

AFROFUTURISM, AI VIDEO, AND IGBO FOLKLORE PRESERVATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

The Igbo language and its oral traditions, including folktales, poetry, and proverbs, face the risk of decline as younger generations become more detached from traditional forms of cultural transmission. This paper examines how AI-generated video can serve as a tool for preserving and promoting Igbo folklore through an Afrofuturist lens. The study argues that when Igbo oral literature is translated into visual narratives using generative video tools, the process can facilitate creative reimagining while also creating risks of cultural distortion that keeps cultural knowledge alive for contemporary audiences. The research objectives are threefold: to identify the key literary elements of Igbo folklore that can be adapted into visual form, to develop a practical framework for generating culturally authentic AI videos, and to assess the potential and limitations of this approach for cultural preservation. The study adopts a qualitative methodology that combines literary analysis of Igbo folktales and poetry with practice-based research in AI video generation. Afrofuturism serves as the theoretical framework, providing a lens through which the blending of tradition and futuristic aesthetics can be understood as a form of speculative preservation. The findings suggest that AI-generated video has potential as a complementary medium for visualizing Igbo oral narratives, particularly when literary scholars guide the prompt engineering process to ensure cultural accuracy. However, the study also identifies challenges, including the need for larger Igbo language datasets, the risk of homogenizing diverse dialects, and the ethical considerations of using AI to represent sacred cultural elements. The paper recommends the development of collaborative frameworks that bring together literary scholars, cultural practitioners, and technologists to create a sustainable model for AI-assisted folklore preservation. It also calls for the creation of open-access Igbo literary datasets to support future research and practice in this emerging field.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, AI Video, Igbo Folklore, Cultural Preservation, Oral Literature, Generative Media

1.0 Introduction

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria have a rich tradition of storytelling that has served as the primary means of passing down knowledge, values, and history from one generation to the next. These oral traditions, which include folktales, poetry, proverbs, and moonlight stories, have played a central role in transmission and preservation of Igbo cultural identity for centuries. Storytelling in Igbo society is not merely entertainment but a fundamental practice through which children learn moral values, elders transmit wisdom, and communities strengthen social bonds. However, these traditions face increasing challenges to their intergenerational transmission. Scholars have observed that younger generations are increasingly disconnected from traditional oral

practices, and the art of storytelling is gradually fading from Igbo communities (Chima & Orji, 2024). Several factors contribute to this decline. The changing lifestyles brought by urbanization and technology have disrupted the traditional rhythm of life that once made space for evening storytelling sessions around the fire (Nwadike, 2021). Digital entertainment now competes with oral traditions, and what were once communal gatherings have been replaced by individual screen time. Additionally, many of the elders who served as custodians of these oral traditions are passing away without passing on their knowledge to younger generations (Adegbilero-Iwari, 2023).

This paper examines how emerging digital technologies, particularly AI-generated video, can serve as a tool for preserving and promoting Igbo

folklore. The study draws on Afrofuturism, a cultural movement that blends African traditions and history with futuristic or speculative elements. Afrofuturism is concerned with what scholars call acts of recovery the process of reviving and celebrating elements of Black culture that were destroyed or suppressed by colonization. The movement operates at the intersections of history, speculation, and performance, seeking to imagine new frameworks for black self-representation. As one scholar notes, Afrofuturism offers a way to recover lost cultures and celebrate cultural legacies that have been marginalized. The central argument of this paper is that when Igbo oral literature is translated into visual narratives using generative video tools, the result is not a distortion of tradition but a creative reimagining that keeps cultural knowledge alive for contemporary audiences (Nwosu et al., 2025). This perspective aligns with the Afrofuturist principle that looking back to ancestral knowledge and culture is essential for forging a better future. In this sense, AI video becomes what one might call a modern griot a digital storyteller that carries forward the wisdom of the past into new forms.

Recent research on digital storytelling for language preservation shows promising results. Communities using digital storytelling tools have shown greater language retention among youth compared to traditional methods alone (Lee, 2023). For Igbo, efforts such as YouTube channels and digital initiatives have engaged thousands of young learners globally (Okafor, 2022). Other Indigenous communities, such as the Māori and Navajo, have successfully combined oral traditions with digital technology, resulting in increased youth engagement with their native languages (Galla, 2022). These examples offer valuable lessons for Igbo cultural preservation. Studies on AI and cultural heritage also provide useful frameworks. Researchers working on preserving traditional Malay music videos using generative AI have developed workflows that combine face cloning, motion-lip synchronization, and expert validation to maintain cultural integrity. Similarly, projects examining Korean traditional dance generated by AI have identified both the potential and limitations of generative tools for

culturally specific content. These studies highlight the importance of expert oversight and culturally grounded datasets in ensuring authenticity. The present study has three objectives. First, to identify the key literary elements of Igbo folklore that can be adapted into visual form, drawing from folktales, poetry, and proverbs. Second, to develop a practical framework for generating culturally authentic AI videos that respect Igbo traditions. Third, to assess the potential and limitations of this approach for cultural preservation, including the challenges of dialectal diversity, data availability, and ethical considerations.

The methodology combines literary analysis of Igbo folktales and poetry with practice-based research in AI video generation. The study draws on existing Igbo literary sources, including poetry anthologies and folktale collections, to build a foundation of culturally authentic narratives. The literary analysis identifies key themes, structures, and metaphorical language that can inform video prompts. The practice-based component involves generating video content using available AI tools and evaluating the outputs through the lens of cultural authenticity. This paper addresses a significant gap in Igbo-focused research. While studies on the digital revitalization of other Indigenous languages are abundant, Igbo-focused research remains sparse. Most existing work on Igbo language preservation emphasizes pedagogical strategies rather than technology. This study aims to contribute a framework that bridges cultural authenticity with technological innovation, offering a blueprint for using AI video in service of Igbo folklore preservation.

The paper proceeds as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature on Igbo oral traditions, Afrofuturism, and AI video generation. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework that guides the study. The methodology section describes the approach to data collection, literary analysis, and video generation. The findings present the results of the practice-based research, including examples of generated content and evaluation by cultural experts. The discussion addresses the implications, challenges, and ethical considerations of the approach. The conclusion

offers recommendations for future research and practice in this emerging field.

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing body of knowledge on Igbo oral traditions, digital technologies for language preservation, artificial intelligence in cultural heritage, and Afrofuturism as a framework for cultural reclamation. Rather than simply summarising what each study found, this review compares how different scholars have approached these questions, points out where their methods and conclusions differ, and shows where the present study fits into these ongoing debates.

Igbo Oral Literature and Cultural Transmission

Storytelling has historically occupied a central position in many Igbo communities. It has served as the primary vehicle for passing down knowledge, values, and history from one generation to the next. The oral tradition encompasses folktales (akụkọ ifo), proverbs (ilu), poetry, riddles, and moonlight stories that have sustained Igbo cultural identity for centuries. Storytelling is the foundation upon which language stands Nwadike (2021). In preserving stories, communities preserve not just words but the living essence of culture itself.

The decline of these traditions has been well documented. Scholars have noted that younger generations are increasingly disconnected from traditional oral practices. Chima and Orji (2024) examined the probable extinction of storytelling and moonlight games among the Igbo of Nigeria, highlighting the effects on culture and wellness. They argue that the changing lifestyles brought by urbanization and technology have disrupted the traditional rhythm of life that once made space for evening storytelling sessions. Digital entertainment now competes with oral traditions, and communal gatherings have been replaced by individual screen time.

The concept of the "grandparent gap" has also been identified as a significant challenge. Adegbilero-Iwari (2023) describes this as a situation where elder native speakers lack digital literacy while tech-savvy youth lack language fluency. This disconnect creates a barrier to intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Additionally, Nwadike (2021) cautions that standardizing oral traditions into written or digital formats risks losing dialectal variations and performative elements crucial to meaning. When a folktale is transcribed, the words may be preserved but the music, tone, and performance often are lost. Fishman's (1991) Graded that Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) provides a useful framework for understanding language vitality. For Igbo, intergenerational transmission remains critical to survival. Digital storytelling interventions can target youth, the demographic most disconnected from traditional oral practices.

Afrofuturism/Africanfuturism and Cultural Reclamation

Afrofuturism offers a valuable framework for understanding the intersection of technology and cultural preservation. The term was introduced by cultural critic Mark Dery (1994), who described the Black body as inhabiting a perverse space of cultural intolerance, where the African diaspora experience is more reminiscent of alien abduction than self-determination. Afrofuturism emerged as a cultural movement that pulls from science fiction, magical realism, speculative fiction, and African history to imagine new frameworks for black self-representation. A central tenet of Afrofuturism is what scholars describe as 'acts of recovery', referring to the process of reviving and celebrating elements of Black culture that were destroyed or suppressed by colonization. This practice is often linked to "Sankofa," an Akan word that translates to "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind." The Afrofuturist listserv organized by social scientist Alondra (1998) described the movement as cultural production that simultaneously references a past of abduction, displacement and alien-nation; celebrates the unique aesthetic perspectives inspired by these fractured histories; and imagines the possible futures of black life and ever-widening definitions of blackness.

Womack (2013) describes Afrofuturism as an apparatus by which a nonlinear and fluid imaginary emerges. It operates at the intersections of history, speculation, and performance to develop a methodological immediacy that combines speculative sufficiency with historical

modes of suffering and displacement. The purpose is to imagine new relational frameworks. Afrofuturism is, at its core, a humanist agenda concerned with understanding where the black body ends and representation begins. The relevance of Afrofuturism to this study lies in its emphasis on looking backward to move forward. Afrofuturist works often mine the past as a first step toward creating visions of the future. Brooks (2019) describe Afrofuturism as a theory of time where present, past, and future exist together, creating the opportunity to push against the systemic devaluation of Black people. This perspective aligns with the argument of this paper that when Igbo oral literature is translated into visual narratives using generative video tools, the process can facilitate creative reimagining while also creating risks of cultural distortion that keeps cultural knowledge alive for contemporary audiences.

The work of contemporary artists demonstrates this principle in practice. Ifeoma Ebo, a Nigerian-American designer, uses artificial intelligence in her work to emphasize the significance of incorporating cultural heritage into architectural designs. Her work emphasizes the importance of reclaiming narratives and honoring the depth of African traditions. Similarly, Emmanuel Ndefo and Dan Xu's project "Decoding Egwu" reimagines the concept of dance and intelligence through the Igbo concept of "egwu" a word encompassing dance, music, play, and awe. Unlike Western frameworks of dance, egwu is described as a philosophy of embodiment, ritual, and ancestral memory. The project takes a community-driven approach to co-create an ethical, multimodal dataset of egwu across Igbo language, movement, and sound, aiming to build an alternative AI prototype that can listen, learn, and rethink dance through Igbo ontologies and epistemologies.

Digital Technologies and Indigenous Language Preservation

Storytelling reveals significant potential for cultural preservation. Warschauer (1998) posits that technology democratizes access to linguistic resources, while Jenkins (2006) emphasizes transmedia storytelling adapting

narratives across apps, podcasts, and social media as a way to engage digital natives. Case studies from other cultures offer valuable insights for Igbo preservation efforts. The Māori "Pūrākau" revitalization program combined elder storytelling with augmented reality technology, resulting in a 25% increase in youth language engagement (Galla, 2022). Similarly, the Navajo Nation's "Storybook App" project demonstrated that interactive digital narratives could boost vocabulary retention by 60% compared to textbook learning (Lee, 2023). The Living Tongues Institute reports that communities using digital storytelling tools show 40% greater language retention among youth compared to traditional classroom methods alone.

For Igbo, nascent efforts show promise. Nwosu and colleagues (2025) conducted a study on digital storytelling and AI-enabled platforms in Igbo language revitalization. Using a mixed-methods approach with surveys of 300 Igbo youths and interviews with linguists and content providers, the study identified a strong preference for app- and social media-based Igbo learning (67-78% across measures) over traditional methods. Case studies of successful digital initiatives, such as the Akuko Ifo podcast with approximately 10,000 monthly listeners and the Igbo Stories TikTok account with around 50,000 followers, illustrate how platform ecosystems can enhance participation and linguistic practice. The findings demonstrate the potential of digital formats to transform Igbo folktales, proverbs, and historical narratives into interactive, scalable experiences that appeal to both native and non-native speakers. Other successful models from the region include the S.T.O.R.I.A. project, which combined Semai folktales with Arabic language instruction in an immersive audiobook format. The intervention demonstrated significant improvements in vocabulary recall and sustained motivation to learn Arabic. Learners reported a deeper emotional connection to the stories, which enhanced engagement and cultural awareness. Research on Minangkabau indigenous knowledge in Indonesia similarly found that digital storytelling effectively transforms oral knowledge into digital formats that are both communicative and participatory. Major

opportunities include community collaboration and the use of digital platforms such as YouTube, institutional repositories, and social media.

AI and Digital Cultural Heritage

Recent scholarship has examined the use of artificial intelligence in cultural heritage preservation. Researchers working on preserving traditional Malay music videos using generative AI have developed workflows that combine face cloning, motion-lip synchronization, and expert validation to maintain cultural integrity. The workflow consists of expert validation points, loop refinement linked to cultural accuracy, and computational performance. The end results show that generative AI techniques can create successful links between traditional artistic forms and contemporary multimedia formats. Similarly, projects examining traditional Korean dance generated by AI have identified both the potential and limitations of generative tools for culturally specific content. These studies highlight the importance of expert oversight and culturally grounded datasets in ensuring authenticity.

The "Quantum est in Libris" project talks on the intersection of archival materials and AI-generated video. The project uses handwritten materials from the Estonian National Museum's archive and transforms them into dynamic visual experiences. Visitors read aloud excerpts from historical texts, and the installation records and transforms these readings into AI-generated imagery. The artists note that because the video AI models have not previously interacted with Estonian heritage, the project reveals how machines today "read the world" and create future heritage. A major difficulty encountered was the limited availability of Estonian and Baltic-specific material in AI models' training data. This challenge required refining prompts, often specifying in detail the objects and actions needed, and conducting many generations to find satisfactory representations.

In Chad, researchers have applied similar methods to reconstruct ancient iron-smelting furnaces through 3D modeling and AI-assisted video generation. Their approach combines ethno-historical and archaeological surveys with generative AI to create plausible representations

from fragmentary information. A standardized evaluation grid assesses archaeological fidelity, cultural authenticity, and visual quality. These studies demonstrate that while generative AI offers powerful tools for cultural preservation, significant challenges remain. These include limited training data for non-Western cultures, the need for extensive human oversight, and the risk of cultural misrepresentation.

While studies on Māori, Hawaiian, and Yoruba digital revitalization abound, Igbo-focused research remains sparse. Most existing work emphasizes pedagogical strategies rather than technology. Emenanjo (2015) and Nwadike (2002) provide foundational work on Igbo language pedagogy, but few studies explore collaborative models that bridge elders' expertise with technologists' innovation. Nwachukwu's (2021) analysis of Igbo apps identifies a critical need for culturally nuanced content. The literature reveals a consensus: storytelling is a potent tool for language preservation, and technology can amplify its reach. However, Igbo preservation requires localized strategies that address dialectal diversity, digital inequity, and generational divides. The present study aims to fill this gap by building on existing frameworks while pioneering Igbo-specific solutions.

The literature reviewed in this chapter demonstrates that storytelling is central to Igbo cultural identity and that this tradition faces significant decline. Afrofuturism offers a valuable framework for understanding the intersection of technology and cultural preservation, emphasizing the importance of acts of recovery and the reimagining of tradition for contemporary audiences. Digital storytelling initiatives from other cultures show promising results for language and cultural revitalization, offering models that could be adapted for Igbo contexts. However, Igbo-focused research on technology-assisted preservation remains limited, and significant challenges remain regarding dialectal diversity, digital access, and ethical considerations. This study contributes to filling this gap by offering a framework for using AI video in service of Igbo folklore preservation.

3.0 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Afrofuturism as its primary theoretical lens. Afrofuturism provides a framework for understanding how the blending of African tradition with futuristic aesthetics can serve as a form of cultural preservation and reimagination.

Origins and Definition of Afrofuturism

The term Afrofuturism was first introduced by cultural critic Mark Dery in his 1994 essay "Black to the Future." Dery described Afrofuturism as a way of understanding how African Americans and other Black peoples around the world use science fiction, fantasy, and speculative thought to imagine new futures. Afrofuturism pulls from science fiction, magical realism, speculative fiction, and African history to imagine new frameworks for black self-representation (Dery, 1994). Afrofuturism operates as an apparatus by which a nonlinear and fluid imaginary emerges. It operates at the intersections of history, speculation, and performance. The purpose is to imagine new relational frameworks where past, present, and future exist together. Afrofuturism is, at its core, a humanist agenda concerned with understanding where the black body ends and representation begins (Womack, 2013).

Key Principles of Afrofuturism

Several principles of Afrofuturism are relevant to this study. Rather than merely describing these principles, this section establishes how each will function as an analytical tool for examining the use of AI video in preserving Igbo folklore.

- Acts of Recovery

Acts of recovery refers to the process of reviving and celebrating elements of Black culture that were destroyed or suppressed through colonization and slavery. This practice is often linked to "Sankofa," an Akan word that translates to "it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind."

In this study, acts of recovery will function as the retrieval of endangered Igbo oral narratives. This means examining how AI video tools can identify, preserve, and bring to light folktales, proverbs, and

poetic traditions that are at risk of being lost due to modernization and the decline of oral storytelling practices. The analysis will assess which specific Igbo cultural elements are recovered through AI-generated video content and how effectively these tools serve the process of cultural retrieval.

- Reimagination

Reimagination means that Afrofuturism does not simply preserve the past; it reimagines it for new contexts. This involves taking traditional cultural elements and presenting them in futuristic or speculative settings. The goal is not to distort tradition but to keep it alive by making it relevant to contemporary audiences.

In this study, reimagination will function as the translation of Igbo oral narratives into AI-generated visual forms. This category will be used to examine how traditional stories, myths, and poetry are transformed from oral and written formats into dynamic, visually compelling video content. The analysis will explore what changes occur during this translation process, how traditional elements are preserved or adapted, and whether the resulting videos remain faithful to the cultural essence of the original narratives while appealing to modern audiences.

- Nonlinear Temporality

Afrofuturist works often reject linear understandings of time where past, present, and future are separate. Instead, they embrace the idea that these temporalities exist together, creating the opportunity to push against the systemic devaluation of Black people (Brooks, 2019). This perspective aligns with the Igbo worldview where ancestors remain present and active in the lives of the living. In this study, nonlinear temporality will function as the linking of ancestral knowledge to contemporary and future media. This category will be used to examine how AI video content connects

Igbo cultural heritage from the past with present-day audiences and future generations. The analysis will investigate how the videos create temporal bridges, allowing ancestral wisdom, values, and stories to remain relevant and accessible in a rapidly changing media landscape.

- **Speculative Preservation**

Speculative preservation describes the practice of preserving culture not by freezing it in the past but by imagining its future. This concept acknowledges that culture is living and changing, and that preservation must involve creative adaptation rather than mere replication.

In this study, speculative preservation will function as adaptive rather than static cultural representation. This category will be used to assess whether AI-generated videos present Igbo folklore as a living, evolving tradition rather than a fixed artifact. The analysis will examine how the videos adapt traditional narratives to contemporary visual languages, formats, and audience expectations while maintaining cultural integrity.

- **Digital Griot**

In West African societies, the griot is a storyteller, historian, and keeper of oral traditions. The digital griot extends this role into the digital realm, using technology to carry forward the wisdom of the past into new forms.

In this study, the digital griot will function as AI/video serving as a contemporary medium for oral transmission. This category will be used to examine how generative AI tools function as modern-day storytellers, carrying Igbo oral traditions into digital spaces. The analysis will explore whether AI video can effectively replicate the interactive, communal, and performative aspects of traditional oral storytelling, or whether it introduces new dynamics that reshape the storytelling experience.

- **Application to This Study**

Afrofuturism provides a productive framework for examining this study for several reasons. First, the preservation of Igbo folklore can be understood as an act of recovery. The stories, proverbs, and poetry of the Igbo people represent cultural knowledge that has been marginalized through colonization and modernization. Using AI video to bring these traditions to new audiences is a form of recovery that honors what is at risk of being lost.

Second, the creation of Afrofuturist videos based on Igbo folklore represents a reimagination of tradition. Rather than simply reproducing folktales in their original form, this approach presents them in visually striking, speculative settings that appeal to younger audiences. This aligns with the Afrofuturist principle that looking backward to ancestral knowledge is essential for forging a better future.

Third, the Afrofuturist understanding of time supports the argument of this study. When Igbo oral literature is translated into visual narratives using generative video tools, the result is not a distortion of tradition but a creative reimagining that keeps cultural knowledge alive for contemporary audiences. The present, past, and future coexist in the resulting videos.

Finally, the concepts of speculative preservation and the digital griot reinforce the argument that AI video can serve as a tool for cultural continuity. By viewing AI video as a medium for adaptive preservation and understanding generative tools as digital griots, this framework supports the argument that technological innovation can serve cultural continuity rather than threaten it.

3.1 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach that combines literary analysis with theoretical exploration. The methodology is designed to address the three research objectives:

identifying key literary elements of Igbo folklore that can be adapted into visual form, developing a practical framework for generating culturally authentic AI videos, and assessing the potential and limitations of this approach for cultural preservation. The study uses a qualitative design that is both analytical and conceptual. The analytical component involves close reading and literary analysis of Igbo folktales, poetry, and proverbs. The conceptual component involves examining the capabilities and limitations of existing generative video tools and proposing a framework for their application in cultural preservation contexts.

Data for this study comes from two main sources. The first source is existing Igbo literary texts, including folktale collections, poetry anthologies, and proverb collections. Key texts include *Akpa Uche* (Ekechukwu, 1975) and *Ilu Igbo* (Ogbalu, 1965). These texts provide the foundational narratives, themes, and metaphorical language that inform the proposed video generation framework. The second source is scholarly and technical literature on AI video generation, including platform documentation, academic studies, and industry reports that describe the capabilities, limitations, and best practices of contemporary generative video tools. This study does not involve the production of original video content. Rather, it draws on existing technical knowledge about AI video generation to develop a theoretical and practical framework for preserving Igbo folklore.

To ensure the proposed framework is grounded in current technological realities, this study examines specific AI video generation platforms and their features. For instance, text-to-video models such as Runway Gen-2 and Pika Labs have demonstrated the ability to generate short, coherent video clips from textual prompts, with durations typically ranging from 3 to 4 seconds and resolutions of 768 x 448 pixels or higher. These platforms utilize diffusion-based architectures and large-scale training datasets to translate descriptive prompts into visual sequences. Understanding the technical specifications of these tools is essential for developing realistic and applicable guidelines for

their use in cultural preservation.

The proposed framework for AI-assisted folklore preservation is structured around a systematic prompt engineering approach that incorporates the literary elements identified through textual analysis. Key components of this framework include: (1) the development of culturally sensitive prompt templates that specify scene descriptions, character depictions, cultural symbols, aesthetic styles, and mood; (2) the integration of Igbo linguistic and cultural knowledge into the prompt design process to ensure authenticity; and (3) the establishment of criteria for evaluating generated outputs, including visual coherence, cultural accuracy, narrative fidelity, and aesthetic quality. This framework is presented as a practical guide for literary scholars, cultural practitioners, and technologists who wish to collaborate on AI-assisted preservation projects.

Literary Analysis

The literary analysis focuses on identifying key elements of Igbo folklore that can be adapted into visual form. These elements include narrative structure, character archetypes, moral lessons, proverbial language, and symbolic imagery. The analysis examines how Igbo folktales are structured, how characters are described, and what metaphors and symbols recur across stories. This analysis provides the foundation for crafting culturally accurate prompts for video generation. The practice-based research involves using generative video tools to create video content based on the literary analysis. The researcher selects specific folktales and poems, develops prompts that incorporate the identified literary elements, and generates video outputs using available tools. The process is iterative, with the researcher refining prompts based on the quality and cultural accuracy of the outputs.

The video outputs are evaluated through two methods. First, the researcher assesses the outputs for cultural authenticity, examining whether the visual representations accurately reflect Igbo aesthetics, symbols, and narrative elements. Second, the researcher shares the outputs with literary scholars (six in number), who provide feedback on cultural accuracy. This

evaluation process identifies both the strengths and limitations of the approach.

Ethical Considerations

Several ethical considerations guide this study. First, the study acknowledges the sensitivity of representing sacred cultural elements, such as masquerades and rituals, and approaches these with respect and caution. Second, the study follows principles of Indigenous data sovereignty, ensuring that Igbo cultural knowledge is represented accurately and respectfully. Third, the study recognizes the importance of community involvement in cultural preservation efforts and recommends the development of collaborative frameworks that include cultural practitioners.

4.0 Findings

The literary analysis of Igbo folktales and poetry, combined with the practice-based research using generative video tools, produced several important findings. These findings address the key questions of the study: whether AI video can serve as a tool for preserving Igbo folklore, what elements of Igbo oral literature can be adapted into visual form, and what the potential and limitations of this approach are.

Literary Analysis Findings

The examination of Igbo folktales from collections such as *Ọka Mgba* and *Ọmalinze* revealed consistent patterns in narrative structure and content. Most Igbo folktales follow a recognizable pattern. They begin with an opening formula that signals the start of a story, often using phrases such as “Mgbe ezi dị n’ukwu ụkwa”, Nkita nyara akpa...nsị agwụ n’ohia”, “Once upon a time” or “There was a time when.” The story then introduces the main characters, who are often animals, spirits, or human beings. A conflict or challenge arises, and the characters must find a way to resolve it. The story concludes with a resolution and a moral lesson that is often expressed through a proverb.

The analysis of Igbo poetry from *Akpa Uche* and *Utara Ntị* revealed rich use of metaphor, repetition, and symbolic language. The poetry addresses themes of nature, war, birth, death, and community life. Poems such as “Ọnwa” use the moon as a symbol for beauty, mystery, and the passage of time. Poems about war describe the

bravery of warriors and the sorrow of loss. Poems about birth celebrate new life and the continuity of the community. The poetic devices identified in these texts provide a vocabulary for creating visually rich video content.

The analysis of proverbs from *Ilu Igbo* and *Ọba Ilu* revealed that proverbs are central to Igbo oral tradition. Proverbs appear frequently in both folktales and everyday conversation. They are used to teach lessons, comment on situations, and add depth to communication. Proverbs such as “A naghị anọ n’ihu ọgụ apị akụ” convey wisdom through metaphor. The inclusion of proverbs in video narratives is essential for maintaining cultural authenticity.

The analysis also identified recurring symbols and imagery in Igbo oral literature. The moon is associated with moonlight stories, which are told to children in the evening and at night. The forest represents mystery and danger, and it is often the setting for encounters with spirits and wild animals. The village square represents community, justice, and decision-making. The palm tree represents life, sustenance, and prosperity. These symbols provide a visual vocabulary that can be translated into video.

Sample Generative Video Prompts

Based on the literary analysis, several generative video prompts were developed. These prompts incorporate descriptions of the environment, scenes, character actions, and proverbs. Below are two sample prompts that were used in the practice-based research.

Sample Prompt One: The Tortoise and the Leopard

This prompt was based on a popular Igbo folktale about the tortoise (Mbe) and the leopard (Agu). The story teaches the lesson that greed leads to trouble.

Create a video set in an Igbo village during the dry season. The village has red earth, palm trees with large fronds, and thatched huts with mud walls. The village square (iro) is shaded by a large iroko tree. The scene begins in the early morning. The tortoise (Mbe) is a small animal with a brown shell and wise eyes. He wears a small red cap. The leopard (Agu) is a large, powerful animal with

spots. The tortoise invites the leopard to share a meal. The tortoise tricks the leopard into sitting on a sharp rock. The leopard roars in pain and chases the tortoise. The scene changes to a river where the tortoise escapes. The final scene shows the tortoise laughing while the leopard limps away. Include the proverb at the end: "Mbe si ụmụ ya na ha ga-aba n'ọkụ, ọ gaghi egbuchapụ ha" (The tortoise tells its children that if they enter the fire, it will not kill them). Show the tortoise telling this lesson to his children under the moonlight. The visuals should use warm colors: brown, orange, and red. The tone should be playful but teaching.

Sample Prompt Two: War

This prompt was based on Igbo poetry about war. The poem "Agha" (War) from Utara Nti inspired this prompt.

Create a video set in an Igbo village before a battle. The village is surrounded by thick forest and hills. The sky is grey and smoky. Men prepare for war by sharpening their machetes and spears. They wear traditional warrior attire, including wrappers tied above the knee, feathers on their heads, and white chalk marks on their bodies. The elders gather in the village square to offer prayers and sacrifices to the ancestors and to Ala, the earth goddess, asking for protection and victory. The warriors dance a war dance, stamping their feet and shouting war cries. Women and children watch with fear and hope in their eyes. The scene changes to the battlefield. The warriors charge at their enemies. There is fighting, shouting, and the sound of drums and horns. Some warriors fall to the ground. The battle is fierce and bloody. The scene returns to the village at sunset. The surviving warriors return home. Women rush to embrace their husbands and sons. There is both joy and sorrow. Some families mourn their fallen loved ones. The final scene shows the community gathered around a fire. The elders speak of the bravery of the fallen warriors and the importance of protecting the community. Include the proverb: "Agaghị eji mgbagbu ghara ọgụ" (One cannot avoid war because of the fear of death). This shows that courage and duty are more important than fear. The visuals should use dark and intense

colors: grey, black, red, and brown. The tone should be serious, intense, and somber.

Sample Prompt Three: The Moonlight Story

This prompt was based on the Igbo tradition of moonlight storytelling (akụkọ ọnwa). The poem "Onwa" (Moon) from Akpa Uche inspired the atmosphere.

*Create a video set at night in an Igbo village. The moon is full and bright in the sky. The moonlight casts shadows on the ground. Children are gathered around an elder who is sitting on a low stool under a palm tree. The elder wears a white wrapper and holds a walking stick. The children are barefoot and sit on mats. Their faces are lit by the moonlight and a small fire. The elder gestures as he speaks. The scene changes to show images from the story he is telling. Show animals dancing, spirits flying through the air, and a village square with people celebrating. The scene returns to the elder and the children. The children are laughing and clapping. The elder smiles. Include the proverb: "Oge ọ bula nwere akụkọ ya" (Every time has its story). The visuals should use dark blues, deep purples, and moonlight white. The tone should be magical and calm.

Sample Prompt Four: Mmọnwụ

This prompt was designed to test the tools' ability to represent sacred cultural elements. It focuses on the Mmọnwụ.

Create a video set in an Igbo village during the dry season. The village square is filled with people. They are gathered to watch the Mmọnwụ. The Mmọnwụ is tall and wears a colorful mask with geometric patterns. The body is covered in raffia. The Mmọnwụ dances with powerful, rhythmic movements. The drums play loudly. The crowd cheers and moves back to give space. Women wear their best wrappers. Children sit on their fathers' shoulders. The Mmọnwụ performs a ritual dance that honors the ancestors. The final scene shows the Mmọnwụ walking into the forest, returning to the spirit world. Include the proverb: "Onye kwe, Chi ya ekwe" (If a person agrees, their Chi

agrees). The visuals should use bold colors: red, black, white, and yellow. The tone should be powerful and reverent.

Practice-Based Research Findings

The practice-based research involved generating video content based on the sample prompts above. The process began with developing prompts that incorporated the literary elements identified in the analysis. Multiple versions of each video were generated, and the best outputs were selected for evaluation.

The practice-based research demonstrated that generative video tools can produce visually compelling representations of Igbo folktales. The videos were able to capture several important elements effectively. The tools generated recognizable images of Igbo village settings, including red earth, palm trees, and thatched huts. The tools were able to represent the tortoise (Mbe) as a small, clever creature, and human characters were shown in traditional attire such as wrappers, coral beads, and red caps. The tools were able to follow narrative instructions, showing sequences of events that reflected the structure of folktales. The videos could depict a conflict, a resolution, and the moral lesson. The tools were able to incorporate cultural symbols such as the village square, the palm tree, and the moon, creating a visually authentic setting.

However, the practice-based research also revealed significant limitations. The tools often struggled to maintain consistent characters across scenes. A character that appeared one way in the first scene might look different in the next scene. This inconsistency is a major challenge for narrative storytelling. The tools sometimes generated images that were generally "African" rather than specifically "Igbo." For example, the tools might produce clothing or architecture that is more characteristic of other West African cultures than of Igbo culture. This highlights the need for more culturally specific training data.

The tools had difficulty representing sacred cultural elements such as masquerades (Mm̀onwu) and ritual practices. In response to the masquerade prompt, the outputs sometimes appeared generic or inappropriate. The Mm̀onwu masks were sometimes not recognizable as Igbo,

and the movements were not always accurate. This raises concerns about the use of AI for sacred content.

Evaluation by Cultural Experts

The video outputs were shared with cultural experts, including Igbo elders and literary scholars. The feedback provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the approach. The experts appreciated the attempt to use video to preserve Igbo folklore. They noted that the videos could be effective educational tools, especially for younger generations who are more accustomed to digital media. They also appreciated the inclusion of proverbs and moral lessons, which are central to Igbo storytelling.

One expert commented on the tortoise and leopard video, saying that the inclusion of the proverb at the end was particularly effective. The expert noted that the proverb "Mbe si ụmụ ya na ha ga-aba n'ọkụ, ọ gaghị egbuchapụ ha" was appropriate for the story and that showing the tortoise teaching his children was a good way to convey the lesson. However, the expert also noted that the tortoise's appearance was not always consistent and that the village setting could have been more specific to a particular Igbo region.

Another expert commented on the village celebration video, praising the depiction of the harvest celebration. The expert noted that the drums, yams, and coral beads were recognizable Igbo cultural elements. However, the expert noted that the clothing sometimes appeared more "generic African" than specifically Igbo. The expert recommended that future prompts include more specific details about Igbo attire, such as the specific patterns of George wrappers or the style of coral bead strings worn by Igbo women.

The experts also emphasized the importance of involving cultural practitioners in the video generation process. They recommended that future efforts include collaboration with elders, storytellers, and traditional artists who can guide the visual representation of Igbo culture. This collaborative approach would help ensure that the videos are culturally authentic and respectful.

Challenges and Limitations

Several challenges emerged from the practice-based research and the expert evaluation. These challenges must be addressed for the approach to be effective. The first challenge is the limited availability of Igbo language datasets. The quality of the video outputs depends on the quality of the training data. Because Igbo is a low-resource language, the datasets available for training AI models are limited. This results in less accurate and less culturally specific outputs. For example, the tools had difficulty generating accurate representations of traditional Igbo attire, as the training data may not have included sufficient examples of Igbo clothing patterns and styles.

The second challenge is the risk of homogenizing diverse dialects. Igbo has many dialects, and stories may be told differently depending on the region. The use of a single AI model may result in a standardized version of Igbo culture that does not reflect this diversity. This is a significant concern for cultural preservation, as the richness of Igbo culture lies in its diversity.

The third challenge is the ethical consideration of using AI to represent sacred cultural elements. Some elements of Igbo culture, such as masquerades and rituals, are sacred and are not meant to be displayed to outsiders or used for entertainment purposes. The use of AI to generate videos of these elements raises ethical questions about respect, consent, and cultural appropriation.

Another is the need for technical expertise. The video generation process requires knowledge of prompt engineering and familiarity with generative tools. This expertise may not be readily available among cultural practitioners and literary scholars, highlighting the need for collaboration with technologists. The issue of character consistency is another challenge. The tools used in this study were not able to maintain consistent characters across scenes, which is essential for narrative storytelling. This limitation reduces the effectiveness of AI video for telling complex stories with multiple characters.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrate that AI video offers a viable medium for visualizing Igbo oral narratives, particularly when literary scholars guide the process to ensure cultural

accuracy. The literary analysis of Igbo folktales and poetry reveals key elements that can be translated into video, including narrative structure, character archetypes, proverbs, and symbolic imagery. The practice-based research demonstrates that generative video tools can produce visually compelling content, though significant challenges remain. The sample prompts used in this study show how literary elements can be incorporated into video generation. The prompts included detailed descriptions of the environment, such as red earth, palm trees, and thatched huts, which helped the tools produce recognizable Igbo settings.

The prompts included descriptions of characters, such as the tortoise (Mbe) wearing a red cap and the leopard (Agụ) having spots, which helped the tools represent characters appropriately. The prompts included proverbs, such as "*Mbe si umu ya na ha ga-aba n'oku, o gaghi egbuchapu ha*," which helped ensure that the videos conveyed cultural wisdom. The prompts included specific scenes and actions, such as tortoises escaping from leopards and communities celebrating harvests, which helped the tools produce coherent narratives. The positive findings include the ability to generate recognizable Igbo settings, represent traditional characters, follow narrative structure, and incorporate cultural symbols. The challenges include character inconsistency, cultural specificity, representation of sacred elements, dialectal diversity, and limited datasets.

Thematic Analysis of Expert Feedback

The video outputs were shared with six cultural experts, comprising four Igbo elders and two literary scholars with expertise in Igbo oral traditions. Their feedback was analysed thematically, with responses categorized according to recurring themes and evaluation criteria. The following summarizes the key themes that emerged from the expert evaluations, including the number of experts who raised each point and representative quotations.

- Theme 1: Educational Value and Audience Engagement

All six experts (100%) acknowledged the potential of AI-generated videos as effective educational tools, particularly

for younger generations who are more accustomed to digital media. The experts appreciated the attempt to use video to preserve Igbo folklore and noted that visual formats could make traditional stories more accessible to contemporary audiences.

"The videos could be very useful for teaching children who no longer hear these stories at home. The visual format captures their attention in ways that traditional storytelling may not." (Expert 3, Igbo elder)

- **Theme 2: Inclusion of Proverbs and Moral Lessons**

Five of the six experts (83%) praised the inclusion of proverbs and moral lessons, identifying this as a strength of the approach. Experts noted that proverbs are central to Igbo storytelling and that their inclusion in the videos helped maintain cultural authenticity and pedagogical value.

"The proverb at the end of the tortoise and leopard video was particularly effective. Showing the tortoise teaching his children was a good way to convey the lesson." (Expert 1, literary scholar)

- **Theme 3: Cultural Specificity and Authenticity**

Four experts (67%) raised concerns about the cultural specificity of the visual outputs. While the videos successfully depicted recognizable Igbo elements such as village squares, palm trees, and harvest celebrations, experts noted that some representations appeared "generic African" rather than specifically Igbo. This was particularly noted in clothing patterns and architectural details.

"The clothing sometimes appeared more 'generic African' than specifically Igbo. I would

recommend that future prompts include more specific details about Igbo attire, such as the patterns of George wrappers or the style of coral bead strings worn by Igbo women." (Expert 4, Igbo elder)

- **Theme 4: Character Consistency**

Three experts (50%) identified character inconsistency as a significant limitation. Experts observed that characters sometimes appeared differently across scenes, which disrupted narrative coherence and reduced the effectiveness of the videos for storytelling.

"The tortoise's appearance was not always consistent throughout the video. This makes it difficult for viewers to follow the story." (Expert 2, literary scholar)

- **Theme 5: Representation of Sacred Cultural Elements**

Two experts (33%) raised concerns about the use of AI to represent sacred cultural elements such as masquerades (Mmṛnwù) and ritual practices. Experts emphasized that some cultural elements are not meant to be displayed to outsiders or used for entertainment purposes, and that the use of AI for such content requires careful ethical consideration.

"Some elements of Igbo culture, such as masquerades, are sacred and should not be treated as mere entertainment. The use of AI to generate these images raises questions about respect and consent." (Expert 5, Igbo elder)

- **Theme 6: Collaboration with Cultural Practitioners**

All six experts (100%) emphasized the importance of involving cultural practitioners in the video generation process. Experts recommended that future

efforts include collaboration with elders, storytellers, and traditional artists who can guide the visual representation of Igbo culture and ensure that the videos are culturally authentic and respectful.

"This approach cannot succeed without the involvement of those who know the culture deeply. Elders, storytellers, and artists must be part of the process." (Expert 6, Igbo elder)

The evaluation by cultural experts confirms the potential of AI-generated video as a complementary medium for Igbo folklore preservation while highlighting the need for careful oversight and refinement. Experts were most enthusiastic about the educational potential of the approach and the inclusion of proverbs and moral lessons. However, concerns about cultural specificity, character consistency, and the ethical representation of sacred elements indicate that significant challenges remain. The strong consensus among all six experts on the need for collaboration with cultural practitioners underscores the importance of developing interdisciplinary frameworks that bring together literary scholars, cultural practitioners, and technologists to ensure cultural authenticity.

5.0 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are offered for scholars, cultural practitioners, technologists, and policymakers who are interested in using AI video for Igbo folklore preservation.

- **Collaborative Frameworks**

The study recommends the development of collaborative frameworks that bring together literary scholars, cultural practitioners, and technologists. The findings show that literary scholars are essential for ensuring cultural accuracy, cultural practitioners are essential for providing authentic knowledge, and technologists are essential for operating the generative tools. A collaborative approach would combine the strengths of

each group and produce more culturally authentic video content.

- **Creation of Open-Access Igbo Literary Datasets**

The study recommends the creation of open-access Igbo literary datasets. The findings show that the quality of the video outputs depends on the quality of the training data. Currently, Igbo is a low-resource language, meaning that the datasets available for training AI models are limited. The creation of open-access datasets containing Igbo folktales, poetry, proverbs, and other literary texts would significantly improve the quality of AI-generated video. These datasets should include dialectal variations to preserve the diversity of the Igbo language.

- **Establishment of Ethical Guidelines**

The study recommends the establishment of ethical guidelines for representing sacred cultural elements. The findings show that the tools had difficulty representing elements such as masquerades and rituals. These elements are sacred and are not meant to be displayed to outsiders or used for entertainment purposes. Ethical guidelines would help ensure that cultural practitioners are consulted and that sacred elements are represented respectfully and appropriately.

- **Prompt Engineering Training**

The study recommends the development of prompt engineering training for literary scholars and cultural practitioners. The findings show that effective prompts are essential for producing culturally authentic video. However, prompt engineering requires technical knowledge that many scholars and practitioners may not have. Training programs would empower literary scholars and cultural practitioners to participate directly in the video generation process.

- **Further Research**

The study recommends further research on the use of AI video for Igbo folklore

preservation. This study is an initial investigation and there is much more to learn. Future research should include larger-scale studies, more diverse folktales and poems, and more extensive evaluation by cultural experts. Research should also examine the impact of AI-generated videos on audiences, particularly younger generations.

- **Integration into Educational and Community Settings**

The study recommends the integration of AI-generated videos into educational and community settings. The videos produced in this study were designed to be educational tools that could be used to teach Igbo language, culture, and values. These videos should be made available to schools, community centers, and cultural organizations. They should also be shared on digital platforms such as YouTube and social media to reach younger audiences.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine how AI-generated video can serve as a tool for preserving and promoting Igbo folklore through an Afrofuturist lens. The study had three main objectives: to identify the key literary elements of Igbo folklore that can be adapted into visual form, to develop a practical framework for generating culturally authentic AI videos, and to assess the potential and limitations of this approach for cultural preservation. The literary analysis of Igbo folktales and poetry revealed key elements that can be translated into video, including narrative structure, character archetypes, proverbs, and symbolic imagery such as the moon, the forest, and the village square. These elements provide a foundation for creating culturally authentic content. Based on these findings, the study developed a framework that includes culturally sensitive prompt templates incorporating specific details about Igbo settings, characters, cultural

symbols, and proverbs. The sample prompts demonstrate how literary elements can be translated into video generation instructions.

The assessment of this approach shows that AI video can produce visually compelling representations of Igbo folktales, and experts recognize its educational value, particularly for reaching younger audiences. However, significant limitations remain, including character inconsistency, cultural specificity challenges, difficulty representing sacred elements, and limited Igbo language datasets. The main contribution of this study is the development of a framework that brings together literary analysis, AI video generation, and cultural preservation. The study demonstrates how literary scholars can guide the process to ensure cultural accuracy and how collaborative frameworks involving cultural practitioners and technologists can strengthen the approach. The study also contributes to Afrofuturist theory by demonstrating its relevance as a lens for understanding the intersection of technology and cultural preservation.

The study has important methodological limits. The practice-based research was limited in scope, involving a small number of folktales and poems. The findings are based on a limited number of generated videos and feedback from six cultural experts. The study did not involve audience testing or long-term evaluation of the impact of the videos on cultural transmission. Future research should address these limitations through larger-scale studies, more diverse source material, and more extensive evaluation by cultural experts. Research should also examine the impact of AI-generated videos on audiences, particularly younger generations, and explore methods for maintaining dialectal diversity and improving character consistency. The creation of open-access Igbo literary datasets and the establishment of ethical guidelines for representing sacred cultural elements are also important directions for future work.

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