Research Article

Assessment of Styles and Quality of Articulation by Presenters of the Africa Independent Television and Channels Television Stations, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Television broadcasting is important to educate the populace on their rights, economic activities and their potentials, culture and customs, among other issues. So there is greater need to improve on the quality of news presenters' skills to be able to discharge this important responsibility optimally. The inability of most presenters to express their ideas smoothly and precisely in words, sentences, idioms and other expressive grammatical constructions is worrisome. This miscommunication bears a piece of communication with linguistic signs that do not express the intended message to the target audience. This study assessed the style and quality of articulation by presenters of the Africa Independent Television and Channels Television stations. The study utilized the primary data source of focus group discussion among final year students of Mass Communication and English Departments of University of Jos and Plateau State University, Bokkos on the recorded contents of the Channels and AIT broadcasts. The study found among other things that the Channels TV presenters do not have heavy accent, but have polished and fluent language and can speak like the Americans while AIT has an undertone accent. AIT targets the African population, so they present their news naturally without twisted tongue. The news presenter's voice in Channels is captivating while AIT presenters sometimes have high pitched voice. Channels presenters are fast and their audiences need to pay close attention before getting the message and AIT presenters have slower speech rate which makes for easy assimilation of their news by their audiences. The study concluded that while the two stations are performing very well in Nigeria and on the global television broadcasting space, AIT presenters have better style, accent, speech and greater skills and experiences. The study recommends among other things that: the level of presentations of the two stations, especially that of Channels television should be continuously improved to enable them perform their functions to the public professionally; the quality of speech, accent, voice and originality of presentation should be improved for both stations to continuously improve along with global broadcasting code and realities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dissemination of information is a veritable conduit for change and societal transformation. Abah (2019) views the modern democracies and governance structures, the media has always occupied the forefront of socio-political and economic changes, so much so that whatever is presented by the press is taken as authentic and true. The media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing the affairs of government, non-governmental organizations, communities, and individuals. The federal government's recognition of the invaluable role of the media in Nigeria as contained in the 1999 Constitution as amended gives the media the responsibility thus: "the press, radio, television and other agencies of the media shall at all times, be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people" (Section 22) (Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN), (1999). Television as a medium with its powers of sight and sound has always had much impacts on the task of engaging the people in political discussions. Aririguzoh (2015) avers, "Television has brought more exposure which is public and made the candidates and their styles of paramount importance. This makes it less difficult for them and their advisors to manipulate the public than they would with other media that give them less exposure (Feezell, 2018; Ibagere, 2013). Gilardi *et al.*, (2020) agree that television has touched and changed politics, has the most persuasive power, and has come to replace opinion leaders.

The responsibilities of the media in the society are weighty and demand an utmost sense of responsibility and accountability (Osakue & Kehinde, 2021). Journalists exert great influence on society, their strategies to 'put pictures in people's heads' according to Dana'an (2017) must be well thought out and implemented. It is important that presenters recognize that 'the essence of good journalism and 'tell it as it is' without editorialising and sensationalising, in news columns (Dana'an, 2017). The pressures on journalists have compromised their habit of 'telling it as it is,' leading to changes in their styles over time. Osakue & Kehinde (2021) explained that news presenters' articulation has roles in encoding -decoding theory of language perception. Using words clearly and logically leads the audience smoothly from thought to thought during their news cast. The essence is to make the task an agreeable and enjoyable experience for the audience. An efficient communication can be viewed as an encoding-decoding process, where the decoder process or perception is an active process consisting of phonetic/linguistic interpretation. As an encoder implemented by the speech production system, the speaker uses knowledge of meanings of words (or phrases), of grammar in a language, and of the sound representations for the intended linguistic message (Abah, 2019).

Different media houses may have their diverse styles of presentations; nevertheless, it should not permit them to audaciously break the laws of English or the approved language rules, especially in formal presentations such as news broadcasts." - The verb "permit" should be changed to "permit them" to agree with the subject. The National Broadcasting Commission, NBC (1990) in one of its workshops in an effort to solve this problem gave some presentation tips. These include,

amid other things, that a good presenter must inflect and modulate the voice properly, speak at comfortable pace, aim for a smooth flow, choose simple words, use a script if necessary, rehearse the script, pronounce names properly, avoid slangs, identify the station clearly, refrain from being informal, never make dry and expensive jokes, sound warm and friendly always, stick to correct pronunciation of words (Ibagere, 2013). Therefore, this research has assessed the style and quality of articulation by presenters of the Africa Independent Television and Channels Television.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Audience Perception of News Presenters' Articulation

2.1.1. Audience and News Presentation in Broadcast Media

Audience remains a central concept in the media landscape. Television programs, for instance, are meticulously crafted to resonate with specific audience segments. To attract and retain viewers, broadcasters must deliver high-quality content that aligns with audience preferences. News presenters, in particular, often adapt their delivery style based on viewer feedback. Feedback is a very important process as it shows the level of success in a communication encounter (Alabi, 2014). The Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (2010) stipulates in its The Nigerian Broadcasting Commission emphasizes the need for broadcasters to design programming that meets audience expectations. Broadcast organizations exist primarily to inform, entertain, and educate their target audiences. Understanding and segmenting this audience is crucial for delivering relevant and satisfying content. As Onabajo (2002) asserts, detailed demographic and psychographic audience data enhance a broadcaster's ability to fulfill viewer needs.

2.1.2. Audience Perception of News Presentations by TV Broadcasters

In 2010 the annual survey of Nielsen Media Research reported that 91% of 2,000 polled respondents obtained information from television (TV), compared to only 65% from radio, 58% from outdoor advertising, 15% for print media, and 9% from magazines. Further, an estimated one-fifth did not read newspapers because TV was their preferred medium. Six years earlier, a Pulse Asia survey reported that 63% considered TV the most credible source of news and information, leaving behind radio (20%) and newspaper (5%). In 1999, TV's credibility rating was only at 53%, with radio at 35%, and newspaper at 27% as cited in Omar & Criselda, (2011). Television (TV) continues to be the preferred source of information in the Philippines. These figures consistently demonstrate television's growing dominance as a primary source of information in the Philippines. Moreover, the TV broadcast has provided a clearer link between the presented data and the TV's credibility advantage due to its technological features

Akpan (1993) demonstrated that perception is a process through which people learn about the world. In the process of perceiving, individuals select stimuli (information) from the external world and at the same time, mix and blend those (stimuli) with internal stimuli, which are within them (individuals). He states further that in an attempt to make sense out of the world, individuals

have two sources of information available to them: the elements they bring with them (the past, the attitude, their personality) and those elements presently existing in the external world (other people, their words, messages, surroundings and so on). Folarin (2005) supports the above by saying that perception depends on some multifaceted variables such as psychological disposition, past experiences, cultural expectations and social relationships. Given the complex nature of perception as outlined above, it is evident that audience members of AIT and Channel Televisions will bring their unique perspectives to bear on the news presentation styles of these stations.

2.1.3. Perception Variation in TV Broadcasts

Although the area of variation perception is a growing field in socio-linguistics, the literature on this topic is scarce and points to the necessity of understanding how listeners perceived and, especially, how they utilize information in different contexts of communication based on representations of variation and its social meaning in their memory. Naturally, variation allows listeners to codify details of indexical characteristics of the speech signal of a specific listener or a group. Listeners often have expectations and attribute positive or negative values to certain speech variants. Speech perception is influenced and mediated by the listeners' beliefs and attributions attached by them to a specific speaker or group (Leonardo *et al.*, 2013).

A study demonstrated by Kraljic, Brennan & Samuel (2008) on speech perception was influenced by the expectations and attributions that listeners attached to speakers. The same synthesized vowel was perceived differently, depending on where the listeners believed the speaker had come from. Another study which aimed at evaluating if the communicative situations interacted with the presenters' articulation determine the listeners' judgment in relation to the speakers' attributes, showed that the listeners' attitudes varied according to the communicative context, even when speech characteristics were similar. This finding reinforces the fact that listeners have expectations in relation to the way of speaking of other individuals in specific situations and will actively construct social meaning from speech variation, and their perceptions are also influenced by both inherent linguistic features and contextual factors (Leonardo *et al.*, 2013).

2.2. Sources of Message in Broadcast Media

Surui (2015), pointed out that a source in communication is an important part of the perceived news credibility and news quality, and it is an essential part that people have to take into consideration when they evaluate the credibility of news. With the absence of the source of information, it may be difficult to validate the reliability of a news story; and with clear source information, the audience may favour one more than the other depending on their knowledge about the source. As a result, the credibility of the source, or the credibility of the source is a key element in evaluating news quality. Source credibility is the total of credibility (believability) attributed to a source of information. This refers to fairness, trustworthiness and reliability of the institution (Bracken, 2006). Audiences' prior knowledge and impressions concerning the source may influence their judgment to the source. When audiences have

little or no prior familiarity with a source, for example, in news stories, audience members must assess a speaker's credibility from the source's credentials. When they read news stories, audiences have to refer to other cues to assess the credibility of the speaker if the information of the source credentials is not provided. Therefore, if the audiences do not have access to comprehensive information about sources such as reporters or news organizations, they have to rely on other cues to assess the news quality (Slater & Rouner, 1996).

Scholars (Berlo & Mertz, 1970) found that expertise and truthfulness are two main factors that influence perceived source credibility. These studies sought out three main criteria which audiences used to evaluate message sources. The three factors are: safety (e.g., safe-unsafe, just-unjust, kind-cruel, friendly-unfriendly and honest-dishonest), qualification (e.g., trained, experienced, informed, and qualified), and dynamism (e.g., aggressive-meek, emphatic-hesitant; bold-timid; active-passive and energetic and tired). This presents numerous criteria used in evaluating source credibility. Other factors related to the personality of the source may influence audiences' evaluation on these criteria. Similarly, a recent study also reported honesty and justice to be the two main aspects of trustworthiness. The study also showed that perceptions about depth of experience and evaluation of professional demeanor to be the main contributors to perceived professionalism (Sirui, 2015).

Social cues are how we communicate without using words. These cues involve facial expressions, how we move our bodies, tone of voice, physical proximity to others, and any other way we express ourselves outside of verbal communication (Jones, 2024). While social cues tend to be similar among most people, they can be affected by many things, including a person's personality, culture, and comfort levels. Wright (n.d) defined social cues as the signals people send through body language and expressions. like rolling and winking of the eyes when they're saying something, or use a sarcastic tone of voice, most persons will get the message. But people mostly kids who have social skills issues often miss those nonverbal cues. And that can lead them to misunderstand people and misread situations. Wright (n.d) identified and explained the four types of social cues as follows:

1. Facial expressions: Facial expressions are used to express how one is feeling, whether or not it is intended intend to. Eyebrows are raised when questioning something, smile wide when happy and sulk when a feeling of anger is expressed. Facial expressions can be the most obvious social cues as it's hard to hide an emotion when it's "written all over one's face and it can be frustrating when someone fails to read how such feelings are expressed.

2. Body language: Body language can be used sometimes when an emotion is so strong, it affects the way we hold our body. Shoulders are slumped when tired, shrug when we an answer is not known and a step is added to a skip to express happiness. Body language can be involuntary or done on purpose. Either way, it's an important way of communicating. Some persons can totally misunderstand what's being said. And people can feel annoyed when the signs they're giving off with their body are ignored.

3. Voice pitch and tone: Certain moods call for high or low voices and fast or slow speech. When there is need to get something important across, one talk quickly and urgently. When a question is asked, the pitch of the last word or two is raised. Changes in voice can sometimes change the meaning of what's being said. But some persons take speech too literally and miss the nuances. They may not get the joke or when kids are being mean.

4. Personal space (physical boundaries): Once we're interested in someone, it tends to move closer (but not too close). When a step is taken further, it is signaled that we'd rather keep our distance. Standing too close to (or too far from) someone can be awkward. It can also communicate something kids don't mean to say. Keeping an appropriate distance or boundary is especially difficult for kids with executive functioning issues.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the purposive type of non-probability sampling technique. This is to enable the researcher elicit ideas and feelings of the respondents concerning the phenomenon under study. Here, a certain number of Lecturers and Students from Mass communication and English Departments of University of Jos and Plateau State University (PLASU) Bokkos were approached to critique the contents recorded from the duo of AIT and Channels Television for 15 minutes to assess and determine the articulation of the news presenters. The researcher intends to record one news programme each from AIT and Channels Television for review by the Lecturers individually and Students in focus groups.

To determine the sample size, the researcher approached a total of Eight (8) Lecturers from the four Departments of the two Universities, that is, two each from the four departments. While a total of twenty (20) students with five (5) each from the four

departments of the two Universities would be constituted into four (4) focus groups for the detailed critique and examination of the recorded presentations. In a nutshell, a total of 28 respondents would be used for this study. This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who could provide in-depth insights into news presenter articulation. Eight lecturers (two from each of the Mass Communication and English departments at the University of Jos and Plateau State University, Bokkos) and twenty students (five from each department) were recruited for the study. This sample size was determined based on the need to capture a diverse range of perspectives while maintaining manageable data collection and analysis. The researcher's choice of AIT and Channels Television is hinged on the facts that the two stations are both privately owned. AIT's viewership cut across 3 continents of Africa, Europe and North America. Channels Television broadcast area is worldwide, because of its usage of satellite technology.

The purpose of this research is to compare the news presenters' articulation on AIT and Channels Television stations. The researcher approached the audience or viewers of the two media stations who are Lecturers or students of Mass communication and English departments of University of Jos and Plateau State University, Bokkos to participate in the study. A focus group discussion was used to obtain data for the achievement of the study's objectives and research questions. This research used the qualitative data analysis. The data generated from the field through focus group discussion and Television presentation content by sampled respondents was coded and analysed using the descriptive statistics such as, frequency tables, pie charts, bar charts, histogram and simple percentages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Presenters, Style and Quality of Articulation

S/No	Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Name ofstation	AIT	2	10
		Channels	3	15
		Both	15	75
	Frequency of patronage	Frequently	9	45
		Occasionally	9	45
		Rarely	2	10
2	AIT style of presentation	Yes	20	100
		No	0	0.00
		Not sure	0	0.00
3	Channels style of presentation	Good	15	75
		Average	4	20
		Fair	1	5
4	AIT presenter's quality of articulation	Good	16	80
		Average	3	15
		Fair	1	5
Total			**20**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 1 depicts presenter's style and quality of articulation. Seventy five percent over (75%) of respondents of the focused television agree to watch the two channels this means that majority of the respondent's watch the two channels. Ten (10 %) percent and fifteen (15%) percent respectively watch AIT and channels TV respectively and agree that they are deeply abreast with content and style of each of the stations. Ninety percent of respondents watch AIT and Channels Television Stations frequently (45%) and occasionally (45%) while only 10% of the respondents rarely watch these channels. Majority of the patrons of these stations and the frequency and occasional patronage of the channels attest to their ability to understand the level of presenters' articulation, style and quality of their presentation as they decode all the information given to public viewers from the stations.

On AIT and Channels Television Styles of presentation, 100% of the respondents agreed that AIT presenters have fine style of presentation while 50% of respondents agree that channels TV has good style of presentation with 5% saying that channels' TV presenters style is not too good. The remaining 5% said they are not sure of the style adopted by Channels TV presenters. AIT Presenters' quality of articulation as shown in Table 1, 75% said that the quality of presenter is good, 20% of the respondents are of the view that the presenter quality of articulation is average while only 5% said the Channels TV presenters' articulation is fair.

Table 2. Quality of Speech, Originality and

S/No	Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Accent of voice on AIT	Good	15	75
		Average	4	20
		Fair	1	5
	Accent of Voice on Channels	Good	14	70
		Average	4	20
		Fair	2	10
2	Professionalism & Originality on AIT	High	9	45
		Moderate	11	55
		Fair	0	0
3	Professionalism & Originality on AIT	High	8	40
		Moderate	11	55
		Fair	1	5
4	AIT Sound & Speech Quality Style	Yes	17	85
		No	3	15
	Sound/Speech & Style on channels	Yes	17	85
		No	3	15
Total			**20**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 shows the quality of speech accent, voice, originality and profession exhibited by the presenters of the two television stations. Seventy five percent (75%) of the respondents are of the opinion that the presenters of AIT have a good rating in accent and voice. Twenty (20%) percent ranked the presenters as average in quality of accent and voice while only 5% said that their performances on accent and voice is fair. Channels Television presenters on the other hand were ranked by seventy (70%) percent to be good in quality of accent and voice. Twenty (20%) in the same vein said that news presenters in Channels Television show average performance on quality and accent and voice and ten (10%) percent on the other hand said that performance on accent and voice is just fair.

The performances of the two stations as shown by the trend of responses provided from the foregoing depict that there is no significant dissimilarities in accent and voice qualities of AIT and Channels Television Stations. But according to Top5 TV news rating, Channels TV was rated number one, followed by NTA News 24 and AIT coming third position based on number of people watching their programmes daily. (Top 5 News, 2024)

''Channels Television stands as one of Nigeria's most reputable and widely watched news TV stations. Known for its in-depth reporting and insightful analysis, Channels Television has become a go-to source for breaking news, political discussions, and current affairs.

2. NTA News 24: The National Broadcaster: NTA News 24 is the dedicated news channel of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). As the national broadcaster, NTA News 24 provides a broad spectrum of news coverage, ranging from local to international affairs.

3. AIT News: Staying Ahead of the Curve: Africa Independent Television (AIT) News has established itself as a dynamic

news outlet, offering a mix of politics, business, sports, and entertainment news. AIT's commitment to staying ahead of the curve has garnered a dedicated viewership''.

Forty five (45%) percent of the respondents are of the view that AIT News presenters are highly professional and original in their news cast and 55% said that they are moderately professional and original in their news cast. On professionalism and originality of Channels TV presenters, 40% of the respondents view them to be highly professional and original and 55% also view them to be moderate which gives equal raking with that of AIT. Five (5%) percent said that they are not professional and

this could be attributable to their seeming less independence compared to AIT channel.

On sound and speech qualities AIT and Channels TV are ranked almost equally also as 85% respondent said that there are good sound and speech qualities which Channels 75% asserted that sound and speech qualities are good. Fifteen (15%) percent of respondents said AIT has poor sound and speech qualities and twenty (20%) percent of the respondents said that Channels Television has poor sound and speech qualities.

Patterns, skills and experience of the presenters of AIT and

Table 3. Audience Perception on the two Stations

S/No	Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Presentation pattern on AIT	Excellent	8	40
		Very good	8	40
		Good	3	15
		Average	1	5
	Presentation pattern on Channels	Excellent	3	15
		Very good	10	50
		Good	5	25
		Average	2	10
2	Skill & experience of presenters on AIT	Yes	20	100
		No	0	0
	Skills & experience of presenters on Channels	Yes	18	90
		No	2	10
Total			**20**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Channels TV were ranked at excellent, very good, good and average as shown in Table 3. Forty (40%) percent of the respondents assert that the presentation of AIT is excellent. Another forty (40%) percent agrees that the presentation pattern of AIT as very good, fifteen (45%) percent of the respondents view the AIT pattern of presentation as good with none scoring them below average.

Fifteen (15%) percent agreed that the pattern of presentation on Channels Television is excellent while 50% constituting the majority view their pattern of presentation as very good, twenty five and ten percent view their performances on pattern of presentation as good and average respectively (Table 3).

5. CONCLUSION

This comparative study has revealed that while the two stations are performing very well in Nigeria and on the global television broadcasting space, AIT presenters have better style, accent, speech and greater skills and experiences. Television broadcasting is important to education of the populace on their rights, economic activities and their potentials, culture and customs of the people, among other issues, so there is greater need to improve on the quality of their presentation to be able to discharge this very important reproducibility.

RECOMMENDATION

The study has therefore recommended that the two stations should take the following steps in improving on their styles and quality:

The level of presentations of the two stations, especially that of Channels television should be continuously improved to enable them discharge their functions to the public professionally.

Both stations should improve their sound and speech qualities to make them more competitive and profitable to remain relevant in their broadcasting business.

Some quality of their production which could be attributed to work tools, there should be periodic maintenance of their equipment and replaced where they are obsolete.

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