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**LEVERAGING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO ENHANCE THE SOCIAL
FUNCTION OF FOLK POETRY: A SOCIOSTYLISTIC STUDY OF A YORÙBÁ
FOLKSONG**

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joesfudma@gmail.com

Foluso Adedoyin AGOI (PhD)

Department of English Education, Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos

Mobile: +234 802 611 8565

Email: agoifa@lasued.edu.ng

Abstract

Yorùbá folk poetry, the verbal art identified with the Yorùbá people mostly domiciled in the southwestern geopolitical region of Nigeria, serves vital social functions, including the transmission of cultural values, preservation of communal memory, moral education and the reinforcement of identity. However, threatened by several factors, including globalisation, linguistic erosion and shifting modes of communication, the verbal art is going into extinction. This sociostylistic study thus explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can facilitate the revitalisation, preservation and dissemination of Yorùbá folk poetry. Sociostylistics studies the stylistic features of linguistic forms with focus on the relationship between language and society. This makes it an essential framework for analysing Yorùbá folk poetry, which is inherently tied to cultural and social contexts. Focusing on Jimi Solanke's "Ba Rẹ Ní J'oyè", a Yorùbá folksong purposively selected, the study examines the sociostylistic properties of Yorùbá folk poetry and how AI tools can help preserve these features. Sociostylistics will also provide insight into the social functions of language in Yorùbá folk poetry, such as education, moral instruction and community cohesion. The study highlights AI's potential to enhance accessibility, foster intergenerational dialogue and support the dynamic evolution of oral traditions, while safeguarding their cultural integrity. By employing natural language processing, machine learning and generative AI models, traditional poetic forms can be digitised, translated and adapted for educational and cultural platforms. Ultimately, the study argues that AI, when ethically and contextually deployed, can be effective in sustaining the social relevance of Yorùbá folk poetry in the digital age.

Keywords: Yorùbá folk poetry, Sociostylistic features, Literary functions, Linguistic form, Literary effect

Word Count: 250

1. Introduction

Yorùbá folk poetry, deeply rooted in the rich cultural tapestry of the Yorùbá people, has long served as a vital medium for preserving history, transmitting social values, and fostering communal identity. Through oral traditions, it has provided a voice to the collective memory, bridging generations and creating a sense of shared belonging. Several texts (literary and non-literary) have been subjected to sociostylistic investigations (such as Adeyanju & Olaniyan, 2020; Alaba, 1985; Ashipu, 2010; Hussein & Dawood, 2018; Ononye, 2014). However, not many of such studies have examined the linguistic features that characterise folk poetry in the Yorùbá sociocultural setting with a view to exploring how language is patterned in the verbal art to achieve social functions and how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be deployed to facilitate the social functions of the verbal art, particularly as the survival of this verbal art, indeed African folk poetry, is being threatened in contemporary society, hence this study. In this context, AI offers promising tools to further the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry by enhancing its preservation, accessibility and relevance in the modern world. This study thus examines, through the application of sociostylistic tools, how AI can facilitate the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry, exploring how technology can preserve, analyse and revitalise this cultural treasure.

The sociostylistic study set out to: examine the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry with focus on a folksong by Jimi Solanke titled “Ba Rẹ̀ Ní J’oyè”; analyse the traditional roles of Yorùbá folk poetry in preserving history, conveying social values and fostering communal identity within Yorùbá society; investigate the role of AI in cultural preservation; explore how AI can contribute to the digitisation, transcription and preservation of Yorùbá folk poetry, ensuring its continuity in the digital age; apply the Sociostylistic theory to the study of Yorùbá folk poetry, unraveling the stylistic features of the verbal art, such as language, rhythm, metaphor and performance. This interdisciplinary study raised relevant questions to, among other things, identify the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry and how AI can contribute to the preservation and digitisation of Yorùbá folk poetry.

2. Conceptual Clarification

Foundational works on sociostylistics and specific studies on folk poetry, offering both theoretical frameworks and practical applications for analysis, are reviewed in this section. Folk poetry, which may be portrayed as poetry in action, is a prominent component of a community's folklore – an integral part of their oral tradition. According to Tucker (2018), “In various settings, including small groups of friends, large organized groups, public performances, and interactions on the Internet, folk poetry continues to grow and change” (p. 169). Yorùbá folk poetry is a vibrant verbal art through which Yorùbá people enunciate their worldview, cultural heritage, beliefs and practices. The oral art, perceived within the parameters of Yorùbá folklore, reflects the worldview, manners, customs, culture and tradition of Yorùbá people mainly domiciled in the southwestern region of Nigeria. The internal distribution of the linguistic features of a Yorùbá folk poem reflects the structure of the poem (Alaba, 1985).

Yorùbá folk poetry can be classified according to use and mode of rendition into chant, recitation and song, each of which exhibits unique characteristics. The subgenres of chant include *Ìjálá Ode* (hunter's chant), *Èkún Ìyàwó* (bridal chant) and *Arò Èyò* (Adámú-Òrìṣà chant). The subgenres of recitation include *Ofo* or *Ogede* (incantation), *Oríkì* (praise poetry), *Owe* (proverb) and *Alọ Apamọ* (riddle); while forms of Yorùbá traditional song include folksongs (e.g. “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè”, performed by Jimi Solanke), *Orin Etiyeri* (musical satire), *Àpàlà* (popularised by Ayinla Omowura, Haruna Isola, Ligali Mukaiba, *Dadakuada* (popularised by Dauda Epoakara), *Sakara* (identified with Yusuf Olatunji), *Wákà* (popularised by Batile Alake and Salawa Abeni), *Wéré* and *Àgídìgbo* (popular in Lagos, particularly Lagos Island).

This study attempts to examine the sociostylistic features of “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè”, a folksong performed by Jimi Solanke, with attention to aesthetic expression reflected in stylistic features and social function as manifested in Yorùbá folk poetry vis-à-vis the role of AI in facilitating the social function of the verbal art.

Adeyanju and Olaniyan (2020), in a sociostylistic study, examined the impact of the socio-context of the Nigerian civil war on the use of language in Chukwuemeka Ike's novel, *Sunset at Dawn*, a text based on the issues associated with the 30-month war. The work concluded that the socio-context of war which Ike experienced exerted a significant impact on the use of language in his novel, submitting that examining Nigerian Civil War Memoirs through a sociostylistic approach offers a better understanding of the memoirs besides highlighting the discourse value of

sociostylistics. In a study of prominent sociostylistic traits of English and Arabic junior songs, Hussein and Dawood (2018) analysed the sociostylistic elements of 100 junior songs in both English and Arabic languages, asserting that “sociostylistic prospects applied to both languages”, prompting the introduction of the children to “new world conventions and unconsciously grafting childhood with friendly othering world” (p. 86).

Working with 40 printed cigarette advert texts collected from *The Guardian* and *THISDAY* newspapers between October 2004 and January 2006, Ononye (2014), in a study, examined the sociostylistic elements used by cigarette advertisers to deliver their message. It submits that the texts deploy “much of semi-specialised vocabulary, adjectives of quality, and collocations in the description of products” (p. 179) which distinguish them from other subgenres of media texts. In a sociostylistic analysis of some selected Bette dirges, a subgenre of African oral poetry, Ashipu (2010) submits that both the language and its literature are portrayed in the sociolinguistic activities of the folk, including dirges and other subgenres of folk poetry. “Bette is of the Bantu stock,” a sub-group of the Ekoi (p. 113). Bette is a main ethnic group in Obudu Local Government Area of Cross River State. The term “Bette” refers to both the people and their language, which still exists only in its oral form. In a study in which Alaba (1985) based on the characterisation of *orin agbè*, a Yorùbá poetic song, Alaba (1985) highlighted three main divisions of the oral art as “the overture, entertaining and didactic utterances, and valedictory sayings” (p. 1), with a fourth minor division that comprises related themes called “other sayings,” distributed across the three main divisions.

In a study ~~based-on~~ titled “A sociostylistic analysis of *orin agbè*: A multimodal genre of Yoruba oral poetry”, Alaba (1985) characterised and contextualised *orin agbè*, a Yorùbá poetic song, from a socio-historical perspective. The sociostylistic study highlighted the entertainment and oral-poetic features, besides the religious and secular aspects of the verbal art. The study, which identified “the essence of interpersonal relationships in traditional society” (p. 1), perceived the communicative, aesthetic and ritual functions of the art form as intertwined. Analysing the structure of an *orin agbè*, characterised as the internal distribution of its elements, Alaba identified the three main divisions of the oral art as “the overture, entertaining and didactic utterances, and valedictory sayings” (p. 1), with a minor division, the fourth, which comprises related themes called “other sayings,” which are distributed across the three main sections. Alaba identifies the

linguistic resources used by *orin agbè* performers, stating that, besides rhythmic devices, which serve to offer a sense of movement, *orin agbè* features syntactic parallelism and several other elements, such as simile, metaphor, analogy and wordplay, which are common features of Yorùbá folk poetry.

The attention of some of the above sociostylistic studies (Alaba, 1985; Ashipu, 2010; Hussein & Dawood, 2018) is focused on oral poetry, while the other works (Adeyanju & Olaniyan, 2020; Ononye, 2014) focus on written texts. However, none of the works explicated the sociostylistic features of folk poetry with focus on how AI can be used to facilitate the social function of folk poetry, which is the gap filled by this study.

A sociostylistic approach to Yorùbá folk poetry examines how language and style interact with society and culture. This approach involves understanding the use of language in its social context, focusing on how stylistic features – such as rhythm, metaphor, tone, and performance – convey cultural meaning and social functions. In the case of Yorùbá folk poetry, these stylistic elements are integral to its power and impact. AI can play a significant role in analysing these stylistic features. Through machine learning algorithms, AI can detect recurring stylistic patterns in Yorùbá poetry, such as the use of metaphorical language, alliteration, and rhythmic structures. It can also assist in identifying variations in style based on context – such as the difference between a dirge and a praise poem. These insights can help researchers better understand the social functions of different forms of folk poetry and how they relate to broader societal values.

Furthermore, AI's capacity for processing large volumes of text allows it to uncover subtler patterns within the poetry, such as shifts in language usage that might indicate social change or cultural evolution. By applying sociostylistic analysis, AI can offer deeper insights into the language of Yorùbá folk poetry, facilitating its preservation while maintaining the nuances that define it.

The Social Function of Yorùbá Folk Poetry

In Yorùbá culture, folk poetry is more than just an art form; it plays an integral role in the social fabric of the community. The poetic form, known for its rich oral traditions, serves multiple functions such as education, entertainment, cultural preservation and moral instruction. Through

folk poetry, wisdom is transmitted, history is preserved and individuals are connected to their ancestral heritage. Yorùbá folk poetry is often performed during significant cultural events such as festivals and ceremonies. It is a dynamic, participatory form of expression that addresses communal concerns, celebrates achievements, and offers advice on moral and ethical behaviour. These functions are closely tied to the collective nature of Yorùbá society in which communal values and shared identity are paramount.

Yorùbá folk poetry is thus disconnected from the philosophy of “art for art's sake” (“l’art por l’art”) with which several literary writers, critics and artists (such as Irish writer Oscar Wilde, French philosopher Victor Cousin, American painter James McNeill Whistler and Swiss writer Benjamin Constant) are identified. Indeed, many scholars tend to prioritise aesthetic expression over social function. However, the verbal art identified with Yorùbá people aligns with the Horatian platitude which, stressing the social function of poetry, asserts that poetry must “instruct and delight” (Howatson, 2013, p. 75). Yorùbá folk poetry manifests the aesthetic, communicative and ritual functions of poetry.

3. Theoretical Underpinnings

Sociostylistic theory, an approach that allows for a deep understanding of how linguistic choices reflect and shape social realities, was adopted for this study. Sociostylistics is concerned with the relationship between language, society and culture, thus, making it an essential framework for analysing Yorùbá folk poetry, an oral art which is inherently tied to cultural and social contexts. Sociostylistics is a theoretical framework that combines features of stylistics and sociolinguistics. Stylistics is the study of language style, manifested in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and other features, to reflect social identities, relationships and affiliations, while sociolinguistics is the study of language in its social context. Sociolinguistics studies how social elements, such as social networks, socio-economic class, gender, ethnicity and age, influence language variation and language use, reflected, for example, in the use of register, vocabulary and grammatical structures. Sociostylistics, an interdisciplinary field, examines how language is used in social contexts to construct and negotiate social meaning; it focuses on the interplay between language variation and social phenomena. It studies how social factors influence stylistic choices and how the choices shape social perceptions and interactions. Prominent features of sociostylistic theory include:

Social Factors, Social Identity, Language as Social Practice, variation in Language, Speech Communities, Codeswitching and Diglossia.

Applying sociostylistics to the analysis of Yorùbá folk poetry offers valuable insights into how social identity, cultural context and linguistic features influence the construction and interpretation of the verbal art. Sociostylistics will also provide insight into the social functions of language in Yorùbá folk poetry, such as education, moral instruction and community cohesion, highlighting the stylistic features of Yorùbá folk poetry (such as language, rhythm, metaphor) and how AI tools can help preserve these features.

Sociostylistics has been influenced by several notable scholars who have contributed significantly to the study of language variation in social contexts. The key proponents of sociostylistic theory, which focuses on how social variables influence language use and how linguistic choices reflect broader social structures and identities, include William Labov, Penelope Eckert, Douglas Biber, John Gumperz, Roger Fowler and Basil Bernstein.

Labov's studies of dialects, particularly in Martha's Vineyard and New York stressed the social distribution of linguistic features. His work on language variation and social factors, such as class, gender and ethnicity, set the foundation for sociostylistics (Labov, 2001). Labov is generally considered the father of sociolinguistics basically because of his pioneering effort in establishing the discipline and developing its core processes and methodologies. Eckert, who is known for her research on how social categories, such as age, gender and social class influence language use, introduced the concept of "social meaning" in language variation, investigating how individuals align themselves with social identities through their linguistic choices (Eckert, 2000). Biber's research on variation in English across diverse registers and discourse types offers insight into the link between social context and language use. His work highlights how stylistic choices differ based on such factors as audience, purpose and formality (Biber, 1995). Gumperz, a prominent figure in the development of the concept of "speech communities," investigated how social interaction and communication are inspired and shaped by cultural norms and situational factors, thus influencing linguistic variation (Gumperz, 1982). Fowler's research on language and social context highlighted how stylistic choices reflect social identity and power dynamics, particularly in relation to the social context of discourse (Fowler, 1991). Bernstein's theory of "codes"

(elaborated and restricted) highlights how language use varies across different social classes, with focus on the link between linguistic style and educational attainment (Bernstein, 1971).

4. Data and Analysis

“Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè” (a folksong, subgenre of song) performed by Jimi Solanke constitutes the data used for this study. The rendition was purposively selected because of its sociocultural significance and role within the Yorùbá ethnic community. Moreover, the features of the poetic form encapsulate the linguistic and literary components of Yorùbá folk poetry. The data collected from the selected sample (of Yorùbá folk poetry) were documented, transcribed and translated into English from Yorùbá, after which they were described, classified and analysed to identify the sociostylistic features of the data in order to unravel the linguistic and social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry.

A. Thematic Features of “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè” – A Folksong

Songs are an essential feature of ceremonies in Yorùbá communities. “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè”, a typical Yorùbá folksong, is a poetic rendition used to entertain, inform and educate members of the community. Besides entertainment, the song disseminates social commentaries on life experiences, praising people, praying for – and blessing – everyone, including the performer and his audience.

Theme/Rheme

Our father is going to take a chieftaincy title

Our mother is going to take a chieftaincy title

May we not break up

Death and his weapon play together forever

Father has taken a chieftaincy title

Table 1: Thematic Features of “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè”

	Theme	Rheme
1	Our father	is going to take a chieftaincy title

2	Our mother	is going to take a chieftaincy title
3	May	we not break up
4	Death and his weapon	play together forever
5	Father	has taken a chieftaincy title

Source: Researcher's Findings, 2025

B. Semantic Content

The song, “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè”, was composed and performed by Jimi Solanke to mark the installation of his father as Lisa of Ipara Remo in Ogun State. The song celebrates the performer’s father and mother, in particular, who are being honoured with traditional chieftaincy titles, which accounts for the recurrent use of *şàkì cloth* used to make *òjá* (sling) and *ìlẹ̀kẹ̀* (bead) in the song. The titles signify leadership roles within the Yorùbá political system, which are linked to duties that benefit the community. *Òjá* is a sling usually tied around a woman’s body to carry a baby on her back. *Òjá* is also worn by traditional title holders (Chiefs) over their shoulders to symbolise their status. Beads are used mostly by women for adornment. Some beads (*ìlẹ̀kẹ̀*) are also worn by traditional title holders as esoteric elements, like *òjá*. Beyond being physical adornments, the *şàkì cloth* and beads symbolise wealth, status, and respect for tradition.

C. Lexico-Grammatical and Sociostylistic Features

Repetition

The dominant feature of “Ba Rẹ Ní J’oyè” is repetition. The repetition of the clause “Our father/mother/husband is going to take a chieftaincy title” reflects the song’s ceremonial tone. The repetition and use of culturally specific lexis further reinforce the role of language in sustaining and transmitting these values across generations. Besides musicality, the repetition emphasises the importance of the event, aligning with the communal nature of African oral traditions where repetition enhances collective memory and participation.

Cultural Lexis and Symbolism

The use of words like *şàkì cloth*, *Balogun*, *Aşipa Apènà*, and *Amú-ìlúdùn* situates the song firmly in the Yorùbá socio-cultural context. These terms are culturally loaded, representing material and symbolic resources tied to power and prestige in Yorùbá society.

Social Context and Ideology

The song reflects the Yorùbá socio-political structure, where the chieftaincy title is a symbol of power, honour, and community leadership. The ideological focus is on the glorification of leadership, familial honour, and unity. The song reinforces the collective identity of the family and the community, ensuring that the listener is reminded of their role in sustaining cultural heritage. The hope for unity ("May we not break up") highlights the threat of disunity, perhaps from external forces, and serves as a reminder of the need to preserve communal bonds.

The song also reveals an ideological concern for unity and social cohesion, suggesting that, even in moments of celebration, there is an underlying awareness of the need to maintain social harmony and resilience against external threats (symbolised by death).

The sociostylistic analysis shows how language in the song is used to reinforce social hierarchies, family unity, and the cultural importance of chieftaincy titles in Yorùbá society. The analysis illustrates how the song "Ba Rẹ Ní J'oyè" uses linguistic features and symbolic language to celebrate title-taking, honouring cultural values and fostering a sense of family and community pride in the Yorùbá tradition.

Table 2: Summary of the Lexico-Grammatical and Sociostylistic Features of "Ba Rẹ Ní J'oyè"

Folksong: "Ba Rẹ Ní J'oyè"	
Feature	Analysis
Lexico-Grammatical	
Vocabulary	Use of formal, honorific language (e.g., "Balogun," "Amú-ìlúdùn") to emphasise cultural respect for titles. Specific terms associated with Yorùbá culture underline the spiritual and societal importance of chieftaincy titles.
Repetition	Repetition of clauses, like "Our father is going to take a chieftaincy title", and the chorus reinforces communal pride and celebratory atmosphere.

Metaphor	Terms like "Maker of the Way," "Entertainer," and "One who reigns with the King" metaphorically represent the roles and virtues expected of a titled person in society.
Parallelism	Parallel structure in addressing each family member (father, mother, husband) taking a title reinforces unity and highlights each role's significance in the extended family.
Sociostylistic	
Oral Tradition	Oral tradition is clear in the repetitive, rhythmic, and celebratory structure typical of Yorùbá folksongs, suitable for communal participation and memorability.
Register	High, reverential register reflecting the occasion's ceremonial nature and reinforcing respect for elders and the chieftaincy institution.
Tone	The tone is festive and reverent, celebrating familial honour and societal roles within the context of Yorùbá traditional titles.
Cultural Symbolism	The song references Yorùbá cultural symbols and titles (e.g., "Balogun," "Amú-ìlúdùn," "Maker of the Way"), which emphasise the respected roles of titled individuals within the community and convey shared heritage and pride.

Source: Researcher's Findings, 2025

5. Findings

As revealed by the findings of this study, Yorùbá folk poetry features basic sociostylistic devices identified with oral literary productions. These elements are reflected in the sample of Yorùbá folk poetry analysed in the study. The verbal art reflects poetic beauty enhanced with the aid of dialogue, invocation and figurative language (including sound devices, such as rhythm, rhyme, repetition, chorus, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance and consonance) and other sociostylistic elements with which meaning is communicated in Yorùbá oral poetry. The findings thus reveal how language is organised in Yorùbá folk poetry to achieve social functions, besides identifying the psychology, philosophy and cosmology of Yorùbá people whose population is about 50 million, besides some 2 million second-language speakers (Eberhard et al., 2021).

The findings also reveal the capacity of sociostylistics to interrogate and explore literary texts in verbal forms, while highlighting the social function and its capacity to make significant contribution to global civilisation.

6. Discussion

As the digital age continues to transform cultural practices, AI has emerged as a powerful tool in preserving and analysing African oral traditions. AI can facilitate the digitisation, transcription, and archiving of Yorùbá folk poetry, ensuring that it is not lost to time or cultural erosion. By applying natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning, AI can assist in recognising patterns in the poetry's language, themes and stylistic nuances, which may otherwise be difficult to quantify or preserve manually.

AI applications are already making strides in other domains of cultural preservation, such as language translation, transcription, and archiving. For instance, AI-powered platforms are employed to transcribe oral histories, digitise ancient manuscripts, and preserve endangered languages. In the context of Yorùbá folk poetry, AI can be used to create digital archives of performances, annotate them with contextual information, and even facilitate their analysis for academic and cultural purposes.

The preservation of Yorùbá folk poetry is one of the most pressing challenges in an age of rapid globalisation and technological change. Oral traditions are particularly vulnerable to the erosion of cultural heritage, as they rely on live performance and transmission through generations. With AI, however, this vulnerability can be mitigated through digital preservation.

AI technologies such as speech recognition, transcription tools, and machine learning can be used to create digital archives of Yorùbá folk poetry performances. These archives can capture not only the text of the poetry but also the performance aspects – such as tone, rhythm, and gestures – that are often crucial to its meaning. Digitised versions can then be stored in accessible formats and made available to scholars, students, and the general public, ensuring that the poetry can be studied and appreciated across generations.

Additionally, AI can be employed to assist in language revitalisation efforts, particularly in preserving endangered dialects of Yorùbá and other African languages. By automating transcription and translation processes, AI can ensure that no linguistic nuances are lost in the translation from oral to written form.

AI can also enhance the social impact of Yorùbá folk poetry by facilitating its dissemination across modern media platforms. Through digital storytelling, podcasts, mobile apps, and social media, AI can help bring Yorùbá folk poetry to global audiences. AI-driven platforms can promote Yorùbá poetry by analysing popular trends and tailoring content to users' preferences, increasing its visibility and engagement.

Furthermore, AI can provide personalised learning experiences for individuals interested in Yorùbá poetry. Educational tools powered by AI can offer interactive lessons, quizzes, and analyses of Yorùbá poetic forms, making it easier for learners to engage with the material and understand its cultural significance.

In this way, AI does not only preserve the poetry; it can also actively contribute to its continued relevance in contemporary society. By helping to make Yorùbá folk poetry accessible to a wider audience, AI can enhance its social function as a tool for cultural exchange and global understanding.

Despite its potential, the use of AI in preserving and promoting Yorùbá folk poetry presents several challenges and ethical concerns, one of which is the risk of misinterpretation. AI systems, while powerful, can sometimes fail to fully grasp the cultural context of certain expressions or stylistic elements, leading to inaccurate or incomplete representations of the poetic rendition.

There are also questions of ownership and authenticity. Who owns the digital archives of Yorùbá folk poetry, for instance, and how can cultural appropriation be prevented? These are important questions that must be addressed to ensure that the role of AI in preserving African traditions is ethically sound and culturally respectful.

Moreover, while AI offers efficient tools for processing and preserving folk poetry, it cannot replicate the deeply personal and communal nature of oral storytelling. There is a need to strike a

balance between utilising AI's capabilities and preserving the human element of performance and storytelling, which are vital to the cultural integrity of Yorùbá folk poetry.

Conclusion

AI holds significant potential to enhance the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry by facilitating its preservation, analysis, and global dissemination. By leveraging AI's capabilities, we can ensure that Yorùbá folk poetry remains a dynamic and accessible form of cultural expression. However, careful attention must be paid to the ethical implications of AI's role in cultural preservation to ensure that it complements, rather than compromises, the authenticity and integrity of this important oral tradition. As we move forward, a collaborative approach between technology and culture will be essential in ensuring that Yorùbá folk poetry continues to thrive in the digital age.

7. Contribution to Knowledge

This study foregrounds the transformative role of AI in preserving, analysing and promoting the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry, thus making a significant contribution to the interdisciplinary fields of digital humanities, African oral literature and sociostylistics, including computational stylistics. Specifically, it offers a new sociostylistic framework with the capacity to integrate AI-driven tools, such as natural language processing, speech recognition and machine learning, to decode, interpret and publicise the social values embedded in Yorùbá oral traditions.

Recommendations

1. Public awareness about the potential of AI in preserving and promoting Yorùbá folk poetry should be promoted. Initiatives can include workshops, webinars and public discussions that explore how technology can be used to safeguard cultural heritage. Engaging local communities in the digital preservation process will help ensure that the people whose traditions are being preserved are active participants in the process.
2. Linguists, cultural experts and Yorùbá oral tradition practitioners should synergise their efforts in collaboration with ICT experts and/or firms to ensure that AI tools are developed with a deep understanding of the social, historical and cultural nuances of Yorùbá folk poetry. This collaboration is necessary to prevent misinterpretations and ensure that AI models respect the integrity of the poetry's stylistic and social functions.
3. AI-driven digital archives for Yorùbá folk poetry, incorporating text, audio and visual elements should be developed. These archives should be accessible to scholars, students and the general public, ensuring long-term preservation and wide dissemination. AI tools can assist in tagging, indexing, and categorising the verbal art to enhance searchability and contextual understanding.
4. AI-powered educational platforms that teach Yorùbá folk poetry to learners worldwide should be created. These platforms should offer interactive lessons, language learning tools and culturally contextualised content, making Yorùbá poetic forms accessible to new generations and global audiences. AI can tailor learning experiences based on the user's level of understanding and interests.
5. The integration of AI in contemporary media and performance arts to bring Yorùbá folk poetry to new audiences should be encouraged. This may include AI-assisted translations for global audiences, digital storytelling and virtual performances that blend traditional and modern technologies. AI can help create new forms of expression, expanding the reach of Yorùbá folk poetry while maintaining its cultural essence.

By adopting these recommendations, AI can become an essential tool in preserving, enhancing, and expanding the social functions of Yorùbá folk poetry, ensuring that this rich cultural tradition remains vibrant and relevant in the digital age.

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