

## EFFECTIVENESS OF RADIO PROGRAMME IN BRIDGING THE ILLITERACY GAP IN THE RURAL AREAS OF BAYELSA STATE: A STUDY OF NEWS IN THE LANGUAGES OF RADIO BAYELSA

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**ABSTRACT:** The study investigated the effectiveness of the radio programme in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas of Bayelsa State. The research was based on the development media theory. The survey method was used; the study's population was 470,800, and a sample size of 385 was calculated using an Australian online sample size calculator. The study used a multistage sampling procedure, with a questionnaire as the data gathering tool. The findings revealed that 54% of respondents are highly exposed to the news in language programme, 98% of respondents confirmed that Radio Bayelsa's use of language in information dissemination is a welcome development that should be encouraged, and 81% of the respondents attested that news in language has been very effective in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas of Yenagoa metropolis. Therefore, the researchers recommended that the residents strive for more exposure to language broadcast programs in order to be adequately informed. Therefore, more language programs should be made available on Radio Bayelsa and other broadcast media organizations in the state; language broadcast should be encouraged and embraced by media organizations during news or program broadcast; and media organizations should be very creative in working with creative producers to create programmes in languages and airtime/space be allocated to such programmes.

**Keywords:** Radio, Rural, Programmes, Development, Illiteracy.

### I. Introduction

Regardless of the field, information is essential to all sorts of human activity, including tourism, agriculture, and health care. There will always be a need for information exchange in order to ensure that duties are done (feedback mechanism). As a result, information is seen as a critical resource that must be appropriately utilised due to its enormous impact on society (Ijah, 2013). It is not an exaggeration to say that a society with poor communication and information infrastructure lags behind societies with effective information infrastructure. Communication is a basic part of connection and information sharing in life, as it helps to develop a pool of ideas and promotes the feeling of togetherness through the interchange of messages and the translation of thoughts into actions.

Radio, above all other forms of mass communication in Africa, is much more suitable for the continent's inhabitants. In a third-world country like Nigeria, radio is an ideal type of mass communication since it allows a large number of people to communicate, both literate and illiterate, and it is very affordable to acquire and operate without relying on electricity (Oyero, 2010). Through radio communication, citizens are educated about new concerns that arise in society. Radio is a social mobilisation tool; it motivates individuals to achieve a specific objective by raising their awareness of their rights and responsibilities in society (Ijah, 2013). The medium can act as both a conduit and a catalyst for growth.

Radio stands out among other media channels because of its ubiquitous and penetrative qualities. Myers (2008, p.18) believes that development-related radio content works better on radio than on television because radio is a better medium for communicating complex ideas and has added a lot of value to listeners' imaginations. In rural communities, there are generally more illiterates than literates who are unconcerned with what is going on in their surroundings (Ijah, 2013). This contributes to certain rural residents' casual attitude toward listening to radio broadcast programmes. This raises the important question of how effective radio has

been in bridging the illiteracy gap in Bayelsa State's rural areas. The majority of the broadcast programmes are not in the mother tongues of the rural population.

## II. Statement of the Problem

Radio as a conduit for national development cannot be underemphasized. Radio's influence is neither confined nor unique to Nigeria, but rather to most developing nations. For decades, the media in some developing areas have failed to give rural areas a voice or even access to their facilities. Therefore, they contribute to widening the existing gap between the literate and illiterate. Even though Nigeria is a developing country and, as such, does not have as much technological advancement as first world countries (Amodu, 2008). Effort should still be made through radio programmes to carry the ruralites along. Nwosu (2005) stated that being a developing country, the majority of the populace live in rural areas and, by reason of this, a lot of economic activities take place in these areas, i.e., agriculture, farming, vegetable cultivation and what not. This basically means that we are fed by the output or resources of rural areas, but they are still barely mentioned in the big picture. It is, however, critical that such issues be handled expeditiously with an eye and heart, not just to cover up, but to truly solve the problems at their root (Oyero, 2007). It is obvious that if this disparity continues, the gap will keep growing. In such a situation, the media has a great role to play, but then how effective is news in the languages of the Radio Bayelsa programme in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas of Bayelsa State?

## III. Research Questions

The study raises the following questions to guide it;

1. What is the level of exposure to news in languages programme among Yenagoa rural residents?
2. What are the reactions of the residents towards the use of languages in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa?
3. In what ways has the news in the languages programme on Radio Bayelsa broadcast bridged the gap between the learned and the non-learned in the rural areas of the metropolis?
4. What is the effectiveness of the news in languages by Radio Bayelsa in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas?

### 4.1 Review of Related Literature

#### 4.1.1 A peep at the Concept of Radio and Development

Radio is a large-audience audio medium for distributing information. Radio is the process of conveying messages using electrical waves. To put it another way, these waves may send and receive sound (Sambe, 2008, p.75). Apuke (2014) claims that radio is one of the most significant forms of communication. People convey spoken words, music, and other communication signals to any location on the planet via radio. Music, news, conversation, interviews, sports event descriptions, and advertisements are now included in radio broadcasts. People listen to car radios on their way to work and spend their free time listening to their favorite radio shows (Idebi, 2008).

Because development is such a vast notion, it cannot be defined in a single way. It does, in fact, encompass a vast spectrum of human endeavours. Asemah (2010) defines development as "a process of change in mindset, social structure, and the overall acceleration of economic growth through the decrease of poverty and inequality." Human society's development, according to Asemah (2011), is a multidimensional process. At the individual level, it comprises increased skills and capacity, greater independence, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility, and material well-being. Any of these objectives' achievements is closely related to the state of society as a whole. Development entails the provision of chances for people to realize their full potential. Human beings have certain basic needs that must be met in order for them to function well in society. Enough food, employment, and the removal of the kind of inequality that leads to poverty are among them.

According to Asemah (2010), growth is a gradual process of instilling positive attitudes in people. It's a never-ending process of constructive change to improve their living conditions. The core of development, according to Asemah, is the development of people through a shift in attitude that leads to a shift in behaviour. This means that changing things without changing one's behaviours or mentality is not a healthy development. The process of changing one's knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours is referred to as development. According to Keshku (2005, p. 53), progress entails change.

#### 4.1.2 Rural Area

Rural areas are areas of a country that have not yet been fully developed. They are parts of a country where high-traditional lifestyles can still be maintained that are not prevalent in urban areas or urban centres. According to Udoaka (1998, p. 49), certain images come to mind when the word "rural" is uttered in Africa. According to Udoaka, these images reveal significant underdevelopment and poverty, as seen by bad roads, a lack of water supply, poor housing, poor sanitation, and a high illiteracy rate.

Rural communities lack the necessary infrastructure to support a sustainable livelihood. They need good roads, electricity, portable water, a good market, banking institutions, good schools, and health centres, among other things. People in rural areas must travel to urban areas if they require such infrastructure. People in rural locations, for example, frequently travel to towns and cities for healthcare services. This is why Anaeto and Anaeto (2010, p. 12) say that what is observed in Africa's rural areas is a picture of poverty, unemployment, hunger, lack of infrastructure, illiteracy, and a lack of basic social amenities like portable water, excellent roads, and hospitals, among other things. According to Colgate (2009), as cited by Nwabueze (2010), a rural community is a place where people's living conditions are extremely poor. As cited by Nwabueze (2010), the features of a rural community include a high degree of illiteracy, low productivity, cultural homogeneity, one mode of communication, and lack of infrastructure, among others.

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#### 4.1.3 Radio Programmes and Development in Rural Communities

According to Soola (2003), radio is a true medium that has given a vast number of people, both literate and nonliterate, good access to communication. Its advantages over other media are its relative simplicity, low cost, and widespread availability without the need for energy. Because the situation of human existence has become a matter for concern more than ever before, the necessity of development is becoming increasingly a topic for critical discussion (Mojaye, Oyewo, M'bayo, & Sobowale, 2008).

The relevance of rural radio in the introduction of change in rural communities is evident, according to Moge kwu (1990). Radio has the potential to be a powerful tool for community development and raising national awareness at the grassroots level. In essence, radio can be used to disseminate critical information to the general public about the latest agricultural techniques, trends in agricultural extension services, and so on.

### IV. Empirical Review

A study on radio and rural development was conducted by Asemah, Anum, and Edegoh (2013). The goal of this study was to look into the role of radio in rural development in Nigeria. The study's goal is to determine the benefits and drawbacks of employing radio as a tool for rural development in Nigeria. Radio plays a critical part in the development of any society's rural and urban areas. The study reveals that radio is a vital instrument for entertaining, enlightening, and educating society, but that certain limitations prevent radio from being used effectively for rural development. It consequently proposes, among other things, that radio stations in Nigeria try to employ local dialects, especially when broadcasting to rural inhabitants, and that community radio stations be established to bring radio closer to rural dwellers.

Acido, Muega, and Oyzon (2013) did an exploratory study on the Philippines' Radio-Based Literacy Programme. The data was gathered and analyzed using a descriptive research design, which included focus group discussions. According to the findings, if the programme's design, topic plotting, and content are carefully planned and implemented in the context of literacy support for parents of young learners, the programme can produce significant educational results and make a significant difference in family literacy skills and practices. A radio-based literacy programme also works best when it is supplemented with other kinds of communication and a strong support component in which learners and their parents have one-on-one interactions with literacy specialists and teachers.

Lalima (2013) conducted a study on radio and language learning in India, and it was revealed that radio is a potent medium due to its low cost and widespread transmission. Because of the available infrastructure and the low cost of generating programmes, it has the potential for widespread application in education. Radio is an electronic magic carpet that may convey educational possibilities to far-flung locations, thus influencing our social, political, and cultural lives. Radio broadcasting and interactive radio are excellent tools for supplementing classroom learning, particularly in English, in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Students can benefit from radio educational programmes by hearing native English speakers who can explain grammatical topics in a straightforward and engaging manner. Speaking skills can be improved by listening to interactive radio. Although radio broadcasting has significant educational potential, it has not been well received or utilized by schools. One of the key reasons for this is that teachers are not sensitive to radio programmes and are not prepared to integrate them into their classroom instruction.

In a study on radio public affairs broadcasts on rural development, Ojiakor, Anyanwu, and Orji (2018) found that residents of select communities are moderately exposed to Orient FM and Heartland FM programmes "Kwue uche gi and Utututaraoji". The public affairs broadcast "Kwue uche gi and Utututaraoji" encouraged meaningful dialogue and discussion of issues of public interest that concern rural dwellers in Imo State.

## V. Theoretical Foundation

The study was framed on development media theory. McQuail proposed the development media theory in 1987. This theory aims to explain the press's normative behaviour in countries that are traditionally grouped as developing countries. The MacBride Commission, established by UNESCO in 1979, gave birth to the theory. This philosophy opposes arbitrary authoritarianism, as well as dependency and foreign dominance. It accepts that economic development and nation-building are the most important goals. Press freedom should be subjected to limitations based on economic priorities and societal development demands. In the interests of development goals (Ndolo, 2005), the state has ultimate control. According to this view, the media has a role to play in assisting the development process in underdeveloped countries. In line with the development media theory, the media should be used to benefit the nation as a whole. Because the media is viewed as an agent of development and social change in any community, the idea suggests that the media should be used to supplement government efforts by implementing programmes that result in good behavioural change among the public. According to Okunna (1999), the development media theory believes that economic development and nation building should take priority over some press freedom and individual freedom.

The theory is significant to the study since it emphasizes the use of the media to help society grow. This suggests that the media has the ability to influence society in a positive way. As a result, the media must be used to promote social, political, and economic progress in society.

## VI. Research Methodology

The study adopted the survey method. This method was deemed appropriate since it involves polling the opinions of a variety of people using a questionnaire to obtain information on the issue under investigation. The population of this study consists of residents in Yenagoa metropolis. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2016), Bayelsa state has a population of about 2,278,000 people, and Yenagoa has a population of 470,800 people. In determining the sample size, the researchers used the Australian sample size calculator as represented thus: Confidential level= 99%, Population= 470,800, Proportion= 0.5, Confidential Interval = 0.06568, Upper = 0.06568, Lower = 0.0434322, Standard Error = 0.02550, Relative Standard Error = 5.10, Sample Size = 385

The representatives of the sample were chosen using a multistage sampling technique. Igbogene, Yenegwe, Akenfa, Edepie, Agudama, Akenpai, Etegwe, Okutukutu, Opolo, Biogbolo, Yenizue-Gene, Kpansia, Yenizue-Epie, Okaka, Azikoro, Ekeki, Amarata, Onopa, Ovom, and Swali are among the 21 communities studied in the first stage. In the second stage, all the communities that make up Yenagoa metropolis were randomly selected for the study for equal representation. In stage three, having twenty-one communities, the researcher distributed the questionnaire proportionately to the communities, that is,  $385/21 = 18$ . Therefore, the researcher gave 18 copies of the questionnaire to respondents, purposively. The data gathering instrument was a questionnaire. For the quantitative study, the researchers used simple percentages and tabulations.

### 7.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data collected from the field through a questionnaire was presented in tables using numbers and simple percentages. The researchers distributed 385 copies of the questionnaire to the communities. From the numbers distributed, 374 (97%) copies were retrieved and found valid. This means that 11 (3%) copies were lost to the field.

#### 7.1.1 Table 1: Respondents' response on Yenagoa rural resident's level of exposure to news in language programme

| Items     | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Very high | 84        | 23%        |
| High      | 202       | 54%        |
| Moderate  | 60        | 16%        |
| Low       | 28        | 7%         |
| Total     | 374       | 100        |

Source: Field survey, 2021

Analysis from table 1 above revealed that 54% of respondents are highly exposed to the news in language programme. This alludes that the respondents are highly exposed to the news in language programme on Radio Bayelsa.

#### 7.1.2 Table 2: Respondents' response on the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa is a welcomed development that should be encouraged

| Items             | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 144       | 39%        |
| Agree             | 222       | 59%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 2         | 0%         |

|          |     |     |
|----------|-----|-----|
| Disagree | 6   | 2%  |
| Total    | 374 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2021

Analysis from table 2 above showed that 98% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa is a welcomed development that should be encouraged. Thus, the implication is that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa is a welcome development that should be encouraged in Yenagoa metropolis.

**7.1.3 Table 3: Respondents' response on the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa helps them to understand information passed on the media?**

| Items             | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Strongly Agree    | 278       | 74%        |
| Agree             | 92        | 25%        |
| Strongly Disagree | 1         | 0%         |
| Disagree          | 3         | 1%         |
| Total             | 374       | 100        |

Source: Field survey, 2021

According to the data in table 3, 99% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that Radio Bayelsa's use of language in information dissemination aids them in comprehending the information they are given. This means that Radio Bayelsa's use of language in its information distribution aids residents' comprehension of media messages.

**7.1.4 Table 4: Respondents' response on the effectiveness of news in language by Radio Bayelsa in bridging illiteracy gap in the rural areas?**

| Items          | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Very Effective | 302       | 81%        |
| Effective      | 63        | 17%        |
| Ineffective    | 3         | 1%         |
| Can't Say      | 6         | 1%         |
| Total          | 374       | 100        |

Source: Field survey, 2021

According to the results of the analysis in table 4, 81% of respondents believe that news in language has been extremely beneficial in closing the literacy gap in rural areas. The insinuation of this is that news in language has truly been very effective in bridging the literacy gap in the rural areas of Yenagoa metropolis.

## VII. Discussion of Findings

Analysis of data revealed that 54% of respondents were highly exposed to the news in the language programme of Radio Bayelsa. This high level of exposure could be as a result of the local dialect that this news is broadcast in. People are easily drawn to their native language, which explains the high level of exposure revealed by the study. In line with this finding, Acido et al. (2013) found that if a radio programme's design, topic plotting, and content are carefully planned and used in conjunction with literacy support for parents of young learners, it can produce significant educational results and make a significant difference in family literacy skills and practices. Without a doubt, a lot of radio show exposure can help you grow. In line with development media theory, the media has a duty to help in developing poor countries. The media, according to development media theory, should be used to benefit the entire nation. The media are viewed as agents of societal change and growth.

According to data analysis, 98% of respondents agreed that Radio Bayelsa's use of language in information dissemination is a positive development that should be encouraged. By implication of this finding, it is clear that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa is a welcome development because it will help bridge the existing literacy gap. This literally means that the residents of Yenagoa metropolis appreciate the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa as this enables them to participate or contribute to radio on-air programmes, which thereby bridges the gap in communication in the rural areas of the metropolis. In close relation to this finding is that of Asemah et al. (2013), who stated that radio stations in Nigeria should make an effort to employ local languages, particularly when broadcasting to rural dwellers. However, according to Lalima (2013), despite the fact that radio broadcasting has a lot of promise in education, it isn't widely accepted or used in Indian classrooms. According to the development media theory, the greater the appreciation for the usage of local language in radio broadcasts, the more development will be attracted to society.

The result of the analysis of the data indicated that 99% of respondents confirmed that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa helps them understand information passed on by the media. This implies that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa helps the residents understand media messages. Invariably, the learned and the non-learned in the rural areas of Yenagoa metropolis have equal access and understanding to media content as Radio Bayelsa broadcasts using language that everyone understands. According to Lalima (2013), radio is an electronic magic carpet that may transfer educational opportunities to far-flung locations, having an impact on our social, political, and cultural lives. This extends to grass-roots development, incorporating rural residents into development goals and agendas. Also, Ojiakor et al. (2018) revealed in their study that public affairs broadcast "Kwue uche gi and Utututaraoji" encouraged meaningful dialogue and discussion of issues of public interest that concern the rural dwellers in Imo. The development media theory supports this finding by stating that bringing concerns to people in a language they understand will encourage development.

From the data gathered, it is evident from the analysis that 81% of respondents said that news in their language has been very effective in bridging the literacy gap in rural areas. The insinuation of this is that news in language has truly been very effective in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas of Yenagoa metropolis. This finding is in consonance with that of Ojiakor et al. (2018), who revealed that Orient FM and Heartland FM programmes "Kwue uche gi" and "Utututaraoji" had influenced rural development positively. The fact that this is effective could be because most people appreciate their local language, so programmes aired in this language will have a positive result, as the finding showed. This is consistent with Lalima's (2013) finding that radio broadcast and interactive radio are excellent methods for supplementing classroom education efficiently and effectively. This is supported by the media development theory, whose tenet emphasizes the use of the media to build society. This means that the media has the potential to have a positive impact on society.

### VIII. Conclusion

The fact the people are exposed to news in languages programmes of Radio Bayelsa is a welcome development. Radio as a medium when utilised properly it has the capacity to advance development in society. Based on the findings, it is glaring that the respondents appreciate the fact that programmes are being aired in their local dialects and as such enable them to be part of the discourse that affects them and also eliminating the literacy gap that exist among them. Based on the foregoing, it is therefore concluded that the effectiveness of Radio Bayelsa news in languages programme in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural area of Bayelsa state is high. That is to say it is the radio programme is effective.

### IX. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings:

1. Given the fact that Yenagoa metropolis residents are highly exposed to news in language on Radio Bayelsa, the need for the residents to strive for more exposure to such language broadcast programmes in order to be adequately informed
2. Since the findings revealed that the residents of Yenagoa metropolis appreciate the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa owing to the fact that it enables them to participate or contribute to radio on-air programmes, which transcends to bridging the gap in communication in the rural areas of the metropolis, it is therefore recommended that more language programmes be made available on Radio Bayelsa and other broadcast media organizations in the state.
3. Considering that the respondents confirmed the fact that the use of language in information dissemination by Radio Bayelsa helps the residents understand media messages, it means that the learned and the non-learned in the rural areas of Yenagoa metropolis have equal access and understanding to media content as Radio Bayelsa broadcasts using language that everyone understands. Hence, it is recommended that language broadcast be encouraged and embraced by media organizations during news/programme broadcast.
4. Owing to the result, which showed that 81% of respondents affirmed that news in language has been very effective in bridging the illiteracy gap in the rural areas, media organizations should be very creative while operating with creative producers to create programmes in languages and airtime/space be allocated to such programmes.

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