Benefits of Digitization of a Language

TRANSLATION
COMMONS

2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
Indigenous Languages

Benefits of Digitization of a Language

We hope the Zero To Digital series of guidelines will offer any interested language community a clear path to digitization if they wish to enjoy full computer capabilities in their native language.

The benefits of rendering a language in digital form will depend on the goals of its speaker community. These may include celebrating the beauty of the language, maintaining knowledge systems, disseminating values, creating apps and products, sharing stories and histories, facilitating environmental stewardship and thought leadership, and expanding trade, education, employment, entertainment, health, and safety. Digitization allows a community to avail itself of an ever-expanding set of computer-based tools for language maintenance, revitalization, and education. A strong digital presence online, and therefore increased visibility, may help influence government policies in support of Indigenous communities and tip businesses toward inclusion. Given the ubiquity of smartphones among youth, digitization may be a natural avenue to engage them with their native language. Greater exposure via digital platforms can lead to more opportunities and demand for native speakers.

When language communities take their place on the global stage via digital platforms, it benefits the broader world. Their experiences, knowledge, and unique worldviews will be a significant contribution to the rest of the world, and the resulting synergies may bring new solutions to the world's problems. Digitization facilitates the preservation and publication of this information, making the breadth and nature of human language available to the world and preserved for humanity's benefit in ways we cannot yet predict.

To summarize, some of the benefits gained by language digitization are:

- Enable monolingual speakers to easily access, create, and exchange native language content, including across long distances, and to individuals or large groups.

- Increase access to medical and healthcare information.

- Support lifesaving emergency and disaster communications.

- Expand both local and e-commerce.

- Create new avenues for sharing art, thought leadership, and philosophies.

- Develop native-language educational materials.

- Improve relations and communications with neighbors.

- Improve dispute resolution.

- Enable advocacy and access to legal and governmental procedures in the native language.

- Increase access to information on the Internet for education, commerce, and participation, whether in the native language or other languages as translation tools develop.

- Bring recognition of native language, culture, and wisdom to others.

- Expand the role and visibility of Indigenous communities globally.

- Enable marginalized or minoritized groups to sustain or revitalize their language even though engulfed by dominant groups.

- Preserve native knowledge systems, culture, history, art, medicine, wisdom, values, and worldview.