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## DEVELOPMENT CONTENT IN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE RADIO

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### ABSTRACT

*The proofs that messages are better understood and that the audience derived good feeling of enjoyment and sense of satisfaction when they listen to radio messages in their indigenous language underscore the significance of indigenous language radio in airing development-oriented messages. Against this backdrop, this paper examines the development content in an indigenous language radio station for example Radio Lagos 107.5. F.M Nigeria. Findings showed that the radio station does not give adequate attention to development-oriented messages in terms of the number of such programmes aired weekly in comparison with non-development messages. However, the few development-oriented programmes were well-treated and were given good prominence.*

### INTRODUCTION

The nature of human development has underscored the imperative of communication to its enhancement process. As pointed out by FAO (1994), communication is the key to human development and the thread that binds people together. For sustainable development to be realised therefore, communication must have its place. Consequently, the media of mass communication have great roles to play in development process going by their potentials to expedite message delivery. Radio in particular is a very potent tool especially in the third world because of its ubiquity and affordability.

However, before communication can be effective, the language of communication is of much significance. Owens (2002) notes that the language of communicating development messages must be acceptable to the audience, and that people understand information better when conveyed in their indigenous language than in a foreign language. No matter the length of time the foreign language has been with them (Chieka, 1982). Oyero (2003), in his study of indigenous language in radio broadcasting, discovered that listeners obtain better meaning and greater understanding from radio messages packaged in indigenous language. Besides, they derive good feeling of enjoyment and sense of satisfaction with radio programmes when packaged in their own tongue, and thus prefer radio programmes in their indigenous language to English language.



Against this background, this study set out to examine the extent to which an indigenous language radio station, Radio Lagos 107.5 FM, has given attention to development-oriented issues in its programming.

### **RADIO LAGOS 107.5 FM (TIWA-N-TIWA)**

The story of Radio Lagos 107.5 FM dates back to 1978 when the government of Lagos State, Nigeria, via an edict established Lagos State Broadcasting Corporation (LSBC). The station was originally known as Radio Nigeria, Ikeja and was owned by the Federal Government. The then Nigeria's Military Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo, as part of his administration's disengagement programmes, effected the transfer of the station to the Lagos State Government. By September 1980, the Lateef Jakande administration established a television station (LTV) under the same management with the radio service, transmitting on 91 Khz; 327 metres in the medium wave band. The 50 kilowatts transmitter used by the Radio Lagos was inherited from the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria in 1985.

In 1997, the Lagos State Broadcasting Corporation was split into Radio and Television services. This was followed by the establishment of another radio station, Eko 89.75 FM. It was in 2001 that Radio Lagos was changed from Amplitude Modulation (AM) to Frequency Modulation (FM). With this development, the station now broadcasts in the two indigenous languages spoken in Lagos State-Yoruba and Ogu. However, more than 90% of the programmes is in Yoruba language.

There are about 32 licensed radio stations in South-west Nigeria; federal and state governments own 9 stations each, while about 14 stations are privately owned. The programmes on the private stations are broadcast predominantly in English language, while some of the federal and states' owned stations give a number of their programmes in indigenous languages and dialects. It is only Radio Lagos 107.5 FM (Tiwan-n-tiwa) that broadcasts all its programmes in indigenous language; thus it is a typical indigenous language radio.

Yoruba is the language spoken by indigenous Nigerian people inhabiting south-west Nigeria and parts of neighbouring Benin in Africa. Although there are hundreds of different ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Yorubas are one of three main indigenous peoples with the Hausa and Igbo people. The Yorubas are predominantly town dwellers who practise small-scale domestic agriculture and are well known as traders and craftspeople. Since the 13th century, Yoruba artists have been producing masterpieces of woodcarving and bronze casting (Encarta Encyclopedia 2005)

Around 22 million people, mainly in Nigeria and Benin, but also in Togo, the United Kingdom, and the United States, speak the Yoruba language. Yoruba, a member of the Niger-Congo family of African languages and belonging to the Benue-Congo



sub-group, has around 20 different dialects including Oyo, Ijebu, and Ekiti. Standard Yoruba is based on the dialect from Oyo State. Yoruba is a tonal language which means that the meaning of certain words is distinguished by the pitch alone.

Lagos State Radio Service (LSRS) now has two stations, Eko 89.75 and 107.5 FM; they are popularly called Eko FM and Tiwantiwa respectively. The objectives of LSRS include:

- The provision of a comprehensive coverage of the social, economic and political activities of Lagos State in particular and the country in general.
- The use of the electronic media for development, research documentation and propagation of the indigenous culture of the state.
- The promotion and encouragement of responsible and balanced discussion on issues of vital interest to the people and provision of objective and impartial coverage of events as they occur in the state.

## **LITERATURE**

Though the view that the media is all-powerful has been disproved, it is nonetheless still very powerful in communication. As the agenda setting media theory states, the media predetermined what issues are regarded as important to a given time and in a given society; and also determine what people think about (Folarin,2005). The media then can bring development issues to the fore and thus 'force' people to think about them.

In line with this is the cultural norm theory, which states that by selective presentation and tendentious emphasis on certain themes, the mass media create the impression among the audience that such themes are part of the cultural norms of the society. It is possible for the media therefore to present certain innovations and make them acceptable to the audience.

## **THE ROLE OF RADIO IN DEVELOPMENT**

Of all the media in mass communication in Africa, radio is significantly suitable for the people in the continent above other media. Radio can be described as an ideal means of mass communication in a third world country like Nigeria because it provides access to communication for a large number of people, both literate and non-literate; and it is very cheap to own and maintain without dependency on electricity power supply.

Besides, Folarin (1990) notes that radio messages, apart from breaking barrier of illiteracy, reach all people without discrimination and demand less intellectual exertion from the listener than print media. Radio messages are immediate and have



multiplying effect. A single radio message may be received simultaneously by millions of people and a single radio set can serve a group of people.

Jamison and McAnany (1978) have pointed out the role of radio to motivate, inform, teach and change behaviour in the development process. Radio can be used to motivate a country politically towards national unity, or to arouse the public against a common external enemy, or to motivate a group towards a self-development activity. Given the ability of radio to overcome the barrier of distance and illiteracy, it is a very powerful medium for promoting national integration by fostering national identity through communication of national anthem, slogan and campaign (Ansah 1991:35).

Radio has, over the years, played the role of information provider through news, messages about the availability of social services, and announcements concerning an event of importance to the audience. National objectives, programmes and aspirations can be made known and explained to the people through radio in order to have their support and forge a sense of belonging.

Radio can also be used to teach non-formal education in subject areas specific to the development needs of individual regions of a country. Development related knowledge on agronomic practice, Public health, personal hygiene and nutrition, community organisation, and so on can be transferred to individuals through the medium of radio.

Changing behaviour is the most difficult goal to achieve yet, radio provides the only reliable communication system that reaches large portions of African populations, and thus potent in behaviour change process. Jamsion and McAnany (1978:65) have noted that radio can more effectively provide exact instructions or directions for behaviour change when few people are involved and they have a two-ways capacity, but even when instructions are for large masses of people and the message is one-way only, radio often functions for instructing people in certain behaviours.

Radio also, has the potential to encourage profound mutual understanding and even help to forge social relationship (Coldevin 2001:8). This can help in nation building by inviting people both with similar and opposing views to have interactions, debates and exchange ideas, out of which other people will learn and channel a course for national consensus.

With specific reference to rural areas, radio can fulfill a number of versatile functions. FAO, (1998: 11) states that radio is:

- an important mechanism for rapid diffusion of development information in a diversity of language and to widespread, often remote geographical areas;



- a channel for interactive communication, for dialogue and debate on the major issue of rural development;
- a platform for democratic and pluralistic expression of the opinions, needs and aspirations of rural communities;
- a tool for cultural expression and entertainment, and a means of collecting, preserving and enhancing the oral and musical heritage of rural communities;
- a medium to collect local information on social issues, which is essential for defining, planning and implementing development efforts;
- a means of raising public awareness and motivation; and
- a tool which, combined with other media, can be used for training, transfer/exchange of knowledge and technologies.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE**

With all the numerous potentials of radio for development, the central aim of development messages may not be realised if the messages are not packaged in the right language. Considering the number of people in Africa who cannot communicate in English language, the need to communicate with people in the language they understand well cannot be under-emphasized.

Because language cannot be separated from culture, this makes indigenous language unique. People's indigenous language is part of that culture. Therefore, cultural context and intimacy with a culture will give a deeper meaning to the understanding of language and the circumstance in which it occurs will determine believability or sense of reality (Wallace 1996).

When development messages are communicated to people in their native tongues, it gives better understanding, assimilation and recall of such messages (Oyero 2003). By reducing knotty terms of English language in development messages to indigenous language, the audience will grasp deep meanings of such messages.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study made use of Content analysis. The programmes of Radio Lagos 107.5 F.M, were monitored for one week to obtain the data for the study. Only one week was used because radio programmes are on weekly basis, and this makes monitoring of other weeks unnecessary. The programmes for the week are also a representative of a quarter of the year. The programmes were monitored for 17 hours each day from 7.00a.m. to 10.00p.m.



**TABLE 1: FREQUENCY OF DAILY STATION'S PROGRAMMES**

Week Days	Development-oriented programmes	Non-development programmes
Sun.	1	19
Mon.	10	13
Tue.	9	12
Wed.	6	12
Thur.	9	13
Fri.	6	18
Sat.	10	16
Total	50	103

**TABLE 2: ATTENTION GIVEN TO PROGRAMMES**

Week Days	Development-oriented Programmes {Air time in minutes}	Percentage	Non development programmes {Air time in minutes}	Percentage
Sun.	30	4	710	96
Mon.	295	44	375	56
Tue.	285	39	445	61
Wed.	165	22	570	78
Thur.	225	32	470	68
Fri.	85	12	605	88
Sat.	280	41	410	59
Total	1,365	28	3,585	72

In Table 2, we see the airtime spent on the programmes on each day of the week. On Sunday, 30minutes(4%) were spent on development-oriented programmes while 710 minutes (96%) were spent on non-development programmes. Development programmes took 295minutes(44%) on Monday, while non development-oriented programmes took 375 minutes (56%). On Tuesday, development-oriented programmes and non-development-oriented programmes took 285 (39%) and 445 (61%) minutes respectively.

A total of 165 minutes (22%) were spent on development-oriented programmes on Wednesday, while 570 minutes (78%) spent on non development-oriented programmes. Also on Thursday, 225 minutes (32%) and 470 minutes (68%) were spent on development-oriented programmes and non development-oriented programmes in the order mentioned.



On Friday, 85 minutes (12%) were spent on development-oriented programmes and 650 minutes (88%) were spent on non-development-oriented programmes. Also on Saturday, 280 minutes (41%) were spent on development programmes while 410 minutes (59%) were spent on non-development-oriented programmes.

On the whole, a total of 1,365 minutes representing 28% of the airtime was spent on Development-oriented programmes for a week, while a total of 3,585 minutes representing 72 % of the airtime spent on non-development-oriented programmes.

It then shows that the airtime allotted to non development-oriented programmes (72%) is far more than what is given to development-oriented programmes (28%). So, development-oriented programmes are not treated as much as non development-oriented programmes. See figure 1 below

Figure 1

Attention given to programme:

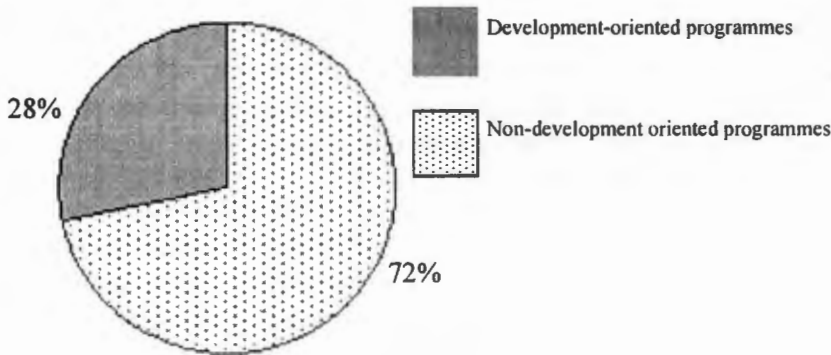


Table 3 below shows that Straight Talk is mostly used for development-oriented programmes with 50%. Magazine programmes took 24 %, followed by discussion programmes with 22%. Drama is the least used with 4 per cent.

**Table 3: Programmes Genres for Development-oriented Programmes**

Genres	No	Percentage
Straight Talk	25	50
Magazine Programmes	12	24
Discussion	11	22
Dramatization	2	4
Total	50	100





Table 4 shows that all the development issues content analyzed; Morals has the highest coverage with 56%, followed by politics with 24% and health with 8%. Employment and community self-help have 4% each. Besides, most of the issues (70%) were well treated, that is, have more than 20 minutes airtime. Thirty per cent of the programmes were not well treated.

**Table 4: Frequency and Depth of Treatment of Development-Oriented Issues**

Issues	Number	Percentage	Well Treated	Not well Treated
Agriculture	0	0	0	0
Education	0	0	0	0
Health	4	8	1	3
Morals	28	56	18	10
Employment	2	4	2	0
Economy	2	4	1	1
Politics	12	24	11	1
Community self-help	2	4	2	0
Total	50	100	35 (70%)	15 (30%)

Table 5 shows the prominence given to the development issues. Agriculture and Education had no coverage. Out of 4 health programmes, 3 were prominent, 1 was not. Morals had 15 prominent programmes out of 28, 13 were not. The two programmes for each of employment and economy were prominent, while Politics had 10 prominent programmes out of 12. The 2 programmes of Community self-help were shared between prominent and non-prominent. On the whole, 33 programmes (66%) were prominent while 17 programmes (34%) were not prominent. It then follows that most of the development-oriented issues were given prominence by the station.

**Table 5: Prominence of Development-Oriented Issues**

Issues	Frequency	Prominent	Not Prominent
Agriculture	0	0	0
Education	0	0	0
Health	4	3	1
Morals	28	15	13
Employment	2	2	0
Economy	2	2	0
Politics	12	10	2
Community self-help	2	1	1
Total	50	33	17



## Conclusion

This paper has examined the extent to which indigenous language radio gives attention to development messages. It is believed that combining the potentials of radio stations with the benefits of indigenous language will, to a great extent, bring to realisation the purpose of communicating development messages. The effective message delivery that will result will, of course, lead to people's mobilization and persuasion to change for the better.

As the findings show, Radio Lagos 107.5FM does not give adequate attention to development messages both in terms of the number of such programmes transmitted weekly and the airtime allotted to them. Non-development programmes received greater attention than development-oriented programmes in the two aforementioned. Besides, straight talk is mostly used to present development issues. However, good prominence and adequate time were given to the development-oriented programmes covered.

It is therefore necessary for indigenous language radio stations like Radio Lagos 107.5 F.M. to give greater priority to development-oriented programmes in order to maximize their potentials for development purposes. Agriculture and Education, which surprisingly did not receive any coverage in the programmes analysed, need to be given attention due to their central place in development. Besides, programme genre like dramatization, which has 'edutainment' quality that catches and retains listeners' attention, should be explored to present these development programmes.

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