

Language, Culture, Media and Development: A Nexus of Harmony

Inaugural Lecture

Delivered by

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Professor Abiodun Salawu: A Biographical Sketch

Professor Abiodun Salawu holds a PhD in Communication and Language Arts of the University of Ibadan; PGD and MSc in Mass Communication of the University of Lagos; and a B.A (Hons) English Studies of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile- Ife. After a six-year stint in active practice of journalism, Abiodun started his professional academic career at The Polytechnic, Ibadan in 1996. In 2002, he moved to the University of Lagos and subsequently Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo where he became the pioneer Head of the Department of Communication and Media Studies.

He relocated to South Africa when he took a professorial appointment with the University of Fort Hare in 2009. He later held briefly the Mazisi Kunene Chair in the School of Arts, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal. In April 2013, he assumed duties as Professor in the Department of Communication, Mafikeng Campus of the North-West University.

Abiodun's major areas of research interest include indigenous language media, development communication, critical media studies, journalism and communication research and education as well as digital media. He has to his credit scores of publications as peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters; as well as a book and two edited volumes. He has also presented papers at conferences in several countries cutting across all the continents of the world. He had been a visiting scholar to universities in Africa and the Pacific. He is rated as an established researcher at level C3 by the National Research Foundation of South Africa. He has successfully supervised a good number of Master's dissertations and Doctoral theses.

He edited *Fort Hare Papers*, the multidisciplinary journal of the University of Fort Hare between 2009 and 2013. He guest-edited a special issue (Journalism Education in Africa) of *Global Media Journal – Africa edition*. He serves on the editorial/advisory boards of a number of journals which include *Journal of African Media Studies*, *Journal of Communication and Media Research*, *Global Media Journal – Africa edition*, *Journal of Communication and Language Arts* and *Journalism Research and Education*. In addition, he reviews for these and other journals such as *African Journalism Studies* (formerly known as *Ecquid Novi*), *Critical Arts*, *Communicatio*, *Communicare*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* as well as *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies* among others.

In furtherance of his academic citizenship responsibilities, Prof. Salawu has also been external examiner to universities in Nigeria, South Africa and Namibia. He has also been involved in assessment of professorial candidates for universities. He equally evaluates for NRF.

Prof. Salawu has won a number of research grants from institutions such as the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (Codesria) and the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) of the University of Oxford.

He is a member of a number of academic and professional bodies such as the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR), African Council for Communication Education, South African Communication Association, Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria, South African National Editors' Forum, Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, and International Communication Association (ICA). He has consulted for UNICEF and UNESCO.

Professor Salawu is happily married and is blessed with three children.

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Salutation

The goat that enters without salutations is tethered down. So is the case with the sheep that enters without salutations. Because I do not want to be tethered down, I start by paying homage so that I do not suffer the same fate like the goat and the sheep. I need to give honour to whom honour is due so I can soar like the eagle.

I start by honouring the Lord God Almighty, the King of kings and the Lord of lords who has brought me this far and made this day possible. To Him be all glory and honour. If not for you Lord Jesus, who am I to stand before this great assembly today to give this inaugural lecture? King David asked the same kind of question when he was overwhelmed by the awesomeness of God: "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that you have brought me this far?" (2 Sam. 7: 18). I say this because I appreciate where I am coming from and what God has done for me.

I turn to the Rector and say *Iba* (Honour). I salute all the dignitaries present here, including colleagues and students. I say *Iba* to you all. *Dumela*.

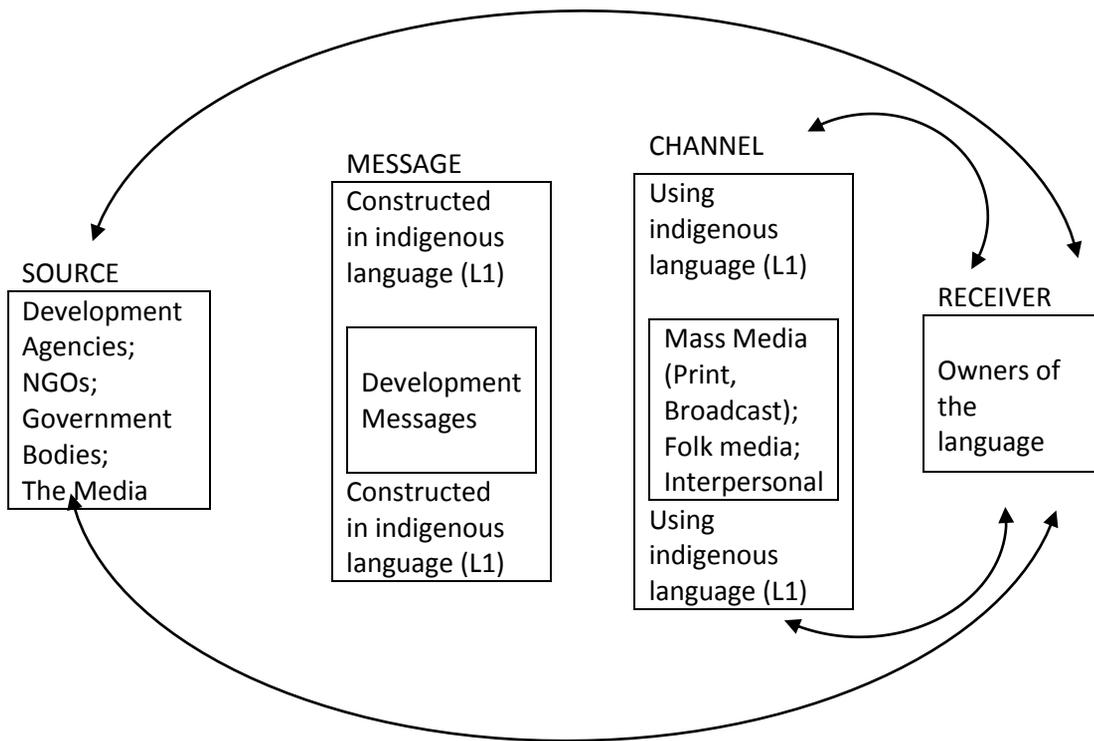
Introduction

The major plank of my research straddles Indigenous Language Media and Development Communication. I see a connection between language, culture, media and development. At the expiration of the dominant paradigm of development - when development was largely viewed as economic (Rogers, 1976a, 1976b) – the alternative paradigm that emerged was geared toward the popularisation of the development and design of campaign messages, that are supposed to be culturally sensitive, *language specific* (emphasis mine) and in tune with the social realities of the people of the developing world (Nwuneli, 1993).

It is no gainsaying that there is a symbiosis between communication and development. Therefore, the media through which the communication is done cannot but be important. Specifically, the

media that use indigenous languages are important for the purpose of information, mobilisation and continuity i.e. survival of the language and culture (Salawu 2004a, 2004b). The language in which a development message is disseminated is a very important aspect of the message treatment. It is posited that the indigenous language of any community is the best suited for the purpose of conveying any message, whatsoever, to the said community (Nwuneli, 1985: 203). There is ample literature in support of the fact that people would understand information better in their indigenous language than in a foreign language, no matter the length of time the (foreign) language has been with them (Ngugi, 1986: 116; Chieka, 1982; Eyoh, 1986: 111). There are also myriad of studies which have confirmed the effectiveness of mother-tongue or indigenous language (L1) for instructional purposes (McNamara, 1965; Klein, 1994; Okombo and Rubgumya, 1996; Lockett, 1994; Fafunwa et al, 1989). So, it does not matter the level of corrosion or corruption a native language has suffered as a result of the influence of a foreign language, the (native) language still remains the language that speaks in the idiom of the people. Without using the language of the people, development will only be communicated *at* the people; not *to* the people, and not *with* the people.

My Model of Indigenous Language for Development Communication (Salawu, 2001) graphically explains this.



Model of Indigenous Language for Development Communication (Salawu, 2001)

In the model, the Source is a change agent which could be a development agency, a non-governmental organisation, a government body or a media organisation. The Message is basically development-oriented and it is constructed in the indigenous language of the community for which the development programme is meant. The Receiver(s) are the owners of the language. They understand the development messages better in this language and they can express themselves better in it; thus, facilitating robust interaction between them and the Source.

This model actually derives its strength from the myriad of studies already carried out which, undoubtedly, confirmed the effectiveness of mother-tongue or indigenous language (L1) for instructional purposes. Similarly, in a study conducted by me (Salawu, 2001, 2004a), respondents (all of Yoruba origin) to copies of a questionnaire distributed adjudged Yoruba language newspapers more effective than the English language newspapers in the dissemination of development

messages. In other words they understand development messages in Yoruba language newspapers better than in English language newspapers.

The Regret

Regrettably, in most developing nations, communication in indigenous languages has been adversely affected due to the fact of their colonisation. Interestingly, the onslaught of globalisation on very many languages of the world, including many national languages in Europe, is real. Hourigan (2007: 254) notes that with the increasing dominance of global economic institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the secession of political power to supra-national structures such as the European Union, it is clear that the global political context through which we evaluate language status has changed. The process of minoritisation is now being experienced by other more powerful language groups. However, Africa is the worst of it.

Essentially, there is a symbiotic relationship between language, communication and media. The mass media in Africa is predominated by foreign and colonial languages. In Anglophone Africa, the English language media are the mainstream media. In the Francophone world of Africa, French is the language. The Lusophone Africa has Portuguese as the language of dominance. Ngugi (1986: 11, 1993) attests to this fact while narrating an experience he had in school after the 1952 declaration of state of emergency in Kenya. He wrote:

English became more than a language: it was the language and all the other had to bow before it in deference. Thus one of the most humiliating experiences was to be caught speaking Gikuyu in the vicinity of the school. The culprit was given corporal punishment – three to five strokes of the cane on bare buttocks - or was made to carry a mental plate around the neck with inscriptions such as I AM STUPID or I AM A DONKEY. Sometimes, the culprits were fined money they could hardly afford (Ngugi, 1986: 11).

The media of mass communication are also caught in this web as they disseminate mostly in the foreign language. By and large, the print media seem more culpable as the electronic media do better in the use of native languages. This is probably accounted for by virtue of it, being principally, an oral/aural medium and the point that its production is not too cumbersome. Being oral, the

indigenous language does not cost the broadcaster, who may not be able to write it, anything to broadcast in it. Also, being aural, it does not cost the listener, who may not be able to read the language, anything to listen to it (Salawu, 1993:2). But then, one still calls to question the authenticity of what passes as African languages on our airwaves today.

Meanwhile, there are newspapers being published in indigenous languages of Africa, but are critically suffering from low awareness and patronage. Ironically, Coker (1968) says *Iroyin Yoruba* (Nigeria), established in 1945, was the widest read weekly in the 40s. Gradually, however, the people who are supposed to be the readers became more and more anglicised, and, therefore, jettisoned the reading of the indigenous language newspapers. Salawu (2006a) notes that the story of indigenous language newspapers rising and dying is the same across most parts of Africa. In 1930, there were 19 registered African language newspapers in South Africa. They included the isiXhosa *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Inkundla ya Bantu*. Today, most of those newspapers are non-existent. As recently as 1990s, there used to be newspapers in fifteen Ghanaian languages; today, there is none (Salawu 2006b). In the colonial Democratic Republic of Congo, there were more than 150 periodicals in indigenous languages. Today, the story is quite different (Vinck 2006). In Cameroon, there is hardly a remarkable indigenous language newspaper (Tanjong and Muluh 2006). Of all the newspapers in the first to the fourth 'waves' of indigenous language press in Nigeria (Folarin and Mohammed 1996), only *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* (established in 1937) still exists till today. *Iroyin Yoruba*, established in 1945, existed till 1996 when it was finally laid to rest. Meanwhile, many other newspapers that had come after *Gaskiya* and *Iroyin Yoruba* had ceased to exist. Bloom (in Wigston 2007, 53–54) poses the question: Why are there no mainstream newspapers in ... South African languages such as isiXhosa and Sesotho? Madam Rector, distinguished members of the audience, I pose the same question, why are there no mainstream newspapers in Setswana and Tshivenda?

My Scholarship in African Language Media Studies

I have engaged African language media studies from two major approaches: critical political economy and cultural studies. Critical political economy is that branch of political economy that specifically deals with issues of culture, and therefore, the media. Because of the global changes dictated by the rapid growth of capitalism in the last three decades, both the state and private sector have increased their capacity for controlling public discourse. Language is central in this matter as it is through language that meaning is mediated. In the logic of critical political economy, defining what meanings are in circulation is an important part of one group exercising power over others. The structure of the global media is now such that the priority with regard to language is not so much to enhance diversity as to increase efficiency, as the media are seen primarily not as channels for citizens to participate meaningfully in their own governance, but as a means of manipulating public opinion, largely through advertising and generating income on a large scale. Efficiency and maximization of profit, therefore, are of paramount importance. The literature of critical political economy addresses the close relationship between those who wield political (and economic) power (Chibita, 2006: 249-250). Critical political economy gives us understanding about why the status of local language media is what it is compared to that of their European (for example, English and French) language counterparts in Africa.

With respect to the issue of language, cultural studies focuses on how and why different languages are used in more specific cultural contexts, in spite of the influence of macro forces (Ricento, 2000: 18). While acknowledging the influence of macro forces, Pennycook (2000) alerts us to the element of human agency, which is said to play a major role in the choices people make with regard to the use of the languages of wider communication, like English, as well as in the use of their own languages. Thus, Pennycook and his fellow postmodernist scholars do not merely see local peoples as victims of the hegemony of English, but they rather see them as actors with the freedom to choose what to make of English and of their indigenous languages (Barker, 2002; Grossberg, 1995;

Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Chibita, 2006: 252). In contrast to critical political economy, cultural studies explains to us why local language media still keep resisting total extinction despite all odds. It explains to us why peoples all over Africa still keep their languages in the public domain through the media despite the onslaught of the dominant European languages.

My 'crusading' research into indigenous language media in Africa started with my MSc dissertation (Salawu, 1993), followed by my PhD thesis (Salawu, 2001). In 2006, a book that I edited, entitled, *Indigenous Language Media in Africa*, was published. It is a seminal publication, being the first of its kind and having contributions from various regions of Africa including West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and Central Africa. In the preface to the book, I said:

This work stands as a pioneering effort in drawing academic attention to the indigenous language media in Africa. As it was noted at the start of the project, not much attention has been paid to the study of this section of our media. The few that have been done have been largely sporadic and uncoordinated. This work, therefore, stands as an attempt to coordinate scholarly efforts in this direction, document them and give focus to the disparate activities (Salawu, 2006a: xi).

A second edited volume will be out in November of this year. The book, entitled *Indigenous Language Media, Language Politics and Democracy in Africa*, is being published by Palgrave Macmillan and I have Dr. Monica Chibita of the Uganda Christian University as my co-editor in this latest effort. This second effort was probably inspired by one of the modules in the UNESCO's Reporting Africa project. Indigenous Language Media and Democracy in Africa is one of the modules in the four-syllabus Reporting Africa Project. The essence of this module is predicated on the idea that indigenous language media would foster the participation of the masses of the people – for whom the indigenous language is the everyday language – in the democratic process. The specific objective of the particular module is to experiment with culturally and linguistically innovative media forms which lend themselves to a more democratically engaged journalistic practice. The indigenous language media have played (Folarin and Mohammed, 1996; Olunlade, 2006; Kishindo, 2006; Ugangu, 2006; and CCSU, 1996) and continued to play a key role in Africa's democratisation. I had

the privilege of serving as the Project Manager by convening, on behalf of UNESCO, a consultative meeting with the South African potential centres of excellence in Journalism Education on the Implementation of the module. The meeting held in October 2010 at the East London campus of the University of Fort Hare. Unfortunately, both the UNESCO and the four (South African) universities designated as the potential centres of excellence could not take the programme forward.

Salawu (2013a) also reinforces the importance of indigenous language communication to democracy. The paper was a report of a special phone-in programme of the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS) during the general elections held in Nigeria in April 2007. The paper specifically considers the edition of this programme aired on April 14 in its coverage and monitoring of the conduct of the Oyo State gubernatorial (governorship) election held on that day. Realising that it cannot be everywhere and that people need be involved in the process of democracy, the Radio/Television station gave out some phone lines to which people could call to report their experiences of the conduct of the election in their localities. Participation of the people in this programme was possible because of the ubiquity, affordability and portability of radio sets and cell phones; and the proficiency of expression which the local language programme afforded them.

Meanwhile, I have reconstructed the history of indigenous African Language Media (Salawu, 2015a). *Iwe Irohin Yoruba Fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba*, founded in 1859, is generally known in Nigerian media studies as not just the first newspaper (in any language) in Nigeria but also the first African language newspaper (Coker, 1968; Omu, 1978; Akinfeleye, 1985; Duyile, 1987). I however discovered and argued that an isiXhosa newspaper, *Umshumayeli Wendaba*, which started in 1837, was the first indigenous African language newspaper. Two other Xhosa language newspapers predated *Iwe Irohin*. They were *Ikwezi* (1844) and *Isitunywa sennyanga* (1850). I concluded with a call for the need to reconstruct African media/press history so that facts are straightened out and disseminated for the knowledge of all. The South African media history scholarship may be responsible for this lack of awareness about the early local language newspapers in the country. This

however cannot be divorced from the impact of apartheid on the native history. A tendency towards reductionism can be suspected in the way the apartheid ideology relates to the black African history in South Africa. More robust scholarship is expected around the history of media in South Africa. It is also worrisome that South African media history is not systematically taught in the nation's media schools (Salawu, 2013b). Rather than the media history to be treated handsomely in the nation's journalism curricula, it is at best taught as a topic in amorphous media studies modules.

I have also looked into the management of the local language press in Africa (Salawu, 2015b, 2013b). I identify two basic models of managing the press. They are what I call the *Mainstream* model and the *Subsidiary* model. In the Mainstream model, we have local language newspapers that exist as sole or main products of a media organisation. Such newspaper organisations that exclusively deal in local language publications include World Information Agents, Ajoro, Marianhill Monastery, Mandla-Matla Publishing etc. World Information Agents publishes titles such as *Alaroye*, *Akede Agbaye*, *Alaroye Magasini*, and *Iri Aye*. Ajoro organisation publishes *Ajoro*, Marianhill Monastery used to publish *UmAfrika*, while Mandla-Matla Publishing publishes *Ilanga*.

The Subsidiary Model consists of local language newspapers that exist as subsidiary products of a foreign (but dominant) language media organisation. For instance, in Nigeria, the defunct Daily Sketch Press Ltd., publishers of English titles such as *Daily Sketch*, *Sunday Sketch* and *Evening Sketch* also published *Gboungboun*, a Yoruba newspaper. Concord Press of Nigeria, publishers of titles like *National Concord*, *Sunday Concord*, *Weekend Concord*, and *African Concord* used to publish local language titles such as *Isokan* (Yoruba), *Amana* (Hausa), and *Udoka* (Igbo). African Newspapers of Nigeria Plc, publishers of *Nigerian Tribune*, *Saturday Tribune*, *Sunday Tribune*, and *Sporting Tribune* also used to publish *Iroyin Yoruba*. Northern Literature Agency, publishers of *New Nigerian*, also publishes *Gaskiya*. The defunct Perskoporasie of South Africa (Perskor), publishers of titles in English and Afrikaans, also used to publish the now defunct *Imvo Zabantsundu*, an isiXhosa newspaper. This model seems to be the trend in South Africa now. In 2002, Independent Newspapers Limited,

publishers of *The Star*, *Daily News*, *Pretoria News*, and *Sunday Tribune* etc. established *Isolezwe*, the isiZulu daily newspaper. In November 2010, Avusa Media Group, publishers of *Sunday Times*, *Sowetan*, *Business Day*, *Daily Dispatch* and the *Herald* also introduced the isiZulu version of *Sunday Times*. *Um Afrika* is also now in the hands of Zico Investment-Witness Group partnership. Interestingly, Media24, another major media conglomerate in South Africa, owns 50 per cent of the Witness Group.

I also noted that the two model types can be differentiated along the following typology: *Focus/Attention/Priority* and *Resources (Sharing) – Men, Materials, Machine, and Marketing*. I submitted that the success of a local language newspaper is not dependent on a particular management model under which it falls. The fact of the matter is that the success of local language press in sub-Saharan Africa can only be explained by political economy which hinges on the largeness of a language, the power equation and resource allocation as well as the ability of a newspaper to pamper to the taste of the market composed largely of the urban youths and the middle-class.

Meanwhile, convinced of the importance of indigenous language media to information access and participation of the masses of people in the democratic and larger development process, I have advocated for the formal and systematic integration of the study of this sector of the media into African Journalism/Media curriculum (Salawu, 2008, 2007, forthcoming). Emphasising the point that every educational programme should be socially relevant and culturally sensitive, the paper argues that while it is not out of place for a journalist to be global in orientation and application, thereby equipping himself with proficiency in a very international language like English, it will, however, be out of place for him not to be able to communicate effectively with his very own people. The fact of the matter is that in most journalism curricula on the continent, premium attention has not been given to indigenous languages and the media using them. I proposed a module or course for the teaching of indigenous language media, the contents of which span language, history, contents, graphics and

designs, styles, management and problems, use for development, and production. This is in line with the growing calls for the dewesternisation of media studies.

Not all gloomy

The Bloom's question (cited in Wigston 2007, 53–54) which I referred to earlier in this lecture was actually framed thus: Why are there no mainstream newspapers in THE OTHER South African languages such as isiXhosa and Sesotho (*emphasis mine*)? This question was not asked in vacuum. It was posed against the background of the success of isiZulu newspapers like *Ilanga* which has existed for 139 years, *UmAfrika*, 105 years and *Isolezwe* which has been publishing since 2002 and remains the only daily local language newspaper in South Africa. Furthermore, the Avusa Media, in November 2010, started publishing the isiZulu version of the highly successful *Sunday Times*. As a digression, the interesting irony is that the first local language newspapers in South Africa were isiXhosa newspapers, namely *Umshumayeli Wendaba* (1837), *Ikwezi* (1844), *Isitunywa sennyanga* (1850), *Indaba* (1862), *Isigidimi samaXosa* (1870) and *Imvo Zabantsundu* (1884) (See Switzer and Switzer 1979; Johnson 1988; CCSU 1996; Opland 1996). Writings actually started in isiXhosa and Sesotho before other languages in Southern Africa (Gerard 1971).

There are some other outstanding success stories in African language newspaper publishing. In Yorubaland (Nigeria) today, for instance, there are still some Yoruba newspapers serving the people. Among them, *Alaroye* is particularly a phenomenal success. Unlike what exists in most African nations, indigenous language press – and to be specific Amharic press – is in the mainstream in Ethiopia. Amharic is the dominant language in the domains of media, education, government, commerce etc. *Bukedde*, a Luganda language newspaper in Uganda is the most widely circulated daily in Uganda (Wikipedia, 2015).

At this juncture, it is important to point out that Setswana also has history of newspaper publishing. A prominent Tswana personality, late Solomon Tshekisho Plaatje, popularly known as Sol Plaatje,

was a pioneer of Black Press in South Africa. His journalism endeavours started here in Mafikeng and he edited/published a number of Setswana/English newspapers such as *Koranta ea Becoana* (*Bechuana Gazette*), *Tsala ea Becoana* (*Bechuana Friend*) which was later changed to *Tsala ea Batho* (*Friend of the People*) and *Umteteli wa Bantu/Mouthpiece of the People*. I am already embarking on a study of the journalism of Sol Plaatje, particularly in relation to his Setswana publications. My Faculty – the Faculty of Human and Social and Sciences - has approved some funding for the purpose. In the same vein, I am in collaboration with the Kimberly-based Sol Plaatje Educational Trust and some colleagues on an extensive study of Sol Plaatje's journalistic, literary and political activities.

Madam Rector, distinguished ladies and gentleman, I have pleasure to inform you that in order to have a focused and robust study of indigenous language media, the declaration of intent to establish a research entity for the purpose has been approved by the Mafikeng Campus. Full proposal has now gone to the institutional research support commission (of the North-West University) for further processing. Certain colleagues from Communication, Setswana and English are involved in this endeavour. I should also report that the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) is already giving us green light to provide funding for our study of indigenous language media. Through all these efforts, we hope to produce Honours, Master's and Doctoral researches in the area.

Madam Rector, distinguished ladies and gentleman, another new focus of my research in indigenous language media and communication will revolve around digitalisation. Regrettably, many African languages are not present in the cyberspace as many Africans are still not into using their languages for socialising online. It is then of little wonder that researches into the use of African languages in the social and digital media are a rarity. This, for instance is in contradistinction to what obtains for minority languages in Europe which already enjoy a considerable number of researches into their use in the social media (Cru, 2015; Johnson and Callahan, 2013; Jones, Cunliffe and Honeycutt, 2013; Cunliffe, Morris and Prys, 2013; Wagner, 2013; Johnson, 2013; Dolowy-Rybinska, 2013; and Cunliffe

and ap Dyfrig, 2013). This, however, is without prejudice to the existence of Swahili (though not an indigenous African language) blogs in Tanzania.

Mabweazara (2014: 2) remarked that research into the impact of new digital technologies on African journalism is scarce. Here, Mabweazara is referring to the mainstream African journalism in the colonial languages of English, French and Portuguese. While it may be true that research into digital mainstream African journalism is scarce, it is non-existent for the media operating in indigenous African languages. One of the tasks I have thus assigned myself is to investigate African language press and their (in) ability to adopt digital technologies, as well as the impact of these technologies on their operations.

Rethinking Development: Ethical Paradigm of Development and the Correlate African Oral Ethics

Meanwhile, in my study of development communication, I have gone beyond looking at development at the social level. Rather, I have come up with an Ethical Paradigm of Development which I, otherwise, call Foundational Paradigm of Development (Salawu, 2004c). Significantly, my postulation for the diffusion of the ideals of this development praxis is the adoption of the African oral ethics, which are found in the continent's folklores (Salawu, 2006c, 2006d, 2008, 2012, 2015c). This paradigm takes a perspective of development that is akin to Civilisation, which is an advanced and organised state of human social development. This state of human development can only be made possible by Civilisation, which is the cultivation of mind for the higher ideals of society. The equation is: **Civilisation = Civilisation**. Contending that it is when we develop the mind and the man that we can talk of development in every sphere of the society, the paradigm believes that Civilisation is the foundation for meaningful development in Africa.

Frank Okwu Ugboajah was a major proponent of the “culturalist” paradigm (Bourgault, 1995: 251) for development which argues in favour of harnessing traditional culture in the service of development. For the purpose of spreading (development) information, Ugboajah (1985: 167 -175)

pointed out that songs, dance, dramas, drumming, storytelling, and proverbs are useful. Essentially, he advocated for traditional communication processes and the social setting in which such communication takes place. This type of communication is what Ugboajah (1985, 1987) referred to as Oramedia. Oramedia which is interchangeable with folk media, traditional media or oral arts (Salawu, 2006c) are, according to Ugboajah (1985), grounded on indigenous culture produced and consumed by members of a group. They reinforce the values of the group. These oral arts or oramedia are also oral ethics because they speak ethics which is necessary to bring about the much needed Civilisation.

This is my story, this is my song

Madam Rector, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my story is that language is the most characteristic element of a people's culture. Language is the repository of culture. My song is that if indigenous languages and our communities must survive and grow, the media, especially, the print media must be encouraged to use them. Print media aid literacy; therefore, the media operating in these languages must be encouraged for it is with these languages that our people can be effectively informed for development purposes.

In order to promote indigenous languages recognised by the South African Constitution as historically diminished in use and status, the South African government is according a growing importance to the learning of these languages. Prah (2003) raised a concern that the devaluation of African languages would result in the devaluation of much of the indigenous knowledge contained in those languages. This must also be part of the concern of the South African Ministry of Education when, on 27 November 2003, it set up a ministerial committee to advise on the development of African (indigenous) languages as mediums of instruction in higher education. The report noted that the "Minister (of Education) called to mind the challenge facing higher education to ensure the simultaneous development of a multilingual environment in which all South African languages would be developed to their full capacity while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of

instruction did not form a barrier to access and success” (DOE, 2003: 3). Happily, in this regard, there are changes happening in some South African universities. The University of KwaZulu-Natal has made isiZulu a compulsory first-year subject. At Rhodes University, journalism students must pass an isiXhosa for journalism course at either mother tongue or second language level (Kaschulla, 2015).

My main concern here has to do with the role that the media can play in supporting a language and its culture. This is also tied to development as the right path to real development is for one to appreciate one’s own cultural heritage (Aligwekwe, 1986: 215). It is important to say that supporting and promoting African language media by directing academic focus on them has a significant role to play in the maintenance of the African languages. The governments of Africa, private initiatives, and especially the media, have an important role to play in this. The media, in turn, will be helped in this bid, if amongst other measures, our journalism and communication training institutions can through their curriculum designs, pay serious attention to our indigenous languages and the indigenous language media.

Acknowledgements

All glory must be to the Lord who has made the delivery of this lecture possible and successful. I give honour and adoration to Him.

I also want to appreciate the people who brought me into this world. Posthumously, I thank my late father, Pa Salawu Adigun Owolabi. *Baba Ire* (Good father), as you are fondly called in the neighbourhood, your words of encouragement have been tonic to me. You once told me in my period of despondency that *ninu pakapaka l’alabahun ti n yo’ri* (meaning, the tortoise will always survive even in the most difficult of circumstances). Baba (as we your children used to call you), to the glory of God, I am triumphing despite challenges.

I have two mothers – one who gave birth to me and the other who nurtured me to growth – Falilat Aduke and Sulat Adunni. I say thank you to both of you for your support.

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