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# Community Radio Content in Print Facebook Posts: Limitations and Opportunities for Indigenous Languages

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## Abstract

With the advent of social media, traditional analogue radio has converged to audio-visual with print formats. Using the case of community radio in Zimbabwe, this article explores how radio broadcasters have taken advantage of media convergence to disseminate text as implant on radio. A qualitative content analysis of community radio platforms on Facebook reveals that some multilingual community radio stations still maintain their local languages in written text as captions or print, although there is a tendency towards English and major indigenous language dominance. Using language revitalisation theory, we argue that merging written text with radio on social media should always maintain the distinctness of radio and text as implant that reflect the local languages of community radio stations to revitalise or strengthen indigenous languages. We find the affordances of digital connection through Facebook useful to revitalise languages which are no longer used in the everyday communication of a digital audience.

**Keywords:** community radio; Facebook posts; indigenous languages; radio convergence

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## Introduction

Radio has always been known as a “blind” medium and a prime disseminator of popular culture through music or talk shows enabling listeners to visualise or imagine realities by listening to the human voice (de Beer 1998). Although utilising print text for marketing purposes, from its inception and development in the early twentieth century, radio detached itself from a visual culture and print to only audible means of communication (Patnode 2011). Today, the internet has enabled radio to converge from its primary characteristic of “blind” medium to audio-visual with print formats since digital platforms as multimedia forums can accommodate all forms of media. For instance, some radio stations have become audio-visual on YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter with print text. Media convergence affording different formats for communication has knit together multimedia means of content distribution (Alejandro 2010; Herkman 2012; Jenkins 2004, 2008). There are now social media platforms for radio in audio-visual formats with text (Cordeiro 2012; Farrell 2016). Digital transformations, namely social media, have changed radio from its legacy of analogue broadcast to becoming more digital with internet broadcasting provisions, podcasts, and social media affordances (Laor 2022). Other than podcasts, what remains questionable is the authenticity of written text in print or captions and subtitles as radio content ubiquitous on digital radio platforms. Questioning whether podcasts are radiogenic, Berry (2016, 1) notes that

when evaluating any new medium or technology we often turn to the familiar as a point of reference. Podcasting was no different, drawing obvious comparisons with radio. While there are traits within all podcasts that are radiogenic, one must also consider whether such distinctions are beneficial to the medium.

From this point of departure, we critique the affordances of print texts or captions as radio content on Facebook. Unlike many studies that focus on the audio-visual (Bosch 2014; Cordeiro 2012; Farrell 2016; Williams and Tkach 2022), this article takes a different approach by analysing the dissemination of radio content in print posts or textual versions. Although radio schedules were always marketed in newspapers and magazines before the inception of digital platforms, the marketing is, however, not the same with digital platforms such as Facebook which accommodate multimedia formats with backup print text or written text in captions or notes.

One might dismiss the ubiquitous textual or print posts on digital forums as radio content but accept the audio-visual format yet radio was never known as visual but audible. This article does not intend to define written text in graphic images and captions or subtitles as radio but accepts that digital radio platforms utilise print to market audible radio content on social media. Using a case study of community radio in Zimbabwe, we link textual posts to the language on community radio. Taking note of the indigenous language culture of community radio, we signify textual posts as captions or artefacts of radio content in local languages. In other words, we view textual posts in indigenous languages (major and minority languages) as reflections of the lingo or artefacts of

community radio content. By print or textual versions in this article, we refer to Facebook notes in the form of captions or subtitles and written text in graphic images, not necessarily audio-visual. This is because written text on digital platforms ranges from captions (subtitles) to written text on graphic images (besides links which are obviously in written text). Our analysis of print or text in indigenous languages is based on the question: Do print or textual versions merge as radio content on social media and in what way do they reflect indigenous languages on community radio? The reason for the selection of print or textual versions of community radio was to critique the significance of Facebook notes or captions/subtitles and written text in graphic images on social media as outputs of local culture on radio. The article gives salience to indigenous languages while questioning the authenticity of Facebook notes and written text in graphic images as outputs of community radio. The transition of radio to digital platforms is worthy of discussion whenever focusing on African languages (major and minor) in written text on an English-dominant site like Facebook.

## Community Radio and Indigenous Languages in Zimbabwe

English, Shona, and Ndebele have been the dominant languages in Zimbabwe's media landscape until the licensing of community radio in 2021. English has been the official language since the colonial era. Between 1923 and 1980, Shona and Ndebele became official languages in education because the colonial regime's high-ranking white government officials could speak Ndebele and Shona (Makoni 1998; Makoni, Makoni, and Nyika 2008). The post-colonial period between 1980 and the 1990s was characterised by the contestation of Shona and Ndebele speakers in government and media. In the late 1990s, the call for the recognition of minority languages began to rise in the education sector as they were marginalised both in government and in the media. English, Shona, and Ndebele dominated the state-controlled public broadcasting services (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023b; Moyo 2004). For instance, public radio broadcasting, namely National FM, Khulumanani FM, Power FM, Radio Zimbabwe, and Classic 263 remain Shona- and Ndebele-dominant with limited airtime for minority languages (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023a, 2023b). The licensing of commercial radio broadcastings services from 2012 did not necessarily promote minority languages but reinforced the commercialisation of major indigenous languages (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023b; Ndlovu 2011; Salawu 2021).

In 2013, the Constitution of Zimbabwe recognised 16 languages, namely English, Shona, Ndebele, Nambya, Tonga, Kalanga, Ndau, Khoisan, Xhosa, Shangani, Venda, Sotho, Tswana, Xhosa, Chewa, and Chibarwe. We consider majority languages to be languages that are spoken by many people and minority languages as languages that are spoken by a few (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023b). Although there has been minority language revitalisation in education, media, and government in the past decade, the dominant and widely spoken languages still remain English, Shona, and Ndebele (Moyo and Mathe 2014; Salawu, Tsutsa, and Mpofu 2022; Tshabangu and Salawu 2022). The majority languages such as Ndebele are spoken by multilingual minorities given that

the minority languages were assimilated by dominant groups in the pre-colonial and colonial social strata (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023b, 2024). For example, Kalanga is a majority language yet the Kalanga-speaking people have been described as multilingual because of their ability to communicate in Ndebele (Dube and Wozniak 2021). Thus, minority indigenous languages had no traditional media of their own until the licensing of community radio broadcasting (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023a, 2023b). The licensing of community radio broadcasting between 2021 and 2022 by the Broadcasting Authority of Zimbabwe opened up opportunities for exclusive coverage of minority indigenous languages.

Community radio enhances multiculturalism, especially in Africa where there is a variety of ethnolinguistic groups, and overcomes illiteracy and lingual diversity while promoting the cultural independence of local people (Mano 2012; Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023a). It is noteworthy that community radio licencing in Zimbabwe has so far promoted the exclusive broadcasting of minority languages such as Tonga/Dombe, Sotho, Shangani, Nambya, Kalanga, Venda, Doma, Chibarwe, Sena, Chikunda, Chewa, Tswana, Tshwawo, Nyanja and Xhosa. However, Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023a) argue that these community radio stations are still too few to cater for all indigenous languages. The dominant languages, namely English, Ndebele, and Shona have been enjoying more space in the media (Ndlovu 2011; Salawu 2021; Salawu, Tsutsa, and Mpofo 2022); as Ndlovu (2011) plainly put it, digital media is dominated by dominant indigenous languages spoken by the majority. Media corporations set up “digital online media platforms among those groups that, despite globalisation and the persistent hegemony of English, still take strong historical, futuristic, political and cultural pride in their languages” (Salawu 2021, 6).

Community radio broadcasting reaches local people in their indigenous language and defies communication barriers caused by illiteracy and linguistic diversities (Mano 2012). Radio also appeals to local life as part of the popular cultural practice (Mano 2012; Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023b). De Beer (1998) argues that community radio aims to open up opportunities for local participation through the redistribution of communication channels to marginalised groups. Citing the Venda language on the *Muvhango* drama series in South Africa, Motsaathebe (2018) argues that indigenous language media such as community radio contributes to media diversity. Table 1 below shows the representation of minority and majority indigenous languages per community radio station in Zimbabwe. Table 1 reflects some multilingualism as more than one language is accommodated on radio space.

**Table 1.** Indigenous languages per community radio station in Zimbabwe

| Community radio  | Area          | Indigenous languages   |
|------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| Ntepe-Manama CRT | Manama Gwanda | Sotho and Ndebele      |
| Lyeja FM         | Hwange        | Nambya, Dombe, Ndebele |
| Ingcanga FM      | Mbembesi      | Xhosa, Ndebele         |

| <b>Community radio</b> | <b>Area</b>       | <b>Indigenous languages</b>        |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| Radio Bukalanga        | Plumtree          | Kalanga, Venda, Ndebele            |
| Bayethe FM             | Matobo            | Ndebele and Kalanga                |
| Beitbridge-Shashe CRT  | Beitbridge        | Venda, Shangani, Sotho, and Pfumbi |
| Twasumpuka FM          | Binga             | Tonga                              |
| Nyangani FM            | Nyanga            | Manyika, Hwesa, Buja               |
| Avuxeni FM             | Chiredzi          | Shangani, Shona, Ndau, Ndebele     |
| Chimanimani CRT        | Chimanimani       | Ndau, Shona                        |
| Vemuganga CRT          | Chipinge          | Ndau, Shona                        |
| Ndau CRT               | Mahenye (Garahwa) | Ndau, Shona                        |
| Kasambabezi FM         | Kariba            | Tonga, Shona                       |
| Madziwa FM             | Shamva            | Shona                              |

Source: Authors

The main characteristic of community radio broadcasting is that it is not aimed at profit making (de Beer 1998; Fourie 2001). Members of the community become the producers, journalists, managers, and audience since the station is administered and controlled by the local community. Community radio serves local people, giving them a voice and participation in sociopolitical and economic matters. Leketanyane, Molale, and Ogunsanya (2021, 50) note that “community radio programming is designed to reflect the specific interests and needs of the community it serves.” Specifically, community radio functions geographically as it disseminates local content for a specific audience. Community radio broadcasting programmes are participatory and promote horizontal communication for open debate purposes (Megwa 2007; Mathe and Motsaathebe 2003a). Community radio broadcasting has a serial approach with constant evaluation of programmes and an autonomous continuity of topics (Megwa 2007). The challenge is that community radio often depends on volunteers and a few paid staff and experiences financial constraints (Mmusi 2002; Megwa 2007). Community radio broadcasting also survives on donations from well-wishers, namely individuals, non-governmental organisations, and government, and attracts less advertising revenue (de Beer 1998; Fourie 2001). Given this lack of funds, this article questions the effectiveness of community radio on Facebook and its ability to embrace media convergence.

Twelve of the 14 community radio stations have active social media platforms. Community radio platforms have divergent numbers of followers and a growing audience interaction. Since community radio licensing started in 2021, we note that the adoption of social media for broadcasting also began recently as these community radio stations strive to be active on digital platforms. Among the community radio stations growing their Facebook presence are Vemuganga Community Radio with 8600 followers, Lyeja FM with 824 followers, Ntepe Manama with 2700 followers, Radio

Bukalanga with 1900 followers, Twasumpuka FM with 1000 followers, Nyangani Community Radio with 5200 followers, Avuxeni FM with 5200 followers, Chimanimani FM with 15 000 followers, Madziwa FM with 6400 followers, and Bayethe FM with 285 followers. It is important to note that the number of followers can fluctuate depending on the activeness of the Facebook page.

## Social Media and Radio Convergence

With the advancement of technology, media devices and platforms have enabled immediate access to information through the intersecting modes of consumption (Kolodzy 2009; Williams and Tkach 2022). Although there are many definitions of media convergence, scholars agree that it means the intersecting of media in one accessible platform of consumption (Alejandro 2010; Herkman 2012; Jenkins 2004). Jenkins (2004, 4) notes that “convergence alters the relationship between existing technologies, industries, markets, genres and audiences.” Digitalisation is an impetus for media convergence with the rise of the internet, particularly social media. All forms of media (print, radio, and television) now merge as one. However, with these advantages of convergence through the internet, access remains a challenge, especially in rural Africa where the internet is still considered expensive (Mathe 2022). Analogue radio devices still remain the most accessible in Africa compared with the internet or internet radio (Williams and Tkach 2022). It is noteworthy that radio and other analogue media remain the legacy media that serve communities which cannot access digital media such as Facebook (Bosch 2003).

On the other hand, social media is often used as a platform for sharing content by those with access to digital media platforms (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2022). Media users have become consumers and producers of news (Mathe 2023). Linking the media producer and the consumer, social media has become more participatory as community journalism in the light of community radio (Benkler 2006; Bosch 2014; Tkach and Williams 2018). Media convergence has led to the adaptation of newsrooms and renovated storytelling techniques (Pavlik 2001). Storytelling through social media now exploits different techniques in print text as captions. Bosch (2014) gives cases of commercial radio stations in South Africa that broadcast in multimedia versions with text versions of stories or links to multimedia packages in video television style. Referring to podcasts, Berry (2016, 1) notes that radio has become adaptable and has evolved with podcasting as its latest iteration. Podcasting is viewed as a non-linear model of broadcasting (Berry 2016). Edmund (2014, 2) argues that contemporary radio is “experimenting with ever more complex cross-media practices” such as social media, websites, and video which have become the output of radio stations thereby complicating the definition of what is known as radio (Berry 2014; Bonini 2012; Cordeiro 2012). Bonini perceives textual versions, websites, and social media as implants to the body of radio.

Radio is still a one-to-many means of communication. However, the telephone already made it partly a one-to-one medium (phone interview) and many-to-one (open mic, phone talk radio); to this we have to add SNS, which are at once a one-to-one (chat), one-to-many (tweets, FB notes or posts), many-to-many (FB Home, Twitter hashtags), many-to-one (FB comments) kind of media. (Bonini 2012, 18)

Bonini gives a scenario of live Italian radio platforms on Facebook with high audience engagement in the comments attached to radio programmes where fans and presenters shared an average of 60 to 100 YouTube links to music videos every day.

Thus, radio content can now be disseminated on social networking sites (SNS) in multimedia versions. However, Tkach and Williams (2022) note that the transformational multi-networked journalism is not always beneficial. There are digital inequalities, such as lack of access to digital technologies (Warschauer 2002; Wei and Hindman 2011). In other words, the increase of multi-networked journalistic reporting does not guarantee the increase of access to such digital platforms. For instance, radio broadcasts in rural areas are still largely accessed via traditional modes of consumption because of poor internet connectivity and poor transmission where most community radios are located. Although there is now more use of mobile phones that make radio access a possibility, studies shows that many people still rely on analogue battery-powered devices for information (Tkach and Williams 2018). In this article, we do not intend to explore audience reception to community radio platforms but question the limitations and opportunities for languages through text versions (Facebook notes or captions or written text on graphic image) of radio content in indigenous languages.

The available literature focuses more on legacy print media in indigenous languages than on digital platforms (Mpofu 2023; Salawu, Tsutsa, and Mpofu 2022). Salawu, Tsutsa, and Mpofu (2022) note that *Isolezwe*, a newspaper which publishes in Zulu, has the most popular social networking sites in South Africa because of publishing in Zulu, the most widely-spoken indigenous language. Other studies argues that English remains dominant in Africa, as reflected by how English media outlets easily converge on social media (Ndlovu 2011; Salawu, Tsutsa, and Mpofu 2022). English language media has had more impact because many literate people in former British colonies are proficient in English (Motsaathebe 2018). Exploring the possibility of a common African language to replace English as a dominant language in the African media landscape, Motsaathebe (2010) notes that English remains dominant in post-colonial Africa both in broadcasting and print media. These studies, however, focus more on legacy media like newspapers and do not highlight radio convergence especially in indigenous languages. In this article we reflect on 14 community radio stations that broadcast in diverse indigenous languages (majority and minority) to ascertain the limitations and opportunities in print posts or textual versions of radio content.

Since 1930, 19 African media outlets publishing in indigenous languages, especially minority languages, have become extinct (Salawu 2015). Although there are many causes for the extinction of indigenous language media outlets, we point to a few factors



such as the dominance of English, major indigenous languages, and the advancement of technology that needs adoption (Ndlovu 2011; Salawu 2021). On the other hand, we argue that media convergences such as radio online are not always beneficial especially when they disrupt the aural language or limit the orality and visibility of indigenous languages. Given the advancement of technology, we, however, take note of the print or text formats of radio content to argue how radio can maintain its aural culture while using written text in captions or in graphic images just as practised by commercial radio stations in other contexts (Bosch 2014). The interesting part of radio convergence on digital platforms is that it defies the geographical location of airwaves, reaching locals out of the geographical radius resulting in a symbolic digital community (Moyo 2012). Social media allows audience out of the geographical reach of the radio coverage to access content through the community radio's Facebook page. This means that those with access to social media can read the content in indigenous languages or access multimedia content regardless of being out of the reach of a community radio. Thus, in this article, we give salience to the use of indigenous languages through Facebook notes or captions and other graphic images noting that community radio should revitalise local languages even on the English-dominant social networking site.

## Language Revitalisation Theory

Since we are interested in the reflection of indigenous languages (major and minor) in Facebook notes or captions and written text on graphic images, this article uses language revitalisation theory to argue that community radio should maintain local languages on social media. Language revitalisation (LR) is a multi, inter, and transdisciplinary approach to issues of language rights, language revival, language restoration, language shift, and multilingual and multicultural education (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2021). To be specific, LR focuses on ways to revitalise languages that are no longer used in people's everyday communication and suppressed in contexts of dominant languages (Hinton and Hale 2001; Paulston, Chen, and Connerty 1993). Several pragmatic ways to revitalise language are proposed, such as strengthening, teaching, cultivating, developing, and disseminating "a language to make it a vital instrument of communication in daily life; in other words, restoring and strengthening its pragmatic functions in various spheres of society" (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2021, 887). Hornberger and King (1996) argue that LR requires the involvement of communities for decision making as they would need to define their goals and the means to achieve their objectives. Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina (2021, 898) note that "despite the global village, local languages and cultures are still necessary, and the political basis of LR theory is to support cultural pluralism and cultural self-determination." Although social media can enable audiences out of the geographical area of coverage to access community radio content (Moyo, 2012), this does not mean that community radio should abandon local languages on the digital platform.

Thus, LR theory is interested in language preservation as well as pluralism even in contexts where minority indigenous languages are marginalised. Language shift should

embrace cultural change whereas minority languages that were marginalised in Zimbabwe should find visibility through Facebook notes. In this article, we use LR theory to argue that online text should reflect multilingualism. Minority languages should also find coverage in a context where major languages share space with minority languages. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023b) have shown that minority language speakers are often dominated within public spheres shared by major language speakers and tend to switch to the language of the majority. Thus, we argue that community radio for multiple indigenous languages should also reflect minority languages in Facebook notes as captions or as text on graphic images.

## Methodology

This study used a qualitative methodological triangulation. Content analysis was applied to the community radio platforms shown in Table 1 to ascertain how Facebook notes in the form of captions and written text on graphic images merge as community radio content in a Facebook post and how they reflect indigenous languages for the community radio. We thoroughly browsed the timelines of community radio Facebook pages to extract written text in captions or in graphic images. The focus on written text in captions or in graphic images determined the collection of data because digital platforms can be awash with videos or audios which were not the object of this study. We thus focused on written text in captions and in graphic images to answer the research question regarding whether community radio stations use indigenous language on digital platforms. Although the browsing of Facebook timelines (through a Facebook researchers' account) occurred between 1 November 2022 and 31 January 2023, the posts collected were dated from June 2022 to January 2023. The period of data collection was determined by the licensing of community radio broadcasting in Zimbabwe which occurred in 2021 and 2022, although some community radio stations had to create Facebook pages in 2022. The data collection occurred at a time when all 14 licensed community stations had started broadcasting. Facebook timelines are easy to follow, thus only two of the 14 community radio stations were without active Facebook pages. A corpus of 400 posts was collected for analysis. We consider the Facebook posts analysed reflective of the language used in the digital space by community radio stations. This article only features some of the Facebook posts analysed since we could not feature all 400 posts. We avoided using images that expose people's identities without their consent as we presented data in screenshots. Facebook posts of written text in graphic images and notes as captions were the units of analysis.

The study made use of in-depth interviews with Facebook administrators to question the use of print posts and other textual versions as radio content on social media. The semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) was formulated after the content analysis of the extracted Facebook posts. The interviews took place between 31 January 2023 and 1 February 2023. We contacted administrators of community radio platforms through Facebook Messenger. Although we were unable to interview every administrator of the 12 community radio platforms analysed, six of the administrators

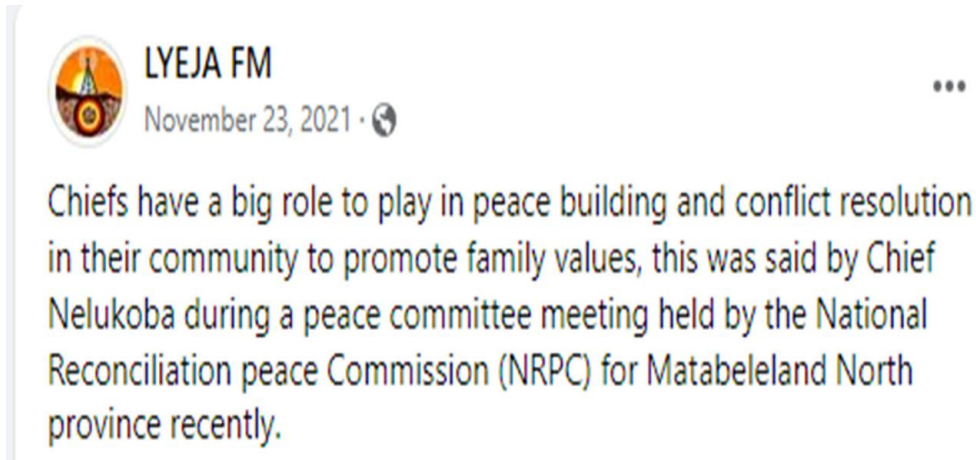
responded to our interview request. Some of the interview questions were answered through WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. The identities of the community radio administrators are not revealed in this article.

## Findings

Community radio platforms make use of Facebook notes as captions (subtitles) or Facebook markers and written text in graphic image. As reflected in other studies, the use of multi-networked journalism in audio-visuals with print or text is now a feature of radio convergence (Bosch 2014; Cordeiro 2012). However, the findings of this study reflect over-use of Facebook notes in written text as content detached from the radiogenic aural nature of radio on social media. Although there was some Facebook Live streaming, most of the content reflected written text or textual captions in various indigenous languages per radio station reflecting the dominance of one language over others, especially major indigenous languages with English as an intervening language (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2023a). For instance, Avuxeni FM utilised some live radio broadcasting sessions. Unlike Bosch's (2014) findings of commercial radio stations' sharing of textual links, this article notes that most community radio platforms reflected over-use of Facebook notes and graphic images that were not necessarily radiogenic audio-visual content or podcasts. We argue that the over-sharing of radio content in Facebook notes or written text without implanting it to radio's aural nature overcomes the strengths of radio as a medium of even the illiterate. To answer the research questions—Do print posts or textual versions (Facebook notes as captions and written text in graphic images) merge as radio content on social media and how do they reflect indigenous languages on community radio?—we categorise our analysis in three segments, namely Facebook notes (captions and subtitles), selection of indigenous languages, and code-switching to English.

### Facebook Notes (Captions and Subtitles)

In this section, we start by analysing how notes or captions including written text in graphic images merge as radio content on Facebook. As previously mentioned, that social media sites can accommodate multimedia versions unlike newspapers that accommodate only print of radio content, the study's findings reflect over-use of detached notes or captions from radiogenic Facebook posts. Although notes or written text in graphic image serve as marketing text, this article argues that notes can be attached to radiogenic audio-visuals given the multimedia advantages of radio on the Facebook platform. Figure 1 below gives an example of Facebook notes in the form of a caption.



**Figure 1.** Screenshot of a Lyeja FM post

We argue that this caption could have been attached to a live show radio programme discussing such matters, but also in the community's local language, not necessarily English. Bonini (2012) and Berry (2016) have shown that text should be an implant to what is known as radio especially with digital platforms as multimedia networks that can accommodate captions as implants while utilising the live radio utility of Facebook. Also, written text as a feature of community radio content on Facebook somehow limits radio's aural nature especially when text is not attached as an implant to live or non-live shows. The audibility of the human voice is capable of breaking multilingual challenges for the illiterate (de Beer 1998; Mano 2012) rather than a detached written text. Although Facebook notes and graphic images are beneficial for marketing, this article argues that written text should at least be in an indigenous language for a community radio and there must not be overuse of detached text on the digital radio platform. The interviews with the administrators of community radio platforms reflected several reasons for the dissemination of content in written text or print text as shown by the comments below:

Before Facebook phased out the live audio function, we used to have live programmes in audio form; nowadays we upload live programmes at limited rate because of bundles and network.

We need support to have enough bundles and gadgets for live-streaming our radio programmes.

Issues of gadgets, data and Wi-Fi are a problem because currently we use personal gadgets to do live coverage on Facebook. We have inadequate resources for the station.

In our context, we lack adequate equipment such as HD cameras for live radio broadcasts on Facebook.

The comments reflect the challenges of radio convergence on social media, especially for community radio. Given the fact that community radio stations often struggle with funding (Mmusi 2002; Megwa 2007), dissemination of content in print or textual versions is considered affordable compared with doing live radio shows. The affordance of content dissemination in print or textual versions enables community radio stations to keep online audiences informed about radio programmes. The findings pose a different scenario from the convergence of commercial radio, as informed by Bosch (2014) and Bonini (2012) that radio is live on Facebook with the use of textual links.

In Figure 2 we show the written text in a graphic image from Nyanga FM (identity of the presenter is hidden for ethical reasons). Figure 2 shows that the radio station's digital platform is used to market radio schedules but the written text in the graphic image is not in the indigenous languages of the community radio. English was dominant on the Nyanga FM Facebook page.



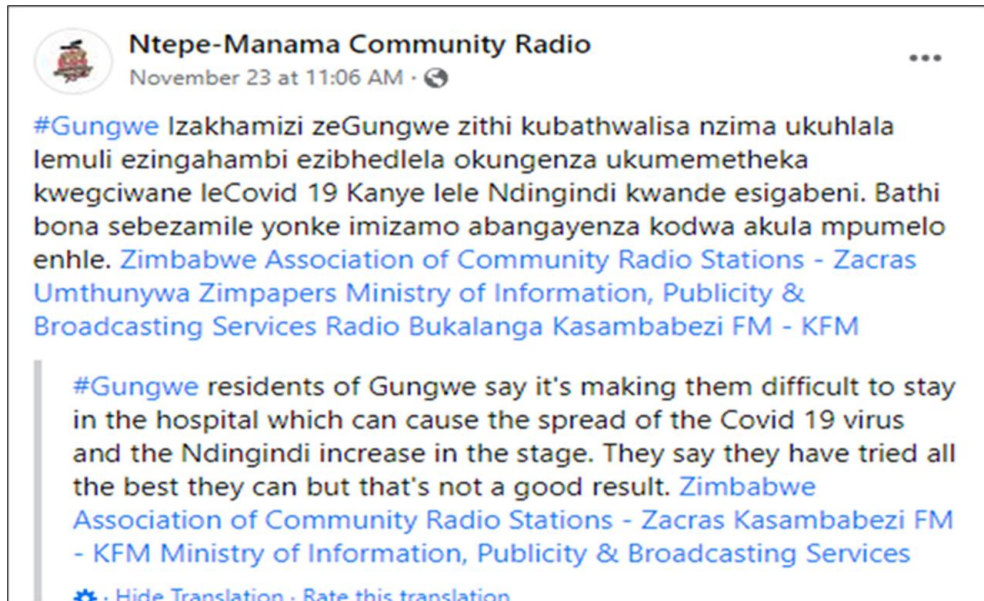
**Figure 2.** Nyanga FM print post

The perspective of the page's administrator aligns with Tkach and Williams's (2022) findings that rural communities have less access to digital radio content as they aim to target a global digital audience. It is interesting to note that although rural communities

may have less access to the community radio's digital platforms, audiences are no longer restricted by the geographical boundaries of the radio's radius of broadcast (Moyo 2012). Thus, despite the digital global village, LR theorists would argue that the community is still obliged to disseminate content in its local languages on Facebook to revitalise, promote, and restore indigenous languages (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2021). We find the affordances of digital connection through Facebook text as advantageous to revitalise languages which are no longer used in the everyday communication of a digital audience (Hinton and Hale 2001).

### **Selection of Indigenous Languages**

In this section, we explore the limitations and opportunities of indigenous language in the analysed notes or written text of graphic Facebook posts. The study's findings show that each community radio station had at least three languages licensed for broadcast as shown in Table 1; however, captions or written text in graphic images reflected the dominance of one language over others. While Ndebele and Shona are known as major languages in Zimbabwe, the competition among minority languages per community radio also reflects the dominance of one minority language over others in Facebook written text. Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023a) have argued that the number of community radio stations in Zimbabwe are still too few to accommodate all the languages. Ntepe-Manama, for instance, broadcasts in Sotho and Ndebele but textual versions reflect the dominance of Ndebele over Sesotho, a challenge which could have been avoided through multilingual translation (Mathe and Motsaathebe 2024). LR theorists argue that minority languages are often suppressed in contexts of dominant languages (Hinton and Hale 2001; Paulston, Chen, and Connerty 1993); hence there is a need for language shift on community radio. Figure 3 is one of several posts that show Ndebele translated into English on Ntepe-Manama Community Radio at the expense of Sotho.



**Figure 3.** Web capture of a post on Ntepe-Manama Community Radio

Community radio thrives in indigenous or local languages as it seeks to serve the community; as shown by Leketanyane, Molale, and Ogunsanya (2021, 50), “community radio programming is designed to reflect the specific interests and needs of the community it serves.” However, the administrator of the Nyanga community page argued that

what is posted on Facebook is not primarily targeting locals only. We also want to affect English speaking people because Nyanga is a tourist town with a relative number of white farmers and tourists who need to also benefit from what is happening through other radio platforms through elements like news, weather updates, traffic updates.

The comment above dodges the responsibility of community radio to communicate on local language platforms. Hornberger and King (1996) argue that it is the community’s choice whether to revitalise their language by findings practical ways to achieve the goal. This means that prioritising local languages even on social media should be a collective decision by the community.

On the other hand, the Vemuganga Community Radio page prioritised Ndaue over Shangani, Ndebele, and English. The administrator of the page noted that they are mandated to broadcast 85% Ndaue, 10% English, 2% Shangani, and 3% Ndebele, hence their textual versions were more in Ndaue on Facebook. As shown in Figure 4, the written text reads *ndizvo zvetoita kanyiri* (“that is what we do”). In this case we note the use of indigenous language in print reflecting the local language of the community.





**Figure 4.** A print post on Vemuganga Community Radio

According to the administrator, written text in Nda promotes the language because many Nda speakers do not know how to write in their own minority language. This means that Vemuganga Community Radio chose to revitalise the Nda language through broadcast as well as written text. The administrator further noted:

An additional point on use of text: we want the Nda people to have an appreciation of Nda spellings since Nda is still unpopular in written form but very popularly spoken.

Thus, posting text in written Nda can promote the local culture, because language as an instrument of communication can restore and strengthen culture and its “pragmatic functions in various spheres of society” (Comajoan-Colomé and Coronel-Molina 2021, 887). Not only does Vemuganga Community Radio reflect Nda language in graphic images, but it also uses indigenous language in captions or Facebook notes as shown in Figure 5. We acknowledge that indigenous language was dominant on Vemuganga Community Radio both in print text and captions reflecting the local culture of the community radio.





**Figure 5.** Web capture of a post on Vemuganga Community Radio

English was not used to translate the Ndaupha language in Figure 5, which reads *kana dzimai pasha reshe rei kona kuridze ferengwana pamutambo wevaise akusi kunaka kwazvo ere.?* *Hino vangazviita kana kukhombisa sei mweiva nyime mukuwo? Vapei mukuwo vatungamirewo* (Women can be referees for the games, is not that very good. How can they prove it to you? Give them a chance). Vemuganga Community Radio leads as an example of an indigenous language revitalisation platform in print text and Facebook notes although live radio shows were less visible.

On the other hand, Lyeja FM community radio (which broadcasts largely in Nambya and Dombe) posts more print posts and videos with captions. Posted videos were largely in non-radio format but outdoor videos of community activities. Figure 6 shows print text written in English instead of Nambya, Dombe, and Ndebele.



**Figure 6.** A print post on Lyeja FM Community Radio

We note that Lyeja used mostly English in print text and Nambya in a few captions, neglecting other local languages such as Dombe.

Moreover, Figure 7 shows a caption on Ntepe-Manama Community Radio's page which shows written text in Sotho, *Tsoara U-Mathe ho Morning Drive, ho tloha ka Mantaha*, meaning that it is a morning drive programme. We argue that Figure 7 is a good example of how radio can converge on Facebook as it reflects the indigenous language in written text and also in the language of the presenter although English in the code-switching phrase "morning drive." It is evident that indigenous languages can be promoted on Facebook.

09 Phupu 2023

Tšoara U-Mathe ho Morning Drive, ho tloha ka Mantaha - Labohlano  
ka nako ea 06:00am - 09:00am.

Tune in ho 97.0

#Umsakazokazulu

#letsatsileletsatsi

See Translation



**Figure 7.** Web capture of a post on Ntepe-Manama Community Radio

Thus, our study's findings show that some indigenous languages were more used than others. This means that the popular language of the radio station somehow dominates other languages where Shona and Ndebele normally dominate the shared space with minority languages. We argue that Ndau is close to Shona and the majority of people in the region of Vemuganga Community Radio speak Ndau. This means that the languages of the region should also be promoted on community radio social media pages through written text, captions, or subtitles. As shown by Mathe and Motsaathebe (2023a), the selection of one language over another is the result of a shortage of community radio stations to cater for each indigenous language. Thus, language pluralism should embrace every indigenous language, reflecting the need for more community radio stations.

### **Code-Switching to English**

We note that English always shows up and is somehow more dominant than indigenous languages on Facebook. As argued by Motsaathebe (2010), there is an over-reliance on English in the African media. English is often used as the first option to support indigenous languages, especially minoritised languages. Probing why English is largely used on community radio platforms, administrators noted that they are mandated to broadcast 5% content in English while other percentages cover indigenous languages. Other community radios stations are mandated to broadcast 10% content in English. However, captions and written text in print images reflected the use of more than 5% or 10% English content. Where indigenous languages are prioritised, English is used as the language of translation. We argue that indigenous language revitalisation on social media is largely challenged by the dominance of English. Probing why English seems

to be more than 5% or 10% content on Facebook, some administrators responded as follows:

Through our community radio, we aim to attract business partners who need to advertise, link the diaspora community and create mutual relationships.

We also want to affect English-speaking people because we are a tourist town with a relative number of white farmers and tourists who need to also benefit from what is happening through our radio platform.

We wish to be registered on Radio Garden so that it can reach more people who are not within the radius.

As already mentioned, digital platforms somehow prompt community radio to go out of the community's physical boundaries, although community radio should cater for its community in local languages (Megwa 2007; Mathe and Motsaathebe 2003a). As previously noted, digital platforms defy the geographical location of airwaves, reaching locals out of the geographical radius resulting in a symbolic digital community (Moyo 2012). For instance, Radio Garden is a software application that makes radio accessible by rotating the globe on the application. Our argument is that even though community radio stations aim to reach beyond their geographical radius coverage, indigenous languages remain essential. On the other hand, community radio should not focus much on attracting advertisements like commercial radio, although there is always a need for donor funding. Nonetheless, it shows that attracting donor funding is prioritised on social media through the English language, defeating the purpose of community radio in local languages. Besides, promoting, restoring, and revitalising indigenous languages no longer spoken because of suppression by colonial and dominant languages is a choice that requires collective community decision making (Hornberger and King 1996; Hinton and Hale 2001; Paulston, Chen, and Connerty 1993).

There are many instances of captions in English. For instance, Radio Bukalanga has Facebook posts in Kalanga and English (Figure 8). We argue that disseminating radio content in English translation somehow advantages the interpretation of the message in indigenous languages and cultivates the understanding of local languages.



**Figure 8.** Web capture of a post on Radio BuKalanga

Although English is translated into the local language, the hashtags remain in English. On the other hand, Twasumpuka Community Radio also had Facebook posts in English with a few exceptions in the Tonga language. Nyangani Community Radio mainly disseminated content in Shona (Manyika dialect) with limited English translations. We note that Shona enjoys more dominance on a Shona-speaking radio station than English compared with minority language community radio stations. Avuxeni Community Radio also reflected indigenous languages (Shangani, Shona, and Ndebele) with a backup of English translations as shown in Figure 9. Unlike other community radio platforms, Avuxeni's Facebook page had the most live radio programmes, reflecting the aural nature of radio in indigenous languages with written text in both English and Shangani. Where a minority language is dominant, English enjoys second language privilege for translation purposes.

Chimanimani Community Radio's page publishes and broadcasts in Shona, which is a majority language in Zimbabwe. Live radio talk was also visible on Chimanimani's Facebook page; however, English was dominant in print text. Among all the community radio Facebook platforms, Kasambabezi's community platform had the written text in English titles. This article argues that the dominance of English hinders the visibility of the indigenous languages on the digital platform thereby failing to reflect local culture on community radio. Thus, if there is a need to use English, it has to be for translation purposes to promote the indigenous language.



**Figure 9.** Web capture of a post on Avuxeni FM Community Radio

Since language theorists emphasise language preservation, we also highlight that making use of indigenous languages on digital platforms preserves the language of the community, and where English is used, it has to be for translation purposes.

## Conclusion

This article raised three key issues: the convergence of radio content in print text or captions on digital platforms, and the visibility of local culture and language of community radio in print text or captions. Unlike the traditional print marketing of radio in newspapers, digital forums have multimedia affordances that enable written text to function as an implant to live radio shows or radio as an audible medium of communication. Applying the concept of community radio, we amplified the advantages of disseminating content in local or indigenous languages. In other words, we used the concept of community radio to evaluate community radio convergence on social media by answering the following question: Do print posts or captions merge as radio content on social media and how do they reflect indigenous languages on community radio? Having given some background to community radio in Zimbabwe (Table 1), we then used a qualitative content analysis to reflect how indigenous languages are used or neglected in print text or written text on digital community forums. The main findings of the study debate the limitations of non-radiogenic content such as print text or written text if content is not in the indigenous languages of community radio stations. On the other hand, we showed the opportunities available to revitalise indigenous languages through digital means that can reach audiences beyond

the geographical coverage of community radio. Although the findings reflect dominant indigenous languages per community radio, the article argues that there is a need to increase the number of community radio stations in Zimbabwe to cater for each indigenous language.

Although some community radio stations are permitted to broadcast in English, we argue that English can be exploited as the language of translation to promote indigenous languages. The written text or captions and print text should be in indigenous languages with less reflection of English to promote the community's local languages. Ultimately, we argue that there is a need for community radio stations to be consistent with disseminating content in indigenous languages on social media with text as implant on the body of radio. However, using indigenous languages on digital platforms should be a collective decision made by the community that runs the radio station, involving even digital audiences away from the radius of the radio coverage. Since the digitalisation of community radio can strengthen indigenous languages to reach the global village, there is always a need to be practical in the implementation of indigenous language in text. This means broadcasting in indigenous languages on Facebook does not necessarily disadvantage accessibility, as shown by Tkach and Williams (2022), but reconnects locals in the digital reach. A limitation of this study is that it did not unveil the perspectives of the audiences regarding how indigenous languages can be enhanced on social media. There is therefore a need for future studies to engage digital community audiences on how community radio platforms can promote their local languages.

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## Appendix A

1. Given that the page is for radio, how come posts are in text or print?
2. Are there any challenges with radio going live on Facebook through audio-visual?
3. It seems that some posts are in English. Does that not defeat the local languages for the community radio?
4. In what way do you think community radio can utilise its Facebook page for radio convergence?