

# **Multilinguality of Farm Broadcast and Agricultural Information Access in Nigeria**

OLADIMEJI IDOWU OLADELE

*University of Ibadan, Nigeria*

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the effect of the multilingual farm broadcast on the access to agricultural information in Nigeria. Farm broadcast programmes on radio and television were compiled and the language of presentation examined for each of the programme. The diversity of the languages in Nigeria presupposes that for farmers to have access to agricultural information through the radio and television, the language of presentation has to be based on that of the listeners. The study recommends that information sources to farmers should explore multilingual sources to ensure farmers' access to agricultural information.

*Keywords: Multilinguality, agricultural information access, Nigeria, farm broadcast*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, the world rapidly grows to be an informative community with the support of the internet. It is recently expected that there are more than thousands of gigabytes of information and more than hundreds of thousands online communities spreading all over the internet. Since the language is the foremost obstacle for people to access the content of such information, it is considered as the barrier for information access. Knowledge and information are important factors for accelerating agricultural development by increasing agricultural production and improving marketing and distribution. ICTs can enhance the integration and efficiency of agricultural systems by opening new communication pathways and reducing transaction costs, given greater accessibility of information on prices, transportation and production technologies.

The problem of multilingual access to information resources can be afterward seen as an extension of the general information-retrieval problems and it is becoming increasingly relevant. English has remained uncontested in its dominance but attention must be now given to other languages and subsequently to development of tools and methodologies to enable this. Consequently, the urgent mission is to demolish the language barrier to broaden information access into multilingual. By combining information retrieval with language translation, the Multilingual Information Access System provides a way for monolingual users to gain access to information in other languages by using their own native language.

This technique has been explored in many countries of Asia such as Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, China and Indonesia with the attendant transformation of the agriculture and improvement in the economy. This is due to the fact that data and information produced locally are normally displayed in native language. To be useful therefore they also have to be recorded and indexed in local language. However, each language is different in alphabet characteristic and structure. Some languages are easy to process by computer.

AGROVOC is the most comprehensive, multilingual thesaurus for indexing data in agricultural information system that has been developed and maintained by the network of cooperation from countries over the world and the only one with an international updating mechanism which will ensure its continuous development (Kawtrakul, et al. 2004). At the beginning AGROVOC was available in three languages, English, French, and Spanish. Later it has been developed to contain other languages. This has been done either by FAO or the owner country with the support from FAO. Currently AGROVOC on the web can be displayed in 7 languages, namely English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Czech and Chinese at the FAO website.

Basically, the information required in agricultural sector can be grouped into technical and business information. The technical information is information related with cropping practices and the related activities, including agro-environment analysis, land preparation, nursery, irrigation and fertilization, crop protection, harvesting, post harvest handling and product processing. Business information is information related with economical aspect of agricultural sector, including capital, finance, and market information. All of that information theoretically can be produced and used by the related elements in the whole agricultural system so that it forms an information network. It involve government as the policy makers, experts as researchers and knowledge sources, extension workers as farmers' consultants, industrial sectors and businessman as the suppliers of production factors, financial institutions and investors as source of capital, business practitioners and distributors as market mediators, and farmer groups, farmer cooperatives or individual farmers as agricultural produce producers.

As the agricultural macro-production system in Nigeria is set to explore the internet which offers great opportunities for addressing the information needs of agricultural development and food security, there is need to overcome the evident limitations for finding and retrieving relevant information using existing internet tools and technologies through multilingualism. With the ICT revolution, several national and multinational agencies as well as local and international Non governmental agencies have embarked on interventions in terms of the provision of ICT facilities and infrastructure. In Nigeria, it may be interesting to know that VSAT and other Satellite equipment are already installed in some rural communities and large agricultural markets. These are to link producers, input and produce marketers worldwide. The effect of the infrastructure and the equipment will be greatly limited due to language barriers since majority who are English illiterate will be barred.

With the poor literacy level of farmers and low level of education among agricultural extension agents, the use of multilingual to provide agricultural information in Nigerian languages will maximise the exploration of the full potential of the information services. Translation of specialised information into many languages is necessary notable in agriculture because it is often crucial for the final end users who do not master the source language due to the low literacy level of farmers in Nigerian situation.

Prah (2001) draws a crucial connection between language culture and development by stating that in Africa, the cultural base of mass society which is in reality premised on African languages provides the only credible condition for the development of a society which involves the masses and uplifts them socio-culturally and economically from where they are on the basis of what they have. Egbokhare, *et al.* (2001) noted that over 400 languages in Nigeria can be reduced to less than 100 mutual intelligibility clusters and the proportion of those who speak 10 major and medium languages either as first or second languages would cover close to 90 percent of the population. Egbokhare (2004) reported the nature and types of language barriers to include illiteracy, linguistic diversity, linguistic deficit and technology deficit.

The mandate of disseminating agricultural information in Nigerian rests with National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service (NAERLS), and the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs). The evolution of NAERLS was through five major stages namely: 1920 - 62 - Agricultural Research and Advisory Services, 1963 - 68 - Research Liaison Services 1969 - 75 - Extension Research Liaison Services, 1976 - 86 - Agricultural Extension Research Liaison Service, 1987 - present - National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service (NAERLS). The mandate of the NAERLS is to co-ordinate the overall planning and development of extension liaison service throughout the country, collaborate with research institutes, and co-ordinate national training activities, conferences and workshops, conduct research on technology transfer and adoption. Zonal offices are located throughout the country depending on the agro-ecological division of the country; they include Southwest, Southeast, Northwest, Northeast and Middle Belt.

The Agricultural Development Project (ADP) approach began as a World Bank assisted integrated rural development package, with in the establishment of three pilot/enclave ADPs in Funtua, (Kaduna state) Gombe (Bauchi state) and Gussau (Sokoto state) in 1975. The ADP strategy was based on the premise that a combination of inter-related factors comprising the right technology, effective extension, access to physical production enhancing inputs, adequate market and other infrastructural facilities are essential to get agriculture moving (FACU, 1986). The core elements of the ADP include: An input delivery and credit supply system through a network of farm service; A massive rural feeder road network, A revitalized intensive and systematic extension training programme backed by synchronized input supply, credit and adaptive research services; and A solid project management together with built in project monitoring and evaluation (Patel, 1983). The success recorded by the pilot ADPs led the Federal

government to establish six more enclaves at Ayangba, Lafia, Bida, Ilorin, Ekiti-Akoko and Oyo North between 1979 and 1982. The success of the PADP encouraged the creation of the nation-wide Agricultural Development Project (ADP). While the previous agricultural development scheme involved extension services within the frame of operations of the state Ministries of Agriculture, the ADPs operated as a separate organisation structure. The World Bank, the Federal Government and the state government tri-partitely funded the ADP. The Federal Agricultural Co-ordinating Unit (FACU) co-ordinates the project. The ADP, according to Idachaba (1988), constitutes the single largest agency charged with the responsibilities of agricultural extension in Nigeria. Nasko (1989) reported that the programme had demonstrated a close and positive correlation between the development of infrastructures, agricultural credit and extension services from research technical back up through on-farm adaptive research trials.

Within the socio-cultural milieu of Nigerian farmers, several studies have reported that the most important sources of information to farmers in the decreasing order of importance are extension agents, radio, and neighbour/relatives. Oladele (2005) reported farmers' perspective on factors that will enhance agent's acceptability if they were to be advised on farming. Majority of the farmers considered same language with agent as the most critical as they will understand the agents first hand rather than through an interpreter. The multilinguality of a farm broadcast is the number of languages that are used in the presentation of the programme irrespective of the location. The a-priori expectation is that a multilingual farm broadcast covers the prevalent location language and the other languages of those involved in farming activities within the coverage of the broadcast. This is based on the fact that extension messages should reach all farmers irrespective of their mother tongue or ethnic language. Similarly the farming communities are made up of different ethnic groups with different languages who might not have stayed long enough to have sufficient understanding of the location language. It is therefore important to examine the multilinguality of farm broadcast if the purpose of increasing agricultural information access will be achieved.

Table 1 presents the farm broadcast programmes on radio and television in Nigeria. The use of local languages and English for the programmes were examined. The dominance of English language is not so prominent in the farm broadcast programmes. However there is need for improvement and the application of the multilingualism principle to other information sources to farmers in Nigeria. The consideration here is the languages used for the presentation of the farm broadcast and not the content of the farm broadcast. The content of farm broadcast are primarily information needed by farmers in each of the area of coverage of the broadcast for different months of the year. The broadcast cover several farming activities on different farming enterprises such as fishing, livestock, agro-forestry, agro-processing, crop production among others.

**Table 1.** Farm broadcast programmes in Nigeria 1995-2001.

States	Programme Titles <sup>+</sup> *	Dominant location language	Language of presentation
Abia	Radio farmer	Igbo	English
Adamawa	<b>Gona Manomi, Noma T Arziki<sup>*</sup>, No ma yanke talauci</b>	Adamawa Fulfulde	<b>Hausa, Adamawa Fulfulde</b>
Akwa-Ibom	The farmer <sup>*</sup> , <b>Otoiwon</b>	Efik, Anang, Ibiobio	English, Efik
Anambra	<b>Oge Ndi Olu Ubi, Oge ndi Oluugbo<sup>*</sup></b>	Igbo	<b>Igbo</b>
Bauchi	<b>Noma Tushin Arziki<sup>*</sup>, Mukoma Gona<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>
Bayelsa	Farming on radio, Farmers' hour	Ijaw	English
Benue	Farming world wide, <b>Mdoo u sule, Ehio-ohe</b>	Tiv, Idoma, Utonkpo	English, Tiv
Borno	<b>Noma Tushin Arziki</b>	Fulfulde, Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>
Cross Rivers	Fellow farmers, Telefarmer <sup>*</sup>	Efik, Anang, Ibiobio	English
Delta	Country farmer, Green fingers <sup>*</sup>	Itsekri, Isoko, Urohbo, Ijaw	English
Edo	Better farming, Farming hints <sup>*</sup>	Edo	English
Ekiti	<b>Agbeloba/ AgbeIwoyi, Lahere<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba	<b>Yoruba</b>
Enugu	Radio farmer, Farming half hour <sup>*</sup>	Igbo	English
Gombe	<b>Noma da kiwo, Kasa mai albarka<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>
Imo	<b>Onye oru ubi, Onye Oruugbo<sup>*</sup>, Radio farmer, Ka anyi yocha oru ubi, Telefarmer<sup>*</sup></b>	Igbo	<b>Igbo , English</b>
Jigawa	<b>Jagorar manoma</b>	Fulfulde	<b>Hausa</b>
Kaduna	<b>Ku saurara manoma</b>	Hausa	
Kano	<b>Harama manoma, Ina manoma, Mukoma gona<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa, Fulfulde	<b>Hausa</b>
Katsina	<b>Kartau sarkin Noma, Na Dure<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>
Kebbi	<b>Abarka na cikin kasa, Mukoma gona, Don manoma<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa, Fulfulde	<b>Hausa</b>
Kogi	Farmers' forum, Back to land <sup>*</sup>	Igala, Ebira, Okun, Basa	English
Kwara	<b>Agbelere, Farmers forum, You and your farm<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba, Baruti	<b>Yoruba, English</b>
Lagos	<b>Boluyo</b>	Yoruba, Egun	<b>Yoruba</b>
Nasarawa	<b>Noma yanke talauchi<sup>*</sup></b>	Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>
Niger	<b>Enu Do bare, Nadki T, Coniki<sup>*</sup></b>	Nupe, Hausa	<b>Nupe, Hausa</b>
Ogun	<b>Agbe afokosoro, Agbelere<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba, Egun	<b>Yoruba</b>
Ondo	<b>Ise Agbe, Boluyo, Olalagbe<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba	<b>Yoruba</b>
Osun	<b>Aye Agbe, Agbe Ode oni<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba	<b>Yoruba</b>
Oyo	<b>Agbe loba<sup>*</sup></b>	Yoruba	<b>Yoruba</b>
Plateau	<b>Donmanoma, Noma jari<sup>*</sup>, Noma tushin Arziki</b>	Kanuri, Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>

<b>Rivers</b>	Farmer*	Ijaw, Calabari	English
<b>Sokoto</b>	<b>Filin Sokoto project, Kai da gonanka*</b>	Hausa, Fulani	<b>Hausa, Fulbe</b>
<b>Yobe</b>	<b>Zauren manoma*, Kuloro waltiyе</b>	Tiv, Nupe, Kanuri, Hausa	<b>Hausa, Fulbe</b>
<b>Zamfara</b>	<b>Filin Zamfara project</b>	Hausa	<b>Hausa</b>

+ Programmes in local languages of the area are bold faced

\* Television programmes, where a single programme is asterisked implies the same programme for radio and television.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has described that mass media information dissemination to farmers is primarily through radio and television in Nigeria. These are traditional media sources that are in use to reach farmers due to poor communication infrastructural facilities within the country. Farm broadcast which covers various aspects of agricultural production activities at different times of the year should therefore be more accessible to the farmer by removing the language barriers through multilingual presentation.

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**About the author:** Dr Oladele O.I. is a lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development University of Ibadan Nigeria. His research interest includes the factors that influences the dissemination of appropriate technology to farmers among which is the language of dissemination. He has researched into several factors affecting the development, dissemination and organizational setting of research and extension agencies with a view of forging an effective linkage among researchers, extension agents and farmers.