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LANGUAGE DIVERSITY AND THE INCLUSION OF LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN PROGRAMMED CONTENT AT AKWA IBOM BROADCASTING CORPORATION (AKBC), NIGERIA

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Abstract: Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria is homogenous in terms of language with Ibibio as the main indigenous language. Yet, there are dialectal groups such as Annang, Oron, Andoni, Ibeno, Eket, Okobo, Mbo, Iwerre and Efik. Therefore, this study set out to ascertain the extent that the Radio and the Television Services of the Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation (AKBC), established, owned and operated by the Akwa Ibom State Government, have fulfilled their mandate of promoting and sustaining the culture of the State through the broadcast of programmes in the languages used in different parts of the State. The study content analysed the programmes of Radio Akwa Ibom (90.50 MHz FM band) and AKBC-TV Channel 45, Uyo (UHF band) from January 2017 to September 2018. The findings indicated that the amount of airtime given by the two stations to programmes in the different dialects spoken in Akwa Ibom State was one-third of the total airtime allotted to programmes in local languages; the remaining two-thirds were in Ibibio - the dominant local language. From the findings, it was concluded that although there was language diversity and inclusion in programme contents of Radio Akwa Ibom and AKBC-TV Channel 45, the diversity and inclusion was peripheral and skin-deep. It was recommended that AKBC as a Corporation should consciously pursue inclusion through diversity as part of its social responsibility by encouraging the production of programmes in other dialects spoken in the State but not yet covered in its programming.

Keywords: Culture, Dialect, Ethics, Hegemony, Vernacular

Original Article

1. Introduction

One of the primary functions of the mass media, particularly the broadcast media, is the transmission of the culture of the people from one generation to another. The basic tool in achieving continuity in the beliefs, norms and values of the people is the language indigenous to the people who form the target audience of a radio or television station. Language is the highest form of expression of the culture of a people. It is their identity. Language excites and enlivens its users and evokes a sense of belonging among its speakers.

Language, according to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, is a system of conventional spoken, manual, or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression and emotional release. It is also a system of communication which consists of a set of sounds and written symbols which are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking and writing.

The use of local languages on the air is one of the ways that a broadcast station adopts to attract and sustain its audience base. The reason for this is three-prolonged, according to Akpan (2017). First, the audience is serviced in a way that is meaningful; secondly, the audience is sustained; thirdly advertisers are attracted to do business with the broadcast station given its relative audience size. The ever-growing desire by societies to re-invent themselves through the use of indigenous languages has propelled broadcast stations to take advantage of the unique characteristic of the medium which can reach diverse people in diverse languages. Nigeria is credited to have more than 450 languages and dialects (Eka, 2012). The airwaves are one of the ways of ensuring the survival of these languages; otherwise they could be extinct. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

(2010) estimates that “if nothing is done, half of the 6,000 plus languages spoken today will disappear by the end of this century”. The disappearance of unwritten and undocumented languages would cause humanity to lose not only an irreplaceable cultural heritage but also valuable ancestral heritage and knowledge embedded in indigenous languages. “However, this process is neither inevitable nor irreversible: well planned and effectively implemented language policies can bolster ongoing efforts of speaker communities to maintain or revitalize their mother tongue and pass them to younger generations” (UNESCO, 2010).

Broadcasters have moved to capture the speakers and users of these languages through programmes in such languages. Some of these languages are spoken by ethnic groups that are regarded as minorities, defined by the assumed number of persons that speaks the language. That explains why Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa languages in Nigeria are taken to be the languages of the majority tribes while Ibibio, Ijaw, Tiv etc are regarded as languages of the minority groups. While it is incontestable that no language is inferior to another, the languages of those who constitute the majority tribes seem to be accorded more prominence on radio and TV in Nigeria. This appears to be the global trend.

Akwa Ibom State as a part of Nigeria is not immune to this trend. It has a major language which is Ibibio. It is spoken and understood in all parts of the State and parts of Cross River State. There are also variations of the language which have been classified as dialects. Some of these dialects - some have classified them as

Original Article

languages in their own right - are Annang, Oron, Ekid, Andoni, Okobo, Mbo, Iwerre, Efik and many others. Annang and Efik are as widely understood as Ibibio. However, some of the dialects are only intelligible to those within such linguistic groups. It is because of that restrictive intelligibility that the languages are regarded as dialects or minority languages within the Akwa Ibom setting.

Therefore, in view of the sometimes seamless distinction between dialect and language, the two concepts are used synonymously in this study, except where an express meaning is intended. In this work, too, vernacular refers to any of the indigenous or local languages spoken in Akwa Ibom State – the main language (Ibibio) and/or any of the minority languages or dialects. Linguistic minorities refer to the people who speak any of the indigenous languages in Akwa Ibom State already listed, aside from Ibibio.

2. Profile of AKBC

The Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, Uyo, was established by Edict No. 4 of 1988. The Edict came into effect on April 19, 1988, with a retrospective commencement date of March 1, 1988. The Edict was gazetted as Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria Gazette No. 7, Vol. 21 of 18th February, 1988.

The Edict mandates the Corporation, comprising Radio Akwa Ibom and AKBC TV Channel 45, Uyo, to ensure that its programmes “maintain a proper balance in their subject matter and quality”, and ensure that “due impartiality is preserved in respect of matters of political, religious or industrial controversy or relating to public policy. The Corporation shall ensure the inclusion in programmes of properly balanced discussion or debates”. (cited in Otu, 2006, p. 244). Thus, the Edict empowers the Corporation to ensure “inclusion”. This inclusion cuts across every sphere of life, including languages. That “language” was not expressly stated as one of the issues for inclusion might have stemmed from the fact that Akwa Ibom State is homogenous in terms of language since Ibibio is spoken in all parts of the State. Yet, the Edict tended to have overlooked the dialects or other languages which exist in the State.

3. Statement of the Problem

The instrument establishing the Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, AKBC - Edict No. 4 of 1988 - empowers the Corporation to vigorously and holistically project the culture of Akwa Ibom State. One way that AKBC does express culture is the use of the language of the people in its broadcasts. It is on the basis of the above that some linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State have often alleged that AKBC has not promoted their culture through the inclusion of their dialects in programmes. They allege that in its vernacular programmes, AKBC seems to concentrate on Ibibio which is the general language spoken in the State. These insinuations have prompted this study to ascertain the extent that there is language diversity on AKBC and by extension inclusion of linguistic minorities in its broadcast contents.

4. Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of airing of programmes on AKBC in dialects of linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State?

Original Article

2. What is the amount of airtime given to programmes on AKBC in dialects of linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State?
3. Why does AKBC give such amount of airtime to programmes in dialects of linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State?
4. To what extent is there language diversity in programmes on AKBC?
5. Is there inclusion in terms of language in programmes of AKBC?

5. Theoretical Framework

This work is founded on the Democratic-participant Theory and the Development Media Theory – both propounded by Denis McQuail in 1987. One of the principles of the democratic-participant theory is that individual citizens and minority groups should have rights of access to the media – right to communicate as well as the rights to be served by the media according to their own needs. The media should exist primarily for their audiences and not for the media organizations, professionals, or clients of the media (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008). The theory in relation to this work suggests that all individuals and groups, especially the minorities, should have a sense of belonging expressed through their access to the media – the right to communicate and the right to be served by the media. They should have the opportunity to be served by broadcast stations through the use of their language which is the highest expression of culture. Thus, the people would use such opportunity to express their needs. The other theory – the Development media theory – emphasises that “the media should give priority in their content to national culture and languages” (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008, p.63). It is by giving attention to national languages by the media that culture is promoted; the people whose language is promoted would have a sense of belonging and inclusion and would feel a sense of commitment to contribute to national goals. On the above lies the relevance of the two theories to this work.

6. The Concept of Diversity

Diversity is defined in this work in line with the definition by University of North Carolina School of Media and Journalism (2008):

Any point of difference among individuals, variety especially among different types of peoples. It includes a recognition and appreciation of differences and finds value in these differences because they are necessary for promoting growth and learning for all community members. Diversity can be measured across many variables – age, race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic group, geography, religion, thought, philosophy, perspective, disability and veteran status.

Meaningful and productive conversation in the public sphere is dependent on the inclusion of diverse perspectives. This therefore demands news organizations and their operatives to understand that “the diversity and inclusion commitment is rooted in the knowledge that diversity and inclusion benefit all...” (UNC School of Media and Journalism, 2008). The School explains that the practice of the tenets of diversity is designed to:

1. Create and maintain an environment that promotes civic participation, values understanding of each other’s backgrounds and experiences, and practises inclusion of all individuals;

Original Article

2. Create and maintain a climate that offers equality of opportunities and plurality of Thoughts...in the marketplace of ideas;
3. Cultivate mindfulness of the unconscious biases we all have and of institutional Inequalities that can threaten progress within (the society);
4. Recruit, hire, promote and retain diverse staff; and
5. Provide the classrooms that are and remain accessible to all.

The points above suggest that media organisations should clearly define and publicise their commitment to diversity and inclusion; recruit and retain underrepresented populations to ensure the benefits of diversity and inclusion in managerial positions; create and sustain a climate in which respectful discussions of diversity and inclusion are encouraged; and support commitment to diversity and inclusion of linguistic minorities not only in their content, but also among those who produce the content.

7. The Concept of Inclusion

Social inclusion is a broad construct. It raises the issues of who is to be included and degrees (ideologies) of inclusion. According to Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler and BeredSamuel (2010):

Possible areas of inclusion are socio-economic status, culture (including indigenous cultures), linguistic group, religion, geography (rural and remote/isolated), gender, sexual orientation, age (including youth and old age), physical and mental health/ability, and status with regard to unemployment, homelessness and incarceration. Degree of inclusion comprises a nested three-fold schema incorporating a spectrum of ideologies involving - from the narrowest to most encompassing - the neoliberal focus on access and economic factors, the social justice focus on community participation and the human potential focus on personal and collective empowerment stemming from positive psychology and critical/transformational pedagogies.

Lareau and Horvat (1999) emphasise “the difference between possession and activation of capital and the value accorded displays of capital in particular settings. Taken together, (they) suggest the importance of focusing on moments of inclusion and exclusion in examining how individuals activate social and cultural capital”.

Inclusion involves access, participation and success – these are key concepts in the domain of social inclusion. They represent society as “one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. Social inclusion is seen to be defined in relation to social exclusion” (Lareau and Horvat (1999). Some scholars have argued that both inclusion and exclusion are inseparable sides of the same coin.

According to Cappel (2002), citing de Haan (1998): “Social inclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person in the community”.

Inclusion has become inevitable because the world is changing; moral values are being re-examined as stereotypical thinking is increasingly exposed; national and international guidance advocates degrees of social inclusion (Gidley, Hampson, Wheeler and Bered-Samuel, 2010).

Original Article

Social inclusion is bridge-building. It enables the news organisation to build bridges of friendships, social interaction and understanding within the context of diversity among the component units of its (target) audience. The sense of belonging offered by inclusion creates goodwill for the media organisation, and in the long run may enlarge the audience base which in turn encourages and draws advertisers to the media outlet. Austin (2006) is unequivocal when he states that “contact based on sustained curricular and social interaction has an effect on children’s perceptions of each other”.

Robo (2017) states that any alternative to social inclusion, quite simply, seems unthinkable. He says an inclusive system benefits all without any discrimination towards any individual or group. According to him, social exclusion, or social marginalization, is the social disadvantage and relegation to the fringe of the society. Taylor (2012) explains five perspectives of social inclusion: (1) economic participation, (2) health and access to services (3) personal independence and self-determination, (4) education and (5) interacting with society and fulfilling social roles. All the perspectives also relate to media inclusion. Media inclusion will enhance economic participation; a financially buoyant individual can access health care; can have independence and self-determination; can and does enhance the education of the individual and enables an individual or a group to interact with one another and so fulfil their social roles.

8. Endangered Languages

UNESCO (2010) has provided the following classification systems to indicate the languages that are in danger of being extinct.

1. Vulnerable – most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g. home).
2. Definitely endangered – children no longer learn the language as a “mother tongue” in the home.
3. Severely endangered – language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves.
4. Critically endangered – the youngest speakers are grandparents, and they speak the language partially and infrequently.
5. Extinct – there are no speakers left.

Two hundred and thirty out of 2500 languages have become extinct since 1950 according to the Atlas published in 2010. As at 2018, the number of endangered languages is almost 3000. Happily no language in Akwa Ibom State is on that list.

9. Minorities and the Media

Globally, the news media appear to be fascinated with minorities. In words and perhaps in deeds, the media suggest to their audiences that their news outlets do not discriminate, do not exclude but are inconclusive of minority groups however the groups are defined. Cortes

(1987) has noted that “whether intentionally or unintentionally, both the news and the entertainment media ‘teach’ the public about minorities, other ethnic groups and societal groups, such as women, gay, and the elderly”. Cortes’ statement implies that the media do not shut out minorities, but discuss them, the intent

Original Article

notwithstanding. In the process of mentioning the minorities, the media sometimes create images, particularly stereotypes, for the minorities. Thus, the media have some influence on the public image of minorities. As Cortes (1987) has said, “minorities have long recognised the media’s power to influence their lives. And they have struggled to achieve greater influence over their own media destinies...most minority efforts, including protests, have focused on the area of media content. Minorities realise - supported by research – that the media influence not only how others view them, but even how they view themselves”. That is to say, even the minorities, through their exposure to some content, may judge themselves on the basis of such media content. This may contribute to the marginal presence and even less influence of the minorities within the mainstream media.

The Encyclopaedia of Communication and Information (2002), citing Clark (1969), characterises four typical and distinct stages that minorities are portrayed in the media: **Stage 1:** Non-recognition – the idea that initially, people of colour are generally ignored by the media and are rarely seen in any type of portrayal.

Stage 2: Ridicule – the negative and stereotypical media images.

Stage 3: Regulation – the portrayal of minorities in roles upholding social order or protecting the status quo (e.g. police officers, military).

Stage 4: Respect – the portrayals including a diversity of images, both positive and negative, that parallel characterisations.

Although portrayals could and do affect self-concept, the influence is not vivid. It may depend on the ethnic group and the media content in question. Yet, there is no doubt that many media portrayals of ethnic groups are not flattering. This, many a time, leaves the minorities who are being portrayed in less than flattering ways dissatisfied with media portrayals. The consequences of such dissatisfaction manifest in negative attitudes by the portrayed towards the media and vice versa. Those behind the media content are likely to see the ethnic group from a particular and negative perspective while those portrayed would conclude that such media do not always see any positives in the ethnic group. Negative thoughts can in turn affect subsequent perceptions of individuals (Ford, 1997). Hence, the Encyclopaedia of Communication and Information (2002) states that “racial stereotypes held by viewers can influence the ways in which viewers understand, interpret, or react to social images presented in the media”.

10. Methodology

This study used two research designs – content analysis and the survey. Content analysis was used for the evaluation of the programme schedules of AKBC TV Channel 45 and Radio Akwa Ibom. The survey was used to obtain the views of programmers regarding the analysed content.

The population of the study was the programme schedules of AKBC TV Channel 45 and Radio Akwa Ibom from 1st April, 2017 to 30th September, 2018 – a period of one year, six months containing six broadcast quarters. Each quarter usually has a programme schedule. Hence, for Radio Akwa Ibom, there were six programme schedules; the same number for AKBC Channel 45. Thus the population of programme schedules

Original Article

for the study was 12. This period was considered long enough to reveal trends concerning the subject matter at hand – the inclusion or exclusion of minority dialects/languages in programmes of Radio Akwa Ibom and AKBC Channel 45.

In view of the manageable size of the population, a census study of the programme schedules was carried out. For the survey, only the Director of Programme of AKBC was interviewed. The unit of analysis was the individual shows (programmes) scheduled for airing on a particular day at a particular time. The instruments for data collection were the coding sheets and the interview schedule.

The following content categories were created:

1. Language/Dialect – This category dealt with the language/dialect in which a particular show was broadcast.
2. Duration – Duration was concerned with how long a programme was scheduled to last.
3. Time of Broadcast – This content category looked at the time of the day that a programme was meant to be broadcast.
4. Day of Broadcast – Day of Broadcast referred to the day in the week that the show was aired.
5. Programme – This category referred to the name of the individual show that was aired.

11. Presentation of Data and Analysis

Altogether, six quarters of programming spanning 18 months (1st April, 2017 to 30th September, 2018) were content analysed. The asterisked (*) is a minority dialect/language

1: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st April-30th June, 2017)

Programme	Episode a week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language/ Dialect
Afe Mbono	1	Sunday	8-8.30pm	30 min	Annang*
Nkereude	1	Monday	9-10pm	1 hour	Annang*
Udua Mbire Mbire	1	Tuesday	1.15-2pm	45min	Ibibio
Anwang idit Oro	1	Tuesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45am	45mins	Ibibio
Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Efreuwa	1	Wednesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Akwa Ibom Abodie	1	Thursday	9.9.45am	45mins	Ibibio
Uto (Ballad)	1	Thursday	8.15-8.30pm	15mins	Ibibio
Sibaba Sibaba	1	Thursday	9-10pm	1hour	Ibibio
Ikon Akwa Ibom	1	Friday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*

Original Article

Sio Mfi Ta	1	Friday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Nneme Nnyin	1	Saturday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio

Table 1 indicates that Radio Akwa Ibom aired 13 different programmes in vernacular from 1st April to 30th June, 2018: eight in Ibibio, three in Annang, one in Oron and one in Andoni. Each programme had one episode per week.

Table 2: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st July - 30th September, 2017)

Programme	Episode a Week	Day of the Week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language/ Dialect
Afe mbono	1	Sunday	8-8.30pm	30 min	Annang*
Nkereude	1	Monday	9-10pm	1 hour	Annang*
Udua mbre mbre	1	Tuesday	1.15-2pm	45min	Ibibio
Anwang idit Oro	1	Tuesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45am	45mins	Ibibio
Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Efreuwa	1	Wednesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Akwa Ibom Abodie	1	Thursday	9.9.45am	45mins	Ibibio
Uto (Ballad)	1	Thursday	8.15-8.30pm	15mins	Ibibio
Sibaba sibaba	1	Thursday	9-10pm	1hour	Ibibio
Ikon Akwa Ibom	1	Friday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*
Sio Mfi Ta	1	Friday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Nneme Nnyin	1	Saturday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio

According to Table 2, Radio Akwa Ibom aired 13 different programmes in vernacular from 1st July to 30th September, 2017, with each having one episode a week: eight in Ibibio, three in Annang, one in Oron and one in Andoni.

Table 3: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st October – 31st December, 2017)

Programme	Episode a week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language/ Dialect
Anwang idit Oro	1	Monday	8 8.30pm	30mins	Oron*
Nkereude	1	Monday	9.30-10pm	30mins	Annang*
Udua Mbire Mbire	1	Tuesday	1.15-2pm	45mins	Ibibio

Original Article

Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45pm	45mins	Ibibio
Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Etop Udonga Itiata	1	Wednesday	7.45-8pm	15mins	Ibibio
Afe Mbono	2 -	Wednesday Sunday	10.30-11pm 8.8.30pm	30mins 30mins	Annang* Annang*
Akwa Ibom Abodie	1	Thursday	9-10am	1 hour	Ibibio Ibibio
Inem Mbono	2 -	Thursday Saturday	10.30-11.30am 1.30-2pm	1 hour 30mins	Ibibio Ibibio
Sibaba Sibaba	1	Thursday	7.30-8pm	30mins	Ibibio
Uto (Ballad)	1	Thursday	8.15-8.30pm	15mins	Ibibio
That Same Jesus (vernacular)	1	Thursday	6.30-6.45pm	15mins	Ibibio
Ikon Akwa Ibom	1	Friday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Ibibio
Akwa Ibom Mmamna	1	Saturday	10.30-11am	30mins	Annang*
Nneme Nnyin	1	Saturday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Ibibio

Table 3 indicates that from 1st October to 31st December, 2017, 15 programmes were aired in vernacular: nine in Ibibio, four in Annang, one each in Oron and Andoni. Two programmes – Afe Mbono in Annang and Inem Mbono in Ibibio – had two episodes a week

Table 4: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st January – 31st March, 2018)

Programme	Episode a week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language/Dialect
Afe Mbono	1	Sunday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*
Esop Ndubi	1	Sunday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Ntakrok	2 -	Monday Saturday	4-5pm 4-4pm	1 hour 1 hour	Ibibio Ibibio
Unwana Uwem (Rel)	1	Monday	7-7.15pm	15mins	Ibibio
Nkere Ude	1	Monday	9-10pm	1 hour	Annang*

Original Article

Inem Mbono	2 -	Wednesday Saturday	10-10.30pm 1.30-2pm	30mins 30mins	Ibibio Ibibio
Udua Mbire Mbire	1	Tuesday	1.15-2.00pm	45mins	Ibibio
Anwang Idit Oro	1	Tuesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45am	45mins	Ibibio
Sunrise Sports (vernacular)	2 -	Wednesday Thursday	9.45-10am 9.45- 11am	15mins 15mins	Ibibio Ibibio
Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Efreuwa	1	Wednesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Akwa Ibom Abodie	1	Thursday	9-9.4am	45mins	Ibibio
That Same Jesus (Rel)	1	Thursday	6.30-6.45pm	15mins	Ibibio
Uto (Ballad)	1	Thursday	8.15-8.30pm	15mins	Ibibio
Sibaba Sibaba	1	Thursday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Ikon Akwa Ibom	1	Friday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*
Sio Mfi Ta	1	Friday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Nneme Nnyin	1	Saturday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio

Data on Table 4 indicate that 19 programmes were broadcast in vernacular on Radio

Akwa Ibom between 1st January and 31st March, 2018. The breakdown is as follows: Ibibio – 13; Annang 3; Oron – 2 and Andoni – 1. Each had an episode per week except Ntakrok, Sunrise Sports (Vernacular) and Inem Mbono – all in Ibibio – which had two episodes each per week.

Table 5: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st April to 30th June, 2018)

Programme	Episode a week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language /Dialect
Afe mbono	1	Sunday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*
Esop Ndubi	1	Sunday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Ntakrok	2 -	Monday Saturday	4-5pm 4-4pm	1 hour 1 hour	Ibibio Ibibio
Unwana Uwem (Rel)	1	Monday	7-7.15pm	15mins	Ibibio
Nkere Ude	1	Monday	9-10pm	1 hour	Annang*
Inem Mbono	2 -	Wednesday Saturday	1010.30pm 1.30-2pm	30mins 30mins	Ibibio Ibibio

Original Article

Udua Mbire Mbire	1	Tuesday	1.15-2.00pm	45mins	Ibibio
Anwang Idit Oro	1	Tuesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45am	45 mins	Ibibio
Sunrise Sports (vernacular)	2 -	Wednesday Thursday	9.45-10am 9.45-11am	15mins 15mins	Ibibio Ibibio
Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Efreuwa	1	Wednesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Akwa Ibom Abodie	1	Thursday	9-9.4am	45mins	Ibibio
That Same Jesus (Rel)	1	Thursday	6.30-6.45pm	15mins	Ibibio
Uto (Ballad)	1	Thursday	8.15-8.30pm	15mins	Ibibio
Sibaba Sibaba	1	Thursday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Ikon Akwa Ibom	1	Friday	8-8.30pm	30mins	Annang*
Sio Mfi Ta	1	Friday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Nneme Nnyin	1	Saturday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio

According to Table 5, 19 programmes were aired in vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom from 1st April to 30th June, 2018 with the breakdown as follows: Ibibio – 13; Annang – 3; Oron – 2 and Andoni – 1. Each had an episode per week except Ntakrok, Sunrise Sports (vernacular) and Inem Mbono – all in Ibibio – which had two episodes a week.

Table 6: Programming in Vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom (1st July -30th September, 2018)

Programme	Episode a week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language /Dialect
Afe Mbono	1	Sunday	8-8.30pm	30 min	Annang*
Esop Ndubi	1	Sunday	9-10pm	1 hour	Oron*
Unwana Uwem (Rel)	1	Monday	7-7.15pm	15mins	Ibibio
Ntakrok	1	Monday	4-5pm	1 hour	Ibibio
Nkere Ude	1	Monday	9-10pm	1 hour	Annang*
Inem Mbono	1	Monday	10.10.30pm	30mins	Ibibio
Udua Mbire Mbire	1	Tuesday	1.15-2pm	45mins	Ibibio
Anwang Idit Oro	1	Tuesday	9-9.45am	1 hour	Oron*
Abadie	1	Wednesday	9-9.45am	45mins	Ibibio

Original Article

Ida Ebi Obolo	1	Wednesday	7.30-7.45pm	15mins	Andoni*
Efreuwa	1	Wednesday	9-10pm	1 hour	Ibibio

Table 6 shows programming in vernacular on Radio Akwa Ibom between 1st July and 30th September, 2018. Eleven programmes were aired, all of them with one episode per week. Six of the programmes were in Ibibio, two in Annang, two in Oron and one in Andoni.

Table 7: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st April - 30th June, 2017)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Duration	Language/Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tues, Weds, Thurs Friday	7.30-9am	1 hour 30mins	Ibibio
Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio
Tinkinik	1	Thursday	5.15-6pm	45mins	Ibibio

According to Table 7, three vernacular programmes were aired on AKBC Channel 45 from 1st April to 30th June, 2017. All the programmes were in Ibibio. Ntiantia Asaka had five episodes per week; the rest had one each.

Table 8: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st July - 30th September, 2017)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Duration	Language/Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tuesday, Wed, Thursday, Friday	7.30-9am	1hour 30mins	Ibibio
Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio
Tinkinik	1	Thursday	5.15-6pm	45mins	Ibibio

Table 8 indicates that a total of three vernacular programmes were aired on AKBC Channel 45 from 1st July to 30th September, 2017. All of them were in Ibibio. However, Ntiantia Asaka had five episodes a week while Esa Iban and Tinkinik had one episode each.

Original Article

Table 9: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st October – 31st December, 2017)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language/Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	7.30-9am	1hour 30mins	Ibibio
Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio
Tinkinik	1	Thursday	5.15-6pm	45mins	Ibibio

Data in Table 9 indicate that three programmes – Ntiantia Asaka, Esa Iban and Tinkinik – were aired in the broadcast quarter lasting 1st October to 31st December, 2017 on Channel 45. All the programmes were in Ibibio with Ntiantia Asaka having five episodes and the rest just an episode each a week.

Table 10: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st January - 31st March, 2018)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language /Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	7.30-9am	1hour 30mins	Ibibio
Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio

Table 10 indicates that two programmes – both in Ibibio – were in vernacular on AKBC Channel 45. Ntiantia Asaka had five episodes a week, Esa Iban had one. This was from 1st January to 31st March, 2018.

Table 11: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st April – 30th June, 2018)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the Week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language /Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	7.30-9am	1hour 30mins	Ibibio

Original Article

Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio
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According to Table 11, AKBC Channel 45 aired two programmes in vernacular – both in Ibibio – from 1st April to 30th June, 2018.

Table 12: Programming in Vernacular on AKBC Channel 45 (1st July – 30th September, 2018)

Programme	Episode per Week	Day of the Week	Time of Broadcast	Daily Duration	Language /Dialect
Ntiantia Asaka	5	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday	7.30-9am	1hour 30mins	Ibibio
Esa Iban	1	Monday	5.30-6pm	30mins	Ibibio

Table 12 indicates that AKBC Channel 45 aired two vernacular programmes (both in Ibibio from 1st July to 30th September, 2018, with Ntiantia Asaka having five episodes and Esa Iban an episode a week.

12. Data from Interview with the Director of Programmes, Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation

The policy of Akwa Ibom Broadcasting Corporation, AKBC, though unwritten, is to complement English Language programmes with those in indigenous languages in order to reach out to as many audience members as possible. In doing this, the corporation vigorously promotes the use of the languages spoken in Akwa Ibom State other than English. We have one major language –Ibibio - which is spoken, hopefully, by every Akwa Ibom person.

Yet there are some linguistic differences based on dialectal differences. We also strive to bring on board, i.e. on the air, these dialects through programming. But we run into the hitch of not having talents willing to partner with us in providing programmes in these dialects, partly because AKBC is unable to pay such talents. The good thing, however, is that Ibibio is spoken and understood by the entire State and beyond; so we are covered. The complaints are very few and not often. Yet, as I have already stated, we try to source for talents in some of these dialects to create or participate in programmes in such dialects. Many would be willing but because of lack of funds to assist them, they find it rather difficult to accept. What we do is to use employees of the Corporation who speak these dialects or languages to form the core of the production team for programmes in those dialects or languages. For now we have talents in Oron and Andoni. Of course, Annang is widely spoken; so there is no scarcity of talents in that area.

If we have talents in other dialects, we shall have programmes in them. But it is absolutely necessary to have employees from those areas and who are willing and ready to serve as arrow heads for such ventures.

Original Article

The Corporation wants to include as many indigenous languages as possible in its programme contents in order to give its audiences a sense of belonging. Why Ibibio seems to dominate is that it is, call it, the general language of the people and any programme in it is understood by all. This does not, however, stop the corporation from producing programmes in the different dialects.

13. Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What is the frequency of airing programmes on AKBC in dialects of linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State?

Tables 1 to 12 indicate that for the period of the study, 90 programmes were aired on Radio Akwa Ibom in indigenous languages, out of which 33 (36.7%) were in languages of linguistic minorities. A further disaggregation shows that for the six broadcast quarters under study, 18 programmes were in Annang, nine in Oron and six in Andoni. Thus, 20% of the programmes in vernacular were in Annang dialect, 10% in Oron and 6% in Andoni while 63.3% of such programmes were in Ibibio.

Generally speaking, most of the programmes in local languages were aired once a week. Only four programmes featured twice week: Ntakrok, Inem Mbono, Sunrise Sports (all in Ibibio) and Afe Mbono (Annang). Interestingly, the programmes were evenly spread throughout the seven days in a week. The Director of Programmes in AKBC said the programmes were deliberately spread across the seven days of the week in order to give vernacular listeners a sense of belonging on the air.

The findings of the study are in line with the Development Media Theory and the Democratic Participant Theory on which the work is founded. The Democratic Participant theory emphasises the right of access to the media by minority groups. Evidently, minority groups in Akwa Ibom State do have access to the media, and it is in no way better expressed than in the use of their dialects on the air which, no doubt, is a measure of inclusion. By giving opportunity for programming in minority languages, Radio Akwa Ibom and Channel 45, Uyo, have fulfilled the principles of Development Media theory which canvasses priority to national culture and languages. The use of minority languages in broadcasting helps to transmit the language and culture of the people from generation to generation.

Research Question Two: What is the amount of airtime given to programmes by AKBC in dialects of linguistic minorities in Akwa Ibom State?

From the data on all the tables, vernacular programmes on Radio Akwa Ibom had a total airtime of 44 hours, 15 minutes, while AKBC Channel 45, aired vernacular programmes for eight hours, ten minutes during the period under review. Specifically, programmes in minority languages had 20 hours, 30 minutes for radio and none for TV. In other words, there was no programme on minority language/dialect on AKBC Channel 45. So for the entire AKBC, vernacular programmes had 62 hours, 25 minutes, out of which programmes in linguistic minorities were 20 hours, 30 minutes, 32.8% of the airtime for vernacular programmes. The rest (67.2%) were in Ibibio, nearly two-thirds of the airtime. The data imply that the pendulum of programming in vernacular in

Original Article

AKBC swings in favour of Ibibio, leaving the linguistic minorities with a sense of inclusion which, in reality, is marginal.

It is interesting that the 32.8% of the time allotted to programmes in vernacular is filled with programmes in minority languages in Akwa Ibom State. This leaves a whopping 67.2% for Ibibio – the main language. The data seem to suggest that not much attention is given to these minority languages, and tend to confirm the fears of linguistic minority groups that their languages are relatively neglected. However, in the light of explanations by the Director of Programmes of AKBC concerning the dearth of broadcast talents in those dialects and lack of funds to motivate those who can participate in programmes, the relative amount of airtime to these languages appears reasonably explained. Yet it calls for proactive measures by the corporation towards the inclusion of all segments of the society in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question 3: Why does AKBC give such amount of Airtime to Programmes in dialects of Linguistic Minorities in Akwa Ibom State?

The answer to this question lies in the responses by the Director of Programmes of AKBC. The explanation by the Corporation is that it does not consciously shut out linguistic minorities but that there is a scarcity of talents to produce programmes in those dialects, especially as the State Government has not been recruiting. What the Corporation does is to use its staff who speak those dialects and who demonstrate enormous interest in broadcast production as the fulcrum for the production of such programmes. And given the fact that employees who speak those dialects are not many, it naturally leaves those dialects in a disadvantaged position. That explains why programmes in Ibibio and Annang seem to have more presence on the air because the majority of the employees are of the Ibibio or Annang stock.

Yet, given the need for diversity of languages on the airwaves, the corporation, in order to fulfil its mandate, needs to go beyond its staff to recruit talents in those minority languages that may assist it in the long run to achieve inclusion.

Research Question 4: What is the extent of language diversity in programmes of AKBC?

A look at all the tables reveals that only four languages/dialects are used for programming on Radio Akwa Ibom and AKBC Channel 45. These are Ibibio, Annang, Oron and Andoni, with the volume of programmes following in that order. The situation on Channel 45 is even more interesting – all the vernacular programmes on the TV station are in Ibibio. While the explanation of lack of talents for programme production in the different dialects sounds plausible, it is perplexing that only four languages/dialects are used for programming. The implication is that outside these four, other linguistic groups are shut out of the airwaves in terms of language use – a clear index of exclusion and negation of the principle of the Development Media theory that priority be given to national languages and culture. One of the best platforms for this is the broadcast media.

Research Question 5: Is there inclusion in terms

Original Article

of language in programmes of AKBC?

The data indicate that there is inclusiveness. The Director of the Programmes attests to this. However, a deeper look at the data suggests a peripheral inclusiveness. That is to say, while three dialects/languages of linguistic minorities have been used in programming, the majority of other dialects do not have such “privilege”. The number of programmes and the amount of airtime tilt against the linguistic minorities. While it may sound absurd to demand for equality in terms of number of programmes and amount of airtime (since the Ibibio is spoken and understood by all in the state), it is worrisome that nearly two – thirds of the programmes aired and the airtime allotted are in favour of Ibibio language. The argument that the language is understood across the state does nothing to address the truth.

14. Summary of Findings

From the above, the findings of the research could be summarised as follows:

1. Programmes in dialects/languages of linguistic minorities were spread across each week on Radio Akwa Ibom. On AKBC Channel 45, there were no programmes in such languages or dialects.
2. The amount of airtime given to programmes in languages of linguistic minorities was one-third of the total airtime allotted to programmes in vernacular. The rest of the two-thirds were in Ibibio.
3. Why linguistic minorities had such airtime compared to Ibibio was the dearth of talents to produce programmes in those dialects/languages as only employees of the Corporation who demonstrated sufficient interest spearheaded the production of programmes in those dialects or languages.
4. From the data, there is language diversity but the diversity could not be said to be proportionate to the number of dialects spoken in Akwa Ibom State.
5. There is inclusiveness but the inclusiveness is only marginal or peripheral.

15. Conclusion

From the findings above, it is concluded that although there is language diversity and inclusion of different dialects in Akwa Ibom State in programme contents of Radio Akwa Ibom and AKBC Channel 45, the diversity and inclusion cannot be said to be deep enough. It is shallow, superficial, skin-deep and peripheral.

16. Recommendations

It is hereby recommended that AKBC as a Corporation should consciously pursue inclusiveness through diversity as part of its social responsibility by encouraging the production of programmes in other dialects spoken in the State but not yet covered in its programming.

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