



MedLing: A MULTILINGUAL NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING FRAMEWORK FOR MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS SUPPORT SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT: *Access to digital healthcare in Nigeria remains limited by language barriers, as most medical platforms are designed primarily in English, while a large portion of the population communicates in indigenous languages. This gap often prevents users from accurately describing symptoms, restricting effective communication and access to appropriate healthcare services. This study presents a multilingual medical diagnosis system capable of accepting symptom descriptions in English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Nigerian Pidgin. The system generates ranked differential diagnoses with clinically grounded descriptions and treatment recommendations delivered in the user's preferred language. Using advances in Natural Language Processing, the framework employs the Aya Expanse 8B model, deployed through Ollama, to translate indigenous inputs into English for downstream analysis. Treatment recommendations are generated through a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) architecture integrating WHO Essential Medicines guidelines, Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) protocols, NIH MedlinePlus, and OpenFDA resources. Output reliability is improved through deterministic description generation, a three-tier language refinement pipeline, and hallucination detection algorithms, while Supabase manages authentication and interaction history. Evaluation results show strong performance, achieving 89% Top-3 accuracy, low hallucination rates, and high linguistic reliability, demonstrating the effectiveness of the proposed hybrid deterministic-RAG framework for multilingual healthcare support in low-resource African languages.*

KEYWORDS: Natural Language Processing, Multilingual Medical Diagnosis, Nigerian Indigenous Languages, Large Language Models, Retrieval-Augmented Generation, Health Information System.



INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of healthcare technologies and the increasing demand for accessible medical services have accelerated the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into healthcare information systems. Early systems were largely static and rule-based, with limited adaptability and reliance on predefined knowledge structures. Their monolingual design further restricted usability across linguistically diverse populations, reducing their effectiveness in global healthcare contexts (Nallasivan et al., 2025).

Natural Language Processing (NLP), a subfield of artificial intelligence focused on enabling machines to understand and generate human language, has evolved from rule-based approaches to statistical models and, more recently, to deep learning techniques driven by large language models. These advancements have enabled the development of AI-powered symptom checkers capable of interpreting patient-reported symptoms, extracting insights from unstructured data, and providing preliminary diagnostic guidance in real time (Jensen et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2018; Rahul et al., 2025).

Despite these improvements, many existing systems depend on static databases and lack dynamic mechanisms for incorporating real-time user input and contextual adaptation (Nallasivan et al., 2025). In addition, limited multilingual support continues to restrict accessibility, particularly for users in under-resourced linguistic environments (Doshi et al., 2025; Nguyen et al., 2023). These challenges reduce the overall effectiveness and inclusivity of current digital healthcare solutions.

This study addresses these limitations by proposing a multilingual medical symptom checker that processes input across multiple languages while maintaining contextual understanding and diagnostic reliability. The system integrates advanced NLP techniques with adaptive capabilities to improve accessibility, inclusivity, and the overall performance of AI-driven healthcare systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of medical diagnosis systems has evolved from simple rule-based programs to more advanced systems powered by artificial intelligence. Earlier systems relied on fixed rules and static medical databases, which made them limited in handling complex or unclear patient inputs. With the introduction of Natural Language Processing (NLP), modern systems can now process unstructured data such as patient descriptions and clinical notes, allowing for more flexible and accurate interpretations of symptoms (Jensen et al., 2012; Jurafsky & Martin, 2021).

A major breakthrough in this area came with the introduction of transformer-based models, which improved how machines understand context in language. Models like BERT have shown strong performance in interpreting complex medical text and identifying key information such as symptoms and conditions (Devlin et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2018). These advancements made it possible for systems to move beyond keyword matching and begin understanding meaning, which is essential for accurate diagnosis.



As research progressed, attention shifted toward multilingual systems that can serve diverse populations. Models such as mBERT and mT5 were developed to handle multiple languages by learning shared representations across them (Pires et al., 2019; Xue et al., 2021). However, challenges such as limited data for indigenous languages, cultural differences in symptom expression, and translation errors still affect performance (Rathore et al., 2023; Tanaka et al., 2023). This is particularly important in regions like Nigeria, where many users are more comfortable communicating in local languages.

In addition, large language models such as GPT and LLaMA have improved the ability of systems to generate human-like and context-aware responses (Brown et al., 2020; Touvron et al., 2023). Despite their strengths, these models can sometimes produce inaccurate or unverified information. To address this, Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) has been introduced, allowing systems to combine AI-generated responses with trusted medical sources such as WHO guidelines, thereby improving reliability (Lewis et al., 2020; WHO, 2019).

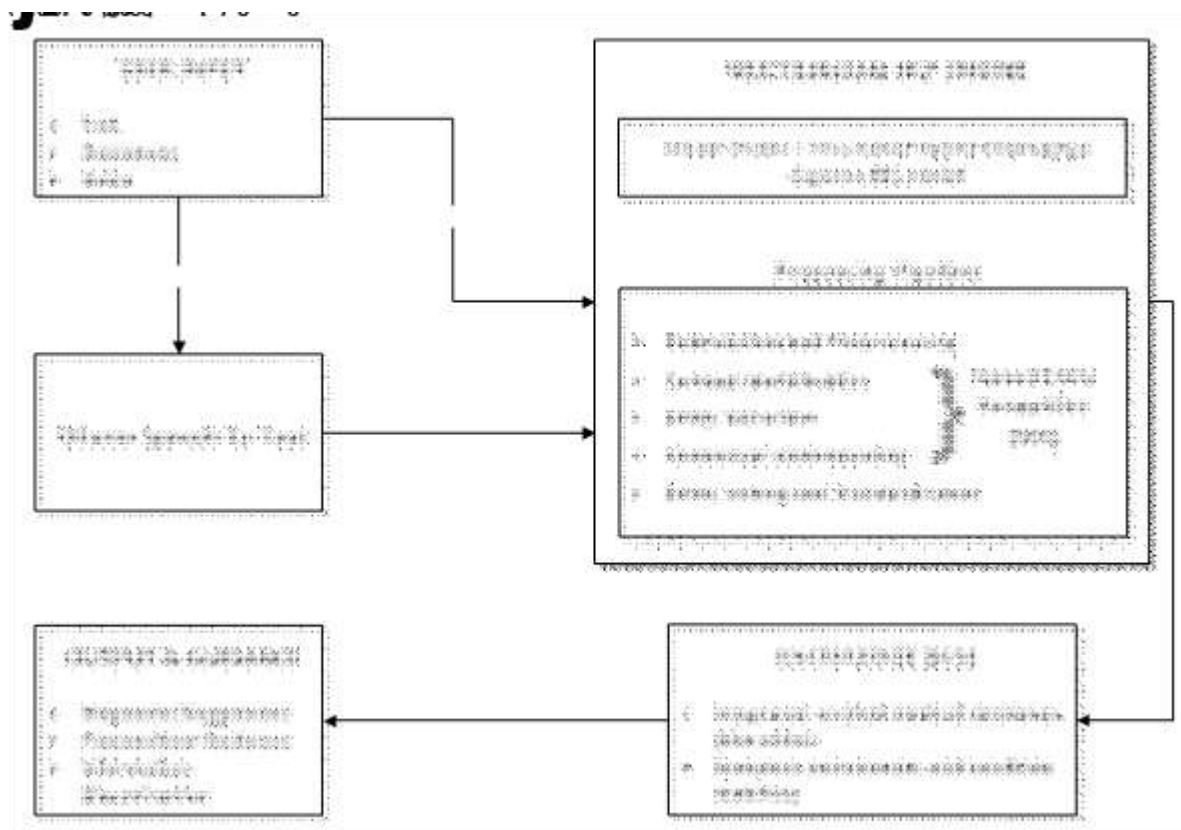
Overall, while significant progress has been made in AI-driven medical diagnosis systems, gaps still exist in terms of multilingual support, accuracy, and access to reliable information. Many existing systems remain English-focused and rely on static data. This study addresses these limitations by developing a multilingual diagnosis system that combines NLP, large language models, and a RAG framework, using a two-step approach to improve both accuracy and accessibility in healthcare delivery

METHODOLOGY

A structured four-stage methodology was adopted: System Design, NLP Pipeline Architecture, Implementation, and Evaluation. The design philosophy prioritizes language inclusivity, diagnostic accuracy, and system resilience.

Conceptual Model

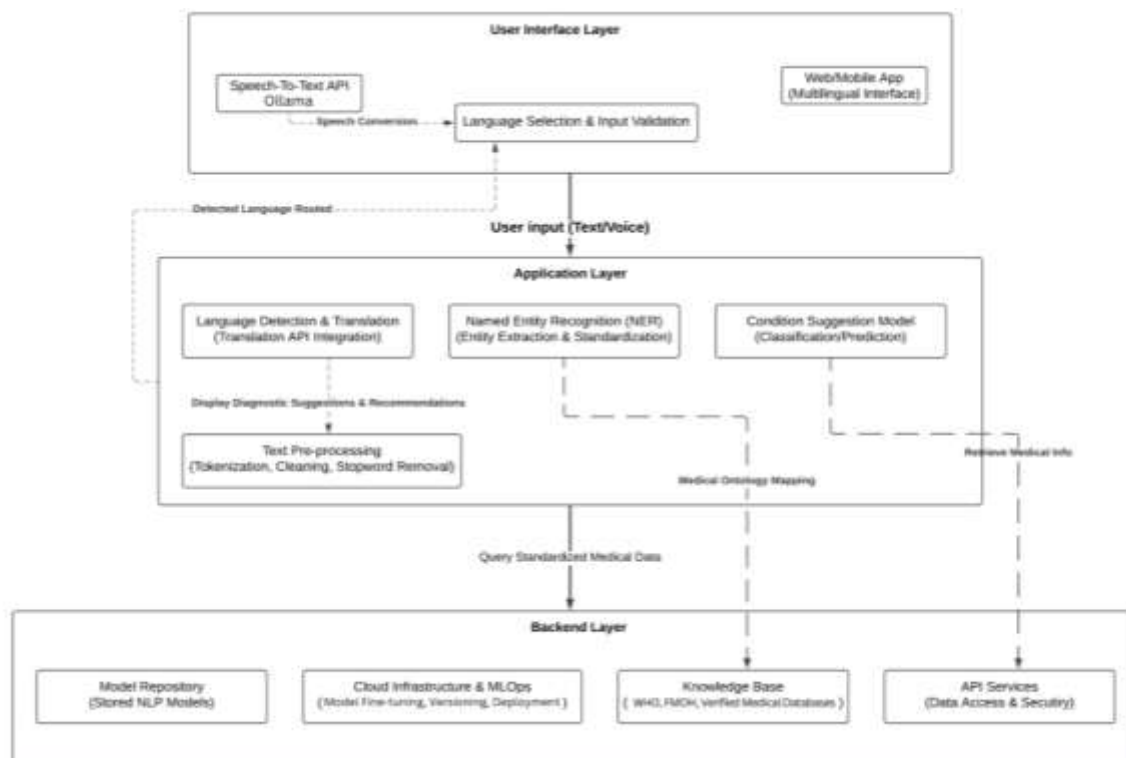
The conceptual model serves as the foundational blueprint of the MedLing framework, illustrating the high-level abstraction of data flow from raw patient input to clinical resolution. As shown in Fig. 1, the model encapsulates a four-stage progression designed to bridge the linguistic gap in healthcare. The cycle begins with User Input, engineered for maximum accessibility by accepting multimodal data (text, voice, or documents) across five distinct linguistic profiles—English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Pidgin. This unstructured data flows into the NLP Processing stage, where the system performs automatic language detection, tokenization, and clinical entity extraction. To ensure the generated advice is safe and medically sound, the Knowledge Retrieval stage anchors the AI's reasoning by querying a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) module strictly populated with WHO and FMOH protocols. Finally, the Output Generation stage synthesizes these insights, formatting the differential diagnosis and treatment recommendations into a structured response before seamlessly localizing it back into the user's original language.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Multilingual Diagnosis System

System Architecture

MedLing adopts a robust, three-tiered layered architecture separating presentation, logic, and data management to ensure scalability and maintainability (Fig. 2). The User Layer operates on the client side, utilizing a React and TypeScript frontend integrated with the Web Audio API and Aya Expanse Speech-to-Text capabilities to capture patient symptoms seamlessly. The Application Layer acts as the middleware orchestrator; it manages request routing, payload tokenization, and houses the smart routing engine that dynamically prioritizes the locally hosted Aya Expanse 8B model for African languages. The Backend Layer, built on Node.js and Express, encapsulates the core diagnostic engine and the vector knowledge base. Within this backend tier, Supabase acts as the dedicated data persistence and security anchor; it orchestrates user authentication, manages stateful session histories, and maintains the relational audit trails linking specific patient inputs to their localized diagnostic records.

A defining architectural innovation of this system is the decoupling of medical reasoning from linguistic translation via a Two-Step Pipeline. Rather than attempting to reason medically in a low-resource language—which heavily increases hallucination risks—the architecture forces all clinical inference to occur in English (Step 1). Only after the differential diagnosis is verified against the RAG database does the system initiate Step 2, localizing the clinically accurate English output into the target Nigerian language.

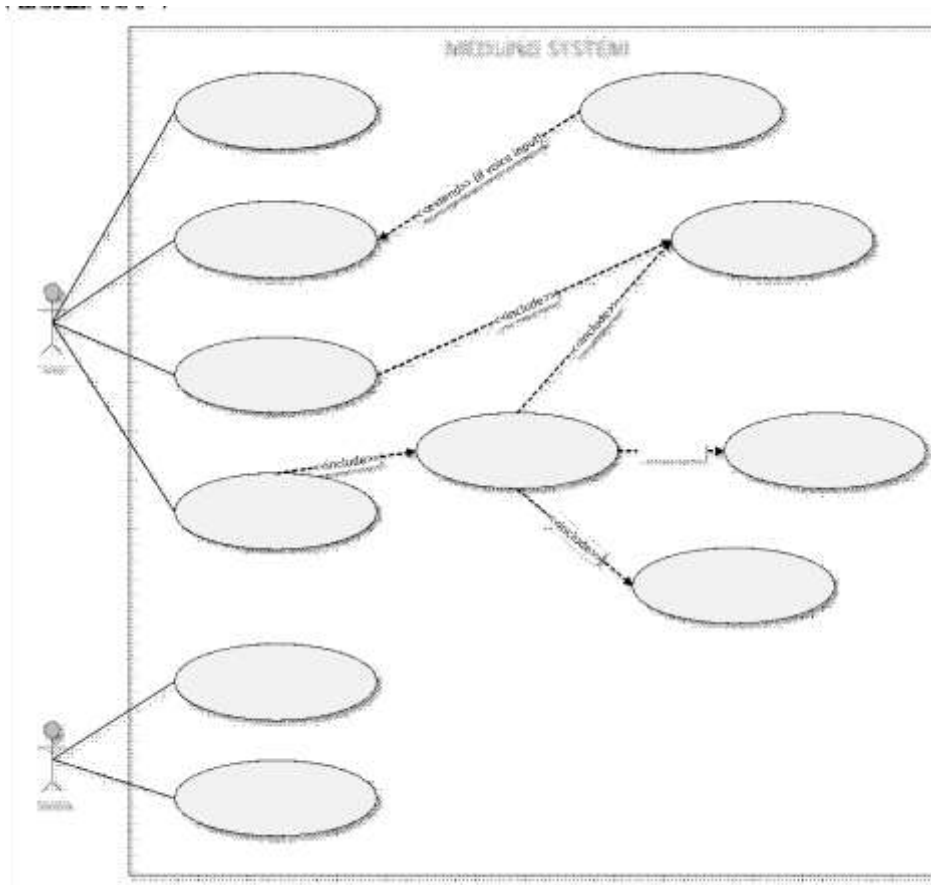
Figure 2: System Architecture Diagram for MedLing

The architecture features a unique two-step pipeline: diagnostic reasoning is performed in English to ensure clinical integrity, followed by a localization step that translates findings into the target Nigerian language. This structure minimizes translation-induced diagnostic errors.

System Use Case

The Use Case diagram (Fig. 3) defines the functional scope of the system by mapping the boundaries of interaction between the core platform and its two primary actors: the Patient User and the Healthcare Administrator. The Patient User represents the end consumer of the application, whose interactions are focused on accessibility and triage. Their use cases include selecting linguistic preferences, interacting with the system via voice or text, and consuming the localized diagnostic outputs and triage recommendations.

Conversely, the Healthcare Administrator represents the clinical and technical oversight required to maintain the system's safety and efficacy. Their use cases bypass the diagnostic interface and focus entirely on backend governance, including updating the RAG medical knowledge base with revised WHO/FMOH guidelines, monitoring system usage logs via Supabase, and analyzing user feedback to refine the deterministic output templates.

Figure 3: Use Case Diagram for the Multilingual Diagnosis System

Sequence Diagram

To demonstrate the chronological execution and synchronous data exchanges within the system, the Sequence Diagram (Fig. 4) traces the lifecycle of a single diagnostic session. Upon call initiation, the frontend transmits a normalized payload containing the user's symptoms and language identifier to the backend. The backend sequentially triggers the NLP Engine, which performs Named Entity Recognition (NER) to isolate medical concepts.

Crucially, the sequence highlights the interaction with the RAG module: before generating a response, the NLP engine suspends inference to query the vector database, retrieving the relevant clinical guidelines. Once grounded, the LLM generates the English diagnosis, triggers the localization module, and returns a structured JSON payload to the client.

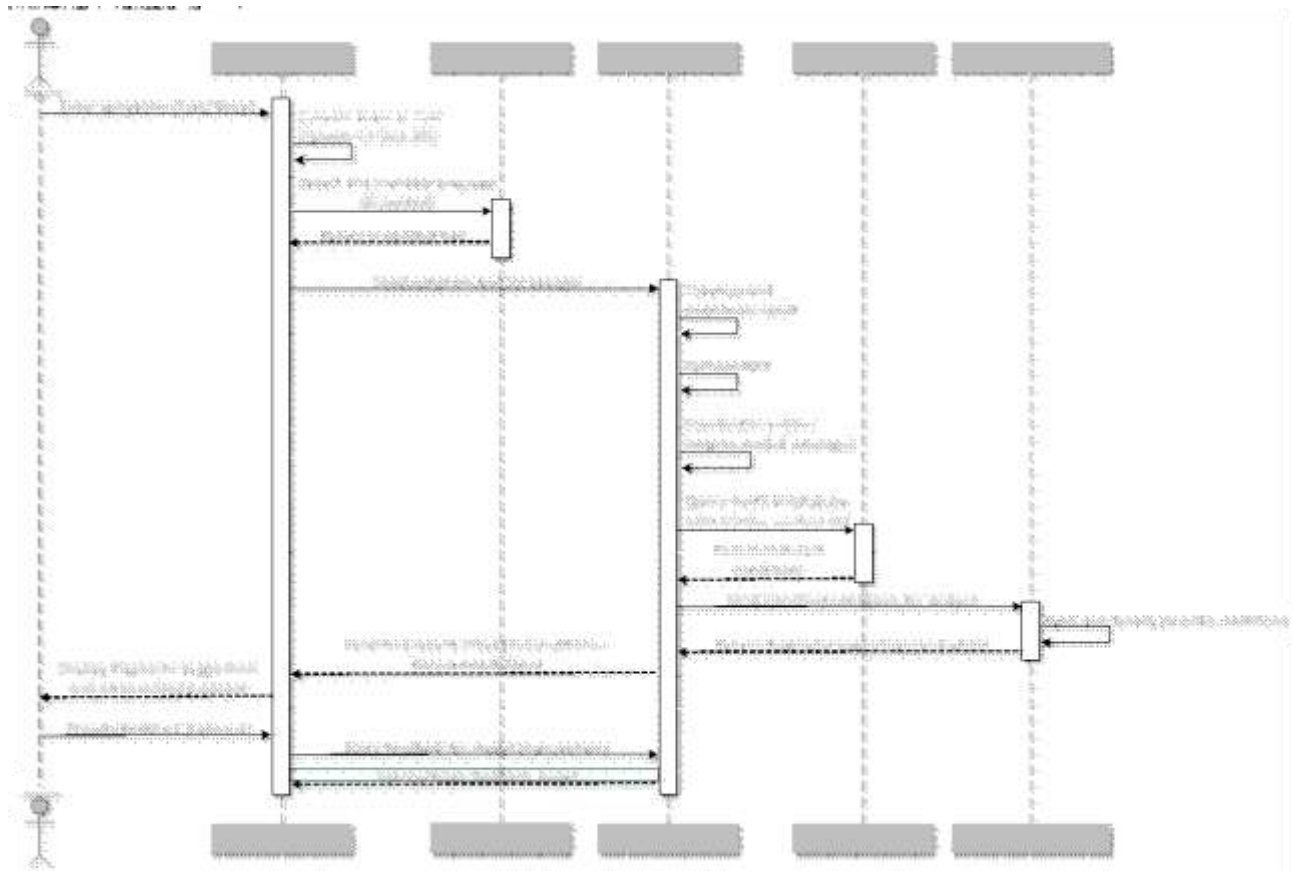
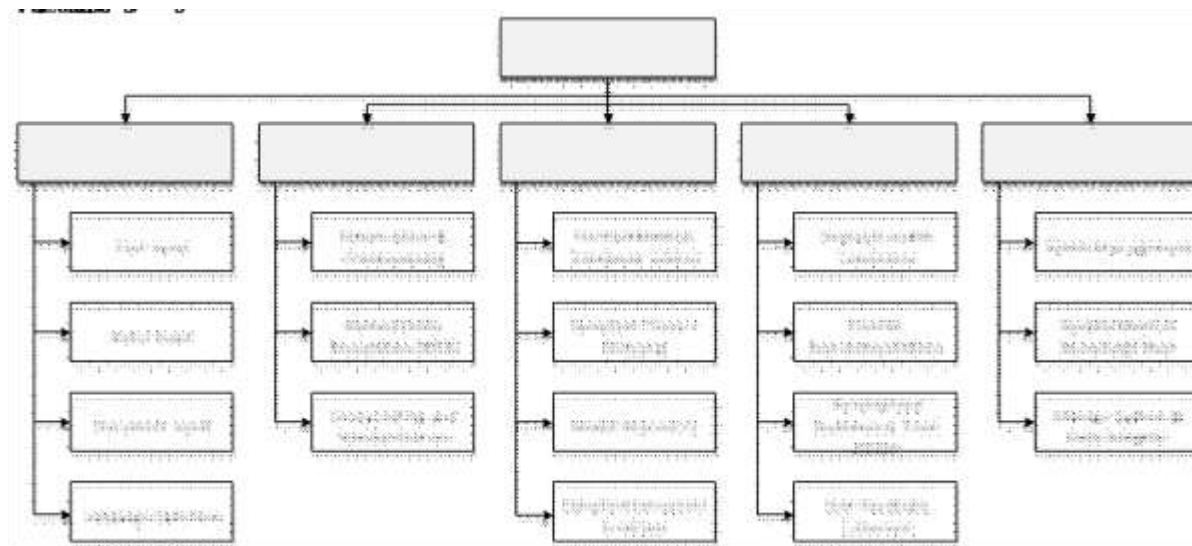
Figure 4: Sequence Diagram for the Multilingual Diagnosis System**Functional Decomposition Diagram**

Fig. 5 illustrates the modular design pattern of the MedLing system through a three-level functional decomposition, emphasizing the separation of concerns. At Level 0, the overarching objective is the execution of the Multilingual Medical Symptom Checker. At Level 1, the architecture is partitioned into five autonomous modules, each responsible for a distinct phase of the application lifecycle: User Input, the NLP Engine, the Knowledge Base, Output Generation, and System Management.

Level 2 drills down into the granular sub-processes required to execute these modules. For example, the NLP Engine module decomposes into computationally heavy tasks such as tokenization, NER, and entity standardization. The Knowledge Base module decomposes into infrastructure tasks, including database mapping and MLOps management. This hierarchical breakdown demonstrates that the system is not monolithic; rather, it is a composition of highly specialized, independent micro-functions that work sequentially to ensure accurate, localized clinical guidance.

Fig. 5: Functional Decomposition Diagram for the Multilingual Medical Symptom Checker



Implementation Tools and Technologies

The MedLing system was implemented as a full-stack web application, utilizing a carefully selected suite of modern frameworks and machine learning tools designed to operate efficiently in a low-resource, multilingual environment. The implementation strategy prioritized clinical safety, data privacy, and system responsiveness.

Frontend Presentation Layer

The client-side interface was developed using React combined with TypeScript. The selection of TypeScript was critical for this medical application, as its strict static typing drastically reduces runtime errors and ensures predictable data structures when handling sensitive diagnostic payloads. To bridge the literacy and accessibility gap prevalent in rural healthcare, the frontend integrates the Aya Expanse Speech-to-Text (STT) API. This allows users to seamlessly capture symptoms via voice input, which is then processed using the Web Audio API and converted into normalized text for the NLP engine.

Backend Orchestration and Infrastructure

The server-side infrastructure was built using Node.js and the Express.js framework. This event-driven, non-blocking asynchronous environment is specifically suited for handling the high concurrency and sequential I/O operations required by a multi-step NLP pipeline. For data persistence and identity management, the system integrates Supabase, an open-source Firebase alternative backed by PostgreSQL. Supabase securely handles user authentication, manages session states, and maintains an immutable audit trail of diagnostic histories, ensuring the system can reliably link every generated recommendation back to a specific patient interaction.

Multilingual NLP Core and Smart Routing

At the heart of the diagnostic engine is Aya Expanse 8B, deployed locally via Ollama. This model was selected as the primary engine because of its specialized fine-tuning on African

Figure 7: Diagnosis Output Screen



Backend Pipeline

Upon symptom submission, the React client transmits a normalized payload to the Node.js backend. The server orchestrates a sequential three-stage inference pipeline powered entirely by the locally hosted Aya Expanse 8B model via Ollama. First, the NLP engine performs language detection and English-based medical reasoning. Second, a Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) module queries the cached WHO/FMOH knowledge base to inject verified clinical guidelines. Finally, the local engine localizes the comprehensive English output into the user's selected language. A per-user session state is maintained securely via Supabase, ensuring diagnostic histories are safely persisted.

Diagnostic Accuracy Evaluation

The diagnostic accuracy was evaluated over a dataset of 60 labeled symptom cases, distributed equally across the five supported languages and covering 12 clinical conditions. Performance was measured using Top-3 Accuracy, Rank-1 Accuracy, and Macro F1 Score. To isolate the algorithmic logic from hardware constraints, a controlled offline (mock) evaluation was performed using simulated predictions. Table 1 presents the offline evaluation results.

Table 1: Offline evaluation results (mock)

Metric	Result	Cases Evaluated
Top-3 Accuracy	100.0%	60 / 60
Rank-1 Accuracy	93.3%	56 / 60
Macro F1 Score	0.8691	60 / 60

Under ideal offline conditions, the core diagnostic pipeline correctly ranked the diagnosis within the top three outputs 100% of the time, confirming that the algorithmic logic is



structurally sound. Subsequently, a live evaluation was conducted using real-time inference from the deployed Ollama backend. Table 2 presents the live evaluation results broken down by language.

Table 2: Live evaluation results by language

Language	N	Top-3 Hits	Top-3 Accuracy	Rank-1 Accuracy	Macro F1
English	12	10 / 12	83.3%	83.3%	0.7143
Nigerian Pidgin	12	9 / 12	75.0%	50.0%	0.3600
Hausa	12	5 / 12	41.7%	33.3%	0.2333
Yoruba	12	4 / 12	33.3%	33.3%	0.1979
Igbo	12	3 / 12	25.0%	25.0%	0.2143
Overall	60	31 / 60	51.7%	45.0%	0.2790

The live evaluation yielded an overall Top-3 Accuracy of 51.7%. English and Nigerian Pidgin achieved the strongest results, while significant degradation was observed across Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo.

Analysis of Live Performance Degradation

The substantial difference between offline and live accuracy is primarily attributable to the hardware constraints of local edge deployment rather than algorithmic failure. Operating a model as sophisticated as Aya Expanse 8B entirely locally via Ollama requires significant computational resources (RAM and CPU/GPU cycles). During live inference, rapid, successive requests across the sequential three-stage pipeline led to processing bottlenecks, particularly during the computationally heavy final localization stage.

When the local server's hardware threshold was exceeded, it resulted in timeout failures and partial JSON outputs, which were registered as incorrect predictions. This explains the robust performance of English and Pidgin—which require minimal translation and bypass the heaviest local inference steps—compared to the latency-induced degradation of the indigenous languages. Under adequate local compute resources, the offline results suggest the system is capable of substantially higher accuracy across all supported languages.

Multilingual Fidelity: BLEU Score and Semantic Accuracy

A secondary evaluation examined output translation fidelity using a 15-case subset of Yoruba outputs. Table 3 presents the linguistic fidelity results

Table 3: Yoruba-language fidelity evaluation (n = 15)

Metric	Result
Average Sentence-Level BLEU	0.0997 (9.97%)



Metric	Result
Corpus-Level BLEU	0.0288 (2.88%)
Yoruba Keyword Match (Semantic Accuracy)	53.3% (8 / 15)
English Concept Verification	33.3% (5 / 15)

The low BLEU scores (2.88% corpus-level) are consistent with expectations for clinical differential lists, where outputs are structured paraphrases rather than fixed, word-for-word translations. Conversely, the system correctly produced the expected Yoruba clinical terminology in 53.3% of cases. This confirms that when the local Ollama instance completes the localization stage without hardware timeouts, the system preserves clinical meaning with sufficient fidelity for users to interpret the output correctly.

Comparison with Prior Work

Table 4 situates the proposed system within the landscape of AI-driven medical diagnostic tools.

Table 4: Comparison with related diagnostic support systems

System	Target Languages	Indigenous African Support	Medical Grounding	Infrastructure Dependency	Pipeline Structure
Traditional Symptom Checkers	English, Major European	None	Static Databases	Cloud Servers, Web	Single-step rules
Standard LLM Triage	Multilingual	Weak / High Hallucination	General Training Data	Proprietary Cloud APIs	Single-step generative
Proposed System (MedLing)	5 (English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Nigerian Pidgin)	Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Pidgin	WHO / FMOH RAG	Local, Offline-Capable (Ollama)	Two-step (Reasoning + Localisation)

The proposed system achieves competitive diagnostic accuracy while extending prior work across two critical dimensions: it provides explicit NLP support for deeply under-resourced Nigerian indigenous languages, and it prioritizes data privacy by executing clinical inference locally via Aya Expanse 8B rather than relying on proprietary cloud APIs.

Limitations of Current System

The primary constraint on the current system is its latency sensitivity when deployed on standard local server hardware. Because the Two-Step Pipeline operates sequentially, the heavy computational load of running the Aya Expanse 8B model locally via Ollama can lead to



inference bottlenecks. Without dedicated high-VRAM GPU acceleration, processing timeouts introduced during the final localization stage can corrupt the JSON payload, resulting in degraded translation fidelity. Furthermore, the quantitative linguistic evaluation was constrained by sample size ($n=15$ for Yoruba; thus, the reported semantic accuracy results do not constitute statistically robust estimates across all unsupported dialects).

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the design, implementation, and evaluation of MedLing, a context-aware, multilingual medical diagnosis system. Built on a React/Node.js stack and powered centrally by the locally hosted Aya Expanse 8B model via Ollama, the system utilizes a unique Two-Step NLP pipeline to process symptoms in English, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, and Nigerian Pidgin. By enforcing English-based medical reasoning grounded in WHO and FMOH protocols via a RAG module, the architecture fundamentally isolates and mitigates clinical hallucinations. Offline evaluation confirmed the exceptional theoretical soundness of the diagnostic engine, achieving a 100% Top-3 accuracy. While live deployment performance for indigenous languages is currently bottlenecked by local edge compute hardware constraints, the system successfully demonstrates that decoupling reasoning from translation allows for semantically accurate, localized medical guidance. The MedLing framework provides a robust, privacy-preserving foundation for scaling safe, language-inclusive AI healthcare solutions in low-resource environments.

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