

THE LANGUAGE FACTOR IN INFORMATION DISSEMINATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Libraries and information centres are yet to fully prioritize the language factor as an effective communication tool in their quest to ensure effective information dissemination. This discourse critically examines the language factor in information dissemination. It also analyzes the concept of development and discusses the cardinal role of information dissemination in societal development. It also highlights the information tools and exposes the areas that information dissemination can engender development such as information literacy, user education and political participation/awareness outreach. It reveals how the language factor narrative has affects information dissemination and concludes that effective information dissemination depends on adequate communication between the information professional and the audience. It has been recommended among others, that librarians and other information professionals should take into consideration the language factor in information dissemination process.

Keywords: Language factor, Information dissemination, Information professionals, Librarians, Development

INTRODUCTION

Development is a universal expectation. The need for individuals, institutions, government of all levels to remain functional and relevant has continually placed development at the centre of discourse across the globe. Development can be described as an improvement geared towards becoming better. Oye (2019) views it as the “process of bringing about fundamental and substantial changes in the society”. However, the concept of development is often discussed simultaneously with information dissemination. This is because access to information can foster development of a people or society (White, 2012). While information may be viewed as a resource which when utilized effectively becomes knowledge which is a tool for development, information dissemination is described as an information service designed to educate and inform focused groups of users on social, economic and educational issues. These are aimed at improving their living condition. Information dissemination in communities may include organizing programs to raise awareness about education, health and

politics. It also involves the use of different media whether online or offline by librarians and other information experts to effectively deliver information packages to a target audience. Thus, information dissemination as such constitutes an important and critical factor for the success of education, health literacy, political awareness and other learning programs which are essential in the development of the society.

Furthermore, it must be noted that despite the critical role information dissemination plays in facilitating the development of a people, institutions and the society at large, the effectiveness of information dissemination process may depend on the language. By inference, the success of information dissemination activity is language dependent. This may have informed Olooye's (2013) opinion that language is a catalyst in information dissemination as well as an important factor of national development. By implication, using the language that is clear and comprehensible to potential users of information can contribute to effective information dissemination. This brings to the fore the language factor referred to, in this study, as effective communication in information dissemination process.

Language is cardinal to a people's understanding of the world they live in. As described by Zhang, (2015), languages are collective products of social interaction and essential instruments through which human beings constitute and articulate their world effectively. Mkwinda-Nyasulu (2014) avers that language is so crucial such that it is impossible to talk of development in a society without language and where there is no language there is no development. However, it must be noted that language does not naturally translate to development but its effective use for its primary purpose which is communication. Buttressing this, Mkwinda-Nyasulu, (2014) opines that the primary purpose of language is communication and effective communication is important for development and this is manifested through language. By implication, language must be used for effective communication to facilitate development in the society. Communicating effectively is key for librarians and other information disseminators who are often at the forefront of information dissemination process. This is because language when not properly communicated can mar information dissemination. Most communities have their dialect which remains the main means of communication and social interaction. For information dissemination process to achieve the desired outcome, disseminators must be aware of the information needs of the audience and the audience need to understand what role they are to play in making information dissemination process effective. In doing this, information to be disseminated should be packaged in the language mostly spoken and used as a means of communication by the people.

Librarians and other information facilitators are therefore expected to ensure effective communication by packaging information resources with the language that is spoken and used by the audience as a means of communication. This is necessary for information dissemination activities in any chosen community to meet its set goals towards societal development. These set goals may include but not limited to information literacy advocacies, education, health literacy and political awareness. It is imperative therefore for library and information centres to consider the language factor in disseminating information by ensuring and advocating that information are packaged such that it is understood

and used effectively by the target users. This discourse is significant as it will explore information dissemination tools needed for development as well as examine the influence of the language factor in information dissemination for development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Undoubtedly, libraries and information centres across the globe play a critical role in educating the masses and creating awareness about pressing issues that affect the development of the society. However, despite efforts and ceaseless discussions about the prospects for achieving remarkable development in the society, it is observed that the language factor in libraries and information disseminating institutions has not been accorded the desired attention (Ndlovu,2015). Literature has revealed that so much is yet to be done as regards the need to incorporate indigenous languages in information dissemination process by librarians, researchers and other information professionals as most information dissemination efforts are done in English, French and other popular languages in the world. This has eventuated in inadequate use of information by the minority language speakers, particularly in rural communities. Thus, this paper aims to to establish the language factor in information dissemination and how it affects development.

THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT

Development, as a concept, is all encompassing. It embraces quality life, access to opportunities, information literacy, political participation inter alia. As described by Lawal and Tobi (2006), development involves not only capital accumulation and economic growth but as well as the condition in which a society has highly informed citizens and the income inequality among them is greatly reduced. Development whether personal or societal, is about people. Dhawan (2015) buttressed this by suggesting that a genuine step towards the development of the society should begin with empowering individuals, the under-privileged and economically weaker sections of the society. A society can be said to be towing the path of development when there are, among others, an improved quality in education which eventuates in greater number of children enrolled in schools, improved quality of health care resulting in the decrease of infant mortality and improved in information infrastructure resulting in wider access to information as well as high employment opportunities for the teeming youth population. Afujo (2013) observes that unemployment and its negative effect such as poverty can be reduced in the society when the citizens are able to access new knowledge and derive fulfilment in their career. The result of this will be increased in income leading to a healthy thriving and survival in such society.

Thus, development is connected to how people think and perceive the world around them and this view is usually embedded in language of the people (Ca et al, 2016). The scholar further argues that development is crucial in every society; therefore, it should be framed within the contexts of the people's culture that will take into consideration the language, ideas and knowledge of the people. In line with this, Banga and Suri (2015) averred that, communicating development plans effectively with the target group in their native language is one of the first step to induce co-operation and sustainable

relationships which both precede development. This is an indication that the language factor and information dissemination are important variables that can affect development; hence require special consideration by information professionals and other development workers across the globe.

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Information dissemination is one of the most credible ways to ensure access and use of information. Information dissemination could be referred to as a proactive activity geared towards individual or societal development. Its proactive nature stems from the fact it often begins with planning which includes identifying the information needs of the target group. Dhawan (2015) notes that information dissemination involves systematic planning, collection, organisation, and storage of information for its delivery to the target audience using different media and communication means. Information dissemination is development-driven as it is usually aimed at improving the living condition of a target group. The information society thrives on information. Any society that must develop must prioritize access to information and free flow of information among citizens. Ezeala (2017) avers that access to timely and relevant information is a fundamental human right that can breach the cycle of poverty and support societal development. Information dissemination, when carried out by librarians and other experts trained for the purpose, ensures informed citizens, which is vital to the functioning and development of the society. Thus, there are many areas information dissemination helps in the societal development. They include Information literacy, education and political participation, among others.

❖ Information Literacy:

The crux of information literacy studies according to Ofebende (2019) lies in the understanding of the knowledge of information access tools, sources of information, information search strategies, evaluation and using information effectively. The present society is filled with many people who find it difficult to search and retrieve information from a wide range of sources for self-development. Therefore, Adeleke and Emeahara (2016) advised that as the volumes of information are constantly increasing, search skills are required in order to gain access to the information that is available. Librarians and information professionals are to engage in information dissemination strategies such as creating information search modules taking into consideration the language of the targeted audience, training students on search skills and ensure that they train others especially in the communities as well as engage in community sensitization on the importance of information for development. This is necessary to ensure that people become independent and active information users which are essential for societal development.

USER EDUCATION

Qualitative education in any nation is not a luxury, but an imperative to the development of such a nation (Shonhe,2017). The role of libraries, especially the public libraries are crucial in facilitating education of people in rural communities. Public libraries are conferred with the peoples' university status due to their mandate of acquiring and disseminating information to curb illiteracy and fostering

independent study, among users. Librarians and other information facilitators in-charge of public libraries are expected to raise the consciousness for education in the rural communities through mobilization of members of rural communities and dissemination of information. Recruiting and training people who will act as interpreters in a situation where the information professionals could not speak the local language of the people can also foster effective information dissemination.

❖ **Political Awareness and Participation**

Awareness of how politics can catalyze development precedes political participation. Many in the rural communities have not been exposed to evidence which irrefutably demonstrates the contribution of politics to development. This has resulted in a somewhat lack of interest in political matters unless there is immediate monetary or material rewards to that effect. Therefore, disseminating information on the need to support credible candidates during elections in the rural communities can foster political participation. It is believed that if people understand that electing competent leaders has the potential of ameliorating most of their challenges, they will show more interest and contribute their quota to societal development through rational political participation.

TOOLS FOR INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

❖ **Internet and ICTs**

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have permeated virtually all aspect of the modern society including health care, information literacy, education, information retrieval and dissemination (Boutin,2013). Information professionals are expected to leverage ICTs to design multi-media contents such as videos, images and audio files; using power points and screen projectors convey the right messages to the target group or audience. In disseminating information, for example, ICTs devices such as CD-ROMs are found useful for packaging and disseminating information for rural development by information professionals. CD-ROM as well as the internet remain important tools for information dissemination that libraries and information centres cannot afford to ignore.

❖ **Social Media**

Information professionals also make use of the social platforms for information dissemination. As observed by Shonhe (2017), social networks are more appropriate for use on marketing information and delivering personalized information resources to groups of people or individuals through notifications. Creating social media accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn or using WhatsApp and other web applications to facilitate widespread access to information should be prioritized by information professionals. Social media can possibly help developing countries tackle numerous issues such as health, social and economic problems. This can be possible if both government and the public have instant access to information that can influence decision making. It is important that information workers adopt social media to enable them to efficiently and effectively disseminate information.

❖ Libraries

Libraries play important roles in the development of the society. Libraries that drive access to knowledge according to (Shonhe,2017) will accelerate economic development, build stronger relationships between information facilitators and the community at large. Libraries can adopt and use mobile telephony systems to disseminate information in the form of text messages and multimedia content. Information facilitators can harness the advantages of mobile technology to create, package and disseminate information for users. Library websites are also crucial for information dissemination. They can be used by librarians for marketing purposes and announcing news or upcoming events to the target audience. The library may also create and own a mailing list, which is a common method of information dissemination, which will allow the librarian or any information facilitator to send personalized messages and receive feedback from target audience. There is need to assemble for use of the rural communities, information centres to facilitate access, retrieval and use of information as it is believed that such a rural development project will bring about visible development in the community where it is established.

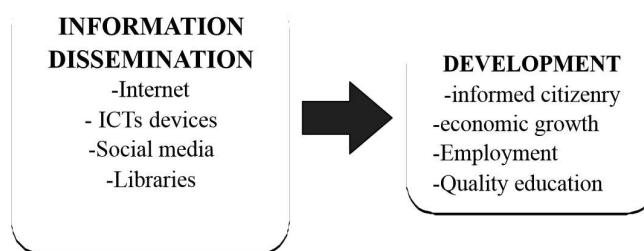


Figure 1. Shows the relationship between information dissemination and development

THE LANGUAGE FACTOR AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Language factor such as effective communication and information dissemination are key players in the development of societies. As noted by Ifukor (2013), effective communication holds apparent influence in the success of information dissemination activities. The scholar stressed that using the language that is understood encourages audience participation rather than restricts interaction to the key players which is cardinal to successful information dissemination process. This implies that using a language most familiar to the target group by a librarian or any other information facilitator is a pre-requisite to understanding information needs, identifying the right sources for information, evaluating and effectively using information from a wide range of sources which are crucial for effective information dissemination process.

Olatumile and Tunde-Awe (2019) conducted a study to determine if there is any difference in the use of mother tongue and English language when disseminating information among rural dwellers. The population comprised of 40 inhabitants of Akungba-Akoko in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study adopted the quasi-experimental method and the instrument used was a self-constructed test. It was revealed in the study that most of the participants that got the information in English Language assimilated with an average performance of 60% while the findings of participants that got the information in Yoruba

showed that none had rating of less than 60%. These results showed that majority of the participants got information in Yoruba Language than those that got information in English Language. These findings were expected considering the fact the common language of expression in Akungba-Akoko in Nigeria is Yoruba. The reason for this difference in assimilation is that the messages were packaged in the language that most people did not understand- English language. This corroborates the claim by Dhawan (2015) that the information dissemination programs and projects, planned for the benefit of any community or target, cannot achieve tangible outcomes unless the media and the language used for communication of contents are meaningful to the audience. The implication of this is that dissemination of information is better delivered using the language that is most familiar to the target group. There is an urgent need for information professional, especially librarians to ensure that any section of the society is not marginalized in terms of access to information due to language barriers. This is imperative as studies have shown that language factor can mar development when not given special attention by development workers.

THE LANGUAGE FACTOR AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

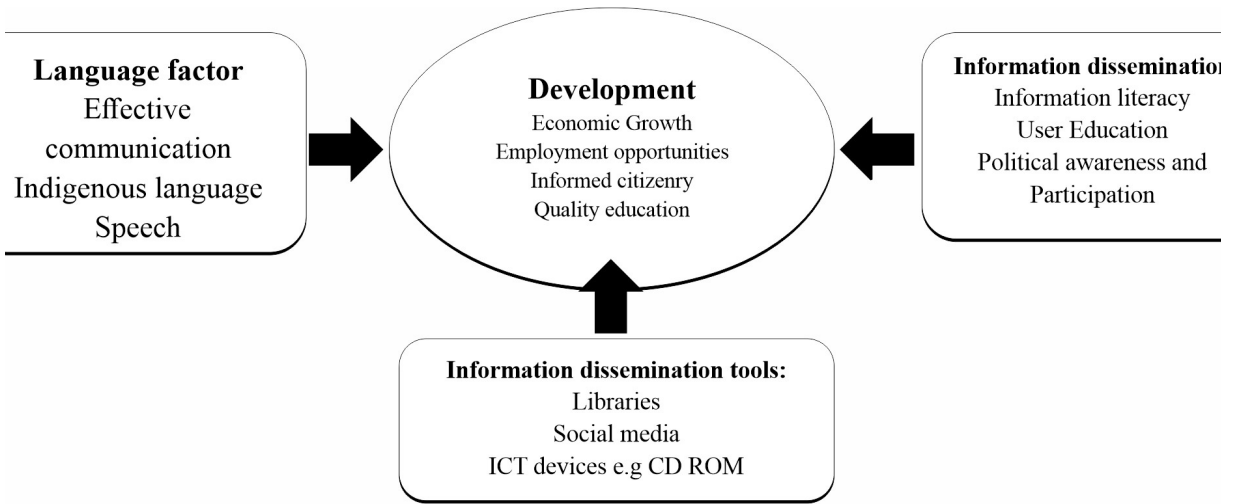
Undoubtedly, the influence of language especially in the 21st century cuts across all disciplines and subjects including information dissemination and development. Literature have revealed that the language factor as it borders on societal development has, over the years, received special attention by policy makers and linguists. Watson as cited in Ca et al (2016) argues that although development discourse has over the years been championed by policymakers, economists as well as policy analysts and political scientists, the subject is of paramount importance to interdisciplinary scholars such as librarians and other information disseminators. This is to say that language is at the centre of information dissemination for development. Ca et al (2016) captures it that language allows information professionals to communicate with potential users of information, describing ideas, making requests and solving their problems by providing exact and relevant information to meet their information needs.

However, studies have indicated that while information dissemination is a highly desired phenomenon as far as societal development is concerned, language factor such as communication, among other variables, can constitute a challenge. According to Asemota (2015), the act of communication in information dissemination process is not basically about exchange of linguistic messages, but for the messages to be socially meaningful to the participants in the verbal exchange. Emphasizing the importance of language in information dissemination, Olaoye (2013) opines that to effectively use information, a user will require to understand the language being used in passing information across. This lays credence to the position of Anyagwa (2019) who noted that many countries in post-independence Africa have initiated various development activities including information literacy packages and dissemination strategies with little or no impact. Anyagwa attributed this situation to the fact that most of these development plans are often conceived, designed and implemented in the language of the country's colonial heritage rather the local or indigenous languages of the people. Thus,

this has stifled, in no small measure, the developmental outcomes and objectives which informed the initiatives. Avila and Vining (2020) advised that library and its personnel need to develop the capacity to communicate effectively to be able to convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse users and groups. The duo advocated linguistic competence among librarians and information professionals to curb the issues posed by language factors that have grossly affected information dissemination and by extension, the development of local communities across the globe.

More so, one way to minimize the negative effect of language factor on societal development is for information professionals or development workers to package information resources in the language that is understood by the target audience. Ball as cited in Nwammuo and Salawu (2018) recommends indigenous languages and noted that this is necessary for communication for development as such languages transmit and enhance a rich way of understanding and making meaning out of the experiences of a people. They added that Indigenous languages help preserve and protect indigenous people, their cultures and their identities as well as aid the formation of social belongingness between and among indigenous communities which are all enablers of development. By inference, it is crucial for communication with members of a community or target group to be done in the language that they understand as the reverse may not yield the desired results and consequently, may hinder development. Thus, a society that wants to develop should prioritize information access and free flow of information by adopting simple and comprehensible means in communicating information for development. The quest for the development of the society should always have the need for adequate dissemination of information at the central position as information as proven to be a great catalyst for development.

The studies reviewed have revealed the nexus between language factor and information dissemination. This nexus is not only important but must be harnessed for the development of the society. There must be effective communication between the information professional and the audience (community) for information needs of the target group to be determined. A situation where information professional could not speak the most common language of the target group, it means that identifying the information needs of community will be difficult. Here, engaging an interpreter is recommended for effective communication. It is important that librarians and other professionals who are often at the forefront of information dissemination activities ensure that the issues of language factor stemming from ineffective communication are resolved. It is incumbent on information professionals to devise information dissemination strategies to bring information closer to the people. This could begin with studying the users in order to discover and use the best acceptable language to disseminate information to their audience (Ifukor,2013). It may equally involve establishing community information centres and ensure that services are manned by trained information facilitators. Information organizations should prevail on the government to fund public libraries in the communities and new ones established. The librarians in-charge of public libraries need to work collaboratively with the existing development workers such as the health workers, agricultural extension workers and adult education workers to create information-rich environment for development.



(Fig.2.) **Self-developed Information Dissemination for Development Model**

CONCLUSION

Libraries engage in the function of disseminating information. A society cannot successfully develop without adequate dissemination and use of information. This fact confers a special status on libraries and makes them assume a central position in the development of the society. Development which is described in this work as a universal expectation is tied to effective dissemination of information, especially in the rural communities across the globe. Therefore, libraries, information centres and other information agencies must leverage 21st century techniques, particularly ICTs in taking appropriate measures to disseminate information. This is necessary in raising informed and educated citizens especially in developing countries.

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