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Private Broadcasting in Nigeria: The Need for the Promotion of Indigenous Languages

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ABSTRACT

When the idea of broadcast pluralism, the philosophical womb that birthed private or independent broadcasting in Nigeria, was mooted, it was envisioned, among other projections, that there would be a massive promotion of Nigeria's many and varied indigenous languages and cultural talents on the stations. The understanding is that it is not only a way of perfecting the freedom of expression in our liberal democracy but also that of integrating the rural communities into the mainstream of public discourse. However, since its cradle in 1992, the broadcasting system has persistently produced and presented the majority of its programs in foreign languages especially English. Private broadcasting has therefore constituted itself into a veritable channel for the extinction of the same indigenous languages and cultural values it was meant to protect and promote. This paper, therefore, draws the attention of concerned individuals or groups to this persistent production and presentation of programs in English by Nigerian private broadcasting and its concomitant effects, particularly the corrosion of the nation's indigenous languages and cultural talents, and makes a case for the use of Nigeria's indigenous languages on the nation's independent radio, and even television.

Key Words: Private broadcasting, broadcast pluralism, indigenous languages, rural communities, liberal democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1991, broadcasting that has remained an exclusive institution for the government has been substantially incorporated into the market on the platform of a broad term known as broadcast pluralism. One glowing hallmark of the now deeply seated system of broadcasting is private (also known as independent or commercial) broadcasting [1]. The antecedent calls and pressures that were productive of the paradigm shift adduced many reasons, which collectively counter the perpetuation of government monopoly in Nigeria's broadcasting industry. Some of the anticipated goals, when the idea was mooted, were that

the broadcasting system would render the best service, especially when it is operated as a privately owned business or a commercial enterprise [2]. Also projected was that broadcasting would be able to avoid undesirable government influence, which often account for the politically biased-content of broadcast news on public service broadcast stations. Besides, making room for healthy competition, the philosophy of private broadcasting in Nigeria was also designed to encourage diversity in programming, and participation in both content development and consumption. It was remarkably noted that private broadcasting would help to achieve or advance the educational and development objectives of the country.

Again, the emergence of private broadcasting in Nigeria is intended to boost the credibility and confidence quotients of the broadcast media because many Nigerians tend to take most of what they hear or see on the government owned broadcast media as largely government propagandas that do not represent reality much of the time. Following this understanding, it is also assumed that the private broadcast media would be closer to the people, and that this would make the people accept their outputs as more credible and worthy of their confidence. There was also the reason that private or commercial broadcasting would open rewarding opportunities for investors, who are eager to be part of the communication industry [3]. Thus, it was argued that for a continuously downsizing economy such as that of Nigeria, expanded or diversified investment opportunities would be of immense benefit, and would help to reduce the over dependence of many industries on the government. Specifically, the government would then be relieved from the huge amount of money it was then spending by owning and controlling all the broadcast media in the country [4].

There was also the point that private broadcasting would promote the role of advertising in a laissez-faire economy such as the one obtainable in Nigeria. This means that privately owned broadcast media would necessarily care for more advertisements than

government owned media would. The quality of such advertisements would also be better, especially in a situation of effective commercial broadcasting that would serve as good sales stimulus, higher profit margin and a vigorous economy [5]. Furthermore, it was also believed that private broadcasting also has the economic advantage of providing employment to many Nigerians. Thus, in this era of graduate and non-graduate unemployment in Nigeria, it is believed that private broadcasting will encourage professional training among broadcast media practitioners. This has become necessary since market realities indicate that private or commercial broadcasting organizations would have to employ well-trained media professionals in order to compete effectively with other stations. Most importantly, especially to the scope of this paper, it was envisioned that there would be a massive promotion of nation's many and varied indigenous languages and cultural talents on the stations. Nwosu (1999) [6], noted that private participation in broadcasting will make it less an urban and elite phenomenon, and more of a rural and populist concept that will serve better the interests and needs of the greater generality of Nigerians, most of who live in the rural areas.

A cursory look at the philosophical tenets of private broadcasting as summarized above can easily make one to set ablaze any other opposing systems in preference for it. However, today, this dominant belief among the proponents of the broadcasting system has become the canon for the assessment of its success or failure in our multi-plural Nigeria. This paper, in a deeper reflection on most of the reasons, argues that their realization requires a very tight system of supervision and regulation, and in fact an effective system of checks and balances, which must be built into the system without necessarily restricting the freedom of expression. Nigeria is a multi-plural state, which has some special problems and circumstances like multi-ethnicity and language, sectionalism, volatile religious fanaticism of an unusual dimension and many other such problems [7]. Repeatedly, private broadcasting has given primacy to the collective needs of society on the altar of individual rights, consumer freedom and market forces. Premising its action, in

the direction, on a notion of an over-centralized public, and a shared public space that has no recourse for the variegated ethnic and linguistic groups of the nation, private broadcasting has simply rehashed the deformities of the public service radio and television [8].

Specifically, the old problems of a vital segment of the Nigerian federation, the rural communities, such as deprivation from and inaccessibility to major airwaves communications still rear their ugly heads. What has also been evident in the scenario is a shift of monopoly from government to a few privileged individuals, who have the market forces at their disposal. Again, the nation's broadcasting scene has also witnessed the 'demassification' of the public service broadcast stations, as the proliferations of channels and platform for transmissions eat into the mass audience, and replace it with small, more specialized and elitist audiences [9]. The degeneration has ascended such falsetto heights, which raises the question that paper seeks to address thus: Does the idea or framework of private broadcasting that was developed to ensure individual rights, freedom of speech and consumer freedom still serviceable? There are some reasons for supposing that it might not be.

To begin with, it was envisioned that the central values of liberalism, democracy, human rights, and even broadcasting ethics would be evolving, rather than collapsing as they were before with only the public service broadcast stations. For instance, in the supposedly 'indispensable' pattern, content has never been assembled in line with individual taste and interest, particularly as it concerns language and culture [10]. Today, it is all English; all western mannerism; all western programming and scheduling patterns; it is all forcible invasion of Nigerian indigenous languages and cultures. And here lies the preoccupation of this paper. It draws attention to the Nigerian private broadcasting's persistent production and presentation of programs predominantly in the English language, which implies gross insensitivity to Nigerian indigenous languages [11]. To this end,

private broadcasting has failed to preserve the essential canon of making broadcasting a rural and populist phenomenon that serves the interests and needs of greater generality of Nigerians, who are mainly rural dwellers. It has failed to redefine the shared public space of multi-plural Nigeria, in the near impossibility of integrating different cultures into a common cultural pattern. Thus, the jaundiced practice has either made nonsense of the argument for program diversity, or perhaps justified it to be a mere expression of fantasy, aesthetics or scholarship.

The sharp fallout on the side of the private broadcasters may be informed by its prior insensitivity to both the character of broadcasting in Nigeria and the language issue as a major problem of development communication in Nigeria. Adedokun et al (2000) [1] remarked that when talking of communication for rural development, it should be noted that in reality, the electronic media are largely available in institutions and companies, the contents of which are in languages that the rural populace do not use or communicate in such have little relevance to their needs and their use require training. Unfortunately, this has been the trend in private broadcasting in Nigeria, since 1995, when the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) granted the first batch of licenses for the operation of private broadcasting in Nigeria. The licensees, which were fourteen (14) in number include:

1. Vibrant Communication Ltd, Aba-CH 36 Uhf
2. Triple Heritage Ltd, Abuja-CH50 Unf
3. IBW Enterprises (Nig.) Ltd, Benin- CH22 Uhf
4. Triax Company (Nig.) Ltd, Enugu-CH63, Uhf
5. Prime Television Ltd, Ikorodu-CH47 Uhf
6. Galaxy Pictures Ltd., Ibadan- CH53 Uhf
7. Deemins Broadcast (Nig.) Ltd., Kaduna-CH47 Uhf
8. Channels Inc. Ltd., Lagos- CH 39 Uhf
9. TDC Broadcasting Ltd., Lagos-CH 67 Uhf

10. Clapperboard Tv Ltd., Lagos-CH28 Uhf
11. Degue Broadcasting Network Ltd., Lagos-CH 32 Uhf
12. Murhi Int. (Nig.) Ltd., Ota-CH 43 Uhf
13. Minaj Systems Ltd., Obosi-CH67 Uhf
14. Independence Broadcasting Network Ltd., Warri-CH 37 Uhf

Many other licensees have joined these first fourteen, but what appears repugnantly constant is their unrepentant attitude against indigenous languages in their programming. Blankson (2005) informed that the neglect of indigenous languages in private broadcasting is also experienced by developed countries like the United States of America, where privatized broadcasting is dominant, but there is inbuilt checks and balances system in form of a strong and effective regulation, with which they surmount it. It appears there is a striking absence of such policy in the regulation of the nation's pluralistic broadcasting. This paper, therefore, argues that Nigeria needs to include it in its private and general broadcast regulation to achieve the ideological paradigm of broadcast pluralism.

- **The Language Problem of Broadcasting in Multi-plural Nigeria**

One recurring decimal of communication in Nigeria is the language problem of the multi-plural Nigeria. Curran (2000) [3], argued that the role of the mass media is never solely restricted to disseminating information, but mainly involves the arbitration between the discursive frameworks of rival groups, especially those that constitute matters, which though can affect collective opinion but are often excluded from media contents. Thus, pluralism and the clash of divergent opinions and interests in various realms of social life (language inclusive) could be seen as a mediating process. However, [3] had earlier popularized this point, when he argued in favor of freedom of speech, that all opinions, whether true or false must have their place in public so that their merits can be evaluated. The legacy of media pluralism especially in multi-plural democracies such as Nigeria has always been conceptualized in terms of the "free market place of ideas", even when it

poorly represents the original ideas of protecting all opinions in all public discourses. One of the most interesting aspects of the character of the Nigerian state can be found in its multi-pluralism. Isakpa (2011) [5] informed that in Nigeria there is multi-pluralism of religious sensibilities and religious organizations and ethnic groups premised on different languages. It is the existence of the over 250 distinct languages in Nigeria that constitutes a problem to the art of broadcasting information simultaneously to the many and varied ethnic groups.

For communication to be effective on the broadcast media, the audience, whose reactions must be assessed in line with the broadcast programs' objectives, must understand the language with which the content is produced and presented. Commenting on the language problem of communication in developing countries, Hertzler (1965) cited in Blankson (2005) [2] remarked that multilingualism among the countries of recent nationhood or peoples striving for nationhood not only separates the different religious and segments of the population but also frequently maintains dissociation. It is so in Nigeria, where the numerous languages demand that every Nigerian must be literate enough to be a bilinguist, who must speak his indigenous and the English languages. The implication is that such Nigerian must spend more time in language learning than his counterparts in other parts of the world, who simply uses his mother tongue at school, at home and for all the communication he has to do throughout his lifetime.

By origin, practice and convention, broadcasting systems are mainly national institutions, which should be organized to respond to cultural, domestic, political and social pressures, and to the expectations of their diverse audiences. Thus, Ugboajah (1985) [11], argued that the structure and content of broadcasting systems should significantly reflect the cultural character of the societies within which they operate. However, in contemporary broadcasting especially in most developed countries of the world, indigenous languages and cultural identities have their pride of place in content production

and presentation. Blankson (2005) [2] revealed that theories that deal with cultural quality and imperialism have been vigorously implemented in media's content, particularly as it concerns their authenticity in real life experiences and the cultural task of broadcasting. He further explained that the motif of the theoretical positions is the unwavering conviction that languages and cultures are on one-hand collective properties of nations, and on the other, are subject to the onslaught of alien influences. Therefore, in these developed nations such as Europe and North America, there have been, since the 1940s, discussions about language problems by parties representing regional and cultural interests in all broadcast reforms. In these western countries also, public service broadcasting is often jettisoned on the ground that it attempts to unite nations by presenting a unified national culture, while ignoring local and regional differences. To buttress the point being made here Blanco and Bulck (1995) cited in Blankson (2005) [2] revealed that Belgium, Spain and Canada are concrete examples of countries of the world, where the appropriate languages for their broadcasting systems were a political and cultural matter. In Belgium and Spain, they explained that the concerns for culture and language in broadcasting informed the development of independent Flemish-speaking and French-Speaking channels respectively. It equally led to the creation of "cultural councils" that are responsible for cultural matters in the Flemish-speaking and French-speaking communities, and to the creation of regional broadcasting (Blankson, 2005) [2]. Schudson (1994) [9] added that in Canada, broadcasting began as an effort to assert cultural autonomy against the hegemony of the United States and to create a national consciousness.

Similarly, during the 1980's, several Asian countries set off the reformation of their public broadcasting systems particularly by introducing commercial and pluralistic broadcasting. Thus, as part of the reform, there were deliberate policies among Asian broadcasters and government officials to ensure that in the emerging broadcast pluralism, program diversity was promoted without sacrificing individual national cultures and languages. For instance, in Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Singapore, arrangement was

made, in their broadcast programming, to guard against the distortion, or even the extinction of national cultures by their foreign counterparts. To strengthen the arrangement, a regional broadcasting union, Asian Broadcasting Union (ABU) was created to specifically ensure that national cultures, languages and local programming were protected and promoted, especially as private and independent broadcasting developed and existed alongside public service broadcasting.

Unfortunately, unlike Europe, North America and Asia, Nigeria and perhaps other African countries, have either little or no broadcast regulation that particularly promote indigenous languages and cultures in their national broadcast reforms. This deformity must be viewed with all seriousness, especially when one recalls the invaluable role of culture and language as unifying and integrating factors in many African communities. As mentioned above, Nigerian multi-pluralism developed historically, and has continued to exist based on strong cultural, linguistic and ethnic affiliations. Thus, although many nations have deliberately employed language policy and the mass media to integrate their citizens and ensure their continued loyalty, Nigerian private and independent broadcasters appear to be having a field day in using the English language for both their official communications and broadcasting. The dangerous trend has continued despite the post-independence understanding by the Nigerian government, communication scholars and development agencies that in order to realize rural and national development, through the participation of the majority rural peasant population, broadcasting should be tailored to accommodate indigenous and cultural differences of the multi-plural Nigeria.

It is therefore sad that today, virtually all Nigerian private and independent broadcastings produce and present their programs in English, while the very few programs in native languages are predominantly sponsored and scheduled for broadcast at any other time except the prime times and family-time belts, when the rural population is available in its residence.

- **The Promotion of the English Language in Nigerian Private Broadcasting**

The general adoption of western media philosophy by Nigerian private broadcasting seems to be most vociferously expressed in its wholesale promotion of the English language. However, other aspects of the Westside philosophy include a preoccupation with news values, which are inversely proportional to Nigeria's norms, values and nuances, and a programming objective that delights chiefly to educate and entertain, and no more. It follows, therefore, that the kernel of development communication in the context of African communities, including Nigeria, is overtly or covertly neglected in that programming paradigm, more so as African basic needs are simply either not newsworthy or pass for mere window dressing. To understand this argument, it is perhaps imperative to look at the different ways the English language is deliberately lorded over Nigeria's many native languages only to defeat planned communication objectives on the private broadcast media. In the process, some mention will also be made on the overall perpetuation of the western broadcast programming culture in Nigeria's independent and private broadcast stations.

There are more than 250 indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria today, and this further underscores the pluralistic structure of the Nigerian society. The communication needs of these multi-plural Nigerian communities are what the status quo Nigerian private broadcasting, as decentralizing broadcast stations, are supposed to address. Unfortunately, these private radio stations, since their cradle, obviously prefer to use English as their major language for programming. The situation has taken a turn for the worse since the public service broadcast stations have, perhaps in a bid to survive the competition engendered by broadcast pluralism, dropped much of their previous indigenous language programming only to compete with their private counterparts in English broadcast programming, despite the dangerous implications of doing so. Thus, the very hope of promoting indigenous languages and cultural talents on the platform of private

broadcasting became forlorn. Consequently, with the fast endemic and infectious programming pattern, Nigerian public service, commercial and community (where available) broadcast stations appear to have neglected the use of the country's many and varied indigenous languages in the production and presentation of their programs.

In some private broadcast stations, the Pidgin English is often used in the blind belief that it communicates more effectively than the native languages. Arguably, there appears to be palpable foreign influence on Nigeria's broadcasting that has left viewers of and listeners to such stations like Channels TV, Cool FM Lagos, Port Harcourt and Abuja, Planet Radio, Uyo, Solid FM Enugu, Joy FM, Makurdi, to mention just a few, wondering if they are foreign stations that are perhaps transmitted through satellite. Thus, Nigeria's radio environment has begun to experience what Blankson (2005) [2] describes as the 'foreignization' of Ghana's radio broadcasting. In our case, it is the 'foreignization' of Nigeria's radio broadcasting, and this explains a situation where private and commercial FM stations, are so dominated by English when they broadcast, to the ludicrous extent that listeners often phone in to inquire whether the stations were foreign.

Nigerian radio stations have, therefore, become competitive grounds where music particularly western and Caribbean, interjected with talk in western accents accounted for over eighty (80) percent of Nigeria's broadcast airplay and airtime. Although, it can be argued that the stations sometime played a considerable number of "Nigerian hip-hop" (a Nigerian version of rap, hip-hop and rhythm and blues), Nigerian folk and highlife music has an abysmally poor radio-airplay. Program hosts and newsreaders openly accentuate the dominance of foreignization as they compete, among themselves, over who could speak with the best foreign accent. This trend has led to a phenomenon known in Nigerian popular culture as Locally Acquired Foreign Accent (LAFA). This is a scenario, where program presenters and hosts, who had never traveled to the United States or the Caribbean, mimic American, British and Caribbean accents. In their attempt to do so, they mispronounce

common Nigerian names and words. Furthermore, although these stations have also introduced a variety of interactive programs such as phone-in to run with their music and news segments, and thus engaged the public in addressing a wide range of social, health, environmental and political issues, they have, once again, embarrassingly depended on English in packaging their contents. Their relatively limited use of Nigerian languages, dialects and cultural programs means the exact opposite of counteracting value of private broadcasting.

The sad consequence of this development is that it is a gross violation of the National Broadcasting Commission's broadcasting code's provision on seventy (70) percent local content programming. Thus, when audience participation programs, which are expected to use indigenous languages to actively engage the public, are ludicrously and incomprehensively anchored in English, and in the English man's accent, there is no cipher in the complete alienation of the Nigerian rural communities in the dominant broadcast programming pattern. Therefore, the use of inappropriate language, in the guise of official language like English, to deny the rural audience from active participation in rural broadcasting, has made nonsense of the goal of enthroning liberal and deliberative democracy through the instrumentality of private broadcasting. There is a misconception of the shared Nigerian public space, as the rural audience, whose access to the public service radio and television has always been severed by government monopoly of content, has once again come under the fire of elitist private broadcasts.

Worst still, most private radio stations and even some public service ones, engage in direct relay of world news broadcasts on foreign broadcast stations, particularly through exchange programming with international stations such as the Voice of America (VOA), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Radio Netherlands, etc. It is therefore discernable that in most cases, programs which could mobilize communities for rural development or generally address the basic needs of the rural population are shelved in preference for the

foreign news and programs. In spite of the fact that the programs meant for the consumption of the rural dwellers are often produced and presented in English, the few ones packaged in indigenous languages are scheduled at such broadcast times, when the rural population cannot access them. It is therefore not a surprising development to listen to indigenous language programs on Nigerian broadcast stations between 10am and 6pm, when the target audiences are in either the farms or markets.

The dominant Nigerian private broadcasting has also demonstrated some disdain against Nigerian cultural talents. For instance, it is observable that with the commonplace western media philosophy, the massive cultural talents that abound in Nigerian rural communities are seen as “good for nothing” in the auditioning and recruitment of artistes. It is also verifiable that the majority of the employees of the private broadcast stations are individuals, who either speak English with emphasis on pure Oxford vocabulary and accent or demonstrate an unfathomable passion to do so. It is also noteworthy that the international news often relayed to Nigerians through the exchange programs carries such themes that are against the collective stability of Nigerians. In most cases, it is a presentation of negative reports on developing countries such Nigeria, and at best replete with such trivial things such as death of pets, cases of husbands raping their wives, illness and deaths of animals in the zoo, etc (Udoakah, 1998). In addition, metropolitan broadcasters, reporters and talents are often recruited to interpret and present the feelings and opinions of the rural dwellers even when it is a remote possibility. Thus, the most appropriate features of the basic need approach to rural broadcasting that has to do with human interest and personality profiles are carefully avoided. A reversed trend in the direction is imperative to take account of the pathological condition in the rural areas as indispensable part of broadcast programming, and must actively engage the local talents, who reside among the people in the production and presentation of such programs in the language of the people. This will no doubt enhance the content consumption, which will help to achieve the desired program objectives.

- **The Need for Indigenous Languages in Nigerian Private Broadcasting**

Language has always been acknowledged as the medium of the mass media. In effective broadcasting, feedback that is imperative, just as in all communications, is possible if the audience understands the language. Thus, the audience is as important as the broadcaster is, because the purpose of each station is to effectively reach the audiences at relatively lower cost, and impact positively on them, fulfill their social functions and yield an increased advertising productivity. It is the desire to bring about these that the use of indigenous languages in broadcasting evolved. Indigenous language is so important that Mazrui (1996) [7] reminded us that no country has ascended to the level of economic power by excessive dependence on foreign languages.

However, the format has grown to be an interesting and dynamic format in broadcast media programming. Aimed at using what is available (centralized infrastructure) to decentralize content, indigenous language programming uses the reach of the station, relevance of audience (that owns the language), programs of interest and their specific timing to broadcast effectively to the rural people. Indigenous language programming is the broadcasting format that segments the period of broadcasting with which messages in a community's indigenous language are presented or packaged for that community. The programming format has been found to carry effective messages to the target audiences. Effectiveness of messages means creating an understanding atmosphere in which the target audience would accept the demand of the messages, and act accordingly. The effectiveness of local language programming can be ensured if it is presented by a presenter, who resides among the target rural community. In this case reactions or feedbacks can as well come from the city dwellers of the target community. While most rural dwellers would require reinforcements from their fellow rural dwellers to change their attitude, both city and village residents of one community have emotional attachments to a program produced in their local language, and which has tackling their local issues as its substance.

The public service radio stations in Nigeria, by the virtue of their indigenous language programming, have proved to be a veritable medium of providing a good access to communication for a large number of people in the rural communities of their coverage areas, both literate and non-literate. To underscore the point, a review of the yearly-program schedules of some of the nation's public service radio reveals that some programs are produced in indigenous languages, which as well consistently appear on their weekly programming. The synopses of the programs, which in some cases are sponsored, indicate that the basic needs of rural development are essentially addressed. This implies that the broadcast programs in indigenous languages convey rural development messages, especially if one recalls that these basic needs are the thematic preoccupation of rural development.

Generally, the advantage of the radio over other media lies in its relative simplicity, cheapness and ubiquity without dependence on electricity supply. According to Olusola (2002) [8], it is therefore, believed that the rural radio occupies a strategic position in the process of communication for development especially in the third world. Development communication has to do with mobilization of a people to have a positive change in their living conditions. Thus, people are provided with adequate knowledge and information so that they are persuaded, through sound reasoning, to change in a predetermined direction. Communication can play a decisive role in promoting human development by stimulating people's awareness and participation, and by improving their knowledge and capabilities. Communication allows individuals to express themselves effectively, and helps them create an identity for themselves or their group. People develop a sense of community through communication. They also communicate to share information and increase their knowledge. Also through communication, there is the possibility of creating a joint action, which can lead to improvement of the environmental situations.

Participation is the active mass involvement of the citizens in the process of elaboration, implementation and follow-up of development. By this involvement, the people take up responsibilities to determine and shape their future. It starts from the conception of a development project, through to its implementation, follow-up and evaluation. The importance of participation in communication is such that a development goal cannot be realized without the development endeavor beginning in the context of the target beneficiary. The target beneficiaries may not be the foremost experts in macro-level planning, but they are often the most qualified to decide how or if a given project's plan and objectives apply in their immediate communities. The emphasis on participation is not a supplementary mechanism diffused to expedite external agendas, or a means to an end but it is a legitimate goal in itself. Thus communication must be seen as a common denominator for both development and communication, hence participatory communication as a two-way sharing of information among communication equals, is necessary for even development. The centrality of participation to development and communication matters to the extent that people oriented development can only realize its full potential, if rural people are involved and motivated, and if information and knowledge are shared. Communication caters for the human dimensions of development; it establishes a dialogue with rural people, involves them in the planning of their own development, provides information as a basis for social change and conveys the knowledge and skills required to improve the quality of their life. It implies that development cannot occur without participation, while language plays a significant role in participatory communication. Language is in itself a means of communication. Though there exist other means of communication, language remains a peculiar endowment of man that makes him unique among other living creatures.

The inseparable nature of language from culture underscores the significance of indigenous language in communication. A person's indigenous language or mother tongue is a part and carrier of his culture, as well as his means of communication. The meaning

ascribed to specific concepts or statements, in one language, is defined by the nationality of the culture in question. This means that when the indigenous language of a person is used to communicate to him, as obtainable in broadcast programming in Nigeria, the consequence is that he will have greater understanding than when another language is used. Again, cultural context and intimacy with a culture gives a deeper meaning to the understanding of language, and the circumstance in which it occurs will determine believability or a sense of reality. People of different cultures and different languages categorize their experiences and the world around them differently, and they verbalize them in different ways. Literal translations of words for objects, ideas, attitudes and beliefs are often impossible. Even close approximations fail to communicate culturally specific connotations. This implies that the meaning of a linguistic expression cannot be established outside the context of the form of social interaction, which shapes it. In line with this, it is worthy of note that indigenous language, when used in the media, writing or the arts, is powerful in bringing about changes in the lives of people. As Olusola (2002) [8] puts it "the native language heals and sets the mind positively, in whatever endeavor that is being undertaken, and it is critical to being whole and well" (p. 187). He explains that the native language is a catalyst towards strengthening the concept of becoming oneself. This, he says, concerns the recognition of the importance of self, getting to know and accept self.

Several other scholars have called attention to the importance of indigenous language in mobilization for development. Soola (2002) [10], while discussing the family planning information dissemination methods, notes that the success of such messages will be determined by the extent to which such communication is "predicated on an understanding of the society's culture, its peculiar system of values and attitudes" (p. 97). It follows then that indigenous language being a part and carrier of culture is best suited for communicating development messages on broadcast stations. Thus, indigenous language has been proved very potent in creating a critical mass of real

communication for substantial change. Indigenous languages can be used to raise the standard of living in the rural areas by using them in educational broadcast programs to teach basic technology. They can also be used to mobilize the vast majority, who are unlettered in the English language, to be involved in the political process. It follows that of all the media of mass communication available in Africa in general, and Nigeria in particular, radio and television broadcasting, with its strategy of indigenous language programming, is significantly suitable for the people on the continent. It is so because, in a third world country like Nigeria, it provides access to communication for a large number of people, both literate and non-literate, more so as the radio receiver set particularly is very cheap to own and maintain without dependence on electricity supply. Little wonder why national policies, programs and aspirations have always been effectively explained to the people through radio programs in indigenous languages in order to have their support, and to forge a sense of belonging among them.

The same format has also been used to teach in non-formal education in subject areas that are specific to the development needs of individual regions of a country. Development related knowledge on agricultural and economic practices, public health, personal hygiene and nutrition, community organization, civic rights and obligations and so forth have all been accessible to rural communities through the instrumentality of broadcast programming in indigenous languages. Although changing behavior is the most difficult goal to achieve, broadcast programming in indigenous languages provide the only reliable communication system that reaches large portions of the rural population, and thus constitutes a potent weapon in the behavior change process. The broadcasting format can more effectively provide exact instructions or directions for behavior change, when few people are involved. It does so with its inherent two-way communication capacity, but even when instructions are for large masses of people, and the message is one-way only, radio often functions for instructing people on certain behaviors.

Broadcast programming in indigenous languages have also encouraged profound and mutual understanding, and helped to forge social relationships among rural dwellers in African communities. In doing this, the programs facilitate the process of nation building by inviting people 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, FAO (1987) [4] states that indigenous language radio programming can fulfill a number of critical functions, because it is:

- An important mechanism for rapid diffusion of development information in a diversity of languages, and to widespread, often remote geographical areas;
- A channel for interactive communication, for dialogue and debate as the major issues 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 for collecting 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, when combined with other media, can be used for training, and the transfer and exchange of knowledge and technologies.

Furthermore, broadcast programming in indigenous languages can be used to harness the potentials of traditional media to bring about change and development. According to Ugboajah (1985) [11], the traditional or oral-media are grounded in indigenous culture, produced and consumed by grassroots members of traditional societies, and they reinforce the values of society. This is because indigenous languages are visible cultural features, often quite strictly conventional, by which social relationships and worldviews are maintained and defined.

As underscored by Food and Agricultural Organization, traditional folk media are cultural resources that accumulate indigenous knowledge, experience and expressions passed down from generation to generation. Woven into proverbs and poems, songs and dances, puppet plays and stories, rhythms and beats, they are embedded with a strong sense of cultural identity, which can be a potent force for development. In many cases, these media are the traditional conduits of indigenous knowledge, experience and culture. When they are creatively used, these cultural resources can be a subtle and effective way of introducing development ideas and messages. Drama, folk-tales, oral poetry and music, when aired through the medium of radio as programs, signature tunes, jingles, complementary ads, promos and trailers, soundtracks, etc, can purvey some rich development messages and ideas, which have great possibilities to mobilize people for development. Referring particularly to radio drama, Soola (2002) [10] points out that the theatre, as an interactive participatory tool in development, constitutes an asset in mobilizing and galvanizing people into action for sustainable environment. Using local language, or even preferably its dialect variant, idioms and symbolism, popular theatre, laden with environmental awareness messages, can be used to enlist the local or community people in theatrical performance.

Similarly, the rich resources available on the internet can be effectively exploited through radio, thus eradicating the hitherto anxiety over the possibility of a "digital divide", and the knowledge gap, which internet has created, owing to the limited access to it, particularly among the predominantly illiterate and poor, and the larger grass-root communities. Thus, by connecting community broadcast stations to the internet and training broadcasters to collect and adapt information to local socio-economic contexts, rural communities can have access to global knowledge and information to improve agricultural productivity, profitability and food security. Such was the type of project proposed by FAO to link rural radio stations of Southern Mali to the Internet, and was aimed at ensuring that information was collected, translated and adapted for

broadcasting to rural audiences in formats and languages they easily comprehend, and can be extended to other African rural communities. It may require the training of the information specialists, not only in Internet use but also in information management and marketing, to ensure the widest promotion of the ICTs tools, and the sustainability of the system.

CONCLUSION

The pivotal role of the broadcast media, especially in the actualization of liberal and deliberative democracy cannot be emphasized. The spirit and letter of private broadcasting as a counter to the hitherto government monopoly of the public service broadcast stations is to give the people, particularly the rural dwellers, the access to civic discourse and political awareness. As has been noted, the only way to realize this noble objective is to ensure the active participation of the rural audiences through general content diversity, particularly programs produced and presented in indigenous languages. To do otherwise, as has been the persistent case in Nigerian private broadcasting, not only means alienating the vital section of the Nigerian population, but also a platform for the extinction of Nigerian society's languages and cultures. Besides, there is the need to establish Nigeria's broadcast identity to counterattack those of other advanced countries of the world. To realize this, it is recommended that Nigerian government should, as a matter of urgency, provide broadcast policies that would ensure the protection of the nation's cultural integrity and indigenous languages. This would also correct the wrong perception, which Nigeria's media experts have of broadcast pluralism, and provide an appropriate framework for content diversity, especially by using the many indigenous languages of the multi-plural Nigeria.

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