

# Assessing the Role of Radio in Prompting Indigenous Language and Culture

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## Abstract

Radio has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting and preserving indigenous languages and cultures. However, limited research has been conducted on the specific roles of radio in promoting the indigenous language and culture of Kwara State. In this work, we aim to examine and analyze different translation strategies that broadcasters in Sobi 101.9 FM Ilorin usually adopt in their effort to promote indigenous languages. A quantitative research design rooted in content analysis was adopted. A total of 157 data were extracted from the weekly schedules of the stations. The results suggest that radio has a significant impact on promoting these languages and culture. Radio also plays a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing indigenous heritage through its function of cultural transmission of heritage from one generation to another, by providing a medium for the transmission of oral traditions, cultural knowledge, and cultural knowledge. Radio programmes can showcase indigenous music, folklore, and storytelling radio helps to preserve and promote cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among communities. It is however recommended that operators of radio stations and programme producers on radio stations should encourage more indigenous languages programmes to prevent indigenous languages from going into extinction.

**Keywords:** Broadcasting, Community Engagement, Cultural Preservation, Indigenous Languages, Kwara State, Language Revitalization, Nigeria, Radio

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Radio remains a vital medium for communication, education, and entertainment, particularly in remote and rural areas where access to other forms of media may be limited. Radio, like any other electronic media, serves major purposes, of informing, educating, entertaining, mobilising and persuading. Radio has also performed well for the enhancement and advancement of human coexistence and promotion of cultural heritage of every society. Its programmes and reportage have help to improved promotion of indigenous languages in Nigeria and across other countries of the world (Rauf, Goke, Olufunmilayo Adebomi Adekoya, Adeyemi Michael Ademola, & Tolulope Molomo. 2023).

Language is one of the determiners of understanding people's culture in the world. Primarily, language as one of the mediums of conveying innumerable opinions, ideas, emotions and knowledge serve multiple functions in framing the diverse cultural identities of a particular group. Bonvillain (2019) posited that we learn about people through what they say and how they say it, and we learn about our relationships with others through the give and take of communicative interactions.

It is observed that most of the radio stations operating in Nigeria are English based, this is so, since English language has grown all over the world as the predominant language at the expense of other languages. English, as a medium of disseminating information, enjoys high prestige to the detriment of the indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria since it remains the official language. If there is any use of indigenous language in radio at all, it only carries about forty per cent (40%) of the whole period allotted to news and other programmes in the station. (David, N., Ekpong, A. 2018). Adedeji (2015) posited that a lot of the radio stations in Nigeria are licensed to use a mixture of

both English and the local languages depending on the location and philosophy of the station. The intended media objectives may not be realized if the majority of the messages are not packaged in the right languages. Therefore, the need to communicate with people in their indigenous languages is necessary and cannot be over emphasized (Rabiu, Onaopepo, Akanji, & Abiola, 2022).

### 1.1 Problem Statement

Kwara State, located in the North-Central region of Nigeria, the state is known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse indigenous languages. Despite the significance of these languages and cultures to the identity of the state's inhabitants, there is a growing concern over their endangered status. The use of radio as a medium of communication has been recognized as a powerful tool for promoting and preserving indigenous languages and cultures. However, limited research has been conducted on the specific roles of radio in promoting the indigenous language and culture of Kwara State. Most studies on the use of radio in language and cultural preservation have focused on larger and more dominant languages, neglecting the unique context and challenges faced by minority languages and cultures. While evidence suggests that radio has a significant impact on promoting these languages and cultures, there is a need for more rigorous research to assess the extent to which radio can contribute to their preservation. There appears to be a gap in terms of approaches adopted by broadcasters and presenters in the use of semantics and translation styles from the English language to Nigerian indigenous languages. In this work, we aim to examine and analyze different translation strategies that broadcasters in Sobi 101.9 FM Ilorin usually adopt in their effort

## 1.2 Research Objective

1. To explore the historical development of radio in Kwara State and its impact in promoting indigenous language and culture.
2. To explore the challenges faced by radio stations in Kwara State in promoting indigenous languages and culture.
3. To assess the effectiveness of radio programs in promoting and preserving indigenous languages and culture in Kwara State.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kwara State was carved out of the former northern region on 27th May 1967 by General Yakubu Gowon. The state was made up of Ilorin and Kabba provinces of the then Northern Region. With its capital in Ilorin, the state occupies 36,825 square kilometres. Kwara state has 16 local government areas and 4 major ethnic groups which include Yoruba, Fulani, Nupe and Barubas. Kwara State shares boundary in the north by Niger State, in the south by Oyo, Osun and Ekiti States, in the east by Kogi State and in the west by Benin Republic.

Language plays a major role in the dissemination of information to the populace. As such, the language employed by a media house goes a long way in determining the listener-ship strength and effectiveness of its services. Kennedy (2019) states that language can positively navigate and construct cultural identity by strengthening the connection of people in the community.

### 2.1 INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Indigenous peoples are heirs and practitioners of exceptional cultures and behaviors of connecting to people and the environment. They have reserved social, cultural, economic, and political features which are distinct from other dominant societies. Notwithstanding their cultural variances, indigenous peoples around the world stake common difficulties related to the protection of their rights as distinct people. Indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their cultural identities, their lifestyle, and their right to traditional lands, regions, and natural resources for years. However, during history, their rights have been violated for many reasons. Hence, the indigenous peoples nowadays are arguably among the most underprivileged and vulnerable troops in the world (United Nations, n.d.)

### 2.2 Indigenous Language and Culture

Language is the tool of cultural sharing between the members of a community because interacting in a language means understanding the culture and the process of being an integral part of it (Parajuli, 2021). Language is intimately related to the rest of one's life in a community and to smaller groups within that community (Robin and Crystal 2024). Language develops and preserves the culture, and culture interacts within the language system therefore people with different castes and communities persistently want to preserve their languages and cultural identity as cultural pride (Jundi, & Nabila, 2023). Language is the channel through which we are socialised into our culture. The cultural heritage of the past

is transmitted through language and transferred to the next generations (Ajetomobi & Chidolue, 2024).

Language is transmitted culturally; that is, it is learned. To a lesser extent it is taught, when parents, for example, deliberately encourage their children to talk and to respond to talk, correct their mistakes, and enlarge their vocabulary. Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) posited that language unites people together, both in the historical perspective and in the present thereby preserving cultural heritage.

Culture generally is relative and majorly seen by many as the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, and commonly shared within a group of people. It is characterized as a people's holistic way of life. Culture is all the qualities within which a group of people mend together that distinguish them from the rest of the animal kingdom. Culture can also be referred to all aspects of human life in so far as they are determined or conditioned by membership in society. According to the definition of culture by the English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, he posited that culture covers a very wide area of human life and behaviour, and language is manifestly a part, probably the most important part, of it (VanPool, & VanPool, 2023). It can however be deducted that language and culture are intertwined since language is transmitted as part of culture, and culture is transmitted majorly through.

Indigenous language refers to people's local language or native vernacular or tribal/ ethnic that evolved in a particular location. This type of language is spoken, owned, and shared amongst a particular set of people or ethnicity. In explaining the importance of indigenous language Skutnabb-Kangas (2017) argued that it can be viewed as the language through which the process of socialization takes place and individuals acquires the norms and value systems of their cultural group, furthermore, language gives individuals and group an identity it also passes on the cultural tradition from one generation to another. Ajetomobi (2023) argued that cultural values, morals, and traditions that are embedded in African social systems are going into extinction and becoming foreign to children of present generation.

### 2.3 Roles Of Radio In Promoting Indigenous Language

Radio serves as the tool through which information dissemination is passed to the people with ease. The portability and affordability of radio make it an inevitable channel because of the cultural barrier it breaks. The use of radio as the channel of information dissemination can reach all audiences irrespective of educational deficiencies. Ngonso (2021) stated that radio is a powerful means of communication on all subject matters. He attributed the powerful impact of radio on the audience to the ability of radio waves to traverse national boundaries. This characteristic no doubt has pronounced radio as a strong media form and a unique means of communication.

**(a) Broadcasting in Indigenous Languages:** Radio stations in Nigeria, especially those with a focus on community and local programming, often allocate airtime for broadcasting in indigenous languages. This allows

native speakers of these languages to communicate, express themselves, and engage with their culture and heritage through radio. Oyesomi, Onakoya, Onyenankaya, & Busari (2020) stated that in order for radio to achieve its set objectives radio presenters choose standard language, and literary inclined language as their preferred media language, radio as a means of communication is said to be the custodian of peoples' languages and cultures. According to Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014) cited in (Jundi, & Nabila, 2023) language employed in the media goes a long way in determining the audience strength and effectiveness of its service. (Afolabi, & Igboanusi, 2024).

**(b) Cultural Preservation:** Through broadcasting of cultural contents such as folklore, storytelling. Radio programs can showcase indigenous music, folklore, and storytelling radio helps to preserve and promote cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among communities. Radio therefore becomes an indispensable tool in cultural promotions and preservation of cultural heritage.

**(c) Community Engagement and Empowerment:** Radio empower communities and gives them a platform to express their needs and aspirations. As a medium that reaches a heterogeneous scattered, including rural and marginalized communities. By broadcasting in indigenous languages, radio stations can address community-specific issues, provide information on local events, and engage listeners in discussions about their language, culture, and socio-economic concerns.

**(d) Bridging Generational Gaps:** The dominance of English language across all tribes in Nigeria including Kwara state has made the younger generations have limited exposure to proficiency in indigenous languages. Through various programmes Radio programs can bridge the generational gap by targeting youth audiences and incorporating modern content and formats, such as music, talk shows, and storytelling, in indigenous languages. This helps engage young listeners and encourages them to connect with their linguistic and cultural roots.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To make an informed assessment of radio roles in promoting indigenous language and culture, quantitative research design rooted in content analysis was adopted. In addition, data collected through document review and observations were analysed. The population of study is radio stations in Ilorin however Albarika FM 89.9 was randomly selected because of its choice of adopting indigenous language (Yoruba) for broadcasting its programmes. A total of 157 data, were extracted from the weekly schedules of the stations. Document review, observations. In addition, a smart phone with FM radio was used for random monitoring of programmes.

### 4. RESULT

Yoruba is the dominant broadcast language in Albarika FM, with an overwhelming 143 programmes, representing 91%. Followed by English which has 14, representing 9%.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, radio programmes have gone a long way in fostering cultural values, reinforcing language, and positive cultural benefits to the people. It serves as a platform for sharing cultural values such as storytelling, music, and fostering a cultural sense of identity and belonging among communities. Radio also plays a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing indigenous heritage through its function of cultural transmission of heritage from one generation to another, by providing a medium for the transmission of oral traditions, cultural knowledge from one generation to another in the society.

However, the effectiveness of radio in promoting indigenous languages and cultures depends on various factors, including programming content, audience engagement, and government support. While radio has made significant strides, challenges such as limited resources, lack of trained personnel, and the dominance of mainstream media continue to hinder its full potential.

### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the role of radio in promoting indigenous languages and cultures, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Increased Government Support:** Governments should allocate adequate resources to support community radio stations and indigenous language programming. This includes providing funding for equipment, training, and operational expenses.
- **Diverse Programming:** Radio stations should develop diverse programming that caters to the interests and needs of different communities. This includes news, music, education, and cultural programs in indigenous languages.
- **Community Involvement:** Radio stations should actively involve communities in program development and content creation. This ensures that the programming reflects the needs and aspirations of the people.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Investments should be made in training and capacity building for radio professionals, particularly in areas related to indigenous languages, culture, and media production.
- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Radio stations should collaborate with cultural organizations, universities, and other relevant stakeholders to share resources and expertise.\* Advocacy for Indigenous Languages: Radio stations should advocate for the recognition and protection of indigenous languages at national and international levels.
- **Research and Documentation:** Research should be conducted to assess the impact of radio in promoting indigenous languages and cultures. This information can be used to inform policy decisions and improve programming.
- **Owners of radio stations** and programme producers on radio stations should encourage more indigenous languages programmes in order to prevent indigenous languages from going into extinction

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