

Decolonisation Efforts of Indigenous Language Media in Nigeria: A Case of Orisun 89.5 FM

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Abstract

This study evaluates the strategies and methods used by indigenous language media in achieving language decolonisation using a monolingual radio station in Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. The study adopted Diglossia theory to situate the decolonial potency of the broadcast media and its role in language revitalisation. Quantitative research design was used for the study. Data were gathered through questionnaire, which was administered to 25 out of 34 workers of Orisun 89.5 FM contingent on availability of the workers. The data were analysed with simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The results of the study revealed that Orisun 89.5 FM as an indigenous radio station evolved different strategies to achieve decolonisation and endear listeners to the station as a way to revitalise Yoruba language while the management also provided quality management principles in the area of staff recruitment (72%) and monitoring (60%) of programme content and dissemination. Much more importantly, Orisun 89.5 FM ensured the use of standard Yoruba language for programming (76%). Indigenous Language radio stations like Orisun

89.5 FM played significant role in the revitalisation of endangered Yoruba language. It was recommended that government at all levels, corporate organisations and private individuals should come up to assist the existing monolingual radio stations in the country in the area of finance if actually indigenous language survival and revitalisation is a concern.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Yoruba language, Indigenous Language Media, & Orisun 89.5 FM

Introduction

The force that shaped the usage, policies and preference of languages in Africa is traceable to the experience of colonisation. This is underscored by the submission of Salawu (2006, p. 86), "the roles, which African languages play in the public domain in Africa have been linked to colonial policies of marginalisation, and to a large extent, accepted as the norm." Consequently, efforts of the Europeans to subjugate Africans were not limited to political sphere alone but language and cultural spheres were inclusive.

The language situation in Africa is worrisome in the sense that indigenous language utilisation is facing a lot of challenges. Masau (2003) submits that media profession and our educational system in respect to the use of indigenous language are almost the same across the continent of Africa. He notes that in Kenya, these two major institutions show bias in favour of English language. He goes further to say that majority of the radio and TV stations in Kenya broadcast in English language while the print media, too, are published in English language.

Uganda presents a similar situation in terms of foreign language preference in the media. Chibita (2006) acknowledges that while the position of English still appears uncontested in public discourse, Luganda and Kiswahili continue to vie for second position in Uganda's

broadcast media, and Ugandans' views on the roles that these two languages should play in the media remain polarised.

In the Anglophone English speaking countries, the media work with English language as well as the Francophone French and Lusophone Portuguese speaking countries. Educational institutions are not left out in this situation. This revelation portends a worrisome situation for the future of our indigenous languages. If drastic steps are not taken to curtail this abysmal situation, the future of our language is nothing guaranteed.

Meanwhile, it's so unfortunate to note that in tracing the history of mass media in Nigeria, indigenous language was the harbinger of journalism in Nigeria (Alabi 2011). It started in indigenous language and particularly Yoruba language with the establishment of a Yoruba newspaper known to be "Iwe Irohin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba" (The Newspaper for the Egba people and other Yoruba people). To an extent, the newspaper was targeted at Yoruba people and possibly with an assumption to also facilitate effective communication of the British agenda. This was put straight by Coker (Oso, 2006) that the publication of *Iwe Iroyin* helped to prepare the Yorubas for the publication of the first Yoruba Bible in 1862.

Again, Uche (Ojo, 2015) made it clearer by saying that the newspaper actually started by the permission granted to a message sent to London by Townsend who excitedly informed Church Missionary Society (CMS) that the objective of the newspaper was to make the people to read and inculcate in them the habit of information search by reading. This simply suggests that the indigenous languages are tools for effective communication for any given project or programme and this cannot be overemphasised. Hence, the history of media studies and development in Nigeria cannot be separated from the indigenous language media.

Furthermore, the establishment of a Yoruba newspaper was a good starting point for indigenous language press to really help the local people to comprehend and understand the happenings around them as well as to facilitate participation in community development. Salawu (2016) also vividly illustrates that the missionaries knew that the only way they could effectively engage the locals to diffuse their belief and the tenets of their religion was to communicate with them in indigenous languages. This is why Ayodabo (2013) concurs that one of the major organs of spreading and technicalising a language is through the mass media.

However, this tradition that was established by Henry Townsend for establishing the first indigenous language medium was not sustained by other press men that came after him. The moves to revitalise the indigenous languages have failed severally because of serious oppositions. It is therefore unfortunate in Africa and Nigeria specifically that there is imbalance in the status between the former colonial languages and the indigenous languages.

Consequently, one of the problems facing indigenous languages in Africa and Nigeria especially is its death and the preference accorded English language by our media and educational institutions. Media theorists are therefore of the opinion that the backwardness experienced in the utilisation of indigenous language is through the print media (Salawu, 2016).

This study therefore aims to assess the decolonisation efforts of the indigenous language media using the case study of a monolingual radio station called Orisun 89.5 FM in Ile-Ife Nigeria. Orisun 89.5 FM uses Yoruba language to broadcast all its programmes since inception till the time of this research.

Literature Review

The Broadcast Media and Decolonisation in Nigeria

Decolonisation as a movement is the deconstruction and reconstruction of the administrative, structural and cultural effect of colonisation. It is a bid to reconstruct the institutions and people's minds via the instrumentality of knowledge system. Decolonisation approach to the hegemony of English is an attempt to dismantle and overturn it (Mpofu & Salawu, 2018).

Stressing this further, they admit that the linguistic practices that are associated with colonial rule in Africa are a factor of assigning low status to the indigenous languages. The possibility of reversing this trend is in language revitalisation, resistance and maintenance. Hence in this regard, the media are crucial given the fact that media are active spaces for language development (Mpofu & Salawu, 2018). This decolonisation movement resonates the place of the media, especially radio in language decolonisation, revitalisation, revival, and maintenance. In a way, the point here is using broadcast media to reconstruct and deconstruct the colonial legacies and languages in the mind of listeners.

Chukwunalu, Nwnkwere, Orji and Shah (2022, p. 15) reveal in their research the efficient ways that indigenous language broadcasting can be used to revitalise indigenous language which included more broadcast of culturally educating and language reviving contents in a way to aid promotion of culture and language. They also confirmed that radio broadcasting in the indigenous language can reduce marginalisation of local languages which affirms the argument that the greater the use of a language, the stronger the language becomes. The revelation here confirms the possibility of the broadcast media to facilitate language and cultural development.

In a similar formative research conducted by UNICEF (2019) in Tanzania it was discovered that intervention project carried out was not efficient because of delays in feedback and approval of scripts. This research has demonstrated the place of seeking and working on feedback as a means of achieving target goals and objectives of any programme. In the same research, there was limited monitoring of the Sara Radio Programme project execution to bring out the setbacks and work on them in time for continued effective and efficient programming so as to produce the desired outcomes (UNICEF, 2019).

Odu and Alabi (2023) also demonstrated this in a study where they discovered that the objectives of a Yoruba programme (Asa ati Ise Yoruba- customs and tradition of Yoruba) on a radio station reflected the advocacy and struggle to decolonise foreign languages and revitalize the indigenous languages. They further note that the programme had impact on the way people perceive the Yoruba language and Yoruba culture. That is, the listeners of that programme now had interest in Yoruba culture and the language as a result of the episodes of the programme on radio (Asa ati Ise)

Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014) note as part of the input identified in Orisun 89.5 FM in the process of striving towards the achievement of the objectives establishing the station, they note that Orisun 89.5 FM broadcasts in rich standard Yorùbá language as it beams out rich cultural programme laced with innovations. The Radio Station propagates both the language and the culture of the Yorùbá nation. This endears the Radio Station to quite a major chunk of the South Westerners and many listeners in other neighbouring states.

Furthermore, according to Odu (2023) in a study, it was revealed that Orisun 89.5 FM as an indigenous radio had some influence on listeners for language decolonisation and cultural survival which included the projection of the Yoruba cultural heritage; teaching of the Yoruba

culture; promotion of the Yoruba cultural history; changing of listeners' attitude and perception on Yoruba language; revitalising the Yoruba language; projecting the image of the state government and generating revenue for Osun State government.

Moreover, he discovered in the study that Orisun 89.5 FM was positioned to achieve language and cultural development as opined by the listeners which was in tandem with the submissions of the staffers at Orisun 89.5 FM. Hence, Orisun 89.5 FM is at the fore front of language decolonisation and language revitalisation as it makes frantic efforts to promote the Yoruba language.

Orisun 89.5FM

Orisun 89.5 FM, Ile-Ife which is the focus of this study, is an indigenous language broadcast medium which is one of such projects on indigenous language media. Orisun 89.5 FM was established by the Osun State government in the year 2005. The OSBC sub-station at Ile-Ife was renamed ORISUN 89.5 FM in 2003 and it came on air in 2005. The station was named Orisun FM because of its location, Ile-Ife, which is the cradle of the Yoruba race. It is a monolingual radio station that broadcast all her programmes in Yoruba language. All her programmes line-up is set out to promote the norms and the cultural antecedents of the Yoruba people.

The objectives establishing Orisun 89.5 FM include: to project the rich Yoruba cultural heritage; teach Yoruba language and its culture; promote cultural history of the Yoruba people; change listeners attitude and perception to indigenous the Yoruba language; revitalise Yoruba language; and project the image and activities of Osun State government in indigenous language and to generate revenue for Osun State government. Orisun FM is a monolingual radio station which since inception has maintained the same in terms language usage.

Yoruba language is the only language used for broadcast at Orisun 89.5 FM (Badmus, personal communication, October 23, 2022).

Diglossia Linguistic Theory

The discussion of diglossia was first raised by Karl Krumbacher in his book *Das Problem der neugriechischen Schriftsprache* in 1902. Later on, discussions on it continued in 1930 by Marçais, a French linguist, in his book *La Diglossie Arabe*. The term now became famous in linguistic studies after being used by Charles Ferguson in 1958 in a symposium on urbanisation and standard languages.

Diglossia depicts a situation whereby two languages are used side by side in a speech community. One is rated higher and assumes a formal function of being used in organisations, religious houses, other public places and over the media. The other languages assume an unofficial status with its use in private sphere such as home conversation. In diglossic situation, there is the belief that the high variety with a rich literacy tradition is more beautiful, logical and sophisticated than the low variety.

It is also found in multi-languages, also called double diglossia and language contact is responsible for diglossia (Simanjuntak & Haidir, 2019). They emphasise more that one of the effects of language contact is called diglossia. This aptly explains the linguistic configuration of most African states which was brought about by our contacts with the Europeans. This theory in a way explains such configuration and shows a link between this study and the place of broadcast media in playing up indigenous languages.

In a more vivid way, the relationship between this theory and the broadcast media is in a way whereby the broadcast media can serve as vehicles to propagate and amplify Indigenous language than the foreign languages around us.

This is a deliberate attempt to decolonise and reclaim the indigenous languages in Nigeria. Hence the relevance of this theory to this study by a way of using broadcast media to reconstruct and deconstruct the colonial legacies and languages in the mind of listeners.

Statement of the Problem

The print media have been major culprits in the backwardness experienced in utilising indigenous languages in Nigeria and at large in many African states (Salawu, 2016). This is because they utilise more of foreign languages in their publications. The broadcast media to a certain extent through available literature have been adjudged to be doing well in terms of indigenous language utilisation in their programmes which has brought about a ray of hope in language development, decolonisation and revitalisation in the wake of advocacies and struggles to decolonise foreign languages in Africa. However, despite this development through the broadcast media there is the dearth of literature and minimal attempts to interrogate the strategies and methods engaged by the broadcast media to endear listeners and viewers to indigenous language media. Buttressing this assertion, Mpofu, Fadipe and Tshabangu (2023) submit that studies on African language media's practices and processes have remained scanty and the present scholarship on media in Africa focuses on English language. That is, African language media are under-theorised and under-studied as a discipline. Hence, the need for this study is to uncover those strategies and methods that indigenous language media used to achieve decolonisation which in turn would advance literature in that area.

The Aim of the Study

This study aims to find out the strategies and methods employed by a monolingual broadcast station to endear listeners to the station with a view to facilitate the indigenous language and specifically Yoruba

language revitalisation and decolonisation. Particularly, this study intends to:

1. to interrogate the strategies that Orisun 89.5 FM utilise to endear listeners to the radio station for language decolonisation.
2. to find out the actions taken by the management of Orisun 89.5 FM to achieve the station's objectives?

Methodology

The quantitative research design was used for the study. The data were gathered through a questionnaire-Instrument for Data Collection on Indigenous Language Radio Evaluation (IDCILRE). Orisun 89.5 FM has a total number of 34 staff but for this study 25 workers were purposively used based on availability. The analysis was done through the use of mean and simple percentages and standard deviation.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What are the strategies that Orisun 89.5 FM utilise to endear listeners to the radio station for language decolonisation?

Table 1: Workers' Opinion on Strategies of Orisun 89.5 FM to have more listeners and to create more impacts (plans of action)

S/N	Items	Yes	No
i.	Build social media presence	18 (72%)	7(28%)
ii.	Erection of billboards	12 (48%)	13(52%)
iii.	Production and distribution of flyers	22 (88%)	3(12%)
iv.	Online advertisement	9 (36%)	16(64%)
v.	Ensure use of standard Yoruba language	19 (76%)	6(24%)

vi.	Hosting radio programs competitions	14 (56%)	11 (44%)
vii.	Offer of prizes and gifts for quiz and other competitions for radio programs	15 (60%)	10(40%)
viii.	Provides more local news and events coverage.	23 (92%)	2(8%)
ix.	Use of on air personality to discuss important traditional and cultural issues	24 (96%)	1(4%)
x.	Promotion and support for cultural and traditional functions within and without Ile-Ife	24 (96%)	1(4%)
xi.	Frequent audience analysis	23 (92%)	2(8%)
xii.	Low advertisement rates for individuals and organizations	20 (80%)	5(20%)
xiii.	Engaging in charity	15 (60%)	10(40%)

Source: Field Survey (2022)

According to the data in Table 1 and based on the percentages, majority of the respondents agreed that social media presence(72%), production and distribution of flyers (88%), use of standard Yoruba language (76%), provision of local news and events coverage (92%), use air personality to discuss important traditional and cultural issues (96%) and the station promotes and support cultural and traditional functions within and without Ile-Ife (96%), frequent audience analysis (92%), low advertisement rates for individuals and organisations (80%), and engagement in charity (60%) were discovered to be the strategies used by Orisun FM to have more listeners and to create more impacts.

Research Question 2: What are the actions taken by the management of Orisun 89.5 FM to achieve the station's objectives?

Table 2: Actions taken to achieving the stated objectives of Orisun 89.5 FM

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Maen	Std .Dev.
i.	Orisun FM programmes are in line with the objectives establishing it	17 (68%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	3.56	0.71
ii.	Orisun FM works with some language agencies to develop the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation for broadcasting	16 (64%)	4 (16%)	3 (12%)	2 (8%)	3.36	0.99
iii.	There are linguistic criteria for recruitment of broadcasters and journalists at Orisun FM	15 (60%)	5 (20%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	3.68	0.90

iv.	Orisun FM carries out revisions and modifications of her programmes to reflect the stations objectives from time to time	19 (76%)	0 (0%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	3.68	0.6 3
v.	Orisun FM does not employ staff without journalistic training	18 (72%)	3 (12%)	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	3.56	0.7 7
vi.	Orisun FM does not employ staff without proficiency in Yoruba language	17 (68%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	3.56	0.7 11
vii.	Orisun FM management does give rooms for feedback from different units to improve the execution of the station's objectives	19 (76%)	3 (12%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	3.64	0.7 0
viii.	Orisun FM management gives	15 (60%)	8 (32%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	3.48	0.7 7

	adequate attention to such feedbacks						
ix.	Orisun FM management makes the decision on such feedbacks known to staff	18 (72%)	5 (20%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	5.24	8.1 0
x.	Orisun FM management implements decisions from feedbacks almost immediately	19 (76%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	3.64	0.7 6
xi.	Orisun FM management provides internal mechanism or committee that monitors the station's compliance with its objectives	15 (60%)	8 (32%)	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	3.52	0.6 5

Source: Field Survey (2022)

Table 2 shows how well the stated objectives of Orisun FM as an Indigenous language radio were being achieved based on their mean scores. The respondents strongly agreed that the stated objectives of Orisun FM as an Indigenous language radio were well implemented. In

the sense that it was confirmed that the station's programmes followed the objectives establishing it (3.56), Orisun FM worked with some language agencies to develop the grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation for broadcasting (3.36). Also, there were linguistic criteria for employment of core staff (3.68), Orisun FM carried out revisions and modifications of her programmes to reflect the station's objectives from time to time (3.68). Again, Orisun FM did not employ staff without journalistic training (3.56), Orisun FM did not employ staff without proficiency in Yoruba language (3.56). Moreover, Orisun FM management did give rooms for feedback from different units to improve the execution of the station's objectives (3.64), Orisun FM management gave adequate attention to feedbacks (3.48), Orisun FM management implemented decisions from feedbacks almost immediately (3.64), and Orisun FM management provided internal mechanism or committee that monitored her activities (3.52).

Findings

Arising from the foregoing, it was discovered that Orisun 89.5 FM employed some strategies to have more listeners and to create more impact. These strategies included presence and use of social media; the production and distribution of flyers to advertise the station. Importantly, the station used standard Yoruba language for local news, event coverage and all the programmes of the station. Also, Orisun 89.5 FM used on-air personalities to discuss important traditional and cultural issues, as well as promoting and supporting cultural and traditional functions within and without Ile-Ife. It is important to know that the station engaged in frequent audience analysis and low advertisement rates were charged for individuals and organisations. The station engaged in charity to engage the audience.

Moreover, this study has underscored the diglossia theorie that underpins it. Diglossia theory, depicts a situation where two languages are used side by side in a speech community and one is rated higher

and accorded a formal function of being used in organisations and the media. Orisun 89.5 FM has been able to uphold this because all her broadcasts were done in the Yoruba language exclusively, and that has also had a significant influence on the listeners.

Interestingly, part of the strategies used to impress and influence the audience at Orisun 89.5 FM was the use of standard Yoruba. This suggests that at Orisun 89.5 FM, the use of standard Yoruba is treasured to achieve the purpose for which the station was established. This finding was attested by Opeyemi, as cited in Akanbi and Aladesanmi (2014, p. 564), that Orisun 89.5 FM "broadcasts in rich Standard Yorùbá language as it beams out rich cultural programme laced with innovations. The radio station teaches the Yorùbá nation's language and culture. This endears the radio station to quite a major chunk of the South-Westerners and many listeners in other neighboring states".

Additionally, Chukwunalu et al. (2022) provided academic support for the findings mentioned above. They demonstrated in a study the efforts of broadcast media in the management of multilingualism through the expansion of the language lexicon via the introduction of new words, which gave relevance to all the dialects used in the radio stations they investigated. According to them, this helped reduce language death and kept people connected to their culture. In a nutshell, the findings of this study have proved that the strategies used by Orisun 89.5 FM, especially the use of standard Yoruba and the promotion of customs and traditions of the Yorubas within and without Ile-Ife, have wooed more listeners to the station and created more impacts on the audience.

In addressing the action taken by Orisun 89.5 FM to achieve the stated objectives of the station, it was discovered among other things that there were linguistic criteria for employment of core staff with regular revision and modifications of the station's programmes to conform to her objectives. Also, the management was committed to seek and work

on feedbacks from the audience and staff. In a similar formative research conducted by UNICEF (2019) in Tanzania, the finding was in contrast to this study. It was found out that an intervention project that was carried out was not efficient because of delays in feedback and approval of scripts. This research has demonstrated the place of seeking and working on feedbacks as a means of achieving target objectives of any programme. In the same research, there was limited monitoring of the radio that was investigated (Sara Radio Programme project). The implementation was poor and they did not take note of the drawbacks to handle them on time for continued effective and efficient programming to have the desired outcomes (UNICEF, 2019).

Moreover, Orisun 89.5 FM adjusted her programmes quarterly to suit her objectives and organised language and broadcasting training for her staff. Training and re-training was the major way the station tried to make her staff to be up to date. Meanwhile, the revelations here portend the future and the potency of Orisun 89.5 FM as an indigenous language radio station. The objectives establishing the radio station were so clear and purposeful. Here, we see again the tenacity of the pursuit of the objectives which simply implies the seriousness of the station and the management in respect to language and cultural development. Hence, the activities of the radio station provide and will continue to provide a strong support for language and cultural decolonisation in Nigeria especially for the Yoruba language.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that Orisun 89.5 FM is in the forefront of language and cultural development and as well contributing to language and cultural revitalisation. The findings are also in tandem with previous studies about the potency of Orisun 89.5 FM and other indigenous broadcast media in respect to indigenous language decolonisation and revitalisation. Although the current study was based on a small sample of participants with quantitative method of approach,

the findings suggest that Orisun 89.5 FM has a future and the potency as an indigenous language radio station to work and fight for language and cultural survival. This was done through strict adherence to well stated objectives of the station. The station evolved different strategies to endear listeners to the station while the management also provided quality management principles in the area of staff recruitment and monitoring of programme content and dissemination. On the whole, the station fulfilled the expression that says, “Whatever is worth doing is worth doing well” by making sure that standard Yoruba language was used for her programmes.

There is the need to point out that in this current investigation, there was a limitation by its confinement to quantitative approach. In future investigations, it might be possible to use mixed methods of research design to really investigate the issue in a more robust manner.

It was recommended that government at all levels corporate organisations and private individuals should come up to assist the existing monolingual radio stations in the country in the area of finance if actually indigenous language survival and revitalisation is a concern.

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