

Re-Conceptualizing Indigenous African Languages as Alternative Strategy in Development Communication

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Abstract

Long before the coming of Europeans to Africa, the indigenous people and nation states had developed sophisticated languages and cultural practices that held traditional societies together. There were indigenous languages and prosperous socio-cultural economic and political systems that gave rise to known foremost human civilizations. Colonialism and imperial relationships imposed foreign languages on the people of the conquered colonial territories. These new European and Arabic languages were erroneously touted as elitist and superior to the indigenous ones. Languages such as Latin, French, Dutch, English and Arabic were taught in schools and used as languages of trade, politics, and proselytization of new religion, new knowledge and subtle tool for imposition of alien culture. It is known that language is the vehicle through which human communication takes place and that without it, it will be impossible for communication messages, ideas and values to spread from one place to another. Recently, development communication emerged as brand new communication strategy which directs communication messages straight to the people concerned in order to achieve development and improve the lives of the people. This paper seeks to interrogate the continued reliance on foreign languages in conveying communication messages in African societies. It also seeks to re-examine the nature and structure of indigenous African languages in the context of development communication. In order to arrive at valid conclusion, the research adopted the communication accommodation theory as their theoretical framework. Also, the research method of ethnography and narration were used as the qualitative research approach for the study.

Keywords: Indigenous, Africa, Language, Strategy, Communication, Development.

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Introduction

Before the advent of colonialism, the indigenous people of Africa lived well organized and settled lives. Africa had well developed languages and socio-economic and cultural systems that sustained our lives and existence.

Our Indigenous languages were used for communication, for commercial trade and for exchange of various social and cultural activities both locally.

The coming of the Europeans abruptly disorganized the settled and organized life of indigenous people in all its ramifications. Originally the colonial masters came for trade and commerce, but as time went on, they imposed on us a new system of government, a new system of education, a new religion, a new culture and new ways of thinking. New languages such as Latin, Dutch, French, English and Arabic were introduced in schools and imposed on us as languages of trade politics and proselytization of their new religion and education. These new experiences brought about disorientating cultural shocks that led to various social crises, social insurrections and several wars of resistance.

Africans fought gallantly to protect and preserve their culture, their languages and their time tested productive ways of lives. Unfortunately, in most cases, they were overpowered, killed, exiled, or subdued by sheer force of arms or subtle political intrigues and deceptive compromises. The importance of language in communication cannot be overstated. Language is the tool or vehicle through which communication takes place. Without languages, communication and the transfer of messages, ideas and values from one place to another cannot take place.

Some years ago, development communication emerged as new communication strategy which directs communication messages straight to the people concerned in order to achieve development and improve lives and well being. This new communication system was designed mainly for people living in the less developed parts of the world. Just as it is in the other types of communication, selection of appropriate media and language is a key strategy in development communication.

This paper is designed to take a second look at the indigenous African languages with a view to examining the effects which the new foreign language has had on them. The paper will also examine development communication as the new communication system for the less developed countries. Finally, the paper will attempt to establish the relationship between communication and language in order to determine the effectiveness of the indigenous African Languages as the new strategy for development communication.

Research problems

Most countries in Africa especially those in the sub-Saharan region are grossly under developed. These countries are lacking in the most basic amenities and infrastructure that are necessary for human existence. Some years ago, communication scholars came up with the idea of development communication in order to help address the problem of under development in these less developed countries.

Unfortunately, the language which is used to communicate development messages to the people concerned are foreign languages which are alien and strange to the target audience. More so, the majority of the people who are in need of development are rural dwelling illiterates who are not schooled in the diction of alien foreign languages.

The problem of this study therefore is to establish how indigenous African Languages can be used as a strategy in communicating development messages instead of relying on ineffective foreign ones.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to re-examine indigenous African languages and justify its adoption as alternative strategy in development communication.

Specifically, the study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

1. Re-appraising the nature of the indigenous African Languages.
2. Re-examining the idea and practice of development communication.
3. Establishing a relationship between language and communication.
4. Re-assessing the strategies of development communication.

5. Interrogating the continual use of foreign languages as the language of development communication in rural African countries.

6. Justifying the adoption of Indigenous African languages as a more effective strategy in development communication.

Assumptions of the study

This study makes the following assumptions.

1. That there were well developed indigenous languages in Africa before the advent of colonization.

2. That these Indigenous African Languages were negatively affected and undermined by the imposed languages of the colonial masters.

3. That the majority of the people who need development messages are illiterates that are not schooled in the new foreign languages.

4. That the continual use of foreign languages in development communication is ineffective.

5. Adopting the use of Indigenous African Languages as a strategy in development communication will be a more effective way of driving communication messages to the people concerned.

Research methodology

The researchers adopted qualitative descriptive analysis as the research methodology for this study. The specific types of qualitative methods used were ethnography and narrative analysis.

This method of research was considered appropriate because of the nature of the study. The study is designed to establish the relevance of Indigenous African Languages and to interrogate the continued use of foreign Languages as a strategy in development communication.

The qualitative approach helped the researchers to gather multiple forms of data through observations and survey of multiple documents rather than relying on single data source.

This method also assisted the researchers to solve the complex issues generated by the social enquiry and enabled them to breakdown the findings of the study into meaningful inferences that is easily readable and understandable by all.

Theoretical basis of the study.

This study is anchored on the communication accommodation theory.

The communication accommodation theory is a theory of communication developed by Howard Giles in 1973. It urges that when people interact, they adjust their speech, their vocal patterns and their gestures, to accommodate others. It explores the social differences between themselves and their interlocutors, through verbal and non-verbal communication. This theory is concerned with the links between language, context and identity. It focuses on both the intergroup and interpersonal factors that lead to accommodation, as well as, the ways in which power, macro and micro-context concerns affect communication behaviors.

There are two main accommodation processes described by this theory; they are convergence, which refers to the strategies through which individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors in order to reduce these social differences and divergence, which refers to the instances in which individuals accentuate the speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and their interlocutors. Sometimes when individuals try to engage in convergence, they can also end up over-accommodating and despite their good intentions; their convergence can be seen as condescending.

Communication accommodation is a communication theory which emphasizes the adjustments that people do while communicating. Communication accommodation theory elaborates the human tendency to adjust their behavior, in the course of human interaction. The reason behind this behavior, while interacting. This reason behind the behavior is explained as to control the social differences between the interactants. People accommodate their communication activities to get approval and to set a positive image in front of the interactant. The environment in which they are interacting also affects the communication behavior.

The above assertion implies that people change and adjust their communication style to accommodate others. Thus, the theory examines the underlying motivations and consequences of what happens when two speakers shift their communication styles. Communication accommodation theory argues that during communication, people will try to accommodate or adjust their style of speaking to others. Groups with strong ethnic or racial pride often use divergence to highlight group identity. Convergence occurs when there is a strong need for social approval frequently from powerless individuals. When we talk with other people, we will tend to subconsciously change our style of speech (accent, rate, types of words, etc) towards the style

used by the listener. We also tend to match non-verbal behaviors. This signals agreement and linking. Communication accommodation theory is used to be called speech accommodation theory.

Some of the assumptions of the theory are:

- I. People bring in their backgrounds and fields of experience into their interactions through their speeches and behaviors.
- II. Accommodation is influenced by the way in which people perceive and evaluate what takes place during a conversation; that is, how people interpret and judge the messages exchanged in conversation.
- III. Accommodation varies according to social norms and the appropriateness of the situation.
- IV. There are speech and behavioral similarities and dissimilarities in all conversations.
- V. Language and behaviors have the ability to communicate social status and group belonging between people in a conversation.
- VI. Norms guide the accommodation process which varies in its degree of appropriateness.

Review of Related Literature

The Meaning of Language

The Oxford dictionary mentions “communication” as a synonym of language and for most people effective communication means a proficient use of language. It may also mean command even the language. The definitions of language can range from speech, utterances and vocabulary on one side to barbarism, colloquialism, slang, legalese, bureaucratese, idiolect and pidgin on the other. The Encyclopedia Britannica provides the following definitions of the language; “ A system of conventional spoken or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, communicate”.

Language as a unique human trait

Descartes, French mathematician, Scientist and philosopher who founded the concept of ‘mind – body dualism’ considered language to be the important factor distinguishing humans from animals. Recent evidence, however, suggests that many species do indulge in complex communication, e.g. prairie dog communication; “individuals (of the species) enhance group

cohesion by greeting one another upon contact, using vocalizations that are specific to each species”]Prairie dogs are known to recognize and differentiate between two members of the same species yet language is generally believed to be a unique human characteristic.

In human language, the relationship between a word and its referent is a purely arbitrary and conventional one, which must be learned by anyone wishing to speak that language; many words, of course, have no obvious referent at all. Moreover, language can be used flexibly and innovatively to talk about situations that have never yet arisen in the speakers experience – or indeed, about situations that never could arise”.

Dr. Pau Broca, whose study of brain lesions contributed to the understanding of aphasia (the loss or impairment of the ability to form or articulate words), discovered that the left frontal region of the brain is the seat of articulate speech. This suggests that there is a biological basis for the development of language in humans.

Relationship between language and communication, the ethnolinguistic view point.

The interest in the relationship between language, communication and culture was triggered by the ethno linguists. Edward Sapir of Yale University wrote in 1931 that a thorough description of the structure of a language and its function in speech might help explain the processes of perception and cognition in humans and provide a better insight into human behavior. Benjamin Lee Whorf, under the influence of Sapir, hypothesized that the structure of a language may actually influence the manner in which a person conceives and perceives the world (Sapir – Whorf hypothesis).

His work generated considerable interest and his suggestion that the way people view time and punctuality may be influenced by verbal tenses in their language is debated even today, but, the question whether language shapes communication culture or vice-versa has not been resolved.

Bi-lingualism and communication

If the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is true then bilingual people, may have an advantage over those who speak just one language, because, they may be better able to simultaneously perceive comprehend subtle similarities or comparisons, or contrasts, in diverse concepts or view point. They may be able to simultaneously perceive opposing dimensions of an arguments and create

complex realities in their minds since their brains are accustomed to diverse grammatical constructs.

It is possible, though, that conflicting structures of different languages may corrupt one's perception or cognition, leading to confusion. According to professor R.H Robins , bilingualism leads to distortions in the both languages: "However acquired, bilingualism leads to mutual interference between the two languages : extensive bilingualism within a community is sometimes held partly responsible for linguistic change Interference may take place in pronunciation, in grammar, and the meanings of words.

A semiotic perspective

Language can also be viewed as a system of signs and sign using behavior. Semiotics, also called semiology is the study of signs and sign-using behavior. It focuses on meaning derived rather than the choice of words. This theory of signs tries to generate laws and principles that explain the signification process.

American philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce categorized signs into three main types:

1. An icon which resembles its referent (such as a road sign for an accident prone area);
2. An index, which is associated with its referent (as smoke is a sign of fire); and
3. A symbol, which is related to its referent only by convention (like the red light at a traffic signal).

Pierce demonstrated that a sign can never have a definite meaning, and that the meaning must be continuously qualified. This implies that even though people seemingly use the same language generation of meaning is a unique internal experience, which means that no two people will generate identical meanings from any given construct.

The mathematical theory of language and communication

Shannon's theory provides a simplistic model of communication, and unlike semiology, deals principally with the message service, the channel, the message receiver, and the element of noise. According to Shannon (American mathematician and electrical engineer) there are two ways of sending and receiving information namely, discrete signals and continuous signals. The letters of the English Language are considered discrete signal while analog like sounds are continuous signals. Information according to this theory is measured by randomness in the choice of words

(signs and symbols) of particular source, one can compare it to the maximum possible value; provided the source continues to use the same signs or symbols i.e. Language.

Like semiology the mathematical theory of communication, or Information Theory, too highlights the improbability of accurate communication. It is interesting to note that noise actually creates the illusion that a message is informative. If we add to his the conclusions drawn from the review of theories of semiology, then we can imagine the phenomenal difficulties lying in the path of communication effectiveness (especially when linking command on language with communication effectiveness).

Language as a tool for communication and disclosure of cultural reality.

Various definition of language has been proposed by linguists. Language is a form, not a substance (Chaer Lyons 1995: 60). Chaer (1995: 14) mentions the characteristics that constitute the essence of language; as a symbol of the sound system, as arbitrary, productive, dynamic, diverse and humane.

Language is a system, which means that it is formed by a number of components that are fixed and can be patterned. As a systematic meaning, it means that language is arranged according to a certain pattern not arranged randomly or arbitrary. Being systematic means that language is not a single system, but rather consists of several subsystems that differ from other languages. Language subsystems consist of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. Language is also commonly considered unique but universal at the same time. Unique means that it has the characteristics or properties not possessed by other languages, while being universal means having the same traits that exist in all languages.

Chaer and Augustina (2004:26-29) suggests 16 kinds of distinctive human language as follows:

1. The language uses vowel auditory pathway. In this case, there are similarities between communication systems owned by many other animals, including crickets, frogs and birds.
2. Language can spread in all directions yet received as directed.
3. Language is a symbol in the form of sound that can disappear once pronounced. Because of rapid loss, people always trying to preserve this symbol of language sounds into written form and sound recordings.

4. Participants in the communication process with language can communicate to each other. This means that a speaker can be a symbol sender and as symbol recipient at the same time.
5. The language symbol can be a complete feedback. The speaker as the sender can hear their own language symbols.
6. Communication languages have its own specialty. Humans can talk without having to do physical movements to support the communication process.
7. Sound symbols in communication language mean and refers to certain specific things.
8. The relationship between language symbols with its meaning is not determined by agreement or convention between the speakers of the language.
9. Language as a tool of human communication can be separated into certain unit, i.e sentences, words morphemes and phonemes.
10. Reference or something being discussed in the language not always at the present place and time. Human language be used for something in the past, in the future or in distant places. Even only in fantasy.
11. Language is open. It means, symbols of speech can be made according to human needs.
12. Skill and finesse master the rules and customs of human language derived from learning process not through genes in born. Animal language generally is congenital.
13. Language can be learned. Someone who was born and raised in a particular language community will be able to learn other languages that are not used in their community.
14. Languages can be used to express the true and not true, or logically meaningless. Humans can use language to say the right things and that which is not true.
15. Language has two subsystems namely the sound subsystem and meaning subsystems that enable language to have economic function.

Functions of language in communication

Basically language has certain functions that are used according to the needs of a person, i.e as a tool for self expression, as a means to communicate, as a tool to organize and adapt to social integration in the environment or circumstances, and as a tool for social control (Kerap, 1997).

Here are the roles of language as a communication tool:

1. Language as a tool to interact with others.

2. Language reflects a person's level of education
3. Indicates authority
4. As the force of law
5. Attract the customer
6. Indicates a person's social standing.

Pre-colonial indigenous African languages

- **Language groups**

Most languages spoken in Africa belong to one of three large language families: Afroasiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Niger- Congo. Another hundred belong to smaller families such as Ubanain (sometimes grouped within Niger-Congo) and the various families called Khorsan, or the Indo-European and Austronesian language families mainly spoken outside Africa; the presence of the latter two dates to 2,600 and 1,500 years ago, respectively.

In addition, the languages of Africa include several unclassified languages and sign languages. The earliest Afroasiatic languages are associated with the Caspian culture, the Nilo-Saharan languages are linked with the Khartoum Mesolithic /Neolithic, the Niger-Congo languages are correlated with the west and central hoe based farming traditions and the Khoian languages are matched with the South and South Eastern Wilton industries. More broadly, the Afroasiatic family is tentatively grouped within the Nostratic super family, and the Nilo-Saharan and Niger-Congo phyla from the Niger-Saharan macro phylum.

Afroasiatic Languages

Afroasiatic languages are spoken throughout North Africa, the Horn of Africa, Western Asia and parts of the Sahel. There are approximately 375 Afroasiatic languages spoken by over 400 million people. The main subfamilies of Afroasiatic are **Berber, Chadic, Cushitic, Omotic, Egyptian and Semitic**. The Afroasiatic Urheimat is uncertain. The family's most extensive branch, the Semitic languages (including **Arabic, Amharic and Hebrew** among others), is the only branch of Afroasiatic that is spoken outside Africa.

Some of the most widely spoken Afroasiatic languages include Arabic (a semitic language, and a recent arrival from west Asia), Somali (**Cushitic Berber**) (Berber), **Haus** (chadic), **Amharic** (semitic and **Oromo** (Cushitic). Of the world's surviving language families, Afroasiatic has the longest written history, as both Akkadian language of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egyptian are members.

Nilo-Saharan languages

Nilo-Saharan languages consist of a hundred diverse languages. The proposed family has a speech area that stretches from the Nile valley to northern Tanzania and into Nigeria and Dr. Congo with the songhay languages along the reaches of the Niger River as a geographic outlier. Genetic linkage between these languages has not been conclusively demonstrated, and among linguistics, support for the proposal is sparse.

The languages share some unusual morphology, but if they are related, most of the branches must have undergone major restructuring since diverging from their common ancestor. The inclusion of the songhay languages is questionable, and doubts have been raised over the koman, Gumz and kadu branches.

Some of the better known Nilo-Saharan languages are **kanuri, fur, songhay, Nobiin** and the widespread **Nilotic** family, which includes the **luo, Dinka** and **Maasai**. The Nilo-Saharan languages are tonal.

Niger – Congo Languages

The Niger-congo languages constitute the largest languages family spoken in West Africa and perhaps the world in terms of the number of languages. One of its silent features is an elaborate noun class system with grammatical concord. A large majority of this family are tonal such as **Yoruba** and **Igbo, Akan** and **Ewe** Language. A major branch of Niger-Congo languages is the Bantu Phylum, which has a wider speech area than the rest of the family.

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The Niger-Kordofanian language family, joining Nigeria-Congo with the Kordofanian language of South-central Sudan, was proposed in the 1950s by Joseph Greenberg. Today, linguists often use “Niger-Congo” to refer to this entire family, including Kordofanian as a subfamily. One reason for this is that it is not clear whether Kordofanian was the first branch to diverge or more divergent. Niger – Congo has been claimed to be equally linguist, through a few question the inclusion of mande and Dogn, and there is no conclusive evidence for the inclusion of Ubagian.

Throughout the long multilingual history of the African continent, African languages have been subject to Phenomena like languages contact, language expansion, and language shift and language death. A case in point is the Bantu expansion, in which Buntu. Speaking peoples expanded over most of sub-Equatorial African, intermingling with Khoi-san speaking people from much of southeast African and southern African and other peoples from central Africa-century, which led to the extension of Arabic from its home land in Asia, into much of North Africa and Horn of Africa.

Trade languages are another age old phenomenon in the African linguistic landscape. Cultural and linguistic innovations spread along trade routes and languages of wider communication (lingua franca). Of particular importance in this respect are Berber (North and West Africa), **Jula** (Western West Africa), **Fulfulde** (west Africa), **Hausa** (West Africa), **Lingala** (congo), **Swahili** (southeast Africa), **Somali** (Horn of Africa) and **Arabic** (North Africa and Horn of Africa).

After gaining independence, many African countries in the search for national unity, selected one language, generally he former colonial language, to be used in government and education.

However, in recent years, African countries have become increasingly supportive of maintaining linguistic diversity language policies that are being developed nowadays are mostly aimed at multilingualism.

Meaning and origin of development communication

Simply put, development communication is the overall deliberate effort to acquaint target of development with the desired message of development. It involves deliberate, well-desired and

articulated communication codes aimed at bringing development messages to the knowledge of the development targets.

The primary motive of embarking on development communication is to create adequate awareness about the developmental projects meant to enhance the well-being of the inhabitants of a given society and by so doing, sensitise their adoption of the project. Thus, development communication, as Edeani (193:30) defines it is, “the use of all forms communication in reporting, publicizing and promotion of development at all levels of a society”.

Edeani’s definition clearly shows that development communication is hardly narrow in scope. It entails the use of a multi-media approach to disseminate development information for the well-being of man in society.

Development therefore, remains the dominant motivating factor behind the development communication exercise. As we noted earlier, it usually creates awareness about a cause and canvasses support for such a cause. Whatever is the cause however, it must be to the best interest of the people whose life is touched by such a cause.

However development communication or communication for development (Okunna, 2002:293b) originated in the 1960s as an aftermath of the socio-economic and political revolutions that took place in many parts of the world then. In addition, the failure of the four press philosophies (existing before them to fit into the press system of developing nations added impetus to the evolution of development communication.

The four press philosophies, we must note, are the authoritarian, the libertarian, the social responsibility and the soviet communist philosophies. It is instructive to note that Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956:11) who originated these philosophies call them theories, hence, the notions, and four theories of the press.

As we observed earlier, when the older press philosophies failed to address the development needs of developing countries notable communication scholars began to brainstorm on the best approach or press system that can be adapted to bring about speedy development among the poor

nations of African, Latin, American, Asia and Eastern Europe. Prominent among these scholars are Wilbor Schramm, Daniel Lerner, Everett Rogers and Mohammed Musaodi, to mention a few.

However, the continued negative report of the south by the Western press challenged concerned scholars to look for alternative means of reporting developing nations in a most positive light. This search led media scholars and practitioners from developing nations to mount pressure on UNESCO for the adoption of a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). In spite of Western agitations against this call for a new order, NWICO in 1981 received UNESCO's blessings. The adaptation of NWICO by UNESCO becomes a major landmark in the history of communication development in the third world. The achievement is epochal considering the fact that it marked the beginning of the recognition of a development media philosophy as a branch of communication that deserves serious global academic attention. Udoaka (1998:7) observes that the adoption of NWICO conferred legitimacy on what the developing nations already as their media philosophy development communication (Devcom), otherwise known as development journalism".

He further says:

Development communication therefore is a remonstrance against Western domination of the world information market. It is a new philosophy for the new use of modern media of mass information in developing countries. It is journalism introduced to meet the developing needs of the developing nations. Development communication is corrective, integrative and revolutionary in nature. It is journalism of hope and change. It proclaims and extends values in society. It seeks to persuade citizens to accept that their happiness lies in and is enhanced by their adoption of innovations.

The main thrust of development communication therefore, is that the instruments of communications should be used in such a manner that the messages (s) emanating there from should promote national consciousness political integration and the overall socio-economic, cultural, scientific and technological advancement of development nations.

Media and languages selection strategy in development communication.

Nwodu and Ukozor (2013) identified media selection as a key strategy in development communication. They stated that the choice of media that is used to communicate development messages to the people concerned is pivotal to the success of the project or programme.

The media of development communication according to them are broken into two groups, these are the popular mass media channels of radio, television, newspapers, magazines and recently the new digital media. The next group are the traditional media such as gongs, drums, wooden gongs, flutes, town criers, chants, dances, bonfires and so on.

The choice of media to be used in communicating development messages depends to a large extent on the type of message or information that needs to be passed around to the target audience. The mass media of newspapers, magazines and the internet will be effective when addressing a more literate audience while the traditional media will have more effect when the message is directed to rural less literate audience.

According to Alozie (_2003), for development communication to be successful, the selection of appropriate media channels for disseminating development information or message is imperative. The selection of wrong or inappropriate media channels has been blamed for the failure of development programmes in the past.

Nwuneli (1985:203) opines that while social change is desirable, social development programmes can easily run into problems if they are not effectively communicated to the people.

Irrespective of the kind of media channels available, the change agent needs to know the strengths and weakness of these various media of communication so as to select the most effective ones. In this process of selecting the appropriate media, multichannel selection approach is acceptable if it will yield the desired effect.

The imperative of appropriate language selection in development communication

This paper argues that selecting the right media for dissemination of development messages should also go hand in hand with selecting the right language for conveying those messages. As noted in the proceeding part of this paper, no form of communication can be effective without

the use of the right language at the right time. More so, the majority of the people who are in need of development are mostly the illiterate people that are living in the less developed parts of the world especially in Africa. This paper strongly posits that the media contents which are meant for development purposes should be written in any of the indigenous African Languages and not in foreign languages. This will make communication for development purposes more direct more effective and much more understandable.

Unfortunately, most development agents in Africa often fail to mobilize the people towards effective development communication programmes, part of this problem is caused by poor literacy orientation of people in the rural communities.

Following this obvious realization, development agents in Africa should not only rely on the English Language or other foreign languages but should inculcate the use of local languages if they hope to effectively mobilize the people for rural and national development projects.

The media experts who constantly make inputs in the design of media contents should make them more impactful by writing or designing them in local indigenous African languages. Development messages especially in the radio should be aired in African indigenous languages; this is because radio has the potential of wider reach and has recorded some far reaching effects in Africa. Radio is powerful in terms of creating awareness or providing information more than the other channels of mass communication. Using local indigenous languages to design programmes and input other media channels like television newspaper, magazines and even the digital media.

Language selection strategy in development communication should also be extended to the multichannel or multi-media approach. The multi-media approach is a preferred strategy and particularly good for the African situation because of variety of media channels used in disseminating development information are very likely to be more effective than the selection of a single channel.

The multi-media approach calls for development information or message to be carried to the target audience through a combination of various channels.

These are the mass media, interpersonal or group media, oramedia, (traditional media) small personal media (audio and video cassettes GSM phones etc).

In adopting the multi-media approach, this paper posits that the language used in each of them should also be multiple and specially directed to the target audience. Each of the media used should input media messages in a language or dialect that is indigenous to the target audience. The paper therefore proposes a new approach termed. *(Multi-indigenous language audience specific approach (MILASA))*. This new approach should be adopted as a new development communication strategy in the less developed African countries.

This paper believes that using the newly proposed *Multi-indigenous language audience specific approach* will also ensure that popular participation of members of the target audience in development programs in the less developed African countries are elicited at all times.

Without audience participation, the development messages and efforts will be in vain. The target audience will be motivated to take part not only in the process of development but also in the communication process. This paper believed that a major way of making the target audience an integral part of the development process is by using audience specific indigenous language to send the development messages.

Since audience participation entails sending of feedback and receiving of information and taking active part in discussion and decision making, their involvement will become more effective when such interactions are carried out using the audience indigenous language or dialect.

Active participation or involvement of the audience will become even more realistic when interpersonal or face to face channels are used in one's indigenous language or dialect. Emphasis on communication effectiveness in development should lead to a preference for change agents to input development communication messages in the target audience's indigenous language when sent over the mass media channels, the traditional media or when using a multi-media approaches and more so in a face to face interaction.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary

Summarily, this paper has re-assessed the nature and existence of indigenous African languages. It has also analyzed how the coming of the Europeans had imposed foreign languages on African colonies which tended to diminish and undermine the use of the native indigenous African languages.

The objective of the paper primarily is to interrogate the continual use of foreign languages in communication and to establish how indigenous African languages can be adopted as an alternative strategy in development communication.

The paper adopted the qualitative narrative analysis as the research method for the enquiry, while the theoretical framework is based on the communication accommodation theory.

Some of the related literature that was reviewed range from the meaning of language, the relationship between language and communication and the importance of language in communication. In parts of the review, the paper also indentified some pre-colonial indigenous African languages, their language families and the specific African countries where they are spoken. Other works on the meaning and origin of development communication was also reviewed. This was followed by an analysis on media and language selection as a strategy in development communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper agreed with the views of other development communication scholars that media selection is pivotal to the achievement of developmental objectives by change agents. This paper also agreed that the main mass media channels of radio, television, newspaper, magazines are the central media choices in development communication. It also acknowledged that besides the main stream media, development communication messages can also be sent through the traditional media channels of oramedia. Also the paper agreed that multi-media strategy can also be used effectively depending on the audience and the prevailing circumstances.

To expand the frontiers of discourses in development communication, the paper went further to posit that *besides media selection, language selection should also be considered as a pivotal strategy in development communication*. The paper emphasized that development communication messages should be inputted in the indigenous language or dialect of the target audience irrespective of the media that is used to convey the message. The researchers went further to propose a new strategy termed: ***(Multi-Indigenous Language Audience Specific Approach (MILASA))***

Recommendations

In view of the foregoing analysis, the paper makes the following recommendations;

1. There is an urgent need for a re-creation of a general and scholarly interest in indigenous African languages.
2. There should be a reduction of the use of foreign languages as tools of teaching in schools and churches
3. There is need for renewed awareness on the use of indigenous African languages as language of the media and mass communication in Africa.
4. A media regulatory policy initiative should be put in place in African countries to enforce the use of local languages and dialects in the media.
5. Development communication messages directed at Africans should all be inputted in indigenous African languages no matter the media used.
6. This paper finally recommends that the new proposed *Multi-Indigenous Language Audience Specific Approach MILASA* should be adopted as a development communication strategy in all developing African countries.

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