

Cable TV As Medium For Promotion Of Indigenous Language And Culture Of Apatani Tribe: A Study Of Ama Aba Cable TV In Ziro Valley Of Arunachal Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Media play a key role in promoting indigenous language and culture. In remote and geographically isolated areas, cable television serves as a powerful medium through which cultural values are disseminated thereby helping their promotion and preservation. The Ama Aba Cable TV in Ziro Valley of Arunachal Pradesh telecasts local content especially those of the indigenous Apatani tribe in addition to a wide range of popular national and transnational television channels. Apart from its regular telecast of programs related to government or other institutions and traditional festivals like Dree, Myoko, etc., it also telecasts traditional weddings and rituals held in and around Ziro Valley. This study examines how Ama Aba Cable TV has been directly or indirectly promoting the indigenous language and culture of the Apatani community. The findings of the study revealed that cable TV is a powerful medium through which cultural values can be disseminated and preserved for sustainable development. Hence, it is a medium for promoting indigenous language and culture. It was also found that the contents of the Apatani community telecast on Cable TV were still limited and there is ample scope for improvement in the program format. The study recommends that mass media like cable television can be introduced across Arunachal Pradesh which will help in the promotion and preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the multi-ethnic state.

Keywords: Cable TV, Apatani tribe, indigenous, language, culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The mass media is seen as one of the most important tools in the development of culture as it can awaken and stimulate the imagination of an individual. Likewise, it can boost people's appreciation with regards to their mother tongue or language. Beside disseminating cultural and artistic products, the mass media help transmit societal norms and values from one generation to another thereby preserving the heritage (Okunna, 1999). Associating a language with any media is a powerful way of enhancing the vitality of such a language, promoting its use and ensuring positive attitudes towards it (Okpoko & Chukwuka, 2016). Thus, media play a key role in promoting indigenous language and culture.

Studies on media and the promotion of languages show that the media can promote

indigenous languages across the globe through their contents. Among all the mass media, television is considered to be one of the most influential means of communication. One of the most important characteristics that make television a powerful medium is its audio-visual properties. In remote and geographically isolated areas, cable television serves as a powerful medium through which cultural values are disseminated thereby helping their promotion and preservation. The Ama Aba Cable TV in Ziro Valley of Lower Subansiri District in Arunachal Pradesh is one of the popular Cable TV in the state and it telecasts local content especially those of the indigenous Apatani tribe in addition to a wide range of popular national and transnational television channels. This well-known establishment acts as a one-stop destination servicing customers for Cable TV in

the district. Throughout its journey, this business has established a firm foothold in its industry, especially in Ziro valley. Apart from its regular telecast of programs related to government or other institutions and traditional festivals like Dree, Myoko, etc., it also telecasts traditional weddings and rituals held in and around Ziro Valley. Thus, this study examines how Ama Aba Cable TV has been directly or indirectly promoting the indigenous language and culture of the Apatani community of Ziro valley in the state of Arunachal Pradesh, India.

2. CABLE TELEVISION

A Cable TV is a kind of system which provides television signals using coaxial or fibre-optic cables or via satellite (Encyclopedia Britannica). Originated in the 1940s, cable TV was at the beginning devised to improvise the reception of commercial network broadcasts in the United States. Initially, it was used to improve the network for broadcasting in remote and hilly regions. 1960 shows the advent of cable TV in many metropolitan cities. It is also popularly known as Community Antenna Television (CATV). To receive signals from broadcasting, cable TV use a community antenna. Then using cables, the subscribers get a TV connection in their homes and their other establishments. Along with the installation fee, the subscribers have to pay a specified monthly service charge.

In India, Television came on September 15, 1959, with experimental transmission from Delhi. Initially, it was started with a make-shift studio and a low-power transmitter. In the beginning, there were only few television sets in India logistically managed by All India Radio (AIR). From 1972 to 1975, television services were amplified to different cities in India including Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Srinagar, Amritsar and Lucknow. Further, the launch of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in 1975-76 has tremendously boosted the popularity of television in India.

In India, Cable TV came in the 1980s. It was considered to be an economical alternative to watching borrowed cassettes of feature films. Because of its low investment requirements, the local entrepreneurs started investing in the business of operating Cable TV. The arrival of satellite TV was an advantage for the cable TV operators in India. It has made it possible for cable TV operators to receive television programs from various popular

satellite TV channels. While providing various programs including satellite TV channels, cable operators started providing local channels to their subscribers. The local channels usually show films, popular serials, etc. It became an alternative to Doordarshan, especially for middle-class Indian families. It provided an alternative to the Doordarshan (DD) programs for Indian middle-class families. Gradually, satellite TV became popular not only in cities but also in the interior towns and villages of India. Because of this popularity, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India decided to launch some more channels through Satellite INSAT 2B.

In India, out of 231 million households, 148 million households have television sets while over 126 million households have Cable television or Satellite television connections. Over 88% of the total households in urban areas own television sets and over 70% of them have cable or DTH services (TAM Annual Universe Report-2012).

3. INFLUENCE OF CABLE TV ON LANGUAGE

Television is a powerful medium. It can stimulate behaviour. It can impact how people observe, think, and act (Donald and Christine, 1991). Which result influences the behavioural or attitudinal nature of a person. This was further elaborated by Dennis and Kraus (1996) in their work where they observed that television can influence the thinking, attitudes and opinions of the audience. This further affects the behaviour of the television viewer especially in making certain decisions such as when buying goods in the market or favouring a political party.

Television is an audio-visual medium that provides visual entertainment and information. The programs are telecast in various formats or genres like news, films, sports, documentaries, music, etc. Television can establish a direct relationship between these contents and the viewers. The audience believes what they see on television. Sometimes the audience may fall for the values and attitudes which is telecast on television programs (Agboola & Abah, 2020). Fiske (1987, p.37) while defining television argued that it is not just a popular medium but a popular cultural medium. According to him television telecast varieties of the program from numerous subcultures. According to Campbell, television

can be used to unite/promote our indigenous cultural values if well streamlined. This is because its audio-visual characteristics make it stand unique in the information dissemination process (Okpoko, 2012).

Contents that are telecast on television represent real life as well as fictional life. The audio-visual characteristics of television led the viewer more engaging with particular programs. The viewer has the authority to perceive, interpret, and accept or reject the information served to them (Agboola & Abah, 2020). According to O'Donnell (2007), television has the potential to develop cultural values, norms, practices, interests, and other trends which are of public interest.

As language is associated with ethnic identity, lost of language of a community is lost of ethnic identity as well (Okpoko & Chukwuka, 2016). In his work, Nwadike (2008) observed that since mother-tongue is key to the heart of speakers, it can unlock the door to untold riches which cannot be guessed from the other side of the door. If this key is lost, the community will be lost. So, this key should be treasured and kept safe. Ocho (2005), as cited in Didiugwu (2008), asserts that "language is a culture because it expresses, preserves, and transmits the whole set of behaviour patterns, beliefs, tradition, customs and models of thinking that make one group of people different from another".

A research study carried out by Harrison and Raphael (2006) on media and the promotion of Yoruba language and culture in African Independent Television (AIT) and Lagos Television (LTV) showed that 80% of the respondents watch or listen to Yoruba programmes on AIT and LTV. They noted that almost all the informants watch programs that are being telecast in the local language. The study further found that 92% of the respondents see the value of these programmes in the preservation of the indigenous language. Likewise, Oguji (2012) in the study on two TV channels in Nigeria and their effort to promote Igbo language and culture, found that 58% of the respondents agreed that programmes in the local language were meant specifically to promote Igbo language and culture, 29% of them revealed that the programmes help increase their knowledge, 21% of the respondents stated that the programmes improved their speaking of Igbo language, while 14% of them said they could change their mode of dressing and only 11% of them said they gained their knowledge

of Igbo customs and tradition.

Agboola and Abah (2020) in their work while studying the influence of media in language promotion believe that to revitalise or to make minority languages survive, minority language media is very essential. They consider it an important element. It was further emphasized by Hinton and Hale (2001) who observed that media has a huge potential to expand domains of minority languages. Media can increase awareness about the minority languages and enhance the motivational level of the viewer to speak their language.

Cormack (2003) also states that minority language media contributes to the maintenance of language continuity. This helps in enhancing the language importance and progressively helps in language preservation. Such media also fulfils the basic human right of the minority communities in having their language shown on television. It is a well-known fact that to revitalise any minority language, minority language needs to be facilitated by the existing media especially mass media like television (Cormack 2003; Cormack and Hourigan 2007; Riggins 1992).

However, Smith (2006) argues that although the introduction of television is one of the most significant social phenomena of the 21st century, the field of sociolinguistic research has been neglected so far. However, in recent times, several studies have been conducted that show how television is affecting language practices, especially among the minority language communities across the globe (Cotter 1999, 2001; Kelly-Holmes 2006; Moriarty 2007). In his work, Carvalho (2004) observed that television in Portuguese has amplified the practice of speaking Uruguayan Portuguese in Brazil. Also, Cotter (2001) argues that languages such as Irish are capable of becoming a language for television broadcasting. The broadcast media are hugely beneficial in expanding the domains in which the use of minority languages is acceptable.

4. APATANI TRIBE AND THEIR LANGUAGE

The Apatanis are one of the major tribes of the Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh in India. The word Apatani is composed of two words- 'Apa' and 'Tani'. According to the local language, 'Apa' means a display of affection and 'Tani' stands for the human race (Kala, 2005).

The community inhabit an area known as Ziro Valley in the Lower Subansiri District of Arunachal Pradesh. The Ziro valley is isolated by the hills and ranges in all directions (Hilaly, 2018). The Apatanis are a peace-loving and very welcoming tribe.

The total population according to the 2001 Census of the Apatani valley is 24,703 (approx.) of which 12,572 are settled in urban areas and 12,131 in rural areas. There are 12,478 males and 12,225 females. There are fifty-one (51) villages inhabited by the Apatani tribe (Habung, 2009). Although they are settled in different villages, they strongly maintain their social relationships with each other (Hilaly, 2018).

According to their oral literature, they migrated to this valley from the northern direction which is beyond the Kuru and Kime rivers (Habung, 2009). A traditional belief among Apatanis tells that their ancestors came from a country to the North or northeast situated near two rivers known as Supupad-Pudpumi (Ward & Furer-Haimendorf, 1963). However, the Apatanis or anyone else is likely to identify this legendary country of origin. All Apatanis agree that at one stage in their migration they crossed the Subansiri River from north to south and reached the present place. Apatanis regard Tibet as their place of origin (Blackburn, 2008). The oral history of Apatanis reflects that their ancestors assimilated Tibetan culture by wearing local necklaces – an important source of wealth and a marker of identity. The origin of many objects acquired by indirect trade is often imbued with prestige. The Tibetan beads, swords, metal bells and plates obtained by Apatanis were not local; these were Tibetan in origin (John, 2020).

The Apatanis tribe belongs to the Indo-Mongoloid racial stock. Linguistically, their language falls under the Tibeto-Burman family. They believe that they are the descendant of Abotani who is regarded as their legendary ancestor (Hilaly, 2018). The Apatanis generally speak in their language which has no script (Kala, 2005).

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research paper is guided by Agenda Setting Theory of mass communication. The theory examines how mass media emphasizes a particular issue to form certain public agenda. According to the theory, audiences or the readers are most concerned about the public

agenda which is the prime issue. The theory elaborates the connection in terms of relationships between the emphasis that the mass media put on an issue and the media audiences or the public's reaction or attributes to such issue (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). In other words, the theory doesn't necessarily tell people how they should think or feel regarding certain issues, but rather what issues they should think about (Agboola & Abah, 2020).

The theory is based on two fundamental assumptions.

- i. Instead of reflecting on reality as it is, the media filters and shapes reality according to their needs. The facts are filtered and shaped by the producer or editor to make them sensational or most appealing to the audience.
- ii. The audiences give more importance to those issues which get more attention from the media.

While keeping the Agenda Setting Theory as its base, the present research paper studies the role of Cable TV in the promotion of the indigenous language of the Apatani community.

6. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a survey method. An interview schedule was used for collecting the data from the respondents. The study population comprises of age group from 10 years onwards which includes students, civil servants, traders, teachers, etc. who belong to the Apatani community. A total sample size of 64 respondents has been chosen for this study.

7. OBJECTIVES

Following were the objectives of this study:

1. To find out the respondents' attitudes toward their Mother Tongue
2. To study the television user behaviour of Apatani community of Ziro town
3. To examine the extent to which the Ama Aba Cable TV programmes promote the Apatani language and culture

8. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study investigated the influence of Cable TV on the promotion of the indigenous language and culture of the Apatani Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. According to the study, it was found that most of the respondents were males. The

figure amounts to 54.7%. The female representation constitutes 45.3%. The majority of the respondents were from the age group 21-40 years (59.4%). This indicates that most of the representations were from the youths. It is important to note that youths were among the main target groups of this research their participation is significant when it comes to language promotion and preservation.

The statistics on the language attitude of the respondent shows that everyone (100%) was fluent in speaking their mother tongue which is the Apatani language. This is one of the most important findings of the study in terms of language promotion is concerned. Many researchers in linguistics believe that the first and foremost step for language continuity is to speak the language. The study also shows that 85.5% of the respondents can speak and understand the Hindi language. It is important to note here that Hindi is the lingua franca in Arunachal Pradesh as there is no other common language. Most of the people in the state from small kids to older people can speak Hindi in the state. Apart from their mother tongue and Hindi, many of them can speak other languages like English, Assamese and Nepali.

Another important finding on the language attitude of the respondent was that 93.8% of the respondent use their mother in their house for communication. Many researchers observe that if we stop speaking our mother tongue at home that language will die soon. According to the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organization (UNESCO) it's of the utmost importance for children and everybody to start with their mother tongue. The organization has even instituted an International Day of the Mother Tongue to promote the importance of speaking the mother tongue. Only when people speak that language, they will look forward to it to grow else they won't feel it necessary to find the language around them in any form. Any language can live only when it is spoken by people, especially in the home. If the language dies the cultural flavour of a community will lose its identity.

The analysis of statistics on user behaviour shows that 98.44% have television sets out of which 56.3 % watch television on daily basis. This makes a strong point that television is very popular in Arunachal Pradesh. Almost all the respondents have owned a TV set in their homes.

The study found that maximum respondents have Cable TV connections in their homes. A total of 76.6% of respondents have a cable TV connection followed by Satellite TV which makes 17.2% and 4.7% were Dish TV users. This shows that Cable TV is a very popular medium in Ziro valley and there is a positive atmosphere concerning its existence. The respondents mostly prefer to watch television at night time. A total of 38.2% of respondents watch television during the night followed by evening 35.3% and morning 16.7% respectively. Only 9.8% of the respondents watch television during the afternoon. It is because during the afternoon hours most of the respondents are either in the school, agricultural field, office or busy with other work. Further, most of the respondents spend watching television for at least 2 hours a day.

The Ama Aba Cable TV telecast series of local content. These contents include programs organised by the government, NGOs and others. Apart from these, the most important content that they broadcast is the cultural related content. The local channel telecast all the festivals of the Apatani community such as Dree, Myoko and other ritualistic events. Marriage program in various part of the region is telecast extensively. This is letting those relatives and others witness the marriage even if they could not attend the rituals. Cable TV also telecast films that are made in the Apatani language from time to time. According to the study, 98.4% of the respondents watch the local channel that is telecast in the Apatani language. This shows that Cable TV is directly or indirectly promoting the indigenous language and culture of the community. This also reveals that cable TV is a powerful medium through which cultural values can be disseminated and preserved for sustainable development. To support the statement, the analysis shows that 96.9% of the total respondents think that TV is an effective medium for promoting the indigenous language and culture of the Apatani tribe.

However, it was also found that the contents of the programs telecast on Ama Aba Cable TV were still limited and there is ample scope for improvement in the program formats. The programs do not follow any particular format. The programs are being telecast from the beginning of the event till the end without proper treatment. These hours and hours of telecasting an event without proper treatment of

the contents are making viewers shift to other channels.

9. CONCLUSION

In India, the majority of the programs on television or Cable TV are by nature national and foreign programmes telecast in Hindi or English language. The Cable TV operators in Arunachal Pradesh are also in no position to compete with the popular satellite transmission operators such as Tataplay, Airtel TV, Dish TV etc. As a result of this, local content in the indigenous languages is overshadowed by popular programs telecast in Hindi and English. Also, improper program format and limited content are a big concern for cable TV operators. Many of the viewers believe that there are many loopholes and areas for improvement.

However, one cannot deny the fact that, in remote areas, cable television such as Ama Aba Cable TV Ziro serves as a powerful medium through which cultural values in indigenous languages are disseminated. The findings of the study also revealed that cable TV is a powerful medium through which cultural values can be disseminated and preserved for sustainable development. Hence, it is a medium for promoting indigenous language and culture. It was also found that the contents of the telecast on Cable TV were still limited and there is ample scope for improvement in the program format. The study recommends that mass media like cable television can be introduced across Arunachal Pradesh which will help in the promotion and preservation of the rich cultural heritage of the multi-ethnic state. The government in this regard can play a vital role in supporting cable television providers in creating content in indigenous languages.

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