

Bola Agbonile Is Reimagining Heritage Language Learning Through AI and Cultural Intelligence

ITHACA, NY, UNITED STATES, March 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- How a Former Enterprise Product Leader Is Building Technology to Preserve Identity, Strengthen Belonging, and Reconnect Generations

When Bola Agbonile set out to teach her second-generation children Yorùbá, she encountered a quiet but widespread challenge: the tools simply did not exist.

Mainstream language apps perform well for widely spoken European languages. But tonal African languages like Yorùbá — where meaning shifts with pitch — remain largely unsupported by modern speech technology. Pronunciation feedback is often inaccurate. Cultural nuance is limited. The experience can feel transactional rather than transformational.



Rather than accept that gap, Bola decided to build a solution.

Today, she is the Founder and Product Lead of Zabbot LLC, an emerging AI-powered heritage language platform focused on preserving and revitalizing culturally significant languages, beginning with Yorùbá. Zabbot is currently in development and is being engineered specifically to address the tonal complexity that mainstream platforms often overlook.

The platform is being designed to integrate natural language processing, speech recognition, and text-to-speech technologies with deep cultural intelligence. Its AI-driven pronunciation system is being developed to evaluate tonal precision — a critical component in languages where a change in pitch can alter meaning entirely. In addition to conversational practice, the platform will

incorporate folktales, proverbs, and culturally grounded dialogue to create immersive learning experiences rooted in identity and belonging.

For Bola, this is more than product innovation. It is preservation.

From Enterprise Scale to Purpose-Driven Innovation

Before founding Zabbot, Bola spent over two decades leading complex technology initiatives at global companies. At Starbucks, she served in senior technology and product roles and earned a U.S. patent for an AI-driven system that improved customer wait-time transparency — enhancing digital customer experience at enterprise scale. Earlier in her career at Microsoft, she worked as a Software Development Engineer in Test (SDET), contributing to large-scale software quality and delivery.

Her professional background spans innovation leadership, agile product development, cross-functional collaboration, and the successful launch of enterprise-scale digital products.

After years of building systems that optimized efficiency and convenience, Bola felt compelled to apply her expertise to a more enduring challenge — ensuring that heritage languages are not lost in an increasingly digital world.

Now working full-time as founder of Zabbot LLC, she is channeling her enterprise experience into building technology infrastructure for languages historically underserved by mainstream AI systems.

With a foundation in electrical engineering and an MBA in Finance and Marketing from the University of Lagos, Bola brings both technical rigor and strategic vision to her ventures. She approaches heritage language preservation not as a niche interest, but as a scalable and sustainable innovation opportunity.

Founder-Market Fit: Building from Lived Experience

Bola's work is deeply personal.

As a Yorùbá heritage speaker and mother of two adult children raised in the diaspora, she understands firsthand how quickly language fluency can fade across generations. She has experienced the emotional gap that emerges when cultural expression becomes limited to fragmented phrases rather than a full conversation.

That lived experience informs the design philosophy behind Zabbot.

The platform is being developed not only to teach vocabulary, but to help restore cultural continuity. It will provide structured conversational pathways reflective of real-life Nigerian contexts, while fostering community engagement through interactive learning opportunities.

For diaspora communities, heritage language retention extends beyond linguistics — it reinforces identity, belonging, and intergenerational connection. Zabbot aims to serve that need with both technological precision and cultural authenticity.

Expanding Cultural Connection Beyond Language

Bola's broader entrepreneurial portfolio reflects a consistent theme: reconnection.

In addition to Zabbot, she co-leads Beacon VIP Concierge Limited (BVCL), a premium lifestyle and travel concierge service in Nigeria that supports diaspora travelers seeking seamless, culturally immersive experiences. She is also developing NaijaSparks, a culturally aligned matchmaking platform designed to foster meaningful relationships within the Nigerian diaspora.

Across these initiatives, her work centers on strengthening ties between individuals and their cultural roots — whether through language, travel, or human connection.

Advocating for Inclusive AI

As artificial intelligence continues to shape global communication systems, Bola advocates for inclusive AI frameworks that recognize tonal complexity, oral traditions, and linguistic diversity beyond dominant Western languages.

Her work challenges the assumption that technological advancement must prioritize only high-resource markets. Instead, she is contributing to a broader shift — one that positions culturally significant languages as worthy of technical investment and innovation.

A Vision Grounded in Faith, Family, and Impact

Guided by values of faith, family, and service, Bola approaches entrepreneurship with both discipline and purpose. Outside of her professional work, she finds joy in dancing with family, taking road trips, and observing the world with curiosity — practices that fuel her reflective and strategic mindset.

Her transition from enterprise product leader to founder of a heritage language technology platform reflects a deeper evolution: from optimizing transactions to safeguarding identity.

As Zabbot progresses toward commercial launch, Bola Agbonile is demonstrating that technology can do more than scale convenience. It can preserve culture, strengthen belonging, and reconnect generations to the language that shapes who they are.

Learn More about Bola Agbonile:

Through her Influential Women profile, <https://influentialwomen.com/connect/bola-agbonile>

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