
The Role of New Media in the Preservation and Promotion of Vernacular Languages of Uttarakhand

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Abstract:

Uttarakhand, also referred to as “*Devbhoomi*” (Land of the Gods), has a rich linguistic diversity. The vernacular languages of Uttarakhand like Garhwali, Kumaoni, Bhotia and Jaunsari have been traditionally passed down through oral transmission. These languages are now facing the threat of erosion due to globalization and urban migration. Concurrently, the rise of new media such as social media platforms, blogs, websites, online discussion forums and various mobile applications has transformed communication and cultural expression. The new media offers new prospects for preservation and promotion of vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. This research paper explores the opportunities and challenges for new media in preserving the rich linguistic diversity and cultural heritage of Uttarakhand. The examples highlighted here focus on Garhwali and Kumaoni languages. The study investigates how digital platforms can facilitate language revitalization by enabling speakers to document, share and teach their vernacular languages to wider audiences. Furthermore, the study investigates the role of new media in fostering linguistic pride. The key challenges include digital divide issues, the dominance of major languages, infrastructural limitations and the generational divide, which hinder the broader adoption of these languages. This study also highlights the need for strategic initiatives to harness new media effectively for language preservation. The findings offer insights for policymakers, educators, cultural organizations and individuals aiming to utilize digital technology in promoting linguistic diversity in the region.

Keywords: Uttarakhand, Vernacular languages, New Media, Garhwali, Kumaoni, Cultural heritage

Introduction

Uttarakhand, also referred to as “Devbhoomi” (Land of the Gods), has a rich linguistic diversity. Hindi is the official language of the state and Sanskrit holds the status of an additional official language. Several vernacular languages are also spoken across the region. The People's Linguistic Survey of India has documented 13 languages from Uttarakhand, including 8 tribal languages. These include Garhwali, Kumaoni, Jaunpuri, Bangani, Ranwalti, along with the tribal languages Jaunsari, Jad, Buksa, Raji, Johari, Marchha, Rang Lvu and Tharu. Additionally, the survey has documented 9 dialects within the Garhwali language and 10 within the Kumaoni language. For instance, Garhwali includes dialects such as Salani, Tehriyali, Raathi and Srinagari while Kumaoni includes dialects such as Kumayya, Soryali, Askoti and Gangoli. Each of these dialects is associated with specific geographic areas and communities. These languages and dialects have been traditionally passed down through oral transmission. All these languages, except the Jaunsari language which uses the Sancha or Bagoi script for its religious scriptures, are documented in the Devanagari script. According to UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages, “Language diversity is essential to the human heritage. Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is thus a loss for all humanity” (01). However, globalization and urban migration have posed significant threats to the survival of Vernacular languages of Uttarakhand.

According to the 2011 census, Garhwali is spoken by 23% of the population, Kumaoni by 20% of the population and Jaunsari by 1.3% of the state's population (“Uttarakhand”). UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* designates Garhwali, Kumaoni and Rongpo as the “Vulnerable” languages; Jad, Jaunsari, as the “Definitely Endangered” languages; and Bangani as the “Critically Endangered” language (Moseley). A ‘Vulnerable’ language is one which is not spoken by children outside the home; ‘Definitely Endangered’ language is one which children are not speaking while ‘Critically Endangered’ language is the one for which the youngest speakers are grandparents or older, and are often semi-speakers. Though Vulnerable language is the least worrisome category of the UNESCO Endangered languages, however, it does not take long for a vulnerable language to become extinct (Bhatt). UNESCO's *Atlas* has already declared Rangkas and Tolcha languages of Uttarakhand as Extinct. According to NEP 2020:

“Languages influence the way people of a given culture speak with others, including with family members, authority figures, peers, and strangers, and influence the tone of conversation. The tone, perception of experience, and familiarity/ ‘*apnapan*’ inherent in conversations among speakers of a common language are a reflection and record of a culture. Culture is, thus, encased in our languages. Art, in the form of literature, plays, music, film, etc. cannot be fully appreciated without language. In order to preserve and promote culture, one must preserve and promote a culture's languages” (53).

As also, lines by renowned folk singer of Uttarakhand, Narendra Singh Negi, go: “*Harchana chhann gaun guthyar, riti riwaj, boli bhasha / Yun bachaan hi pachyaan ab Teri / Mutt botiki rakh*” (88); wherein he draws attention towards the declining culture and languages of Uttarakhand and urges its people to preserve them. Thus, preserving Uttarakhand’s vernacular languages is essential to safeguard the region’s cultural identity, historical knowledge and collective wisdom.

According to Minhas and Salawu, when endangered languages are used online, they have a better chance of survival (15). The rise of new media has transformed communication and cultural expression, creating new opportunities for language preservation. New media is “the broad term used in media studies to describe digital technologies for creating, distributing, and consuming content. It encompasses various forms, including social media platforms, podcasts, websites, blogs, streaming services, and many more” (Dhiman 01). Technology plays an important role in addressing the challenges of endangered languages by enhancing documentation, revitalization and dissemination efforts through digital tools and platforms. (Olaare). The study by Paul J Meighan highlights that technology's role in indigenous language revitalization has evolved significantly. It now offers the platform where indigenous communities actively create, negotiate and decolonize digital spaces by asserting their voices and worldviews online. According to Munyadziwa and Mncwango, social media platforms provide a space for self-expression and language learning and thus, preserves and promotes indigenous languages (313). Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable communities to share content in vernacular languages. Moreover, these platforms enable the creation of digital pages and groups centred around vernacular languages. Similarly, Blogs allow individuals to write and share personal stories, cultural insights and folklore to a wider audience. YouTube allows content creators to produce educational, cultural and entertainment videos in vernacular languages. Regional music and movies on platforms like YouTube play a crucial role in preserving and promoting the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. Platforms like YouTube provide an open space for speakers of indigenous languages to express themselves, comment, and engage in language-related discussions (Cru 14). Digital magazines, eBooks and online libraries allow regional writers to preserve their works and showcase them to a global audience. Digital Apps allow effective language learning in an easy and friendly manner. E- news platforms like online news portals and digital newspapers can publish news, articles, stories and other content in vernacular languages. The study, conducted by Kaushik and Dukru, states that the new media has contributed to the preservation and promotion of indigenous languages in Nagaland. Also, according to Sahu, new media can help popularize the native languages of Uttarakhand by integrating them into popular culture and the education system (38). This paper explores the potential and challenges for new media in preserving and promoting the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. The examples highlighted here focus on the Garhwali and Kumaoni languages.

Opportunities For New Media In Preserving And Promoting Vernacular Languages Of Uttarakhand**Documentation-**

New media provides the platform for the documentation, teaching and sharing of vernacular languages. According to Cassels, digital spaces such as social media platforms, blogs, podcasts and YouTube channels enable speakers and enthusiasts of vernacular languages to creatively share and preserve linguistic content at minimal cost. He emphasizes that the archival nature of new media allows this content to be stored indefinitely and accessed at any time in the future (37). Moreover, by capturing spoken language, grammar and folklore in audio, video and written forms, linguistic details can be preserved for future generations. This digital documentation becomes a permanent repository and offers future generations access to rich linguistic resources. For instance, ‘*Ghaseri*’, a popular YouTube channel, promotes and preserves Uttarakhand’s rich heritage of vernacular languages by presenting folk lore in the Garhwali language. Similarly, the podcast series by Sushila Devi Maindola is a remarkable and courageous endeavour to narrate folktales of Uttarakhand in the Garhwali language on ‘RadioIndia.in’. She is a living treasure continuing the tradition of storytelling and keeping Garhwali culture and language alive. “Digital storytelling offers a dynamic and engaging means of transmitting indigenous languages and cultural knowledge, facilitating language revitalization and intergenerational transmission” (Kaushik and Dukru 236). New media, thus, plays a crucial role in cultural revival and allows vernacular languages to thrive in modern accessible forms.

Bridging the geographical gap-

New media has revolutionized the way we disseminate information. It bridges geographical gaps by providing accessibility to a vast audience. With just a few clicks, content can now reach a larger audience. In an interview for The Statesman, Narendra Singh Negi said, “The listeners and viewers have increased many times after the mobile revolution. Technology has played a key role in popularising culture. Otherwise, we could never have imagined a situation that the population of Uttarakhand is about one crore and many of our folk songs have received two-three crore views” (Gusain). Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube etc. enables native speakers to create and share language content with global audience. Moreover, digital platforms reconnect diaspora communities with their cultural heritage and native languages (Cassels 30). Digital spaces sustain language connections and foster a sense of belonging for diaspora communities who have limited native tongue exposure.

Bridging the generational gap-

The new media bridges the generational gaps by connecting the younger generations to their linguistic heritage. New media can engage younger audiences and foster an appreciation for vernacular languages by translating traditional narratives into contemporary formats, such as games and animations (Kolay 313). The use of vernacular languages in trending digital formats like memes, short videos, digital storytelling and vlogs make them relevant and appealing to younger audiences. It engages youth as both creators as well

consumers of regional content. For instance, ‘*Ghaprol Pahadi*’ is a popular YouTube channel in local dialect that showcases humorous, everyday situations set in Uttarakhand, brought to life through engaging animated characters. It caters to a wide range of audiences, entertaining children, youth and adults alike. Notably, a new wave of young artists from Uttarakhand has emerged in the past few years. Young singers and music bands like ‘Pandavaas’ are revitalizing classic Garhwali songs, blending heritage with contemporary style. According to Cru, the integration of vernacular languages into popular music genres, such as rap, can serve as a powerful tool for cultural expression and language reclamation, encouraging youth to embrace and promote their linguistic heritage (14). For instance, Rongpaz is a popular rap singer from Uttarakhand who has a massive fan following in social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube. He has also collaborated with Bollywood rappers, thereby contributing to the revitalization of the language on a larger scale. Digital platforms, thus, play a significant role in revitalizing interest in vernacular languages across generations.

Language learning-

New media platforms offer access to online language classes, pronunciation guides and cultural resources. The interactive forums and video tutorials provide structured learning environments and personalized language learning experiences. It help learners immerse themselves in the details of vernacular languages. For instance, ‘Garhwali Dictionary’ and ‘Kumaoni’ are the digital apps that teaches the respective languages, their vocabulary and grammar in a user-friendly manner. Also, there is an Instagram account ‘da_bal_garhwali’ that provides small articles in garhwali language. Similarly, ‘euttaranchal.com’ is a website dedicated to promoting and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Garhwali and Kumaoni communities. It also offers resources for learning the Garhwali and Kumaoni languages by providing English sentence translations. These are just a few examples of how indigenous languages are being used online today, however, there are many more. The examples were found directly on the platforms.

Cultural exchange- Cultural exchange occurs organically on digital platforms, as users from different cultural backgrounds share and learn about each other’s languages and traditions. “The public nature of new media means that the Indigenous language content is not restricted to members of that community” (Cassels 30). Such platforms enable both language learners and native speakers to form a global community, connected through a shared interest in linguistic and cultural heritage. For instance, in today’s reel culture, there has been a surge in global popularity of regional songs from Uttarakhand. These traditional songs have transcended cultural boundaries. Recently, the Kumaoni song “*Gulabi Sharara*” took the world by storm, garnering millions of views globally. The song became so popular, that it inspired a viral trend. Celebrities from different cultural backgrounds in India and around the world participated and shared their own renditions of the song. (D.S.Negi). New media, thus, introduces the rich cultural heritage of Uttarakhand to diverse audiences.

Employment and self-reliance- The new media offers significant opportunities for employment and self-reliance to native speakers of vernacular languages. The new media eliminates distance and language as a barrier for showcasing talent and empowers individuals to harness their skills and resources locally. It, thus, prevents migration, which in turn reduces the threat of languages becoming endangered. When people move out of their native places into nuclear families, there is no provision for transferring their languages to the new generations (Devy et al. li). Geeta Devi, a digital content creator, in one of her YouTube videos, expresses joy and gratitude on getting her first payment from her YouTube content. The moment is made more special by her old mother, who can be seen displaying emotions of pride and gratitude, blessing her daughter's audience for their support ("*Meri Youtube Ki Pehli Payment Aa Gayi*"). Geeta Devi has garnered over 88,000 followers on her Facebook page and more than 14,000 subscribers on YouTube. She creates vlogs in the Garhwali language. Her increasing followers reflects the growing interest and popularity of the language among users. Geeta Devi is just one example among many content creators working tirelessly to preserve and promote the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand and generate a source of income for the family. She represents a growing community of creators dedicated to preserve the cultural identity of Uttarakhand. The new media, thus, not only provides access to income-generation opportunities even in remote villages but also serves as a valuable means to reduce migration from Uttarakhand.

Celebrating the linguistic heritage- New media provides locals with platforms to celebrate their linguistic heritage. Social media, video streaming and other digital tools encourage speakers to create content that showcases their language in diverse contexts. For instance, videos showcasing local festivals like *Harela*, enriched with traditional folk songs, have gone viral on platforms like Instagram and YouTube. It encourages natives to take pride in their heritage. Recently, Kamla Devi, a folk singer from Bageshwar, Kumaon and Priyanka Meher, a young singer from Uttarakhand, together have recreated Uttarakhand's epic love story 'Rajula Malushahi' on digital media. Later, Kamla Devi also collaborated with Bollywood singers and took the love story to the 2nd Season of Coke Studio Bharat. The comments section is filled with people praising the song and expressing pride in seeing their culture represented on such a large platform. One of the comments says, "As a kumaoni settled in Germany..this video transported me to my Homeland for a while.. Proud moment! भौते भल लागो!". Another comment says, "I am Nigerian and I would not understand a single thing if it weren't for the translations provided. But I have to say this is the most beautiful music I have ever heard. It is how the instruments are combined to create such an amazing harmony of sounds. This is so beautiful and I give kudos to everyone involved with the production of this song. Much love". When native speakers see their language being celebrated and learned by others, it reinforces a sense of cultural identity and belonging. It, thus, normalizes the use of vernacular languages beyond traditional settings.

Social media activism- New media provides platforms for social media activism where regional languages have been effectively used to connect people, foster a sense of unity and uphold cultural identity. According to Cassels, hashtags serve as a powerful tool for community empowerment (32). For instance, the Garhwali song "Bhu Bugyal" by Pandavaas and Barmiquaunl, emerged as a popular musical expression advocating for land rights in Uttarakhand. It became an anthem for the *#Uttarakhand_Mange_Bhu_Kanoon* Movement, which calls for stringent land laws to protect the rights of the indigenous population. The song has resonated deeply with audiences, amassing over 42000 views on YouTube. It has also inspired numerous renditions by different users across various social media platforms. Reels, short videos and creative reinterpretations of the song have been widely shared on Instagram, Facebook and even WhatsApp statuses. The song became a powerful tool of digital activism, uniting the community.

Dialogue and collaboration- Through new media, communities can engage in dialogue and collaborate on language preservation projects. Ruchika Rai, in her study, highlights that the Facebook serves as a platform for Kumaoni people to share their language and culture online. It gives them a virtual space to discuss about their identity and problems like linguistic and cultural marginalization (116). It illustrates how new media platforms like Facebook enable community interaction in the digital realm. Also, 'Storyweaver', an initiative by Pratham Books, is a digital repository of open access multilingual story books in over 300 languages. It enables the creation and translation of stories in multiple languages including international as well as indigenous languages such as Garhwali and Kumaoni.

Events, webinars and conferences- New media presents significant opportunities to preserve and promote the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand by hosting local and international events, webinars and conferences dedicated to linguistic and cultural heritage. According to Minhas and Salawu, new media platforms such as audio-video conferencing tools, social networks and other online platforms enable people across the globe to connect and interact in their target languages, regardless of physical location (14). Thus, new media allows communities to come together, share stories and actively engage in language revitalization efforts.

Challenges

Digital Divide- The new media faces several significant challenges in preserving and promoting the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. One of the foremost challenges is the digital divide, marked by limited internet access, poor internet connectivity and low digital literacy in many rural areas of the state. In 2021, a state government survey of 5.20 lakh schoolchildren out of its 23.39 lakh found that 2.14 lakh had no digital devices to pursue online learning (Financial Express). Furthermore, due to limited digital literacy, many native language speakers are unable to access social media platforms, which in turn hinders their ability to create and share digital content in their own languages. As a result, digital engagement with native languages remains low which limits the opportunities for their revitalization.

Dominance of Major Languages- The second major challenge is the dominance of major languages and the consequent language shift. The new media often amplify the dominance of already dominant languages, as the speakers of regional languages frequently resort to using dominant languages online to reach a broader audience (Keegan et al. 60). In Uttarakhand, the dominance of Hindi and English languages can be seen. According to the 2011 census Hindi is spoken natively by 43 per cent of the population (“Uttarakhand”). It is used throughout the state as a lingua franca. It often overshadow regional languages, leaving these endangered languages at risk of diminishing. Similarly, English language is widely regarded as the language of international business, education, and career advancement. As people move to urban areas for better opportunities, there is increasing inclination towards learning English. Moreover, there is a widespread use of English in media, social media and other digital platforms. Even the platforms motivated towards promoting the cultural identity of Uttarakhand tends to use Hindi or English as medium of expression. As a result, vernacular languages struggle to maintain their foothold within these platforms. It is also seen that the new media platforms like Instagram accounts, YouTube channels and Facebook pages dedicated to the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand tend to have relatively few followers.

Generational Divide- Generational divide is another major challenge in the path of preservation and promotion of vernacular languages. Younger generations, both as a content creator and as a user, often prioritize Hindi or English over their vernacular languages. They find the former more relevant in modern social and professional settings. They view the vernacular languages as outdated or unnecessary. Thus, there is a shift away from native languages towards mainstream languages which further endangers the survival of vernacular languages.

Infrastructural limitations- Technological support and infrastructural limitations hinder the efforts to document and promote these languages. According to Cassels, indigenous languages often lack support in tools like spell check, predictive text and speech recognition because these technologies need large amounts of data to work well. Since endangered languages have smaller data sets, they are often poorly supported or not supported at all. However, people can help improve support for these languages just by using them more often (33). Also, language preservation requires adequate funding and extensive resources, such as recording equipment, translation work, and digital platforms, which are often costly. Furthermore, since none of the languages of Uttarakhand enjoys the constitutional status of Scheduled Languages, government initiatives and digital projects that typically focus on Scheduled Languages often exclude the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. These languages also lack recognition as official languages within Uttarakhand, further limiting their institutional support. The concern has also been highlighted by Sahu in her study (35).

Lack of high quality and authentic content- According to Minhas and Salawu, to make sure that the digital content is high-quality and authentic is yet another challenge in preservation and promotion of vernacular languages. They also point out that maintaining user engagement consistently over time can be challenging. Over time, people may lose interest if they don't feel connected to the content or the content feels boring or repetitive (14). Further, Cassels points out that, if an account stops posting regularly, it gradually disappears from users' news feeds and can only be found through direct searches. As a result, it can be easily forgotten by the community (36). Therefore, the content must be both enjoyable as well as regular for both native speakers and learners. For instance, euttaranchal has shared only three lessons on Garhwali language translations, with the last update made in March 2024. Similarly, 'Ambecine' was the first OTT app launched in 2022 that aimed to showcase movies, web series, and songs in Garhwali and Kumaoni languages. However, the platform was discontinued after a short period. While the exact reason for its shutdown is not officially documented, possible factors could include limited audience reach, low youth engagement, technical challenges or financial constraints. Thus, all these challenges hinder the new media's efforts to preserve and promote vernacular languages of Uttarakhand.

Online Criticism and Cultural Policing- According to Cassels, online criticism is a significant challenge faced by indigenous language users when sharing their culture and language on digital platforms. This criticism often comes not only from speakers of dominant languages but also from within the same community (35). In Uttarakhand, many indigenous content creators—particularly women—face backlash for allegedly misrepresenting Pahari culture or for not adhering to traditional norms, such as wearing specific attire. They are often subjected to negative comments and are expected to behave in culturally prescribed ways. Such cultural policing discourages creative expression and limits the participation of diverse voices in digital spaces, thereby affecting the efforts of language preservation.

Recent Advancements

With globalization and modernization affecting linguistic diversity worldwide, these indigenous languages face the risk of extinction unless proactive measures are taken. The UN has declared 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages to highlight the plight of endangered languages and mobilize efforts for their preservation. The Indian government recognizes that regional languages need to be preserved for future generations. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Uttarakhand's 25th Foundation Day, 09 Nov 2024 has urged the people of Uttarakhand to preserve their cultural identity by teaching local dialects like Garhwali, Kumauni and Jaunsari to future generations (PM Modi makes these '9 requests'). A report, "Languages matter: global guidance on multilingual education" was released by UNESCO on 25th anniversary of International Mother Language Day on 21st February 2025. It emphasizes the importance of multilingual education in promoting quality and inclusive learning. The report guides educational ministries and other stakeholders in incorporating multilingual education into the policy-making. It advocates the increase in availability of digital resources to support multilingual education. India's National Education Policy 2020 places significant emphasis on the promotion and integration of regional

languages across various levels of education. It recognizes their importance for learning, cultural identity and national unity. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the use of new media to preserve and promote vernacular languages by developing and distributing educational software in all major Indian languages, accessible to students and teachers at every level. Platforms like DIKSHA and SWAYAM provide e-content in regional languages, ensuring access to quality educational resources even for students in remote areas and Divyang students (57). Google Indic Keyboard now supports Kumaoni and Garhwali, the two major languages of Uttarakhand. Users can type in Roman script, and the text will appear in Devanagari script in Kumaoni or Garhwali. This move enables people to communicate on phones and social media in their native languages. Bharatavani, developed by the Ministry of Education, serves as a multilingual knowledge portal, offering educational resources in multiple Indian languages. In Uttarakhand, various initiatives have emerged on new media platforms to support and promote vernacular languages. DD Uttarakhand is a regional television channel operated by Doordarshan, India's Public Service Broadcaster. It also has a YouTube channel with 3 88,000 subscribers that focuses on delivering content that reflects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the state, including programming in regional languages such as Garhwali and Kumaoni. In the recent years, the digital presence of not only the educated people but also the people from uneducated sector and remote villages of Uttarakhand have increased. The rise of new media has led to a significant surge in the production and consumption of regional songs and movies. Also, there has been an increasing trend of inclination towards regional languages of Uttarakhand. For instance, the Garhwali movie *Pitrakuda*, based on the culture and traditions of Uttarakhand, garnered over 8 lakh views within a year of its release on YouTube. This reflects the growing popularity of regional languages and the audience's deep interest in culturally rooted content.

Recommendations

- According to Munyadziwa and Mncwango, increased content contribution in indigenous languages can enhance online resources (313). Also, according to Sahu, digital documentation—especially through audio-visual recordings—should be incorporated into Uttarakhand's language policies to protect the linguistic diversity (38). Thus, digitizing oral traditions and regional content through e-books, audio recordings, videos, podcasts, mobile apps, social media, digital news channels and newspapers would further preserve cultural heritage for future generations. While many books are being translated in Kumaoni and Garhwali, efforts should also be made to make them available digitally. The documentation and revitalization efforts should be equally extended to other vernacular languages of Uttarakhand.
- Introducing smart classes with regional languages as the medium of instruction can ensure better learning. Additionally, regional languages should be included as subjects in the school curriculum. Introducing vernacular languages in both primary and secondary education supports the preservation of local languages from an early age. According to a newspaper report, Pauri district, in 2019, became the first in Uttarakhand to formally introduce a Garhwali language curriculum for classes 1 to

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5. A 16-member expert committee developed the curriculum, which was officially launched by then-Chief Minister, Trivendra Singh Rawat in June 2019. Teaching began in 79 government schools of Pauri block with colorful, culturally rooted textbooks titled *Dhaguli*, *Hansuli*, *Chhubki*, *Paijbi*, and *Jhumki*. However, the program was discontinued within a year during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed. (Bisht). Additionally, teachers and educators should be proficient in modern digital technology and regional languages to enhance the educational experience of students. Educational initiatives, such as online courses or gamified learning apps, can attract children and youth. These recommendations align with the goals outlined in the National Education Policy 2020.
- State government websites, public service platforms, Public Helplines, digital apps should be made available in regional languages as well. This will not only promote these languages but also enhance user experience. The study by Riyal et al. highlights the need for speech databases in regional languages like Garhwali, which is essential for developing voice input/output systems. It emphasizes that such technologies help ordinary people, including farmers, access government or agricultural information without a need to know English or operate computers (186). Furthermore, government-backed AI platforms and digital initiatives like BharatGen, Bhashini and Anuvadini should also be expanded to support the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand, such as Garhwali and Kumaoni.
 - Awareness programs run by various government departments should be conducted in the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. Additionally, promoting the use of these languages in government communications, local events and cultural festivals digitally can reinforce their significance.
 - Government bodies should collaborate with technology companies to create dedicated spaces for promoting vernacular languages.
 - Collaborations with content creators to produce films, web series and podcasts in vernacular languages can amplify their visibility and modern relevance. Government should offer workshops, grants or incentives to regional content creators for producing high-quality, authentic and culturally rooted content.
 - Developing multilingual digital platforms, language learning applications, e-books in regional languages can provide accessible resources for learning and practicing vernacular languages.
 - To bridge the digital divide, the reading materials across various platforms should be made available offline and in downloadable formats. This approach can enhance inclusive teaching, learning and sharing experience.
 - It is essential to allocate a proper budget for building robust digital infrastructure and for implementing digital literacy programs. It will ensure inclusive digital growth in Uttarakhand.
 - Vernacular languages of Uttarakhand currently lack official recognition from both the
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central and state governments. They are often classified merely as 'mother tongues' and widely regarded as dialects of Hindi rather than distinct languages. According to Sunil Kumar Bhatt, official recognition could open avenues for institutional funding, which would support the development and standardization of Garhwali (95). It will enable funding for linguistic preservation and promotion projects such as the creation, translation, documentation and archiving of regional content online. Also, proper monitoring and evaluation of these projects should be ensured.

- While developing databases in regional languages, it is essential to ensure both authenticity and quality of content. Additionally, content creators should avoid misrepresenting or offending local traditions, values or sentiments. If the content offends the intended audience, it may lead to disengagement, ultimately undermining efforts to preserve and promote these languages.

These initiatives can play a transformative role in preserving and promoting the vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. Also, further research is required to explore various ways of leveraging new media for promoting linguistic diversity of Uttarakhand.

Conclusion

New media offers a promising platform for language revitalization in Uttarakhand. Documentation, bridging the geographical and generational gaps, language learning, cultural exchange, employment and self-reliance, celebrating the linguistic heritage, social media activism, dialogue and collaboration are the opportunities for new media in preserving and promoting vernacular languages of Uttarakhand. Though new media has emerged as a valuable platform to expand the reach of vernacular languages, several challenges still hinder its effectiveness. The digital divide, dominance of major languages, generational divide, technological support and infrastructural limitations, lack of high quality and authentic content and online criticism are the challenges faced by new media in language revitalization efforts. However, addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities requires strategic initiatives and collaborations. There is the need for policymakers, educators, cultural organizations and individuals to leverage digital technology in promoting linguistic diversity and cultural heritage in the region. The use of digital tools for preservation of vernacular languages can be effective in both engaging future generations and ensuring that the language retains its authenticity. Social media platforms which showcase content in regional languages can engage the younger generation and create a sense of pride in their linguistic roots. Thus, new media can be used to preserve, promote and even teach vernacular languages through various digital formats. While the examples highlighted here focus on Garhwali and Kumaoni, further research is required to explore the representation of other regional languages of Uttarakhand in new media.

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