

MEDIA AND LANGUAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THIRD WORLD: FOCUS ON NIGERIA

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Abstract

The paper is titled: "Mass Media and Language for Sustainable National Development of Third World: Focus on Nigeria." Basically, the paper seeks to support the adaptation of English Language by the media of mass communication operating in Nigeria. This is consequent upon the myriad of existing indigenous languages which none can be chosen and adopted as lingua franca for Nigerians. Adopting the social responsibility theory of the press, the paper slates that for the mass media to live up to their responsibility of informing, educating and entertaining Nigerians for development to be attained and sustained, they must adopt the right language, in this case, English.

Key Words: Mass Media, Language, Development Responsibility, English and Nigeria.

The media of mass communication existing in any part of the globe are associated with development. Both already developed and still developing nations fix their hope on the media in order to persevere in Cultivating developmental track. This is fundamentally informed by the reality that development is not static, it is not stagnant; it is a process which does not begin here and end there. Recently, the demand for development has become very high in Third World countries. It is held that the media have a giant role to play in order to free Third World countries from the shackles of underdevelopment. Incidentally, the media operating in countries like this must develop an appropriate media through which they can effectively mobilize people. This mobilization can only be brought to bear where the media are able to appreciate the multi-linguistic atmosphere prevalent in Third World countries.

This paper which has Nigeria as a case study throws weight behind the usage language; English language, on this note, for the cause of sustainable development in Third World countries. To be more holistic and pragmatic, the discourse is presented under-the following sub-themes:

- i. Media Language: Third World Countries and sustainable development demystification.
- ii. Theoretical framework.
- iii. English Language: A case for its applicability by the media in Nigeria
- iv. Concluding remarks

Media Language: Third World Countries and Sustainable Development: A Demystification The concept of media has no universally acceptable definition. It has myriad definitions advanced by diverse scholars. One crucial thing worth acknowledging, however, is the simple fact that media are distinct from mass communication.

Sambe (2005:28) views mass communication as a device by which a group of people working together transmit information to a large heterogeneous and anonymous audience simultaneously. Mass communication is the process whereas mass media are the agents. Bittner. (1980:40) in differentiating the two declares that;

For mass communication to exist, we need an intermediate transmitter of information, a mass medium such as Newspapers, magazine, film, radio, television, books or a combination of these. The politician who delivered a major address without the aid of the mass media would be forfeiting his chance to reach thousands, or even millions of persons not physically present. Essentially, then mass communication is message communicated through a mass medium to a large number of people.

Mass media are agents of mass communication, it becomes mass communication, on this note, where newspapers, magazines, radio, television, bill boards, and so on as channels are able to reach Nigerians with information, where they are able to educate Nigerians about national and global events. Chiakaan (2008:116) concordant) acknowledge that "the presence of the mass media in essence is what makes mass communication to be mass communication".

When mass media are able to reach the general public with information or messages about issues, events or affairs in the world. we have what is professionally referred to as mass communication. It is mass communication because the people being communicated to are not only large but they are also heterogeneous and anonymous. Of course the messages are communicated to them simultaneously. This explains the indispensability of the mass media as tools of sustainable development in any given society.

The effectiveness of the media operating in any given society can hardly be felt if they adopt the right medium in transmitting information across to their diverse public. Medium, in this regard, is synonymous with language which has many definitions. To the Webster Dictionary of the English Language (1994), language is "an organised system of speech used by human beings as a means of communication among themselves." This definition connotes that without language, there will be no communication among human beings in any given society. This explains why Block and Trager (1972) in Terhemba and Ojah (2008:62) consider language be a system of arbitrary vocal symbol by means of which a social group cooperates.

Although theirs has limited language to only vocal symbols. Barber (2002:2) complements it by declaring that "& human language is a signaling system. As its material, it uses vocal sounds. Basically, language is something which is spoken: the written language is secondary and derivative."

Wolff (1973:19) offers a simple definition of language as a means of conveying meanings from one person to another. Shedding more light on this definition, Olusola (2003:106) quotes Person

and Nelson's definition of communication as "the process of understanding and sharing meaning; and goes ahead to conclude that language is a means of communication as a means of communication, it could be verbal or non-verbal or both provided it is capable of enhancing understanding among people in a given set up."

Concerning Third World Countries. Sola (2003:9) declares:

The ongoing debate on development and development communication dates back to the end of World War II, the collapse of colonialism and the emergence of developing countries, ethnocentrically referred to in development discourse as Third World nations. It coincided with the founding of bilateral and multilateral financial institutions such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, as well as with the creation of the United Nations, not only to rebuild (lie war-ravaged Europe bill also to provide development assistance to developing nations.

Third World nations have other names such as undeveloped and developing countries. Concern for development when peace was brought to bear consequent upon the Second World War saw some nations in Africa, South America and other continents stigmatized as Third World.

Significantly, what makes other countries first and others third? Of course there is always silence on second world countries. Do they even exist? In an attempt to separate between First and Third World countries. Webber (1 996: 1 53) writes:

The term "One World" immediately reflects on the notion of Third World, and on I he practice of referring to Third World countries as "Developing". The "Western ", or industrialized, or bureaucratized may be synonymous with development, which itself implies increased well-being - or at least improved material standards.

Third World countries are not well industrialized. They lack facilities for increased well-being of their people. On this note, Weber (1996) further observes:

That national well-being, common in Western countries (which may generally be presumed to constitute the First Work!) should not be decried as a false goal f or all societies is implied in the attempts by President Roosevelt, for example, to formulate universal prescriptions of human rights that should, indeed must, apply worldwide. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms can be subdivided into those which spring from essential psychological or material freedom from want, hunger, disease and danger from human or natural disaster — measures can be applied to assess the well-being of material populations, and these include "mortality rates, incidence of disease and measurement of dietary efficacy, extent for information and movement and eventually of longevity. A general notion which brings all these measures together can be said to be "standard of living."

What makes a country Third World is per capita income, perceived direction of development of standard of living and not where the country is found. Development is a process. It is a process and that is why it is sustainable. It is what has to be continuous. The media operating in a Third World country can help the country to maintain the road of development if only they choose to apply the right language of which English is it.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the social responsibility theory of the mass media. Generally, the belief that how an organisation relates to its environment could provide a platform upon its successful operation and realization of its goals culminated into the coming on board of the social responsibility theory. In the mass communication world, however, this theory was brought to bear as a product of the ineffectiveness of the libertarian theory. Consequent upon the weaknesses associated with the libertarian theory of the media, the Hutchison's Commission was set up in the United States of America (USA) in 1947 to reexamine the press freedom enshrined in the libertarian theory.

Folarin (1998:27) among other drawbacks associated with the free press theory notes that the "so-called free market ideas had failed to guarantee press freedom and yield the expected benefits to society.

The media, Kunczick (1988:48) and McQuail (1987:116) in Folarin (1998:28) have specific functions to perform. They are:

1. To serve the political system by making information, discussion, and consideration of public affairs generally accessible.
2. To inform the public to enable it to take self-determined action.
3. To protect the rights of the individuals by acting as watchdog over the government.
4. To serve the economic system: for instance, by bringing the buyers and sellers through the medium of advertising.
5. To provide "good" entertainment, whatever "good" may mean in the culture at any point in time.
6. To preserve financial autonomy in order to become dependent on special interest and influences.

To be socially responsible by performing their functions, the media must adopt the right language which in this case is English. Again for the sake of survival and sustainable development, no country can operate in isolation; it must relate with other countries; Nigeria as an underdeveloped society must relate with others particularly the developed nations. It is, therefore, another social responsibility of the media to ensure that English language is used as a tool of enhancing healthy interaction between these two unequals.

English Language: A Case for Us Applicability by the Media in Nigeria

Basically, the mass media in Nigeria and any other Third World countries are not for bad; they are for sustainable development. This position derives strength from that of communication scholars and others as notes by Soola (2002:115) that "media scholars, practitioners, development experts and policymakers have, for decades, recognized the potentials of information communication as a critical resource input in the socioeconomic transformation of society, particularly in the less developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America".

The less developed Nigeria, the so called "Giant of Africa" a multi-linguistic society with disintegrated pans, can never agree on an indigenous language as a means of communication among

themselves; they can only be comfortable with a neutral language which in this case is English. Any attempt by the media to adopt any of the indigenous languages will be vehemently resisted. The choice of Yoruba by the media, for instance, as was the case with Rev. Thomson Henry's Iwe-Irohin in the 50s can only attract suspicion and condemnation from the Igbos, Hausas. Tivs. Idomas. Urobos, Itsekiris, Ijaw. Hggons. Madas and the rest after all, they cannot Speak or understand Yoruba. They can call the paper a Yoruba paper which is out to pursue Yoruba agenda at their detriment. Barber (2002:2) apparently referring to this situation observes:

...Various factors have played a part in these assignments including nationalist feeling, attachment to traditional culture, desire for advances in science and technology; and the conflicting needs for local and international communication-but there are many cross-currents. In India, after independence, there was a movement in the Hindi-speaking North in favour of making Hindi the main official language of the country, hut this was opposed by many people in the south who spoke Dravidian languages: having Hindi as the main language would give obvious economic and political advantage to Northerners, and many Southerners therefore favoured the retention of English....

Unarguably, the situation in Nigeria is same with all underdeveloped nations; in Ghana, in Cameroon, Somalia. Angola, Kenya and others it is same. To mobilize people in Third World countries by the media, therefore, an appropriate language as Udoakah (1998) in Laninum (2003:83) notes must be chosen and adopted by the media of mass communication.

Adopting English language means unifying the various cultures and sections. In Nigeria, before independence, three sections known as regions were recognised politically. These three regions: Northern, Western and Eastern regions were identified with Hausa, Yoruba and Ibo respectively. Even though there are no more regions in Nigeria, these major groups are there. None of them can be used to discuss national affairs even in the house of parliament. English language therefore, being the only language that is used to discuss national affairs serves as a unifying language, a language of political unity in Nigeria. The media must recognize this and apply it accordingly for the interest of one Nigeria.

Again the survival and sustainable development of Nigeria and other Third World countries can be guaranteed in the face of healthy interaction with others particularly the developed world. Healthy interaction nationally or internationally can only be achieved where the right language is applied. Stressing the importance of English language as a tool of enhancing international relations. Terhemba and Ogah (2008:63) state:

No nation can develop in isolation and in an atmosphere characterized by rancor. To achieve sustainable national and global development therefore, there must be peaceful co-existence among nations. This could he achieved and sustained through the use of a common language that cuts across national boundaries - through English language, nations can gather under a common umbrella of the United Nations Organization (UNO) and talk of world peace and destruction of nuclear armaments. To develop we need peace. Use of English language among nation* can bring about that peace.

Many developed countries cannot understand and speak Yoruba, Igbo Hausa or any of the indigenous languages. This position, no doubt, is in sharp contrast with that of those clamouring for the usage of indigenous language for sustainable development in our modern highly underdeveloped Nigeria by the mass media. Is it Hausa or what language that the media can adopt in clamouring for the removal of Nigeria's name from the list of terrorist countries?

English language is respected in Nigeria and other Third World nations due to the fact that it is the language of education. It is the language that imparts knowledge. Nigerians cannot use Tiv, Igbo, Yoruba, Birom, Nupe, Hausa or any of the local languages to impart knowledge in the schools. Doing this will be suicidal and destructive as they can only succeed in producing semi-literate people. In the first place, it means Nigerians can produce all books and other instructional materials in indigenous languages. In the second place, it means they must produce instructors in the various languages. It also means that they are ready to localize their education. Aware of the dangers associated with this, Terhemba and Ogah (2008, P.64) quote Olagoke in Ubahakwe (1970) that "English should be taught and learnt in our schools to help Nigeria achieve mass literacy, ensure mass communication, and meet up with the demands of the technological innovation of the world

The media as agents of education must not adopt this Lingua-Franca in educating Nigerians but must be effective in using it.

Concluding Remarks

It is important for the media to preserve and promote the indigenous culture, it will be diametrically heartless, irrational and inimical to call for the adoption of indigenous language by the media for genuine national and sustainable development in the current Nigeria. This is due to the untouchable position which English occupies in Nigeria and the world. Being a foreign language, a Hausa man, an Igbo man, a Yoruba man, a Tiv man and the other man does not have any problem with it when it is spoken or used by the media to mobilize him politically socially and economically. He is satisfied that through this language he is able to relate with people outside Nigeria, his country. He is, therefore forced to learn, speak and write in this language which is the language that makes him to communicate or interact with his fellow Nigerian. The mass media, on this note should never underestimate the power of English Language if they must be effective in mobilizing people in Nigeria and other Third World countries politically, socially and otherwise. This is very important if they must be seen as being socially responsible to Nigeria and other developing societies.

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