

Promoting Ghanaian languages: The role of telenovela series

Yvette Akuorkor Afowa Ussher

Senior Lecturer

Department of Adult Education and Human Resource Studies

University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

Email: yausser@ug.edu.gh

Yvonne A. A. Ollennu

Senior Lecturer

Department of Ga-Dangme Education

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

Email: yaaollennu@uew.edu.gh

Submitted: September 15, 2022 / Accepted: April 26, 2023 / Published: June 29, 2023

Abstract

Telenovelas have become an attractive form of entertainment for many Ghanaians largely because of the use of local Ghanaian languages as voice-overs during telecast. The question that arises is – Does the telecast of telenovelas in a local language play any role in the promotion of Ghanaian languages? Using focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, we explored the role of Telenovelas with voice-overs in the promotion of Ghanaian languages among residents of some communities in Accra, Ghana; specifically, Lapaz, Osu and Gbawe Mallam communities, University students and market women. Findings show that due to low English literacy levels, voice-over telenovelas were preferred among residents in Lapaz community and the market women. A privately-owned television station, Max TV, emerged as the station with a wider audience due to its innovative broadcasting strategy of voice-over Telenovelas using the Ghanaian (Akan) language. Overall, the telenovelas appear to be promoting the Akan language by exposing viewers to lexical knowledge, facilitating the acquisition of

new vocabulary items, and shaping children's learning of Akan. This paper, therefore, unearths the significance of glocalization of telenovelas in the promotion of local languages in Ghana.

Keywords: Telenovela, Ghanaian local language, glocalization, promotion, voice-overs

Introduction

Telenovelas originated from Latin America and have attracted large viewers from across the globe, transcending age, gender, social class and community (Asiamah & Ofori-Birikorang, 2018). The word "telenovela" is derived from the Spanish word "Tele" meaning distance and "Novella" meaning story (Stavans, 2010). The stories are crafted in interesting ways to attract a wide viewing audience. Telenovelas have made their way into Ghana and many Ghanaians delight in viewing them. It all started in the mid-nineties, when the state-owned television known as Ghana Television first showed a Telenovela of Brazilian origin titled '*Isaura*' (1996). Thereafter, a private Television called TV3 provided Ghanaians with Mexican Telenovelas like '*Esmeralda*' (in 1997), '*Acapulco Bay*' and '*Maria de Los Angeles*' (in 1998). Since the first telecast of a Telenovela, it has become a popular programme and has been aired on almost all state-owned and private Ghanaian Television Stations (Hlormenyor, 2017).

With a multiplicity of different TV Stations, Ghanaians have viewed many Telenovela series which include *La Usurpadora* (1998), *Rosalinda* (1999), *The Revenge* (2002-2003), *Second Chance* (2005-2006), *Storm Over Paradise* (2007-2008), *Cursed by the Sea* (2009-2010), *Teresa* (2010-2011), etc. In most cases, the main character's name is taken for the title because viewers tend to have peculiar attachments to them. For instance, a Telenovela named '*Brothers*' (season one started in the year 2020)¹ became popularly known among its viewers as '*Cardo*' (the name refers to the main character in the series). It is quite interesting to see Ghanaian viewers caught up in traffic

¹ Season 2 of brothers is now being telecast on Max TV.

watching the Telenovela on their mobile phones because they just cannot afford to miss an episode. This reflects an addiction to Telenovelas among some Ghanaian viewers.

To Hlormenyor (2017), Telenovelas often carry different storylines such as love and marital relationships that often appeal to their viewers, generating their desire to watch the next episode as one ends. Apart from the storylines which attract viewers in Ghana, the use of a Ghanaian language via voice-overs has made it a popular programme, widening the viewership to include a larger population of mainly illiterate or semi-literate Ghanaians. It must be pointed out that the local language translation using voice-overs was initiated by an Akan-speaking television station called United Television (UTV) during the telecast of the Telenovela titled '*Wild at Heart*' which was popularly called '*Maricruz*' based on the name of the main character (Hlormenyor, 2017). Other Ghanaian TV Stations such as Adom TV, Obonu TV, GTV and MAX TV followed this new broadcast strategy and popularized the Telenovelas. The use of voice-overs in Twi, according to Dsane-Laryea (2019), has led to the coinage of a new television programming lexicon, "*Twinovela*" (a combination of the language "Twi" with the lexical item "novela") among viewers.

The use of the Ghanaian language through translation has not only led to the indigenization of the content of the Telenovelas but also reflects the localization of a foreign cultural artefact which has gained a global status through broadcasting. Such indigenization and linguistic adaption of a foreign programme content reflect how the world has become a global village (globalization) where transmission of culture, in this case, the Telenovela via broadcasting has become so widespread that it has been adapted to suit the viewer's local context. The process involved here is what has come to be generally known as "glocalization". Glocalization, that is, global mass media often portrayed in a local context, gives people a better sense of identity as well as a familiar lens through which to view global

media. Glocalisation suggests that people need a local context to understand or appreciate global phenomena. The globalisation of media consumption and the need for glocalisation reflects the cultural similarities and differences people across the world share. This interplay of the global and the local is necessary to find an appropriate meaning for the Telenovela series (Dsane-Laryea, 2019).

Against this backdrop, this paper explores how the indigenization and glocalization of these foreign Telenovelas in the context of their prevalence affect the promotion of local languages in Ghana. To this end, the paper attempts to answer these questions: Which TV station is the favourite of voice-over Telenovelas of viewers? What are the reasons for watching Telenovelas telecast in Ghanaian languages? Has the indigenization and glocalization of Telenovelas promoted Ghanaian languages?

Methodology

Using a qualitative exploratory research design via in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), data were collected from Telenovela viewers from three communities in Accra, two major markets and two universities. Accra was chosen as a study site since it is the capital of Ghana and its residents have access to television and can access the different television channels to watch these Telenovelas. Within this study site, we purposively selected seven communities where there appeared to be community interest in Telenovelas, based on the researcher's observation. These communities include Lapaz, Osu and Gbawe Mallam. Lapaz, as an urban area in Accra is one of the most popular and busiest commercial areas. It is densely populated and has many households consisting of compound houses². Many residents of this area are seen watching Telenovelas throughout the day³. Osu Community, known for its

² Compound house is a Ghanaian English phrase meaning a multi-household house.

³ People tend to congregate at the homes of those who possess television sets or at shops to watch the Telenovelas.

busy commercial, restaurant and nightlife activities, is located about 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) east of the central business district, Accra. Gbawe Mallam is a peri-urban community located on the main Kaneshie-Winneba Highway. In addition to these three communities, Makola and Agbogboshie markets (two major markets in Accra) were also selected for interaction with the market women. To further get diverse views for the study, two universities, University of Ghana (UG) and University of Education, Winneba, (UEW) students were also sampled for the study.

Two FGDs were conducted in each of the three communities, totaling six. The FGDs were conducted in the homes of frequent Telenovela viewers. The homes chosen were households with at least three families residing on the compound. Two members from each family were selected to participate in the FGDs. The FGDs comprised 8 members per group. The homes selected in these three communities were based on researchers' frequent visits to these communities and observed that these homes were frequent viewers and addicted to Telenovelas with voice-overs. In the two selected markets, in-depth interviews were conducted with market women who were frequent viewers of Telenovelas. These women were identified through the snowball technique. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted in each market following the argument of Guest et al. (2006) that in studies of more heterogeneous samples, 12 interviews will suffice. To this end, we had 16 participants interviewed as data saturation was reached after the 14th interview, at which point no new concepts emerged from subsequent interviews (Patton, 2014). Our sample size was also deemed adequate as sample size determination is guided by the criterion of informational redundancy, that is, sampling can be terminated when no new information is elicited by sampling more units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To get further insights and diverse views into the research goal, four FGDs were conducted among university

students who were interested in Telenovelas with voice-overs. These viewers were identified through the snowball sampling technique. Two FGDs were conducted in each University among first and final year students. Eight (8) members per group from these Universities (UG and UEW) participated in these FGDs.

Two data collection instruments, namely FGDs and in-depth interviews, were used to strengthen the reliability and validity of the study. As argued by Yin (2011) data triangulated from different sources add to the study's credibility and trustworthiness. In exploratory qualitative research designs, the views of participants are sought more closely, so that insight can be gained into their thoughts in relation to the question of interest (Smith & McGannon, 2018). In this regard, an interview guide was developed based on the study's objectives. The guide was delineated into four sections namely: participants' background, favourite Telenovela TV stations watched, reasons for watching voice-over Telenovelas and views on whether or not voice-over Telenovelas promoted Ghanaian languages.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all COVID-19 protocols were observed during the data collection in terms of maintaining social distance and wearing of masks. The interviews were conducted from September to November 2021. Participants made themselves available at their own convenience. The interview sessions lasted about 30-45 minutes. Verbal consent was obtained from participants before interviews commenced, and anonymity was also guaranteed by the decision to use pseudonyms. The interviews were conducted in both English and a Ghanaian local language that participants felt at ease with. This approach of using both English and a local language was adopted to make participants feel at ease to answer the questions without having to worry about expressing themselves in English when one is not that capable. These FGDs were recorded based on the consent of the participants. The English language was the option chosen by the university students as it is the major language of instruction across all universities and all participants

could easily communicate in it. The university students' FGDs were conducted online via zoom and were also recorded. The online was opted for by the university students as that made it easier for them to join wherever they were during the interview session which was conducted in the evening (between 7pm and 8pm) on a weekend. The evening and weekends were deemed appropriate as these were the times these students were less busy with academic work and available for the FGDs. In all 128 participants (see Table 1) were used for the study.

Table 1: Sources of data collection

| | Female | Male | |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| FGD 1 | | | |
| • Lapaz | 4 | 4 | |
| • Osu Community | 5 | 3 | |
| • Gbawe Mallam Community | 5 | 3 | |
| Total | 14 | 10 | 24 |
| University of Ghana | | | |
| • First year | 4 | 4 | |
| • Final Year | 7 | 1 | |
| Total | 11 | 5 | 16 |
| University of Education | | | |
| • First Year | 7 | 1 | |
| • Final Year | 6 | 2 | |
| Total | 13 | 3 | 16 |
| FGD 2 | | | |
| • Lapaz Community | 5 | 3 | |
| • Osu Community | 7 | 1 | |
| • Gbawe Mallam Community | 6 | 2 | |
| Total | 18 | 6 | 24 |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----------|------------|
| University of Ghana | | | |
| • First year Students | 6 | 2 | |
| • Final Year Students | 6 | 2 | |
| Total | 12 | 4 | 16 |
| University of Education | | | |
| • First Year Students | 7 | 1 | |
| • Final Year Students | 7 | 1 | |
| Total | 14 | 2 | 16 |
| In-depth Interviews | | | |
| • Agbogbloshie Market | 8 | - | |
| • Makola Market | 8 | - | |
| Total | 16 | | 16 |
| Total | | | 128 |

Study Participants' Background

Perceived to be of interest to women, Telenovelas have, however, also caught the attention and interest of men, particularly in the communities of Lapaz and Gbawe Mallam and students in the university. More than half⁴ (82 out of 112) of our participants were females with the remaining being male participants (30). The average age of our participants was 28 with the youngest participants being 18 years and the oldest being 50 years old. About 39.1% of the study participants were married, 42.9% were single, 11.7% were in co-habiting unions and 6.2% were separated. Our analysis also shows that apart from the 64 university students having tertiary educational backgrounds, about 31.2%⁵ of participants from the selected communities and 25% (i.e. 4 out of 16) of market women had tertiary education. The analysis showed that (47.9%)⁶ of the viewers from the

⁴ That is 73.3%. The total (112) here excludes the market women (16) interviewed. The total figure (112) here includes the interviewees from the three communities and university students.

⁵ That is 15 out of 48 participants.

⁶ That is 23 out of 48 participants.

communities and the markets (50%)⁷ have secondary education (see Table 2). This suggests that Telenovelas have attracted all irrespective of educational background.

Table 2: Demographic information of participants

| Personal Information | Number |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Gender</i> | |
| • Male | 30 |
| • Female | 98 |
| <i>Total</i> | 128 |
| <i>Level of Education</i> | |
| <i>Tertiary Education</i> | |
| • <i>Students</i> | 64 |
| • <i>Market women</i> | 4 |
| • <i>Three Communities (Lapaz, Osu, Gbawe Mallam)</i> | 15 |
| <i>Secondary Education</i> | |
| • <i>Market women</i> | 8 |
| • <i>Three Communities (Lapaz, Osu, Gbawe Mallam)</i> | 23 |
| <i>Basic Education</i> | |
| • <i>Market women</i> | 4 |
| • <i>Three Communities (Lapaz, Osu, Gbawe Mallam)</i> | 10 |
| <i>Total</i> | 128 |
| <i>Marital Status</i> | |
| • Married | 50 |
| • Single | 55 |
| • Co-Habiting | 15 |
| • Separated | 8 |
| <i>Total</i> | 128 |

⁷ That is 8 out of 16 participants.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis following the six delineated phases (Braun & Clarke, 2019). These steps were followed in analysing the data collected from the field. Given that the research focused on three thematic areas (favourite voice-over Telenovela TV station, reasons for watching voice-over Telenovelas and role of voice-over Telenovelas in Ghanaian language promotion), it was necessary to thoroughly examine the data repeatedly and code segments of the data as well as develop themes that addressed the objectives of the study. The FGDs and interviews were therefore transcribed verbatim to get a sense of the data, assess the completeness, and identify new themes not initially considered in the interview guides. Then initial codes that reflected the study objectives were generated and sorted into themes creating meaningful units as well as identifying extracts from the data that reiterated the themes. Next, the initial codes and themes generated were reviewed as we re-read the transcripts and extracts associated with the codes that were collated. We then developed conceptual themes that relate to the study objectives. Based on the interview guide, themes coding categories were identified. Finally, descriptive quotes were selected, and extracts were used to represent the interviewees' views on the study's focus. All the participant identifiers used in this study are pseudonyms.

Discussion of Findings

After analysing the interviews of study participants, four central themes emerged and were supported by ten sub-themes (see Figure 1)

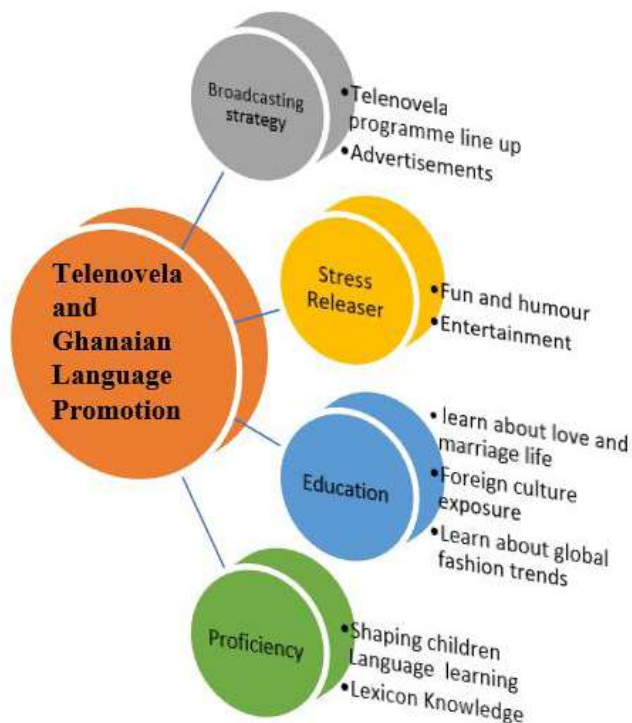


Figure 1: Emergent themes and sub-themes

Figure 1 shows the final thematic map generated from the interview data analysed. The four main themes (*Broadcasting strategy*, *Stress Releaser*, *Education*, and *Proficiency*) supported by nine sub-themes will be discussed in the next section.

Broadcasting Strategy

In Ghana, many private Television (TV) stations have emerged apart from the state-owned TV station known as Ghana Television (GTV). These new TV stations include United TV (UTV), ADOM TV, TV3, Obonu TV, METRO TV, MAX TV, Kessben TV among others that have programme line-ups consisting mainly of voice-over Telenovelas. In the bid to answer our main goal of the study, it was expedient to

explore the favourite Telenovela TV stations watched among our participants. Our finding shows that MAX TV, UTV and ADOM TV are popular and well-known voice-over Telenovela TV stations among interviewees. However, from the narrations, more than half (69.5%)⁸ of the participants prefer MAX TV, one of the private TV stations in Ghana that predominantly telecasts Telenovela in Akan (using Twi and Fante dialects). MAX TV's broadcasting strategy (one of the central themes) supported by two sub-themes (Telenovela line-up and Advertisement) were the reasons that emerged from the data for its preference and wider audience.

MAX TV has coined a term known as '*double double*' (repetition of episodes) which tends to influence their broadcasting strategy. MAX TV, therefore, telecasts its Telenovelas throughout the day during weekdays as the station repeats previous episodes during the daytime. It also has omnibus sessions during weekends for all those who missed any of these series during the week to catch up and fill in the missing story. The participants argued that their preference for MAX TV is because of this innovative strategy. They opined that though the Telenovela programme line-up is not loaded, interesting advertisements shown during the programme make their station quite unique.

Telenovela programme line-up

Participants' interaction shows that the strategy used by MAX TV, in terms of the continuous line-up of their Telenovela in 'craving' order makes it quite appealing. Telenovelas shown follow *each* other with interesting storylines that urge viewers to watch episode after episode. During the interviews, there were three particular Telenovelas that were ongoing known as 'Double Kara' (*but referred to as 'Kara'*), 'Brothers' (*but referred to as 'Cardo'*), and '*The Heiress*' that were of immense attraction to viewers. These three Telenovelas shown on MAX TV, could be a

⁸ That is 89 out of 128 participants.

contributing factor to the preference for the station by most of the market women and families of the selected communities. These voice-over Telenovelas provided them with the opportunity to join in the conversation and express their views about the series. Such conversations according to participants make one not to be 'left out' of the 'Telenovela world'. A participant echoed: *'you know we discuss these episodes and sometimes even argue about what will happen in the next episode. If you don't watch Telenovela you end up being left out of these conversations'* (Market woman, Agboghloshie market).

Advertisements

Interviewees opined that their preference for MAX TV was not only because the station aired all its Telenovelas in the local language, but also because it does not show too many advertisements during the Telenovela programme. And the few it shows are interesting. Accentuating this, a participant said: *'MAX TV is doing well, they show many Telenovelas in Akan, you know they have nice adverts and that's why I like that station'* (Market woman, Makola Market). Another participant narrated thus: *'I like MAX TV, not many adverts during its transmission you know, and they repeat their interesting episode so you don't miss anything'* (Female Student, UG).

Following MAX TV is UTV, another Ghanaian private TV station, the first station in Ghana to telecast Telenovelas in the Akan language and, as indicated earlier in the paper, uses a combination of Twi and Fante dialects which attracted many viewers including the illiterate and semi-literate. The findings showed that about 17.9%⁹ of the participants mentioned UTV as their favourite Telenovela station. They argued that UTV is the station that excites them with its good storylines and panel discussion after the episode. Therefore, they learn a lot from the discussion. A participant echoed: *I like the way 'Alagege' (host of the discussion at UTV) asks the questions and even attempts*

⁹ That is 23 out of 128 participants.

to summarize the episode before the next episode is shown (Female, Gbawe Mallam). Another participant said: 'UTV Telenovela is nice and I enjoy them, I have heard of the other stations but I think I have gotten addicted to UTV programmes so I prefer UTV' (Female, Lapaz).

ADOM TV, was the third preference among participants. According to Hlormenyor (2017), it is well-known and one of the topmost private stations that telecasts Telenovelas in Ghanaian language which attracts high viewership. ADOM TV became popular due to an Indian Telenovela titled '*KumKum Bhagya*' which was aired in the Twi and Fante dialects of Akan.

From these findings, it appears MAX TV has overtaken UTV as the most preferred station for Telenovelas. UTV has been touted in the literature as being famous and highly preferred among Telenovela viewers in Ghana on account of its telecast of Telenovelas in the local language (Hlormenyor, 2017). This implies that the innovative broadcasting strategy adopted by MAX TV has worked.

Reasons for Watching Telenovelas Aired in Ghanaian Language

One of the study's aims was to explore why study participants will opt for Telenovelas aired in Ghanaian language. From our analysis, two main themes (stress releaser and education) emerged from the data with 6 sub-themes supporting these themes. These themes and sub-themes are discussed in detail below.

Stress Releaser

Studies have shown that Telenovela releases stress among their viewers, hence the reason for watching them (Dsane-Laryea, 2019; Adia, 2014). This was evident in the study as participants argued that watching these Telenovelas in a local language eases stress as it is full of fun, humour and entertainment.

Fun and Humour

From the perspective of the majority (75%)¹⁰ of market women, the reason why they watch Telenovelas in the local language is to ease their stress after a hectic day. For these women, Telenovela is for relaxation and fun after a hectic day in the market. These women pointed out that, local names are given to these foreign characters and sometimes the humour attached to the translation of the story makes it full of fun. A market woman reiterated: *'I feel like watching something in the evening for relaxation after a hectic day, I choose Telenovela, you know the way they speak Twi and sometimes the exaggeration makes me relax'* (Market Woman, Makola Market). About 21.3% of the students also echoed this same view of the market women and narrated that after a hectic day of lectures and learning, they sometimes watch these series to ease off some stress. However, these students pointed out that when school is in session, they watch these series during the first few weeks of the semester, but when studies get tougher in the semester and examinations approach, they catch up with the omnibus series during the weekend. A student at UG thus narrated: *'you know as they translate, they create jokes which makes it full of fun too, so we prefer to watch'* (Female Student, UG).

Entertainment

The male participants were of the view that watching these Telenovelas entertain them and their families and, in the end, release their stress after a hectic day. This is because they sit together as a family to watch and with the humour created, they are entertained and do not really feel like going out in the evenings to join their friends. For instance, in Lapaz community, most of the males who participated in the focus group discussions watch Telenovela with their spouses or families at a set time for their evenings' entertainment which tends to make them relax. A man thus said: *'As a driver, I join my wife and children as they*

¹⁰ That is 12 out of 16 market women interviewed.

watch, I do not know all the storyline but just to laugh and relax, I come home to join them to watch it instead of being with my friends' (Male, Lapaz).

Education

Education was the second central theme that emerged from the data as we explored the choice of Telenovelas in the local language. The majority (i.e., 72.9%)¹¹ of the study participants watch these Telenovelas because they learn about love and marriage lives, get insight into foreign cultures, and are updated on global fashion trends.

Learn about love and marriage life

Kwode et al. (2020) and Adia (2014) have argued that the majority of Telenovela telecasts on Ghanaian TV stations are about love and marriage relationship. Our interaction with the study participants shows that more than half of the students (70.31%)¹² and viewers selected from the studied communities (79.1%)¹³ watched these series because they learn and gain much insight about relationships with respect to love and marriage life. A student echoed: *'Most of the storylines are always about love life, they are romantic, you know, as I am young, I think it makes me know more about love life' (Male Student, UEW)*. The same view was expressed by another student who thus: *'It is interesting, how the love life is portrayed in foreign countries as you watch and try to compare your relationship' (Female Student, UG)*. A young resident female participant also said: *'Telenovela stories are beautiful, it is full of love and romantic matters that I do learn from, sometimes I tease my husband with some of the characters who tend to be romantic and ask him to imitate them and treat me as such' (Female, Osu Community)*. This informal education about love and marital life was found to be predominant among participants

¹¹ 70 out of 128

¹² That is 45 out of 64 students interviewed.

¹³ That is 38 out of 48 participants interviewed from the communities.

who were young (ages between 18 and 30 years), a reflection of youthfulness along with the perception of love life as very romantic and beautiful, a phenomenon which is not particularly part of the Ghanaian culture.

Interestingly, the majority (75%)¹⁴ of women do not watch Telenovela to learn more about love life. They argued that these series are foreign and thus portray love and marriage in a manner different from our Ghanaian culture. They contend further that such romantic love relationship is not a norm in the Ghanaian setting, hence they rather get insight and education about the nature of love and marriage life of the countries of origin of these Telenovelas.

Among these market women, voice-over Telenovelas make them understand life issues from different perspectives as sentiments are expressed during their discussions of these series. A market woman accentuated this and said: *'People voice out their sentiments and make me to understand marital life issues better'* (Market woman, Madina Market). About 31.2% of residents in the selected communities shared this same view of the market women as a man narrated thus: *'we know such beautiful love do not exist here, it is for the white people you know. They can do it, you know what I mean like kissing all over the place to express their love'* (Male, Osu Community).

Foreign Culture Exposure

The responses from study participants also revealed that watching these Telenovelas give them insight into foreign cultures, especially about love and marital life. This view was expressed among majority (83.3%)¹⁵ of Telenovela viewers in the selected communities (Lapaz, Gbawe Mallam and Osu) as well as among the market women. According to these participants, the Telenovela storylines inform them about the manner and exhibition of love and marital life in the country that the series originated from, consequently they get much insight into that

¹⁴ That is 12 out of 16 market women interviewed.

¹⁵ That is 40 out of 48 viewers interviewed from the communities.

country's culture. This obviously sets up paradigms for comparison: the foreign culture on one hand, and the Ghanaian culture, on the other. Panel discussions that take place after an episode as well as conversations that ensue between viewers in the market after an episode aired the previous day provide the opportunity to viewers appreciate further the cultural differences. A market woman thus narrated: *'We get to know the culture of these countries which informs the discussion afterwards, you know during the discussion, they compare our culture with theirs' (Market Woman, Makola Market)*. Another male participant from Gbawe Mallam echoed: *'we get to know more about the white people and how they handle their love culture, you know and sometimes our wives try to compare us with them (sighs) ..., some of their ways are not our ways and we cannot be like them' (Male, Gbawe Mallam)*. However, less than one-third (29.68%)¹⁶ of students also expressed this same view of being educated about foreign cultures with respect to love and marriage life. A student from UEW simply said: *'I get to know more about the way they handle their love lives in other countries like Mexico and Spain (Male, Student, UEW)*.

Learn about global fashion trends

According to Antwi et al. (2016) and Kwode et al. (2020), Telenovelas provide the opportunity for viewers to be informed about the latest global fashion trends. This was evident in the study as majority (55 out of 64)¹⁷ of interviewees particularly university students pointed out they watch these series to learn more about new fashion trends worldwide. For these students, the characters are beautiful and are often clustered in beautiful outfits, hence they sometimes follow a particular character in the series and make choices when buying a dress and making their hairstyles. A UG student reiterated: *'I sometimes buy a dress by following a particular style a character wore in the series I*

¹⁶ This is 19 out of 64 students interviewed.

¹⁷ That is 85.9%.

watched' (Female Student, UG). Another student said: 'Did you see the hairstyle used for Andeng's (a character in a Telenovela titled A Love to last) wedding, I just love it and style my hair as such' (Female student, UG).

Telenovela and Ghanaian Local Language Promotion

On the contribution of Telenovelas to the promotion of Ghanaian local languages, 75% of market women and 62.5% of residents in the selected communities, as well as 31.2% of students agreed to a large extent that Ghanaian language is being promoted. In this regard, we further explored which of the Ghanaian languages is being promoted. The narration of the study participants showed that the Akan language (especially the Twi and Fante dialects) is at the top of the list as the main local language being promoted. In Ghana, there are five major indigenous languages (Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagaare and Dagbani) (Dakubu, 1996) with English as the official language. The Akan language has been noted as a popular language spoken (Tindi & Ayiku, 2018) in Accra and this might be the reason why the TV stations decided to indigenise and glocalise Telenovelas using the Akan language (Twi and Fante dialects). Majority of the market women argued that not many of the Telenovelas are aired in the other Ghanaian languages. Only one TV station called Obonu TV, shows some Telenovelas in the Ga language which has not attracted higher viewership, probably due to the Twi and Fante dialects being used by most of the TV stations. A market woman said: *'I feel Twi and Fante are being promoted to an extent as children and non-Twi speakers are beginning to learn new vocabulary and understand the language'* (Market woman, Agbobloshie Market). A university student also pointed out: *'Not many Telenovelas are aired in Ga so the Ga language is not promoted if I may say, there is a new Telenovela in Hausa on GTV now, but not popular as not many people watch it. The Akan language appears to be on top'* (Female Student, UG). The interviewees of the three communities selected shared the

same views expressed by the marketwomen as they also claimed Telenovela contributes to the promotion of the Akan language. A participant narrated thus: *‘Many people watch the Twi Telenovela because they understand it, unlike the English ones. I believe that Twi is being promoted due to Telenovela (Female, Osu Community).*

However, about 29.6% of students interviewed argued that the Akan language is not being promoted properly as there is more to the promotion of a local language. These TV stations sometimes do not consider the entire syntax, phonology, and phonetics dimensions of the language as they translate the Telenovelas. A student explained that: *‘Translating Telenovelas into a local language does not successfully promote the language as the syntax, the phonetics and phonology aspects are important to help you to learn the language better’ (Male Student, UG).* More than half (62.5%) of the students have a different view as they opined that airing Telenovela in a local language does not necessarily promote the language, it just increases the number of viewers as more illiterate and semi-literate people get the opportunity to watch foreign programmes (such as Telenovela) since they can easily comprehend the storylines, which they might not have been able to do had the translation not been done. This finding may suggest that illiteracy (in English) contributes to the preference for watching voice-over Telenovelas.

The interviewees were further asked about various ways in which the Ghanaian language is being promoted. The responses of participants generated one main central theme (proficiency) with two sub-themes (lexicon knowledge and shaping children’s local language learning) and these are discussed in the next section.

Proficiency

Our study findings show that proficiency with respect to lexicon knowledge and shaping children’s local language learning were ways that contribute to the promotion of Ghanaian languages.

Lexicon Knowledge

Interestingly, the responses of participants revealed that even native Akan speakers tend to learn new vocabulary and get further insight into the phonetic and morphological aspects of the language based on watching these voice-over Telenovelas. This was accentuated in the study as an Akan female interviewee revealed: *'I am able to learn some words which I previously did not know of' (Female, Lapaz Community)*. A few students (28.1%) explained that with the airing of Telenovelas in local languages, some foreigners and non-native speakers of Twi have through that learnt and tried to speak Twi. A student narrated: *I quite remember some foreigners came to Ghana and tried to speak Twi as they watched the Telenovela (Female Student, UG)*. Another student reiterated: *I am not a native speaker of Twi, so Telenovela gives me the opportunity to learn more vocabulary of Twi to enhance my communication (Male Student, UEW)*.

Some interviewees also explained that through the local language-based Telenovelas, they have been able to learn new vocabulary. Another market woman reiterated: *'Frequent watching of a Telenovela in a particular language will help you to learn the language if you do not understand it' (Market woman, Makola Market)*. This finding was also evident in the study carried out by Antwi et al. (2016). From these utterances, lexicon knowledge is gained by these viewers, as they begin to improve on their use of the Akan language.

Shaping Children's Language learning

A Telenovela viewer made the following revelation: *'My children now speak Twi because of these series, I do not speak Twi with them, we speak Ewe, but now due to these series you see them speaking the Twi as they play with their friends' (Male, Lapaz community)*. A market woman also pointed out that: *'It helps me and my children to learn Twi, the children ask me the meaning of the Twi words as they watch and I get excited as it helps me to teach them the language which they should have*

been nurtured with' (Market woman, Agbogbloshie market). These revelations suggest that Telenovelas are facilitating the learning of Twi by children.

Conclusion and Implication

The study investigated voice-over Telenovelas and their role in the promotion of Ghanaian languages. This was done using multiple data sources (focus groups and interviews) from diverse Telenovela viewers (residents of some communities in Accra; that is, Lapaz, Gbawe Mallam and Osu communities; market women and UG and UEW students in Ghana) to answer the three main objectives of the study; namely, the favourite voice-over Telenovela TV station, the reasons for watching voice-over Telenovelas and the role of these Telenovelas in the promotion of Ghanaian languages. Findings from the study suggest that voice-over Telenovelas appeal to all irrespective of gender, age and educational background. From the study, private TV stations have attracted the illiterate, semi-literate and the literate and are getting a higher market share due to their telecasting of Telenovelas in Ghanaian languages. MAX TV, a private TV station is predominantly preferred among study participants, followed by UTV and Adom TV. MAX TV appears to have the highest market share and viewership due to its innovative broadcast strategy which entails frequent broadcast of the Telenovelas and avoidance of excessive advertising while making sure advertising interruptions are interesting.

Evidence from the study further showed that releasing stress and education were the main reasons why participants watch these voice-over Telenovelas. These Telenovelas serve as a stress releaser for majority of the participants' families as they get the opportunity to spend time together after their return from work. Spending of such time together coupled with humour and fun created by the translators of these voice-over Telenovelas make them exciting and entertaining. The study participants, therefore, find the indigenisation of Telenovelas a good stress reliever.

On education, the younger viewers (between the ages of 18 and 30 years) indicated that they learn more about love and marital life relationships whereas the older adults (in this case the market women) tend to gather knowledge about the countries of origin and get to understand love and marriage life in a different context. These older adults tend to compare the knowledge thus gained with the Ghanaian context. This comparison is reflected in the panel discussions held after an episode as opportunities are given to viewers to share their thoughts and opinions (via phone calls and social media) about the characters and their behaviour with respect to Ghanaian culture.

Another interesting finding of the study with respect to education is the knowledge acquired on fashion trends. Study findings showed that younger Telenovela viewers (i.e., University students and those from Lapaz community) watch these Telenovelas to be updated with global fashion trends. To these younger viewers, such fashion update is key as they are informed about the latest fashion styles, thus ensuring that they are abreast of global trends in the fashion. Interestingly, the older participants (predominantly market women) were not very interested in updates on fashion trends.

The study findings also indicated that viewers, including children, develop their vocabulary by watching the Telenovelas. Adults get to learn new lexical items because of the breadth of experiences and issues dramatized in the Telenovelas while children who have not been brought up learning the local language get the opportunity to do so.

From the study, it is evident that Telenovelas play a significant role in the promotion of Ghanaian languages, especially Twi. The study participants felt that this was the case especially considering the exposure that the Akan language was receiving in contrast with the other major languages, namely, Ga, Akan, Dagaare, Dagbani and Ewe. While adults are expanding their lexicon children are learning about the language and developing their fluency in it. From the perspective of the impact on children, we

project the emergence of a future generation that would appreciate and contribute to the promotion of our Ghanaian languages. The glocalization of these Telenovelas would also contribute to the development of pragmatic knowledge of Akan and the improvement of communicative competence among viewers as they learn the contextual use of certain Akan expressions. That said, we also recommend that these TV stations should consider using the other major Ghanaian languages as voice-overs for the Telenovelas, as that would contribute to their development and valorisation.

References

- Adia, E. (2014). Programme element importance: an analysis of Telenovelas in the Ghanaian media. *International Journal of ICT and Management*, 2(1), 96-101.
- Antwi, R., Agyeiwaa, J., Darko, C. P., & Anning, A. (2016). *Assessing the impact of telenovela on television viewership: A study of United Television (UTV)*. (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Christian Service University College, Ghana. Retrieved from: <http://ir.csuc.edu.gh:8080/jspui/bitstream/123456789/294/2/Thesis-Rebecca.pdf>
- Asiamah, E., O. & Ofori-Birikorang (2018). An Ethnographic Study of Audience Viewing of the Telenovela-Kumkum Bhagya at Selected Sites in Ghana. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. 8(6).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative research in sport, exercise and health*, 11(4), 589-597.
- Dakubu, M. E. K. (1996). *Language and Community: The View from Accra*. Ghana Universities Press.
- Donkor, E. M. (2013). *Teenagers, Television Serials and Reality: A study of Madina (Ghana)*. (Unpublished Master's thesis). University of Ghana, Legon. Retrieved from: [https://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/bitstream/handle/123456789/23740/Teenagers,%20Television%20Serials,%20and%20Reality%20A%20Study%20Of%20Madina%20\(Ghana\).pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/bitstream/handle/123456789/23740/Teenagers,%20Television%20Serials,%20and%20Reality%20A%20Study%20Of%20Madina%20(Ghana).pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
- Dsane-Laryea, E. (2019). *Glocalization of Media Content: A Case Of "Kumkum Bahgya"* A (Doctoral dissertation) Ghana Institute of Journalism. Retrieved from: <https://repository.gjj.edu.gh/handle/gjjdr/189>
- Ghana Statistical Service, (2022). About 8 million persons in Ghana are illiterate. Retrieved from: <https://statsghana.gov.gh/infobankdetails.php?infobank=MjI5NjA1MzU3Mi43NTU1/infodesk/249ssp0p7r> (accessed on 8 June, 2023)
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. 2006. "How Many Interviews Are Enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability". *Field Methods*, 59-82.
- Hlormenyor, C. K. (2017). Telenovelas and female audience: a study of Telenovela viewers in the Tema Municipality (Doctoral dissertation), University of Education, Winneba. Retrieved from: <https://afribary.com/works/telenovelas-and-female-audience-a-study-of-telenovela-viewers-in-the-tema-municipality>
- Kwode, P. A. K., Agbenyo, J. S., & Yussif, A. B. (2020). The Influence of Telenovelas on the Social Life of the Youth of Tamale Metropolis of Ghana. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) | IV(VIII)*,
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- Smith, B., & McGannon, K. R. (2018). Developing rigor in qualitative research: Problems and opportunities within sport and exercise psychology. *International review of sport and exercise psychology*, *11*(1), 101-121.
- Stavans, T. (2010). *Library of Latinos Civilization: Telenovelas*, Santa Barbara CA: Greenwood.
- Tindi, S., & Ayiku, C. N. A. (2018). Local reception of global media texts: Telenovelas as sites of cultural mixture in Ghana. *Legon Journal of the Humanities*, *29*(1), 259-282.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Applications of case study research*. Sage.