who argues that performance literature derives its full meaning through live presentation, where voice, rhythm, gesture, emotion, and audience interaction become essential elements of the literary experience. Similarly, Shittu (2022) explains that performance poetry combines poetic language with oral delivery, dramatic expression, music, and body movement to communicate artistic and social messages effectively. Chukwumerije (2014) likewise maintains that performance poetry is deeply rooted in Africa's oral traditions and has gained wider visibility through digital platforms that connect performers with diverse audiences. In the area of creative writing, Morley (2007) and Harper (2010) describe it as an imaginative and expressive practice that develops originality, creativity, and literary competence across different genres, while Valenzuela et al. (2026) emphasise its role in enabling writers to communicate human experiences through imagination and artistic expression.

Performance Literature, Creative Writing, and Students' Literary Performance

Performance literature is a literary form whose full meaning is realised through live presentation rather than silent reading. Its artistic significance lies not only in the written text but also in the interaction between the performer, the audience, and the social and cultural context in which the performance takes place. Thomas (2005) explains that important performative elements such as voice, gesture, rhythm, music, facial expression, emotion, and audience participation cannot be fully

represented in written form. Although written texts preserve the words of a performance, they often lose the spontaneity, emotional intensity, and communal experience that define oral performance. This underscores the enduring importance of performance literature in many African societies, where oral traditions continue to preserve indigenous knowledge, cultural values, and collective memory.

Shittu (2022) extends this discussion by describing performance poetry as a creative fusion of poetic expression and theatrical performance. In one of his papers, *Performance as Metaphor for Social Activism: An Assessment of Akeem Lasisi's Wonderland Poetry*, he shows that performance poetry draws on vocal modulation, rhythm, gestures, dramatic movement, music, and facial expression to communicate ideas in ways that are both engaging and socially meaningful. Beyond its entertainment value, performance poetry serves as a platform for social criticism, public enlightenment, and advocacy by addressing political, economic, and cultural concerns. Shittu further observes that although performance poetry originated within oral traditions, it has evolved into written forms deliberately crafted to recreate the atmosphere of live performance. This demonstrates its potential as a valuable pedagogical resource for developing students' creativity, confidence, communication skills, and critical engagement with Literature.

Reflecting on contemporary Nigerian performance poetry, Chukwumerije (2014) similarly notes that performance poetry has revitalised poetry by taking it beyond the printed page and making it accessible to wider audiences. He distinguishes it from spoken word, explaining that performance poetry remains firmly rooted in poetic craftsmanship, whereas spoken word allows greater flexibility through conversational and dramatic modes of expression. He also traces its foundations to Africa's rich oral traditions of storytelling, praise poetry, and folktales, while acknowledging the role of blogs, videos, and other digital platforms in expanding the reach of literary performances. His observations illustrate how contemporary performance literature successfully connects indigenous oral traditions with modern technologies, ensuring that literary expression remains relevant to present-day audiences.

Creative writing complements performance literature by providing learners with opportunities to express their ideas, experiences,

emotions, and cultural identities through imaginative language. Morley (2007) describes creative writing as a literary practice grounded in originality, imagination, and aesthetic expression across genres such as poetry, fiction, drama, and creative nonfiction. Harper (2010) likewise views creative writing as more than the production of literary texts, emphasising its role in self-expression, identity formation, and creative exploration. Valenzuela, Licciardi & Fredrickson (2026) also describe creative writing as an imaginative process through which writers communicate human experiences using literary techniques such as characterisation, imagery, dialogue, metaphor, plot, setting, theme, style, and tone to produce engaging and meaningful works.

Within literature education, creative writing offers learners opportunities to move beyond interpreting prescribed texts to producing original literary works of their own. Rather than limiting students to analysing poems, stories, and plays written by established authors or merely acting out existing texts, literature classrooms should encourage learners to compose and perform their own poems, dramatic pieces, short stories, spoken-word performances, and other creative works. In doing so, students can draw meaningfully on indigenous languages, proverbs, idiomatic expressions, oral traditions, praise poetry, songs, and culturally significant expressions, while making appropriate use of contemporary youth linguistic practices such as code-switching and familiar digital expressions where these enrich literary expression.

Research Gap

Although previous studies acknowledge the importance of creativity, creative writing, and performance literature in literature education, they pay little attention to how students can be encouraged to create and perform original literary works by integrating indigenous languages with contemporary youth digital linguistic practices. Most existing studies discuss these concepts independently rather than examining how they can work together as complementary pedagogical resources. This study addresses that gap by proposing a culturally responsive approach that positions students as both creators and interpreters of Literature, thereby revitalising literature education and enhancing students' literary performance.

Theoretical Framework: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

This study is anchored on Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP), a framework proposed by Paris (2012) and further developed by Paris and Alim (2017). The theory argues that effective teaching should do more than acknowledge learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds; it should actively sustain and promote them within the learning process. Rather than treating indigenous languages and cultural practices as obstacles to academic success, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy recognises them as valuable resources that can enrich teaching, learning, and students' overall educational experiences. According to Paris (2012), schools should create learning environments that enable students to maintain their cultural identities while acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in contemporary society. This perspective is particularly relevant in multilingual countries such as Nigeria, where English dominates classroom instruction despite the rich linguistic and cultural resources embedded in indigenous languages. By incorporating learners' home languages and cultural experiences into classroom activities, teachers can make learning more inclusive, engaging, and meaningful.

Within literature education, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy encourages the integration of indigenous languages, oral traditions, folktales, storytelling, proverbs, songs, and other culturally significant expressions into the teaching of literary texts. Such practices help students relate Literature to their own experiences, deepen their understanding of texts, and strengthen their appreciation of Nigeria's cultural heritage. The framework also supports the appropriate use of contemporary youth linguistic practices where they enhance creativity, communication, and literary expression without undermining standard language conventions. This theory provides a suitable foundation for the present study because it supports the purposeful integration of indigenous languages as pedagogical resources for revitalising literature education. By drawing on learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, literature teachers can promote creativity, critical thinking, active participation, and improved literary performance. Consequently, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy offers a useful lens for examining how culturally relevant instructional practices can enhance literature teaching and learning in Nigerian secondary schools.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design based on a review of existing Literature. Relevant data were gathered from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference papers, curriculum documents, and other scholarly publications related to literature education, indigenous languages, creative writing, performance literature, multilingual pedagogy, and contemporary youth linguistic practices.

The collected Literature was examined using thematic analysis. The reviewed materials were carefully analysed to identify key themes and recurring ideas on the role of indigenous languages in literature education and their potential to enhance students' literary performance. The findings from the different sources were then synthesised to provide a comprehensive discussion of how indigenous languages can be integrated into literature teaching through culturally responsive instructional practices.

A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it enabled the study to draw on existing scholarship to explore the relationship between language, culture, and literature education. It also provided a basis for proposing practical strategies for using indigenous languages to improve students' literary understanding, creativity, classroom participation, and overall literary performance in Nigerian secondary schools.

Proposed Strategies for Literature Education

Using Ambience Improvisation and Dramatisation to Enhance Literary Performance

Another practical way of making literature lessons more engaging is through ambience improvisation and dramatisation. Instead of asking students to focus only on themes, figures of speech, or characterisation, teachers can encourage them to recreate the world of the literary text through performance. This allows learners to interpret the writer's intended setting, mood, character relationships, and central ideas in a practical and imaginative way. As students assume different roles, Literature becomes a lived experience rather than a subject studied only for examinations.

Yemi Atanda's "Mother and Child (With Flute)" in *Garlands for the Dream Seeker* (Abdullahi & Fajenyo, Eds., 2020, pp. 102–104) is a

good example of a text that lends itself naturally to this approach. Written as a dialogue between a mother and her son, with a recurring chorus, the poem already possesses dramatic qualities that make it suitable for classroom performance. After reading the poem, the teacher can divide the class into groups and assign roles such as the Mother, the Son, the Chorus, the Flute Player, Narrators, and stage coordinators. Before the performance begins, students should study the poem carefully to determine the likely setting, emotional atmosphere, and relationships between the characters. The teacher may ask guiding questions such as: Where is the conversation taking place? What emotions should the mother's voice convey? How should the son respond? What movements or gestures will best communicate the message of the poem?

Students can then use ambience improvisation to recreate the performance environment suggested by the poem. They may decide on the seating arrangement of the characters, their movements across the stage, their facial expressions, costumes, pauses, and voice modulation based on clues provided in the text. The chorus may be accompanied by clapping, drumming, flute music, or other indigenous musical instruments to reflect the poem's oral and performative qualities. Rather than changing the author's message, students use their imagination to give life to the text while remaining faithful to its themes and artistic intention.

The activity can also be extended through digital technology. Students may record their performances as spoken-word presentations, stage productions, or short literary videos and present them during literary club meetings or on supervised classroom digital platforms. Afterwards, classmates and teachers can discuss how effectively each group projected the poem's mood, setting, symbolism, and thematic concerns through their voice, gestures, movements, and stage interpretation. Such reflection helps learners understand that literary meaning is conveyed not only through words but also through performance.

This approach develops students' reading comprehension, literary interpretation, creativity, communication skills, confidence, teamwork, and critical thinking. More importantly, it encourages learners to engage deeply with literary texts by visualising and performing them. Through ambience improvisation and dramatisation, Literature is transformed from a printed text into a vibrant artistic experience that strengthens

students' literary performance and fosters a deeper appreciation of literary art.

Integrating Contemporary Youth Linguistic Practices and Indigenous Languages into Literature Teaching

The language of contemporary Nigerian youths continues to evolve through everyday interaction, popular culture, and digital communication. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X have become spaces where young people creatively blend English, Nigerian Pidgin, indigenous languages, emojis, abbreviations, hashtags, and slang to communicate ideas and construct identities. Rather than dismissing these linguistic practices as inappropriate for learning, literature teachers can selectively harness them to make literary instruction more engaging while guiding students to distinguish between informal communication and formal literary expression.

For instance, students can be encouraged to transform familiar digital conversations into poems, dramatic sketches, or spoken-word performances before rewriting them in formal literary English. This activity enables learners to appreciate how language changes according to audience, purpose, and context. Similarly, teachers can introduce discussions on how everyday expressions and slang often carry figurative, humorous, or satirical meanings that can enrich literary creativity.

A good example is the Yoruba expression "È ti ẹ kọ!" Literally, the expression may suggest "continue your explanation" or "you know it already," but among many young people it is often used humorously or sarcastically after someone repeatedly asks "Èn?" ("Pardon?" or "What did you say?"). In a spoken-word performance or dramatic dialogue, the expression can function as satire, conveying impatience, playful mockery, or irony without directly insulting the listener. Literature teachers can guide students to analyse how such expressions derive their meanings from context and how they can be employed effectively in characterisation, dialogue, and humour.

Students from other linguistic backgrounds can also contribute similar expressions. An Igbo speaker might use "Ị nula?" ("Have you heard?") or "Kedukwa?" in conversational exchanges to create suspense, emphasis, or humour, while familiar exclamations such as "Nnaehn!" or

"Chai!" can effectively convey surprise, admiration, frustration, or sympathy in creative writing and dramatic performance. Likewise, Hausa expressions such as "Kai!", "Wallahi", or "Toh!", when used appropriately within dialogue, can reveal a character's emotions, cultural background, or social identity. Through classroom discussion, students can compare these expressions across languages and explore how they contribute to tone, mood, characterisation, and audience engagement.

Teachers can also encourage students to enrich original poems, short stories, and dramatic sketches with indigenous proverbs, praise poetry, folktales, songs, chants, and idiomatic expressions. For example, a student writing about perseverance may incorporate the Yoruba proverb "Ìwàl'ẹwà" ("Character is beauty"), the Igbo saying "Egbe bere, Ugo bere" ("Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch"), or the Hausa proverb "Komai nisanjifa, kasazaifado" ("No matter how far a stone is thrown, it will eventually fall to the ground"). Rather than merely translating these expressions, students can weave them naturally into their narratives or performances, allowing the surrounding context to communicate their meanings. This preserves their cultural richness while making literary works more authentic and engaging.

Digital expressions can also be used creatively. Students might deliberately incorporate hashtags such as #NoGreeForAnybody or #WeMove, emojis, or carefully selected internet slang into spoken-word performances that address issues such as corruption, examination malpractice, peer pressure, or environmental sustainability. Afterwards, the class can discuss whether these expressions strengthen or weaken the literary impact of the work. Such activities help students recognise that language is dynamic and that effective writers make conscious linguistic choices depending on purpose, audience, and genre.

By drawing on both indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices, literature classrooms become spaces where students' everyday linguistic experiences are recognised as valuable resources for learning. This approach not only enhances creativity and literary performance but also strengthens learners' cultural identity, critical language awareness, and appreciation of Nigeria's rich multilingual heritage.

Using Translation and Performance Remix to Enhance Literary Performance

One practical way of integrating indigenous languages into literature teaching is through translation and performance remix. Rather than asking students only to explain the meaning of a poem or identify literary devices, teachers can encourage them to recreate literary texts in their mother tongues while preserving their central themes, emotions, and artistic essence. This approach enables learners to appreciate the richness of both the original text and their indigenous languages, while demonstrating that literary meaning can be expressed creatively across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

For example, Eriata Oribhabor's poem "Virtues Lead..." in *Twenty Eighteen... Moving Poetry Vehicle* (Oribhabor, 2020, p. 20) can be transformed into an engaging classroom activity. The teacher may ask students to work in groups according to their linguistic backgrounds and recreate the opening line, "Speak to me in our language, language of our fathers," in Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Tiv, Efik, Edo, Urhobo, Ibibio, Nupe, or any other Nigerian language represented in the class. Beyond translating the words, students should explain how their cultures express similar ideas and identify indigenous proverbs, idioms, songs, chants, or praise expressions that reinforce the poem's message. This exercise encourages learners to appreciate the diversity of Nigerian languages while recognising the common values they express.

The activity can then be extended into creative writing and performance. Students may compose additional stanzas inspired by the poem or recreate its themes through spoken-word poetry, dramatic performances, songs, storytelling, or digital poetry presentations. Rather than producing literal translations, learners should creatively remix the poem by incorporating culturally familiar imagery, oral traditions, call-and-response patterns, and carefully selected contemporary youth expressions that enhance the literary effect. For instance, a Yoruba-speaking group may employ an appropriate proverb as a recurring refrain, while an Igbo-speaking or Hausa-speaking group may use an equivalent indigenous expression that conveys the same central idea. In this way, students are not merely translating a poem but recreating it through the lens of their own linguistic and cultural identities.

The lesson can culminate in a Performance Remix Showcase, where each group presents its recreated version before the class.

Presentations may combine indigenous languages with English, music, dance, traditional costumes, visual illustrations, or multimedia elements to enrich audience engagement. Students can also record their performances as short videos or spoken-word presentations and share them through school literary clubs, classroom digital platforms, or educational social media pages. Where appropriate and with the necessary copyright permission, exceptional performances may even be shared with the original poet through literary organisations or social media platforms. Such recognition can inspire students, strengthen their confidence, and encourage sustained participation in creative writing and performance literature.

Beyond developing literary interpretation and translation skills, this activity promotes creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, public speaking, multilingual competence, and cultural awareness. It also demonstrates that Literature is not merely a body of texts to be studied for examinations but a living art that can be recreated, performed, and experienced in ways that reflect students' linguistic realities and cultural identities. By integrating indigenous languages with creative performance and appropriate digital engagement, literature classrooms become more interactive, culturally responsive, and meaningful, thereby enhancing students' literary performance and appreciation of Nigeria's rich multilingual heritage.

Using Creative Writing and Performance Activities to Enhance Students' Literary Performance

Evidence from practical classroom experiences suggests that when students are given opportunities to create and perform their own literary works, they demonstrate remarkable creativity, confidence, and critical engagement. During the ENT 1000 Professional Entrepreneurship Exhibition organised by the Department of Language, Arts and Social Science Education, Lagos State University, students moved beyond the conventional analysis of literary texts to produce original spoken-word performances, dramatic sketches, storytelling, panel discussions, and other creative presentations. Many of the performances reflected students' immediate social realities, incorporating indigenous languages, local settings, Nigerian Pidgin, and contemporary youth expressions commonly used on social media and in everyday interactions. These linguistic resources were not employed merely for humour; rather, they

helped performers establish rapport with their audiences, communicate ideas more effectively, and create culturally authentic literary experiences.

The performances also revealed varying levels of literary competence. While some students delivered polished and engaging presentations, others struggled with stage confidence, voice projection, character interpretation, and organisation of ideas. Nevertheless, repeated rehearsal and continuous participation suggested that these skills can be developed over time through sustained classroom practice. More importantly, the exhibition demonstrated that literary performance is a learnable skill rather than an innate talent possessed by only a few students.

An equally significant outcome was the professional recognition some students received from invited scholars and literary practitioners, including Professor Babafemi Babatope, Dr Yinka Fagbile, Dr Sola Ogunbayo, Toba Dosunmu, and Mr Segun Durowaiye. Beyond assessing the performances, these experts identified exceptionally talented students for mentorship and possible professional collaborations after the programme. Such recognition illustrates how performance-based literature education can expose learners to opportunities beyond the classroom, motivating them to develop their creative abilities further and positioning them as emerging writers, performers, educators, broadcasters, and cultural ambassadors.

This experience reinforces the argument that literature education should not be restricted to the interpretation of prescribed texts. When students are encouraged to write, perform, and creatively adapt literary works using indigenous languages alongside appropriate contemporary youth linguistic practices, they become active creators of Literature. Such an approach strengthens literary competence, nurtures creativity, promotes cultural identity, and prepares learners to participate meaningfully in Nigeria's evolving literary and creative industries.

Using Digital Literary Platforms to Enhance Students' Literary Performance

In today's digital age, young people spend a significant amount of time creating, consuming, and sharing content through various digital platforms. Rather than viewing these platforms merely as distractions, literature teachers can harness them to make literary learning more

engaging, interactive, and relevant to students' everyday experiences. Learners can be encouraged to record spoken-word performances, stage short dramatic productions, narrate stories, or present poetry recitations using smartphones and other digital tools. These performances may be shared during literary club meetings, on school-managed online platforms, or through other supervised digital spaces where students receive constructive feedback from their teachers and peers.

Teachers can also design digital literary projects that require students to transform poems, folktales, dramatic scenes, or prose narratives into short videos, podcasts, digital storytelling projects, or multimedia presentations. In doing so, learners may appropriately incorporate indigenous languages, code-switching, local expressions, and contemporary youth linguistic practices where they enrich meaning and audience engagement. Such activities help students recognise that Literature is not confined to the printed page but can be communicated creatively through different digital media.

Radio also provides an important platform for developing students' literary performance. School radio stations, campus radio, community radio, and educational broadcasts can be used to promote literary appreciation and creative expression. Students may be guided to write original poems, spoken-word pieces, dramatic sketches, or short stories for special occasions such as Independence Day celebrations, International Mother Language Day, World Book Day, Children's Day, cultural festivals, environmental campaigns, or anti-drug awareness programmes. Before these works are broadcast, learners can participate in rehearsals under the guidance of literature teachers, broadcasters, performance poets, and other literary experts who provide professional feedback on content, voice modulation, pronunciation, pacing, articulation, and overall delivery. Regular practice and mentorship not only improve students' performance skills but also build their confidence as emerging writers and performers.

Digital platforms and radio programmes also create opportunities for collaboration beyond the classroom. Students can engage with established writers, broadcasters, performance poets, publishers, literary organisations, and content creators, participate in online literary competitions, and receive professional reviews of their creative works. Such exposure broadens their understanding of Literature as both an academic discipline and a viable creative industry while inspiring them to

pursue careers in writing, broadcasting, publishing, theatre, and other creative fields.

By integrating digital technologies, radio broadcasting, indigenous languages, and contemporary youth linguistic practices into literature instruction, teachers create learning experiences that are culturally relevant, creative, and responsive to the realities of today's learners. This approach strengthens students' literary competence, creativity, digital literacy, communication skills, and self-confidence while preparing them to participate meaningfully in Nigeria's evolving literary and creative landscape. It also reinforces the central argument of this paper that indigenous languages and contemporary youth linguistic practices can serve as effective pedagogical resources for revitalising literature education and enhancing students' literary performance.

Discussion of the Proposed Strategies

The strategies proposed in this paper demonstrate that literature education can become more engaging and meaningful when students are given opportunities to actively participate in the learning process rather than merely studying prescribed texts for examination purposes. Activities such as translation, performance remix, ambience improvisation, dramatisation, creative writing, literary exhibitions, digital storytelling, and radio presentations encourage learners to interact with Literature in ways that reflect their linguistic and cultural realities. In doing so, students become active creators and performers of Literature instead of remaining passive readers.

These strategies are consistent with the principles of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017), which advocates teaching approaches that value and sustain learners' cultural and linguistic identities. By drawing on indigenous languages alongside appropriate contemporary youth linguistic practices, literature teachers create learning environments where students' everyday experiences become resources for literary learning. This not only makes Literature more accessible but also helps learners develop a stronger sense of cultural identity while improving their literary competence.

The proposed strategies also build on previous studies reviewed in this paper. Flavian-Obasi and Obiyor (2019), Benson et al. (2017), and Megbowon and Uwah (2020) highlight the importance of indigenous languages and cultural expressions in preserving identity and enriching

literary experiences. Likewise, Lionel et al. (2022), Nawaila (2025), and Adewale and Bank (2020) show that digital communication has become an important part of young people's lives and can be used constructively in educational settings. Rather than treating indigenous languages and digital linguistic practices as separate issues, this paper demonstrates how they can complement one another to make Literature teaching more relevant and effective.

The discussion equally reinforces existing scholarship on performance literature and creative writing. Thomas (2005), Shittu (2022), and Chukwumerije (2014) emphasise that Literature is most powerful when it is experienced through performance, where voice, gesture, movement, and audience interaction contribute to meaning. Similarly, Morley (2007), Harper (2010), Valenzuela et al. (2026), and Adeosun (2019) recognise creative writing as an important means of developing learners' imagination, originality, and literary competence. The practical classroom activities proposed in this paper provide realistic ways of translating these ideas into everyday literature teaching.

The experience of the ENT 1000 Professional Entrepreneurship Exhibition further illustrates the value of these approaches. Students who were encouraged to write and perform original literary works displayed varying levels of creativity and confidence, but the exercise clearly showed that literary performance improves through regular practice, guidance, and constructive feedback. The fact that invited scholars and literary practitioners identified outstanding students for mentorship and possible professional collaboration also demonstrates that literature education can open doors beyond the classroom by connecting learners with opportunities in writing, performance, broadcasting, publishing, and other creative industries.

Conclusion

Literature education remains an important means of developing students' creativity, critical thinking, communication skills, and cultural awareness. However, an overreliance on English and conventional teaching approaches has often limited the effective use of indigenous languages and overlooked the linguistic realities of contemporary learners. This paper has argued that indigenous languages and appropriate contemporary youth linguistic practices can serve as valuable

pedagogical resources for revitalising literature education in Nigerian secondary schools.

Suggestions

Based on the discussion, the study recommends that:

1. Literature teachers should integrate indigenous languages, oral traditions, and culturally relevant linguistic resources into literature lessons to improve students' engagement and literary performance.
2. Students should be given regular opportunities to write and perform original literary works through creative writing, spoken-word poetry, storytelling, dramatisation, translation, and performance remix.
3. Schools should utilise digital platforms and educational media, including radio programmes, podcasts, digital storytelling, and supervised online platforms, to promote literary creativity and performance.
4. Curriculum developers should review the Literature-in-English curriculum to encourage multilingual, learner-centred, and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches.
5. Schools should collaborate with writers, broadcasters, performance poets, publishers, and other literary professionals to provide mentorship, constructive feedback, and authentic platforms for students to develop their literary talents.

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