

DISSERTATION

BEYOND RESISTANCE: RETHEORIZING INDIGENOUS MEDIA THROUGH  
PRODUCTION CULTURE OF GHANAIAAN LANGUAGE (AKAN) COMMERCIAL  
BROADCASTING

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Fall 2025

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## ABSTRACT

### BEYOND RESISTANCE: RETHEORIZING INDIGENOUS MEDIA THROUGH PRODUCTION CULTURE OF GHANAIAN LANGUAGE (AKAN) COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING

This study examines organizational structure and production processes of indigenous language media (ILM), focusing on how these elements influence media operations and practices. By focusing on the operational dynamics of ILM in Ghana, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex ways in which language, economy, and culture interact to construct a media system that emphasizes linguistic and discursive coexistence and fusion, rather than linguistic subjugation and indigenous media as a peripheral alternative discourse. This dissertation employs an interdisciplinary qualitative research approach, utilizing participant observation, practitioner interviews, informal conversations, and various reports to analyze two leading and competitive Ghanaian-owned commercial media corporations: Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. Various theoretical frameworks from production studies, political economy, and heteroglossia are used to evaluate ILM's organizational structure and production process.

This dissertation concludes that while indigenous media scholarship positions indigenous media as an alternative, oppositional category, a response to mainstream media, and a means of established resistance to a certain imperialism and misrepresentation (Spitulnik, 1999; De Jong, Shaw & Stammers, 2005), evidence from Ghana complicates this understanding, showing that indigenous media can simultaneously embody resistance and reinforce mainstream ideologies.

This duality highlights the complex interconnectedness and interdependencies between local and global cultural forces, challenging the binary distinctions often present in discussions about indigenous media and reconfiguring ILM as more than just politically isolated productions of indigeneity. Additionally, the interplay between social, economic, cultural, religious, and political factors reinforces the existence of indigenous media in multiple formations with variegated practices, heightens their agenda-setting function, and possesses three significant interrelated characteristics of Akan commercial indigenous language media: bi-/multilingual discursivity, translational density, and audience-centricity. Hence, these findings underscore how media align with public values and community ethos, focusing on relationality and resonance, cultural narratives, and a commitment to lived realities and media responsibility.

The findings suggest that while in the Western/European context, Indigenous media is political and marginalized, and a binary construct, indigenous language media in Africa is multifaceted, and has a dominant media status. Additionally, indigenous media and mainstream media should not be viewed as ideologically opposing entities. Rather, their positionality is intricately and inherently shaped by the specific mandates under which they operate, which subsequently delineate the ways their identities are marked and reinscribed by various geopolitical, cultural, economic, religious, and social factors. Hence, media practitioners, scholars, and policymakers must take cognizance of these defining forces to better understand the media landscape.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When all is said and done, I walked this path knowing you are always with me. Indeed, your promises are yes and Amen, and it's been a privilege. Thank you, God, for my life, joy, health, and peace of mind.

I am incredibly grateful to my advisor, Dr. Hye Seung Chung, for her exceptional guidance and mentorship. Dr Chung's keen attention to detail and timely, constructive feedback have proven invaluable. My several conversations with Dr. Chung were intellectually enriching and helped me develop an appropriate theoretical framework fit for the context under examination. These discussions and the several insightful comments on drafts helped shape the ideas in this dissertation, making a significant contribution to aspects of production studies and media studies, specifically indigenous media. I am deeply appreciative of the example Dr. Chung set as my advisor. Her advocacy, unwavering belief in my potential, along with her patience and genuine interest in my personal well-being, has been profoundly inspiring. Thank you, Dr. Chung, for making this journey worthwhile.

I am also grateful to Dr. Evans Elkins for his support and influence on my academic journey, which began with the courses I took. The lessons and discussions from those courses were crucial to this dissertation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Eric Aoki for the regular check-ins and valuable suggestions that helped shape and enhance the quality of this dissertation. Dr. Aoki provided guidance on the IRB process. The comments Dr Aoki provided on my draft helped shape the style and narrative, enabling a smooth read. Additionally, I am grateful to Dr. David Wolfgang for his helpful suggestions on ethnographic data collection

methods. I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Parks for her mentorship, friendship, and unwavering support.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Nancy Henaku for her unwavering support throughout my PhD studies. My extensive discussions with her and her understanding of the African context provided me valuable perspective. Dr. Henaku's insightful and thoughtful recommendations on resources and literature have been invaluable. I truly appreciate her dedication to engaging with me, even across time zones, and providing insightful perspectives that are crucial to my dissertation.

The field research and data collection were important aspects of this dissertation. There are so many people I encountered who made the data collection process smooth. I am grateful to Dr. Nana Kwame Osei Fordjour for introducing me to a contact at Despite Media. I am also grateful to Dr. Yaw Agyeman Boafo for his support and for endorsing my document for archival research. I extend my gratitude to all the individuals who provided relevant information and engaged in discussions about media and culture in Ghana, but wish to remain anonymous.

A special thank you goes to the Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media for granting me permission to enter their organizations to collect data. I am extremely grateful to the leadership at the Multimedia Group Limited. Joshua Tigo and A.C. Ohene were my first points of contact at Multimedia Group Limited. Messrs Tigo and Ohene's enthusiasm about my study was evident in the way they checked in and followed up on my progress in the data collection. A.C. Ohene suggested and introduced me to people I could interview, and he often quizzed and questioned me about my ideas and their framing. We had lengthy discussions about the history of indigenous language media in Ghana, its progress, and its interplay with Akan culture and democracy. My engagement with these media practitioners provided me with a more nuanced

perspective on how academia and industry can collaborate. I am also grateful to the Adom News and Current Affairs personnel for the warm reception and friendship during my time with them.

I am grateful to the leadership of Despite Media. A special thanks goes to Nana Yaw Kesseh and Ms. Efuah Mensah for the discussions and help they provided during my field research. Mr. Kesseh and Ms. Mensah guided and introduced me to all the relevant people in the organization for the interview. I thank the personnel at Peace FM newsroom, UTV newsroom, and the production team, Peaceonline.com editors, Marketing, and Telenovela/Twinovela Department. Their friendliness made my data collection smooth.

I am grateful to the Department of Communication Studies at Colorado State University for providing me with a grant to help defray part of my travel costs to Ghana for data collection.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my parents for their unwavering support and prayers throughout my endeavors. I frequently engaged in discussions with my father, Mr. George Frimpong Donkor, regarding Twi vocabulary. His insightful references and guidance greatly enhanced my comprehension of the concepts and terminology I struggled with. Thank you, Mum, for constantly checking in on me. I am genuinely grateful for our conversations, our shared laughter, and your prayers. Additionally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mr. Sampson Nuro and Mrs. Rose Nuro for making my well-being their priority. I am thankful to them for their financial support, regular check-ins, thoughtful provisions and supplies, prayers, and meaningful conversations. Thank you to my wonderful siblings, Grace, Mavis, Rosina, Yaw Kyere, Abigail, and Sandra, for the love, support, and jokes. A special thank you goes to Yaw Kyere and Sandra for being my unofficial research assistants, helping me transcribe the interviews. I appreciate my wonderful friends Freda Anoa Cann, Dr. Faustina Aba Koomson, Euget Zevi Motogbe, and Muna for their encouragement throughout my research experience. I

am also grateful to Dr. Mary Boatema Setrana, Mr. Henry Quansah, and George Akolmolga for their support and care.

## DEDICATION

To my parents  
George Frimpong Donkor (My Father, My Father), Mercy Kessey  
Sampson Nuro and Rose Nuro

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.

Jesus! My Shepherd, Savior, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest, and King,  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring.  
*(John Newton)*

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## Chapter 1: Introduction: An Examination of Indigenous Language Mediascape

### 1.0 Introduction

I open this dissertation with the question: Why Indigenous Language Media? In an interview published online in 2014, Adjoa Yeboah Agyei, a prominent female broadcast journalist with *Despite Media*, recounted some of the derogatory headlines from various print media outlets describing Akan local language stations as “nkonkonsafoɔ”- meaning gossip and “nkurasefoɔ” (GhanaWeb, 2014). The term “nkurasefoɔ” denotatively means “people from the village” or “village people.” However, in Ghanaian English, “nkurasefoɔ” translates to “villagers” and is connotatively derogatory and abusive. Historically, “nkurasefoɔ” is a colonial construct that implies a cultural bias in the perception associated with rural/urban identity binarism. This construct links rural identity with negative stereotypes like lack of exposure, localism, uncivilized, irrationality, illiteracy, crassness, and unprofessionalism. In contrast, urban identity is associated with positive stereotypes like enlightenment, respectability, cosmopolitanism, rationality, literacy, cultured/refinement, and professionalism.

This signifier “nkurasefoɔ” aligns with other published opinions and news articles that describe local language stations, especially news programs, as inferior, mediocre, illiterate, unserious, comedic, sensational, and unprofessional (Essien, 2015; Jacobs, 2020; Graphic, 2006; GhanaWeb, 2014). This pejorative term encapsulates Ghanaian elites' and English language media practitioners' broader sentiments and resistance to Ghana's indigenous language media (ILM), whose modus operandi diverges significantly from the conventions of Ghanaian English language media practices. Despite these prevailing negative attitudes, local language stations experienced significant growth in number and audience engagement, making them competitive

within the Ghanaian broadcasting landscape. So, what accounts for this disparity between public sentiment and the growth of Akan indigenous language or local language media in Ghana?

This question prompted my interest to probe broadly about Akan-speaking broadcasting stations in Ghana. However, what sealed my desire to take up ILM as my research topic was the dynamism, aptitude, and speed with which Akan-speaking radio and television presenters translated the then president of Ghana, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo's periodic presidential addresses on the coronavirus pandemic. These presidential addresses were transmitted live. After these live presidential broadcasts, presenters translated the president's speech into Akan for their listeners and viewers. During my field research, I discovered that media houses and presenters had no access to the president's speeches before the broadcast. The English transcripts of the speeches were only made available after the live transmission. This meant that Akan-speaking presenters translated the president's speeches as they heard him for the first time and immediately went on air following the president's live broadcast. Their responsiveness highlighted Akan-speaking media stations' pivotal role during a health crisis. Moreover, their participation in making governmental messages accessible through a local language showed the urgency and immediacy they attached to their work. So, to answer the question, "Why Indigenous Language Media?" It is because they are responsive, dynamic, disruptive, strategic, and transformative. ILM's unique responsiveness and positioning foreground a need to investigate their role and operations in Ghana.

To fully assess the extent of ILM's significance, role, and interactions in Ghana, as well as the implications of broadcasters' experiences, the operational mechanisms, and language practices, this study offers a detailed exploration of the operational dynamics of ILM in Ghana. It sheds light on the intricate interplay between language, history, economics, geo-cultural, and

trans-cultural elements that shape Ghana's ILM broadcasting system. The dissertation advances scholarly examination of local language media broadcasting from visual representation, analysis, and rhetorical construction of language choice and use to a critical exploration of the practices surrounding ILM broadcasting as it relates to production processes and structuring elements that govern ILM in Ghana. This direction means that this dissertation is not merely looking at the languages used but also probing how ILM operates with broader networks of influence, incorporating local and global perspectives. Significantly, emphasis on the practices of ILM sets the groundwork for assessing the actual implications of language practices in mass media (radio and television) at the media production and corporatization level. It emphasizes the importance of linguistic coexistence and dialogism, rather than viewing ILM as a marginal aspect of the broader media ecosystem and a peripheral discourse.

The subjects of this dissertation are two leading Ghanaian-owned commercial media corporations: Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. MGL and Despite Media are competitive and popular, holding some of Ghana's most significant audience shares. These corporations operate multiple local language radio and television stations. The local language these media corporations adopt is Akan, predominantly Asante Twi. They also use other Akan dialects like Fante and Akwapim Twi. MGL operates both English and Akan-speaking radio and television stations. MGL's local language radio stations include Adom FM, Asempa FM, and Nhyira FM; it also operates an Akan-speaking television channel, Adom TV. Despite Media has four Akan-speaking radio stations- Peace FM, Okay FM, Neat FM and Hello FM, and one Akan-speaking television channel- United Television (UTV). These media corporations were chosen because of their unique position as competitive and leading media houses, trail-blazing status,

breadth of their media portfolio, national character, and appeal to a diverse and cosmopolitan audience.

Because this study examines ILM's organizational structure and production processes to understand how these operations and practices shape the medium, this study is situated in production studies (PS). It employs political economy and heteroglossia as foundational theories to evaluate ILM's structure and production process and assess the assemblage of networks that frame indigenous/local language broadcasting. This interdisciplinary approach is pivotal since it embraces a multidimensional perspective that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of ILM as multilingual, multimodal, and shaped by global and local ideologies and cultures, rather than a linguistically deterministic approach. In terms of methodology, this dissertation uses a triangulated approach to data collection to unpack the intricacies of ILM in Ghana. This means that data from multiple sources was combined. I used ethnographic research data collection methods like practitioner interviews, participant observation, and informal conversations. I also employed archival and digital research. Additionally, I used institutional discourses like media news reports, corporate websites, industrial reports, and media/governmental policies.

This introductory chapter focuses on exploring the interrelationships between language and media. It proceeds to outline the research questions that underpin this study, along with the rationale and significance of the study. In doing so, it reviews scholarly literature on the functions of ILM in Africa and Ghana. This review focuses on Ghana's unique linguistic and broadcasting landscape and engages with scholars' examination of ILM more broadly. Further, this chapter describes the data collection methods employed in this research study, highlighting their relevance to the study's goals. Lastly, it outlines the organization of the dissertation, offering a roadmap to subsequent chapters.

## 1.1 Language and Media

Indigenous language media (print/press, broadcasting, online or film) refers to any media that delivers content in a native language other than a colonial or second language like English or French (Salawu, 2006). Indigenous language media (ILM) is usually limited to a geographical location or linguistic area. Despite having all the trappings of mainstream media,<sup>1</sup> the most emphasized defining feature of the medium is language—the linguistic choice that defines a particular group of people or geography—and subsequent instrumentality of the medium in citizen participation and functioning of democracy, as well as development discourses. Therefore, discourses around ILM have focused on language (as it shapes or is shaped by multiple factors like policy, politics, economics, and governance tools) and instrumentality.

An emphasis on language as a defining feature of indigenous language media/broadcasting may not be surprising since it is implied in the name. Additionally, the relationship between language and mass media/broadcasting could account for this emphasis on language. Language and its associated semiotic elements are the primary communication tool of any medium and media system. The role of language in and its relationship to mass media is significant because language is the primary tool of mass media, and both are inherently mediated tools and have a symbiotic relationship. Blankson (2005), following Shudson (1994), states that language itself is a “mass medium through which all other media speak” (p. 12). Language is the

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<sup>1</sup> Jong Matin & Stammers (2003) in classifying media types defined mainstream media as comprising “the mass media of television, radio and press that are corporately owned, controlled or governed (including by public corporations such as the BBC)” (p. 6). While I adopt this definition as a foundation, I must admit that the findings of this dissertation challenge the primary emphasis on corporate ownership, suggesting a need to consider individual ownership and accessibility. A more comprehensive perspective to defining mainstream media must expand to include other dimensions like distinct ownership systems that may involve individuals or corporate entities, accessibility, context, and advancement in media technologies. Therefore, mainstream media, as used here, refers to the mass media of television, radio, and press defined by its context of operation, accessibility, evolving technologies and is characterized by distinct ownership systems that may be corporately or individually owned, controlled, or governed.

conduit for conveying words and ideas across to the media audience (Nwagbara, 2013). The mass media are the means through which information is expressed and distributed. Meanwhile, the mass media employ language to communicate effectively and facilitate the transmission and distribution of their content to the media audience. Nwagbara (2013) argues that using language allows the media audience to connect, understand mass communication, and become “familiar with its nuances, denotations and connotations” (p. 156). Consequently, language and mass media are imbricated in producing knowledge, disseminating, and consuming information as they mediate and are channels of communication (Nwagbara, 2013).

Language is not only a major tool of mass media but also the major criterion of difference between indigenous language media and mainstream media in linguistically diverse geographical areas, specifically in Africa. Emphasis on linguistic choice results in media separatism, where mainstream media (associated with English-speaking mass media governed by local and global journalistic ethics and practices) is elevated, and ILM is marginalized. Such media separatism rides on the back of the comparison between mainstream media and indigenous language media. The effect of media separatism is the subjugation of ILM as a subset of or a characteristic of mass media instead of constituting an independent media system. Another consequence of media separatism is the neglect of media form, entrenching its marginalization.

For many African countries, deregulation and liberalization of the broadcast sector in the 1990s enabled the widespread use of local languages in broadcasting after colonialism. This does not mean African languages were not used in broadcasting before these policy enactments. On the contrary, as Blankson (2005) argues, in the case of Ghana, the colonial administration introduced Ghanaian languages into radio broadcasting to comprehend the colonial administration’s programs. Akrofi-Quarcoo and Gadzekpo (2020) claim that colonial policy on

local languages focused on “the acculturation and empire-building objectives of the administration” (p. 99). While language policies existed, they were driven by the colonial ideological imperative that served the colonial administration’s continued suppression of any subversion or rebellion. Since the 1960s, many African countries (via their governments), like Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, and Nigeria, have introduced local languages into radio broadcasting (Blankson, 2005; Nwagbara, 2013; Chibita, 2009). These were done through policy formulation, like Nigeria’s news indigenization policy and Zambia’s tribal balancing policy (Blankson, 2005; Nwagbara, 2013). In the case of Ghana, Akojivi and Fosu (2016) show how various guidelines and policies enacted by government and media stakeholders might have motivated the wide use of indigenous languages by most radio stations. Consequently, policy change paved the way for native Ghanaian languages to assume significance on radio and present “new forms of programming and representations” (Boateng, 2009, p. 161). The result is that broadcasting has moved from Blankson’s (2005) “foreignization of broadcasting” concept to the proliferation of indigenous language broadcasting. Deregulation (in the Ghanaian media industry in the mid-1990s) opened the media industry for private media practice, which propelled the current wave of many radio stations using local languages.

Despite the importance of deregulation in eroding government-controlled media in Africa, the lack of adequate or weak media and language policy in most African countries has been seen as an obstacle to indigenous broadcasting development. Blankson (2005) states that radio broadcasting’s insensitivity to native languages, participation in the corrosion of society’s languages, and domestication of the English language and Western broadcast content result from African governments’ failure to initiate broadcast policies that promote native language use. He adds that African governments are not the only culprits; media practitioners and scholars are

equally guilty. According to him, media stakeholders have been influenced by Western ideas about the predominant use of Euro-imperial languages as “ethnically neutral” (p. 15). This perspective is seen as a solution for the competition among linguistic groups, and the thought that African languages are antithetical to broadcasting institutions. Monica B. Chabita (2009) states that “weak laws and vague policies, inadequate provisions for public and community broadcasting, weak regulation of ownership and local content, and poor management of frequency spectrum” are challenges to “harnessing linguistic diversity towards democratization” (p. 302). As such, the gaps in indigenous language broadcasting development due to inadequate media policies, lack of commitment to local Ghanaian languages, and influences from Western media practices stifle media expansion in general. Addressing these gaps will foster a more inclusive media landscape in Ghana and promote linguistic diversity in the media.

The issue of media pluralism has been addressed by scholars offering distinct perspectives on the matter. For instance, both Chibita (2009) and Blankson (2005) address media pluralism, albeit from different viewpoints. Blankson uses a historical approach to show how radio broadcasting indigenization began during colonial times, intensified during the postcolonial era, and liberalized from 1995 onwards in Ghana. Blankson concludes that a true African broadcasting system cannot emerge if African broadcasting systems continue to rely on Euro-imperial languages. For Blankson, a true African broadcasting system depends on adopting and promoting local languages. Chabita, from a political economy perspective, shows how media pluralism and liberalization, which are expected to deepen linguistic diversity towards citizen participation in the democratic process, have been met with obstacles in Uganda. Both authors show the tensions between broadcast liberalization and appropriate broadcast language in both commercial and public radio broadcasting. Interestingly, these different lenses into the issue of

media plurality give credence to these authors' conclusion that media pluralism and broadcast privatization have not necessarily led to linguistic diversity in the broadcast systems, especially in Ghana. Nonetheless, neither author could have anticipated the possibility of linguistic coexistence in the African media ecosystem, which advances media plurality in an unconventional manner, as illustrated later in the dissertation.

The overlapping relationship between language and media shows that language is not the only defining factor of indigenous language media, as shown above. Other conditions, including regulation, policies, technology, economic motivations, and governance, influence the nature of indigenous language media. Subsequently, this dissertation is interested in extending scholarly enquiry of local language media beyond the solely visual representation, analysis, and rhetorical framing of language choice and use in media broadcasting. It aims to critically examine the practices surrounding ILM broadcasting, focusing on the intricacies of media production processes and the structuring mechanisms that govern ILM in Ghana. By focusing on the operational dynamics of ILM in Ghana, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex ways language, economy, and culture interact to construct a media system that emphasizes linguistic coexistence and fusion rather than linguistic subjugation and indigenous language media as peripheral discourse.

Further, the dissertation examines broader conditions, practices, and discursivities that shape ILM's development, definition, and operationalization (specifically, broadcasting). Though significant, language is not a sufficient condition for comprehending the nature and organization of ILM. Without looking into how language interacts with other linguistic elements materialized through culture, geographical contexts, economic and political governance, socio-religious and media-industrial factors, there is a likelihood of circumventing and undermining ILM's unique

positioning in the broader media landscape in Ghana and Africa by extension. Such circumvention will likely create an ILM that is spatiotemporally static. Thus, this study examines language choice, industrial practices, and production methods of Ghanaian commercial indigenous language media (radio and television). It aims to understand how these interconnected elements shape ILM's development, operationalization, structure, nature, practices, and role in Ghana. Additionally, by examining these factors, the findings will offer insights into how ILM is articulated within the broader context of the African continent.

## 1.2 Research Question

The following research question will inform this dissertation:

- Main Question: How do language choice, media industrial practices, and production methods shape the understanding of Ghanaian commercial indigenous language media?
  - Sub questions: In what ways are Akan commercial indigenous language media structured? What factors influence their nature and structure beyond language?
  - What conditions and practices influence our understanding of indigenous language media structure and operations?
  - How do Akan ILM's production practices in news and indigenized telenovelas, also known as twinovela,<sup>2</sup> offer insights into local and global discursive flows?

To answer these questions, this dissertation is informed by assumptions from production studies (PS), which emphasize the creation and circulation of media by examining industrial practices and analyzing their impacts. PS's focus on relationships between creators, workers, institutions/industries, and the production and circulation of different cultural forms is insightful for unraveling how ILM functions and interrelates with other relevant institutions in Ghana. As

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<sup>2</sup> This is a term used to refer to telenovelas, which have been translated into the Akan language.

Freeman (2016) notes, the workings of PS are deeply embedded in the processes of understanding contextualization (p. 16). This contextual emphasis allows this study to focus on the ILM and its product as geographically significant entities. Consequently, the analysis can balance dominant and peripheral discourses, revealing how production hierarchies, priorities, corporate synergy, and commercial imperatives are organized. Additionally, PS shows how societal factors like politics, economics, education, regulation, and ideology influence media operations. Thus, to effectively analyze how media interacts with these deep societal forces, this dissertation adopts heteroglossia and political economy theoretical frameworks as lenses to interrogate structural issues as well as production practices of ILM.

Heteroglossia and political economy theoretical frameworks help interrogate structural issues as well as the production practices of ILM. The significance of these frameworks to the dissertation is their complementary role in shaping the understanding of ILM at various levels of relationality to history, temporalities, and sociopolitical institutions. Moreover, considering the subject this dissertation is concerned with and its context, postcolonial and globalization influences are at the core of the discussion on ILM to help unpack the layers of linguistic and discursive aspects of the nature of ILM in Ghana. As Freeman (2016) explains, when studying the media industry, “we need to adopt perspectives that afford an understanding of both the media’s artistry and of media’s business” (p. 14). Both heteroglossia and political economy allow for a deeper examination of contextualization processes connecting corporate dimensions with “actual production and operation of textual forms” (Havens et al., 2009, p. 248). Chantal Zabus (2007) makes an argument that the postcolonial text (and I would add discourse and institutions) presents a multilayered system that “differentially distributes the European language, the African language (s), and the languages in contact... it is “metonymic of the

mixture of discourse and affiliations in the postcolonial text” (pp. 3, 9). Postcolonial texts/discourses/speeches are inscribed with postcolonial language variants to convey ideological variance and are products of social situations (Zabus, 2007). Heteroglossia helps structure and establish how various languages and discourses with their associated conceptual frameworks and world views coexist and contribute to the development of distinct formations of ILM, while the political economy of media as used in this dissertation, shows how the relationship between history, politics, culture, and socioeconomic factors shape ILM systems of operation and management at the micro and macro levels. Together, these perspectives help formulate and question assumptions, complexities, and contradictions about ILM as a multilingual entity and move towards examining the media as an evolving system influenced by a myriad of conditions converging and diverging to establish new meanings associated with ILM. The significance of these frameworks to the dissertation is their complementary role in shaping the understanding of ILM at various levels of relationality to history, temporalities, and sociopolitical institutions. Heteroglossia’s starting point is the linguistic diversity in various social facets relating to genre, profession, social level, academic institution, age, time, language, gender, religion, tradition/indigeneity, contemporaneity/modernity, etc.

### 1.3 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The significance of studying ILM broadcasting in Ghana lies in helping to bridge the research gap in ILM theorization and ILM practice, where there is a shift from rhetorical arguments for using local languages in mass media to a focus on the actual implications of language and media practices in the production and corporatization of media. The study focuses on the interaction between language choice, industrial practices, and production methods to unpack ILM operational dynamics. Research into Anglophone African local language

broadcasting or ILM has covered topics including development of local language broadcasting (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020), audience attitudes and preference for news practices (Gadzekpo, Yeboah-Banin & Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2020), influences of oral literature in the media (Agyekum, 2000), stylistics and marginalization of indigenous language news and minority languages (Mohammed, 2019; Nwagbara, 2013) and role of indigenous language radio in democracy (Ansah, 2008). While these studies address important issues about African indigenous language media/broadcasting, they also reveal other aspects of local language broadcasting that need attention, like their production processes, operationalization, and forms of organizational structure. Moreover, the overemphasis on ILM as a public good hypervisualizes ILM as a community-oriented institution. This perspective deemphasizes the proliferation of commercially oriented ILMs. These commercial local language media institutions play vital roles in information dissemination and citizen participation in democratic processes. They also connect local and global cultures, and are politically and economically competitive enterprises in the larger Ghanaian media ecosystem. Subsequently, this study highlights ILM's multifaceted and evolving nature and distinct modes of production, practice, culture, and uses that define and establish it as a competitive and independent media system.

Other research has focused on instrumentality, news production practices, the relationship between broadcast media, language choice and use, and the dominance of Euro-imperial languages like English and French. Grace Nwagbara (2013) addresses the issue of broadcast media and language use and argues that the domination of “privileged”<sup>3</sup> languages and English language in news media presentations has resulted in the marginalization of languages spoken by

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<sup>3</sup> Privileged languages are those languages spoken by bigger ethnic groups (Nwagbara, 2013). Blankson (2005) uses the phrase dominant local languages instead of privileged languages and adds that they are either languages of the “largest population group” or languages of “the most powerful social group” (p. 15).

smaller ethnic groups. She establishes a causal relationship between the absence of indigenous languages in the media and their exclusion from school curricula in four states in Nigeria. Her research addresses several issues in indigenous language use in the media. These issues include language policy and (mass) media, media and policy implementation deficiency, and marginalization and dearth of minority languages in indigenous language media. Prah (2005) contends that the preeminence of media work in European languages inhibits media work from reaching “a substantial section of mass society,” undermines the development of a “fully fledged democratic culture,” and “inhibits the potential of the citizenry to participate in state-wide decision making” (p. 9). Nwagbara (2013) opines that the media is inhibited from fully functioning to its capacity when English and other bigger indigenous languages are the primary languages used in mass media, since it can affect national unity and integration. She insists on the exclusionary imperative of mass media when she states that the language used in presenting an issue and the manner of that presentation determine who receives a message. Nwagbara’s contention shows levels of marginalization where some major indigenous languages are privileged over others. The lack of diversity and dominance of the English language leads to minority language abandonment (Nwagbara, 2013). While such research around linguistic marginalization or subjugation in mass media is ideal, the downside is that it obscures the nuances in linguistic interactions between dominant or privileged languages and marginalized languages in the media. This research takes up the challenge of assessing how indigenous language media production techniques and their organizational structures create the opportunity for evaluating the complex ways multiple languages co-exist in the media landscape. The goal is to move beyond the traditional binary discourse that delineates certain languages as central and others as peripheral. Consequently, this research offers insight into the multifaceted interactions

of languages and their implication for cultural and identity representation in the Ghanaian media contexts.

Additionally, this dissertation will contribute to existing literature on indigenous language media in three ways: First, it will focus on the multifaceted nature of indigenous language broadcasting. Indigenous language media have been marked by comparison and media separatism against media that use European languages like English, and their instrumentality has been the defining core element. However, as the literature review has shown, indigenous language media have undergone various transformations and ruptures, which warrant investigating how this media system has evolved. Consequently, this study will move beyond language and instrumentality and explore the forms expressed by indigenous language media through its programming, organizational structures, and production practices.

Second, it will emphasize the production process and the assembly of the apparatus during the production process. This is important for bridging the gap between the moment of production and the product of the production process. As Stuart Hall (1984) argues, even though the moments of production, circulation, and reception or consumption of television signs are distinct, they are connected by their practices and are equally determinant moments. Thus, focusing on the production process reveals their modalities and conditions of existence. Third, it will show how the past and the present construct and reinscribe indigenous language broadcasting in Ghana. It will show how the identity of indigenous language broadcasting in Ghana has evolved and continues to co-evolve with other media systems and programming formats.

Another rationale for conducting this study is to center discussions on the tensions between commercialization, cultural preservation, and linguistic diversity in media. Besides

filling the research gap, this study's interest lies in probing the public scholarship that highlights commercialization and corporatization as significant factors that add to the marginalization of non-viable indigenous languages, which are already facing subjugation in the media ecosystem. The marginalization of native languages in broadcasting results from a lack of or inadequate language policy, colonial legacy, and preference for the English language. Writing about the Ugandan broadcasting situation, Chibita (2009) shows that a critical factor for the marginalization of native languages is economic. She argues that language practice in the media has been guided by geo-economics, where languages with economic value/production are favored over other languages. Because these languages attract sponsorship and advertisement, they are economically viable and the language of choice. So, incorporating other languages into the media only functions as tokenism.

At the institutional and economic levels, the dilemma of African indigenous language media is finding a balance between providing content/programming in economically viable languages and economically non-viable languages because of the lack of numeric strength, as well as sponsorship and advertisement. Publishing in indigenous languages is not economically viable because of their unattractiveness in education, business, and governance. Linguistic diversity is thus influenced by commercialization or economics (Chibita, 2009). Another mitigating factor against local language media is the corporatization of local media. Because of the emphasis on profits, most media outlets focus their content to appeal to the basic instincts of their audience (Salawu, 2016, p. 23). Abiodun Salawu (2006) argues that modernization and technology are some of the causes of the decline in African languages. Factors militating against the survival of African languages include the attitudes of native speakers towards their

languages, which affect the patronage of indigenous language press regarding readership and advertisement placement (Salawu, 2006).

As argued above, the commercialization and corporatization of ILM exacerbate existing inequalities between economically non-viable and viable native languages in media. Such linguistic inequalities undermine the promotion and preservation of linguistic diversity and culture and fall short of producing substantial content that meets the public good or interest. Such analysis obscures the complex tensions and dialogical interactions shaping the evolution of ILM over time. Further, they fail to account for the neoliberal economic conditions that undermine the idealistic aspirations of indigenous media enthusiasts or the fact that indigenous language media financing often falls to private entities. Consequently, there are tensions about language commodification and civic duty or media serving the public trust, interest, and good in the operations of indigenous language media. Nonetheless, the boundaries between commercialization and public or social good are unclear. As such, the idea that commercialization is necessarily ideologically antithetical to public and social good needs to be interrogated since, for most of the media institutions studied for this dissertation, commercialization is necessary both for the running of media corporations as well as serving the public and social interest.

Lastly, this dissertation seeks to critically engage with and challenge the prevailing notion that indigenous media and mainstream media are inherently ideologically opposed. The ideological differences are symptoms of generalized notions that commercialization and corporatization are, by default, catalysts of marginalization and subjugation. By this logic, mainstream media are usually profit-oriented and, for that matter, self-serving as they seek to primarily serve the interests of their owners. In contrast, indigenous media is seen as a

counteraction to mainstream media engaging in activism and identity politics, struggling for fair representation, self-determination, self-representation, and ethnic/indigenous expressions.

Additionally, indigenous media challenge and resist conventional mainstream media expressions, prioritizing social justice, advocacy, resistance to cultural domination, social transformation, and reform. Scholars (e.g., Pietikäinen, 2008; Wortham, 2013; Villarreal, 2017; Salazar & Cordova, 2008; Ginsberg, 1991) position indigenous media as political, marginalized, and in the periphery, where the interrelated engagement between governments and indigenous social movements or advocates determines the gains and direction of indigenous or minority groups' media use and operationalization. However, as I will show in this dissertation, indigenous language media are characterized differently in Ghana, where indigenesness is a matter of cultural and national independence with strong local participation. Indigenous language media are therefore interrelated and marked as both alternative and mainstream. Consequently, I argue that indigenous language media has become a viable media system that must be examined as a media form. Any assessment of this media form must address its varied practices and how they intersect with other media forms, industrial practices, cultural, political, economic, and social factors. It must also investigate how particular trade practices invoke distinct features that converge to form the core parameters of indigenous language media. Such a holistic assessment of indigenous language media helps explain and understand its purpose, role, and function in society and its distinct format. Indigenous language media should be seen as co-evolving with other media formats, not as substandard or regressive. By exploring the complexities and nuances in their interactions, the study aims to reveal the potential for both conflict and convergence within these media forms, ultimately fostering a more nuanced understanding of their roles in contemporary discourse.

#### 1.4 Background: Linguistic Situation and Broadcasting in Ghana

Ghana is a multilingual country with a population of 30.8 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021a). Different figures have been given regarding the number of languages spoken in Ghana. The numbers range between 30 and 90 (Akpojivi & Fosu, 2016; Blankson, 2005; Obeng, 1997; Agbozo & ResCue, 2021; Appiah & Ardila, 2020). However, the Bureau of Ghanaian Languages states that there are nine government-sponsored languages and twenty-five non-government-sponsored languages, bringing the number to 34 languages. Government sponsorship of these languages occurs through training and funding to produce and translate literature into some of the nine local languages, including Akan, Dagaare, Dangbe, Dagbane, Ewe, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, and Nzema. Akan is the most widely spoken Ghanaian language because it is the language of the largest ethnic group in Ghana. The Akan ethnic group comprises 45.9% of the population, followed by Mole Dagbani- 18.5%, Ewe- 12.8%, and Ga-Dangme- 7.1% (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021b). However, none of these languages has been adopted as an official language. Instead, English is the official language. It is the language for carrying out government business, the language of instruction in schools, and the language of the press (newspapers and magazines). On the other hand, broadcasting (radio and television) airs in both English and some local languages like Akan, Ga, Ewe, and Gonja.

According to the National Communication Authority (NCA) 2023 report on the number of FM broadcasting stations in Ghana, there are 747 authorized radio stations. About 550 are in operation, while 197 are not in operation. There are 549 commercial radio stations, 31 public radio stations, 137 community radio stations, 25 campus radio stations, and 5 public foreign radio stations. Radio is the most popular broadcasting medium in Ghana. This is because radio is affordable cost-wise, accessible in terms of coverage and audience reach, and has low operating

and production costs (Ndlovu, 2015). As of 2023, the NCA recorded 175 authorized television stations in Ghana. Out of this total number, 127 television stations are on air while 38 are not on air. While radio stations in Ghana only have administrative regional coverage, television stations can have administrative regional and national coverage. About 42 authorized television stations in Ghana have nationwide coverage and fall under the digital terrestrial free-to-air television programme channel,<sup>4</sup> as categorized by the NCA. The radio (Adom FM and Peace FM) and television (Adom TV and United Television (UTV)) stations selected for this research are commercial and have regional and nationwide coverage, respectively.

The history of ILM (both press and broadcasting) is situated within a sociopolitical agitation for independence from colonialism, language inclusivity, and negotiation between the majority illiterate audience who desired local language programs and minority literate groups as well as broadcast and public personalities' subversion of the western content for local language programs (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020, p. 97). When broadcasting was introduced in Ghana in 1935 for radio and in 1965 for television, it was centered in the urban areas, and the target audience was European settlers and Ghanaian-educated elites. It was first called Radio ZOY, then renamed The Gold Coast Broadcasting Service in 1954, and finally The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) in 1957 when Ghana gained independence (Blackson, 2019). The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, inherited from the British colonial administration, remained a government monopoly. However, broadcasting programming and content were delivered in English, alienating non-English speakers. Later, the British administration included programming content in four of the Ghanaian languages and employed vernacular announcers.

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<sup>4</sup> The NCA (2023) defines the digital terrestrial free-to-air television programme channel as a "A Television Broadcasting Service in which a single programme channel is broadcast unencrypted or in 'clear' over a digital terrestrial television (DTT) network with national coverage and capable of being received without payment of subscription fees."

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) used local languages. However, the use of these local languages was mostly translations of English programs like the news (Boateng, 2009). Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo (2020) note that local language translation into four Ghanaian languages, Twi, Ga, Fante, and Ewe (and later Hausa), constituted only 15 minutes per day of broadcasting news from the BBC. After Ghana's independence, GBC provided two domestic radio services: Radio 1 (transmitted in English and in six Ghanaian languages, including Akan, Ga, Ewe, Nzema, Dagbani, and Hausa) and Radio 2 (transmitted only in English) (Blankson, 2019). This local language broadcasting began the indigenization of radio in Ghana. Nonetheless, the colonial Administration policed indigenous news production on the radio by monitoring news and editorial content to avoid any subversion from the vernacular announcers.

Post-independence, the checkered political history of Ghana (which alternated between civilian rule and military regime) impacted media/broadcasting freedom and independence as well as the development of indigenous language use in broadcasting. From 1957, when Ghana gained independence, until 1992, Ghana had five military and three civilian administrations. The first president of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, initiated a rural radio project to indigenize radio and employed the use of local languages in radio to educate, re-orient, and communicate government policies to rural folks. This rural radio project was criticized as being a propaganda project; nonetheless, this project waned and failed by the 1960s (Blankson, 2005). Under the military dictator General Ankrah of the National Liberation Council (NLC), local language use in the national broadcasting station was de-prioritized to favor the English language (Akrofi-Quarcoo & Gadzekpo, 2020). However, under "Flt. Lt. Rawlings, Head of State and Chairman of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1979 and later Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) from 1981 to 1993," his administration promoted a policy

where regional radio stations were instituted. Dominant local languages in those regions were used even though the languages used in these regional radio stations were not exclusively local languages (Akrofi-Quarcoop & Gadzekpo, p.106, 2020). Thus, the coexistence of English and Ghanaian languages continued to persist, with local language content depending on English language content. Early established radio stations depended on the English language to air all their foreign and local news, interactive segments, and talk programs that engaged the public in English (Blankson, 2005). Akpojivi and Fosu (2016) assert that the absence of an indigenous language press made the domination of the English language in the media possible.

Monopolization of the broadcasting landscape continued until the early 1990s when Ghana returned to constitutional rule. Under Jerry John Rawlings in 1995, the airwaves were liberalized, and the media industry in Ghana was deregulated. Radio and television frequencies were issued to private broadcasting. The 1992 constitution, which guaranteed media freedom, rights, and independence and eliminated any prerequisite license to establish and operate mass media for the purpose of communication and information, marked the proliferation of mass media in Ghana. Consolidation of the deregulation of the media space in Ghana happened through the enactment of “the National Communications Authority Act (NCAA) of 1996, and the repeal of the Telecommunications (Frequency Registration and Control) Decree of 1977 that was enacted by the Supreme Military Council (S. M. C.)” (Boateng, 2009, p.163). Censoring mechanisms like legislations instituted to muzzle, control, and threaten/harass media practitioners were repealed, allowing the proliferation of private media (press and broadcasting). However, early commercial private stations used English exclusively in their transmission.

Local language broadcasting expanded in programming and geographic coverage to broaden access to broadcasting in Ghana. Most of these radio stations broadcast in the primary

language of their audience. This practice has resulted in the proliferation of local language radio and television stations, most of which use the Akan language. The preference for the Akan language is because Akan is the language of the dominant ethnic group. Also, at the inception of the stations that broadcast in Akan, they had an astonishingly large market share, prompting even predominantly English-speaking stations to use local languages side-by-side with the English language, while others established broadcasting stations that were entirely broadcast in Akan. For instance, “the management of Joy FM, a leading English-speaking private radio station, established Adom FM, a local language station that used Akan predominantly in Accra, a Ga-speaking area” (Boateng, 2009, p.166). Peace FM was the first radio station to broadcast its programming entirely in Akan. Despite Group of Companies, owner of Peace, FM, has a television station transmitting entirely in the Akan language called United Television (UTV). Both Adom FM (owned by Multimedia Group Limited) and Peace FM have an expansive reach across Ghana and have corresponding television sister stations. Both stations belong to media companies that have shifted from a single media format production into multiple media format production, creating media groups. Blackson (2019) argues that these media groups have organized fairs and concerts, produced Ghanaian movies, and “provided other services that increase their profit-making margins” (p. 55). Against this background of indigenous language broadcasting development, this dissertation hopes to build upon existing research by investigating contemporary formations of indigenous language broadcasting as it intersects with sociopolitical conditions from its formative years. Choosing Adom FM and TV, as well as Peace FM and United TV, as the case study provides an opportunity to investigate the operations of these media formats and their distinct modes of operation. Such a study allows me to focus on

these stations, understand how their practices set them apart because of their language choice or use, and how they assemble various infrastructures in their production process.

### 1.5 Instrumentality and Production Practices in Indigenous Language Media/Broadcasting

Indigenous language media/broadcasting has been celebrated for being instrumental to national development, unification of the state, development of democracy, and learning and promotion of African languages (Nwagbara, 2013; Salawu, 2006; Akpojivi & Fosu, 2016). As such, the use of indigenous language in mass media is a veritable tool for not only political participation and expansion of citizen participation in democracy but also socialization, cultural transmission, advocacy, and activism (Salawu, 2016).

Indigenous language media has been described as bridging the communication and information gap between dominant privileged groups and marginalized grassroots groups. According to Grace Nwagbara (2013), the introduction of presenting news in indigenous languages in Nigeria was to close the gap between television and people at the grassroots and enable the masses to understand the news. Similarly, the importance of mass media and information technologies has been encoered as bridging information gaps since channels like radio and television can overcome distance and time (Ndlovu, 2015). These media are responsible for setting the agenda for the public, deciding on what news is covered and what and how to think about topics (Straubhaar, Larose & Davenport, 2012).

Local language programming on radio and TV provides an avenue for the audience to gain insight into and knowledge of “Akan language, culture, and environment” (Agyekum, 2000, p. 3). Agyekum argues that local language TV shows employed language, stylistic qualities, and literary devices as well as humor and comedy. By this, Agyekum sees local language radio and television as sites for disseminating and preserving oral literature in Akan. Kwasi Boateng

(2009) considers local language programming to be bringing dynamism into the broadcasting industry and breaking the radio monopoly in Ghana. For instance, the introduction of Akan-speaking radio stations saw an increase in culturally inflected programming. Radio stations played more Ghanaian music genres like high-life music, reversing the old programming order where Western music dominated the airwaves.

Emphasis on the instrumentality of indigenous language media is significant to the extent that it justifies the existence of indigenous language media. This is not to say that the instrumentality of indigenous language media is not important. However, it is important to understand that indigenous language media share the same communicative function as English-speaking media. For that reason, competition is ripe in a multilingual environment where these linguistic media types might compete for the same audience. In such a postcolonial and multilingual environment, how does a linguistically informed functional approach justify the existence of indigenous language media? How might we rethink the functions of indigenous language media as it evolves and co-exists with other media types? Other issues that might problematize issues about the functions of indigenous language media are media types determined by genre. This dissertation explores such larger issues that condition the way indigenous language media is assessed and held accountable in contemporary times and beyond.

Other studies have concerned indigenous language media's news production process and routines. Jemima Opare-Henaku (2016) conducted a comparative study between English-speaking and Akan-speaking news production processes on two radio station subsidiaries belonging to the same corporation. Opare-Henaku's study examined the complexities in the news production process of Adom FM (Akan speaking radio station) and Joy FM (an English-speaking radio station) to show that news routines, culture, internal factors like training and newsroom

policies, and external factors like audiences and advertisers play a significant role in affecting and shaping the final newscast. She found major differences and similarities between these radio stations. These differences and similarities are summarized and presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

*Differences and similarities between Adom F.M. and Joy F.M.*

| Differences                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                          |                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Adom F.M</i>                                                                          | <i>Joy F.M</i>                                   |
| News selection                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | The primary goal is to attract more audiences                                            | The primary goal is to make an impact on society |
| News Presentation/delivery                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | News is written in English and spontaneously translated from English to Akan on air      | News is written and presented in English         |
| Content                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Presentation is interlaced with literary devices                                         | No literary devices are used                     |
| Application of Professional Standards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sometimes flouts professional standards to accommodate cultural perspectives and nuances | Adheres to professional standards                |
| Similarities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                          |                                                  |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <i>Adom F.M</i>                                                                          | <i>Joy F.M</i>                                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin the news gathering process with idea generation</li> <li>● Both are confronted with an overload of information and go through gatekeeping process for selection</li> <li>● News selection is informed by each entity's understanding of their audiences</li> <li>● Editors arrange the stories in order of presentation</li> <li>● Journalists edit news stories together with soundbites and submit it to the editors for final editing</li> <li>● News is written in the English language and packaged in softcopy format</li> </ul> |                                                                                          |                                                  |

*Note. Differences and similarities between Adom F.M. and Joy F.M. I created this table using information from Jemima Opare-Henaku (2016) work titled “An exploratory study of news routines of local and English language radio stations: The case of Adom F.M. and Joy F.M.”*

While this study is significant in providing evidence to support the differences and similarities between English-speaking and local language-speaking radio stations, it suggests that cultural nuances and perspectives adopted by local language-speaking stations are a compromise on professional journalistic standards in the news production process. Even though the author recommends that media regulators adopt a culturally sensitive approach to regulations, the study reveals a broader discourse that discredits cultural forms/elements inflected in news production by adopting a native language.

The tension between the adoption of universal professional standards and traditional communication styles in broadcasting has prompted a debate about local language broadcasters adopting normative practices of journalism or incorporating traditional styles of communication. These cultural forms associated with indigenous language broadcasting include adopting traditional communication styles like proverbs, indirectness, metaphors, and embellishment. These features contrast with Western-style journalism (universal expectations of media regulators) which emphasize neutrality, objectivity, and professionalism. Western-style journalistic practices are the standards taught in journalism schools, recommended by the media regulatory body- National Media Commission (NMC)- and the model used as house style for press and broadcast. Holding indigenous language media to these standards has resulted in continuous criticism against local language broadcasting for lacking newsroom professionalism. They have been criticized for interlacing news with humor to the extent that it lacks any form of seriousness (Ofori, Diabah, Akenten & Agyekum, 2021), accused of ethical violations and

lowered professional standards (Da-Costa, Ganaa & Adade-Yeboah, 2020). Da-Costa, Ganaa & Adade-Yeboah (2020) have questioned media accountability. The authors opine that there is a tension between media freedom and media responsibility. They continue to assert that these tensions arise when media performance does not match society's expectations. The authors have criticized the GLLB for lacking a yardstick against which media performance, accountability and quality can be measured and controlled (p 380). Thus, this guideline "cannot be used to hold media accountable for any infractions" (Da-Costa, Ganaa & Adade-Yeboah, 2020, p. 380).

Meanwhile, other scholars argue that some aspects of the communication style could be integrated into journalism to appeal to the audience, avoid translation difficulties, and maintain the authenticity of the language during translation (Gazekpo, Yeboah-Banin & Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2020). Kwasi Boateng (2009) takes a positive view of indigenous language media style and illustrates how cultural forms of representation adopted into media practice attract audiences, create a forum for discussion, and promote effective communication. Analyzing radio stations' adoption of the Akan language, Boateng argues that these stations' "...participation in the electronic media industry in Ghana served as a dynamic force that unleashed a vibrant and multifaceted radio programming" (p.164). He uses intense hybridization theory to explain how radio content "is becoming increasingly Ghanaian with limited foreign components due to a renewed sense of programming and the focus on the use of local languages" (p. 167). Boateng's theorization is significant because he shows how the adoption of the Akan language helped introduce "Akan linguistic cultural forms to emerge as a main form of expression on some radio stations." (p. 167). Boateng's intense hybridization is significant on many levels. It acknowledges the influence of language on media practice and highlights ethnic culture in broadcasting and the dynamism it has brought into radio programming. It also acknowledges

industrial and corporate decisions that establishes indigenous language media and lastly underscores representations from the Ghanaian perspective.

Similarly, Wunpini F. Mohammed (2019) using indigenous knowledge epistemologies approach underscores culture, language, and context in indigenous language media. She emphasizes indigenous language production and presentation style by centering indigenous ways of knowing and indigenous epistemologies to challenge “western canonical knowledge systems” (p. 248). By analyzing Gonja and Dagbanli news production, Mohammed shows that news production and its presentation in Gonja and Dagbanli rely on the culture of the language and sociocultural context to supplement their journalistic practices and presentation. Her approach legitimizes unconventional ways of knowing like oratory through which culture and history are passed down to generations. As she illustrates, they employ the guidance of English script, but news presenters present the news orally in indigenous language.<sup>5</sup> Her findings corroborate with Henaku’s assertion that news in indigenous language media is written in English and spontaneously translated from English to a native language on air. The format of presentation includes “memorizing, translating and presenting the news story off the cuff” (Mohammed, 2019, p. 247). However, both studies differ on the process of journalistic work or news production and agenda setting. Mohammed found that the English newsroom sets the agenda for the Gonja and Dagbani language newsrooms when news editors source certain news items from nationally recognized radio stations or news websites, resulting in a second-level agenda-setting. On the contrary, Henaku found that Akan newsroom produces its original news content just like

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<sup>5</sup> Mohammed (2019) argues that one of the main features of news in Dagbanli and Gonja is that they “draw heavily on indigenous epistemologies in production and presentation” (p. 243). She links the presentation style to griot culture, where emphasis is on orality and proficiency. She introduces the concept of journalistic griot to describe the presentation style of news presenters. The journalistic griot “works with a combination of memory, pace, linguistic proficiency, personality, traits, aura, and personae to deliver news to the audience” (p. 243).

the English newsroom in her comparative analysis. Thus, indigenous language news production processes are not similar across all the media types categorized by media mandate. These scholars show the variation in media practices and production practices. But this variation in the agenda-setting function is influenced by mandate, location, financial and resource capabilities. Consequently, Mohammed and Henaku's findings are not surprising because their objects of study represent media institutions with different mandates and vast financial resources.

Moreover, what has not been emphasized is the notion that there is an interdependent relationship between English-speaking stations and local language stations in Ghana regarding the media's agenda-setting function, especially for those with a commercial mandate like the Akan cluster of Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media. This study finds that English-speaking and Akan-speaking stations draw on each other's agenda-setting function in their news production process. Each English and Akan-speaking station alternates between primary and second-level agenda-setting. As such, it is contentious to assert that indigenous language media in their news production depend on English-speaking stations to set the agenda. This study shows that most broadcasters monitor other broadcasting stations in English-speaking or indigenous language-speaking stations to source news ideas or surveil their competitors. Consequently, examining how English-speaking and local language broadcasting co-exist and shape each other is important. Most importantly, because indigenous language media was an "afterthought" during the colonial era, it will be prudent to explore how this media form has evolved alongside English-speaking media. Similarly, we must pay attention to the linguistic dynamics shaping the interactions between and within indigenous language broadcasting stations. Both Blankson (2005) and Boateng (2009) allude to historical epochs to show that in the early stages of indigenous language media, radio stations explored a combination of English

language programming and Ghanaian language programming and, as it has been established already, translation from English to a Ghanaian language on air marked a feature of indigenous language news presentation. Consequently, both English and a Ghanaian language like Akan have existed side by side. The coexistence of these languages warrants further investigation into the purpose and function of these languages in indigenous language media and how they define and shape broadcasting in Ghana.

## 1.6 Methods

This section will explain how interdisciplinary qualitative research and theoretical frameworks from production studies, political economy, and heteroglossia influenced data collection and analysis. The explanation highlights my role as the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection techniques, research sites and settings, sampling techniques, and transcription procedures. The detailed information provided in this section is necessary to the extent that it provides contextual information within which readers can situate their understanding of the researcher's engagement with the object and subject of this study.

I came to this research with an interdisciplinary background. I have a bachelor's degree in English and Political Science and a master's degree in Rhetoric, Theory and Culture, and I am currently working on my doctorate in communication studies. I have been trained in various research methods. I took seminars on Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods and Advanced Research Methods. The other media, rhetoric, and communications seminars also helped me critically analyze communication texts and objects. Thus, I have the skills to conduct a qualitative research study. I am Ghanaian. I can read and write two of the 8 Akan dialects: Asante Twi and Fante. I am proficient in Asante Twi and have elementary proficiency in Fante. However, the Akan dialects are mutually intelligible, allowing me to comprehend the other Akan

dialects even though I cannot speak the other six (6) Akan dialects. My language proficiency is crucial in fully immersing myself in the research context and conducting both formal and informal interviews with respondents for this research.

I employed a triangulated approach to collect and analyze data. Triangulation involves comparing different perspectives through various methods/methodologies, theoretical approaches, data sets, and investigators to answer a research question or examine a phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Flick, 2018; Jensen, 2021; Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Triangulation helps researchers use research methods systematically and flexibly, challenges specific forms of data by providing different perspectives, reinforces a critical lens by identifying the limitations of a single data source, and questions the data produced with a specific method (Flick, 2018). Flick (2018) discusses four types of triangulation strategies: investigator, theory, methodological, and data triangulation. Flick's advice for using triangulation is that "triangulation should only be used if there are different levels of information needed for collecting data to understand the issue under study and if the time frame for a study and available resources, in general, allow triangulation to be used" (p. 14). Following Flick's advice, I employed data triangulation, which combines different data collection approaches to collect data at various levels and qualities (Flick, 2018; Jensen, 2021). I combined archival and digital research, participant observation, practitioner interviews, informal conversations, institutional/industrial reports and documents, media reports and opinions, and media and governmental policy documents.

I sought approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Colorado State University. It was determined that this research did not meet the regulatory definition of human subject research (see Appendix F). The research was classified as not human subject research. This determination was based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

definition of a human subject. This definition states that a human subject is “a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research (1) obtains information or biospecimens through intervention or interaction with the individual, and uses, studies, or analyzes the information or biospecimens; or (2) obtains, uses, studies, analyzes, or generates identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). As a result, the research was able to proceed without the additional oversight typically required for human subject studies.

Nonetheless, ethical issues were carefully considered and applied to the extent that research involves the complexities of human interaction, the conflation of private and public accounts, and competing desires and interests (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019; Merrigan & Huston, 2020; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Moreover, practitioner interviews and participant observation can be intrusive, and maintaining ethical standards is essential to any qualitative research. Ethical considerations were prioritized throughout the study, from data collection to data analysis and reporting. Specifically, the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report, written by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979), were applied to this study. The principles outlined in the *Belmont Report* include “doing no harm,” confidentiality, and privacy. I was mindful of the delicate and sensitive nature of the subjects and settings/sites of my research. Thus, going into this study, I prioritized respondents and the media organizations under study’s interests in terms of compartmentalizing to help me set boundaries reflexively. For instance, I took my subjects' security seriously because of the volatile and political relationship between news (media) organizations and various groups. A case in point was when, during one of my interviews, an informant clarified that they could not provide detailed information about

the locations of some of their studios due to security reasons. There was actual physical evidence of these media organizations taking charge of their security. For instance, both MGL Despite Media used security and administrative personnel to control and limit access to the building and workers. I had to undergo strict security checks during my first visit to both media organizations, which required providing evidence of my appointment and leaving my identification information. This security apprehension has a historical basis, as coup plotters in the past would seize the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation. In recent times, disgruntled citizens have attacked radio stations.

I sought permission from interview participants in advance of the interview. During the interview, I introduced myself and the purpose of my research. I reminded participants to sign the consent form and provided a summary of the information contained in it. Although this research was deemed not to be human subject research by the IRB, I still proceeded to request verbal or written consent from participants. This decision was primarily to uphold ethical principles, maintain transparency, and minimize unforeseen risks. Furthermore, my experience with this research confirmed the argument made by scholars such as Lindlof and Taylor (2019), Merrigan and Huston (2020), and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) that human interactions are complex and often involve a conflation of multiple issues, including professional roles and private thoughts. I reminded the participants that their participation was voluntary, and I explained the risks involved in the research, as well as the confidentiality policy, and provided the researcher's contact information. While the researcher did not collect personally identifiable information on the interviewees, the participants' job positions in the broadcasting station were requested. Nonetheless, in cases where participants introduced themselves with personally identifiable information, that information was redacted from the transcripts. The only exceptions

were Professor Kofi Agyekum (a professor of Linguistics and Akan Consultant, University of Ghana) and Mr Charles Amankwa-Ampofo (a veteran broadcaster), who gave consent that, owing to the informative and educational nature of the research, I could use their names in my research. Moreover, Professor Agyekum and Mr. Amankwa-Ampofo are not employees of the media organizations studied, although Professor Agyekum is a regular guest on Peace FM's (a subsidiary of Despite Media) political morning show called Kokrokoo. I notified interview participants that since recruitment took place in the workplace context, the researcher could not guarantee that other workers might see or infer their recruitment for the research. Nonetheless, confidentiality was not an issue for the researcher. The reason might be that the participants did not see their answers as potential sources of incrimination or threats to them. Another reason might be that the questions asked were historical, related to their work, and generally about media practice, so they were considered non-threatening. Lastly, I was introduced to, known by, and developed a rapport with the participants at the research site. I participated in the activities of the research site and, through that, built a connection with the research community to the extent that the researcher was invited to specific internal organizational meetings and cooperate events. As a result, participants were often comfortable doing the interviews in the presence of their colleagues.

The archival research consisted of digital research and visiting two archival repositories in Ghana. I visited the Public Records and Administration Department (see Appendix G for the request letter) and the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Library (see Appendix H for the request letter) for archival research. Additionally, I relied on online media reports, digital archival sources, official websites, and social media accounts of Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media. The archival research focused on finding information to help me construct a history of

ILM in Ghana. I must add that while at the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), I had the opportunity to have informal conversations with various media practitioners and visit one of their newsrooms.

#### 1.61 Recruitment

This study also used participant observation and practitioner interviews. The research sample was drawn from the population of media broadcasting practitioners working in Indigenous Akan broadcasting organizations- Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media (DM) as well as media stakeholders and a media veteran. The study's interview participants were indigenous Akan language personnel from Adom FM, Adom TV, Asempa FM, Adomonline.com, Peace FM, United Television, and Peacefmonline.com. The research techniques (participant observations and interviews) influenced the research sampling design. This study followed Lindolf and Taylor's (2019) three-step approach to sampling. The first step is to identify the sample units like sites, settings, activities, events, or time; second, develop a sampling strategy; and third, determine the sample size. Sites and settings are the "physical or virtual places that have social and cultural significance for people" (Lindolf & Taylor, 20019, p. 143). Two significant sites were identified for this study. They were the physical locations of Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media. Specifically, for each of these two broadcasting organization sites, the settings selected included newsrooms (Adom newsroom and Peace FM newsroom), news studios (Adom FM news studio, Adom TV news studio, Peace FM news studio, United Television news studio), and recording studios (Adom TV telenovela recording studio and United Television recording studio). A combination of theoretical and snowball sampling was deployed regarding the sampling strategy. Theoretical sampling is when a researcher "selects its objects of analysis to explore concepts or categories," whereas, with

snowball sampling, researchers rely on referrals (Jensen, 2012, p. 269). Both theoretical sampling and snowball sampling were used concurrently to recruit participants. Interview participant selection was based on sampling structures where participants at different levels, hierarchies, and departments at Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media were purposefully selected. These included media executives/upper-level management, news editors, production directors, journalists, and presenters.

Referrals were also crucial for recruiting participants for interviews. At Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media, management gave me a contact person who helped me navigate the organization and introduced me to personnel I could interview. Often, these personnel would also suggest other participants for me to interview to obtain more tailored information to answer my research questions. These referrals were made to internal personnel, external media practitioners, or media stakeholders. For example, the head of news at Adom FM and TV suggested and introduced me to veteran media practitioner Mr. Amankwa Ampofo (one of the participants who gave me permission to use his name). Once a referral was made, I followed up with a telephone call or a text message to introduce myself and explain the purpose of my contact. When contact was established, I sent the participant the consent form (see Appendix A) for review in some instances, often via WhatsApp. In cases where the first contact was face-to-face, I provided the participant with a copy of the consent form and arranged a date for the interview.

#### 1.62 Participant Observation

I conducted participant observation at the Multimedia Group Limited and non-participant observation at Despite Media premises. At Multimedia Group Limited, I observed the Adom newsroom, Adom FM recording studio, Adom TV control room, and Adom TV Telenovela

recording studio. At Despite Media, I observed the Peace FM newsroom, Peace FM recording studio, UTV control room, and the UTV Telenovela recording studio. I did a pilot study at Multimedia Group Limited in the Summer of 2021. An official request (see Appendix B for the recruitment letter) to begin the study at Adom FM and Adom TV was sent on June 30, 2021. Multimedia Group Limited granted permission on July 1, 2021. Multimedia Group Limited's observation started from July 3, 2021, to August 20, 2021. I returned in Fall 2022 to continue with the observation and start interviews. The observation and interview period started on December 5, 2022, and ended on January 6, 2023, excluding the Christmas and New Year holidays.

At Despite Media, I spent five (5) days observing the Peace FM newsroom from January 9 to January 13, 2023. This brief period was because by the time (December 22, 2022), permission was granted to start the observation study at Despite Media, the newsroom had gone on Christmas and New Year break. I had to wait until the newsroom resumed from the Christmas break to begin the observation. However, I had been granted access to Despite Media personnel from Peace FM, PeaceFMonline.com, and United Television for one-on-one interviews. Some respondents made themselves available for interviews while the company was on break. The participant observation focused on the routines and practices of media practitioners in their work environment. I focused on the news production process of the two indigenous Akan language news outlets, from editorial meetings to gathering the news to the on-air presentation. The second point of focus was on the production process of telenovelas (twinovela). Various texts were collected during the observation, including photographs and organizational documents such as programming documents, news scripts, and other related news documents, such as press releases.

I interviewed a total of twenty-four (24) adult respondents for this study. The gender distribution was seventeen (17) adult males and seven (7) adult females. Except for three (3) participants, all the respondents were recruited from Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media. Twenty-two (22) of the interviews were conducted face-to-face at the respondents' chosen venue. One (1) of the interviews was a phone interview, and one (1) was a virtual (WhatsApp Call) interview. Twenty respondents gave verbal and signed/written consent; three (3) respondents gave only verbal consent, while one (1) respondent gave virtual consent through a WhatsApp message. Only one person signed the consent form but was unavailable for the interview. The twenty-four respondents included the following:

- one (1) professor of linguistics and Akan Consultant, Professor Kofi Agyekum,
- one (1) media veteran, Mr Charles Amankwa-Ampofo,
- One (1) General Manager from Multimedia Group Limited,
- One (1) telenovela/twinovela director from Despite Media
- One (1) head of sports/journalist
- Three (3) marketing and sales managers from Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media
- Three (3) producers/journalists
- Three (3) presenters/reporters/journalists
- Three (4) Programs/Channel Managers and head of news
- Five (5) news editors

The most extended interview lasted about two (2) hours and thirty (30) minutes, with the shortest interview being thirty (30) minutes. Respondents selected the date, time, and location for the interviews. The interview questions were adapted from Kwesi Kwaa Prah (2005) (see Appendix E for Prah's complete questionnaire). Prah's questionnaire is unstructured and constructed around seventeen thematic areas. Only seven (7) themes were adapted, modified, and expanded for this dissertation. I structured the interview questions around five major areas: the history of the station and issues of political affiliation; ownership profiles of the stations; advertising; program construction and development; and Language choice, policy, and problems associated

with local language use. I developed a semi-structured questionnaire around these five areas. Creating a semi-structured questionnaire was crucial for establishing standardization across the subjects for this study while allowing flexibility for open-ended questions to account for the uniqueness of each media organization under study (see Appendix C for the interview protocol). A different semi-structured questionnaire was developed to understand the concept and history of Akan news (see Appendix D).

Additionally, I had multiple informal conversations with the editors, in addition to the formal semi-structured interviews, at Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media. There were several spontaneous and informal conversational interviews with newsroom personnel (mostly with journalists/reporters), telenovela directors, and TV programmers. These conversational interviews covered production coordination, station affiliates, social media and digitization, news gathering, writing, and reporting or presentation. These conversations were to help clarify practices in the newsroom and other sites of programming production. The interview recording methods for documentation and analysis were audio recording and note-taking. The audio recording was adopted because it helped me concentrate on the topic and interviewee, while note-taking reinforced the interviewer's focus on the issues and line of questioning. I used a 32GB Tschisen Digital Voice Recorder and my phone's sound recorder app to tape the interviews. I immediately removed and transferred the recorded interviews from my phone to a computer to ensure the utmost security of those recordings. Twenty-three (23) of the interviews were audiotaped, while one combined notetaking and audio recording. However, the method for recording many conversational interviews was note-taking. Nonetheless, there were a few instances where some of the conversational interviews were recorded. In such cases, I notified the respondents and sought their consent before proceeding with the conversation.

Respondents were allowed to do the interview in English or Akan (mostly Asante Twi). Only one respondent opted to do the interview in the Akan language for political reasons, stating that indigenous Ghanaian languages must be promoted by consistently and continuously speaking them, especially in the context of research. This respondent is fluent in Ga, Asante Twi, and Akwapim Twi. However, for this interview, the respondent spoke predominantly in Akwapim Twi. Even in this instance, there were instances of code-switching between English and Akwapim Twi. Similarly, code-switching occurred during the interviews conducted in English. However, code-switching in these instances was purposeful and not arbitrary. The code-switching was necessary for illustrative purposes, as the interviews focused on Akan Indigenous media practices. This experience reinforced the agency that research participants possess in co-creating the research context as a political one. Moreover, it reinforces the postcolonial context as one that is continuously engaged in the politics of resistance (by choosing to speak in a local language) and negotiation (through code-switching).

### 1.63 Data Analysis

The data collection methods utilized in this dissertation influenced the data analysis procedure. The different levels of data, including interview transcripts, fieldnotes, material culture, reports/documents, and media texts, produced a layered, discursive, and multifaceted data. This meant that the analytical framework employed must equally address the different levels of data or information collected during the study. Scholars indicate that data analysis comprises a three-step process: data management, familiarizing oneself with the data, and data categorization. Data management is concerned with how data is documented/filed, organized, and stored for retrieval. As already explained, I combined audio recording and note-taking to document the data. Data familiarization involves conducting a thorough, close reading of the

data. Data categorization means breaking down, sorting, and reorganizing data for understanding and interpretation, whether through the lens of existing/ready-made categories (from literature) or categories emerging from the data itself (data-driven categories). I followed this three-step process to help me interpret the data. The following paragraphs outline the transcription process, observational techniques, and data analysis strategies.

Overall, nineteen (19) of the recorded interviews were transcribed. The remaining five interviews were not transcribed because they provided additional information to reinforce knowledge gained during the participant observation. Some scholars have noted that transcription is a political act, requiring researchers to make choices (Bucholtz, 2000; Meyerhoff et al., 2015). As such, the transcription was guided by three overarching phenomena: translation, ethics, and rules about oral and written style language. There were two levels of translation in the transcription procedure for this dissertation. The first translation level was oral to written, and the second was from source to target language. Care and consideration were made to emphasize context and the respondent's intended meaning when translating from oral to written language. Consequently, the translation procedure emphasized verbatim transcription.

Nonetheless, to mitigate contextual gaps and maintain the transcription's integrity, occasionally, I applied written language style rules to make the transcriptions meaningful. The transcription procedure for the interview conducted in Akan (Akwapim Twi) was different. Since this interview required translation from a source language (Akwapim Twi) to a target language (English) and from oral to written, I used written-style transcription. This decision was partly informed by Prof. Agyekum's assertion that "Anytime you translate from one language to another, you may not get equivalents, but you can get things/words that will carry the same concept (interview transcript)." He made this statement when I interviewed him about the

concept of news in the Akan tradition and its contemporary iteration. Following this logic, I applied the rules of written language during the transcription. This decision ensured that the meaning in the target language approximated the source language. In instances of code-switching, both languages were transcribed if they were informationally relevant to the phenomenon under discussion and illustrative. Additionally, the transcription was guided by ethical considerations. Scholars like Svend Brinkman and Steinar Kvale (2009) noted that interview transcription requires ethical choices like maintaining confidentiality and mitigating stigmatization. As such, some interview recordings with relatively sensitive and private information that might politically or socially implicate respondents were not transcribed. This was to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Additionally, coherence was prioritized in the verbatim transcription to avoid any appearance of incoherence or confused speech (Brinkman & Kvale, 2009).

My observation at Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media was focused on three spaces: newsrooms (Adom and Peace FM newsrooms), news recording studios (Adom FM news studio, Adom TV news studio, Peace FM news studio, and United Television news studio), and (dubbing) recording studios (Adom TV telenovela recording studio and United Television recording studio). Documentation of the various scenes under study comprised handwritten notes and photographs. My field notes were recorded in notebooks, focusing on language use, social interactions, space, procedures, and both human and non-human interactions. Each media organization had notebooks dedicated to capturing scenes under study. In a few instances, where there were writing constraints, I used an email draft to record my field notes. The notes captured the day-to-day activities in the newsrooms in a linear and organized manner. I focused on collective and collaborative activities/events in the newsrooms, such as editorial meetings, as

well as individual journalistic tasks, including interviews, writing news scripts, recording voiceovers, and editing audio and video recordings. Additionally, I paid attention to the languages used in verbal interpersonal and group communication within the newsrooms, as well as the languages used for writing in the newsrooms. Additionally, I observed interactions, roles, and dynamics among members in the newsroom, including those between editors, seniors, and junior journalists. I also paid attention to the setting and equipment for content production and distribution. In the recording studios, I focused on studio equipment, setup, and organization, as well as recording sessions for news and voiceovers/dubbing for telenovelas. I also focused on the social interactions between the dubbing directors, engineers, and voice actors.

#### 1.63.1 Data Analytic Approaches

The data analysis combined both descriptive analysis and theoretical analysis. As Coffey (2018) notes, data analysis involves organizing and reorganizing data in a productive manner to identify and develop concepts that possess both explanatory and descriptive value, thereby enhancing the understanding and interpretation of data in meaningful ways. Moreover, due to the discursive nature of the data and the layered information, it became necessary to frame the analysis in conversation with the various levels of information gathered through observation, interviews, internet searches, policies, and reports.

Descriptive analysis employs an inductive approach to data, where the researcher breaks down the data into its component parts, identifying significant patterns, regularities, phrases, categories, and themes within the data (Naele, 2021; Angrosino, 2007). Patterns are repetitive or recurring actions shared by a group or an entity and usually considered ideal, desirable, legitimate, or proper (Angrosino, 2007). Because descriptive analysis emphasizes exploration, it was an ideal analytic approach for unpacking conceptual ideas, such as Akan news and ILM

production practice. I began the analysis by conducting a close reading of the notes and the interview transcripts. Close reading allowed me to identify patterns in the data, which helped me begin categorizing these patterns into themes. Hence, with the field notes, no preconceived themes were applied to the analysis; instead, the themes emerged from the data itself. The analysis of the field notes from the two newsrooms and news recording studios produced six thematic areas. These themes comprised newsroom practices and routines, space and location, newsroom structure, newsroom guidelines, editorial meetings, and news scripting. Additional themes from observing the telenovela recording/dubbing studios included translational strategies, voice actor performance, and editing. The analysis of the interview transcripts served three major purposes. The first was to understand and conceptualize Akan news, and the second was to describe the media company's procedural choices. To achieve these two goals, the analysis of the transcripts was equally inductive, informed by the themes developed from the field notes, thereby enhancing the credibility of the analysis.

The third purpose of the interview analysis was to construct a biographical and historical narrative of the media organizations and to further explain their organizational choices. As a result, I employed theoretical analysis that drew on preconceived themes from existing literature, linking them to relevant cases. The theoretical influences on the data analysis stem from heteroglossia and political economy. The complexity of the data collected and the multiple types of information it produced required drawing from theories that helped contextualize and organize the data. In analyzing the organizational structures of MGL and Despite media, I used Havens and Lotz's (2017) industrialization of culture framework, which offers three key aspects of analysis of media industries, including media mandate, media industry's conditions of operations, and media organizations' day-to-day practices and the people working in these

industries. Hence, the interview transcripts were examined for narratives on media organizations' biographical information, ideological disposition, organizational structure, programming, policies, and management structure, which helped construct profiles about MGL and Despite Media. Additionally, the analysis was framed within the framework of heteroglossia, utilizing three foundational categories: stratification, dialogism, and double-voicedness. These theories and analytic categories are discussed extensively in Chapter 4.

### 1.9 Organization of Dissertation and Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into Part I and Part II. Part I is titled Theory and Practice. This section delves into theoretical concepts that inform this dissertation. It consists of chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Chapter 2 examines three theoretical concepts used in analyzing ILM's structures, production, and language, namely production studies, political economy, and heteroglossia. It explains how the study is situated within production studies and how this foundation informs the adoption of political economy and heteroglossia as theoretical frameworks to unravel the interaction between language, organizational structure, and production practices. While production studies are steeped in structures and contextualization of media, political economy emphasizes the relationship between media, the state, and market institutions. Heteroglossia emphasizes the diversity of languages and ideologies. Combining these three theories helps unpack the nuances of ILM as a multilingual entity shaped by cultural, economic, and historical dynamics. Additionally, these theoretical frameworks facilitate a holistic analysis of the elements that shape ILM, enabling a comprehensive understanding of ILM as an evolving system influenced by various sociopolitical and cultural discourses.

Chapter 3 outlines the concept of indigeneity and indigenous media. It provides an in-depth analysis of indigenous media, outlining its various definitions, characteristics, and functions as a cultural and political tool driven by indigenous communities and global institutions. By situating indigenous media within its socio-geopolitical context, we uncover its significance in fostering transnational connections, reaffirming communal ties, and negotiating identity in the face of contemporary challenges. Also, it points out the relationship between indigenous media and sociopolitical contexts shaped by various discourse like language endangerment, identity and legal rights disputes. Ultimately, this exploration underscores the multifaceted nature of indigenous media as both a cultural process and a political tool essential for ongoing struggles for self-determination and cultural preservation among indigenous peoples worldwide. Through references to key scholars, the document articulates that indigenous media is a multifaceted entity, functioning as a site for cultural affirmation, a product of social expression, and a practice rooted in indigenous communities' historical and contemporary needs. Ultimately, it underscores the significance of indigenous media as a powerful tool for shaping narratives, fostering identity, and facilitating the resilience of indigenous cultures in the face of ongoing challenges.

Chapter 4 focuses on the history of ILM in Ghana, outlining the development of ILM, its connection to the state, and how its history is wrapped up in the practices of ILM. It looks at the regulatory and operational frameworks that govern media organizations in Ghana. It focuses on key aspects like media regulatory institutions like the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA), media responsibilities, accountability and public engagement, broadcast media guidelines, and language and ownership regulations. A historical overview of ILM in Ghana and its regulatory regime offers the opportunity to comprehend the

philosophies underpinning ILM operations and the political context that shapes Ghana's local language media broadcasting. Further, we can understand how ILM helps foster media plurality and an accountable media environment in Ghana.

Part II focuses on the organizational structure of Ghana's two dominant Akan media corporations: Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. Additionally, it examines production practices in ILM news-making and dubbing of telenovelas. Part II consists of chapters 5, 6, and 7.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed overview of the organizational structures of the two Akan commercial corporations under study: The Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. It analyzes the corporations' mandates, ownership structures, visions, missions, philosophies, programming, business models, target audiences, and policies. It discusses these corporations' branding strategies and how their business models project religious, cultural, and national sentiments. It discusses how these media corporations' evolution and adoption of multiple media platforms- radio, television, and digital- reinforce their commercial mandate. However, more importantly, it also shows tensions arising from a commercial framing of ILM and some discordant discourses from the interaction between cultural, religious, and commercial. Ultimately, the discussion reveals the unique identity of Ghana's ILM, characterized by strong private ownership, a high economic and political competitive edge, and dominant cultural, religious, and democratic relevance. Furthermore, through their emphasis on aspirational branding, ILM in Ghana reflects neoliberal sensibilities, reinforcing entrepreneurial freedom, skill, self-empowerment, and individual well-being (Harvey, 2005; Meyers, 2019).

Chapter 6 focuses on the newsroom practices of Adom Newsroom and Despite Media newsrooms. It details the organization of these Akan newsrooms, resources and infrastructure,

guidelines, labor structure, journalistic routines, and news-making procedures. It discusses how journalistic news production routine, style, and culture are linguistically inscribed in two languages and their associated communication and socio-cultural contexts. Akan indigenous language media reflects both the global practice of journalism and the cultural elements of Akan communicative acts. Akan news production demonstrates how factual reporting intertwines with culturally inflected narrative depth, mirrors the diverse developmental phases of indigenous language media in Ghana, and exemplifies the changing landscape of journalism in Ghana.

Chapter 7 is titled “Reproducing Audiovisual and Representational Dissonance: Translating Foreign Telenovela into Twinovela.” This section delves into the concept and production of twinovela, a process of indigenization that transforms foreign serial dramas into the Akan language through dubbing. Using heteroglossia as a framework to analyze dubbing production is significant for explaining the intertwining discourses, voices, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts that shape the poetics and aesthetics of telenovelas in Ghana. It is particularly concerned with demonstrating the interrelationships between foreign content and indigeneity. It illustrates how multiple voices and cultures merge, contributing to larger discourses about identity and representation in indigenous television. More importantly, examining twinovela production provides a critical perspective on the contradictions in the ideological foundation of indigenous (language) media rooted in resistance to non-indigenous influences. It reveals a stratified production system shaped by various factors, including economic motivations and shifting audience preferences.

The concluding chapter adopts a reflective approach, outlining the mediating role of ILM and its tripartite character, comprising bi-/multilingual discursivity, translational density, and audience-centricity.

## Part I: Theory and Practice

## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: Production Studies, Heteroglossia and Political Economy

### 2.0 Introduction

This study is situated at the intersection of (Critical) Media Industry Studies (CMIS/MIS) (emphasis on media production studies) and Socio-cultural linguistics. The study examines the interplay between media production, organizational structures, and language to understand how their coevolution in postcolonial contexts, such as Ghana, influences indigenous language media practices and aesthetics. This study examines the impact of the coexistence of the English and Akan languages (language choice) on media broadcasting practices, particularly in radio and television. It investigates how indigenous language media articulate their identity through programming, emphasizing their organizational structures and production methods, specifically journalistic and dubbing (of telenovela) production practices. Because of the multidimensionality of and integral role language and operational mechanization play in indigenous language media (ILM), it is essential to adopt a framework that accounts for the multiplicity of systems and discourses embedded in ILM. Moreover, as Henaku (2023) argues, African contexts are complex and messy with various entanglements because they are “shaped by colonialism, multilingualism, globalization, diverse ethnicities,” (p. 3), and (I would add that presently) transnational, global, technological, and diasporic formations. ILM has been influenced by these complex factors in media development, discourse, and practice, shaping its distinct formations.

Consequently, this chapter analyzes three theoretical frameworks used to analyze ILM’s structure, production practices, and language use. This study adopts an integrative theoretical framework that can account for the various dimensions of ILM, including production studies, political economy, and heteroglossia. It explains how the study is grounded in production studies

and how this foundation influences the adoption of political economy and heteroglossia as theoretical frameworks. Production studies focus on the structures and context of media, while political economy emphasizes the relationships between media, the state, and market institutions. Heteroglossia highlights the diversity of languages and ideologies. By combining these three theories, we can better understand the complexities of ILM as a multilingual entity shaped by cultural, economic, and historical dynamics. Furthermore, these theoretical frameworks enable a comprehensive analysis of the various elements influencing ILM, allowing for a deeper understanding of it as an evolving system impacted by a range of sociopolitical and cultural discourses. Together, they help question existing assumptions, complexities, and contradictions about indigenous language media as a monolingual entity and move towards examining the media as an evolving entity influenced by a myriad of conditions converging to establish new meanings associated with indigenous language media. These theoretical frameworks are explained below.

## 2.1 Production Studies

The aspect of media studies that focuses on “structures that affect” and “institutions that create media and their content” is referred to as Media Industry Studies (MIS) or Production Studies (PS) (Lort & Newcomb, 2021, p. 75; Govil, 2013). As a media studies component, MIS/PS is multifaceted and enjoys disciplinary heterogeneity (McDonald, 2013; Herbert et al., 2020; Havens et al., 2009). PS is a “big tent that encompasses the research that explores the creation and circulation of media across the spectrum of micro to macro perspectives by identifying and examining industrial practices and analyzing their consequences” (Herbert et al., 2020, p. 7). Holt and Perren (2009) argue that MIS/PS “brings discipline that answers the need for interdisciplinary scholarship on media industries into a common dialogue” (p. 2). In this

regard, various concepts, ideas, perspectives, and methods from many different disciplines of study, like sociology, communication, journalism, film, media, political economy, and cultural studies, inform MIS/PS. This multiperspective approach towards MIS/PS is because industry studies is an object of study for many humanities and social sciences disciplines. Thus, the researcher's home discipline informs assumptions, tenets, and ethics.

While there are various definitions of MIS, at the core of MIS are issues about relationships between creators, workers, institutions/industries, and the production and circulation of different cultural forms. Two definitions of MIS by scholars, Herbert et al. (2020) and Freeman (2016), are instructive here since both scholars agree that MIS looks at the intersection between culture and business. Herbert et al. (2020) define MIS as focused on “the critical analysis of how individuals, institutions, and industries produce and circulate cultural forms in historically and geographically contextualized ways” (p. 6). MIS is concerned with all research that examines the “creation and circulation of media across the spectrum of micro to macro perspectives by identifying and examining industrial practices and analyzing their consequences” (Herbert et al., 2020, p. 7).

While Herbert et al. (2020) refrained from circumscribing and delimiting MIS because they believe that media constantly change, Freeman (2016) did not. For Freeman, context is the basic tenet of MIS. The significance of contextualization to MIS lies in the fact that context offers “valuable insight into the process and practices” of the fusion of creativity and enterprise, enabling a translation of culture into economy (p.12). Therefore, MIS constitutes the “processes of understanding contextualization” (p. 81). Three principles offer an understanding of MIS as a process of contextualization. The three principles are structure, interaction (or corporate context), and discursive context (or modality). Structure refers to the social or societal context “where the

operations of the media industries emerge as the outcome of deep structures in society” (Freeman, 2016, p. 13). In other words, how media functions, divisions, departments, staffing, etc., are influenced by deep societal forces, including politics, economics, education, regulation, and ideology. It helps reveal insights into production hierarchies, priorities, corporate synergy, and commercial imperatives.

The interaction/corporate context principle is about “the working practices that make up production cultures within media industries” (Freeman, 2016, p. 13). Emphasis is on how the individuals exert agency. The principle of interaction assumes that individuals or media practitioners in the industry hold power and that power wielded by these agents in the industry “can, in turn, shape larger social and industrial structures” (p. 112). Meanwhile, the modality principle refers to a discursive context, which is about the discourses communicated by media industry practitioners, not the actual practice of media practitioners. These three principles of contextualization concretize the layers underpinning media industries and show the translation processes of the crisscrossing relationships between various agents in the media industry. The structure allows us to see the coordination of economic, political, and social mechanisms in the media industry; interaction opens an avenue for how this coordination is translated and transformed into media products, while the discursive context shows the ways “media practitioners narrativize the transformation of deep social structures into clear sets of meanings and understandings about the media industries” (Freeman, 2016, p. 13).

These three principles cumulatively show that MIS/PS is about understanding the relationship between structure (social hierarchies, political forces, economic motives, policies, etc.), agency (how people create and produce, how teams are formed, how media and audiences are conceptualized, etc.) and “cultural climates where media industries communicate meaning,

messages, and values that shape our understanding of those industries” (Freeman, 2016, p. 67). Similarly, Govil (2013) articulates the idea of MIS/PS, showing the triadic relation between structure, agents, and societal/social climate. Govil states that PS “sheds light on the practices of self-characterization through which cultural laborers situate their work within larger formations” (p. 172). This brings us to another aspect of MIS/PS: it also studies authorship. This means understanding the “larger social structures in which media industries operate, and indeed the importance of researching those industries as part of larger webs” (Freeman, 2016, p. 66).

Media industries are at the center of MIS/PS, informed by the social, political, and cultural forces that work in complex ways (Freeman, 2016). Like Herbert et al. (2020), Freeman (2016) understands MIS as “those industries involved in the production and circulation of media texts, such as television, radio, film, music, and newspapers” (p. 9). Nonetheless, MIS/PS expands from a singular focus on texts to include “routines, norms and infrastructural conditions in which cultural dynamics are worked out... and studies of media making and circulation as cultures in their own right” (Herbert et al., 2020, pp. 6-7). This means that the object of study for MIS is the media industry driven by an interest in culture. It concerns various things, including policymaking, production, distribution, creative labor, marketing, etc. The influence of culture and its consequences differentiates other studies about media industries from MIS. MIS focuses on the “industrial aspect of media communication” (McDonald, 2013, p. 149). Media products are at once symbolic and economic entities (Freeman, 2016; Govil, 2013). They articulate cultural meanings and are commodities for creating profits. According to Wasko and Meehan (2013),

media industries produce commodities that convey narratives, arguments, visions, symbolic worlds, and imagined possibilities. Regardless of the particular technologies for distribution and access, media products are simultaneously artifacts and commodities that are both created by artists and manufactured by workers, and present a vision for

interpretation and an ideology for consumption to an active public of interpreters who may also be consumers targeted by advertisers or product placements and a commodity audience that can be measured and sold to advertisers (p. 153).

Consequently, media products shape our understanding of the media industry, resulting from a unifying social structure (Freeman, 2016).

Power is also a crucial focus of MIS, specifically, how power operates at different political, economic, and social levels. As such, MIS “explores the operation of power across and within global and national regimes, business sectors, labor communities, or within media organizations” (Herbert et al., 2020, p. 7). From a critical lens, MIS “examines the business culture of the media industries; how knowledge about texts, audiences, and the industry form, circulate and change; and how they influence textual and industrial practices” (Havens et al., 2009, p. 237). Also, MIS examines the relationships between strategies (here read as the larger economic goals and logics of large-scale cultural industries) and tactics (the ways in which cultural workers seek to negotiate, and at times perhaps subvert, the constraints imposed by institutional interests to their own purposes)” (Havens et al., 2009, p. 247).

This study is situated in media production studies for several reasons. First, production studies emphasize practices, routines, and conditions marking the production process of media production workers. Production studies show the link between “micro contexts and macro forces” (Mayer, 2009, p. 17). It brings together production culture from situated contexts, politics, and economics. It conceptualizes “practices within the political economy of labor, markets, and policy” (Mayer et al., 2009, p. 3). Production studies centralize media production workers' activities and lived realities to theorize about media culture. The data gathered about production highlights activities from and relations between production sites, actors, and their practices/routines. Similarly, Stuart Hall (1980) emphasizes the distinctiveness of the production

moment in mass communication with its own modalities consisting of “apparatuses, relations, and practices of production” (p. 117). Therefore, media encoding is affected by institutional structures, production networks, organized routines, and technical infrastructure. Mayer et al. (2009) break down these constituents as data for PS to include routines and rituals, complex processes, economic and political forces, technologies, and distribution of resources. In this way, PS foregrounds the culture of production workers instead of the products they create.

Second, situated in the interpretive tradition of research, PS establishes ground and inductive conclusions for conceptualizing new concepts or revising existing ones (Mayer et al., 2009; Lindolf & Taylor, 2019). This dissertation suggests revising the definition of African ILM by moving from a singular linguistic perspective towards a multidimensional perspective focusing on the production process's activities, conditions, relations, apparatus, and routines. The focus on production processes, sites, and actors points towards theorizing from the ground up. Focusing on behind-the-scenes activities of the production process of media products is consequential for bridging the gap between on-screen representations and behind-the-scenes discourses shaping the form. For this dissertation, such a connection is important for understanding the conditions informing African indigenous language media's modalities and existence, particularly because on-screen or on-air representations are constructs of the production structure (Hall, 1980). While they are distinct, their connection cannot be overemphasized. First, they all constitute important moments in the communication exchange circuit, and second, as Hall argues, they are all informed by codes. The important thing about the production moment is that its message construction operates through shared and culturally produced codes. It is at this stage, according to Hall, that meaningful discourses are produced and transmitted to the audience. Nonetheless, the production process is influenced by structured

feedback because of the influence of consumption and reception. Consequently, the production process signifies the circuitry of culture by reconstituting and reproducing production and consumption discourses. It implies that African ILM not only theorizes the media form through a linguistic lens of information exchange but also expands into the realms of production to assess ILM effectively.

Connected to the idea of establishing ground and inductive conclusions is that production studies allow researchers to confront discourses and practices shaped by general conventions. An aspect of this dissertation deals with the news production process in ILM, where professionalism is emphasized. In Ghana, this emphasis on professionalism has been a linchpin in criticizing local language radio and television stations. Caldwell (2008) argues that conversations about professionalism only help differentiate audience activities from media workers' professional activities. I must also add that professionalism discourses are gatekeeping mechanisms that tend to show progress, constraints, or exclusivity, whether for good or bad.

Third, PS is interdisciplinary, allowing researchers to borrow insights from various disciplinary traditions. PS concentrates on the study of media production from various academic disciplines, drawing on their methods and disciplines. For instance, Mayer et al. (2009) talk about the influence of cultural studies on studies on production, where there is a focus on examining the ways in which “culture both constitutes and reflects relationships of power” (p. 2). Caldwell (2008) uses an integrated cultural industrial approach to examine the cultural practices and belief systems of film/video production workers in Los Angeles. He triangulates various data collection methods from ethnographic field observation of production space and work, textual analysis of worker artifacts, as well as draws from “several interrelated disciplines including sociological cultural studies, the sociology of work, interpretive anthropology and performance

studies, institutional theories of art, political economy and new technology research” (p. 11). As Caldwell notes, this framework allows him to theorize from the ground. His work is instructive for this dissertation’s theories and methodologies, specifically political economy, which is described below.

## 2.2 Political Economy (PE)- Political Economy of Media and Communication

Historically, political economy (PE) emerged during the mercantilist era when the merchant group accrued more wealth and political power and began producing writings about economic matters to advance their interests (Gondwe, 1992). Mercantilist writers, predominantly businessmen focused on increasing the power and wealth of the nation-state, laid a foundation for ideas that shaped social attitudes and established key principles in modern economics and political economy. One of the working assumptions of the mercantilists was the absolute involvement of government in all economic activity to help advance their interest in maintaining wealth and promoting national power through dependency on government for unrestricted internal trade, security, cheap labor, and expansionist activities like colonialism which enabled merchants to gain access to new markets, raw materials and gold and silver (Gondwe, 1992). Consequently, as Gondwe argues, mercantilist economic inquiry promoted policies that affected how they conducted business. In this sense, mercantilist writers practiced political economy within the pre-capitalist era (Gondwe, 1992). It should be noted that the merchant group was not interested in making goods available to ordinary people but was concerned about getting rich by obtaining precious metals like gold and silver. The mercantilist accumulation of capital was crucial in launching the Industrial Revolution. It provided a platform for other writers, including “government officials, philosophers, churchmen, scientists, and journalists, who were concerned with the moral, social, and ethical implications” of activities deemed objectionable (p. 17). By

the time the Industrial Revolution began, industrial capitalists had opposed mercantilist institutions, especially the government's involvement in economic activities, such as granting monopoly trading rights to companies (Mosco, 2009; Gondwe, 1992). The shift from the mercantilist era to the Industrial Revolution resulted in a change in ideology, impacting how political economy is approached and practiced. These approaches will be discussed briefly.

Following, some scholars argue that PE arose as a response to and as an alternative to mercantilism and its feudal vestiges and capitalism to help understand and “maximize the potential of the new social order” (Gondwe, 1992, p. 22; Golding & Murdock, 1997, p. xiii). Scholars like Caporaso and Levine (1992) say that classical political economists like Adam Smith and Karl Marx highlighted the unintended consequences of profit-seeking behavior and private gain on historical movements, the social order, production, social relations, and ways of life. As such, political economy advocates were more concerned with history and moral philosophy at the onset of political economy than technical philosophy (Golding & Murdock, 1997). The moral and philosophical foundation constitutes a core characteristic of political economy today. I shall return to expounding this core character of PE later in this chapter, but first, I will attempt to define political economy.

The term political economy comprises two concepts- economy and politics- whose relationship is viewed differently by scholars as either analytically distinct categories or as the conceptual fusion of politics and economy. *Oikos*, the Greek word for house/household, is the origin of the terms ecumenical, economics, and ecology, while *nomos* means law (Mosco, 2009; Tabb, 1999). The word economy can be traced to Aristotle, meaning “the science of the principles of house management” (Lang, 1963, p. 13; Caporaso & Levine, 1992). Meanwhile, politics is derived from the Greek word *polos*, meaning city-states. Thus, PE meant “social

custom, practice and knowledge about how to manage... the household... and the community” (Mosco, 2009, p. 23). Nonetheless, when political economy was deployed, the emphasis was no longer on familial relations but on interactions among strangers. Specifically, PE is traced to the Anglo-French tradition that emphasized a social economy, and the term political economy first appeared in Montchrétien’s publication in 1615 titled *Traité d’économie politique* (Lang, 1963; Gondwe, 1992). Since Montchrétien was interested in state finance, he used PE to refer to work concerned with managing the state economy (Lang, 1963; Caporaso & Levine, 1992). Therefore, “political economy sought to advise the statesman on how he could best manage the economic affairs of the state so that the wants of the citizens would be met” (Caporaso & Levine, 1992, p. 1).

To state categorically, PE is a theory of relations between economy (economic) and politics (political). Thus, PE approaches critique the status quo of normative theory about understanding the relationship between the ideal and reality (Gandy Jr., 1997). However, the nature of this relationship is highly debated largely because PE has both disciplinary and methodological labels. On the one hand, some argue about the separability of economics and politics but do not deny their interrelatedness. On the other hand, some argue that economics and politics are inseparable.

Proponents of the separability of politics and economics, like Garnham (1986/1995) and Caporaso and Levine (1992), opine that politics and economics are analytically distinct/separate categories that influence each other and occur within the same concrete structures. For instance, politics and economics are institutional realities with structures like participants, values, constraints, specialization, etc. The institution of politics is the state; its mode of operation is compliance based on coercion; membership is through citizenship; it projects ideas of justice,

equality, and democratic participation and specializes in public goods like public education and government-run prisons. On the other hand, the institution of economics is the market whose mode of orientation is compliance through interest, voluntary exchange, and relations based on personal satisfaction; it emphasizes the values of market exchange, freedom, and individual autonomy; the means of participation is through buying and selling as well as ownership of property; and it specializes in private goods. Nonetheless, while politics and economics are distinguishable, they are not entirely separate or in isolation. Instead, PE rests on relations between two distinguishable activities, not on the conceptual fusion of politics and economy. Recognizing the separability of politics and economics highlights the irresolvable fundamental contradictions between politics and economics regarding value systems and social relations shown above (Garnham, 1986/1995). Therefore, PE is the theoretical relationship concerned with the logic of the relations between the economic as an institutional reality (which is the economy) and the political, which refers to the state as an institutional reality (Caporaso & Levine, 1992).

Mosco's (2009) definition of PE suggests politics and economy as distinguishable spheres but interconnected categories. Mosco defines PE as "the study of control and survival of social life" (p. 25). Mosco admits that this definition is general but important because it helps identify "processes at work in all forms of life" (such as human activity and organic processes) as well as differences and interrelationships (p. 25). For Mosco, control refers to the "internal organization of individual and group members" and is broadly political because "they involve the social organization of relationships within a community" (p. 25). Similarly, Caporaso and Levine (1992) define politics as "the activities and institutions that relate to the making of authoritative public decisions for society as a whole" (p. 20). According to Caporaso and Levine,

politics consists of three overlapping concepts: politics as the public, politics as government, and politics as the authoritative allocation of values.

First, politics as the public is the “noninstitutional realm outside of private exchange” and refers to either the regulation of unintended consequences of private actions and market failure or to the sense of common interest, mission, identity, or conception of what it means to be a citizen of a community (Caporaso & Levine, 1992, pp. 17-18). Habermas, Lennox, and Lennox (1974) explain the public sphere as “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (p. 49). Moreover, Habermas et al. argue that the public sphere has a political aspect, which is any realm of the public sphere where “public discussion deals with objects connected to the activities of the state” (p. 49).<sup>6</sup> But there is also the public sphere which is not political but consists of informal codes governing dress, speech, and behavior in public places, enforced through social norms and informal understandings (Caporaso & Levine, 1992). The public, therefore, is a foundation for the government to act, raw material and subject matter of politics and mediate between society and the state (Caporaso & Levine, 1992; Habermas et al., 1964). Second, politics as government relies on institutions and serves as an arena of expression and an instrument to achieve the aims of the public. The government consists of organizations (these are concrete structures like courts, legislatures, bureaucracies, and political parties), rules (these include rights, obligations, permissible procedures, and strategies used in the political process in the form of written or unwritten constitution), and agency (this encompasses agents or personnel in government who are responsible for undertaking political initiatives like passing of

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<sup>6</sup> I observed that Caporaso and Levine’s concept of the public is broad, covering various spheres, including Habermas et al.’s concept of the public sphere. What is constant in both scholars’ concepts is that it is a non-governmental realm, and the executioner is the state. Of course, I must mention that Habermas’s concept of the public sphere is not the same as the crowd or the mere gathering or assembly of people, but rather one characterized by and instituted through public opinion which is directed at the state and the relationship between the state and the public sphere is antagonistic. Interestingly, Caporaso and Levine emphasized the public as a realm of regulation, whether codified into law and executed by the government or facilitated by conventions and rules.

laws). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the governmental sphere is neither public nor authoritative because part of what occurs in government concerns politicians' motivations, ambitions, and career goals, even though pursuing those goals takes place within a public space. Third is politics as authoritative relations. Authoritative relations are not limited to politics and may be found in settings/institutions such as the family, church, factory, and school. In fact, politics and economics share a common authoritative attribute, as both involve the allocation of scarce resources and values. For instance, Caporaso and Levine suggest that goods and services may be allocated in market or political structures. Nonetheless, in politics, the decision-making about the production and distribution of resources involves authority (a matter of enforcement or issuing orders for the collective good and society's interest), while economics involves voluntary exchange through pricing (Caporaso & Levine, 1992; Sowell, 2015).

Meanwhile, survival is economic, and it is how individuals or groups produce “what is needed to reproduce themselves” (Mosco, 2009, p. 25). By implication, it is how society continues to exist for generations without becoming extinct. According to Caporaso and Levine (1992), there are three distinct perspectives to understanding economics that do not overlap. These three approaches are economics as calculus,<sup>7</sup> material provisioning,<sup>8</sup> and economy. For our purposes, economics as an economy is important for understanding PE as a theory of relations. Sowell (2015) argues that understanding the economy is fundamental to understanding economics. Sowell explains that for an economy (which he defines as a system for producing and

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<sup>7</sup> Economics as a calculation framework posits that human action/behavior and institutions are looked at through means and ends, that is, knowing your ends and the means available to achieve that end. Access to means determines how well we can satisfy our wants and constraints from a limited supply of means or resources. The economic calculation approach defines its subject in terms like efficiency (the ability to satisfy wants better) and constrained choice.

<sup>8</sup> Economic as material provisioning uses economic to refer to a kind of activity identified by purpose: “the production and reproduction of goods, or the material provisioning” to satisfy needs and wants (Caporaso & Levine, 1992, p. 24).

distributing goods and services) to exist, there must be scarcity instead of unlimited resources. Therefore, economics is the “study of the use of scarce resources which have alternative uses” (Lionel Robbins as cited by Sowell, 2015, p. 2). Consequently, for Sowell (2015), economics is about scarcity, alternative uses of resources, efficient allocation of available resources, how decisions affect the allocation of scarce resources, and a systematic study of cause and effect. For Caporaso and Levine, economics is seen as a systemic process whose starting point is the structure of the reproduction of society consisting of interconnected needs determined by objective social facts. Economic as the economy means a distinct system of relations. This approach emphasizes the economy as a social sphere. Lang (1963) describes PE as social economy and proceeds to define political economy as “the study of social laws governing the production and distribution of material means of satisfying human needs” and “the study of economic laws, that is, the study of relationships continually recurring between the elements of the economic process” (pp.1, 92). Taken together, the production and distribution of goods are called economic activity (Lang, 1963). Therefore, PE is the “science of the social law of economic activity” (p. 7). This description of PE is because the PE’s sphere of interest is in producing and distributing goods and services, which are fields of social activity.

Tabb’s (1999) definition of PE helps unpack the nature of the social economy. According to Tabb, PE is the “study of the mechanisms used or usable by society to operate the social economy, understanding the social economy to be tools, institutions, and human energies that produce goods and services” (p. 15). Lang (1963) explains how the economic, social, and political spheres interconnect. He argues that PE is interested in economic relations, which constitute production and distribution relations. Further, production relations are a complex system of social relations between individuals requiring cooperation and labor division. To

understand this complex system of social relations, certain fundamental elements that determine the nature of this system must be addressed, such as economic relations and social consciousness. Economic relations include ownership of the means of production and mode of production. Specifically, ownership of the means of production forms the foundational and organizational principle of production and distribution. Ownership dictates the use of the means of production and determines the structure of cooperation and division of labor, product ownership, and distribution (Lang, 1963, p. 17). Social consciousness, on the other hand, consists of “a complex of social ideas and psychological attitudes” (p. 25). As people consciously interact, they affect one another “through the behaviour in which these social relations are revealed” (p. 23). Out of these kinds of interactive social relations emerge “legal, political, moral, religious, philosophical, scientific, and artistic ideas,” based on which “men evaluate social relations” (p. 24). From these systems of social ideas (known as ideology), people develop specific attitudes toward certain social relations or become the basis of the expression of certain social groups/classes or institutions. For instance, about nation-states, Gondwe (1992) argues that capitalism and socialism are the dominant competing ideologies in politics and economics. For Lang (1963), PE examines specific economic laws, modes of operation, mutual connections/interconnected systems, and general problems of a specific historical social formation, whether that social formation is primitive, Asiatic and ancient, feudalism, capitalism, or socialism. Nonetheless, Lang admits that among the political economies of these listed various social formations, the political economy of capitalism has been well developed.

Proponents of separability emphasize the economy and politics as institutionally distinct categories. Nonetheless, they acknowledge that the complex conditions, processes, and relations that underpin their existence, continuity, and perpetuity connect politics and economy. As such,

despite their distinction, politics and the economy are interconnected by these same complex conditions, processes, and relations. Thus, PE posits that the economic sphere is separate but not isolated from related social and political phenomena” (Hardy, 2014, p. 4). Classical political economy is one approach that emphasizes the separability of economics and politics and the primacy of the economic sphere. In fact, classical economists were the first to argue that, in principle, the economy as a system is separable from politics and family life, and market self-regulation, where the market system is connected to the state (Caporaso & Levine, 1992). Founded on rationality and empiricism, the tenets of classical political economy include minimizing public intervention, expanding the freedom of market forces operations, protecting and advancing self-interest and natural liberty, emphasizing natural laws, private property, and labor theory of value (Mosco, 2009; Babe, 2009; Golding & Murdock, 1997 & 1996). Classical political economists focused on capitalist modes of production, “distribution, exchange, and consumption of wealth” (Hardy, 2014, p. 4). Most classical political economists examined the “social relations one observes in the process of production and distribution” (Gondwe, 1992, p. 25). The system of economic relations from the classical perspective consists of civil society (a system of private want satisfaction... and a system motivated by self-interest where members are their own end), a self-regulating market, the relationship between private interest and public good, the state (public agent), and society (Caposaro & Levine, 1992). According to Adam Smith, the state has three main duties: protecting society against violence, national defense, administering justice, and maintaining public works and public institutions, and public education (Caposaro & Levine, 1992). “The labor theory of value provides a direct link between the division of a pool of social labor and the exchange of commodities” (Caposaro & Levine, 1992, p. 47). In unpacking the political and economic realms, separability proponents show each

sphere's distinctiveness. As a result, there is a clearer understanding of how the interconnectedness of politics and economics generates complex relationships filled with similarities, differences, and contradictions. In applying PE to any phenomenon, like the media field, it becomes easier to examine these contradictions since media operate simultaneously across the economic and political spheres (Garnham, 1986/1995). On the other hand, when governments control media in totality, it may be difficult to delineate where economics ends and politics starts clearly.

On the contrary, proponents of the inseparability of politics and economics, like Hardy (2014) and Drazen (2000), argue that these two fields are fused together and cannot be separated. I have observed that proponents of this argument ground their claims in the assertion that the allocation of resources and the processes of decision-making permeate all dimensions of social life, including both the economic and political spheres. As stated earlier, proponents of the separability of politics and economics acknowledge this fact as the most significant similarity between politics and the economy. According to proponents of inseparability, the overarching question of political economy is how politics affects economic outcomes. Their definitions of PE have focused on the interdependence of social, cultural, and economic phenomena, power relations, resource allocation, policies, regulations, and economic laws (Dunn, 2004; Gondwe, 1992). Drazen (2000) defines PE as “the study of how the political nature of decisionmaking<sup>9</sup> affects policy choices and ultimately, economic outcomes” (p. 21). For Drazen, political economy starts with the political nature of decision-making and its impact on economic choices. On the other hand, Garnham (1990) states that PE relies on economic determination. Political

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<sup>9</sup> According to Drazen (2000), the phrase “political nature of decisionmaking” means that economic policy is the product of decisionmaking process which “balances conflicting interests so that a collective choice may emerge” (p. 21)

economy challenges theorizing social formation “as structured into relatively autonomous levels of the economic, the ideological and the political” (Garnham, 1990, p. 30). PE reinforces and articulates the economic, ideological, and political as intertwined.

While separability proponents argue that both economics and politics can be the starting point, inseparability proponents state that politics is the starting point for PE analysis. Both separability and inseparability camps can fall into the trap of determinism, where either economics or politics becomes the linchpin driving social reality and relations, and takes precedence at any formative epoch. I do not intend to get into the politics of determinism. Modern-day economists, some social scientists, and liberal arts scholars belong to this camp. For instance, Drazen (2000) argues that the term PE echoed the idea that economics and politics were inseparable and that political factors/forces influenced and determined economic outcomes. However, I will state that determinism can be productive when it promotes an unbiased assessment of how distinct categories affect other categories, makes visible differences and similarities between categories, and, lastly, when scholars execute the historical character of social relations and change in their analysis. Additionally, I agree with Garnham, who argues that determinism should be seen as not unproblematic but complex and flexible rather than static. Using economic determinism as an example, Garnham states that, when necessary, scholars should clearly define their analytical deterministic categories during the analysis process and conceptualize determinism as flexible rather than static.

This perspective becomes important in unveiling the economic and political dynamics in a postcolonial context where at different epochs in their political history, separability and inseparability ideas can be applied for effective material and ideological reckoning of media history in Ghana. To illustrate, Ghana's media has undergone political and economic changes

since 1935. Initially a propaganda tool for colonial administration, the media (broadcasting and press) later became a government instrument following independence. Eventually, after constitutional reforms, media deregulation enabled the coexistence of commercial-private, public, and community media. During both the colonial period and post-independence, media ownership was primarily aligned with political interests, resulting in a close relationship between government control and media operations. Here, arguments for the fusion of government and economics make the most sense. With the introduction of constitutional reforms, private ownership in the media fostered a separation between media and government. This development enabled a clearer understanding and evaluation of the media as an institution that operates within both economic and political realms. As such, the application of separability thesis is most logical in this context. Despite the differences in describing the nature of the interaction between economy and politics, one thing is clear: both separability and inseparability proponents agree that economics and politics influence/shape each other. Therefore, political or economic determinism as central to political economy must be studied or analyzed historically.

Other scholars also emphasize human beings as the *raison d'être* for PE. Gondwe (1992) defines PE as “the study of people in the social process of producing and distributing the means for their own reproduction, in a given social environment or geographical domain, under rules promulgated and enforced by a political state” (p. 12). Further, Gondwe states that PE studies how “people organize themselves to produce and distribute the means or their own reproduction under rules promulgated and enforced by a political state” (p. 153). Centering human beings means that society is at the heart of PE. Consequently, PE acknowledges that individuals function in and along with other people in a society and that their economic activities occur in the “context of political and cultural institutions” (p. 12). Thus, human relations are at the core of

the political economy, whether organized politically or economically. Additionally, PE acknowledges that change is inevitable, and these changes can be causes or effects from an individual, state, group, or interactions between states and groups (Gondwe, 1992).

The interactions between various social and political categories foreground power and heterogeneity of interests regarding political economy. Scholars like Havens et al. (2009) and Babe (2009) state that political economy concerns questions of power. For instance, Babe considers political economy as “the scholarly discourse studying power relations affecting the production, distribution, and consumption of wealth, income, and resources—including information and communication resources” (p. 13). Consequently, power reflects the study and exercise of power and authority; therefore, politics is “the study of mechanisms of making collective choices” (Drazen, 2000, p. 6). What is significant about Drazen’s emphasis on power and authority is that he maintains that questions of power and authority become significant only when there is “heterogeneity of interests”- specifically, when there is “a conflict of interest between economic actors in a society” (p. 6). Heterogeneity or conflict of interest, in the view of Drazen, is central to the political economy, without which there will be no issue of choice at various levels of decision-making. For instance, Drazen argues that heterogeneity is necessary for political constraints and markets (analyzed through economic or political mechanisms). There is heterogeneity of actors with different policy preferences and heterogeneity of distribution (of goods and services); these are not mutually exclusive.

Marxist/radical approaches to PE emphasize the interactions between various interests. Class is central to Marxian theory because it is the organizing principle for understanding interests. Marxists argue that class facilitates an understanding of private/self-interest, is the source of struggle/conflict between various class interests, and determines individuals' wants and

interests in the production structure (Caposaro & Lavine, 1992). In a capitalist system, the interests of different social classes conflict. The Marxist interpretation of the relationship between economics and politics emphasizes the significance of economic interests in shaping political agendas. Marxist economic theories examine how class structures and interests emerge from the economy, particularly through the relations of production. They consider how the capitalist system categorizes individuals and their desires based on their positions within the production framework. While classical political economy views the market as a mechanism for maximizing individual private welfare, Marxists see the market economy as a tool that enables capitalists to appropriate surplus value and accumulate capital. Radical thought emphasizes man's poor condition, which can only be redeemed through a social and political revolution. The institutions that oppress them must be uprooted and replaced for the human condition to improve. The Marxist/radical tradition has informed media and communication scholars' approach to PE.

## 2.21 (Critical) Political Economy of Media and Communication

An understanding of PE tradition has implications for communication and media students. First, the focus is on fundamental marketplace forces and processes, followed by how consumer feedback influences the production process of new products, how power structures social relations, and how to control people, processes, and things (Mosco, 2009). So, the political economist of communication will examine how communication products are produced, distributed, and marketed, consumers' choices about these communication products, and "the shifting forms of control along the circuit of production, distribution and circulation" (Mosco, 2009, p. 4). Furthermore, the media and communications economy is not merely a sector engaged in economic activities; rather, it serves as a crucial mechanism that simultaneously

aligns consumption with production while also reproducing the ideological framework that reinforces the existing status quo (Faraone, 2011, p. 189). Faraone posits that this economy should be examined as an integral component of the overall economy, given its linking function in the production, circulation, and consumption of goods and services, as well as its significant symbolic role in upholding and perpetuating political and economic power (p. 189).

Consequently, the PE of communication looks at the triadic interlocking relationship between media/communication, economy, and politics. Political economy (PE) in media and communication includes various terms, such as the political economy of media (PEM), the political economy of communication (PEC), and the critical economy of culture and communication (CECC). For clarity and consistency, I will use the terms political economy of media and communication (PEMC) and critical political economy of media and communication (CPEMC) interchangeably throughout this discussion. The following section examines the definitions, approaches, assumptions, and characteristics of PEMC.

The development of PEMC was against criticisms of positivist political economy or mainstream social science disciplines advocating for a return to social and political elements of demand and supply, as well as its discontent with reductionism and linear causality (Golding & Murdock, 1997; Boyd-Barrett, 1995). Moreover, media and communication have become central to social and economic dynamics because they have become significant businesses, and their political dimension was brought to bear when states started regulating broadcasting (Golding & Murdock, 1997). Murdock and Golding (1997) assert that recognizing the mass media as industrial and commercial organizations involved in the production and distribution of commodities should be the starting point of the political economy of mass media. Media companies operate within the larger economic context/situation through “reciprocal investments

and shareholdings and interlocking directorships with other large industrial concerns, and secondly through advertising” (Murdock & Golden, 1973, p. 206). Garnham (1990) succinctly argues that PEMC seeks to reframe the understanding of mass media. Instead of viewing mass media solely as ideological tools of the state, it positions them primarily as economic entities. These entities not only play a direct economic role by creating surplus value through the production and exchange of commodities but also indirectly generate surplus value in other sectors of commodity production through advertising (p. 30). Like any economic good or service, “media products are commodities to be packaged, promoted and marketed in the same way as any others” (Murdock & Golden, 1997, p. 21).

Peter Nitin Giovil (2013) argues that political economy focuses on “relationships between media infrastructures and state and market institutions” (p. 172). PEMC links media and communication systems to the workings of economic and political systems and the exercise of social power in society (McChesney, 2008). As McChesney argues, this connection is evident in how various factors—such as ownership, market structures, commercial support, technologies, labor practices, and government policies—shape media and communication systems and their content (p. 12). Hardy (2014) explains that in a narrow sense, the political economy of communication deals with parts of how or ways communication is organized and “provided as services” (p. 6). PEMC draws on economics, political science, communication, and cultural analysis (Hardy, 2014). According to Hardy, PEMC describes “all forms of inquiry into the political and economic dimensions of communication” (p. 3). Emphasis is placed on the distribution of resources and how and why particular media texts are made and organized in a certain way, showing how decision-making impacts the media industry's structural and operational organization. Oliver Boyd-Barret (1995) explains that PEMC emphasizes “processes

of consolidation, diversification, commercialization, internationalization, the working of the profit motive in the hunt for audiences and/or for advertising, and its consequence for media practices and media content” (p. 186). PEMC’s emphasis on these elements of processes highlights their impact on media creation and consumption, influencing the kinds of content made available in the media landscape.

With Marxist influence, PEMC is inherently regarded as critical in its nature and analysis. Scholars like Vincent Mosco, Janet Wasko, Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Dwayne Winseck, Dal Yong Jin, and Oscar H. Gangy JR. regard PEMC as a uniformly critical practice/inquiry and interchangeably use both the political economy of media or communication and the critical political economy of media or communication. These scholars consider critical political economy of media and communication (CPEMC) as the starting point for political economic analysis of media and communication economies since PEMC critiques the capitalist economic system and modern-day economics. In fact, positivist economic perspectives on media and communication are considered less critical approaches to PEMC because they focus solely on producing and distributing communication goods and services (Farone, 2011).

Beyond PEMC’s association with the political left, McChesney (2008) declares that political economy “grows directly out of mainstream liberal democratic political theory” (p. 13). According to Zallo (2015), PEMC is critical due to the complexity of the field. This complexity arises from the intersection of various disciplines, the methodological complementarity between social theory and power theory, and the elements of flexibility, integration, and an understanding of related fields. Furthermore, invoking the “critical” highlights the interlocking dimensions of media, including production, structuring, and dissemination, and resistance to the problems resulting from capitalist control of media and communication (Nicholas & Martinez, 2020). CPE

asserts that to understand media content and audiences fully, one must understand production (Hardy, 2014). Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is to examine the production process of Akan commercial indigenous language media in to enhance our understanding and contribute to existing literature on indigenous media.

Thomas F. Corrigan (2024) argues that PEMC is rooted in critical realism, encompassing three key components. First, it incorporates ontological realism- the existence of a social and media reality (real, actual, and empirical) and the assumption that reality/social system is stratified, emergent, and open (subject to change). Second, it embraces epistemological fallibilism- the idea that all knowledge is provisional and thus incomplete or uncertain. Third, it involves judgmental rationality-producing justifiable knowledge about social science. According to Boyd-Barrett (1995), PEMC holds a “critical signification” because it emphasizes that analysts evaluate knowledge about values and emphasize processes over institutions. Thus, PEMC is associated with significant issues regarding media ownership and control, the media industries and their link to other societal sectors, and the political, economic, and social elites (Boyd-Barrett, 1995). CPEMC is about comprehending media content production and distribution, resisting and challenging problems of capitalist control over media and communication, and advocating for praxis, i.e., taking action to advance the social good (Nichols & Martinez, 2020). CPEMC focuses on the interaction between symbolic and economic dimensions of public communications, specifically the interplay between economic organization and political, social, and cultural life (Golding & Murdock, 1996).

The critical standpoint is important in this study of ILM because I am writing from the perspective of a postcolonial subject within the political economy of media and communication. This standpoint enables me to move beyond debates about the separation and integration of

politics and economics, allowing me to engage with the complexities of conducting a historical and cultural analysis from a postcolonial perspective within a political economy framework. It is essential to clarify the influence of postcolonial theory on the political economy of ILM within the scope of this study. From a postcolonial perspective, I am emphasizing and centering ILM as the locus for unraveling various historical contestations shaping current discourses about the practices and conditions of the medium, situating ILM as both a nexus and disjuncture between historical and contemporary iterations of media, political and cultural systems and their assigned values while highlighting ILM as a product of a linguistic struggle between the colonial administration and the colonized by emphasizing the problems created by such tensions. A postcolonial entity like ILM embodies not just the history of the political and economic imperative enabling colonialism but also experiences the aftermath and uncertainty of colonialism propelled through the projection of unequal power relations. Within a Postcolonial context, one can implicate and articulate past, present, and future as interlocked highlighting the mutual influence of the Global South and Global West. Therefore, we can extrapolate the economic, political, and cultural effects of colonialism or otherwise, allowing us to interrogate identities, subjectivities, knowledge production, violence, power, geopolitical relations, and their construction and conditions.

## 2.22 Assumptions, Characteristics and Object of Analysis of C/PEMC

In his book “*The Political Economy of Media: Enduring Issues, Emerging Dilemmas*,” Robert McChesney (2008) outlines several key assumptions of C/PEMC. These underlying assumptions of PEMC include the belief that media systems are not natural phenomena but products of specific policies. These policies determine the content of media systems. Thus, assessing these policies and the structures and institutions in place contributes partly to our

understanding of media and communication studies. McChesney argues that media systems play a crucial role in understanding how societies operate, particularly in relation to deep-rooted issues like racism, sexism, militarism, and depoliticization. After all, the mass media disseminates ideas about economic and political structures. Golding and Murdock (1996 & 1997) identify five (5) foundational characteristics of PE/CPEMC. First, it is holistic and advocates that social relations include both the economic and political, and examines the interrelation of social and cultural dynamics. Mosco (2009) describes this as social totality, emphasizing that political economy knows no boundaries. PE is interconnected with other approaches, guiding our understanding of relationships among multiple approaches and in different aspects of social life (Mosco, 2009). Therefore, PEMC is grounded in empirical evidence and a holistic focus on information media, entertainment, and leisure (Nichols & Martinez, 2020). Unsurprisingly, PE theories cover a range of multiple ideological imperatives, including conservatives, socialists, Marxists, liberals, feminists, and environmentalists, depending on whether they prioritize “tradition, community, labour, gender or the organic environment” (Boyd-Barrett, 1995, p.186; Gondwe, 1992).

Second, it is historical, focusing on understanding the process, the diachronic, and the centrality of the processes of change and evolving dynamics in location, as well as the role of communications in a capitalist and global setting, as the focus of analysis. At the core of (C)PE as historical are media growth, the extension of corporate reach, commodification, and the changing role of state and government intervention (Golding & Murdock, 1996, p. 19; McChesney, 2008). Thus, it prioritizes historical transformation and social change (Mosco, 2009; Pedro-Carañana et al., 2024). Historical concentration allows researchers to examine the nature of changes that have occurred over time and forecast or anticipate where those changes

will lead. Changes in media are affected by changes in the broader economy, and therefore, a historical perspective is required to find mass media changes within the “general context of industrialization” (Murdock & Golden, 1997, p. 206). An apparent perspective on political economies of media is that media and communication should be examined in their place in the larger social and economic contexts (Winseck, 2011). Third, PE adopted a realist/materialist epistemology or praxis. It focuses on actual social experiences. It acknowledges that social forces drive human behavior; therefore, changes in social relationships and institutions are central to political economists (Gondwe, 1992).

Fourth, PE stands firmly on a moral and philosophical foundation that emphasizes “what is, and what ought to be” (Goding & Murdock, 1997, p. xvi). Its primary objective is to clarify the fundamental “moral positions of economic and political economic perspectives” (Mosco, 2009, p. 32). PE inherently engages with critical economic, political, and moral concerns, showcasing its ideological nature (Nichols & Martinez, 2020). Gondwe (1992) argues that political economy was rooted in philosophical questions of a good society in the early beginnings. Moreover, even the Greek word from which economics is derived- meaning the management of a household- is a testament to the fact that family and community issues are fundamental to political economy (Gondwe, 1992; Mosco, 2009). PE is about social progress and finding solutions to society’s economic-related problems to improve the human condition. For Mosco (2009), moral philosophy refers to “social values” and “conceptions of social practices” (p. 32). The moral issues surrounding justice, equity, and the public good are being addressed (Golding & Murdock, 1996). Mosco (2009) mentions that morality, culture, and spirituality are central subjects of analysis for political economy since these form the core for understanding the values of institutions and individuals. Fifth, PEMC is concerned with a “balance between capitalist

enterprise and public intervention” (Golding & Murdock, 1996, pp. 17–18). CPEMC examines the distributional effects of capitalism on media and communication processes and institutions (Goding & Murdock, 1997). This involves analyzing how market dynamics influence cultural distribution and the availability of various forms and structures of meaning. It also addresses the critical concern regarding power distribution between public and private entities, mainly in regulation. Central to CPEMC is the question of the role of the state, private corporations, and individuals in communication (Goding & Murdock, 1997, p. xvi).

The object of study/analysis for political economies of media and communication is what Dwayne Winseck (2011) describes as a network of media industries (including books, television, radio, films, magazines, internet, newspapers, video games, advertising, and video games), and their social information ecology like telecom industries, information, communication, and technology (ICT). The media industry's aspects of analysis include market structures in which these media industries operate, patterns of ownership, development trajectory, etc. CPEMC is concerned with three main areas: first, “how communications industries work” (patterns of ownership, finance, and support mechanisms like advertising); second, “influences and consequences of different ways of organizing the media,” which involves a complex interplay of commercial, state and public elements; and third, “the relationships between media content, and communication systems, and the broader structure of society” (Hardy, 2014, p. 9). The task of critical political economy includes analyzing how cultural industries operate, how cultural industries’ economic organization influences the production and circulation of meaning, and how people’s position in the broader economic formation structures their consumption choices (Golding & Murdock, 1996). For this reason, CPE attends to the impact of economic dynamics on the variety and availability of public cultural expression to different social groups and focuses

on how property or cultural consumers and production/cultural producers are organized within broader structures (Golding & Murdock, 1996). Focal questions in PE highlight how changes in control over cultural production and distribution can either restrict or enhance the public sphere, analyze how the relationship between media and the state impacts various expressions and the public arena, examine the exercise of the state's power as both a regulator of media institutions and communicator of power, examine the extent of workers' autonomy in media institutions (Golding & Murdock, 1996).

The point of analysis for CPEMC is that it begins with “sets of social relations and the play of power” (Golding & Murdock, 1996, p. 18). Additionally, CPEMC, as a critical approach, examines “power asymmetries in knowledge production itself” (Corrigan, 2024, p. 12). CPEMC is interested in seeing how social relations' “structured asymmetries” influence meaning-making and adoption of meaning. For example, how do prevailing relations structure news, or how do power relations and the organization of domestic life in the family affect television viewing practices? CPEMC is unique in that it transcends situated activities towards showing the impact of economic dynamics and their structures on particular micro contexts and its concern with how communicative practices are shaped by the unequal “distribution of material and symbolic resources” (Golding & Murdock, 1996, p. 18). For example, the concentration of ownership may reduce the diversity of cultural goods in circulation and increase media company interests. CPEMC is concerned with the distortions and inequalities in the market systems, arguing that these distortions can be corrected through public intervention, which is the opposite of assumptions by classical political economists (Golding & Murdock, 1996).

For Golding and Murdock, CPEMC helps avoid the traps of instrumentalism and structuralism. The former focuses on media as an instrument of class domination, and the latter

focuses only on structures like “building-like edifices, solid, permanent and immovable” (Golding & Murdock, 1996, p. 19). Instrumentalism and structuralism deny researchers the ability to consider the complex relations of interests in media practice, dynamic historical changes, and contradictions that can constrain or facilitate communicative activities. For instance, instrumentalist perspectives like the propaganda model propounded by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky show that “the societal purpose of the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and state” (p. 298). As the authors suggest, the media upholds the purpose of this dominant class in actual media practice through “selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis on tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises” (Herman & Chomsky, 2002, p. 298). Herman and Chomsky show the subordination of the media to state propaganda systems. According to the authors, the instrumentalist approach of the propaganda model is subsumed under structural factors, which serve as filters for news production. These structural factors include (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and “experts” funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) “flak” as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) “anticommunism” as a national religion and control mechanism. These structural factors are consistent with US-based media and information media.

In the context of Ghana and related to indigenous language broadcasting, the propaganda model does not account for the multiplicity of interests, ownership, and audience as a major filter and source of information. Moreover, information is not only political and limited to news but

also religious and culturally embedded in its variety of programming. The omission of audience influence from the propaganda model's institutional factors requires further examination. In the case of the owner of Despite Media, he is a product of his neoliberal interest shaped by his society/community/ethnicity, religion, and the laws of Ghana. So, being a man of peace reflects the general outlook of a normative ideology of Ghana as a country of peace propagated through the constitution, multiplicity of religion and ethnic groups, and coexistence. So, the audience as a structural influence projects that funding through advertising depends on the numbers that these media can justify their sale. These numbers are based on the ability to satisfy the audience. Media and government relationships in Ghana have been as checkered as their political history. Excluding military governance and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's administration, Ghana's civilian governments since independence have allowed private press and state-owned media to co-exist, where they have functioned as watchdogs, adversarial, and provide alternative views (Amoakohene, 2010; Frimpong, 2019). As such, I am cautious about applying the propaganda model to the media institutions under consideration in this dissertation.

Ghana's media system and practice are a testament to Golding and Murdock's (1997) assertion that structuralism should perceive structures as "dynamic formations which are constantly reproduced and altered through practical action" (p. 19). Ghana's history illustrates a progression in ownership systems. Initially, there was colonial ownership rooted in a colonial ideology. This shifted to elite ownership during national liberation movements that advocated for independence. Following that, state ownership emerged with a focus on national development. Today, the coexistence of private and public ownership is characterized by a neoliberal perspective, which is both constrained and facilitated by the democratic and constitutional frameworks of the state.

A more comprehensive approach to PEMC is the industrialization of culture framework (ICF) propounded by Timothy Havens and Amanda Lotz (2017) to articulate and explain the many conceptual ideas and complexities of media studies and to understand media industries. It offers a means for “analyzing media production, organizations, technologies, strategies, and policies” (Haven & Lotz, 2017, p. 42). According to the authors, ICF “identifies the key areas and aspects of media industries that must be considered when analyzing how media industries function and why they do the things they do” (p. xiv). The framework addresses three levels:

First is the mandate of the media, which addresses the primary goal or the reason for the existence of the media industry. Media mandate responds to the basic question, “What is the mandate of the media industry?” A media organization’s mandate affects the behavior and content of the industry. Second is the conditions under which the media industry operates. Conditions focus on operational entities, including regulation (rules under which media organizations operate), economics (ownership and funding norms), and technology (equipment for production, distribution, and accessibility). Third is the day-to-day practices of media organizations and the people working in these industries (Haven & Lotz, 2017). Practices emphasize individual and organizational roles responsible for the day-to-day operation of media organizations: a range of workers and their activities.

At the core of ICF is culture used in both aesthetic and anthropological senses, as well as “members of the public in a variety of different roles that relate to the media industries: as members of political pressure groups, as consumers of commercial products, as audiences for media, and as citizens” (Havens & Lotz, 2017, p. 25). Havens and Lotz have this to say about culture used in two interconnected ways:

We use the term culture in two related senses...: first, in an aesthetic sense, to refer to the content that the media industries produce, such as films, newspapers, and the like;

second, in an anthropological sense, to refer to the specific social practices, values, mores, and hierarchies associated with a particular group of people. The anthropological sense of culture explains why some nations favor public or commercial mandates, why they enact particular laws governing the types of content that can be broadcast, and a whole host of other conditions and practices. More commonly, however, we use the anthropological definition of culture to address the ways in which the people who work at all levels of the media industries exist within industrial cultures that shape their views of themselves, the media they produce, and the audiences they engage (p. 25).

For my purposes, I use the ICF as an organizing force to understand ILM's structural, industrial, and corporate dimensions. Its generality fosters an accounting for the dynamism that exists in various media contexts, whether geographically or ideologically conceived. This dissertation aims to investigate how the indigenous language in Ghana (with emphasis on Akan Television and radio stations) has been impacted by economic, historical, social, cultural, or political/legal variables.

Another important variable possibly linked to culture is the linguistic system's relationship to the above-stated variables and how they shape organizational operations and practices. The multidirectionality of this framework makes it possible to account for how the media organizations under study interlock and integrate with other cultural industries. Randy Nicholas and Gabriel Martinez (2020) argue that the political economy of communication is concerned with components of cultural industries, including "production, structuring, and dissemination of culture" (p. 12). This framework is relevant since it helps account for the layers and networks these aspects of cultural industries create in ILM. Additionally, the significance of this framework to the dissertation is in shaping the understanding of ILM at various levels of relationality to history, temporalities, and sociopolitical institutions. As used in this dissertation, political economy of media helps show how history, culture, and socioeconomic factors intersect to create discourses and events around ILM systems.

### 2.3 Heteroglossia

Mikhail Bakhtin introduced heteroglossia to critique the inadequate and insufficient ways traditional stylistic analysis approached novelistic discourse. Bakhtin argues that literary scholars have failed to understand the style of the novel and language in general (Hirschkop, 2021). Bakhtin introduces the concept of heteroglossia to explain how the novel arranges “all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed” in the novel (p. 263). Bakhtin argues that it is through heteroglossia that the novel achieves this arrangement of themes, objects, and ideological systems. He states that this arrangement in a novel occurs through the “social diversity of speech types” (p. 263). Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia is the common translation of the Russian word “raznorecie”.<sup>10</sup> There have been other translations of “raznorecie”. The word has been translated as “speech diversity,” “social diversity of speech types,” “multidiscursivity,” and linguistic diversity within a community (Brandist & Lähteenmäki, 2010; Hirschkop, 2021; Busch, 2014; Bailey, 2012).

However, it is heteroglossia that has gained traction among scholars and has been widely used. Etymologically, heteroglossia is a Greek word meaning “other” and “speech” (Ivanov, 2000). Consequently, Geralyn Hynes (2014) states that heteroglossia means “different ‘speechness’ or differentiated speech” (p. 406). Like the translation of Bakhtin’s neologism, heteroglossia conjures various interpretations. Volek (2014) argues that when heteroglossia is used, it offers a multitude of interpretations, including “stratification,” “diversity,” “multiplicity,” “conflict,” “sociality,” “engagement,” and “code-switching” (p. 163). Likewise, various scholars’ definitions of heteroglossia have emphasized interaction, mixing and combining, plurality, linguistic diversity, dialogue, struggle, discursive plurality, discursive

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<sup>10</sup> There are variations in the spelling of the neologism raznorecie. For instance, Craig Brandist and Mika Lähteenmäki (2010), Tony Crowley (2001) and Benjamin Bailey (2012) spell it raznorechie.

diversity, and tension between discourses, styles, languages, and world views (Bailey, 2012; 2007; Woolard, 2006; Ivanov, 1999; Hynes, 2014; Swann et al., 2004; Jordan, 1995; Lähteenmäki, 2010). A few of the multiple definitions of heteroglossia are presented below.

Brigitta Busch (2014) defines heteroglossia as the co-presence of specific speech types or discourses that are related to time (particular epochs, periods, days, etc.) and to social worlds or spaces (nations, professions, age groups, families, circles, etc.)—to a “multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems” (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 288). Brandist and Lähteenmäki (2010) state categorically that “*raznorchie*” refers to the “coexistence of a multiplicity of various struggling language forms- e.g., social registers, professional discourses, and so forth- associated with certain ideological points of view” (p. 73). The most cited definition of heteroglossia is by Vyacheslav Ivanov (1999). He defines heteroglossia as “the simultaneous use of different kinds of speech or other signs, the tension between them and their conflicting relationship within one text” (1999, p. 100). Benjamin Bailey adopts Ivanov’s definition but with a slight modification. In the words of Bailey (2012, 2007), Ivanov’s (1999) definition can be divided into two parts. The first part, “the simultaneous use of different kinds of speech or other signs...” encompasses both multilingualism, code-switching, and “a broader range of linguistic phenomena,” including “intra-language social variation like regional dialects and registers related to profession or age”— albeit monolingualism (Bailey, 2012, p. 499). He explains further that what counts as “different kinds of speech or other signs” is not an a priori judgment of analysts. Instead, it is based on how social actors differentiate between the forms. Thus, heteroglossia reinforces the social perspective of language.

In the second part of Ivanov's (1999) definition, where Bailey’s modification comes into effect, instead of “the tension between them and their conflicting relationship within one text,”

Bailey has “the tensions and conflicts among those signs, based on the sociohistorical associations they carry with them.” The importance of this modification lies in Bailey’s emphatic reference to the social and political tensions and struggles that exist in a language, making it alive with meanings (Bailey, 2012, p. 499; 2007, p. 257). I would expand on this activation of meanings and argue that the conflation of these signs results not only in tensions and struggles but also in peace and harmony, resulting in layers and layers of meaning. The concepts of tension, struggle, peace, and harmony will be explored later in the chapter. In the meantime, Bailey argues that heteroglossia’s emphasis on the social and political dimensions of speech presents a new reality for understanding multilingualism's meanings because heteroglossia emphasizes multilingualism's social and contextual functioning rather than formal linguistic approaches. As such, heteroglossia “represents a philosophical perspective on language and communicative practices from which to approach contexts, practices, and meanings of multilingualism” (Bailey, 2012, p. 500). Ken Hirschkop (2023) agrees with Bailey that heteroglossia is a general philosophy of language and meaning. Hirschkop explains that heteroglossia, as a philosophical lens into language and meaning, emphasizes ways “linguistic forms were associated with contexts of use, with particular classes of speakers, and with ideologies, broadly conceived” (p. 2). Emphatically, Geralyn Hynes (2014) argues that the “temporal, spatial and social contexts of utterances” are important to interpreting interactions (p. 407).

Tony Crowley (2001) presents the teleological and politicized conceptions or uses of heteroglossia relating to stages of linguistic being. Crowley (2001) makes the argument that heteroglossia presents a lens for understanding the history of language and that heteroglossia is final in the “stages in the historical being of language,” i.e., the historical becoming of a

language (p. 180). (The first and second stages of linguistic becoming are monoglossia and polyglossia.)<sup>11</sup> From the teleological perspective, heteroglossia shows how internal and external language differences are uncovered. More importantly, at the heteroglossic stage of the becoming of language, “a language drops the absolute and relative unity characteristic of its former stages (i.e. monoglossia and polyglossia) and thus reveals the full dialogic and heteroglot reality of its pluralistic character...” (p. 180). While from the politicized conception, heteroglossia is “one of the historical representations of a language as well as its grounding characteristic” (p. 182). Therefore, heteroglossia makes “the historical, conflictual nature of all discourse apparent” (p. 182). Crowley maintains that both perspectives are important for establishing historical specificity and making it possible to answer questions about relations between discourse and power.

Consequently, Adrian Blackledge and Angela Creese (2014) emphasize heteroglossia’s concern with linking linguistic utterance “in the present with socio-historical associations they carry with them” and focus on “speakers as social actors using heteroglossic resources to negotiate the social world” (p. 11). Evidently, Bailey (2012; 2007), Hirschkop (2023), and Blackledge and Creese (2014) point to the indexical meanings as an inherent nature of heteroglossia. Therefore, Blackledge and Creese (2014) discuss heteroglossia in relation to three concepts, including indexicality (a reference to how various linguistic forms and signs become associated with past uses of these linguistic forms as well as social practices (Bailey, 2007;

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<sup>11</sup> Tony Crowley (2001) discusses both the teleological and politicized conception of monoglossia, polyglossia and heteroglossia. In the teleological conception monoglossia, polyglossia and heteroglossia refers to “opposed stages of linguistic being in an irreversible teleology” where monoglossia (primary and pure state of a language) is supplanted by polyglossia (language becomes conscious of otherness- references to geographical, historical, social and gender-related variations) which is also supplanted by heteroglossia. In the politicized conception, monoglossia, polyglossia and heteroglossia are “forms of representations of language brought about by social and historical conflicts” (p. 182). Per the politicized conception monoglossia shifts from a primary pure state of a language to attaining a certain stability which is not absolute because it is the “product of the dialogical struggle between opposing tendencies.”

Hirchkop, 2023; Blackledge & Creese, 2014).), tension-filled interaction (social tensions in language exist through the opposing pull of centrifugal and centripetal forces (p. 7) and multivoicedness (interrelationship between our own words and the words of others). According to the authors, this triadic approach helps pin down the concept of heteroglossia for it to be useful. It concretizes their idea of heteroglossia as emphasizing context, uses, speakers and time rather than formal language systems.

Brandon Kershner (2011) also states that Bakhtin's heteroglossia "insures the primacy of context over text" and notes that heteroglossia is "the simultaneous presence of competing languages and their social, historical, psychological and physical conditions of utterance" (p. 1). Therefore, for Blackledge and Creese (2014), "heteroglossia is not only—in fact not principally—about the simultaneous use of 'languages', but rather refers to the coexistence of different competing ideological points of view, whether constituted in a single national 'language' (as Bakhtin proposed) or within the complex communicative repertoires in play in late modern societies" (p. 5). Further, Mika Lähteenmäki (2010) explains that heteroglossia accounts "for the social, functional, generic, and dialectological variation within a language as well as the ways in which sociolinguistic stratification is used as an aesthetic device in novelistic discourse" (p. 26). Lähteenmäki states that heteroglossia describes the social and ideological stratification of language. Hence, Hynes (2014) defines heteroglossia as the "mix of different languages and world views..." and that heteroglossia "describes the stratification of languages into different genres, dialects, generations or sociolects based on age group, gender, socio-grouping, discipline or profession and so on" (p. 406).

The core argument of all these scholars in their definition of heteroglossia is that it emphasizes linguistic diversity and variations as well as the "coexistence of different competing

ideological points of view within a single language” (Lähteenmäki, 2010, p. 28). Even though the entry into heteroglossia is diverse, all these authors cited above are concerned with the coexistence of both linguistic and ideological phenomena/signs and their historical associations. Nonetheless, the observation is that at the dialectical level of coexistence, tensions and struggles are emphasized at the expense of possible peace and harmony resulting from their simultaneity. Specifically, in postcolonial contexts like Ghana and in relation to ILM, coexistence can be liminal, making its threshold an avenue for layers of possibilities. For instance, during my fieldwork at the TV and radio stations, I observed the simultaneous use of both the English language and Akan dialects in the newsrooms. Each language had a specific function during the editorial process. Both languages were used as means of articulation and expression; however, English was the only medium of literary expression for developing story ideas, writing news scripts, crawling, and all written materials related to programming. Nonetheless, the language function in the newsroom is far from simple. The language relationship changes at every level (from production to distribution), shaping how newsmaking is conducted. Even with other programming types (like sports and entertainment), the relationship between English and Akan is not linear: at one point, they can either complement or supplement each other, while at another, they can detract. As such, heteroglossia, as a theory, creates the space for unraveling these layers of possibilities a text or object presents. Bakhtin's explanation of heteroglossia points to these possibilities because he argues that languages of heteroglossia do not just co-exist; they can interact and intersect. In the following pages, I will focus on how Bakhtin discusses heteroglossia, specifically focusing on his discussion on the incorporation and organization of heteroglossia and the linguistic sense of heteroglossia.

### 2.31 Compositional Forms of Heteroglossia

According to Bakhtin in *Discourse in a Novel* (1981), novels consist of compositional units, which are the basic forms for incorporating and organizing heteroglossia into a novel. These units include authorial speeches, speeches of narrators, inserted/incorporated genres, speeches of characters, character zones and forms, and degrees of parodic stylization. Bakhtin clarifies that these are not exhaustive since they do not cover all the possible means by which heteroglossia enters a text. Moreover, the distinctiveness of every prose genre determines its compositional constituents. These compositional units are subordinated to a higher working style, yet they are autonomous; each unit determines the language of the novel, “permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships...” and they enable the combining of languages and styles into a higher unity (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). These compositional units explicate the multiplicity, mixing, or combining of discourses. For Thomas Ferrel (1995), compositional units constitute the literary sense of heteroglossia achieved through techniques that bring varieties of speeches into the novel, “highlight differences between them and contextualize each of them in a specific world view” (p. 3). These literary techniques include framing devices, incorporated narratives, parodic stylization, and speech in dialect.

By implication, each text is unique in the ways that text organizes various heterogeneous stylistic units to achieve heteroglossia. What is important here is that compositional units point towards dimensions and patterns of social discourse converging at a moment in time.

Compositional units of heteroglossia help contextualize a discourse in a particular worldview, and most importantly, the context marks the limit of each voice’s authority as these voices interact. Therefore, different components come together to form the heterogeneous stylistic unities of a novel, which becomes a structured artistic system. These units help characterize the novel as a heteroglot and, therefore, a good representation of heteroglossia. Specifically,

authorial and character speeches, character zones, a comic playing with languages and genres represent voice sources connected with “particular stylistic possibilities” that “demand particular forms for the artistic treatment of heteroglot languages introduced into it” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 301). To understand these voice sources, Anthony Wall’s conceptualization of a character in Bakhtin’s theory is relevant to this discussion. Wall (1984, p. 6) notes that “characters are carriers of social discourse” and are unisolable and unfinished. Characters are composed of and participate in social discourse, and they constitute a “point of convergence and a point of emanation for social voices in the text” (p. 47). Consequently, compositional units equate the origins of diverse discourses and discursive practices with their associated socio-historical and ideological imperatives converging at a particular moment. Therefore, heteroglossia embodies the complex relationships between various levels of discourses, and the “conflict of social forces will produce particular discursive forms, effects and representations” (Crowley, 1989, p.179).

An additional complexity to the combining of these units to achieve heteroglossia is that regardless of the form or degree of organization or incorporation of these components, they each “permit language to be used in ways that are indirect, conditional and distanced” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 323). Bakhtin clarifies,

They all signify a relativizing of linguistic consciousness in the perception of language borders-borders created by history and society, and even the most fundamental borders (i.e., those between languages as such)- and permit expression of a feeling for the materiality of language that defines such relativized consciousness (pp. 323-4)

Each component consists of its own idiosyncrasies or peculiarities about language, style, belief system, independence, and structural integrity (in the case of inserted genres). Heteroglossia sets the stage for foregrounding social actors’ (Bakhtin uses the term prose writer) ability to organize language repertoire, social context, and history. Further, it sets the stage for unpacking elements

constitutive of a discourse, understanding the social and political implications of heteroglossia, seeing heteroglossia as a method and an organizing principle, and, more importantly, explicating a discourse. It posits heteroglossia as dialogic, tensional, and stratified.

Heteroglossia is inherently multiple and expresses a point of interconnection, interrelationships and coexistence, interanimation, and dialogue. Thus, heterogeneity is an important feature of heteroglossia. By heterogeneity, Bakhtin means “various discourses, styles, speech patterns, ideologies which may merge with or confront one another, interacting dynamically, in what becomes multi-voiced and multi-styled discourse or ‘heteroglossia’” (Howard, 1994, p. 44). This view aligns with Blackledge and Creese’s (2014) triadic approach to heteroglossia, i.e., indexicality, tension-filled interaction, and multivoicedness. The heterogeneity of heteroglossia is foundational to understanding the core principles constitutive of the phenomenon. As a heteroglot, the novel emphasizes differences in speech types/languages and voices. As Hynes (2014) explains, heteroglossia helps expand the “focus of voice to the multi-vocal nature that is implicit in speech,” privileging the action of how people hear others and themselves as well as the “narratives” that are accorded importance (p. 407). It presupposes, therefore, that competing values are highlighted in the discourse, making it tension-filled and conflictual with possible supplementary and complementary values.

## 2.32 Linguistic Sense of Heteroglossia

### 2.32.1 Stratification

In the linguistic sense of heteroglossia, Bakhtin puts emphasis on the social nature of language and its stratification. It is impossible to discuss heteroglossia without discussing Bakhtin’s notion of language. Bakhtin claims that language is not a neutral medium and never

unitary.<sup>12</sup> Rather, it is a “concrete heteroglot conception of the world” that is “populated-overpopulated- with the intentions of others” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 293, 294). The social and ideological dimensions of language make language a “heteroglot from top to bottom at any given moment of its historical existence” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291). Language is a heteroglot because it

represents the co-existence of social ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These “languages” of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming socially typifying “languages” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291).

For Bakhtin, language is “not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, ensuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life” (1981, p. 271).

In Brandist and Lähteenmäki (2010) interpretation of Bakhtin’s concept of language, language is a stratified social ideological concreteness “associated with various often clashing worldviews” (p. 72). Bakhtin (1981) claims that language is stratified at any given moment in its development into socio-ideological linguistic dialects and languages. The work of language stratification is done by varied social forces like “social level, academic institutions, professions, genre, a particular tendency, individual personality, day or hour, generation, age group, a party, etc.” (p. 293). As such, language can be stratified according to the following dimensions of stratification: generic stratification of language (occurs through genre); professional stratification of language, social stratification, languages of various epochs and periods and periods of socio-ideological life, and “stratification at the level of expressive system and forms that carry its meaning” (pp.

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<sup>12</sup> The caveat to this claim, according to Bakhtin, is only when language is seen as an “abstract grammatical system of normative forms, taken in isolation from the concrete, ideological conceptualizations that fill it, and isolation from the uninterrupted process of historical becoming that is a characteristic of all living language” (1981, p.288).

288-9). This generates languages of social groups, professional and generic languages, and languages of generations (p. 272). Jacqueline Howard (1994) and Ferrel (1995) have argued that in addition to dialects of age, class, and profession, race and gender are now included in this list. So, the internal stratification of a single language includes the following:

Social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargon, generic language, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of authorities, of various circles and passing fashion, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphasis)... (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 262-263).

These social stratifying forces work to create languages associated with social groupings, communities, or even institutions. Based on these stratifying factors discussed above, it is safe to conclude that any language is heteroglossic, comprising the different forms in which it is used, making “all human speakers... heteroglossic using language in different, historically and socially constructed ways” (Bakhtin, 1981; Ferrel, 1995, p. 3). As such, scholars like Kershner (2011) have described heteroglossia as the basic condition of human communication. Alternatively, as Michael Holquist (1999) puts it, “heteroglossia is a situation, the situation of a subject surrounded by the myriad responses he or she might make at any particular point, but any one of which must be framed in a specific discourse selected from a teeming thousands available” (p. 104). This presents a philosophy of language and meaning where language's social, ideological, historical, and dynamic nature are emphasized (Bailey, 2012; Brandist & Lähtenmäki, 2010; Hirschkop, 2021a, 2021b).

Furthermore, stratifying languages enabled by social forces are associated with values and belief systems. They become imbued with intentions and accents referencing the social and ideological stratification within a single national language and linking linguistic differentiation with social differentiation. In addition, emphasis is placed on meaning-making. Heteroglossia

“governs the operation of meaning... in any utterance” (Holquist, 1999, p. 104). Consequently, there are no neutral words. Holquist asserts,

As a result of the work done by all these stratifying forces in language, there are no neutral words and forms - words and forms that can belong to “no one”; no language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents. For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the taste of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day, and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word (p. 293).

For Bakhtin, “social stratification of language is not primarily a linguistic phenomenon but has to do with the existence of a multiplicity of different ideological purviews within a linguistic community” (Brandist & Lähteenmäki, 2010, p. 73). The idea of stratification helps expound Bakhtin’s notion of language and unpack and juxtapose significant dialogic relations present in a word/utterance/discourse. Consequently, heteroglossia shows that language is socially and functionally stratified and reflects the world views of groups, individuals, and communities (Brandist & Lähteenmäki, 2010).

Distinctively, heteroglossia is not a mere variation in language but establishes a relationship between language and ideology, historical modes of language and its dynamism, and discursive practices associated with language use and function. Ken Hirschkop (2021) outlines three dimensions of heteroglossia that expand the notion of linguistic variation to include ideology and belief systems. These dimensions are aligning variation in language with ideological differences, the play of language as the motor for historical becoming and locating “this powerful play of linguistic and ideological difference in an unofficial tradition, which began with popular cultural practice...” (p.436). For Bakhtin, heteroglossia is composed of a

multiplicity of language and verbal-ideological belief systems, language used by characters, and the incorporation of artistic and extra-artistic genres<sup>13</sup>. As such, when Bakhtin describes the features of comic novels specifically, he articulates two distinctive features that summarize the combining and mixing of the techniques listed under heteroglossia in the literary sense. The first feature is the multiplicity of languages and verbal ideological belief systems, and the second is the unmasking and destruction of these incorporated languages and ideological belief systems as “false, hypocritical, greedy, limited, narrowly rationalistic, inadequate to reality” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 311-2). Obviously, the distinct characteristics of comedy set it apart from other genres, making the coexistence and mixing or combining of units of heteroglossia different from other genres.

#### 2.32.2 Dialogism

In fact, for Bakhtin, the organized system of languages in a discourse “do not lie on the same plane” (1981, pp. 410, 415). They are stratified hierarchically, yet they influence each other and are filled with tensions and contradictions. It is the realization that different languages used are associated with different competing ideological systems and approaches to the world/points of view. So heteroglossia implies a “stratified conglomerate of competing ideological points of view” (Brandist & Lähtenmäki, p. 73), concretizing dialogization in a discourse. Bailey argues that the most distinctive aspect of heteroglossia is its “focus on social tensions inherent in language” (p. 499). The interaction and struggle characteristic of heteroglossia allow for worlds to collapse within a single space and time from a historical, social, temporal, and spatial antecedent. As such, heteroglossia is dialogic, showing how the multiplicity of languages and verbal ideological belief systems interact and interanimate to create meaning. Bakhtin asserts

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<sup>13</sup> Bakhtin considers a novel as an example of artistic prose and everyday utterances, rhetorical (journalistic, moral, philosophical, and others), and scholarly writing as examples of extra-artistic prose.

that language is dialogic in nature and shows “a struggle among socio-linguistic world views, not an intra-language struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions” (p. 273). Language is not exclusive in many forms and varying levels; it intersects with other languages, creating an environment concerned with the interrelationships and dialogue between discourses. As such, heteroglossia, in its diversity of languages, is dialogic. This is because the phenomenon of “dialogic orientation of discourse... is a property of any discourse” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 279). Unsurprisingly, Holquist describes the simultaneity of dialogue that takes place in a discourse at various levels of heteroglossia as “merely a particular instance of a larger polyphony of social and discursive forces” (p. 104).

Kershner (2011) describes dialogism as the “necessary and characteristic mode of meaning” as well as the “characteristic epistemological mode,” making all forms of communication, whether written or oral, always dialogical (p. 1). Bakhtin uses the phrase dialogized heteroglossia. Dialogized heteroglossia is “the authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape... anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance” (p. 272). There is reference to context driven discourse and accented utterance. Hynes notes that context “refers not just to the speaker and the words used but also extends to the wider, more diffuse environment, for example, day of the week or time of day” (p. 406). Similarly, Holquist (1999) argues for the critical role of space and time in dialogism. Holquist states that “dialogism assumes that at any given time, in any given place, there is a set of powerful but highly unstable conditions<sup>14</sup> at work that will give a word uttered then and there a meaning that is different from

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Holquist opines that these conditions responsible for the difference in meaning already exist in language and also includes other non-linguistic factors like differences in weather, and physical condition of the speaker.

what it would be at other times and in other places” (p.105). Bakhtin argues that languages of heteroglossia represent a “specific point of view on the world, forms or conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such, they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 291-292). Expanding on the notion of dialogism Holquist (1999) is of the opinion that it is the “differential relation between a center and all that is not in the center” (p. 98). Holquist suggests that dialogism is important because it allows us to see how other relationships work because the “self” is a relation. The self/other dichotomy is a relation of simultaneity (p. 99). Neither has absolute privilege. Because of the multiplicity of voices and languages (heteroglossia) present in a discourse, the dialogic exchange is neither determinate nor is the hegemony of any ideology guaranteed. Both the periphery and the center are always in the process of becoming, foregrounding the sociality of language and its historical, contextual, and political tones.

Therefore, heteroglossia as a situation, a perception of the world, and a way of “conceiving the world as made up of a roiling mass of languages” (Holquist, 1999, p. 104) set the stage for simultaneous dialogic exchange. Simultaneity “deals with the relations of same and different in space and time” (Holquist, 1999, p. 99). Because of simultaneity, there are several levels of interaction or dialogic exchange occurring in an utterance or discourse. One of the several levels of interaction is the point of intersection of the “processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification” enabled by centrifugal-stratifying forces and centripetal-unifying forces, of language (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272).

Bakhtin differentiates between centripetal forces (which aim to centralize, unify, and result in unitary language creating standardization and authoritative discourses- e.g., official

languages or discourses or socially powerful genres) and centrifugal forces<sup>15</sup> (which decentralize and disunify- diversify- and are characterized by unofficial languages or genres of lower social status (Sawnn et al., 2004). Despite the fact that heteroglossia is opposed to the realities of unitary language<sup>16</sup>, Bakhtin notes that centripetal forces of language are found in the midst of heteroglossia. Both centripetal and centrifugal forces are in a “perpetual dialogic struggle,” resulting in the “conflict of opposing tendencies” (Crowley, 1989, p. 182). The intersection between centripetal and centrifugal forces reinforces heteroglossia's social and political implications, deepening our understanding of humans as heteroglossic using language in different, socially and historically constructed ways. Language as a social phenomenon is dynamic, “constantly in the process of becoming and shaped by centripetal and centrifugal forces. Thus, a national language is simultaneously characterized by its unifying tendencies and striving for stratification and differentiation” (Brandist & Lähteenmäki, 2010, p. 73). It is thus not surprising that Crowley (1989) claims that heteroglossia should be seen as the last stage of linguistic being, emphasizing language’s character of becoming, evolving, and developing, making the argument that at the heteroglossic stage of being a language drops the absolute and relative unity characteristics of its former stages and thus reveals the full dialogic and heteroglot reality of its pluralistic character (p. 180).

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<sup>15</sup> Centripetal forces in and under specific historical conditions organize “a certain form of discourse as the centralized, unified authoritative form, and thus monoglossia and monoglogism to be effected,” resulting in a system where one language dominates or reigns over another (Crowley, 1989, pp. 182-3). Crowley has argued that monoglossia emphasizes a desire for purity, signals blindness to difference, and reinforces the formulation of standardization.

<sup>16</sup> By unitary language, Bakhtin means “the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language” (p. 270). Bakhtin rejects the idea of unitary language, which is opposed to the plurality of language.

Another level of simultaneous dialogic exchange is at the level between language at the level of code (prescribed meaning) and language at the level of discourse (cultural associations linked to a word) (Holquist, 1999). Bakhtin (1981) identifies dialogism as a characteristic of heteroglossia by describing the internal contradictions of word-internal dialogism. Here, Bakhtin concentrates on the relationship between a word and its object, its speaking subject, and its surroundings (social context). He writes that,

Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist- or, on the contrary, by the “light” of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents. The word, directed towards its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgements and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile (p. 276)

The internal dialogism of a word constitutes two forms: (1) a word’s encounter with an alien word within an object itself and (2) the subjective belief system of the listener. According to Bakhtin, these two forms are interwoven and almost indistinguishable. The first constituent of internal dialogism - a word’s encounter with an alien word- suggests that every word is directed towards an object, which, according to Bakhtin, is the intention of a word. This word takes its meaning in a socially specific environment and arises from a “dialogue as a continuation of it or as a rejoinder to it. It is not from the sidelines” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276). Bakhtin adds that “the word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way” (1981, p. 279). The object at which a word is directed is equally laden

with a multitude of voices (multivocality), social consciousness<sup>17</sup> and reveals “socially heteroglot multiplicity of its names, definitions and value judgements” (p. 278). Bakhtin offers,

All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word. (p.293).

Here, we find another level of dialogic exchange where a word has different meanings at different stages in history and in various situations within the same historical period (Holquist, 1999). Consequently, an object is surrounded by social heteroglossia, which Bakhtin describes as “the tower-of-Babel mixing of languages that goes on around an object” and interwoven with an object's dialectics (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 278). By implication, the intertwining of social heteroglossia with the dialectics of an object forms part of the elastic environment of an object to which a word relates, creating a dialogue. The second form of the internal dialogism of the word centers on a responsive understanding,<sup>18</sup> foregrounding the apperceptive background of the listener and describing how a word provokes a future answer. In other words, for Bakhtin, every word/discourse/conversation/utterance is determined by what has not been spoken.<sup>19</sup> A listener's apperceptive background includes “contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgments” (p. 281); thus, it is filled with responses and objections. The dialogism between the word and the listener is “more subjective, psychological and (frequently) random character, sometimes crassly accommodating, sometimes provocatively polemical” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282). Thus, a listener or

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<sup>17</sup> According to Bakhtin (1981), social consciousness lies in an object, “a multitude of routes, roads, and paths” a prose writer or user can take (p. 278).

<sup>18</sup> According to Bakhtin (1981), a responsive understanding is a “fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and its moreover an active understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching discourse (1981, pp. 280-281).

<sup>19</sup> A word's direction towards an answer and the influence of the answering word that it (the word) anticipates.

audience is not passive but active, forming a conceptual horizon or belief system that a word encounters, concretizing the dialogic process.

### 2.32.3 Double-voicedness

To further understand dialogism as a feature of heteroglossia, Bakhtin directs attention to double-voicedness. What happens once heteroglossia enters a discourse? Bakhtin claims that once heteroglossia enters a discourse (in this case, prose), it becomes a double-voiced discourse. This type of double-voicedness in prose is special because it serves two speakers simultaneously and expresses two different intentions simultaneously- i.e., the intention of the character speaking and the refracted intention of the author. Heteroglossia becomes “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 324). Moreover, double-voicedness is deeply rooted in “fundamental, socio-linguistic speech diversity and multi-languagedness” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 326). Here, the idea of images of social languages and their speakers or users (social groups) is highlighted. So, these languages are at once the language of the speaker but also the language of others (Jordan, 1995). Jordan (1995) argues that by the speech of others, Bakhtin refers to social, professional, and literary types of speech (p. 86). The social languages are “ideologically laden social phenomenon and are also created objects or images” (Jordan, 1995, p. 82). They carry with them values and judgments. Consequently, that type of speech becomes a double-voiced discourse, simultaneously serving two speakers who express two different intentions. The result is two voices, two meanings, and two expressions- double-voiced discourse. These two voices are mutually and dialogically interrelated; hence, “double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. A potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 324-25). They

know about each other and engage in conversation, affect, and depend on each other; hence, they are dialogically interrelated. Bakhtin adds that

This double-voicedness in prose is prefigured in language itself (in authentic metaphors, as well as in myth), in language as a social phenomenon that is becoming in history, socially stratified and weathered in this process of becoming. (p.326)

As such, heteroglossia results not in a “single language but a dialogue of languages”-

interconnectedness and interrelationships (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). These languages can oppose or dialogically interanimate each other. Thus, Valerij Tjupa (2009) describes heteroglossia as a “dialogical” agonal structure of verbal communication whose essence lies in the fact that “within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own and another’s word is being waged” (Bakhtin [1934/35] 1981: 354), a struggle, that is, involving two or more codes between which links of selection and connotation emerge” (p. 219). Tjupa (2009) helps explain the nature of the relationship dialogue produces.

For Bakhtin, the text was a compositionally unitary utterance of a particular (in literature fictive) subject, a subject within which there are foreign words and entire foreign intratextual discourses that can enter into various relationships with the discourse surrounding them: subordinated and subordinating relationships, relationships as discussion of equals and relationships of solidarity (p. 224).

Because Bakhtin’s heteroglossia was described in relation to the novel, he shed light on how novelists exploit the discursive diversity of language (Brandist & Lähteenmäki, 2010; Hirschkop, 2021). In a novel, heteroglossia not only emphasizes the speaking character but also becomes an organizing principle by which novelists represent language, bringing into perspective various heteroglossic resources that co-exist, intersect, and interact to produce varied discursive practices. Bakhtin explains that when heteroglossia enters a novel, it assumes a material form in the image of speaking persons who come with their own language and unique ideological discourse and style. The speaking person is also an actor whose actions are “highlighted by ideology” and whose activity “is always ideologically demarcated” (DN, 1981, pp. 334, 335).

Therefore, heteroglossia, according to Blackledge et al. (2014), “takes as its focus speakers as social actors using heteroglossic resources to negotiate the social” (p. 502). The work of exploitation is not the sole province of novelists since individuals and various social actors are equally engaged in drawing from the languages of various facets of life, whether it is genre, profession, social level, academic institution, age, time, etc.

The tripartite emphasis of heteroglossia is relevant to the multi-discursivity of media industry studies and ILM's general conundrum and multidimensionality. Heteroglossia's emphasis on social, historical, and political implications of discourse provides an avenue into both micro and macro levels of structural operations of media institutions. Since this dissertation is concerned with both the micro (like the day-to-day interactions and procedures, production decisions, workflow, and newsroom internal hierarchy) and macro-politics (like regulations, ownership, and economic trends) of ILM, heteroglossia helps locate distinct and/or competing voices and worldviews shaping ILM's internal operations and business practices. Heteroglossia's starting point is the linguistic diversity present in various social facets of life relating to genre, profession, social level, academic institution, age, time, language, gender, religion, tradition/indigeneity, contemporaneity/modernity, etc. The media industry, in its entirety, encapsulates these life dimensions. For this reason, heteroglossia as a lens for investigating ILM opens the door to locating these discourses and their interanimation and how these are organized to shape our understanding of ILM at lower and higher levels of media politicking and meaning-making. However, heteroglossia ignores the interaction between “socio-economic structures and linguistic diversity” (Lähteenmäki, 2010, p. 29). For this reason, this dissertation adopts a second political economy framework to fill in the socio-economic gap that heteroglossia does not

account for. In the following section, I will briefly discuss how political economy complements heteroglossia in this study.

## 2.4 Significance of Heteroglossia and Political Economy to this Study

Heteroglossia is not just about linguistic variation. Instead, it emphasizes sociohistorical and ideological dimensions of language meaning and uses in terms of the social worlds past and present (Bailey, 2012, p. 506; Blackledge, 2014; Hynes, 2014; Hirschkop, 2021). Heteroglossia provides a lens to challenge the way one perceives or thinks about language and meaning-making. It explicates discursive practices associated with language use and function in context, understanding the historical and social conflict imbued in a national language (Hynes, 2014) and “linguistic interactions as more than the simple encoding and decoding of signs” (Hirschkop, 2021, p. 438). Bailey’s analysis of heteroglossia shows that meanings are not arbitrary but rather have sociohistorical associations collapsing past, present, and future in a dialogic environment. He argues that heteroglossia “conceptualizes language meaning as a function of both linguistic forms and historical social relations” (p. 505). Consequently, heteroglossia helps explain linguistic diversity and shows that contexts are not neutral and meanings are not “stable across people, activities, or contexts” (Bailey, 2012, p. 502; Lähteenmäki, 2010). Hence, heteroglossia provides a modern reading of a mixed text (Jordan, p. 83) while invoking source (origin) and/or preceding discourses/texts that give rise to the mixed text. It helps unravel how contemporaneity reveals a mixed discourse shaped not just by history but by the social situatedness of a subject and its object. Such mixed text/object conjures aspirational tendencies evoked through geopolitical and cross-cultural factors. The basic tenets of heteroglossia, including the coexistence of socio-ideological points of view, stratification, dialogism (multi-styled, multilingualness, and multivoicedness), tension-filled and tendentious, make heteroglossia an

appropriate framework to analyze current texts with multilayered significations and configurations, including ILM.

Both heteroglossia and political economy provide a platform for approaching discourse where neither the margin nor the periphery has absolute privilege. As stated earlier, at the core of the object of study for this dissertation is the postcolonial and globalization contexts. Both globalization and postcolonial involve a complex set of processes and elements interconnected in a complicated way. Under such contexts and conditions, different flows and interconnectivity exist. Thus, heteroglossia and political economy help construct and challenge assumptions or preconceived notions about “pre-existing socio-economic structures and established power relations” (Lähtenmäki, 2010). The dominance of Euro-imperial languages like French and English in African media systems and journalism work led to the privileging of local media using English/French and marginalizing local media using indigenous languages. In all cases, ILM is held against globalized/western professional norms without due consideration for how the interaction between Indigenous linguistic systems, contemporary formations, and colonial legacy influences and shapes ILM. Moreover, as Zabus has argued, when postcolonial subjects write back to the center, it does so with an accent “by using language that topples discourse conventions of the so-called center and by inscribing postcolonial language variants from ‘the margin’ or ‘the periphery’ in the text” (p. xv). As such, employing heteroglossia as a framework to examine ILM not only challenges conventions but also centers and prioritizes media and journalistic norms shaped by two distinct languages, English and Akan, with their associated ideologies, values, accents, and discourses. The bi/multilingualism of ILM, with their associated values, accents, and ideologies, posits different levels of dialogic exchange and meaning at various moments within the same historical period or different stages in history. Because

heteroglossia challenges imposition/domination, since its dynamic process is contingent on situated social interaction, no one linguistic discourse in ILM has superiority or dominance in their dialogic exchange. This is crucial because ILM has two major dimensions informing its practice: located in the global discourse of Western media/journalism practice through the adoption of the English language and professional practices, and cultural and linguistic practices of particular geographical locations. Until recently, diasporic aspiration and reach, as well as media and technological innovations, have challenged ideas about media practice, programming and production practices, journalistic norms, and professionalism in ILM. All these various dimensions in ILMs' practice need to be examined in detail for an appropriate theorization of ILM. Thus, heteroglossia provides a framework for understanding the ILM practice, journalism, and language in practice while appreciating the social, structural, and political tensions arising from standardized ethics of journalism.

Additionally, heteroglossia emphasizes the complexity and nuances of coexistence. This coexistence happens “within the complex communicative repertoires in play in late modern societies” (Blackledge, 2014, p. 5). ILM illustrates such a system of complex communication repertoires not just because of its bi/multilingual aspect but also with regard to genre, content, and technology. Moreover, heteroglossia is sensitive to multilingual settings like Ghana and accounts for linguistic and cultural diversity. Blackledge et al. argue that the importance of heteroglossia “lies in “moving us from identification of a code to an analysis of the coexistence of competing ideological points of view” (p. 10). Heteroglossia's emphasis on the complexity and nuances of coexistence allows scholars to explicate the layers and layers of meaning present in a discourse. Further, it helps focus attention on the “various institutionalized sites of struggle in which the competing forces meet and so enables historians to trace the battle lines of the

conflict and the complex relations by which discursive effects and power are interrelated” (Crowley, 1989, p. 183). Hence, heteroglossia helps us understand the social influences that shape discourse.

Furthermore, heteroglossia and political economy help us understand how relationships work both at the micro and macro levels of operation and organization. The value of these perspectives makes them appropriate for unpacking the relationship between dominant and non-dominant discourses about language and media. The simultaneity and coexistence of discursive imperatives make visible the type of relationship existing in a higher frame of unified meaning. Despite the emphasis on the tension-filled character of heteroglossia, which suggests resistance, struggle, war, and exclusion, coexistence can also mean complementarity, inclusion, conformity, and peace. Additionally, heteroglossia as a lens helps collapse the distinction drawn between form and content and incorporates systems of ideology, whether they operate at the personal (micro), community (meso), or societal/national (macro) levels, into a discourse. Jordan (1995) argues that Bakhtin’s theory is appropriate because it offers “a means of reconciling the competing claims of formalist and historicist theoretical models” (p. 81). Moreover, it emphasizes participants as active actors situated historically in a dialogic environment. Also, this framework is appropriate because it “provides the critical framework for assessing language within the system of languages that constitute the narrative” (p. 82). Heteroglossia’s general principle is that all forms of discourse are rife with social and historical conflict (Crowley, 2001). I would add that Crowley’s explanation helps answer a crucial question Ken Hirschkop poses about the ambiguity of heteroglossia: Where is heteroglossia found, and is it a fact of everyday language or something that exists in a novel?

## Chapter 3: Concepts of Indigeneity and Indigenous Media

### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part reviews literature on Indigenous/indigeneity to unpack the ambivalence, ambiguities, and complexities associated with the terminology. The review will emphasize the different ways the word indigenous is deployed at the international level, represented through the United Nations, and at the African regional level, represented through the African Union. The significance of emphasizing how indigenous is elicited is to show how different regions' situatedness influences their response to indigeneity. The second part will focus on indigenous media and its applicability in various contexts and general indigenous journalism and hone in to discuss the contradictions around the term.

### 3.1 Understanding the “Indigenous” in Indigenous Media

The term indigenous has been associated with neologisms such as “First Peoples,” “native,” “aboriginal,” and “tribal” (Shohat & Stam, 2014; Anaya, 2009; Ginsburg, 2003; Bêteille, 1998). Indigenous/indigeneity is fundamentally a relational construct. A construct that invokes European imperialism expressed as colonialism. Erica Wortham (2013) states that “indígena” was designed to separate non-Europeans from Europeans—from a European perspective, of course, that has little to do with native people's own point of view” (p. 10). Similarly, Bêteille (1998, p. 188) argues that indigenous identity is derived from “a particular history of settlement and usurpation,” resulting in an administrative category for distinguishing between settler and indigenous populations. Indigeneity conjures “distinct cultures and communities” (Weaver, 2021, p. 1) and a dichotomy between foreign explorers/invasers or

settlers with their associated influences and original inhabitants of a place. As such, it draws on a particularized typology of relations realized through a power imbalance and inequality between the colonized and the colonizer, states and indigenous/tribal communities, cultural and geographical histories, and place and time. George J. Sefa Dei (2016) argues that a critical examination of indigenous must evoke “language, cultural memory and colonization” (p. 294). Consequently, scholars’ understanding of indigenous upends various objects and subjects of relations. Thus, the term indigenous is rife with tensions and contestations with separate but related frameworks of analysis. There are various analytical frameworks through which indigenous can be explained. Four of these concepts are the cultural, positivist, constructivist, and political/global frameworks.

The culturalist framework “emphasizes the cultural characteristics of indigenous communities” and “cultural difference relative to urban capitalist societies” (Morgan et al., 2009, p. 1470). The culturalist perspective focuses on characteristics that “distinct social and cultural groupings” identify with, which are different from those of the larger societies that have grown up around them” (Anaya, 2009, p. 13).<sup>20</sup> Culturalist understanding of indigenous romanticizes indigenous people as fixed in history and lacking any form of development or modern customs. As such, Morgan et al. (2009) argue that the culturalist perspective does not account for contemporaneity and the impact of colonization or globalization on such indigenous communities. Further, the culturalist framework emphasizes what Chris Andersen (2009) calls indigenous as different, which denies indigeneity of any constitutive power shaping the status of indigeneity or indigenous identity. Meaghan Williams and Robert Schertzer (2019) describe this

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<sup>20</sup> S. James Anaya, describes three frames of reference (which I have categorized as social identification, place-based frame of reference and legal/institutionalized frame of reference) by which indigenous can be explained. For discussion and details refer to Anaya 2009.

difference as “relations of difference with others and the colonial state” (p. 681). Designating indigenous people or communities as different keeps them in the essentialist discourse and does not account for “dynamic kinetic and unfolding (indigenous) voices” (Andersen, 2009, p. 90). Moreover, from the culturalist perspective, indigenous people are limited “to the conservation of ceremonial culture” and are denied “economic rights over land and resources in their ancestral areas” (Kadir, 2019, p. 376).

Positivist understanding of indigenous emphasizes cultural minorities’ ability to demonstrate or claim the status of First peoples’ territorial precedence prior to conquest and settler colonialism (Hodgson, 2009). Hillary N. Weaver (2021) argues that indigenous people refer to “the societies, tribes, or nations of people descended from original inhabitants of the land” (p. 2). Similarly, Ginsberg (2003) states that indigenous refers to “the original inhabitants of areas later colonized by settler states (Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Canada, and most of Latin America)” (p. 95) Ronal Niezen (2003) states that indigenous refers to “a primordial identity, to people with primary attachments to land and culture, “traditional” people with lasting connections to ways of life that have survived “from time immemorial.” (p. 3). Gilio-Whitaker and Bruce (2017) define indigenous as “distinct cultural and political societies colonized, for example, by European kingdoms, Chinese imperial dynasties, and Arabic Emirates from the 13th to the 20th centuries, and who were eventually declared minority populations within newly proclaimed political jurisdictions comprised of settler populations or controlled by a ruling nation” (p. 51). Thus, it is clear that the positivist framework conceptualizes indigenous as having “some basis in the territory inhabited by them in the past and the present” (Béteille, 1998, p. 190). The emphasis on physical space or traditional/ancestral territories/areas begs the question of what happens when the indigenous community or people move, whether voluntarily

or by force. Bétéille (1998) problematizes the label indigenous and their habitat/territorial association and asks: “How widely can people move and still retain the entitlement of being indigenous for themselves and their descendants? Positivists' understanding of indigenous communities' attachment to their land suggests that various forces can change indigenous communities' relationship to the land, which affects their cultures and destabilizes the application of the term indigenous. Weaver (2021) identifies about 3 of such forces that shape indigenous identity and culture, including the topology of the traditional territory like oceans, mountains, deserts, and plains; migration and adaptation induced by forced displacement or relocation, and settler disruptions, which resulted in the crossing of boundaries and national lines. For Dei (2016), “the indigenous should be perceived as mostly about place-based knowing, an understanding of traditional sacred relationships between peoples and their cultures and cosmologies” (pp. 294-5) as well as “knowledge located within a body even when that body travels out of the space/place/location” (p. 300). Dei's definition places materiality at the center of indigenous and argues that indigeneity is located in the body and that body's mobility is essential for explaining knowledge about indigenous and indigenous people's cultures. Therefore, the positivist framework shows that indigenous cultures and customs are a product of the people's relationship to their land and environment, and thus, these cultures and customs evolve as their bodies move and the geography and ecologies transform. Consequently, indigenous people are in the process of becoming through the mobility of the human body, transformation of the environment, inhabited land, and temporalities.

On the other hand, while the positivist definition is mechanistic and emphasizes place-based and territorial rights in order to claim indigeneity, the constructivist definition emphasizes common/shared experiences. The constructivist, also known as relational or structural definition

of indigenous, focuses on the experience of discrimination and repression by indigenous and tribal minorities. At the center of the constructivist framework of defining indigenous is the idea of common or shared experience and administering institutions/structures' process and practice of inclusion and exclusion. Anaya (2009) refers to the constructivist approach as a legal/institutionalized frame of reference where "a particular subset of humanity that represent a common set of experiences rooted in historical subjugation by colonialism, or something like colonialism" (p.13). Ryser et al. (2017) concur that "indigenous" is a category borne of statism or centralized control through the enforcement of universal laws within a bounded territory by virtue of exercising power through the state political apparatus. The constructivist definition of indigenous is when cultural minorities experience "a long history of political subjugation, economic marginalization, territorial dispossession and cultural and linguistic discrimination by colonial and postcolonial states (Hodgson, 2009, p. 8). Constructivist understanding of indigenous conjures other descriptors of subjugation, including discrimination, marginalization, vulnerability, and colonization as a characteristic (Weaver, 2021). Hodgson (2009) argues that indigenous communities' subjugation is a result of their distinct culture. The term always assumes the polarization of cultures, values, judgements, beliefs, etc., as well as their related strife and contentions. Sylvanus Barnabas (2018) criticizes the subjugation narrative as perpetually marking indigeneity as a victim. Indigeneity as victims of colonization or domination thesis continues to disempower indigenous peoples, leads to stigmatization, and entrenches and provides grounds for justifying marginalization and discrimination against indigenous peoples (Barnabas, 2018). However, an argument could be made that the subjugation effect also elicits other common/shared characteristics of decolonization, survival, resistance, and resilience. Consequently, Barnabas suggests that indigenous peoples should be articulated in positive terms.

Weaver (2021) comments on the duality of indigenous, stating that indigenous wellbeing is underscored by themes of duality and balance, non-linearity of time (interconnection between past, present, and the future), culture as continuous and ever-evolving, reclamation and transformation, and traditional instructions. So that to be indigenous does not refer to a collective, rather it refers to multiple people, heterogeneous and definitive categories (Weaver, 2021; Williams & Schertzer, 2019).

This leads us to unpacking the fourth frame of understanding indigenous referred to by many labels, including the global/international rights movements framework, indigenous rights framework, regional rights frameworks, or, as the African Commission calls it, the modern analytical understanding of indigenous (ACHPR, 2006). For simplicity and consistency, I will use the label modern analytical approach to describe the fourth perspective of understanding indigenous. Also, it should be emphasized that despite the distinction made between the constructivist frame and the modern analytical approach to understanding indigenous, the modern analytical approach is a cross-fertilization of the first three approaches. In fact, both the constructivist and modern analytical approach are closely related but differ in so far as the modern analytical approach is entrenched in promotion and protection of universal human rights with emphasis on self-determination and intellectual property while constructivists emphasize solidarity based on identification with common experiences of indigenous or tribal communities as a result of institutionalized/structural processes and practices of administration/control.

The modern analytical approach wraps indigeneity in international legal systems and global movements. This perspective locates indigenous peoples at the intersection of statehood, human rights principles or laws, international and transnational movements/institutions, and global imperatives. According to Ryser et al. (2017), the term indigenous has become “a political

term of art adopted by the United Nations, International Labor Organization, states' governments and many Fourth World nations to designate the peoples colonized and re-colonized by newly formed states" (p. 51). Scholars like Ronald Niezen (2003), Williams & Schertzer (2019), and M. Ya'kub Aiyub Kadir (2019) state emphatically that the elites in society invoke indigenous identity through social and political movements. It is propelled through international movements that "aspire to promote and protect the rights of the world's first peoples" (Niezen, 2003, p. 4; Ndahinda, 2011), and in the case of the UN, it is an organization of state elites who seek to promote and protect their nations. Or as Williams & Schertzer (2019) argue, indigeneity "stems from social and political movements of indigenism, in which specific groups of people assert their political identities as the original inhabitants of particular tracts of land" (p. 681).

International legal entities like the African Commission, United Nations, World Bank, and International Labour Organization have approached the term indigenous differently.

Nonetheless, these international institutions have self-identification as the common subjective criterion for determining indigenous status. For instance, the ILO in Article 1, Section 2 of its Convention 169 states that "Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply." Article 33 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live" (UN, 2007). The international instruments also identify other objective criteria, as noted in the ILO's definition of indigenous people:

peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to

which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonisation or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions (ILO, 1989).

The United Nations does not categorically state any criteria for defining indigenous people. However, its emphasis on the recognition and affirmation of indigenous peoples' rights to equality, freedom, and self-determination, constituting "the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples of the world" (Article 43), sheds light on the UN's perception of the status of Indigenous people. In paragraph 6 of the preamble to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it states that the General Assembly is

Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests (UN, 2007),

Like the UN, the African Commission refrains from defining indigenous. Instead, it outlines certain criteria by which one can be identified as indigenous in Africa. These characteristics include cultural differences, marginalization and discrimination, and self-identification. Cultural difference refers to cultures considerably different from the dominant society, and that culture is under threat or at the point of extinction. Marginalization and discrimination refer to the structural subordination position certain ethnic groups hold in relation to dominant groups, while self-identification is defined as "self-definition as indigenous and distinctly different from other groups within a state" (ACHPR & IWGIA, 2005, p. 93). As the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2005) argues, the term indigenous is a term of democratization to help analyze and describe the situation of subordinated groups as well as help protect their "fundamental collective human rights" (p. 102).

The modern analytical approach, while recognizing historical subjugation, discrimination, and repression as consequences or markings of institutionalized powers enshrined in legality, its universal rights solution to address both the condition of groups' experience of historical injustice follows the same strategy of legality. If history has taught us anything, laws are tools of empowerment and subjugation, inclusion and exclusion, access and denial, punitive and compensatory. At different historical junctures, indigenous status has either been undermined or upheld by constitutional frameworks. Therefore, it stands to reason that legal imperatives and their institutions are ensnared in an inventive loop of incrimination, promotion, and protection of rights. What this approach does not address is the degree of interanimation between indigenous groups and dominant societies in attaining their self-determination interests.

The four frames for understanding have moved from the anthropological emphasis on cultural distinction and territorial aboriginality to a social constructivist and political understanding. Taken together, these four frames indicate that indigenous has taken on the status of an analytical and legal category and an expression of identity (ACHPR, 2006; Niezen, 2003; Weaver, 2021). As an analytical term, indigenous describes the condition and situation of marginalized groups (ACHPR, 2006). As a legal term, it recognizes the indigenous conditions and mobilizes international movements and institutions to promote and protect the rights of marginalized, repressed, and discriminated peoples based on their distinct cultures, politics, economics, and geographical realities. Lastly, indigenous identity is defined through self-identification, communal identification, or confirmation of that identity- external identification (Meaghan & Schertzer, 2019; ACHPR; Weaver, 2001; Niezen, 2003). Indigenous is a distinct socio-historical condition of historical subjects as it relates to dominant and non-dominant

groups. The status of indigenous peoples and their definition are not static. Instead, it has evolved and continues to evolve based on the dominant value and ideological imperatives of historical epochs. Contemporaneity and the currency of individual/people/group's conditions and world powers' ambition of appropriateness continue to shape labels. This socio-historical condition of historical subjects has influenced the application of indigenous/indigeneity to postcolonial regions like Africa and Asia. In the spirit of the term indigenous, it is clear that the term's contemporary usage applies to peoples or groups that experience a combination of these characteristics, including Africans.

### 3.2 Indigenusness in Africa: The Case of Ghana

The curtain cannot be drawn on the term indigenous without considering its applicability and appropriateness in Africa. Africans as indigenous is a contentious one. The term indigenous has been highly contested in certain postcolonial regions like Africa and Asia. This contestation is grounded in this paradoxical assertion: All Africans are indigenous; Africans and Asians are not indigenous (Hodgson, 2009; ACHPR & IWGIA, 2005). The argument has been that the entire population in these two regions must be considered indigenous because these people were already present at the time of colonization, and most of them experienced colonialism (Gocke, 2013; Hodgson, 2009; Barnabas, 2018). In this sense, all Africans and Asians are indigenous, and for that reason, the term indigenous cannot be applied to Africans and Asians. Territorially, Africans and Asians are the first peoples and aboriginals. Hence, the application of indigenous to peoples in Africa and Asia is redundant. Some African states have hostility and disdain towards the concept of indigenusness; meanwhile, denying indigenous status for Africans and Asians suggests the refutation and resistance of certain nonindigenous persons to accept that Africans can be described as indigenous (Hodgson, 2009). This is because most governments consider

indigeneity in the African context as divisive, exclusive, and conceptual (or semantic) confusion<sup>21</sup> (Ndahinda, 2011). Another tension in using indigenous for Africans comes from the difference between settler colonial and post-independent states. Moreover, despite its glorification in modern discourse, indigenous in the African context in relation to European colonization was derogatory. Historically, indigenous was a term of difference and the “other.” Indigenous was used as an institutionalized distinction between “civilized, settlers, colonizers of European descent” and “the original, ‘backward’, ‘primitive,’ ‘native’ “inhabitants of colonies (Ndahinda, 2011, p. 7; Werner, 2023, p. 382). The end of colonialism meant that indigeneity as a term of difference during colonialism was nonexistent and, therefore, not applicable in postcolonial and independent African states. However, despite this reality of the end of colonialism, the effects of colonialism in postcolonial states render indigenous as a recursive logic (Yarrow, 2008), upholding it as an oppositional phenomenon.

Further, because of the multicultural (heterogenous ethnicities, cultures, and religions) reality of most states in the African region, who should be considered indigenous is difficult to determine. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights states emphatically that “any African can legitimately consider him/herself as an indigene to the continent” (ACHPR, 2010, p. 31). The ACHPR acknowledges the wide variety of ethnic groups in African states and that these ethnic groups are indigenous<sup>22</sup> with either dominant or subordinate status. Additionally, the commission points out that there has been internal repression of marginalized groups by dominant groups since independence. For example, according to a 2008 publication by Minority Rights Group International titled *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous*

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<sup>21</sup> For instance, what is the difference between minority or tribal and indigenous?

<sup>22</sup> Here, reference to ethnic groups being indigenous emphasizes aboriginality and that they occupied their lands before the arrival of European colonialists.

*Peoples - Ghana: Konkomba*, the Konkomba of Northern Ghana are a marginalized group because of their limited political power<sup>23</sup> and land rights. Historically, although indigenous to north-east Ghana, they were subjugated by three ethnic groups (Dagomba, Gonja, and Nanumba). As such, the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities explains that neither aboriginality nor who came first nor colonization and domination are necessary criteria for determining indigeneity in Africa. The changing criteria resulted from African countries' independence(s), where there was an end to colonialism and the transfer of territorial sovereignty from colonial settlers to Africans (Ndahinda, 2011). So, the criteria for indigenesness can no longer be grounded in (pre)colonial schemes or schemas from the situatedness of other continents, but rather postcolonial and post-independence schemas. Ndahinda (2011) opines that a distinction between sources of marginality and the genesis of African indigenous claimants' assertion for "special protection as indigenous peoples" should be the criteria for assessing the nature of African indigenous peoples' claims (p. 57). Consequently, scholars like Ndahinda (2011), Ronald Niezen (2003), Williams & Schertzer (2019) and M. Ya'kub Aiyub Kadir (2019) assert that the genesis of indigenous claims is an artificial construction because indigenous claims started at the international level before being transposed to the domestic level; hence, the claim that African indigenesness is grounded in international or global activism. It is not surprising that the African Commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities argues that the term indigenous when applied to groups in Africa is used as a modern analytical term- that is the period of global/international

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<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that chieftaincy (a traditional political institution) provides ethnic groups access to land rights and political power. Ethnic groups outside of chieftaincy are dispossessed of lands and lack political representation.

indigenous movement/activism. As already indicated, the commission in characterizing

Indigenous peoples emphasizes self-identification as well as

- b) A special attachment to and use of their traditional land whereby their ancestral land and territory have a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples;
- c) A state of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession, exclusion, or discrimination because these peoples have different cultures, ways of life or mode of production than the national hegemonic and dominant model (ACHPR & IWGIA, 2010).

ACHPR emphasizes ethnic groups who are in a “structurally subordinate position to the dominating groups and the State, leading to marginalisation and discrimination” (ACHPR & IWGIA, 2005, p. 101). Consequently, situational characteristics of African claimants of indigenesness like marginality, dispossession, and victimization by dominant or elite groups mirror and are common denominators of other indigenous groups outside of the African continent (Ndahinda, 2011).

ACHPR and IWGIA, in their 2006 report, identify 25 African countries with a total of about 61 groups who identify as indigenous peoples.<sup>24</sup> Kenya has the highest number of groups (14) that identify as indigenous. Chad and Eritrea are not listed in this 2016 report, even though these countries are listed as countries on the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) website; meanwhile, on the IWGIA’s website, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Zambia are not listed as countries with indigenous groups. The claimants of indigenesness in Africa constitute three socio-economic categories, including hunter-gatherers, pastoralists (herders), and agriculturalists. What is common to these indigenous identifying socio-economic groups is their eviction from their land and denial of natural resources, which are vital for their survival.

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<sup>24</sup> The countries include Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Congo(DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tunisia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

While Ghana is a signatory to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights "Resolution on the Rights of Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa," the country has no known documented peoples or communities identifying as indigenous peoples. Ghana is not listed in either the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights or the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) list of African countries with indigenous groups or communities. Nonetheless, indigenous as a modern analytical term is invoked in various discourses like ethno-geography, knowledge systems, language/culture, media, politics and sustainable development, and economic opportunities to guarantee equal rights and freedoms. In fact, my readings across various fields of study and discourses show that Ghanaian scholars and activists use the term indigenous as a marker of ethnic/ancestral connection to a geographical location, practices, lifeworld, and philosophies.

However, the deployment of indigenous is a marker of difference, position, and density encompassing various identities, socioeconomic and national geopolitical relations, as well as ideological expressions. It is also evident that indigenous as a legal and human rights phenomenon inadvertently signifies, in addition to difference, a phenomenon of opposition and sometimes conflict; not necessarily in a negative way, but constitutively recursive. Focusing on indigenous as a phenomenon of difference, opposition and conflict, a distinction is drawn between "western" (foreign) and "indigenous" (local or traditional) (Yarrow, 2008). Anything indigenous is local, native, and traditional (like customary laws, institutions, and production) to Ghanaian communities, society, and ethnic groups; whereas Western implies anything non-traditional, foreign, or modern to Ghanaian ethnic groups. Indigenous becomes a phenomenon of resignification, reidentification, synchronization, and a return to customary practices, lifeworlds,

institutions, and philosophies. While this term of difference suggests a Manichean divide, this duality of 'indigenous' and 'western' is not situationally simplistic. Yarrow (2008) describes the distinction between 'indigenous' and 'western' as a recursive logic as internal and relational. Internally, this distinction is the embodied assertion of dual identities by individuals and the individual's imagination of being mediators (between indigenous and Western). Relationally, people elicit indigenous and/or Western in contrast to each other. This is where opposition becomes evident when either identity can contextually be deployed as a resource. Consequently, the awareness of difference engenders a position of density where Ghanaians (individuals, institutions, or organizations), looking through two lenses, choose how to deploy and engage with indigeneity in prioritizing, promoting, and defending their rights to survival. So, indigenous identity claims in Africa are legitimized through international/global legal institutions and codes. So far, those who have claimed indigenous status based on the principle of self-identification emphasize cultural differences from the dominant society, the threat of cultural extinction, survival of their way of life by gaining access to traditional lands and natural resources, discrimination, geographical isolation, socio-political marginalization, subjugation, and exploitation (ACHPR & IWGIA, 2006).

The above examination of indigenous or indigeneity paves the way to holistically, if not exhaustively, explicate indigenous media. If, according to Dei (2016), investigating what is indigenous requires that we evoke language, cultural memory, and colonization, then a critical examination of indigenous media requires invoking more than language, cultural memory, and colonization. In fact, it requires the conflation of a multitude of discursive, theoretical, analytical, temporal, administrative, scholarly, legal, communicative, and technological imperatives. Indigenous media systems are a culmination of language, media technologies, cultural

conservation, identity articulation and marking, emancipation and resistance, markets, legislation, nationhood/statehood, citizenship, trans/ international and global discourses. Moreover, the term media in media studies covers communication channels, technology, formats, genres, and products (Spitulnik, 2000). Furthermore, according to Dan Lauhey (2007), media can be understood in seven senses. Media are perceived as “historical (the wonder associated with every new media’s essence as supernatural and spiritual), technical (means of communication), capitalist (media as profitable/means of making money), social, cultural, political” (how media is perceived), and psychological (effects of media) (p. 3). All these discourses shape media production, circulation, distribution, and consumption.

Furthermore, indigenous media is tied to social justice, territorial claims, ideological imperatives, culture, global media governmentality, identity, and media systems. The formation and framing of indigenous media extend beyond local imperatives. The formation and framing of indigenous media articulate the complex degrees of specific socio-geographical memories of identity representation when interoperating with global discourses of representation.

Consequently, it is prudent to begin a discussion on indigenous media by attending to the naming/labeling strategies for this media system. This is important to unpack because name designation is inherently political, and the matter of indigenous media sustains this political trait.

### 3.3 What is indigenous media?

Indigenous media is both a subset of and one of the names and iterations of ethnic media. Ethnic media or Ethnic minority media is the broad overarching term for alternative media produced by, for or about a particular ethnic community/group (Matsaganis et al., 2012; Cottle, 2002; González,& Torres, 2011), “often with the goal of offering alternative media representations, identity positions and participation practices” (Pietiäinen, 2008, p. 174).

Matsaganis, Katz, and Ball-Rokeach (2012) state that ethnic media “are produced by and for (a) immigrants, (b) racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities as well as (c) indigenous populations living across different countries” (p. 10). The film studies scholar Hamid Naficy (2001) describes this media type as accented cinema, which includes exilic, diasporic, postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers. The term accented cinema describes cinema that is distinct, non-standardized, and political, both at the “film’s origination and reception,” making this type of cinema critical of dominant film practices (p. 45).

Label preference is often related to a country's recognition and understanding of differences between people based on their ethnic or racial background (Matsaganis et al., 2012). In different jurisdictions and political systems, a range of names and iterations exist for ethnic media, including minority media, immigrant media, community media, local media, locative media, diasporic media, and indigenous media. For example, in America, “a separate, segregated wing of America’s opposition press” is referred to as “minority” or “ethnic” media (González, & Torres, 2011, p. 12). Specifically, in Africa, the label for ethnic media is indigenous language media or local language media. The emphasis on language is a testament to colonial language policy and the adoption of colonial languages for official communication and broadcasting, which disproportionately affected native/local/indigenous language use in media and broadcasting. After all, at the center of indigenous language media in Africa is language. First, this foregrounding of language is because most media systems in Africa are the result of a colonial legacy, which predominantly uses colonial languages like French and English. Second, multilingualism has been seen as antithetical to media systems, and for that reason, imperial languages like English and French, regarded as neutral, are the linguistic choice of media systems in Africa, even though most of the indigenes do not have access to these languages

(Blankson, 2005). Consequently, the media in Africa have been exclusionary systems, sidelining indigenes who do not have access to the colonial languages.

Additionally, what distinguishes the different iterations of ethnic media apart from geography, context, and indigenous/ethnic/racial-state relations are issues about producers, funders, size, location, language choice, target audience, distribution method, and content. Matsaganis et al. (2012) opine that these eight listed dimensions can constitute a wide variety of categories, and they can combine to create many other types of ethnic media. For example, when Abiodun Salawu (2016) discusses the four phases of indigenous or local language press in Africa before independence, he highlights interrelated dimensions like producers, target audience, language, distribution method, etc. These dimensions impact the media types: missionary press (expression of nationalism and anti-colonial struggle), independent press (a press that was free from the missionaries and colonialists), commercial press (seeking to exploit the black market for consumer goods) and progressive press (the expression of community struggle in the wider struggle for democracy, connected to popular political movements). Ethnic media, as an overarching imperative subsuming indigenous (language) media, maintains common attributes in relation to identity articulation or solidarity, function, production, distribution, audience, and mandate. For example, generally, all the iterations of ethnic media share similar functions and roles like media as mobilizing forces, indicators of social change, and competitive forces, and their multiple dimensions like producers, audience, content, funding, size, location, language, distribution, etc.

For this reason, indigenous media has taken on socio-geopolitical understanding and has been variously described and defined. Mostly, these definitions attend to indigenous people's right to fair representation, and the desire to challenge and resist conventional and stereotypical

ways mainstream media has dealt with their expressions. A common denominator in the various definitions of indigenous media is indigenous/ethnic people's use of media technological innovations to produce, circulate, and store media content related to indigenous or ethnic expressions. For example, cultural studies and film scholars Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (2008) define indigenous media as "the use of audio-visual technology (camcorders, VCRs) for the cultural and political purposes of indigenous peoples" (p. 34). Emphasis is placed on the adoption, adaptation, and instrumentalization of media technologies and processes towards achieving indigenous people's cultural needs and establishing transnational connections. Niezen (2003) expressed this media instrumentalization as follows: "Indigenous organizations defending local attachments to land and simple subsistence technologies make use of electronic media and technologies of communication and transportation to establish and maintain international connections" (p. 10). Niezen's comment emphasizes how indigenous organizations actively deploy technology to connect with others at the international level, leveraging these technologies for advocacy and sharing their experiences with the rest of the world.

The definition of indigenous media has also centered on the subjects responsible for setting up and creating content. Wilson and Stewart (2008) look at the production process of indigenous media and define indigenous media as "forms of media expression conceptualized, produced/or created by indigenous peoples across the globe" (p. 2). For Sari Pietikäinen (2008), indigenous media "signals the particular quality of an ethnic group (indigenous) and the language (endangered) and often, the sociopolitical conditions within which both the community and their media are embedded" (p.175). Pietikäinen (2008) asserts that the conditions within which indigenous people or particular ethnic groups exist usually constitute "language endangerment, (re)negotiations of identity politics and legal dispute of various rights" (p. 175).

Other scholars have also described indigenous media as a system of relations. Writing about indigenous video making in Mexico, Wortham (2013) describes indigenous media as “a study of relations between indigenous peoples and the state” (p. 2). Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal (2017) insists that it is impossible to disassociate indigenous media from the contradictions of colonial and state power. This is the situation for indigenous language media systems in Africa, where colonial legacy, state power, and culture are intertwined. Wortham states that the condition of indigenous media is reflective of indigenous identity. As such, to understand indigenous media, they must be situated within an institutional context, indigenous autonomy movement, and specific regional and local expressions of indigenous autonomy (Wortham, 2013). Salazar and Cordova (2008) argue that indigenous media “constitute a system of relations and networking aimed at reaffirming communal social solidarities, where local conjunctures are increasingly strengthened and linked through transnational strategies and cross-cultural collaborations across national borders” (p. 55). Taken together, these definitions highlight critical aspects and conditions of indigenous media which can be described in whole and in part as political- whether media is a means of identity expression or confirmation, a site for counternarratives and negotiations, dominance and resistance, accusation and refutation, struggle for legitimacy and survival, social and cultural affirmation, democratization, etc. Consequently, indigenous media is a site, a product, and a practice.

In the words of Faye Ginsberg (1991), indigenous media is both a cultural process and a product. It can initiate a reproduction and transformation of cultural identities “among people who have experienced massive political, geographic, and economic disruption” (p. 94). Deploying the capabilities of media like media’s ability to “transcend boundaries of time, space” and to an extent language, indigenous people can mediate “historically produced social ruptures

and help construct identities that link the past and present in ways appropriate to contemporary conditions” (p. 94).

According to Wortham (2004 and 2013) and Villarreal (2017), indigenous media is inherently contentious and political. The political nature of indigenous media consists of two distinct but overlapping characteristics that embody, constitute, and sustain the multidimensionality of indigenous media. The first characteristic of indigenous media is that it is a position, and the second is that it is a public sphere. These two characteristics overlap and are interrelated. First, indigenous media as a position is concisely captured by Wortham, who describes indigenous media as a postura- “a political position vital to indigenous struggles for self-determination and self-representation” (2013; 2004, p.365). As a position, it “facilitates and reinforces people’s sense of belonging to their ethnic communities (Pietikäinen, 2008). Indigenous media, as a position, not only sustains indigenous/ethnic identity but also reinscribes boundaries. As Wortham (2013) stated about video indigena, it is an “oppositional category that ties a term of resistance to a technology that can represent it” (p. 11). Indigenous language media, in their early development, were used to agitate for independence, establish democracy (Salawu, 2016), and censure and express dissent. Indigenous media takes on indigenous identity and shows indigenous media’s potential for social change and “an entangled social process situated at the complex juncture of state-indigenous relations” (Wortham, 2004, p. 364; 2013). Thus, indigenous media is a form of self-determination and basic human rights denied indigenous people for a long time (Wortham, 2013). Indigenous media takes on an alternative position to what is dominant or conventional.

Authorship defines and is embedded in indigenous media (Wilson & Stewart, 2008). Just as indigenous media is political, indigenous media makers are also considered political subjects

and observers (Villarreal, 2017) who may or may not be indigenous or have an indigenous identity. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the history of indigenous language media in Africa and specifically Ghana, shows that colonists used indigenous media as a propaganda tool while the indigenes used it as tools of agitation, democracy, development, cultural preservation, and education. As political subjects and observers, Moraca and Nuntiis (2022) in their research found that indigenous authors found coverage of indigenous issues in mainstream media as often prejudiced and biased, factually inaccurate and misinterpretation of indigenous culture events both in its product and its process” (p. 3). As such, indigenous authors are engaged in “cultural struggles over symbols and identities” and other forms of social and political practices re-writing the narrative of indigenous people by contesting existing narratives, leading the chart on self-representation and ensuring accountability (Villarreal, 2017, p. 42). They are seen as agents of social transformation and cultural activists. Wortham (2013) notes that indigenous authors “‘imagine’ they are replacing dominant narratives that have long oppressed them with narratives of their own. In other words, they make visible narratives and realities that have long and systematically been made invisible by dominant societies” (p. 6). Authors of indigenous narratives understand the power of storytelling and the significance of representation. They, therefore, engage in reshaping historically marginalized stories and perspectives.

Thus, it is not surprising that many scholars describe indigenous media as an alternative and a response to mainstream media. Spitulnik (1999) describes alternative media as antithetical to mainstream media, while Shaw and Stammers (2005) describe alternative media as activist media- that is, media produced by activists. On the other hand, mainstream media are “those media that are produced by and are produced for the mainstream of society; however, that is defined in a specific country and at a particular point in time” (Matsaganis et al., 2012, p. 11). In

terms of ownership, “Mainstream media comprise the mass media of television, radio and the press that are corporately owned, controlled or governed (including by public corporations such as the BBC)” (Jong, Martin & Stammers, 2003, p. 6). For Cottle (2000), the mainstream media “is differentiated by medium, outlet, genre and subject interests often producing shocking examples of xenophobic reporting and racist portrayal, while often publicly committing to the ideals and practices of an inclusive multi-ethnic, multicultural society” (p. 3). The operations of mainstream media are influenced by institutional inertia, countervailing tendencies, as well as “ideas of multiculturalism and the representations of white backlash culture” (Cottle, pp. 3-4). Indigenous media, as an oppositional category, exists to challenge and change dominant and prevailing perceptions imposed by mainstream media and journalists (Hanusch, 2013). Henrichen (2022) states that indigenous journalists use culturally sensitive reporting to counter tropes and stereotypes in the mainstream media. Also, indigenous media cover issues that mainstream media ignores (Henrichen, 2022).

When describing indigenous journalism, Moraca and Nuntiis (2022) insist that indigenous journalism seeks to create its own “mediatic cultural framework” and exists as a response to Western journalism to counter tropes and stereotypical representations of marginalized and excluded indigenous communities. Hanusch (2013) explains indigenous journalism as “the production and dissemination of information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance, by indigenous peoples for the benefit of indigenous but also non-indigenous communities” (p. 83). The history of ethnic media shows that it serves “as community media that engage in “geo-ethnic storytelling” - that is storytelling to provide “culturally relevant and locally vital information to immigrant in the host society” (Yu & Matsaganis, 2019, p. 2). Indigenous journalism has many dimensions, like functioning as a

source of empowerment, language revitalization, and a watchdog, providing counter-narratives, strengthening indigenous voices in the public sphere, and creating mediatic culturally appropriate frameworks (Hansch, 2013; Henrichsen, 2022; Moraca & Nunttiis, 2022). Ethnic media engages in agenda-setting, but unlike mainstream media, “ethnic media’s agenda-setting role features a 'strong participatory or dialogical element” (Wang Q. & Katz, V., 2019, p. 24). As such, indigenous media takes on multiple positions to counter, oppose, refute, and resist long-standing dominant media narratives and representations of ethnic/indigenous communities, but continuously and simultaneously reconstitutes media and media frames of indigeness dialogically. This binary position constructs and structures indigenous media to articulate media representation in indigenous terms. The importance of this alternative “postura” is that indigenous people can set their own terms and discourse surrounding their representation and identity.

Another characteristic of indigenous media is that it is a type of (alternative) public sphere (Murillo, 2008; Henrich, 2022). This type of public sphere is about the place and location where discourses of indigeneity or indigenization occur and resources are disseminated and documented. For Herman and Chomsky (2002), the public sphere refers to “the array of places and forums in which matters important to a democratic community are debated and information relevant to intelligent citizen participation is provided” (p. xviii). For Schudson (2003), the public sphere is both a social space and a set of norms that encourages private persons to discuss public issues without the sponsorship of or surveillance by the government. Thus, media as an institution of the public sphere is further entrenched in indigenous media as an alternative media form and practice. Indigenous media are sites of indigenous information, empowerment, articulation, and reconnection. Villarreal (2017) contends that indigeness does not mark the

value of indigenous communication; instead, the value of indigenous communication is its “becoming a space for expressing voices and creating narratives that have not been granted access previously” (p. 65). Murillo (2008), in discussing indigenous media in Colombia, argues that it functions as “an expression of democratic discourse,” has the capacity to operate independently in a difficult economic and political environment, and serves as an alternative to broader commercial media (p. 157). As I will show later on in this dissertation in the section on Akan Newsroom production practices, indigenous media broadcasting deploys editorial crusade (through a method I call editorial live broadcast) in their news broadcast as a site for both advocacy and private citizens’ discussion of public issues. Indigenous media, like any other ethnic media, are regarded as spaces where ethnic communities construct and reimagine their identities and boundaries (Pietikäinen, 2008). For example, in my interviews with media practitioners in Akan indigenous language media in Ghana, they articulate certain phenomena and practices that differentiate Akan indigenous language media from English language media. Such phenomena include Akan news delivery as news-telling, not news reading, as is the case with conventional news presentation in English-speaking broadcasting. Or the invocation of certain cultural signs and symbols in the production of news and other programming. Thus, indigenous media invokes ideas about media as an organizing tool, a space for deliberation and discussion, and a vehicle for denunciation and resistance (Murillo, 2008). An important arena of indigenous media serving as an organizing tool for indigenous information creation and dissemination, deliberation, participation, and mediation between indigenouness and non-indigenouness is journalism and the product of news.

Indigenous media as a position and public sphere reconstitute media practice. According to Wortham (2013), indigenous people and communities are “protagonists in their own stories”

(p. 4), repairing a rift between culture and politics. It is a form of self-representation and self-determination. Indigenous media are important for self-expression and alternative representation (Pietikäinen, 2008). As Williams and Schertzer (2019) explain, indigenous self-determination presupposes two important elements, including self-government and relations with other existing state institutions and peoples both within and outside of indigenous territory. As such, indigenous media become spaces for (re)connecting indigenous communities as well as indigenous communities with non-indigenous communities. Also, indigenous media become important “symbols of empowerment and means for political mobilization of ethnic communities, mediating their public participation or helping in the reinterpretation of the notion and practices of citizenship” (Pietikäinen, 2008, p. 177). Williams and Schertzer (2019) present three main ways of indigenous political representation, including recognition, protection, and decolonization. These principles that underpin indigenous representation are important for understanding indigenous/ethnic media representation. First, the principle of recognition decenters the state and colonial powers as the main agents of recognition which creates power imbalances. Second, the principle of protection identifies indigenous people as agents of their own protection against state encroachment while securing the right to self-determination and choosing how they interact with the state or settlers. Third, the principle of decolonization reinscribes both the principles of recognition and protection to “oppose existing state infrastructure... and push for principles that challenge the colonial narrative and respect the autonomy of indigenous people” (Williams & Schertzer, 2019, p. 682). Applying these representational lenses to the practice of indigenous media, indigenous media practitioners in any capacity are agents in and subjects of their own representational practice able to defend their positionality as custodians of the historical continuity of communication about their community.

Despite the social justice, advocacy, self-determination, cultural domination resistance, social transformation, and reformative orientation of indigenous media, criticisms have been raised against indigenous media as oxymoronic and existing in a spectrum of contradictions (Pietikäinen, 2008). For example, Shohat and Stam (2014) state that indigenous media “evokes both the self-understanding of aboriginal groups and the vast institutional structures of TV and cinema” (p. 35). On the one hand, indigenous media discourse is a discourse of empowerment but on the other hand, the phenomenon can be slippery in drawing boundaries between indigenous and non-indigenous. In other circumstances, indigenous media does not escape the pressures of both market and state influences; nonetheless, these influences do not diminish the role of indigenous media as a type of public sphere and as a tool for broader resistance (Murillo, 2008, p. 159). Indigenous media refrains from the victimhood thesis of indigeneity. Indigenous media turns issues of victimhood through colonization and subjugation, discrimination, and marginalization over its head.

### 3.4 Conclusion

Unpacking the concept of indigeneity and indigenous media creates the opportunity to properly situate these phenomena in their historical development and continuity while, at the same time, opening up the discourse on avenues of access for subordinated and marginalized representations. What this overview does is present the various ways scholars conceptualize indigenous media and its practice across different media and communication dimensions to understand indigenous media’s network and relations in its socio-cultural and geographical contexts. Showing that indigenous media is multi-faceted prompts a closer examination of the factors that motivate the differences and similarities of indigenous media across different political, religious, cultural, and economic settings. In relation to the focus of this dissertation on

the production practices of the Akan indigenous language media in Ghana, it becomes immediately obvious that the dimensions of indigenous media are operationalized differently in different political jurisdictions. What is particularly obvious is that scholars position indigenous media as political, marginalized, and in the periphery, where the interrelated engagement between governments and indigenous social movements or advocates determines the gains and direction of indigenous or minority groups' media use and operationalization. Evidently, the general attitude of indigenes as a legal category has been transposed into indigenous media systems in Western and European contexts. But as I will show in this dissertation, indigenous language media are characterized differently in Ghana, where indigenes is a matter of cultural and national independence with strong local participation. Indigenous language media are therefore interrelated and marked as religious, cultural, and dominant/mainstream.

## Chapter 4: Historicization: Developmental Stages and Regulation of Indigenous Language Media in Ghana

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a historical overview of the development of Ghana's indigenous language media (ILM). This chapter will focus on the political context that shaped Ghana's local language media broadcasting. The first section will investigate the colonial and subsequent Ghanaian government's philosophies that established local language broadcasting, programming, and general administration. Discussing the phases of local language broadcasting in Ghana concretizes the resonance between media history and contemporary media dynamics. The chronological account of local language broadcasting introduction and development unravels current media organizations' practices regarding recruitment and programming while helping understand professional practices peculiar to local language broadcasting. Understanding local language broadcasting development creates the foundation for evaluating regulatory frameworks guiding the operation of broadcasting media.

Following the ILM's development will be an account of media regulatory frameworks governing media institutions in Ghana, mainly through two key regulatory institutions: the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA). By examining these regulatory bodies and their historical and political contexts, we can better appreciate their functions, operations, and influence on the media landscape in Ghana. Additionally, we can examine the interplay between these regulatory structures, media practitioners, and indigenous language media to understand how their relationship fosters media accountability and cultural preservation.

#### 4.1 Indigenous Language Broadcasting Development in Ghana

The first broadcasting in Ghana began on July 31, 1935, and is situated in British colonialism. Sir Arnold Wienholt Hodson started radio in the Gold Coast (now Ghana). The name of the first station was Station Zoy. It began as a relay service for the Empire Service<sup>25</sup> (Ansah, 1985.). Station Zoy, a colonial empire relay station, relayed news and selected programs from the BBC to the Gold Coast. Radio broadcasting was confined to Accra, the capital, and transmitted to about 300 subscribers. It was in 1939 that programs were carried out to other parts of the Gold Coast and West African territories. Later in 1938, the opening up of wired broadcasting stations to other populated and provincial headquarters towns enabled the spread of broadcasting to different parts of the Gold Coast.

The purpose of introducing radio was to help maintain political and cultural ties between colonial authorities and Europeans in the Gold Coast and the British Metropolis, support “the empire building (com)mission by transplanting occidental ideologies and urgent propaganda” and for cultural and political indoctrination of the indigenous population (Ansah, 1985; Tietaa, et al., 2019, p. 221). According to Ansah (1985), radio was also used to serve the “information, cultural and entertainment needs of the political and educated elites who consisted of European settlers, colonial administrators and a small group of educated Africans” (p. 2). This function is implied in the quotation below:

One of the main reasons for introducing the Relay service is to bring news, entertainment and music into homes of all and sundry. This will bring to an end the barriers of isolation and ignorance in the path of progress; and National and World events will from now on be close to most isolated households; also to enable the people of the Gold Coast to improve on their very rich cultural music (voice of Sir Arnold Hodson on July 31, 1935, at 17:45 GMT)

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<sup>25</sup>The BBC's Empire Service was formed in 1932 and has gone through name changes from Overseas Service in 1938 to what is now known as the BBC World service (Smith, 2018)

Additionally, the colonial government sought to use radio as a means of civilization and education. Ansah reports that the broadcast was transmitted to schools each day for about half an hour. Programming expected to be educational included “general news items of World or Empire significance,” “local news items of interest to the teacher or value to the teaching of good citizenship in the schools,” and information about government policy and activities (p. 3). Programming in the early years of broadcasting was a repeat of BBC programs with some inclusion of music and local news in a few of the local languages. The main programs were news from the BBC, happenings around the Commonwealth, European music, and entertainment. At this stage, broadcasting as a relay service meant that programming was British-oriented, in English, and there was no permanent program staff except for the local engineers and technicians. Ansah indicates that recruitment of African personnel was limited to “junior technical personnel who doubled as newscasters for local news and announcements” (p. 15). Most program recruitments were temporarily seconded from other departments to work at Station Zoy.

In 1937, local languages was introduced to radio broadcasts and is the reference point for understanding media indigenization in Ghana and the genesis of indigenous language media. Radio indigenization was not organic. Instead, it is linked to the colonial propaganda agenda of executing empire ideologies and countering any resistance threatening the colonial administration. The colonial administration controlled radio, which the Department of Information administered. The process of broadcast indigenization was intensified during the Second World War. Before the war, part-time staff were appointed to translate and announce the news in the local languages and broadcast the local edition of the news in English (Part-time news readers in English). Part-time workers were appointed to broadcast the news in four

Ghanaian languages: Twi, Fanti, Ga, and Ewe. Only 8 to 10 minutes were allocated to local news bulletins, while each of the four Ghanaian language news bulletins was allocated less than five minutes (Gadzekpo, 1972<sup>26</sup>). Each Ghanaian language news content concentrated on issues related to the language area and then issues of general interest to the whole country. News translation into the local languages was extemporaneous. Bernard Senedzi Gadzekpo, in his unpublished memoir, reports that during the colonial days, local news was sourced by District Commissioners who sent news items to Accra.

However, the start of the Second World War brought significant changes and improvements to broadcasting in Ghana. Radio became an important propaganda tool in the war efforts. As Ernest Asamoah (1985) argues, broadcasting was used to mobilize British West Africans behind the war effort to disseminate information about the war and the fate of Gold Coast soldiers at the war front<sup>27</sup>. It was also used to inculcate parts of British culture and ideas as well as to counter objectionable ideas among the indigenous population. As such, local language became very important in information dissemination and colonial administration. The significance of this period is that it helped expand radio in the Gold Coast and reach a wider African audience in Nigeria, Togo, Sierra Leone, Cape Town, and some parts of East Africa<sup>28</sup> (Ansah, 1985.). At the same time, it entrenched broadcasting as a colonial tool. During the war, regular programming, including entertainment programming by local artists, was curtailed to make way for propaganda by the colonial government (Ansah, 1985). Around this time,

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<sup>26</sup> Bernard Senedzi (B. S.) Gadzekpo is recognized as a prolific writer and a pioneering broadcaster, known for his literary program on the BBC Overseas Service. His unpublished memoir, titled 'Ghana muntie: from Station ZOY to the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation,' offers valuable insights into the origins of local language broadcasting in Ghana, the interplay with the colonial government, and the broader evolution of broadcasting. B.S. Gadzekpo was born in 1905 and died at the age of eighty-three in 1989 (Gadzekpo, 2021). Excerpts from his memoir have been published by Cambridge University Press and are available under open access.

<sup>27</sup> More than sixty-five thousand Ghanaians were enlisted into the British Army

<sup>28</sup> Ansah notes that the signal to East Africa was weak.

Ghanaian language use became instrumental in the propaganda machinery of the colonial government. B.S. Gadzekpo (1972) indicates that broadcasting programs in English proved challenging since only the literate minority of the African community could understand these programs, resulting in a lack of interest in radio. As such, in 1943, full-time staff were employed to translate and announce the news in five Ghanaian languages: Twi, Fanti, Ga, Ewe, and later Hausa. These full-time staff were called vernacular announcers. Vernacular announcers' work involved news translation and broadcasting. The full-time vernacular announcers were different from the part-time announcers in their translation and broadcast practices. Part-time announcers delivered the news extemporaneously, while full-time vernacular announcers were trained and certified teachers who were not allowed to interpret the news directly from the English script. Full-time vernacular announcers were required to read from translation scripts to serve as a check and proof against claims of false news (Gadzekpo, 1972). As B. S. Gadzekpo explains, news translation and broadcasting underwent the following process: First, the vernacular announcers received the news scripts in English every morning; second, news conferences were held to review and delete news items considered unnecessary; third, the news was translated and written down; and fourth, it is broadcast at the set time. Both practices of extemporaneous news presentation/delivery and vernacular reading of news transcripts are foundational to understanding contemporary news and journalism practice in indigenous language media in Ghana, since the practice of extemporaneous news delivery continues today. Apart from the vernacular news, there were also vernacular talk programs about war and music. The vernacular announcers scripted the war talk programs or were translations of special scripts on the war from London. The scripts were usually about general strategies and weapons used in the war.

Teachers played an essential role in developing indigenous language media in Ghana. The service of teachers in providing local language translations of news and official statements was seen as necessary in squashing rumors about the war efforts on the Gold Coast. B. S. Gadzekpo records in his memoir that advocacy for teachers as vernacular announcers was premised on the fact that they were considered to be the best spokespeople to speak to the Gold Coast people in their language, had good moral standing in their communities, were held in high esteem in rural communities, were “regarded as an adviser, a dispenser, an arbitrator, a preacher and a helper generally in times of need” (Gadzekpo, 1972, p. 19). Bernard Senedzi (B. S.) Gadzekpo (1972), in his memoir, stated the following as evidence of the recruitment of teachers as vernacular announcers on the radio:

We the Vernacular Announcers were seconded to the Information Department in 1942 and 1943 when the War was already three years old. We were ten in all and were trained and certificated teachers with wide and varied experience in both teaching and in local affairs. We put this experience at the disposal of the Information Officer. In order to link up past events of the war with fresh ones, we quickly read back copies of the “Empire at War”, periodicals, pamphlets, and other publications bearing on the war (p. 20).

The labor of teachers in indigenous language broadcasting is important not only as pacesetters and therefore historically relevant but also for contemporary remaking and establishment of the role of teachers in indigenous news programming. In my personal correspondence with A. C. Ohene, a seasoned editor at Adom Newsroom, he reiterated how teachers were instrumental in news delivery in Akan in the early days of Akan ILM after the liberalization of broadcasting in Ghana. In fact, as Audrey Gadzekpo comments that B. S. Gadzekpo’s memoir “confirms other historical accounts of the quick uptake of radio by the local population and the cultivation of radio listenership during the war” (p. 188, 2021). Moreover, these teachers turned announcers

and journalists participated in laying the foundation for indigenizing radio and professionalizing local language news through the art of translation (Gadzekpo, 2021).

From 1945 (when the Second World War ended) to 1956 marked Ghana's struggle for independence, and also intensified broadcast development in Ghana. The end of the war resulted in the cessation of all war-related programming, creating a vacuum. The need for programming to fill these slots resulted in increased local programming created by Ghanaians and highlighted the need to train programmers. Post-war and pre-independence local programming was left to the engineers and technicians of the broadcasting department. They were requested to prepare vernacular entertainment and other vernacular programming. Vernacular announcers were moved from the Information Department to the broadcasting department and promoted to program assistants. Local languages were given 18 hours a week, while 58 hours were given to English programs, including relays from the BBC (Ansah, 1985). There were concerns about the time of the local language broadcast: the broadcast time was inconvenient since many people were away from their loudspeakers. In 1953, a commission was set to advise the government on how to improve broadcasting in Ghana. This commission made three recommendations: the setting up of the Gold Coast Broadcasting services to replace the existing service, retaining control over the broadcast service by the government, and ensuring that government control is as light as possible to help the broadcast service develop in the spirit of independence. In 1954, the commission's recommendation led to the establishment of the Gold Coast Broadcasting System, a news division, and an engineering training school in 1956. It was no longer attached to a government department.<sup>29</sup> By 1955, programs of local origin had increased. They included music request shows, documentary series, the newsreel (Window on the World), arts programs, variety

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<sup>29</sup> Station ZOY was attached to the Old Secretariat when it was inaugurated. Later it became part of the Public Relations Department and it was moved to become part of the Information Services Department

shows, Sunday religious service broadcasts, and programs about other West African countries (Smith, 2018).

After Ghana gained independence in 1957, the Gold Coast Broadcasting System was rebranded as the Ghana Broadcasting System (or Radio Ghana). In July 1965, Ghana inaugurated a television service. Subsequently, in 1968, the organization underwent a name change from the Ghana Broadcasting System to the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). Structurally, GBC was organized into two key divisions: radio and television. The radio division had two national networks/services- Radio 1 and Radio 2. Radio 2 was the English network of GBC's domestic service, as opposed to Radio 1, a Ghanaian language and English network. Radio 1 network broadcasts programs in English and six Ghanaian languages: Akan, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Nzema, and Hausa. There were program spots for each Ghanaian language, and the language sections were expected to produce programs to fill those spots. Most of the vernacular programs produced were news and news-related programming, including translations of Ghanaian newspapers' editorial opinions, topical event programs about regional happenings, and rural broadcasts. Rural broadcasting was a special department set up in 1962 to cater to rural folks in Ghana. There were also general programs for women, children, and the youth, as well as music and various entertainment programs.

In 1967, Ghana initiated commercial broadcasting. The following year, in 1968, the Ghana Broadcasting System was renamed the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). These initiatives are foundational to understanding the total indigenization of broadcasting in Ghana. In 1961, an external service was launched to “galvanize Africa's freedom fighters into action and instill fear into the colonial powers” to achieve Nkrumah's dream of “total emancipation” (Asamoah, 1985, p. 14). Portuguese, Hausa, Swahili, and Arabic speakers were recruited for this

mission. GBC established. When the television station was inaugurated, Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana, envisioned that television would be used to supplement educational programs and “foster a lively interest in the world around us” (Asamoah, 1985, p. 39). From 1986 onwards, regional radio stations were established to serve those regions (Anyidoho, 2016). These regional radio stations broadcast in English and Akan, Ga, Ewe, and Dagbani/Hausa. According to Ansu-Kyeremeh and Karikari (1998), besides the regional FM stations belonging to the GBC network, there were also FM stations in district centers that used the local languages effectively. Consistent with the president's aim, these Ghanaian language broadcasts aimed at educating farmers, fishermen, homemakers, and non-English speakers on topics dealing with “social welfare development, health, home economics, and management, political education, among others (Asamoah, 1985).

Like the radio programs, television programs in the Ghanaian languages were translations of English programs. Some popular Akan programs included *Obra*, a comedy show, and *Osofo Dadzi*, a satirical series in Akan that ran for over a decade. There were also indigenous songs and dances by cultural groups. The GBC continued to be a monopoly from 1957 until 1995. Between 1957 and 1992, GBC survived five military coups and three civilian administrations.

The 1992 constitution ushered in democratization and media pluralism, helping break the monopoly enjoyed by the GBC. The 1992 constitution guarantees freedom and independence of the media and prohibits licensing any mass communication medium like radio and television. The state began authorizing private radio and television stations in 1995 (Heath, 2001). Private radio authorization ended the monopoly GBC had enjoyed for decades. By 2005, about fifty-seven private radio stations were operating alongside GBC’s Radio 1 and Radio 2 (Blackson, 2005). These privately owned stations broadcast in English and retransmitted foreign or world

news from international stations like the BBC and VOA (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998; Blankson, 2005). Public criticism against English's predominant and sole use prompted some private stations to air selective programs in Ghanaian languages, mainly in Akan or Ewe. Radio Univers- a campus-community radio of the University of Ghana- was Ghana's first authorized non-state/government radio station<sup>30</sup> to introduce local language programming in five Ghanaian languages: Akan, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga-Adangbe, and Hausa. The station had an English-language policy when it started airing. The local language programming began in 1997 and "focused on civic education, politics, human rights, culture, current affairs, and democratic governance" (Odartey-Willington, Ahmed & Alhassan, 2020, p. 264). Radio Univers pioneered a press review program in Ewe and Twi, which has since become mainstream; they also introduced phone-in discussions in Twi (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998; Odartey-Willington, Ahmed & Alhassan, 2020, p. 264). The success of a Twi talk program titled "Obiara Nka Bi" (Free Speech) on Radio Univers became a catalyst that prompted other private stations to follow suit (Ansu-Kyeremeh & Karikari, 1998; Yankah, 2004). For instance, Accra-based English-speaking radio station Joy FM broadcast a social program titled *Asetena mu Nsem* (Issues of Life) and a religious program for dawn prayer in Twi (Yankah, 2004). Another Accra-based radio station, Radio Gold, included Akan-English multilingual programs (Yankah, 1994). Peace FM and Radio Gold began airing news in English, Akan, and Ga. Later, radio stations like Peace FM, Adom FM, Obunu FM, Top

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<sup>30</sup> There had been other experimental and amateur radio stations by individuals who used home-made transmitters and equipment. In terms of private or independent broadcasting, the most prominent and politically famous station was Radio Eye, started by Dr. Charles Wereko-Brobby in 1994. His main reason for starting Radio Eye was to test the constitutional requirement of media pluralism, and it was this attempt that led to the government granting authorization to private persons for private media establishment. He is described as a man wearing many professional hats. He is an engineer, businessman, a politician (once a member of the ruling government and later a member of the main opposition political party, National People's Party), a journalistic gadfly, and an expert in electronic communication (French, 1994; Ryser).

FM (no longer in operation), and Happy FM started vernacular broadcasting (Boateng, 2009; Yankah, 2004).

The history of Ghanaian language private commercial stations begins with Peace FM, which started in 1999. However, Kwasi Ansu-Kyeremeh and Kwame Karikari (1998) state that OTEC FM started airing in 1988 in Kumasi and mention OTEC FM in passing as an exception to stations that broadcast in English. OTEC is the abbreviation for Oppong Twumasi Electronic Company. Professor Kwesi Yankah (2004), in his published lecture titled “Language, The Mass Media and Democracy in Ghana,” also mentions OTEC FM as evidence to support his argument that the Ashanti region (with Kumasi as its capital) best exemplifies linguistic nationalism and English marginalization despite being cosmopolitan and commercial in nature. Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti region, has resisted Westernization and maintains a “distinct cultural outlook” as a result of its “strong sense of nationalistic pride” in the Akan dialect- Asante Twi (Yankah, 2004, p. 11). Yankah admits that he only became aware of OTEC FM in 1996.

OTEC FM’s mission is to “promote and preserve the norms and culture of Ghana.” OTEC FM started with a 50 KM radius and on a frequency of 99.9 MHz; currently, it is 102.9 FM. Recounting the genesis of OTEC FM, the head of Marketing, Sales, and Digital Media, Michael Addai-Dwomoh, stated that the founder, Oppong Twumasi, was a technician, a craftsman, and a firm believer and advocate for indigenous creativity. He manufactured radio sets, speakers, and other electrical appliances and taught his craft to others. He had no formal education but built the entire radio broadcast technological infrastructure himself. He built his radio transmitter, tower, antennas, and console. Twumasi was against importing anything despite his colleagues' pressure to import. OTEC FM bought its first imported radio console after Twumasi died in the 2000s. The personal ideology of Twumasi upends the cultural branding of

OTEC FM as oriented towards upholding Akan and Ghanaian cultural norms and values. Using Asante Twi as the transmission language was one of the means of sustaining this ideology. The station started as purely news and information broadcasts with intermittent music and gradually progressed to a talk-only station.<sup>31</sup> OTEC FM had its share of political prosecution in the early 1990s when President Jerry John Rawlings flew into Kumasi in a helicopter to shut down the radio station. The president believed this radio station was a threat to his government and could constitute a tool for an overthrow and a coup d'état. The shutdown lasted less than a year after assurances that the radio station was solely an information tool. Mentioning OTEC FM is crucial for appropriately constructing local language media history in Ghana, and the contribution OTEC FM has made to the labor force in all radio stations, including Peace FM and Adom FM.

Nonetheless, several factors could explain the erasure of OTEC FM as the premier private commercial FM station and the first Ghanaian language station among scholars. These factors may include its non-authorization status, audience reach, and location. As already explained, the first private radio authorization occurred in 1995, which made OTEC FM's operation illegal before its approval. The 50 km radius limited OTEC FM's location and reach to Kumasi. Thus, its popularity was limited to the Kumasi community.

The next section will focus on media regulatory frameworks in Ghana, examining the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA) to understand their constitutional mandates and their relationship with media institutions and practitioners. It will subsequently address specific rules and regulations concerning ownership, language, and programming. Finally, the analysis will identify the gaps and challenges encountered by these regulatory bodies.

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<sup>31</sup> Currently, OTEC FM is a talk radio station. Music is only played after 10pm until 4am. Their programs include news and current affairs programs, political program, religious program, social program and sports.

#### 4.2 Media Accountability: Media Regulatory Institutions (Regulatory Structures)

Ghana has two established instruments that regulate media and communication services: the National Media Commission (NMC) and the National Communication Authority (NCA). An Act of Parliament established both bodies under the provisions of Chapter 12 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution. While the NMC regulates media content, the NCA licenses and regulates electronic communication and services in Ghana. There are instances where the NMC and the NCA are expected to collaborate in regulating the media and communication services. For instance, the NCA and the NMC must collaborate to regulate and monitor holders of frequency authorizations.

The NMC is an independent governing body mandated to “take all appropriate measures to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media, including the investigation, mediation, and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media” (NMC, n.d.). Its constitutional functions include ensuring the freedom and independence of the media for mass communication and information; establishing and maintaining high journalistic standards; insulating state-owned media from governmental control; ensuring fair opportunities in state-owned media for divergent and dissenting views; appointing chairmen and members of governing bodies managing state-owned media and making regulations for the registration of newspapers and other publications (Ghana, 1992). While the NMC regulates content, this statutory body does not have control over the professional functions of personnel in the production of newspapers and other means of communication. One of the editors I interviewed described the NMC as arbiters and not a power-wielding agency. Consequently, NMC relies on the goodwill of media practitioners and organizations to adhere to the regulations they propose.

The NCA is the central body mandated to license and regulate electronic communications activities and services in Ghana, including cable, wireless, internet, telephone, terrestrial, and satellite. The NCA was established by the National Communications Act 2008 (Act 769).<sup>32</sup> The NCA is mandated to establish and monitor the implementation of national communications standards and ensure compliance; classify communication services; develop a frequency plan and monitor allocated frequencies; investigate and resolve disputes about frequency interference among users and operators about rates and bills, failure to obtain redress from providers of public communication and in respect of interconnection facilities and utility installations (National Communication Authority Act, 2008). The NCA is expected to collaborate with relevant and appropriate stakeholders in developing the frequency allocation plan. This collaboration is not only national but also regional to avoid or minimize compromises in spectrum utilization. Clear directions are given in the areas' geographical coverage, limit on transmission power stations, transparency in and accessibility to records on frequency assignment, frequency assignment fees, proper documentation and regular monitoring of frequency assignments, and guidelines on relay. The validity period for a frequency license or broadcasting authorization is for a period of 5 years and is renewable three months before the license expiration date.

In pursuit of NMC's constitutional mandate and guided by Chapter 2 of the 1992 Constitution, the NMC published multiple guidelines to serve as a yardstick for measuring standards in media and establish a free, dynamic, and responsible media in Ghana. These guidelines include *National Media Policy*, *Guidelines for local language Broadcasting*, *Print Media Guidelines*, *Broadcasting Standards*, *Guidelines for Fair and Equitable Coverage of Political Parties by State-owned Media*, *Guidelines for Political Advertising*, *Guidelines for*

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<sup>32</sup> The National Communications Authority Act, 2008 (Act 769) replaced an act of Parliament, established in December 1996 Act 524.

*Political Journalism*, and *Guidelines for Political Reporting*. With the exception of the *National Media Policy*, the guidelines are published as pamphlets and distributed to media organizations. The guidelines are also promoted by the commission by conducting workshops for media practitioners and journalists (McKenzie, 2011). The essence of publishing these varied guidelines is to take a proactive approach to mitigating the excesses of media pluralism. The National Media Policy is comprehensive and takes a democratic approach, emphasizing the centrality of active citizenry. The National Media Policy applies to mass communication media (print, broadcasting, and film) and communication services (wire services (news agencies), advertising, and public relations). It classifies print, broadcasting, and film into 3 working categories: Public media, Commercial Media, and Community Media. Regardless of the mandate or prerogative of the media type, the policy admonishes all the media categories to work in the national interest. On the other hand, the NCA classifies (FM radio) broadcasting according to purpose, coverage, and location. The different approaches to broadcasting categorization emphasize the mandate difference between NMC as a media content regulator and NCA as a technical operations regulator of the telecommunication industry. Table 2 shows these classifications and their definitions.

Table 2

*NCA classification of FM Radio Broadcasting*

| Type                       | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | Classification by Purpose                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Classification by Coverage                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Public                     | All stations owned and operated by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and/or any other station established by the Government of Ghana by a statutory enactment.                                                        | There is no coverage limitation on the Public FM radio broadcasting stations.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Public Foreign             | Stations established by Foreign Governments through diplomatic arrangements to rebroadcast/relay content from foreign countries e.g. BBC, RFI, VoA.                                                                          | Maximum coverage radius is 45km.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Commercial                 | Those that are privately owned and operated for profit and controlled privately by independent commercial groups or individuals.                                                                                             | Maximum coverage radius is 45km.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Community                  | A non-profit broadcasting service provided for a specific marginalised community by a radio or television station whose ownership and management are representative of the community for which the service is provided.      | Maximum coverage radius is 5km. In cases where the definition of the community and the terrain require a variation, the Authority may make extensions to the coverage area but this shall not exceed 25km in any case.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Campus                     | A station operated within the ambit of educational institutions.                                                                                                                                                             | Maximum coverage radius is 5km. In cases where the definition of the community and the terrain require a variation, the Authority may make extensions to the coverage area but this shall not exceed 25km in any case.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The signal strength at the periphery of the coverage circle/contour with the authorised radius shall not exceed 54 dB(μV/m). This does not mean the station cannot be heard beyond the circle/contour, because the ITU Recommendation BS.412-9 gives a field strength requirement of 34 dB(μV/m) for 'acceptable' service. The Geneva 1984 Agreement governing Sound Broadcasting services in the frequency band 87.5 – 108 sets the field strength of 54 dB(μV/m) as the threshold for coordination of the FM radio broadcasting service in the frequency band. |
| Classification by Location |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Urban Type 1               | For the major metropolitan assemblies e.g. Accra, Kumasi and Takoradi.                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Urban Type 2               | For the other metropolitan cities that are not as economically viable as the above cities such as Tamale and Cape Coast, as well as the other regional capitals such as Koforidua, Sekondi, Ho, Bolgatanga, Sunyani, and Wa. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Sub-urban Type 1           | For the capital of some municipal assemblies and some major towns, e.g. Tarkwa, Oda, Berekum etc.                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Sub-urban Type 2           | For locations that have moderate economic activity and moderate population, including some district capitals such as Bibiani, Sefwi Bekwai, Somanya etc.                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Rural                      | The rest of the country.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

*Note. NCA classification of FM Radio Broadcasting. Designed this using information from the NCA's 2023 second quarterly report on authorized FM stations in Ghana.*

The National Media Policy can be divided into three areas. The first area addresses the context and influences of media. The second emphasizes general guidelines common to all media types. The third area focuses on implementation guidelines outlining distinct policies for the six mass communication media and communication services. Because this dissertation is concerned with commercial/private broadcast media, attention will be given to general guidelines and specific policies relevant to broadcast media. Under the general guidelines, emphasis will be placed on legislation concerning commercial/private broadcasting, media roles and mandates, media ownership, frequency allocation, language, and programming.

The NMC's National Media Policy is a response to historical infractions caused by colonialism and the checkered political history that violated press freedom and civil engagement

in Ghana. This is because the NMC devotes section 4 (four) of the policy document to outlining 4 influences that have shaped the content of the media policy, consisting of pre- and post-independence environment in Ghana, restoration of constitutional rule in 1992, globalization of information and communication, and information technology. In addition, section four of the document narrates the history of the development of mass media and communication services in Ghana. Consequently, the NMC identified seven issues arising from the development of mass media in Ghana, including “cultural impoverishment, the marginalization of local languages, education and development, technological competence, human resources, institutional capacity, and public accountability” (NMC, 2001, p.6). Together, these four influences (being national and global in nature) and the historical development of mass media provide the context necessitating a need for a national policy. As such, the NMC exists to insulate the media against government control and interference and ensure freedom and independence of the media. It is not surprising that the policy upholds the principle of freedom and independence of the media, media and cultural pluralism, national unity, and universal access and participation.

The general guidelines standard to all media is titled common policy statements. The common policy statements address issues regarding the nature of media, media role, and civic responsibility/duty of Ghanaians. The nature of media in Ghana is described as a public trust, independent and free, accessible and pluralistic. The policy stipulates that all media and media services are a public trust that holds “the public interest as paramount” in all their operations regardless of whether they are public, commercial, or community (National Media Commission, n.d.). Defining the public interest has been elusive in broadcasting history around the world. For the NMC, the public interest is enshrined in the letter and spirit of the 1992 constitution of Ghana, upholding the principles, issues, vision, and mission statements of the National Media

Policy, providing individual choice, and enacting media roles to inform, educate, and entertain. Defining the public interest in legal and neoliberal terms outlines the nature of public interest helping delimit the boundaries of public interest. Moreover, the NMC posits this policy as centering the citizenry and promoting the welfare of the people of Ghana.

The policy statements regarding the media's role concern both media organizations' duties towards their human resource and operational output. Regarding the media's internal role, the policy provides direction on media organizations' duty for capacity building of their human and non-human resources in order to be self-sufficient and technologically competent. Media organizations are expected to promote technological competence by employing indigenously developed technology and keeping abreast with "worldwide developments in technology with a view to adapting them for optimum local use" (NMC, 2001, sec. 6.1.9, p. 34). Externally, the media must be an agent for promoting local culture and an agent for national education. To enhance the professionalism and quality of media personnel, media corporations must promote human resource development by continuously providing training for media practitioners. The relationship between the media and the public is accountability. NMC expects the public to be a front-runner for defending the sanctity of media freedom and to demand accountability of all media. The public thus becomes partners in helping build a responsible and ethical media. The citizens must actively ensure that media freedom is not misused, and they must protect "freedom of thought and expression" (NMC, 2001, sec. 6.1.12, p. 35)

In relation to implementing media category guidelines, the NMC describes broadcast media as consisting of radio and television and involving the "transmission by the airwaves, cable or satellite of sound or image for simultaneous reception by a mass audience" (National Media Commission, 2001, sec. 3, p. 8). It considers the airwaves as the property of the Ghanaian

people. As such, their use must add value to the “quality of life of all Ghanaians and to the society and economy as a whole. Broadcasting, even more than other media, shall operate on the understanding that it is a public trust.” (National Media Commission, 2001, sec. 7.2.2, p. 46). Consequently, per the policy, even though commercial/private commercial broadcasting organizations can operate freely, competitively and as profit-making enterprises, they still have a public service obligation to the state and its citizens.

Meanwhile, both the *Guidelines for Broadcasting* and the *Guidelines for Local Language Broadcasting* (GLLB) were published in the same year and offer practical suggestions to broadcasters in their line of duty. While the *Guidelines for Broadcasting* is a generalist document covering about 21 different subject areas in the preparation, presentation, and transmission of programs and advertising materials, the GLLB is a specific document for only local language radio and television broadcasting. The document covers five major interrelated areas, including core journalistic values and principles, news, local language programming, local language, and conflict of interest. According to the NMC, GLLB is offered to help “broadcasters... harness the benefit of linguistic pluralism and diversity” (NMC, 2009b, p. 3). The context for producing the GLLB is based on “the felt needs identified at a consultative forum with broadcasters” (NMC, 2009b, p. 3). This document stipulates the importance of local language media as contributing not only to media pluralism, linguistic plurality, and active citizen participation in civic affairs through the media but also breaking illiteracy, cost, and internet barriers, and helping to absolve media exclusivity. A distinct aspect of the GLLB document is the emphasis on local language media playing a leadership role in voter education.

#### 4.21 Ownership

The policy on commercial/private media ownership in Ghana advocates for prioritizing public interest, ensuring ownership diversity to prevent monopolies, and maintaining majority control by indigenous Ghanaian citizens in both shareholding and board representation. The National Media Policy stipulates that “ownership of commercial media organizations shall be spread to discourage monopolies and serve the interest of pluralism” (NMC, 2001, sec. 6.2.2, p. 38). It also states that, “cross-media ownership and chain media ownership shall be restricted in terms of numbers of holdings and shall be allowed only if clearly in the public interest” (National Media Commission 2001, sec. 6.2.2, p. 38). There is no clearly stated number capping the restrictions.

However, the policy is clear on the percentage of shares Ghanaians should hold in a commercial media enterprise. According to the policy, indigenous Ghanaian citizens can retain a minimum of 51% ownership in a commercial media company. Additionally, a commercial media company’s Board must consist of indigenous Ghanaian citizens, with the chair also being an indigenous Ghanaian citizen (NMC, 2001, sec. 6.2.2, p. 38). This ownership restriction limits foreign ownership of commercial media to a maximum of 49% shares. This policy restriction ensures that control of commercial media remains predominantly with Ghanaians in a bid to safeguard national interest. Despite this limitation, the policy makes room for foreign intervention to help enhance media pluralism.

The policy not only pushes for media pluralism, but it also advances media access. The policy advocates for some concessions for commercial media organizations that establish themselves outside urban centers: “To promote access, various concessions shall be offered to commercial media organizations that establish themselves outside the urban centres” (NMC,

2001, sec. 6.2.2, p. 39). While the specific concessions are not mentioned, this clause recognizes the need for equitable access across urban and rural centers, showing that media pluralism may not translate into equitable access. Also, the policy shows how the urban-centric commercial media. Hence, the mention of accessibility and incentives for media organizations in rural areas aligns with the broader policy on commercial ownership that promotes media pluralism, public interest, and the representation of diverse voices in rural and underserved areas in Ghana.

In terms of media-specific policy guidelines on ownership of broadcasting stations, there are only three categories of entities prohibited from owning any broadcasting station. These are political parties, religious organizations, and district assemblies. The policy holds that the prohibition will mitigate the potential of broadcast media to “fan divisive tendencies.” To sustain ownership prohibitions, the policy vaguely references the possibility of fronting and disguised ownership and suggests that the process of registration should account for these loopholes through transparency. There are no further instructions or guidelines on methods that could help check fronting and disguised ownership.

#### 4.22 Language

According to the NMC, historically, there has been a marginalization of Ghanaian languages in the media space, specifically in broadcasting. The NMC indicates that the result of local language marginalization has contributed to “the atrophy of local cultures” and also the exclusion of the majority of the population in expression, participation, and representation of their ways of life. The solution to this problem is to require the predominant use of local languages in all media. Beyond saving Ghanaian languages through media use, it is also to promote and advance national unity, development, and diversity. The NMC (2001) states that

Ghanaian languages shall be used widely to promote national unity and development. Additionally and concurrently, in the provision of media channels and outlets, care shall

be taken to ensure that all languages are catered for to realize the ideals of diversity and multiplurality. The use of Ghanaian languages in the media shall demonstrate oral and written competence. The documentation and study of oral literature and traditions shall be integrated wherever possible. (sec. 6.1.7, p. 33).

Thus, language becomes a tool for cultural preservation. Among the many suggestions on how and what language should be used in indigenous language media in Ghana, two of the guidelines are of interest. The first is radio/television presenters as role models and translation guidelines.

Radio and television presenters and speakers are identified by the NCM as role models. As such, in the *Guidelines for Broadcasting*, radio and television presenters are expected to use appropriate language as well as language of the “highest possible standard.” Even though what constitutes an appropriate language is not explained in this guideline, the guideline links language appropriateness with program type. In terms of language proficiency, the GLLB states that presenters and speakers must speak and write the local language they broadcast in with high proficiency. This guideline contradicts the local language broadcasters' practice on the ground as well as the normative educational practice of media institutions in Ghana. As this study will show and attest to by the indigenous language media practitioners whom I interviewed, recruitment emphasizes talent, fluency, and proficiency in the local language, and not writing. Many recruits can only speak the local language of transmission and can't write in those local languages. In fact, the media personnel interviewed admitted that one of the challenges is the inability of most media recruits to read and write in the local language, despite being literate in English. This observed literacy deficiency in Ghanaian local languages exhibits a national and structural character since local language literacy is not as formalized as English language literacy.<sup>33</sup> As Yankah (2004) noted, even though most people learn to “read and write Ghanaian

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<sup>33</sup> Ghana's current language instruction policy is that a child's L1 should be used as the language of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3. Subsequently, English is used as L1 for instruction. Moreover, English is taught as a

languages in primary, middle, and secondary schools,” the majority learn these local languages through the church (p. 4).

Moreover, media practitioners and journalists are trained in the English language. For that reason, very few media practitioners can speak, read, and write in the local languages. While the ability to read and write in the transmission language is ideal, it is not practical for local language broadcasters to meet this requirement until the educational structures are revised. This study argues that there is a simultaneous and concurrent use of English and Akan in Akan media stations where writing is done in English, and the local language is used as the transmission language. Meanwhile, the guideline for local language news is that, as much as practicable, the gathering and presentation of the news should be done in the intended broadcasting language.

Translation is addressed in GLLB. The document suggests that news translation must be faithful to the “denotation and context of the original utilization” and must be subjected to the news production process (NMC, 2009B, p. 12). The document deemphasizes literal translation prioritizing instead understanding the meaning and idea the source language seeks to convey. An interesting advice to broadcasting news translators is to read religious translated materials since those are considered to be translations of the highest standards. In addition, translators must have good dictionaries for both source and target languages, and be knowledgeable of the “culture, festivals, history, traditions and economic activities” of speakers of the target language. Nonetheless, radio and television stations are given the prerogative to determine their own style guides for local language news translation.

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subject up until secondary school while Local languages are subjects of study starting from Grade four through to grade 9 (Bureau for Africa, May, 2020)

#### 4.23 Programming

The general guidelines for all media under programming direct media institutions to emphasize local content and protect children's identity, privacy, and reputation. For radio and television stations, program content must reflect, enhance, and advance Ghanaian culture and cultural aspirations and values; promote Ghanaian languages; exhibit high moral values and standards; and “propagate the value that crime does not pay and must be punished” (NMC, 2001, p. 50). The policy specifically identifies vulnerable groups like children, women, and people with disability, encouraging the protection and defense of children’s and women’s rights and interest and support for children’s psychological and social development. Programming content must protect children's identities, privacy, and reputation, show sensitivity to the dignity and respect of womanhood, and respect for the physically challenged. Commercial media decisions on programming are subject to their public service obligations.

The minimum percentage of local content in commercial broadcasting is 50%, and a maximum of 75% for radio. For free-to-air commercial television, there should be a minimum of 30% and a maximum of 50% within a specific time frame. Even for subscription stations, the policy instructs that the subscription organization dedicate one channel to local content with the same local content requirements as free-to-air stations. The policy requires that during prime time, there should be an allocation of at least 50% of the minimum required local content to be aired. Further, “at least 50% of the minimum allocation for local programmes shall consist of programmes which promote local education, culture and/or development” (NMC, 2001, sec. 7.2.4, p. 52).

In the *Guidelines for Broadcasting*, the NMC suggests that programs should prioritize the development of a national identity and national development. Meanwhile, in the GLLB, local

language programming values rest on constitutional imperatives of national unity and cohesion. The values emphasized include engendering dialogue for equitable development, providing people with a voice and empowering them, and affirming and strengthening cultural expression “by leveraging indigenous knowledge through the application of core journalism values and principles” (NMC, 2009B, p. 15). In addition, local language programming should promote Ghanaian cultural rites and practices of value. Equally, broadcasters must prioritize marginalized individuals and communities by allowing them to share their views and knowledge. Some other guidelines include good taste and decency; authenticity; morality and social values; portraying violence as undesirable; advertising of alcoholic drinks, financial products, medicines, and comparisons; presenting information accurately, objectively, and fairly; and being cautious in relaying programs that subvert national identity, culture, and self-respect.

Of course, journalistic values and ethics are mentioned in both GLLB and the *Guidelines for Broadcasting*. These guidelines articulate a commitment to normative ideals of accuracy, objectivity, fairness, comprehensiveness, right to reply, covering disabled persons, and promoting peace and incitement. An extensive analysis of journalistic norms and ethics will be done in subsequent chapters.

#### 4.3 Gaps and Challenges

There is no doubt that the NMC’s guidelines are grounded in research. For instance, the *National Media Policy* articulates the national scenario and development of media by foregrounding historical antecedents and political context shaping the policy context and implication on contemporary media environment. Also, in the GLLB document, the NMC clearly states that the document guidelines distill research in journalism, linguistics, translation, and media ethics. While the guidelines are grounded in research, there are gaps that indicate that

aspects of policies like news and journalism are removed from actual media practice on the ground. It is obvious that research-based evidence is not lacking. However, actual/practical based evidence seems to have been overlooked. One such gap is the failure to acknowledge that news and journalism are context-based practices and that, perhaps, there are distinct foundations of news and journalism upheld by speakers of Indigenous languages in Ghana. As such, journalistic normative ideals governing journalism and news may constitutively embody commitments to local ideals and trappings of normative ideals. As a result of this failure, the document demands local language news to holistically adopt what it calls “foreign language news” practices and disavow creative elements of oral literature as well as embellishments. As the document states, spontaneous composition and performance are artistic skills for traditional poets, dirge, and praise singers; consequently, these skills are unsuitable for news bulletins. Additionally, the document considers the use of proverbs, anecdotes, and linguistic devices as embellishments, which are not permitted in local language news. This is obviously a response to local language presenters’ continued use of oral and storytelling devices like proverbs in news presentations, which has been criticized as prejudicing news content (Gadzekpo, Yeboah-Banin & Akrofi-Quarcoo, 2020). This disavowal means that the document fails to reconcile actual local news and journalistic practice with idealistic journalistic norms in “foreign language news.” Thus, it is difficult not to question its translation guidelines, which advise against literal translation and encourage translators to be well acquainted with the “culture, festivals, history, traditions, and economic activities of native speakers of the target language.” Incidentally, NMC in the GLLB document acknowledges that language expresses the culture of a people. Nonetheless, it contradicts itself in news and journalism as a cultural product. Therefore, broadcasting stations’ practices are reflected in the language of transmission. By exalting commitments to normative

ideals of journalism, local practices of information gathering and presentation become a dent in news and journalism. Moreover, as this study will show, editors in the Akan newsroom distinguish between Akan news presentation as storytelling and English news presentation as news reading. Therefore, the values and principles that occasion the final news product will not be the same. The NMC, though recognizing the translation dimension of news gathering and presentation, seems to have missed this important perspective.

While some may argue that colonial legacy is still a great influence on African media practice, this study finds that elitism is one of the many blessings and challenges to media and journalistic practice and profession in Ghana. Historically, the elitist intelligentsia<sup>34</sup> developed Ghana's local media (specifically newspaper development and journalism) (Frimpong, 2019). This study does not dismiss the influence of colonial legacy. However, when policy that is based on research is removed from actual practice, the gap created between praxis and policy will result in tensions, contradictions, and misunderstandings. Incidentally, because the NMC relies on the goodwill of media practitioners and organizations to implement these guidelines, such optimistic expectations and continuous collaboration could deteriorate and finally crumble. Associated with the issue of elitism is standardization. The other implicit gap in these guidelines is the holistic recommendation of the strictest adherence to the global governance of journalistic norms and principles without consideration for what the translation of those principles means in the Ghanaian multilingual media space. Standard setting is not a problem; however, when the implementation of standards to a phenomenon is removed from actual practice and the cultural realities of a group of people, then progressive transformational aspirations will be stalled.

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<sup>34</sup> The elite in society like doctors, schoolmasters, merchants, lawyers, clergymen with western education but no education in journalism constituted journalists (Frimpong, 2019). Jones-Quartey (1974) described them as "amateurs of great brilliance and prestige" adding that these contributed to the craft of journalism from the stance of "political patriotism and literary excellence" (p. 37).

Lastly, when the NMC references research, issues of canonization and selectivity arise. The questions to be raised are where the research was conducted and which canon of literature informed the guidelines.

NMC has no power of regulation; thus, there are arguments that while the media is free, it is not truly independent. This is because the power of regulation is vested in the NCA which is under government administration.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to outline the history of indigenous language media in Ghana and the context of its beginnings, growth, and development. I have also explained the regulatory structures that influence media practice and ethics as well as the gaps and challenges these regulatory instruments pose to indigenous language broadcasting practice in Ghana. Despite the transformative outlook of these regulations, to a certain extent, there is a disconnect between research-based evidence and practice-based evidence; it is evident that the NMC guidelines do not have legal backing to enforce their implementation. The NMC, for instance, relies on the goodwill of media practitioners and institutions/organizations to implement these guidelines. Because adherence is voluntary, standardization efforts remain in abstraction. Also, the elitist nature of the guidelines ignores actual local practices and ethics of indigenous language broadcasters. As such, local language broadcasting practitioners are less likely to collaborate, and even in cases where they choose to collaborate, their choice will be based on their organizational interest.

## PART II: Production Culture

## Chapter 5: Unpacking the Organizational Structures of Multimedia Group Limited and Despite Media TV

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter will focus on two media corporations that operate indigenous language media: The Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. These two media corporations are very competitive and popular and hold some of the largest audience shares in Ghana. According to the Global Media Kit (2024), Adom TV and UTV are among Ghana's top five television channels, with a 90% daily reach to the audience. Similarly, within the radio landscape, with an 88% weekly reach and over 400 radio stations, Peace FM and Adom FM are among Ghana's top five radio stations. In this chapter, emphasis will be placed on the organizational structure of these corporations. The focus will be on their vision and mission, business model, employment policy, programming, target audience, and digitization policy. Beginning with The Multimedia Group Limited, I will analyze how the organizational structure and objectives operationalized along language lines help the company amass the largest audience possible. I will then analyze Despite Media, whose business model rests on the notion of ordinariness and thus deploys a supplemental model to amass a broad audience and remain competitive equally.

#### 5. 1 Profile of Multimedia Group Limited

The mandate of the Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) is commercial. They describe the corporation as an “independent commercial, media, and entertainment company in Ghana” (The Multimedia Group, n.d.). Their vision is to become a “world-class African media Group” (The Multimedia Group, n.d.). MGL’s mission is to create “compelling, exciting, enthralling content

to attract the largest audiences wherever they are, through multiple platforms; and delivering exceptional value to advertisers and all our stakeholders” (The Multimedia Group, n.d.).

Figure 1

*MGL's vision, values, and mission*



*Note. The image depicts MGL's vision, values, and mission statements. (Source: Nancy A. Frimpong, 2022)*

Their vision and mission reflect MGL's desire to establish its exceptionalism as an African media power and aggregate a large audience to fulfill its commercial objectives. MGL's exceptionalism lies in balancing local needs with broad legitimacy while pursuing global significance and visibility. Consequently, MGL's exceptionalism connotes a media value based on a wider legitimacy, serving as the primary reference point, media standardization, media resource for both media and human development, and a hub for advertisers. MGL's exceptionalism signifies media diversity, richness, and hypervisibility. This contrasts American exceptionalism, which is frequently associated with American imperialism. The organization's mission statement outlines three strategic areas of focus designed to establish MGL as "a world-

class African Media Group." These areas include creating compelling content, consolidating media resources, and ensuring exceptional accessibility for its audience. In recognition of its efforts, MGL has achieved notable accolades. In 2006, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) distinguished one of its subsidiaries, Joy FM, as the second-best radio station in Africa. Furthermore, MGL has been awarded the Media Organization of the Year three times in 2008, 2017, and 2021, highlighting its consistent performance within Ghana. The organization was also honored as the Most Respected Company in 2010 and 2012 and received recognition as the Most Vibrant Media Institution in Ghana in 2012.

As with any commercial media industry, the goal is audience maximization for profit. Consequently, audience aggregation is MGL's prime goal. Accordingly, audience aggregation is a market-driven concept that interpellates various images, models, and spatiotemporal and ideological articulations (regarding linguistic, demographic, and psychological) of audiences. Media audience theory often divides audiences into three categories: simple, mass, and diffused (Hills, 2017). In addition to this tripartite division, Matt Hills (2017) argues that the definition of an audience should also consider interaudience interactions, coalitions, and the concept of "othering." Traditional academic representations of audiences are commonly illustrated through the media effects model or the uses and gratifications model. Other theories of media audiences also explore media representation of audiences, focusing on aspects such as content delivery and audience participation (Branston & Stafford, 2006). Jonathan Bignell (2013) further enhances this understanding by describing a television audience as "a complex set of overlapping groups with different allegiances, backgrounds, and interests" (p. 266). This complexity underscores the multifaceted nature of audiences, highlighting the importance of recognizing their diversity in any media strategy. From this scope of understanding media audience, MGL's audience

aggregation is a conglomeration of people, institutions, and technologies. Amanda Lortz (2017) distinguishes between the conglomerated niche strategy of internet-distributed television, such as Netflix, which focuses on mass customization, catering to multiple audiences, and creating content tailored to specific subscriber segments. In contrast, traditional broadcasting employs mass audience strategies to reach diverse viewers simultaneously. MGL effectively addresses this gap by harnessing the internet's advanced technological capabilities, distribution mechanisms, innovative broadcasting methods, and diverse language use. A notable example occurred during Adom TV's morning show, *Badwam* (meaning "Public"), on December 30, 2022. This episode titled *Badwam Thanksgiving* was the last show of the year. Part of the program lineup was a worship and praise session and a cooking competition between Adom FM's morning show (*Dwaso Nsem*- meaning market issues) and Adom TV's morning show hosts. What is particularly significant is that Zoom was incorporated into the live broadcast during the praise and worship session. Zoom participants joined from the comfort of their homes and offices and their engagement was broadcast live. Audiences were seen dancing in their bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, and offices, and their reactions to being featured on television demonstrated that they were both participants and viewers of the program. While with this program, the audience does not have a plethora of content to choose from, it shows MGL's adaptation of internet-based technologies or applications to reach multiple segments of the population. MGL uses technology to engage different audience segments.

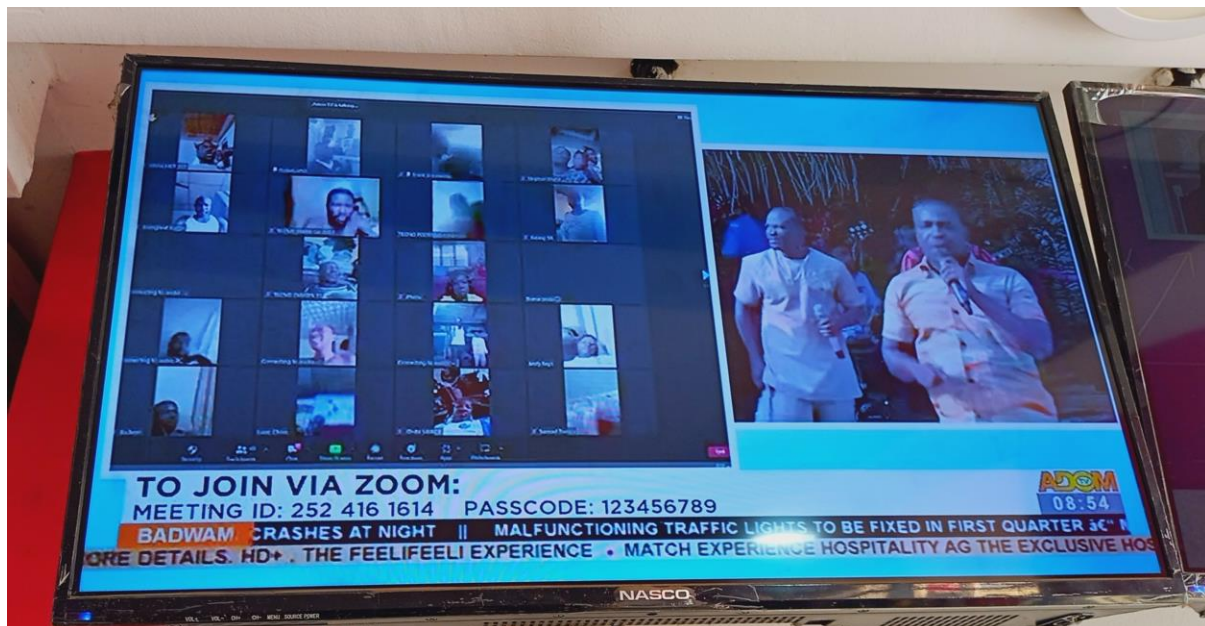
This strategic approach allows MGL to engage and attract vast audiences, ensuring its content reaches a broad spectrum of viewers and listeners. Subsequently, their vision and mission are operationalized through a business model described simply as a Mass Market Business Model. The mass market business model effectively argues that aggregating and maximizing a large

audience for sale to advertisers is crucial for sustained profitability. According to the general manager for Adom TV,

*Our business model is a simple model. Our business is to aggregate large audiences. Once we aggregate this large audience, ...it is not yet money but you have them (the audience). Advertisers are looking for a place where those large audiences have congregated. And because we have been able to congregate (the audience), we sell them to those advertisers. Then the advertisers give us money (General Manager, Adom TV, MGL)*

Figure 2

### *Live Split-Screen*



*Note. A picture of Adom TV's morning show, Badwam, aired live on December 30, 2022. The image displays a split-screen featuring participants on a Zoom call alongside the hosts and guests in the Adom studio. This television monitor is one of several located in the MGL offices (Source: Nancy A. Frimpong, 2022).*

The mass market business model shapes various aspects of the corporation's operations, including distribution, production culture, language policies, digitization strategies, audience

targeting, content creation, programming, and scheduling. This aligns with the corporation's commercial mandate, and they openly describe their subsidiaries as business entities.

The mass market business model is operationalized through an audience-centric approach that emphasizes the importance of understanding and responding to the needs and preferences of the audience. As a phenomenon, audience-centricity prioritizes the audience as the motivation for sustained profitability and brand impact. This model places the audience as the lens through which media content is created and delivered. Audience-centricity focuses on continued tailored content that enhances user consumption, satisfaction, and transformation. It prioritizes the intricate relationship between content creation, distribution channels, and audience engagement. Additionally, audience-centricity can also be understood as the practice of leveraging advertisers and media stakeholders. The goals and interests of advertisers, media agents (managers and marketers/sales team), and audiences are deliberated to reach a consensus and align them. This alignment of interests, preferences, and objectives is achieved through the type of content delivered to the audience. It is the guiding framework for MGL's audience aggregation and maximization strategies, including the cluster system, language, distribution, and transmission channels.

First, their distribution and transmission model emphasizes a cluster system based on platform concentration and agnosticism. MGL uses platforms to refer to channels and technologies through which media content is delivered and means of interacting with the audience. The cluster system consists of radio, television, and digital media functioning under a horizontal integration system of ownership. The Multimedia Group believes every platform holds the key to aggregating an audience and reaching this aggregated audience. As such, they are not fixed on any particular distribution or transmission platform. The General Manager of the

Adom Cluster operating under MGL articulated significant perspectives regarding the organization's objectives and strategic initiatives.

*We keep saying that we are platform agnostic... we want to reach the audience wherever they are. We are not fixed on a platform. We don't say we are a radio station. We don't say we are a TV station. We produce content and we deliver the content through platforms that are available that can reach our people. I mean the most cost-effective way of reaching people. If tomorrow a new platform comes and that's the best way to reach people, we will take our channels that we have developed and we will put it there to be able to reach the people... We don't believe in the platform. We are not stuck to platforms. And that's why we are aggressively pushing digital because we know that's where people aggregate now. Because if you want to deliver audiences to advertisers, then you will have to be looking for places where they aggregate to consume content. And you can't still say I am a radio station when a lot of young people don't even switch on the radio. You are a radio station but they are not... the set is not probably a radio station. People are consuming radio online. Would you say you not go online? (General Manager, MGL Adom Cluster, MGL)*

In pursuit of aggregating the largest audience, the corporation launched Multi TV in 2009 to make television and radio available locally and internationally (available in about 26 African countries). Multi TV is a free-to-air, multiple-channel, digital, direct-to-home TV service (Myjoyonline, 2009). Access to this service requires purchasing and installing a digital set-top box and a satellite dish. No subscription or monthly fees are applied. This Multi TV provided “multi-channel television and radio access to remote areas and locations with no media access. As indicated on the Multimedia Group’s website, “Multi TV has also been a platform to export local Ghanaian TV channels across Africa via satellite and across parts of Europe via the ABN channel” (The Multimedia Group, n.d.).

At the launch of this service, there were 20 channels (10 television stations and 10 radio stations). Since then, these channels have been consolidated into fewer TV and radio stations. The corporation has four television stations (Adom TV, Joy Learning, Joy News, and Joy Prime), six radio stations (Adom FM, Asempa FM, Hitz FM, Luv FM, Joy FM, and Nhyira FM), and three online platforms (Adomonline.com, Myjoyonline.com, and Multitvworld.com). Two of the

online platforms, *Adomonline.com* and *Myjoyonline.com*, are news portals. The three clusters- radio, television, and digital media- are strategically built to correspond and complement each other (not compete), allowing diverse audiences to access their product. All Multimedia channels are free-to-air. While they started as a radio station on analog, the launch of their TV stations coincided with the international directive to move from analog to digital. Accordingly, their television channels were launched as digital. Subsequently, even though they were free to air, patrons with analog television sets required a dish (sold by Multimedia) to receive their television channels. According to the General Manager for the Akan Brands, operating broadcast and online media are significant ways MGL aggregates large audiences. Consequently, Multimedia Group has a digital-first policy that emphasizes the need to digitize all content from Multimedia's subsidiaries. This policy will be discussed under *Adom Digital Ecosystem: Digital First “Sloganeer.”*

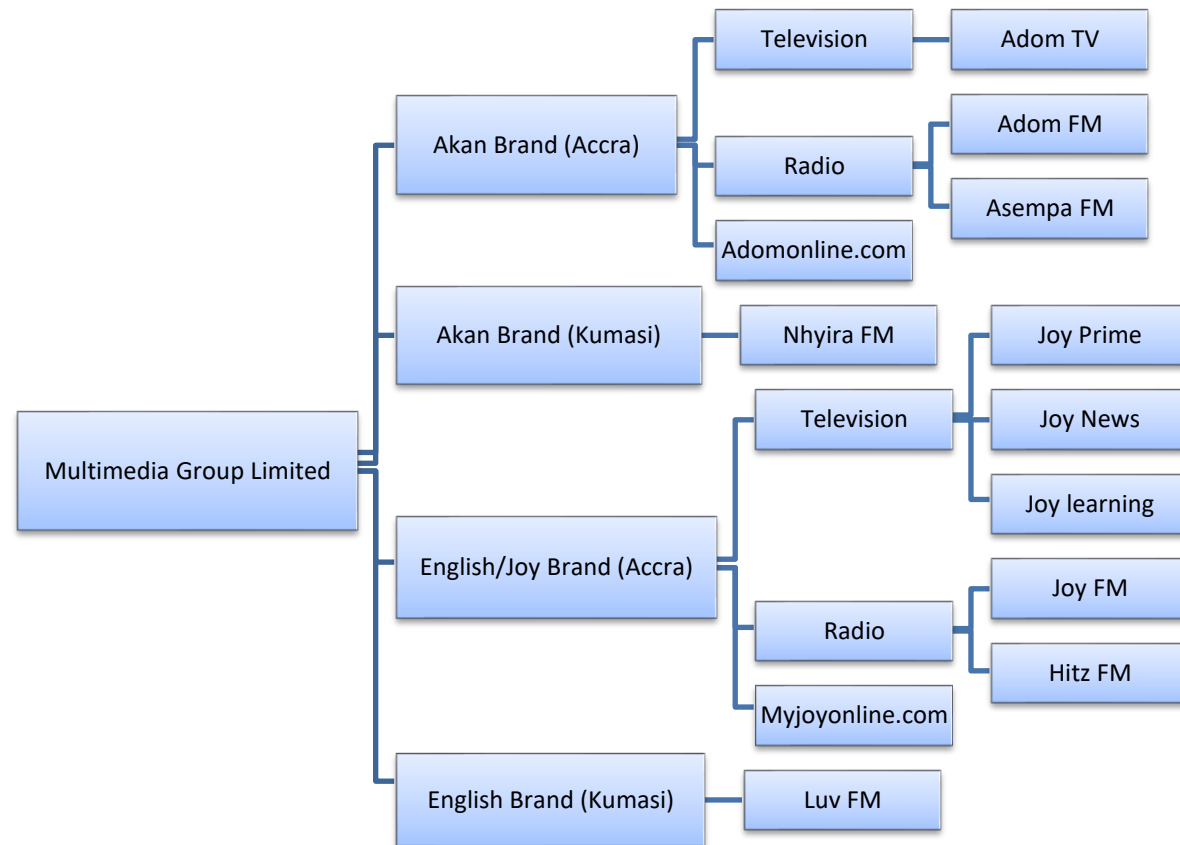
The second aspect of audience aggregation and maximization is the language of communication, which runs concurrently with distribution and transmission. This strategy of audience aggregation and maximization relies on numerical effectiveness. As such, the Multimedia Group is organized primarily by language, mainly English and Akan, as shown in Figure 3 below. Language is closely tied to locality (geographical location). MGL operates along two distinct language brands: the Akan Brand and the English Brand. The Akan-speaking media brands include Adom TV, Adom FM, Asempa, and Adomonline.com, located in Accra in the Greater Accra region, and Nhyira FM in Kumasi in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The English-speaking brand consists of Joy FM, Hitz FM, Myjoyonline.com, Joy Prime, Joy News, Joy Learning in Accra, and Luv FM in Kumasi. The significance of English and Akan as the dominant languages spoken by many in Ghana is crucial to MGL’s goal of gathering and

congregating large crowds at a time. English occupies a lingual franca status, while the Akan language has the most speakers, including non-Akans. The Akan language has eight mutually intelligible dialects. MGL understands this linguistic dynamic in Ghana and thus uses it to its advantage. The decision to operate Akan-speaking broadcast media was purely a business decision. First, it was to break the dominance of its competitor, Peace FM, in the Akan-speaking media market space, and second, to achieve its goal of having the largest audience share. The Program Manager for Adom FM and Editor for Adomonline.com elaborated on MGL's competitor strategy below:

*They [Joy FM] used only English. There wasn't any other language and they targeted the middle to upper class. So that should tell you that there was a certain segment of the market that was left behind; those below the middle-class classification. So, then Peace FM, the competitor brand entered the market and straight away started controlling more audience shares because the educational levels in the country at the time wasn't too high. And so it was just natural that people would gravitate towards language that they can relate to and understand. Peace FM was controlling a lot of audience shares. And Kwasi Tswum, being a businessman, then saw that there was a need to have a competitor plan (Program Manager, Adom FM and Editor, Adomonline.com, MGL).*

Figure 3

*Linguistic Clustering of MGL's Media Divisions*



*Note. A visual representation of how MGL organizes its media outlets based on language. It shows the two primary language brands operated by MGL: The Akan Brand and the English Brand.*

The business motive aligns with the marketability of the Akan language in addition to the English language. The rhetoric of accessibility and proximity also shapes the economic motivation for deploying the Akan language. Maintaining the largest audience share means communicating in a language most Ghanaians can understand or relate to. As an indigenous local broadcast media, the Akan language was an obvious choice over other Ghanaian languages because of its dominance among native and non-native speakers. If there were any other Ghanaian languages with such numerical advantage and economic viability, MGL would have considered that language. Related to the language choice is the issue of location.

In Ghana, languages are associated with ethnicity found in specific geographical locations in Ghana. Native Akan speakers are in nine out of the sixteen administrative regions in Ghana. Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti region, is home to Asante Twi speakers, and about 95.8% of the population speaks the language. Both Accra and Kumasi are cosmopolitan areas with diverse language speakers. The Greater Accra region is home to Gas and the Damgmes. However, according to the 2021 population census, a total of 68.4% of the population in the Greater Accra region speak Akan. In addition, the Ghana 2021 population and housing census shows that the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions have the highest population as well as the highest urban population in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022). Together, the two regions comprise about 35.3% of Ghana's population, which is 30,832,019. This explains why most broadcast stations are in the capital cities of Accra and Kumasi. However, it is also important to point out that the coverage policies in Ghana regarding radio and television are different. The maximum coverage radius for urban and commercial FM stations is 45km, and 25km for rural FM stations. However, for television, there is nationwide coverage. Consequently, having a chain of radio stations in these two major cities helps mitigate the frequency restriction policy.

Similarly, the organization's leadership structure operates along the Akan-speaking and English-speaking brand lines. Figure 4. shows the management structure of MGL.

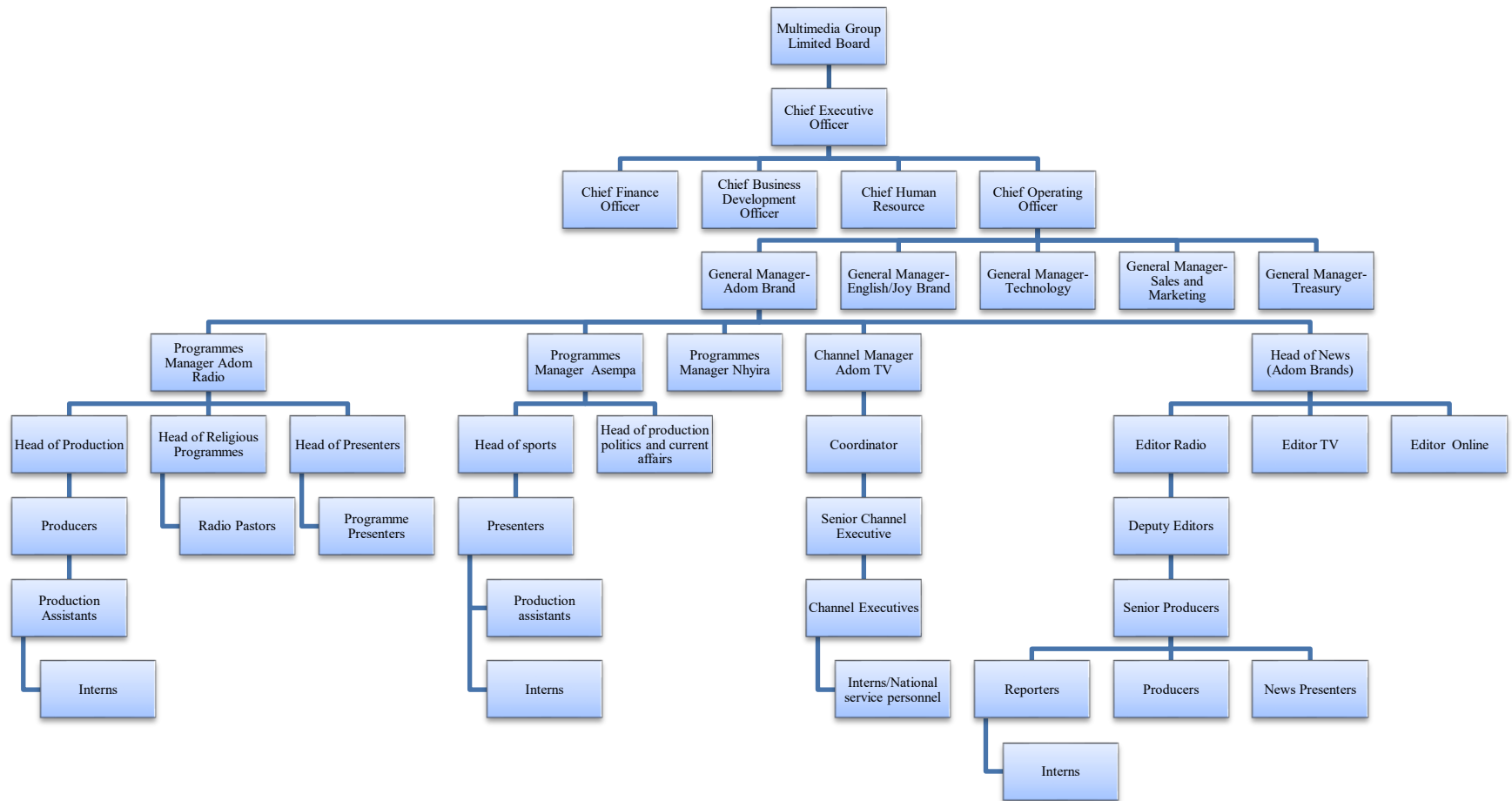
The leadership structure expands into specific units and brands. Under the Chief Operating Manager, the leadership branches into five general managers with an emphasis on the media clusters, technology, sales, and finance. Structurally, there is a general manager in charge of the Akan brands. These brands produce content in the local languages. The general manager focuses on creating products (contents) that position the Akan brands as competitive and profitable. The general manager works collaboratively with the sales and marketing team to monetize the product. He described his mandate as follows:

*I am in charge of the profit and loss, the P&L of the brands. I need to deliver competitive brands within my portfolio, market leading brands within my portfolio and brands must be profitable, that means I must make enough money over my cost. And even though I am in charge of the profit and loss, the way we are organizationally structured, the General manager in charge of the brand focuses more on the product. Because we have a general manager in charge of sales who then sells it and monetizes it. But we need to collaborate to be able to produce products that clients like, audiences want that clients will then ride on it and then make money. Per the structure, my focus is more on the product. I work with my team to develop the product which fits into our organizational mandate'*  
(General Manager Adom Cluster, MGL)

It should be noted that all five general managers and divisions work closely together to ensure the successful and smooth running of the subsidiaries, particularly when they must share resources like personnel, vehicles, editing, and recording studios, seeking budget approval, or getting sponsorship for their programs and events. Consequently, the MGL, as a media corporation, serves as an avenue for pooling business resources, including human, financial, physical, intellectual, and digital. Employees are employed under The Multimedia Group and assigned to a particular brand. Nonetheless, brand assignment is not necessarily a fixed assignment.

Figure 4

Figure 4: MGL Management structure



*Note. This chart represents the management structure of MGL. It outlines the hierarchical organization within MGL, specifically focusing on the leadership roles and their divisions.*

The Chief Editor for Adom News and Current Affairs indicated that by law (of MGL), position-related assignments are not fixed to a particular platform/brand; in substance and practice, assignment to a brand is fixed until there is a transfer or change in assignment. Positions such as journalists/reporters, producers, anchors/hosts, camera operators, and some technical roles constitute a pool of human resources for the MGL. Journalists/reporters, for instance, could report or write stories for both the English and Akan brands. Especially in cases where a particular story interests English and Akan brands, their stories can be used by any of the two newsrooms. Moreover, some presenters stationed at the Akan brands double as program hosts in the English brands. A.C.O., who is the chief editor for Adom News and Current Affairs, explained the crossover of presenters across sister stations.

*At times, we even cross over and they can be here for years. But your job description tells you that you... work for The Multimedia Group Limited even if you are paid at the Akan space. It is possible that sometimes you will be taken to the English brands. I am, with due respect, a key player in the Akan space. Even me, I can be moved to.... the English space. (A. C. O., Chief Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs).*

Nonetheless, Akan language proficiency plays a major role in Akan anchoring or presentation. In Ghana, journalists are trained in the English language. As such, all journalists under the MGL are expected to be literate in English. However, fluency in the Akan language is a requirement for Akan brand presenters/anchors. Generally, Akan brand journalists should have some degree of fluency in the Akan language, albeit not advanced, because journalists are trained in English. They are not expected to be able to read or write in the Akan language because all new scripts are written in English. Nonetheless, Akan presenters/anchors/hosts are expected to be able to read and write in the English language and speak the Akan language fluently. Through my engagements with some of the newsroom personnel, which was later confirmed by the Chief Editor of the Adom News and Current Affairs, I found out that some of the personnel had a

degree in Akan; consequently, they can read and write in the Akan language (specifically Asante Twi).

Physical resources like space, cars, equipment, etc., are centralized and/or shared. A typical example is the building. Of course, the corporate office and all the brands located in Accra share the same buildings (about 4 buildings located in the same vicinity) with office and space allocations made to these individual brands. Similarly, the Kumasi brands also share the same building. Space demarcation is done along platform lines. For instance, all the radio studios are located in one building while the television studios are in another. The other two buildings serve as offices for both corporate and general employees. MGL has branded vehicles for each subsidiary and sometimes service. For instance, since news is a service brand, there are branded vehicles for Adom News, Asempa Sports, and Joy News. However, sometimes, any of these vehicles could be used by any of the newsrooms. On July 26, 2021, I accompanied the Adom News crew to cover a press conference conducted by the Organised Labour (Ghana) regarding minimum wage and base pay negotiations. This event was held at the Ghana National Association of Teachers' Hall (GNAT Hall) in Accra. We used a Joy news-branded vehicle. On that same mission, there were two Joy News-branded vehicles because the English brand journalists were present also to cover the same event. While this was the norm during my observation study, corporate brought a rule that brands covering the same event should consolidate their assignments by sending just one crew to cover for the rest of the brands. The Akan newsroom editors vehemently kicked against this new rule, stating that language proficiency in the Akan space is very important, and since most English brand journalists are not fluent in the Akan language, live reporting can be a challenge. Also, even in cases where a reporter/journalist is fluent in both English and the Akan language, in practice, they realized that

such practice could cause a delay in both live reporting and news production. There are instances where they expend more resources than usual. Corporate later backed down on that policy.

#### 5.11 The Akan Cluster of the Multimedia Group Limited

The history of the Akan brands, also known as the Adom Cluster, started with Adom FM, originally an R&B station called Groove FM located in Osu, a suburb of Accra, Ghana. Groove FM basically played R&B music. It was owned by two brothers who were pilots. In 2001, Kwasi Twum, with backing from the Multimedia board, acquired 85% of interest in Groove FM, making Multimedia the majority shareholder. It is the only subsidiary under The Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) which does not have full ownership. After acquiring the Frequency (106.3), there was a name change from Groove FM to Adom FM. At the time of the acquisition, Groove FM was located in Tema in the Greater Accra Region. For purely business reasons and as Multimedia grew, Adom FM relocated back to Accra. Renaming Groove FM as Adom FM follows the Christian orientation of MGL. Adom means “grace.” The Programs Manager for Adom FM and Adomonline.com as well as General Manager for Adom Cluster under MGL explained the significance of naming as follows:

*Adom, in English, means grace. So we had a brand called Joy, which was doing a lot of tricks for us, so we needed to also find a name that if people are happy, then there must be some grace that is making them happy. Of course, the whole structure of multimedia is grounded on Christianity, so we have a catchphrase that we say in-house, “Christ at work.” Ours is Christ at work... So that you would also find in your subsequent interviews that there is a relationship between them. So we have Joy, then we set up Adom, and then we set up Asempa...- which is good news. So it tells you that there’s something divine or Christlike about most of the names that we choose. (Program Manager, Adom FM and Adomonline.com).*

*Adom means grace... I know that the ownership and the Multimedia has always been rooted in Christianity. So maybe out of the success of Joy FM and Love FM and the fact that out of grace revenue came. But again, Adom is a strong word... in Akan. People... want grace. We are very religious people... You know the name now is more than just grace. It means more things, it means the voice of the voiceless, it means the channel that*

*talks to us, it means the channel that helps us when we need something, speaks truth to power holds leadership accountable (General Manager, Adom Cluster, MGL).*

The other Akan brands (Adom Cluster)- Nhyira FM and Asempa FM, have corresponding

Christian-oriented names: Nhyira means blessing, and Asempa means “good news.”

MGL’s naming convention demonstrates a connection between media and spirituality, particularly in the context of religion. The concepts of grace, joy, love, blessings, and good news illustrate MGL’s spirituality and connection with the divine. They highlight that media are not just business entities but carriers of spiritual and moral values that align with audience beliefs, everyday practices, and aspirations. MGL’s core values and business model are fundamentally rooted in Christianity. MGL’s core value statement emphasizes, “Our business philosophy is anchored in the Christian faith.” The brand is defined by three main values: leadership, integrity, and community. This spiritual connection is captured in the catchphrase “Ours is Christ at work,” which reflects the integration of Christian principles into the corporation’s structure. For instance, MGL organizes an annual Prayer and Thanksgiving service where employees, friends, and clients gather to express gratitude to God. Additionally, the individual clusters hold similar Thanksgiving services separately. During my field observation, one such event occurred on July 16, 2021; the annual Adom Cluster Thanksgiving Service was held in the Adom TV and FM office. The service was led by the international Ghanaian evangelist Dr. Lawrence Tettey. It featured a prayer session, worship, praises, and a word exhortation titled “Seven Things You Should Never Forget in Life.” This Thanksgiving service was specifically for employees of Adom Cluster (Adom FM, Adom TV, Asempa FM, and Nhyira FM). Such activities reinforce the company’s dedication to inculcating spiritual values into their business and fostering a culture of faith.

Further, their Christian business philosophy suggests that spirituality is a link to attaining cultural, political, and social values. This perspective reflects the general Ghanaian context where the connection with the divine is valued and seen as a propellant for general well-being and self-actualization. Anderson Jnr. (2013) argues that, like Africans, Ghanaians are notoriously religious, and religion permeates every aspect of their lives. This is corroborated by the 2021 population census, where 98.9% of the population stated that they have a religious affiliation to either Christianity (71.3%), Islam (19.9%), traditionalist (3.2%), or other religion (4.5%) (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Thus, religion plays a vital role in shaping public expectations of governance and societal responsibility in the Ghanaian context, making it an integral part of the political landscape. Consequently, Ghana's cultural identity and related practices embody a strong affinity to religion and community.

Unsurprisingly, MGL and, subsequently, the Adom Cluster reflect Ghanaian religious motivations. It shows how media institutions, agents, and operations are intertwined with spirituality. So that media philosophies are crafted to resonate with the audience's cultural, spiritual, and social values that shape the identities of their audience. This intricate connection is achieved through carefully targeting particular demographic and psychographic audiences and tailoring programming that resonates with audience beliefs and experiences.

Adom TV and Adom FM cater to the same target demographic. Their primary target audience is an adult Christian female whose economic status is lower-middle to upper-class income earner who typically works in the informal sector. Her age range is between 19 and 50 years; she has children, has basic to secondary education, and is very religious (devoted to Christian activities like attending church and prayer events). She is interested in the news, politics, and sensational matters, and enjoys watching television for leisure. She has a fair interest in foreign news to the

extent that it affects her somehow. She seeks information on health, education, the economy, basic infrastructure, etc., and consumes social media content.

To diversify its offerings, Adomonline.com focuses on young people who are also interested in light stories and diasporic audiences. Adom Cluster clearly tailors its content to resonate with a Christian audience. This is exemplified by the organization of two major gospel events each year. The first is *Adom Praiz*, a gospel concert showcasing local and international gospel musicians. The second event is the Adom Carol Nine Lessons & Carol service. Renowned American gospel artists such as Ron Kenoly, CeCe Winans, Israel Houghton, Kirk Franklin, The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, Hezekiah Walker, and Travis Greene have performed at these concerts. Beyond such grand events, there is an array of religious broadcasts on TV and radio. For instance, on Adom TV, there are religious programs airing daily during various distinct time slots between 12:00 midnight and 1:30 as well as from 4 am to 5:30 am. Some religious broadcasts include Charismatic Anointing (usually a prayer session or bible teachings led by a pastor) and *Gospel Music Compilation* program, which features gospel songs. Adom FM schedules Christian-related activities like prayer and Bible exhortations from 12:00 midnight to 5:30 am. Additionally, the station features *Adom Live Worship*, a blend of gospel music, prayer, and Bible exhortations, and airs five days a week from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm. Other programs include *Breaking Yoke* and *Christ Vision*. These programs inspire faith and hope and prepare the audience for the day ahead by uplifting their spirit. Programming is an avenue for pushing the aspirational agenda in line with their mandate to inform, educate, and entertain. The channel manager for Adom TV stated that their objective is to be Ghana's number one station and station of Choice. As such, they strive to be the most creative and informative and, in terms of entertainment, present the most uplifting content in the Ghanaian language media space.

In addition to the explicitly defined Christian programs, Christian values guide the creation and selection of other non-Christian programs, like news and current affairs programs, and entertainment programming like telenovelas. The organization operates within a moral framework emphasizing ethics and integrity when producing news and political programs and choosing films and telenovelas. For instance, in the case of news, ethical practices are strictly adhered to. The channel manager for Adom FM and Adomonline.com mentioned that it was unethical to commercialize news, so they avoid commercializing news and refrain from associating with affiliate stations that are overtly partisan in character. Here, he shows the station's commitment to transparency and to keeping news reporting credible and trustworthy. However, when a company sponsors a particular news item, it ensures that it makes the audience aware of the sponsorship. Moreover, they usually play advertisements on the radio immediately after the news or include ad mentions at the beginning. Television news differs as it is segmented and combines visual and audio elements. Playing advertisements during news broadcasts is practical and strategic, serving as a distraction that helps maintain audience attention and provides them a break. In the case of telenovelas and films, Adom TV broadcasts shows that are considered clean and morally aligned with the general cultural values of its audience. They emphasize the "cleanliness" of the shows, avoiding programs considered profane. They prefer content that has moral lessons and minimal or absent sexual content, like kissing or sex scenes. If there are sexually suggestive scenes present, they must be subtle and not explicit, or they are scheduled for the late hours of the day. For example, *Ɔɔɔ Ahomaso* (Love Line/telephone) is an adult late-night talk show program broadcast on both Adom FM on Wednesdays at 10:00 pm and Adom TV on Fridays at 11:00 pm. This show discusses relationships, marriage, and sex,

reflecting the organization's approach to content that aligns with its moral framework while considering audience sensibilities.

Meanwhile, the operational philosophy of MGL reflects a tension between media, commerce, and spirituality. Even more prominent is the complex interplay of maintaining ethical standards, audience expectations, advertiser objectives, and financial imperatives. An even bigger question to contemplate is the extent to which the Christian values of MGL influence their hiring practices. Further, it reflects a broader media industry question of aligning commercial principles with profit, or as is the case with indigenous language media, finding a balance between social justice and profitability.

All four Akan-speaking stations are independent and are overseen by their respective program managers for the radio stations and channel managers for TV. The programs and channel managers report to the General Manager for the Adom Cluster (Akan Brands). The programs and channel managers handle the day-to-day affairs of the broadcast stations, including strategic planning, content oversight, programming, and scheduling. Each brand under the Adom cluster produces its own programs, except for centralized services like news, entertainment, and sports news. This phenomenon of centralized services will be discussed in depth in Chapter Six under production practices. Because Adom cluster brands mirror each other, their programs complement each other and are not in competition.

All the stations broadcast in the Akan language. The predominant Akan dialect used is Asante Twi. They have the same goals and objectives. The broad objective of Akan brands is to “build a strong market and influential and profitable brands” (General Manager, Adom TV). As the general managers indicate, the only difference between Adom TV, Adom FM, and Nhyira FM is that Adom TV is audiovisual, and both Adom and Nhyira FM are audio. Nonetheless,

there is an argument that the advent of the internet and social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube changes the premise that radio is characteristically sound/audio only. The General Manager for Akan brands and Program manager for Adom FM describes these broadcasting stations as mirroring each other.

*...Adom TV is just a reflection of radio unto TV. So when we decided to do tv broadcasting, then the decision was made that if you have Adom FM then it is just natural that you create a reflective brand that is tv... You would also find that our English brands, even for Joy FM, there is a creation of a Joy News channel more like a reflection of radio (Program Manager, Adom FM and Editor, Adomonline.com).*

*Nhyira was also actually set up in the mode of Adom FM but in another... geographical market. So you see that we have Nhyira which is operating just like Adom but sits in Kumasi and not in Accra and you will find that even for the English brands we have Love FM which is just like Joy FM but operates in Kumasi. (General Manager, Akan Brand/Adom Cluster).*

To indicate the similarities between the individual radio and television stations, the language used to describe the Akan brands is “family,” with each station commonly addressing each other as sister stations. This reinforces their complementary characteristics, which align with multimedia's general objective, which is to amass a large audience. In the words of the Channel Manager for Adom TV, the organization represents a cohesive unit and mutual support illustrated through the concept of family.

*It's one family. One word to describe is a family. Whatever we do they support, whatever they do Adom TV supports because it's one brand. Managers are always together in terms of meetings, in terms of programs, in terms of idea sharing. In terms of how to make audiences come because we are all targeting a mass market. So strategically when I get any client, the client benefits from my sister. When my sister gets (clients) they also benefit from me. (That's) the relationship we have. So the only difference is that each of us has a target and each brand has a slogan and each brand has a focus and each brand one thing they want to do with their core audiences but we are a family... We have similar programming. The only station in our Akan radio market that is a bit of a departure from the rest is Asempa FM. Asempa is a talk radio, in other words they don't play music (Channel Manager, Adom TV).*

However, Adom FM, Adom TV, and Nhyira FM differ from Asempa FM in terms of programming and target audience. Adom TV, Adom FM, and Nhyira FM are mass-market

female-biased generalist broadcast stations, while Asempa FM is a niche-based market radio station targeting the male population of Ghana and is the only talk radio station in Ghana.

Asempa FM does not play music, and it is the first sports and talk-only radio station.

Consequently, the Programs Manager described the Asempa FM brand as disruptive.

*...all talk all day. We don't play music again because we are a disruptive brand. We came to disrupt the status quo. It's the first talk only radio station in Ghana, and we still maintain that consistency. And that's why we are successful. Consistency, we don't follow the status quo. We do talk only from 6 am to 6 am on radio (Programs Manager Asempa FM).*

Asempa FM is considered the “male” counterpart to the other three Akan-speaking stations, with an audience composed of 60% male and 40% female. This distribution reflects the fact that sports enthusiasts, as well as socially and religiously engaged listeners, can comprise any gender. Asempa FM operates on three strategic pillars: sports, politics, social issues, and religion. The program manager at Asempa FM describes the target audience as “sports lovers, sports fanatics, and religiously and socially active listeners.” The Asempa FM Programs Manager stated,

*...our target audience; we operate three strategic pillars as a brand. One is the sports leg of the brand... We target sports lovers. and sports lovers because we make sure we don't only produce for sports fanatics but somebody who is a regular lover of sports. So we target sports lovers. We target religiously and socially active listeners- so those who are very religious and who love social stories, we target them as well. And then politics and current affairs, and news lovers we target them as well. Our strategic pillars are tailored to these specific target audiences (Programs Manager, Asempa FM).*

On the other hand, Adom FM is a talk and music radio station that features a diverse lineup of programming, including news and current affairs, music, sports, religious programming, entertainment, and innovative outdoor shows. Adom TV's programming consists of news and current affairs, movies, magazine shows, talk shows, sports, religious programming, and entertainment shows. Nhyira FM produces more sensational general programming, including news, entertainment shows, and talk shows. Adomonline.com provides news stories from Ghana

and across the world, ranging from politics, business, sports, entertainment, and lifestyle. It is the only Akan brand unit focused on providing news and content from Ghana and around the world, primarily in English. However, audio and or video content are usually in the Akan language. The other units focus on issues related to Ghana and the African region.

Despite this specificity of the audience demographics, the Adom cluster is conscious about evolving with its audience and attracting new audiences. All the general and channel managers acknowledged that there is a point in the life of broadcasting where the life of the brands can plateau. As such, they revise and review their programming per the changing and growing audience demographics. To address this stagnation in audience growth, they are transitioning from a fixed target audience profile to creating a pipeline of listeners aimed at capturing a large audience share. This pipeline of listeners approach suggests an understanding of the permanent state of flux of the audience due to the natural growth process and the wider impact of external factors, including social, political, cultural, economic, and technological changes. Consequently, the Adom Cluster considers its brands to be audience-centric. Audience-centric(ity) emphasizes two major phenomena: the transformation of indigenous language media and the pursuit of becoming an aspirational brand. Programming and personnel are the major strategies used to meet the aspirational desires of their target audience. The Programs Manager for Asempa FM offered an explanation of building an aspirational brand as follows:

*In recent times, we are trying to develop our brand into an aspirational brand. Generally, when people hear a mass market or an Akan or an indigenous language radio station, they think we are outmoded, illiterates, and uncouth. But we have gotten to a point where we think that even the young man in the village is aspirational. He wants to come to the city; he wants to create wealth; he wants to be rich; he wants to be influential. So, if those are the people you are targeting, then the outlook of your station cannot be outmoded. We are illiterates because we do Twi? No, we have to change that narrative so we are consciously building an aspirational brand at least to show in the*

*kind of presenters we put on air, their outlook, their branding because people look up to them” (Programs Manager Asempa FM).*

Audience-centricity implies that the Akan brands must be a model and a resource for audience self-development and actualization. Such transformational and aspirational objectives help shift public perception from indigenous language broadcasting as outmoded, illiterate, and uncouth to indigenous language broadcasting as desirable. In simple terms, radio and television stations should carry their audience along in their development and not leave them behind. As such, audience-centricity greatly influences program planning and selection as well as the business structure.

Programming is a major pillar for gathering the largest audience. Program creation is audience-centric. It is what the audience wants. As such, programming decisions are not only based on market surveys, they are also based on trends and what is popular. For instance, the program's Manager for Asempa FM shared that they have introduced a betting segment into their ultimate sports program because they noticed that betting was popular among the youth. Third party programming must fit the brand portfolio of the station before they can be granted airtime. *Time with Dr Phil* is a third-party health talk show program on Asempa FM. This health program is named after the host of the program whose name is Dr. Philemon Mensah. There are also religious programs, specifically Christian programs, hosted by pastors. The Programs Manager being interviewed continues to share insights into MGL's strategies,

*We are an audience centric brand. That's the multimedia culture. We are audience centric;... when you walk into my general manager's office, what you will see is that the economics of what we do is not in how much we produce but it is how much of what we produce is consumed. Because if you are not consuming, you are not in business. We are always audience-centric. What the audience want. If we study the trends and we say the audience love sports then we have to create more sports products (Programs Manager Asempa FM).*

The cluster system approach adopted by MGL helps them segment programming according to the needs of their target audience. The cluster system approach works on the principle of segmentation and symbiosis. By segmentation, as explained earlier, MGL has different subsidiaries structured along language lines where each brand/subsidiary has a specific program/genre emphasis and tailors their programming to a specific audience demographic in order to gather the largest audience. The cluster model deemphasizes/avoids internal competition and promotes a symbiotic relationship. The cluster model focuses on building strong brands in coordination with the other brands. Building strong brands rests on leading strong and unique individual products for each subsidiary.

The Adom Cluster manages its own creative process and produces original programs. Events are promoted as a cluster, not as an individual brand event. They describe themselves as content creators who create, generate, and produce their own content. Third-party content is minimal, especially on radio stations. Content generation is a collaborative effort in terms of planning and scheduling programming. The planning stage includes most of the various program/channel managers. This is strategic because the subsidiaries consider themselves as complementing each other, not in competition. Consequently, planning/selection and scheduling of programs are managed and scheduled to avoid competition and sustain large traffic for their flagship programs. For instance, *Ekosiisen* program (the phrase translates to "How did it end?" or "How did it go?" It suggests an inquiry about the conclusion of a situation or matter.) is Asempa FM's flagship program, just as *Dwaso Nsem* (this phrase translates to "Market issues".) is on Adom FM. Both programs are political and current affairs talk shows. However, *Ekosiisen* is a late afternoon program scheduled at 2 pm until about 6 pm, while *Dwaso Nsem* is a morning show that starts at 5:45 am until about 10:30 am. This scheduling tactic allows the sister stations

to complement each other and not compete. As such, they not only complement but have a symbiotic relationship. Each station is both an author/creator and a source of content. They have content-generating centers like the newsroom and the sports team, whose content production feeds all the radio and television stations. These centralized content generation centers are responsible for news and current affairs, entertainment, and sports content for the various brands. Internally, these centers are considered service centers because their production is used for programming. The Program Managers for Asempa FM clarify this phenomenon of service centers,

*Basically, we are content people so we deal with what goes on air in order to attract the largest possible audience which we can sell for revenue... We pick stories from; the newsroom becomes that content generating center where we all get news from. It's more like a symbiotic relationship. we pick news from there; the newsroom also picks news from the big interviews we do and they use it for the news. Same for our online platform when you check adom online majority of the stories will be stories sorted from Ekosisen and vice versa. So that is the system we have created you know to generate news content (Programs Manager Asempa FM).*

Such a centralized content service reinforces their symbiotic relationship and complementary nature.

Apart from the target audience and specific programs for individual brands, scheduling is a major strategy used to uphold the complementary role of the Akan cluster. Particularly for radio stations, flagship programs for individual stations are slotted at noncompeting times. For instance, Adom FM's most popular show, politics, and current affairs program, "Dwaso," happens on weekdays in the morning, while Asempa's most popular show, "Ekosii Sen," is scheduled in the afternoon. This scheduling decision is to avoid competition and attract as many audiences as possible to the station. At the same time, this scheduling strategy allows the Adom cluster to remain competitive and attractive. So they are the radio and television choice at every point in time. Radio programs are all locally produced. Program titles/names are mostly in the

Akan language. There are a few exceptions like “Work and Happiness,” “Adom Live Worship,” and “Burning Issues” on Adom FM, Ultimate Sports,” Fire for Fire,” and “Sports Night” on Asempa FM, and “Power Sports” on Nhyira FM.

For Adom TV, there are 3 categories of content. They are local content, third-party content, and foreign content. Ninety percent of the Adom TV content is local content, with 10% foreign content. Local content refers to materials that are produced or commissioned by Adom TV. The in-house local content includes morning shows, talk shows, reality, health, and sports shows. Third-party content is also local content, which is supplied by a third party. Third-party content on Adom TV is usually drama series or talk shows produced in the Akan language. Third-party content suppliers either buy airtime or collaborate with Adom TV and share the profit. Foreign contents are those purchased from other countries like India, Dubai, Turkey, Korea, and the Philippines. These are usually telenovelas, which, upon purchase, are dubbed from the original language into the Akan language. Telenovelas, which have been translated into the Akan language, are known as Twinovela. Thus, Twinovelas are localized/indigenized foreign content. The reason for buying from these countries is that their stories resonate with Ghanaians, and they are usually devoid of obscenities, kissing, and sex scenes. Most importantly, there is a moral lesson. These characteristics align with the Christian orientation of the station and its target audience. The dubbing process is a whole production on its own and requires a director, sound engineer, actors, translators, etc. There is a studio specifically for this dubbing production.

#### 5.12 Adom Digital Ecosystem: Digital First “Sloganeer”

The Multimedia Group has a “digital first agenda” policy. The digital first agenda is a policy on building a digital culture in The Multimedia Group. This digital policy is a practice of employee conscientization about the limitless possibilities of immediacy, reach, revenue

generation, flow of production processes and products, and access to circuits of production communication across Multimedia subsidiaries. Creative workers and producers, as well as “journalists under Multimedia, are supposed to write first for digital media and also for traditional media...” (A. C. O., Chief Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs). It is an internal acculturation process to streamline organizational production and products, as clarified in the following comment by the Program Manager for Adom FM and Editor of Adomonline.com.

*So digital first is more like sloganeering. It is not just for the fact that the thing goes there first that is not the reason we coined the term digital first. We have come to realize that digital leads in everything so for everything we do we want you to think digital first. Yes, of course, sometimes the content could go there first but we want you to think digital first not necessarily meaning the content must go there first but you must think digital first. So when you do your show and you are packaging it, you must know that digital is the most important part of all the things you are doing. So your content, no matter what, whether it is going on tv or radio, you must know that some aspect of it must be packaged as digital. That's why we coined the term. The term was meant to get people to align with the new vision of the organization that digital is the way to go... We want you [Adom employees] to be digital in all things... (Programs Manager, Adom FM and Editor, Adomonline.com).*

Further, the Program Manager and Editor added that the focus on digital is because “there is no boundary to digital content and digital content *creates the* opportunity for lifetime revenues and lifetime content. Once your content is on YouTube, it remains there forever unless something happens and Google says we are no longer going to use YouTube again.” The digital-first agenda is a policy that recognizes digitization as a tool of convergence, integration, speed, lifetime content, and revenue generation, archival, and supplemental systems. The digital-first agenda acknowledges digitization as capturing processes of converting analog information and moving manual processes to digital (Gobble, 2018; Brennen & Kreiss, 2014). Also, the process of digitization helps circumvent the limitations of broadcasting. The transitory nature of broadcasting makes it ephemeral, and its time-bound scheduling constricts space for more

programs. Digitization, as explained by one of the news editors, offers alternative airtime space for excess content supply and serves as an avenue for content aggregation and distribution.

*So multimedia has a policy... called the digital first agenda. Now this digital first agenda simply means everything you do- whether for radio, for TV, or for online- must find itself on the digital platform, simple. Now the story that you do sometimes cannot go as scheduled on radio or on TV. But there is never no space on the digital platform. The other part of it is that, that is where the consumption is high because we believe watching news, listening to news has moved on from being tied to radio or TV to consuming at your pace when you want to watch. You get more people, you reach more people and so yes that is the digital first agenda (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs).*

For instance, because news bulletins are time-bound, they are not able to accommodate all the news stories produced in the newsroom in a day. One of the Adom news editors commented that Adomonline.com provides the space for surplus or excess news stories. All things being equal, digitization enhances content storage and archiving. Its archiving affordance allows Programs to aggregate programs and make them available for asynchronous viewing where audiences can call or recall images at will (Lotz,2014). Newsmakers understand that news consumption is no longer bound to television and radio and has shifted to online. As such, increasing program access to the audience is the goal since widening audience reach is part of Multimedia's corporate goal. Following Multimedia's digital-first policy, several strategies have been deployed to implement this agenda, and these strategies involve digital platforms.

The digital-first agenda stands on four pillars categorized into the platform (online/website, and social media) and format (audio and video). The online consists basically of Adomonline.com and Myjoyonline.com. Adomonline is the online platform that serves all the Akan brands under Multimedia Group, while Myjoyonline.com serves the English brands. Adomonline.com hosts live radio, live TV, and podcasts. Twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, all programs on the four Akan brands are live-streamed on Adomonline.com.

Adom TV programs are streamed live on the website along with a posted daily program schedule. Adomonline is devoted to delivering a wide variety of soft and hard news on politics, sports, entertainment, business, lifestyle, local news, and foreign news. It was originally created as the digital wing of the Akan cluster of the Multimedia Group. According to the Editor of Adomonline.com, its main goal was to amplify traditional media content, that is, to give further online visibility to programs on television and radio. Adomonline.com has its own personnel who create, reproduce, and repurpose content. Journalists under Adomonline.com would monitor the programs on Adom FM, Adom TV, Asempa FM, and Nhyira FM to reproduce and repurpose them for their digital content. After the live stream ends, some programs are edited and posted on their digital platforms independent of the live stream. They monitor all their shows, including sports, entertainment, news, and current affairs. Nonetheless, Adomonline.com has morphed from merely reproducing and repurposing programs from the Akan brands to a news hub, content creation, documenting, and advertising hub. Adomonline.com writers and journalists source and create their own content. However, journalists of Adomonline.com work collaboratively with the Adom newsroom. In fact, they are part of the Adom newsroom.

On the social media front of the digital-first agenda, every Akan brand has its own social media platform operated and managed by its social media personnel. All the Akan brands have YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok handles, WhatsApp, and Telegram. While Multimedia recognizes YouTube as a social media platform, it places YouTube under video because of YouTube's affordances of dominant video streams and ease of sharing. Most importantly, YouTube's streaming and permanent nature helps overcome the transient nature of television and radio. Obviously, these social media handles are for audience reach and engagement. However, WhatsApp and Telegram play an important role in Adom news

production and production communication. By production communication, I emphasize communication that takes place among producers of content for broadcasting. WhatsApp is the major communication platform used by the Adom cluster to communicate within and across brands. There are various platforms created for news production communication. Usually, these platforms consist of journalists, reporters, producers, editors, program managers, and other executive members. As noted below, members of the Adom newsroom use the WhatsApp platform to exchange news ideas, news scripts, videos/visuals, and audio.

*We have Telegram also. We created a Telegram platform after one of those days when WhatsApp crashed. WhatsApp didn't work for a whole day. We created that platform and we realised most people are not on Telegram, so they couldn't even post their stories there for us to pick the news....So we maintained it as a backup in case anything happens... we have the bigger newsroom platform that's Adom newsroom, then we have the Adom TV reps, and that one is usually for TV. We created that platform because usually, when they put all the videos on the Adom newsroom. Then we have the affiliate platform. Yes, there's a multimedia platform that has everybody- every journalist. Some people are not journalists, but they are there by virtue of what they do. (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs).*

The WhatsApp platform creates the intersection between the English brands and the Akan brands. For news production, there is a multimedia journalist platform. This platform is made up of all journalists/reporters as well as personnel in news and current affairs programming under The Multimedia Group. Only stories at the intersection of English and Akan interest are posted there. Intersectional stories are stories that can appeal to both English and Akan listeners. Intersectional stories are usually national in character, like state addresses, education, health, fuel prices, disasters, etc. Podcasts, online (website), and YouTube are the main platforms for revenue generation. The social media platforms are leveraged for reach, not monetization. For online, there are banner displays, campaigns, and direct ad placements. Hence, WhatsApp and Telegram are significant for internal communication and collaboration, altering the news

production processes, and enhancing real-time exchanges of ideas. This collaborative effort allows for team integration while also entrenching a blend of traditional and digital media practices.

Audio digital is the third pillar of the digitization agenda. All radio products that air on the Akan radio subsidiaries of Multimedia group are streamed on Spotify and iTunes. Podcasting is an important leg of the digitization process. In fact, both radio and television programs are converted into podcasts. All dialogue-based radio and television programs/content broadcast live on Adom FM, Adom TV, Asempa FM, and Nhyira FM are edited and published in episodes on Adomonline.com under the Podcast directory. The polishing of these broadcasts includes adding advertisements, sound and music effects, and titles. Moreover, podcasting allows the Akan cluster to overcome the language barrier in digitization. Even though Adomonline.com is categorized under the Akan cluster, the language for publication is English, which corroborates research on English as the dominant online language. As such, podcasting allows editors to present content in the local language helping circumvent the language barrier in online communication. Nonetheless, the indigenous language, as oral, and the English language, as written, are regenerated in the online space. Except that orality in the digital space is not transient and therefore ephemeral. Instead, the archival nature of digital devices and platforms enables documentation of oral products. Consequently, the linguistic integrity of Akan programming is sustained and documented, enabling cultural continuity and reference.

The fourth pillar of the digital ecosystem of The Multimedia Group is the video digital. Here, audiovisual content from both TV and radio is streamed on platforms like YouTube and Facebook. All four Akan radio stations under Multimedia Group live stream their TV content as well as their popular and dialogue-based radio programs/content on Facebook and YouTube.

Radio programs like morning shows, sports shows, and drive time shows are live-streamed with visuals, and often, stills and soundbites are taken and posted on all the social media platforms and on Adomonline.com. Visuals are now included in radio news bulletins because of their presence on these visual platforms. As such, as one of the news editors indicated, it has become important and almost inescapable to consider and include visuals (pictures/images or videos) during news production for radio. Before, editors only thought about audio for radio production. However, currently, radio news producers must consider visuals in their production for their digital audience. So, while traditional broadcasting showed a clear demarcation between radio as an audio medium and TV as an audio-visual medium, digital media platforms like Facebook and YouTube have blurred this dichotomy.

The digital strategy of the Akan cluster under MGL shows a multifaceted digital approach that blends traditional media practices with innovative digital practices to enhance diverse audience engagement and efficiency in internal communication. The four pillars under the digital-first agenda illustrate a structured and comprehensive approach towards digital engagement. The digital strategy enables MGL to have an online presence to amplify traditional media content, broaden its content reach, audience engagement, and retention, and leverage streaming capabilities to counter the fleeting nature of live broadcasts.

## 5.2 Profile of Despite Media

Despite Media is the communication wing of the Despite Group of Companies and operates under a commercial mandate. Despite Group of Companies consists of five different lines of business: media, food and beverages, banking/finance, insurance, and real estate. Despite Media describes itself as a conglomerate consisting of a television station, an online news platform, and four radio stations. Despite Media started with Peace FM in 1999 and was

the first media outlet and private radio station in Ghana to broadcast much of its content in Akan, specifically Asante Twi. Initially, Peace FM was established to help the declining music industry in the late 1990s. With their emphasis on the local market came the desire to foreground speakers of the local Ghanaian language, thereby creating a platform that will provide interpretive opportunities for government communication, educate the public, and promote and preserve Ghanaian culture. Consequently, Despite Media's vision is to be a reference point in indigenous broadcasting in Ghana. Their mission is to serve the ordinary Ghanaian and to preserve culture. Their vision and mission are reflected in Despite Media's history as the first publicly recognized private media company to broadcast predominantly in the Ghanaian language- the Akan language. Despite Media was strategically founded to fill in the language and communication gap in radio and enhance access to political participation. It was to break the dominance of the English language in radio communication and take on the interpretive function of the media in Ghana. Despite Media believed that a section of the Ghanaian population looking for information in their mother tongue and in a language they can understand and relate to had been ignored. Consequently, the language gap in radio communication at the time reinforced Despite Media's desire to serve the ordinary Ghanaian. This gap is noted in the comments of the radio news editor who emphasized the significance of taking on the interpretive function of media, thereby promoting culture in the process.

*...we felt that the chunk of the Ghanaian populace ... is not served properly by the media. If you look at the Ghanaian population, about 70 to 80% speak indigenous languages. And if you take Akan for instance, I think about 70 to 80% understand a little Akan. Radio before then was wholly English, English! English! English! And you know that for us, those of us who had even schooled, sometimes, we want things done in our local language or in our own way so we understand it properly. English, after all, is someone's language. And so to bring radio to the ordinary person so everybody will feel the impact of communication. So that's Despite Media for you. So apart from that, we also felt that it would be a way of promoting the indigenous Ghanaian language- Asante Twi. Because if*

*we continue to broadcast in English and everybody hooks unto English few years to come, Akan will be extinguished. So we felt that apart from bringing radio to the ordinary Ghanaian we also found it prudent to preserve the indigenous language by the repeated use of it and the major use of it in all our programs (News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

To understand the significance of Despite Media's establishment and its role in bridging the disparity gap in radio/broadcasting communication in Ghana, attention must be given to the literacy trend at the time. Such contextual information also gives insight into understanding Despite Media's vision and mission statements and how it defines its target audience. The Ghana Statistical Service (2005b), in its 2000 census, defined literacy as "persons 15 years and older who can read and write in English, a Ghanaian language, or both" (p. 133). The census in 2000 showed that out of a total population of 18,912,079, about 42.6% of the population was illiterate (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005a). Within the literacy group, which is 15 years and older, the total population is 11,105,236, constituting about 58.7%, which is more than half of the total population. In terms of literacy trends, 42.1% were totally illiterate, 16.4% were literate in English only, 38.1 % were literate in both English and a Ghanaian language, 2.5% were literate in a Ghanaian language, and 0.9% were literate in other languages (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005a, 2005b). Approximately 44.6% of the literate population was excluded from radio communication and, to an even greater extent, from participating in governance. It is in this context that Despite Media was established to provide broadcasting communication in a language that the ordinary Ghanaian could speak and understand. So, the ordinary Ghanaian is one who has been linguistically marginalized in radio communication and governance.

This linguistic marginalization is national in character and possesses literacy (educational), economic, and democratic sensibilities. Linguistically, ordinariness is linked to the dominant and daily use of Ghanaian languages by most of the Ghanaian populace, as opposed to

the English language. While the 2000 census did not provide data on Ghanaian language fluency, the data on literacy supports Despite Media's recognition that quite a significant section of the adult population at the time did not have access to radio communication in their local languages and that there were those who desired to hear their languages used on radio. More specifically, even though there are many different Ghanaian languages in Ghana, a common attribute of Ghanaians is their ability to speak (at various levels of fluency) and/or understand the Akan language. In socio-economic terms, the 2000 census showed a correlation between education levels and the labor force, showing that educational attainment impacted the type of occupational choices. The census indicated that those with no formal education were heavily concentrated in private informal sectors of the economy, including agriculture, production (general laborers), and sales. Those in the private informal sectors do not have laid down labor regulations they follow or defined tax obligations, and where the majority have never had any form of formal education, with a few having up to middle school education. Specifically, they include "petty traders, street-side vendors, self-employed odd-jobbers and artisans, peasant farmers, fishermen and artisanal fish processors, street-side mechanics, and others" (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005b, p. 179). These sectors have the highest proportions of uneducated workers, while those with tertiary education are in professional and technical sectors like administration or management.

The informality of the Ghanaian languages is linked to the informal economic activities of most Ghanaians. Explaining who constitutes the ordinary Ghanaian, the radio news editor listed a job category that falls under the private informal sector. The ordinary Ghanaian includes the "market woman," "the trotro mate" (bus conductor), "the truck pusher," "the street hawker," and "the commonest on the street." Despite being entrepreneurial, these economic activities are often viewed as menial jobs for school dropouts. Thus, the public perception is that people

engaged in such activities are illiterate. Moreover, as the radio news editor indicated, these categories of people are not ordinarily considered in decision-making processes. In this case, fluency in a Ghanaian language and the inability to speak, read, or write the English language automatically marginalized Ghanaian language speakers from fully participating in governance. To get these people to participate effectively in governance, they need to communicate with them in a language they associate with and understand and speak fluently. Bringing radio to the ordinary Ghanaian provides a platform for the ignored Ghanaian population to participate in the democratic process. According to Despite Media, a major way of preserving culture is preserving the people's language. To preserve language, that language must be used repeatedly and at a higher frequency. Consequently, broadcasting in the Akan language provides the opportunity for daily repeated and major use of the Akan language.

Like MGL, Despite Media is audience-centric and aims to achieve a reference point status. The primary distinction is that Despite Media emphasizes local recognition in Ghana, while MGL seeks regional recognition across Africa. Undoubtedly, it is evident that Despite Media, through its subsidiary Peace FM, has already attained the reference point status. As indicated earlier, MGL established its Akan brand to compete with Peace FM, which is still doing very well in the Ghanaian media space. One key difference between the two corporations is their approach to audience-centricity. MGL focuses on audience aggregation and maximization from a business standpoint, aiming to enhance its commercial outcomes. In contrast, Despite Media's audience-centricity is rooted in a commitment to linguistic and cultural independence, reflecting a nationalist perspective. The political implications of Despite Media's approach to audience-centricity are clear and resonate with postcolonial nationalists' struggle to liberate themselves from British dominance. By focusing on the needs and interests of ordinary

Ghanaians, this approach is designed to empower citizens through access to vital information and active participation in governance. By prioritizing the needs and voices of the audience, Despite Media can address the population's governance and linguistic marginalization challenges and facilitate a platform of empowerment and democratic engagement in Ghana's political landscape. Consequently, for Despite Media, radio exists to bridge the communication and information gap created by language between the citizens and the government. However, as I will demonstrate in the following paragraphs, Despite Media's expansion aligns with the same business goals as MGL, although it focuses on providing more space for advertisers.

As a private enterprise, Despite Media started under a single individual ownership wholly owned by Dr Osei Kwame Despite. As Peace FM grew and became successful, Despite Media expanded its holdings from one radio station to four radio stations, one television station, and one digital platform. Three more radio stations were opened: Hello FM in 2004, Okay FM in 2010, and Neat FM in 2013. Even though Peace FM was established primarily to fill the language gap in broadcasting communication and promote culture, Dr Osei Kwame Despite, a businessman, believed that radio provides an alternative means for advertising and general marketing of goods and services. Radio, thus, serves the dual function of cultural promotion and commercial advertising. Unsurprisingly, Okay FM and Neat FM were explicitly established to absorb excess advertising surplus from Peace FM due to its success and to militate against space and time limitations. As Peace FM expanded and became popular, its programming became prime for advertisers seeking to reach the local Ghanaian market. The station owner decided to set up additional stations to solve the ad space scarcity on Peace FM. This expansion aims to create additional ad spaces for advertisers, broaden program offerings to meet audience interests and create new avenues for businesses to advertise their products. Thus, Okay FM and Neat FM

are considered extensions of Peace FM to absorb the surplus advertising from Peace FM's success in the media space.

On the other hand, Hello FM serves as the mirror image of Peace FM in a different geographical location. Hello FM is located in Kumasi, the capital city of the Ashanti Region. It was established to take care of issues peculiar to the Ashanti Region. The Ashanti Region is home to Asante Twi speakers. It is one of the two regions with the highest concentration of industrial and commercial activities and the largest city in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service 2005b and 2021). So, opening a mirror station of Peace FM in the Ashanti region is a commercially and linguistically viable decision. All four radio stations broadcast in the Asante Twi language and are fully owned by Dr Osei Kwame Despote. Despite Media's broadcasting expansion reflects a business motivation beyond linguistic and cultural independence. Essentially, this underscores the coexistence of culture and commerce.

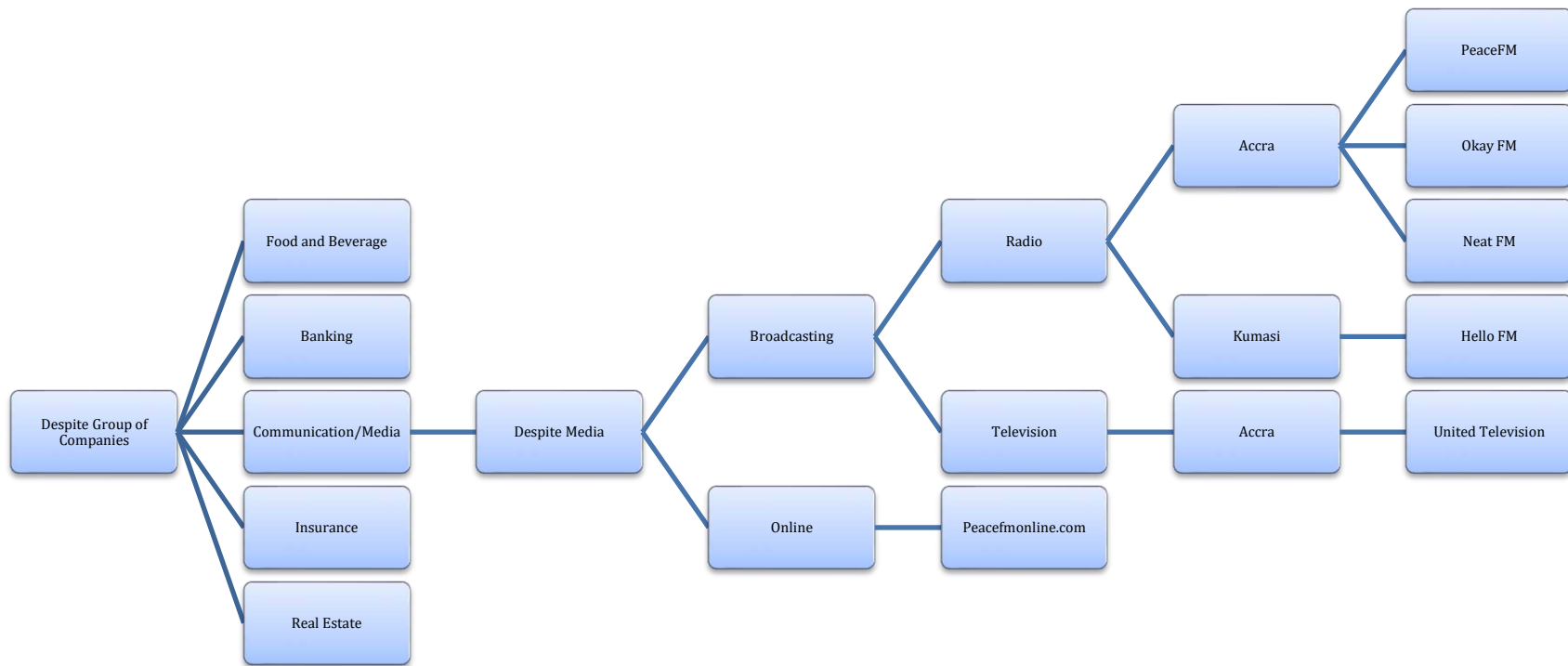
Along with the company expansion came audience expansion beyond the target demographic to include individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds. As stated earlier, the mission of Despite Media is to serve the ordinary Ghanaian. Thus, the target audience, as described by the company, is the ordinary Ghanaian, specifically middle to upper-income listeners. Despite the emphasis on the ordinary Ghanaian as discussed above, the audience profile has expanded to cut across all strata of the Ghanaian populace. While Despite Media did not deliberately seek to expand its audience profile, it attributes its expansion to the quality of radio they present to Ghanaians. Their target audience has expanded from the ordinary Ghanaian to "associates." The term associates refer to individuals who recognize the good work of Despite Media, share in their mission of projecting and preserving Ghanaian language and culture, and "feel they are being served properly" (News Editor Radio). Associates include those in academia, like professors and

students, and people from all walks of life. They have expanded and attracted “professors, farmers, academics, students and people from all walks of Life.” Furthermore, the editor for Peacefmonline stated that the website content categories target different people or groups. However, generally, Peace FM Online targets 18 to 50-year-old groups, including people of black African descent, student groups who are politically conscious, and entertainment and sports lovers.

As the company expanded, the ownership structure also shifted and combined sole proprietorship and partnership. While Dr Osei Kwame Despite owns all four radio stations, Despite Media’s digital platform (Peacefmonline.com) and television station (UTV) are co-owned. United Television (UTV), established in 2013, is co-owned with equal shares between Dr Osei Kwame Despite and Dr Ofori Sarpong. UTV’s license was acquired under U2 Company Limited (a salt mining company). Its programming is intended to inform, educate, and entertain. Management does not consider UTV to be radio on television. Instead, it is considered a separate entity with its own programming. UTV is free-to-air and has nationwide coverage. The TV station broadcasts its programs predominantly in the Akan language. PeaceFMonline.com is also co-owned, with about 70% of shares belonging to Despite Media. Originally opened in 2008, Peacefmonline.com was also considered an extension of Peace FM.

Figure 5

*Organizational Structure of Despite Media*



*Note. This chart shows the diverse range of holdings within the Despite Group of Companies, with particular emphasis on their communication/media wing: Despite Media. It presents the geographical distribution of the group's radio and television outlets, highlighting the various locations.*

Peacefmonline.com was primarily repurposed to reproduce content from Peace FM's flagship political morning program 'Kokrokoo,' for Ghanaians in the diaspora and those who missed the program in real time. The Peacefmonline.com news editor elaborated on the reasoning behind establishing an online news website.

*The general idea was that people wanted to access our flagship program, the morning show- KOKROKOO- on the internet. So, Peacefmonline came up with the idea that if people can't listen to KROKOKOO in real-time or interviews that go on the radio, how can they get to read about those interviews or even listen to that audio? So, when I joined Peace FM online, we were only putting up information mostly about the morning show. We scripted the interviews that were conducted on the morning show- the panel members or the resource persons came on the show and shared views about socio-economic issues. Sometimes, we just put the audio on demand on the website. So that was basically the idea. Over time, we realized that there were other shows on the radio that needed to be put on Peacefmonline.com. As of now, when you come to Peacefmonline.com, you can listen to our entire program for 24 hours. You can also have audio on demand for KOKROKOO, our flagship program and mid-morning program, and any Peacefmonline.com. You can access them all. (Online News Editor Peacefmonline.com, Despite Media)*

Initially, the content consisted of transcripts and audio recordings from the Kokrokoo program. All its written content is in English, with the audio on demand in the language it was produced in, usually Akan or English. Thus, linguistically, only UTV and Peacefmonline.com are the exceptions since they combine English and Akan in their broadcast and are co-owned.

Despite Media's branding strongly reflects the personality and philosophy of Dr. Osei Kwame Despite. Importantly, the media company is named after Dr. Despite himself. Moreover, the names of the radio stations are specifically a reflection of the person and ideologies of Despite. The naming system shows the personality and style of the company's owners. Peace FM represents decency and national cohesion. The name reflects the character of Despite, who is described by many Ghanaians and the radio news editor as "a man of peace." It also embodies

the station's overall mission of promoting peace in Ghana through its programming. On the other hand, Hello FM is based on the ubiquitous use of Hello as a greeting in telephone conversations. Okay FM combines the initials of the proprietor's first and middle names and the word "okay." O. K. stands for Osei Kwame. Neat FM is a testament to Despite Media's success and demonstration of quality, excellence, and decency in the broadcasting and digital space. United Television demonstrates the partnership and unity between Despite and Sarpong, who are business partners and close friends. The news editor at Peace FM elaborates on Osei Kwame's unique approach to naming his enterprises:

*Our boss has a unique way of doing his things, he wants something that the ordinary person can easily relate to. So he is a man of peace. So when he established Peace FM... Peace in Twi is Asomdwe- Asomdwe FM. So people also call us Asomdwe FM. Hello FM for instance we were, I remember we were in a meeting one day when we were looking for a name structure for Hello FM. And he said, but if you pick up a telephone now and you call somebody. How do you respond to that person or if you call somebody on the other side what would be the first thing the person says. Hello! And you also say hello! And the conversation starts. So if it's about conversation, then hello is the best. Then we come to Okay FM. O.K. is his name. You know he is Osei Kwame. Initially we were thinking O.K. FM. But if you want to say OK FM, it needs to rhyme a bit. So let's add AY to make it OKAY (News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

Nonetheless, the naming of these radio, television, and digital platforms appears to be counterproductive to preserving and promoting culture and language, as all the names are in English. However, considering the company's aspiration of reaching the ordinary Ghanaian, it adopts naming conventions that reflect simplicity and familiarity. Simplicity and familiarity are hallmarks of ordinariness. These names are mundane, easy to pronounce, and encapsulate important values for Ghanaians like peace, unity, community, decency, and excellence. So while the English names may challenge cultural identity linguistically, the names resonate with the everyday experiences and ideals of Ghanaians. The naming approach is a means of making Despite Media's brand relatable and accessible. This highlights the tension between Despite

Media's goal to connect with the ordinary Ghanaian and the importance of honoring local culture and language in branding. It proposes a practical approach to fostering an ideological commitment to cultural preservation, using the figures of Despite and Sarpong as a connection.

Despite Media has a mixed organizational structure that incorporates elements of hierarchical, divisional, and functional models. The board of directors comprises 3 members consisting of the owners of Despite Group of Companies and the managing director. The executive team responsible for daily operations comprises the managing director and general manager. Directly below the general manager are the Programs Managers for each brand under Despite Media and the News editors responsible for programming, scheduling and creating content. Below the Program Managers are heads of programs categorized into religious, social issues, music, and news and current affairs. However, the heads of news and current affairs are the news editors for radio, online, and television. The news editors have the same ranking as the Program Managers and work independently of each other. Under the news editor are the deputy editors, news producers, journalists and presenters, and interns. Below the program managers are the presenters, DJs, and producers for radio. Each brand under Despite Media is set up to operate independently, except in cases where they have centralized services like the radio news or when they must schedule presenters for both radio and television. Despite the autonomy of each brand, certain resources are shared and centralized. For instance, there is a centralized administrative system, including the directors, managers, and marketing manager, who oversee the entire operations of all the brands under Despite Media. All media brands under the Despite Media umbrella are located in the same building, except Hello FM, which is located in the central business district of Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. There is also the matter of Despite Media Employees, and the UTV news editor explains it as follows:

*The way it is structured, most of them [presenters] are already on radio. So they are the same people on TV because it is the same building, it is the same outfit. So they go on the radio, do a newspaper review, so obviously already have an idea about the stories that are making headlines (News Editor, UTV, Despite Media).*

All workers of the individual brands are employees of Despite Media. There is a clear demarcation between news anchors/presenters and journalists and reporters. News anchors work for both radio and television. Thus, they can be assigned to any of the radio and television brands. However, most news anchors/ presenters have a background in journalism. They also double as MCs for outdoor events organized by the brands. Their singular responsibility is to present. Consequently, most presenters host social, health, cultural and political programs, and news and current affairs programs. There are different sets of presenters responsible for entertainment and sporting programs. The Peace FM news editor and deputy editors double as presenters and hosts of news and current affairs programs. This is not the same for the UTV news editors. UTV news editors are responsible for news production and other news-related programming like “The Real News with Akrobeto”- a satirical news program that is based on linguistic malapropism. The show combines the English language and the Akan language. The show’s host is a malapropism news anchor who reads the news in English, but because of the host’s elementary proficiency in the English language distorts some words and phrases, creating humor. In fact, this show is very popular in and outside Ghana.

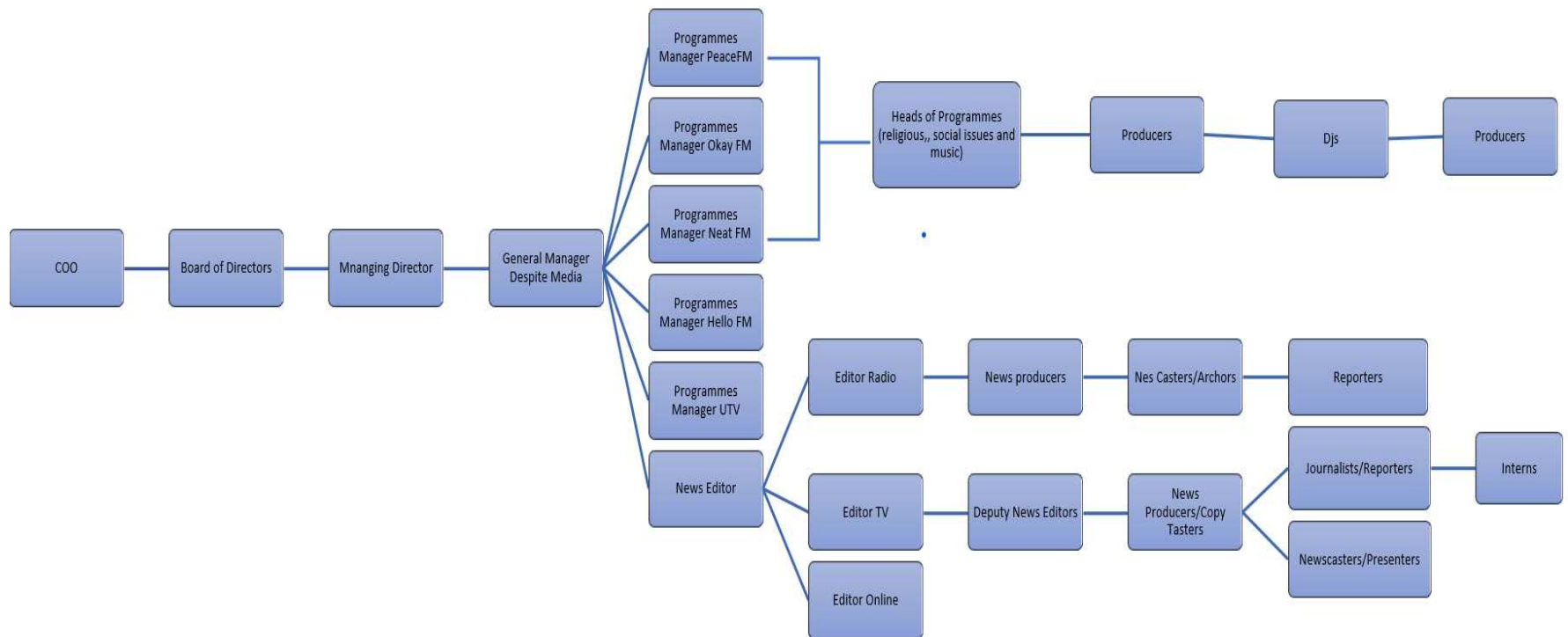
Peace FM, Hello FM, Okay FM, and Neat FM offer general programming with minimal differences. All the radio stations do news and current affairs (social, legal, etc.), political, cultural, entertainment, business, religious, and sports programming. In terms of news, news production is centralized and distributed from Peace FM. All the other three radio stations pick up the news produced by Peace FM and broadcast it simultaneously. Also, any national-related programming is produced by the Peace FM studios and picked up by the sister stations. Some

differences exist regarding current affairs programming, especially with their morning shows.

Peace FM and Hello FM broadcast the same morning show known as *Kokrookoo*.

Figure 6

*Despite Media Management Structure*



*Note: This image illustrates the management structure of Despite Media, providing an overview of the company's hierarchical organization. It highlights the various leadership roles and the specific divisions they oversee.*

In fact, Peace FM and Hello FM have the same programs with corresponding program titles. For instance, Peace FM and Hello FM's morning, sports, and entertainment programs are titled *Kokrookoo*, Power Sports, and Entertainment Review. *Kokrookoo* is produced by Peace FM and picked up by Hello FM. Both Neat FM and Okay FM produce their own morning shows. Their morning current affairs program uses a telephone interview approach instead of an in-studio panel discussion approach like Peace FM and Hello FM. As such, Neat and Okay FM focus on interview-cum-news programming. The differences in the stations exist in their specific areas of focus. Peace FM concentrates on programming related to national issues and the preservation of Ghanaian culture. Hello FM is geographic/regional specific, concentrating on programs and issues that meet the needs and interests of the audience in Kumasi in the Ashanti Region. Okay FM is more youth-oriented, focuses on entertainment, and plays local and foreign music. Neat FM has an extra touch of religious content. Peacefmonline.com is a news website and thus produces newsworthy content. They produce local, national, and international content. UTV also offers general programming, producing various local and foreign programs, such as news, dramas, telenovelas, films, and entertainment shows. It is considered the most local television station catering to local needs, as its tagline indicates, "It's all about you."

In this sense, radio stations have a supplementary relationship rather than a complementary one. As indicated earlier, the expansion of Despite Media to include 3 more radio stations was an issue of extension to create more revenue and variety in programming. Establishing a television station is a combination of meeting audience requests for a television station by Despite Media and a business strategy of entering the broadcasting scene when the Ghanaian public complained about the lack of programming variety on television. Consequently, Despite Media does not consider United Television as radio on television. Instead, UTV is a

unique station not just in programming but in language use and distribution. While Asante Twi is the predominant language, some of their programs are broadcast in English or a blend of English and Twi.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The political economy lens deployed through the industrialization of culture framework (ICF) (Haven & Lotz, 2017) has helped unpack the way the commercial indigenous language media industry is organized and structured, as well as how they are influenced by audience interests and state regulations. ICF emphasizes three key levels of analysis, two of which have been comprehensively analyzed in chapters 4 and 5: media mandate and conditions in which media organizations operate. The third level of analysis, which is everyday practices, will be explored in depth in Part II of this dissertation, with a focus on two programs: news programming and twinovela (telenovela) creation. By analyzing the media mandate and conditions of ILM operations, it is clear that Akan commercial ILM is politically and economically competitive, making it a strong and dominant media player in Ghana. With such strong dominance, they are no longer the alternative media but constitute the mainstream media and have contributed to media plurality and impacted the programming and structural disposition of the Ghanaian media landscape.

An analysis of ILM's mandate in Ghana reveals a strong correlation between the country's media legislative framework and the prevailing ownership practices. Analysis of MGL and Despite Media shows that commercial ILM in Ghana has a high ownership concentration based on private ownership. Ownership regulations stipulate that more than half of the shares (51%) in a commercial media company should be owned by indigenous Ghanaian citizens. However, based on the analysis of the ownership narratives from the research interviews, it can

be concluded that ownership concentration between these MGL and Despite Media is very high and exhibits 100% local Ghanaian ownership. Both media founders are businessmen (Cultural entrepreneurs) with more than 80% shares in their respective media companies. Partnership and share distribution are limited to the extent that for MGL, only Adom FM is co-owned, and only UTV and PeaceFMonline.com are co-owned for Despite Media. As a result of this high ownership concentration, the mandate of these companies reflects the founders' personal ideologies and philosophies. Consequently, it is not surprising that this has resulted in creating personality branding. The practice of personality branding emerges where media brands are associated with the owners' desirable personal traits or values, like social justice orientation, peace, advocacy, entrepreneurship, community, and benevolence

The personality branding characteristic of ILM highlights a neoliberal desire to help organize interactions between government and citizens, and foster institutional and individual entrepreneurship, choice, aspiration, and self-advancement. Notably, in the case of Despite Media, the personality branding around its owner, Osei Kwame Despite, rearticulates values of individual hard work, choice, strong work ethics, entrepreneurship, culture, and benevolence. It is common to hear Despite Media workers in their broadcasts commending and praising Mr. Despite, citing him as their source of livelihood and advancement, giving them opportunities to earn a living. Additionally, his rise from selling cassettes on the streets of Accra to becoming a business mogul and his benevolence through charitable endeavors are often recounted. For instance, MGL's core value stems from their Christian orientation and are thus committed to leadership, integrity, and community, while Despite Media's values are based on the founder's philosophical outlook as a man of peace and therefore focus on programming that promotes national cohesion.

In the case of Multimedia Group Limited, while Kwasi Twum is also described as a businessman and praised for his entrepreneurship, the branding is not centered around his personality. Instead, there is a focus on organizational identity rather than Kwasi Twum's achievements. The organizational identity is fundamentally influenced by Kwasi Twum's Christian orientation. The principles from Christian faith, like leadership, integrity, and community, are often at odds with neoliberal sensibilities, which prioritize self-interest and promote secularism, commodification, privatization, deregulation, corporatization, marketization, and the rule of the one percent. However, the idea that the connection with the divine constitutively promotes total well-being and self-actualization beyond capital and finances is worth assessing. This assessment is because the political economy theory of neoliberalism has highlighted the advancement of human well-being within specific social, economic, and political arrangements (Ryan, 1993) without much consideration for religious arrangements, which is at odds with secularism. Nonetheless, Hackworth (2018) writes that the rise of certain Christian sects, like the evangelical movements, has promoted some religious logics that have created faith-based rationales for supporting neoliberalism tenets like individual responsibility, deregulation, low taxes, and anti-welfarism. These ideas include dominion theology (the mandate to occupy secular institutions), Christian libertarianism (society should attain freedom within a biblical framework), and prosperity theology (the idea that God wants you to prosper).

Nonetheless, in both ownership narratives, the theme of entrepreneurship leading to personal success is rearticulated through the function of their media organizations as pushing the citizens and public interests. As shown in both the Akan Cluster of MGL and Despite Media, they exist to be a voice for the voiceless, serve the ordinary Ghanaian, preserve culture, and provide access to political power and participation in the practice of democracy in Ghana. While

neoliberalism suggests that the media serves as a medium for corporations, the condition in Ghana suggests that the media serves both the owners' and the audience's interests. In this case, personality branding and aspirational branding are intertwined. Personality branding simultaneously mirrors neoliberal tenets and serves as a catalyst for advancing aspirational narratives. Aspirational branding reinforces neoliberal desires of entrepreneurial freedom, skill, self-empowerment, and individual well-being (Harvey, 2005; Meyers, 2019). Sean Phelan (2018) argues that neoliberals consider media and cultural industries as primarily existing to make a profit for their shareholders. While Akan commercial media operates to make a profit, it is equally concerned with its audience's interest, thereby showing that cultural independence guarantees audience choice. The competitive and profit-driven nature of this media form seems counterproductive only to the extent that this media format has been imagined and idealized as inherently a public good and a public interest survival medium. However, the analysis shows that profitability drives the urgency for indigenous media to prioritize cultural expressions and representations and contribute to social transformation and reform. Therefore, ILM is not antithetical to profit or commercialization in the absence of external donor support or governmental assistance.

The interplay between ownership policy and economic motivations has also contributed to media plurality, content diversity, and local content promotion. Ghana's media policy is silent on the number of media outlets a corporation can operate or own, leading to a wide variety of media options for audiences. The absence of ownership restrictions has resulted in media corporations pursuing expansion through complementary business strategies in the case of MGL and supplementary business strategies in the case of Despite Media. These expansionist business models have led to MGL and Despite Media owning multiple media platforms, averaging five

radio stations, 2 television stations, and 2 news websites, which exemplifies cross- and chain-media ownership structures. This ownership structure enables these two media corporations to reach a large audience and provide various types of content. Having multiple media transmission platforms facilitates these two media corporations' compliance with regulatory requirements while at the same time enhancing their competitive edge through aligning their business objectives with meeting audience expectations through a variety of program offerings. MGL and Despite Media exceed the regulatory requirement for free-to-air commercial radio. Programs and their content are about 95% local. Inadvertently, both stations seek to promote Ghanaian culture, and because of this objective, content is locally produced. Thus, at all times of the broadcasting time, the minimum and maximum time frame requirement for showing local content is exceeded. The remaining 5% of programming consists of "Twinovelas" (indigenized telenovelas from Asia and North America) and African/foreign movies. This shows a careful adherence to media policy and, at the same time, a careful and creative balance between local programming and international influences.

The analysis reveals that MGL and Despite Media function as structurally bilingual organizations, utilizing both English and Asante Twi—the dominant and economically viable languages—across their various broadcasting (TV and radio stations) and digital platforms. However, while *Despite Media* operates primarily a structurally monolingual broadcasting system, MGL operates a bilingual broadcasting model. This means that for Despite Media, all their television and radio stations predominantly broadcast in Asante Twi. In contrast, MGL operates television and radio stations that exclusively utilize the English language, as well as television and radio stations that are dedicated solely to broadcasting in Akan. Nonetheless, both media corporations use English for their online digital platforms. The multiple media platform

structure does not mirror the multilingual tapestry of Ghana's society. Evidently, there is a representational linguistic gap between the organizational reality of these media corporations and the actual multilingual character of Ghana's population. Given the structural differences in language use and disparity in language representation, it is important to assess the implications of the media's legal framework and organizational structures on ILM's roles within a complex linguistic landscape. This disparity raises critical questions like, does ILM's political and economic competitiveness undermine its social justice, advocacy, and transformative orientation? Or how does the complex interplay between media legal framework, ILM organizational structures, media plurality, and content diversity address the issue of language marginalization and subjugation? Can profitability coexist with advocacy for marginalized linguistic groups?

Despite the bilingual and monolingual broadcasting structures of these two media corporations along the two dominant languages in Ghana- Akan and English-, the operational reality reveals that these Akan commercial ILM exhibit a distinctively bilingual and multilingual character. Beyond the structural setup of these media entities along linguistic lines, their daily operations demonstrate a simultaneous use of predominantly Asante Twi, English, and various Akan dialects alongside other Ghanaian languages. These organizations function effectively by incorporating both structural and operational bilingualism. As I will show in the production section of this dissertation, the production practice in news making and dubbing of telenovelas is primarily in English and Akan. However, codeswitching is prevalent among the personnel in the discharge of their duties. For instance, in my 60-plus days present in the newsrooms at MGL and Despite Media, it was not uncommon to see media personnel switch from one language to another when communicating ideas in the newsroom or at the transmission stage when

presenting a show. In the dubbing of telenovelas, code switching played a crucial role in preserving humor and creating a connection with the audience. This structural feature of these two media corporations is not arbitrary; it is tied to the complexity of the media's role of navigating and aligning economic viability, cultural significance, and public good. This balance is necessary for establishing a national identity for these organizations.

Consequently, the operational and structural strategies combine to enhance these media corporations' national character and translational density. The MGL-Akan cluster and Despite Media share a national vision, meaning they desire a national audience. The television stations owned by MGL and Despite Media have nationwide coverage. In contrast, their radio stations are geographically restricted to administrative regions. This difference in geographical reach between television and radio broadcasting in Ghana is fundamentally the product of the legal provisions that restrict urban and commercial FM stations to a 45km coverage radius. This highlights the importance of regional considerations within the radio landscape, emphasizing the distinct regulatory environment that shapes the accessibility and dissemination of radio content across various locales. However, because of their affiliate system, some of their radio programs, like news and morning shows from MGL and Despite Media, transcend administrative regional boundaries, creating a semblance of near-national reach. Additionally, the audience profile of MGL Akan cluster/Adom brand and Despite Media emphasizes a cosmopolitan mix including Ghanaians from various ethnic, educational, religious, and economic backgrounds. Therefore, despite language being a unique marker of indigenous media in Ghana due to the colonial legacy, a contemporary assessment of ILM must transcend a monolingual analysis and embrace the changing media landscape.

The structural strategies employed by MGL and Despite Media to achieve a national character produce an intriguing feature which I have termed translational density. The concept of translational density refers to the ability of these media corporations to not only translate social, cultural, political, economic, religious, material, and ideological events and practices but also their capacity to transpose/invert and simultaneously encompass normative and hegemonic textualities. Translational density is a complex system of switching between languages, contexts, ideologies, orthographies, and oralities. This feature highlights the significant role ILM plays in shaping and mediating discourse within contemporary society. This concept is enhanced through the framework of heteroglossia, which emphasizes the coexistence of multiple and heterogeneous discourses irrespective of their potential for harmony or discord. In the first place, the tensions that arise from the organization's language choice and the principle of indigenous media suggest a continued marginalization of lesser-known and economically nonviable Ghanaian languages. However, the potential for language as a conveyor of culture, albeit across different cultures, cannot be underestimated. Scholars like Chantal Zabus (2007) emphasized this point, stating that "language, in its tropological and epistemic structure is an expression of culture...." (p.4). Hence, the translational density character shows how media corporations utilize local language media to navigate, translate, reorganize and integrate various media discourses and human experiences.

This perspective supports the ideas of indigenization in literature, and accented film in media studies is attained. Both concepts articulate the capacity of European or colonial languages to express colonized or African cultures. Similarly, for managers of these media companies, Akan can convey the nuances of the different ethnic groups and their cultures. This outcome is exemplified in the children's music and cultural talent competition reality shows on Adom TV

and UTV, which showcase the diverse ethnic cultures of Ghana's administrative regions. Adom TV's children's music reality show is titled "Nsromma Reality Show" (Nsromma means Stars), which focuses on music and some aspect of Ghanaian culture. Meanwhile, UTV presents a kids' cultural reality show titled "Odehyee Ashasee," which translates to "The Origin/Beginning of a Royal. The content of these programs exhibits the different cultures of various ethnic groups, with the Akan language serving as the conduit for showcasing the diverse ethnic groups and their cultures. As such, the Akan language is a conduit for exploring and teaching about the heritage, history, identity, and culture of other ethnicities. Translation is imbricated and assumed to be constitutive of the intermediary role of the media through their transmission and dissemination of information. This point will further be examined in the section on news production and dubbing of telenovelas, which alternate and are constitutive of English and Akan languages, orality and written expressions, as well as normative journalistic practices and the traditions of Akan folklore and the cultural concept of news.

Moreover, the foundational philosophies and principles that have given rise to these two dominant media corporations are intricately woven together with secular, cultural, and religious imperatives. This complexity renders the task of isolating these ideological imperatives particularly challenging. In this scenario, commercialization and profitability seem not to oppose public good and interest since both go hand in hand. It suggests that while neoliberalism typically emphasizes self-interest and profit, in the context of Ghanaian media, there is a dual focus on entrepreneurship and serving the public interest. The context of Ghana's media ownership policy reveals several key findings that underscore the complex interplay between media plurality, cultural representation, and linguistic diversity. The findings further imply that media corporations can successfully balance profitability with local content promotion.

## Chapter 6: Akan Newsroom Production Practices

### 6.0 Introduction

Ghana's socio-historical and cultural contexts inform the philosophies that influence Akan newsroom journalistic practices and routines. As previously indicated, the historical trajectory of media in Ghana, particularly concerning indigenous language media (ILM), can be delineated into three distinct phases of development. The colonial phase can be generically described as the introductory and shadowing phase. Mass media introduction and, subsequently, the beginning of indigenous language journalism began as a shadowing of English news production by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). The shadowing of colonial news production meant that the BBC set the agenda, direct translation and reading of news scripts into the local Ghanaian languages, and strict surveillance under the colonial administration. The post-independence phase was characterized by government control and monopoly, which emphasized national development and was linked to the total liberation of the African continent. The liberalization/contemporary phase is characterized by private ownership, commercial mandate, and regional and community radio. The contemporary landscape of ILM production in Ghana is marked by a confluence of elements representative of all three phases of its development.

So, differences are drawn between English-speaking media production and practices and local language or indigenous language media production, programming, and journalism. In this chapter, I focus on the practice of journalism and the process of news production. First, I provide an overview of Adom Newsroom and Despite Media Newsroom, focusing on their operations, news dissemination practices, and locations. Second, I explore the socio-cultural understanding of news and journalism, highlighting the influence of Akan folkloric traditions on contemporary

Akan news practices. Lastly, I discuss the guidelines for newsrooms and the news production process, which include everything from conducting an editorial meeting to presenting the news.

### 6.1 Overview of Adom Newsroom and Despite Media Newsrooms

Both Adom Newsroom and Despite Media Newsrooms have similar news-making practices and routines. However, as stated earlier, they come to the news-making process from different perspectives, which impacts their newsroom routines. Adom News and Current Affairs (Adom newsroom) is a converged newsroom where TV, radio, and digital merge. The Adom newsroom is responsible for generating news content and current affairs programming for all the Akan brands: Adom FM, Adom TV, Asempa FM, Nhyira FM, and Adomonline.com. Radio news is broadcast from the Adom FM studios and picked up by Asempa FM, Nhyira FM, and over ninety affiliate stations across Ghana. News content produced in the Adom newsroom is published on Adomonline.com. Adomonline.com journalists pick news scripts from the Adom Newsroom and upload them to the Adomonline.com platform. Adomonline.com is the tool for executing Multimedia Group's digital-first agenda within the Akan cluster. Consequently, Adom News and Current Affairs is regarded as a centralized service unit that feeds and oversees all Akan cluster news and current affairs content.

In contrast, Despite Media has three separate news production divisions: Peace FM Newsroom, UTV Newsroom, and Peacefmonline.com Newsroom. Each of these newsrooms has its own journalists and reporters. Nonetheless, Peace FM newsroom is equally a centralized news production site. The news generated from Peace FM is picked and transmitted by Peace FM, Neat FM, Okay FM, Hello FM, and over a hundred affiliate stations. Although radio, TV, and online news-making/production are decentralized and independent, they follow similar procedures and adhere to the same editorial guidelines.

While Adom Newsroom transmits news three times daily, both on radio and television, Despite Media transmits news four times daily. Both organizations transmit two types of news- the major news bulletin and news brief bulletins; they have the same time schedule and time frame for their radio news. Both organizations have the morning news at 6 am (half an hour), midday news at 12 noon (full hour), and evening news, which is the main bulletin at 6 pm (full hour). The morning news is a repeat of the previous evening's news stories. However, for prime-time news and late-night news, UTV broadcasts at 6:15 pm and 10 pm. Moreover, under Despite Media, Hello FM, which is in Kumasi, produces its own local news, which broadcasts at 3 pm daily. The *Akan news @ 3 pm* on Hello FM is only for Hello FM, and it is in addition to the other 3 scheduled news bulletins transmitted from Peace FM studios. Peace FM news is labeled Akan News, accompanied by the specific time reference indicating the schedule of the news. For instance, the main bulletin is titled *Akan News @ 8 pm*.

In addition to these major news bulletins, both organizations have news brief bulletins (news in brief) produced only for television. Adom TV's news, in brief, is a 3 to 5-minute news bulletin transmitted during weekdays in between programs at 9:15 am, 1:55 pm, and 3:55 pm. It is labeled *Adom Kaseɛ Tau* (*a direct translation of News in brief*). United Television (UTV) produces two sessions of news in brief lasting for about 15 minutes per brief bulletin. The news in the brief bulletin is called "Dawuro," which translates as announce or advertise, and it is also the Twi word for Gong-gong, a Ghanaian indigenous instrument used in traditional communication and information systems to call the attention of the community to action. *Dawuro* broadcasts happen in the morning at 10:30 and afternoon at 3:30 pm each day. The major news bulletins have two presenters while the late news takes a discussion format with only one presenter moderating the discussion on some selected news stories of the day. The morning

news is a repeat of the previous evening news stories. Usually, Adom radio news has one or two news anchors who present the news, while Adom TV news is often anchored by only one presenter. For Despite Media, the major news bulletins on both radio and television have two presenters. However, the late-night news transitions from a news presentation by two anchors into a discussion format with only one of the presenters moderating the discussion on some selected news stories of the day.

#### 6.11 Space and location

The Adom Newsroom is an open shared space for Adom News, Current Affairs, Adomonline.com, and Adom TV. The newsroom is home to all Adom news journalists and presenters, the chief editor, senior editors for radio and television, news producers, scriptwriters, and Adom Cluster social media managers. There is a demarcation that separates the newsroom from the Adom TV and Adomonline.com personnel. This demarcation is created using transparent glass, which facilitates easy communication between the units. Privacy is nonexistent. This open layout model allows for quick and easy assembly and collaboration among journalists and presenters, fosters informal and formal communication and meetings (both editorial and sometimes management meetings), easy movements, surveillance, and easy access to technical and technological infrastructure. All essential human and technological infrastructure for news production, editorial work, journalism, and news presentation is housed in the Adom newsroom, except for the news studios, which are located outside the newsroom building. There is a designated call/telephone booth for conducting all telephone interviews. When I visited the Adom Newsroom in 2021, both the English and Akan clusters shared the same voice recording and visual editing studios. However, when I returned in December 2022, a new voice recording studio had been installed in the newsroom. Additionally, the computers in

the newsroom were upgraded with software for video editing tailored for television news producers. As a result, all news-making infrastructure is now located within the newsroom.

Peace FM newsroom has a crescent-shaped layout. The layout uses a partial open concept where the offices belonging to the newsroom have doors always open into the cubicles. The TV newsroom has a square layout with indoor offices at the opposite side of the entryway. There are only two demarcations: the indoor offices and an open layout. The open layout has desks set against the walls, creating an empty open space in the middle of the newsroom. This allows for easy movement and collaboration. There is no privacy except for the offices for the editor and deputy editors. The newsrooms house editors, deputy editors, reporters, journalists, news producers, and interns. The camera people and visual editors are also in the TV newsroom with their equipment and visual production tools. Both newsrooms have a whiteboard; however, in the Peace FM newsroom, the whiteboard is located in the editor's office, where the editorial meeting takes place. The printer is located in the editor's office.

Both Adom Newsroom and Despite Media newsrooms have similar infrastructures. The newsrooms are equipped with computers, landline telephones, printers, and radio sets. In the Peace FM newsroom, the television monitors were few and were usually off, unlike the Adom newsroom, which had multiple above-the-head television monitors facing different directions and were always turned on. These television monitors in the Adom Newsroom are set to different television channels, both sister stations and competitor channels. Internally, Adom TV and Joy News are constantly on, and externally, there is Ghana Broadcasting Corporation(GBC)/Ghana Television (GTV), United Television, and TV3. Occasionally, these competitor TV channels are switched to other television stations. The radio set can be tuned to any of the Akan cluster subsidiaries. However, it is mostly tuned to Adom FM, and it is usually

on low volume for the most part of the day except during news hours when the volume is turned up and lowered again after the news. Interestingly, the UTV control newsroom had about four separate television monitors used for surveillance purposes.

The television monitors and radio sets are surveillance infrastructures. Internally, news editors use these devices to monitor on-air news, news anchors, reporters, and current affairs programs. on July 12, 2021, I observed the head of Adom News and Current Affairs for the Akan brands correct a journalist on a telephone call immediately after listening to the afternoon news bulletin on the radio. I entered the following into my fieldnotes:

July 12, 2021

*The chief editor and head of Adom News and Current Affairs for the Akan brands, A. C. O., spoke to a journalist on the phone to correct his use and pronunciation of the word “Asante.” The reporter had said “Ashanti” instead of Asante. He corrected the reporter, saying the correct pronunciation was Asante Mampong, not Ashanti Mampong. He added that Asante Mampong implied the Asante region. His argument was that if the whites cannot pronounce Asante, how can a Kwawu man say Ashanti instead of Asante? In addition, he told the reporter that part of journalism is to educate so journalists must pronounce words accurately. The goal of management is “to do what is truly Akan and African.” (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom)*

The devices also serve to keep tabs on their competitors to monitor their news and current affairs programs, but also for informational purposes.

#### 6.12 Newsroom Labor Structure

One of the editors in the Adom newsroom describes the newsroom labor structure as a pyramid. From the top to the bottom of the pyramid are the senior editor, two editors, radio and television deputy editors, radio and television producers, reporters/journalists, presenters/anchors, and interns. The senior editor is also the head of the News and Current Affairs of the Akan brands and oversees that department. The other two editors provide guidance for the newsroom and news production on radio and television. Their tasks include selection of

news stories, editing scripts for both radio and television, arranging news stories, writing news slacks for television news (the subtitles you see), assign tasks to reporters/journalists for coverage (includes knowing who to cover what the capacity of the reporters to do some assignments or otherwise), participates and contributes to current affairs programs on the various Adom cluster decisions topics, angles for discussion as well as resource persons for these shows. The editors work closely together but have a division of labor arrangement where each editor focuses on radio news or television news while at the same time contributing to news production for each platform and stepping in in the absence of the other. There are also two deputy editors each assigned specifically to radio and television.

The newsroom has been compartmentalized. Adom newsroom calls these compartments Specialized desks while Peace FM newsroom calls them “desks”. Desks are areas of interest or focus on a specific subject matter like politics, business, sports, religion, culture, entertainment, social issues, foreign news, court and legal reporting, finance and health, etc. Each reporter belongs to one or more of these desks. Consequently, a new story idea will be assigned to a reporter belonging to the desk on the story’s subject area. All personnel in the newsroom belong to at least one of these specialized desks.

## 6.2 Newsroom Guidelines

I begin this section by briefly foregrounding the values, principles, and guidelines that shape newsroom production practice and routines in relation to editorial policies and judgments as well as journalistic routines. Adom Newsroom, Peace FM, United Television (UTV), and PeaceFMonline.com all adhere to the same guiding principles. These include editorial independence, fairness, balance, unity, accuracy, neutrality, secrecy, discretion, and truth. They prioritize minimizing harm, objectivity, decorum in language use, trust, credibility, privacy,

serving the public interest, and protecting children and vulnerable individuals. Additionally, both editors from Adom newsroom and Despite Media stated that they emphasize transparency and accountability among other principles. While all the editors are guided by similar principles, the lens through which they attend to the discourse on values, principles, guidelines, and ethics is different. Adom Newsroom's outlook emphasizes journalism as a global vocation with global and local applications and implications. The glocal perspective on the practice of media and journalism is also a result of Multimedia's vision of becoming a world-class media hub. As the radio editor in Adom News and Current Affairs emphasizes,

*Journalism itself is a global kind of vocation that is practiced everywhere. There are standards; there are ethics; and there are legal consequences because you are going to talk about people. You are going to talk about events. You are going to talk about happenings in your country, your society, your community and beyond. So you need to be very factual. You need to be very factual to feed your numerous consumers with... factual information. So all over the world, the International Federation of Journalists, Journalist without Borders, and other international organizations have crafted codes of ethics. So, Adom has localized it here to fit into our circumstances so that we ensure that their practice will not cause problems for the newsroom, the individual, the organization and the country as a whole (Radio Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

As a global vocation, the geographic-specific practices of journalism are influenced by the global governance of journalism. Such influence, directly or indirectly, works through international governing bodies and professional associations. Adom newsroom editors asserted that being part of professional bodies like the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA), which is a member of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), automatically links Adom newsroom to the global governance of journalism. They mentioned that all their journalists belong to GJA. For that reason, the precepts of GJA are binding on their practice of journalism in the newsroom. At the corporate level, the Multimedia Company belongs to the Ghana Independent Broadcasting

Association (GIBA)<sup>35</sup> - a UNESCO-recognized association of “authorized and operational non-state-owned, private broadcasting organizations” responsible for promoting high professional and ethical standards amongst media practitioners and broadcasters. The codes of conduct for these professional bodies and associations are largely similar and interconnected. Additionally, a TV news editor clarifies that when creating the Multimedia Bye Laws, the company sourced and integrated content from various sources, including multiple professional organizations and individual media outlets such as the BBC:

*They are coming from all around. We have adopted some. We have created some. I'm actually trying to search for our manual. It was adopted from the BBC. We adopted and we adapted. We always say Multimedia Group Limited is a world-class media house. So if you are going to continue being called a world-class media house, you must do your things according to world standards... (TV News Editor Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

The Multimedia Bye-Law is a manual that governs newsroom and programming production, and it contains guidelines on media roles and responsibilities, production techniques, editorial policies, and standards of journalism. The idea behind adopting and adapting is to ensure that the Multimedia Bye Law meets global standards while also attending to the specific conditions of Ghana. For instance, in the case of language and security, the Adom newsroom editors pointed out that they had to consider societal norms and conventions as well as the political situation in Ghana. One of the editors in Adom News and Current Affairs read from their Multimedia Bye Law stating,

*So let me read the section on language. Section 5420 says “the effect of strong language depends on the choice of words, the speaker, and the context. Different words cause different degrees of offense in different communities as well as different parts of the world. A person's age, sex, education, employment, faith, nationality, and where they live*

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<sup>35</sup> Their code of conduct has 18 articles and covers themes such as professionalism, objectionable broadcast material, bribery and corruption, integrity, editorial independence, free speech, public education, misrepresentation, pay news content, copyright and plagiarism, hate, incitement and insulting speech, etc. (GIBA, 2016).

*may all have an impact on whether or not they might be offended.” So if you come down it says “strong language can mostly likely cause offense when it is used gratuitously and without editorial purpose and when it includes sexual swivets, terms of racists or ethnic abuse in terms of sexual and sexists abuse, or abuse referring to sexuality.” Another thing is the language, we cannot say penis in the raw form in the local language on air, as it is done in English. (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs).*

Despite Media also has a similar orientation about language. The radio news editor articulated a similar viewpoint, explaining that

*You cannot use unprintable language. You can’t use abusive language and stuff like that. ...let me give you this example: the private parts of a woman, you can’t go and sit on news and say the private parts of the woman. You won’t do it... So language policy is strong there. And then you don’t go and use hate speech no matter your preference. We understand that we are working with people. (Senior News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

MGL and Despite Media have a comprehensive approach to language use in the media. They prioritize cultural sensitivity, ethical considerations, and adherence to professional standards to foster respectful media communication in the Ghanaian context. They show an awareness of Ghanaian societal norms and the impact of language on public discourse and proceed to exhibit responsibility toward their audience. Additionally, the political situation in Ghana creates a power imbalance where the total protection of journalists and their sources cannot be promised. This means that sometimes editors cannot assure reporters and their informants' total security. In such instances, they undertake extensive discussions with their legal team or may postpone or halt publishing such information. They are also mindful of the religious and ethnic diversity in Ghana and, as such, refrain from doing stories that may destabilize the country.

Despite Media newsrooms- Peace FM, United Television (UTV), and PeaceFMonline.com newsrooms- operate from a conventional system that emphasizes the constitution of Ghana. They do not have a codified document guiding their media and journalistic practices. Instead, the constitution of Ghana is the ultimate law that guides newsroom

practices. This fact is because the constitution emphasizes the national interest, which is Despite Media's focus. A radio news editor in Despite Media offered this explanation,

*No, the only thing that we look up to is the national constitution, especially Chapter 12 that talks about the media, the freedoms, your rights, and the things that you can do. That is our guiding principle. The National Media Commission, if you look at their acts, their powers and every other thing, is derived from chapter 13 of the constitution. We are guided by that but we are regulated by the NCA... We want to be the best version of ourselves because I have already told you that we are the leading and best radio station in this country. You can go and look for research that has confirmed this. And so if we are the best, who do we look up to? However, we are not oblivious to best practices in the world. (Senior News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

The primary objective is to adhere to the constitution of Ghana to avoid violating the country's governing laws. The constitution provides sufficient guidelines for legal operations in Ghana. However, the editor also noted that they are aware of best practices from around the world. They expect their editors and journalists to apply the knowledge they learned in school. According to the editors, all the editors and journalists in the newsroom (except interns who are still in school) have had tertiary training in journalism and belong to the Ghana Journalist Association (GJA). So, by implication, it is expected that they will apply the tenets of their profession and educational training, and it is the newsroom editor who ensures the application of these rules and regulations. As a news editor emphasizes,

*Anything we do in the media space, regardless of your medium of communication, you are guided by the W's and H's. That is why I told you earlier that if you come to tell me someone said something. Who said it? Where did he say it? By who and why and all that. Those become the guiding principles for your story. So, if it meets that guideline, you are good to go. Yes, we are broadcasting in the indigenous language, but we are guided by these (Senior News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

As part of its editorial policy, Despite Media newsrooms avoid what I call socio-cultural imbroglios. Socio-cultural imbroglios refer to stories entangled in controversy, including pending

court cases, chieftaincy disputes, and land litigation issues, which are to be avoided. This idea is exemplified in the following two comments.

*We wouldn't do anything that causes confusion in the country, anything that brings chaos, anything that brings destruction we won't do. Anything that incites violence we won't do. ...I would say that our major value is the national interest. Yes, we are private and have to make money by the end of the day. But anything that will disorient this nation, that will disorient families... that is why I want you to know that chieftaincy is one of the areas we will rarely go to because of a whole set of issues in that institution. so if it is anything that will bring confusion, if it is anything that will knock heads around, you won't find us. (Senior News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

*In the event that there are some stories that are filled with controversies, especially chieftaincy disputes... So basically, issues that are in court. Issues that we think will bring us a lot of problems. We shy away from those, like land litigations and things that will just bring us issues. When we look at it and we realize that this one is not as fair as possible, and we cannot get the other side- if you haven't ticked all the boxes that says this is okay... You must have people who can vouch for you. (News Editor, UTV, Despite Media)*

According to the editors, these stories are highly controversial and prone to conflict. They often involve “she said, he said” scenarios that cannot be objectively proven and may be rooted in deep cultural issues. Despite Media chooses to avoid these types of stories in the interest of fair reporting and their commitment to upholding national unity and public interest. Despite Media’s commitment to uphold the Constitution of Ghana ensures that they operate within the bounds of the law and do not take on adjudication roles.

### 6.3 Editorial Meeting

The radio and TV news-making process begins with the editorial meeting. The editorial meeting is where news stories are developed, and journalists are assigned stories. The purpose of the editorial meeting is to recommend and brainstorm story ideas and outline a plan of action for developing these news ideas into news stories. Equally, the editorial meeting creates an avenue for implementing editorial guidelines and serves pedagogical, accountability, and deliberative

purposes. Editors and news personnel take the opportunity to educate and inform fellow journalists/reporters and presenters on management decisions, editorial matters, and journalistic values and practices. Adom Newsroom holds two editorial meetings held each day. There is the morning editorial meeting and afternoon editorial meeting. The morning editorial meeting takes place at 8 am in the morning while the afternoon editorial meeting happens after the midday news bulletin at 1 pm. The meeting usually lasts an hour. All journalists and some news presenters, as well as hosts of current affairs programming on both radio and television, gather for the editorial meeting. The meeting can be chaired by anyone from the newsroom: usually, the editors, or senior journalists, or presenters selected by the editors. A junior reporter or journalist is assigned the duty of writing the story ideas on a whiteboard. Both morning and afternoon editorial meetings follow the same structure: first is the recap of news stories, second is the suggestion of new story ideas, and third story assignment.

Peace FM holds one editorial meeting daily and it happens in the morning. Peace FM's newsroom editorial meeting usually starts at 8:15 am and lasts for about 45 minutes to about an hour. The meeting is always led by the editor or deputy editor and is attended by journalists and reporters. In the case of radio editorial meetings, the gathering takes place in the office of the editor. The editor's office door is always open and is accessible to all the people in the newsroom.

The language used for conducting the editorial meeting is mixed: English and Akan (predominantly Asante Twi). Code-switching is predominant, so it is difficult to capture when there is a switch to one or the other language. There is no strict requirement for any specific language to be used. However, one can infer that the language of transmission influences news production at the editorial meeting stage and, subsequently, the news writing stage. Additionally,

the language used must be intelligible to all in the newsroom. Code-switching extends beyond the newsroom and impacts the communication between journalists and their sources/witnesses.

The following excerpt from my field notes exemplifies this point.

*January 11, 2023*

*Reporters discuss stories they are interested in doing. I observed a reporter make a call to an analyst for a story they were writing. This reporter used their personal phone to make the call. I observed that there was no call/recording booth. Phone interviews are conducted at the desk. This particular reporter recorded the interview using software on their desktop. Before the start of the interview, the reporter requested the analyst to speak more Twi than English: “Eyaa na twi no abamu kakra” (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Peace FM Newsroom)*

Whichever language is predominant at any specific point in the meeting depends on the speaker and their ability and comfort level to articulate their ideas and thoughts in that language. The language of communication throughout the day in the newsroom is equally mixed.

### 6.31 Structure of the Editorial Meeting

Adom Newsroom and Peace FM Newsroom have similar structures for their editorial meeting except for the opening and closing activities. While Adom Newsroom opens its editorial meeting with a recap/update of news stories and closes with story assignments, Peace FM Newsroom starts its editorial meeting with an opening prayer and welfare check and ends the meeting with a closing prayer. The chair of the meeting calls upon one person to do the prayer. Opening prayer requests are usually about the success of the editorial meeting, while closing prayer requests ask God to bless journalists and reporters for easy and fast access to their contacts and wisdom to write good stories for the benefit of Ghanaians. Then there is a welfare check where the chair asks about the health of everyone. This welfare check generates small talk about things happening in their individual lives. I must also mention that while I had the chance to visit the UTV newsroom and observe their on-air evening news bulletin, unfortunately, I was

unable to observe their news production. The following description follows both my observation of the news-making process at the Peace FM newsroom and interviews with the editors of Peace FM and UTV. The news editor for UTV assured me that their editorial meeting structure is the same as Peace FM's.

Generally, apart from the opening prayer and welfare check, both organizations' editorial meetings follow this structure: (i) recapping/updating previous news stories, (ii) story suggestions, and (iii) story and tasks assignments. Despite the similarities, there are differences in the ways that the editorial meeting is conducted in these two organizations.

#### 6.32 Recap and update on previous news stories.

Adom newsroom updates take an evaluative form of the previous news cycle, whether morning, afternoon, or evening. First, the meeting chair would go through each itemized storyboard idea and ask “*Ekɔɔ yɛ?*” and is there any update to the story item? *Ekɔɔ yɛ* means did it go through? This question evokes an accounting of each completed news story submitted to the news editor. In the newsroom, this phrase formed an important part of news story selection for the main news bulletin of the day. While anyone present at the editorial meeting can respond, usually either the presenter, producers, or editors, it is an assessment of the news editors' selection process, a confirmation of the status of each scripted storyboard idea, and determining whether the scripted story has an update, or needs to be filed for the next news bulletin or discarded. Unless there is an update to the story or in the form of a developing story or a new angle to the story, scripted storyboard ideas that made it to the main news bulletin is wiped from the board. Updates in the form of developing stories organically take a new turn without the intervention of editors or journalists. How updates with a “new angle” means a change in the direction or perspective of the story, and this requires the intervention of

editors and journalists. This new angle update can be suggested by anyone. For instance, during the editorial morning meeting on July 9, 2021, I took observational notes on two news stories: the first excerpt (i.e., First story) represented an organically developing narrative, while the second excerpt (i.e., Fifth story) showcased an angled approach.

*First story: The chair asks for an update on the car loans for MPs story. There was a news story about car acquisition for members of parliament (Ghana's legislative body). The story was that the government of Ghana would give loans to these MPs to purchase cars. One of the senior editors mentioned that a new official document released to the public and posted on the Adom newsroom's WhatsApp page platform shows that 60% of the said loan would be paid by the government. The remaining 40% would be paid by the MPs. This said official document outlines the details of the loan agreement. He continued that there has been mixed reactions from the public about the loan document.*

*Fifth story: The story about 3.1 million people with mental illness in Ghana. The Minister of Health reported in Parliament that 3.1 million Ghanaians have mental health disorders. This is data from the World Health Organization and the Ghana Mental Health Authority. After a lengthy discussion of the story which drew concern, they decided to continue the story by looking at a new angle. A good new angle to this story is to look at this data and its effect on Ghana's Gross Domestic Product. Whoever will be assigned the story should contact an economist and the health minister for further explanation. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

The first story illustrates an organically developing story. On the other hand, the fifth story illustrates an angled story that involves suggestions and careful deliberation by news personnel on the best possible perspective to report. During that same meeting, a previous news story on a COVID outbreak in one of Ghana's most popular senior high schools- Achimota Senior High- was updated. One of the newsroom participants suggested that they look at the issue from the perspective of the parents of the students. This is another example of an angled story. When all angles of a storyboard idea have been exhausted, the editor instructs the assistant to "slash it." A literal slanted stroke/line is drawn beneath the storyboard idea. Slashing a storyboard idea means that the discussion on that idea has ended and is ready to move on to the

next new story idea or update. Slashing a story helped keep order and end lengthy debates on a matter. When reaching a consensus becomes difficult, the chief editor or the editors intervene to make the final decision.

Updates/recaps of previous news stories in the Peace FM newsroom constitute an individual accounting of the status of their assigned tasks rather than an assessment of the editorial selection. Updates in the Peace FM newsroom are a public accountability of each reporter. Each reporter provides an update on whether they completed their story or if their stories were published. In instances where stories were not completed, reporters explained why they could not complete their stories. This practice of providing updates, as observed in the Peace FM newsroom, is illustrated in the observational excerpt below:

*January 11, 2023*

*Today's editorial meeting took place in the editor's office at about 8:29 am. The seating arrangement was in a crescent shape. The meeting was chaired by the deputy editor, who sat facing the reporters. Some of the reporters stood while others sat. The chair called on one of the editors to pray before the meeting started. The prayer was brief and the request was for a successful editorial meeting. The chair did a welfare check and asked how everyone was doing. This resulted in general small talk and everyone talked freely. Then the chair proceeded to ask about updates on previously assigned stories. Some reported that they completed their stories and made it into the main news bulletin the day before. A few mentioned that they couldn't complete their stories. One particular person explained that they couldn't complete one of their assigned stories because the correspondent they were working with delayed in delivering an information that was vital to completing the story. The chair asked that all incomplete stories should be added to today's news stories. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Peace FM Newsroom)*

Incomplete stories are included in the day's news bulletin without needing additional approval or discussion of their content. Unless there are concerns raised about the story, which demands the editor's intervention, incomplete stories are considered approved stories and do not require further deliberation on the story angle and appropriateness. Updates/recaps as a practice help establish a guideline for handling incomplete stories in the journalistic process, facilitating a

system for managing incomplete news stories. Additionally, it is a systematic approach for monitoring assigned stories that are at risk of being neglected.

### 6.33 Story suggestions/Story ideas

The story suggestion or story idea is the brainstorming stage of the editorial meeting. Every newsroom personnel present at the meeting is required to recommend or suggest a story idea. Reporters and journalists are expected to be in tune with their audience and environment. It is their duty to be aware of the happenings in the country and be on top of stories as they are developing. These news ideas move from mere suggestions (ideas from an individual or a group) to storyboard ideas (when the story makes it on the whiteboard) and finally potential news stories (when the story is scripted and uploaded into the news folder for the day).

Story ideas come from various sources. The sources of story ideas include trending issues, listeners and the general public, newspapers, affiliate stations and regional correspondents, political and current affair shows (both internal and external), freelance reporters, invitations from institutions and communities, press releases or conferences from various government institutions, businesses, religious bodies, individual observations and interests, etc. Explaining further the nature of the brainstorming, the UTV editor and the Peace FM editor mentioned that the process starts with “trends...”

*...all the things happening around us...so, we sit down and find out what are the things happening around us, what people would be interested in, what are the things people are talking about... that comes in the newspapers or what people are talking about. So, it's just everyday happenings, just everyday work.” The sources of news include trending matters, invitations, news papers, news correspondents from the other regions in Ghana (UTV News Editor, UTV Newsroom).*

*...sources of news today our listeners have become a good source of news to us. You see no media house can be everywhere at the same time; people are in the communities; people are in the vicinity; they are seeing things happening so they*

*alert you. They become your source of news; the emergency services, the security, the government, the political entity, religious bodies they all become source of news for you (Editor, Peace FM Newsroom).*

The most pressing story of the day takes precedence over all other news story suggestions. These pressing stories are usually national in character. In the case of the Adom newsroom, when the storyboard is full, suggestions that did not make it to the storyboard are shelved for the next editorial meeting. Documentation of story ideas differs for both the Adom newsroom and the Peace FM newsroom. I observed 3 different platforms for recording story ideas in the Peace FM newsroom. Story ideas are documented on either the whiteboard, paper, or the newsroom's WhatsApp platform. Both the whiteboard and WhatsApp also serve the same function as the assignment book. They are used to record story ideas, events, and tasks. However, WhatsApp's function in the newsroom goes beyond recording ideas, events, and tasks. For the Adom Newsroom, there is only one recording site/tool for news story ideas: a whiteboard that is visible to everyone in the newsroom.

Suggestions of news story ideas are usually intensive, educative, deliberative, and jovial. Reporters must justify their news story ideas. Individuals who suggest stories must justify their story ideas. Defending a story idea can quickly shift from an individual act to a collaborative one, and from reporting facts to sharing personal opinions and experiences. Other news personnel usually jump in to offer their views or facts that help to sustain the relevance of the story idea. Once an idea is suggested, it is deliberated upon to find the appropriate story angle and also determine whether it meets the editorial guidelines. Debating an appropriate angle can be intensive and lengthy. At this point, the boundaries between a journalist and a citizen can be blurry as newsroom participants share their own and others' experiences on a particular issue. The following three excerpts from my observational fieldnotes illustrate how news story ideas

are deliberated, developed, and potentially blur the lines between professional reporting and personal opinion.

January 10, 2023

First Story: University Accommodation

*Second Story: Meek Mill Music Video. A reporter mentioned that the American Rapper Meek Mill's music video was trending, and many Ghanaians were incensed about the fact that the music video was shot in the Flagstaff House, which is the office and residence of the president of Ghana. There was a long discussion about the appropriateness of shooting a music video in the most secure zone in Ghana. There were discussions about how, when Meek Mill visited the Flagstaff House, he was not dressed appropriately for a presidential visit, and his demeanor with the president was also inappropriate. Comparisons were drawn between the American White House and Ghana's Flagstaff House. Questions were raised about whether anyone can shoot a video in the White House or if they allow celebrities to shoot music videos there. There were also discussions about the protocols in the presidential office and whether they were breached or if someone did not do their job well. There were suggestions on briefing expatriates on Ghanaian culture and basic Ghanaian courtesies. The chair decided that a good angle would be from a security perspective. Whether the music video compromises the security of the presidential office and residence. The chair asked that whoever was assigned the story must speak to a security analyst.*

January 11, 2023

*Second Story: Introduction of 1% tax on mobile money transfer (Electronic Transaction Levy) goes into effect. The chair summarised this government policy, adding that there was a fee waiver on any transaction that was 100 Ghana cedis or less. The editor instructed that they do a vox pop to collect the opinions of Ghanaians about taxing mobile money transactions. The chair asked if anyone had done a mobile money transaction since the policy went into effect. One of the reporters stated that they had done a money transfer and showed evidence of the transaction. The reporter added that the fee waiver was not applied when they did their money transfer and stated that there was a tax deduction for any amount sent via the mobile money transfer. There were further discussions on how that affects the poor, who constitute the majority of users of the mobile money service.*

*Fourth Story: Update on Odorgonno Senior High School Debacle. The chair requested an update on the school's issue between the administration and students. One reporter requested more details on the story. The chair summarized the issue. Students who reported late on the first day of school were asked to return home. The meeting participants shared their opinions on the administration's decision. Participants shared*

*their personal experiences and expressed opinions on reasons why students report late on the first day of school. Some stated that some parents can cause their children to report late to school. Others also cited financial constraints as a major problem for senior high school students. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Peace FM Newsroom)*

The blending of facts, opinions, and experiences enables a richer narrative in terms of bringing diverse perspectives, voices, and humanizing these story ideas. The challenge with these nuances at the generative stage may be whether journalists are risking facts and objectivity. However, as seen in the excerpts above, each deliberation concluded with a clear direction the news story idea is taking, showing how this process aligns with their editorial policies.

Defending a story idea can quickly shift from justification to critique, and from commentary to complaint, reflecting the contentious nature of news storytelling. Because of this contention, deciding on a story angle usually goes through a lengthy debate and discussion. The debate process highlights the collaboration and negotiation at play in the story development phase, leading to either a rejection or acceptance of the story idea. The rejection or acceptance of a storyboard idea is based on several factors, including editorial policies, the sensitivity of an issue, timeliness, currency and relevance, authority, repetition, audience interest, and national interest alignment. Here are three examples to illustrate the rejection of story ideas as accounted for in my observation field notes.

*July 13, 2021*

*Moesha's Repentance and Preaching Story*

*Moeha's story resulted in a lengthy deliberation on what is worth the attention of Adom listeners. There was a discussion about what Adom newsroom's focus is and what their audience's interests are. The story was dropped and did not make it on the storyboard. Another reason for dropping the story was that it had similar themes to an earlier story that was done on celebrity life and their influence. The conversation continued and many personnel shared their personal stories about peer pressure and the lessons they learnt from these experiences. The conversation generated stories of self-imposed pressures, lifestyle choices and personal anecdotes about car and phone choice as well as*

*experiences with public pressure to live a certain kind of life as journalists and presenters who are seen as celebrities.*

*January 5, 2023*

*Brain Drain: Doctors Leaving Ghana*

*There was an idea to do a story on Ghanaian doctors leaving Ghana to practice in other countries. There were various commentaries on the idea about reasons why these doctors are leaving Ghana. One was that they were poorly paid. Another said that other countries had better offers than the Ghana government. However, the chair stated that the story has already been done before and so there was no need to repeat it. Nonetheless, he asked that the idea should be shelved until further notice.*

*Chief Imam and Reverend Owusu Bempah*

*A suggestion about doing a piece on the rift between the Chief Imam's Office and the Reverend Isaac Owusu Bempah was rejected. The office of the National Chief Imam issued a press release cautioning the head pastor of the Glorious Word Power Ministries International to desist from making false statements about the Chief Imam. The chairman suggested that this story cannot be done because it is too sensitive a matter and borders on two different faiths- Islam and Christianity. As such, the newsroom will refrain from doing a story on the matter. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

The above excerpts underscore the importance of careful and strategic consideration made in the newsroom to ensure that creativity aligns with institutional policies. This shows that though the process can be subjective, this subjectivity is filtered through broader concerns related to audience interest, editorial policy, national interest, and sensitivity.

The deliberative nature of story idea suggestions provides opportunities for newsroom pedagogical instruction, a measure of accountability, and, to a large extent, the exercise of citizenship. Story ideas present an opportunity for educating newsroom personnel on editorial issues, professional ethics, and sometimes constitutional matters. For example, on January 11, 2023, as recorded in my observational field notes below, news personnel were reminded of journalists' commitment to understanding the difference between facts and opinions, emphasizing that news should be based on facts, not on opinions.

January 11, 2023

*Third Story: Nyaho Tamaklo accused Kennedy Agyapong of not contributing anything to the New Patriotic Party. One reporter suggested doing this story and indicated that they spoke to a political analyst about the story earlier in the morning. The chair asked whether this story was a fact or someone's opinion about another person. The chair used the moment to educate participants about the differences between opinions and facts. The chair went ahead to remind them of their editorial policy on opinions, stating that they don't do stories on someone's opinion. The chair gave examples of how the idea could be revised to make it an appropriate news story idea. They mentioned that since Kennedy Agyapong is an aspiring Flagbearer for the New Patriotic Party, a story could be done on whether Ghanaians or party members like him. This story idea was rejected. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Peace FM Newsroom)*

In other instances, the pedagogical turn shows how institutional frameworks, ethics, and guidelines impact journalistic practice.

The excerpts below from my observational field notes on July 22, 2021, and December 12, 2022, illustrate how general concerns about corruption present a context to discuss what Adom newsroom and the Multimedia Group Limited consider corrupt practices in journalism.

Additionally, these excerpts show how a story idea challenges newsroom personnel to rethink their concept of their target audience.

*July 22, 2021- Afternoon Editorial Meeting*

*Third Story: Special Prosecutor (SP) faces the appointment committee*

*The vetting of the special prosecutor story generated an interesting argument about eliminating corruption. This was because it was reported that the nominee made a statement about corruption, which was considered controversial. He said he would make corruption costly because no one can eradicate corruption. The argument was about whether the statement was ethical. Someone referenced a similar statement made by the Inspector General of Police some time ago, where he stated that crime will never be eradicated. As the argument continued, "what is corruption?" took center stage, and soon it shifted to what constituted corruption in light of journalistic practice. The practice of "soli" came up. ("Soli" is the shortened form of the word solidarity. "Soli" is the practice of individuals, companies, or politicians offering gifts to journalists who report or cover their events.) While the argument was inconclusive, the editors took the opportunity to discuss Multimedia's policy on collecting "soli." They stated that*

*collecting any gift or amount of money from any individual or organization is unethical, and if found guilty, the culprit will lose their job with Multimedia.*

*December 12, 2022*

*Morning Editorial Meeting*

*The story about Wizkid's (a Nigerian musician) no-show fiasco at a concert in Ghana, which he was headlining, came up during this morning's editorial meeting. Some people raised concerns about how to report this issue, while one of the editors quizzed, "Is this in the interest of our listeners?" The discussion continued until it was decided that in the interim, they should speak to the organizers of the concert for an explanation on Wizkid's no-show fiasco while the editors decide whether it should be included in Adom news or left to the entertainment radio like Hitz FM to air such stories. One of the editors stated that people cite Adom News, and therefore, they have to be careful about the kind of news they air. Nonetheless, the editor acknowledged that they cannot ignore that social media plays an important role in redefining Adom news' target audience. Many young people are on social media and they want to know "what's up". The editor stated that their target listeners have changed according to recent research conducted by management. Many educated people, including tertiary and college students, are now part of the Adom audience profile who are also interested in trending issues. A reporter from the newsroom who was present at the concert on their own accord gave an eyewitness account. After the eyewitness account, they decided to do a story on whether or not the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture regulates big music concerts/shows. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

The instructional mode also aims at news personnel's personal responsibility towards practicing journalism. The following two excerpts from my observational field notes illustrate how journalists are reminded to be ethical, uphold the principles of neutrality, and assume personal responsibility towards developing and refining their note-taking skills.

*July 14, 2021*

*Morning Editorial Meeting*

*Two story ideas ignited a lengthy and heated argument. One was on how the Ghana police manage demonstrations, and the other was about toll booth accidents. The story angle that made it to the whiteboard was educating the public on how to detect police excesses. With the Toll booth accident, the focus of the story was on the speed ramps at the Tema Motorway toll booth. Many of the personnel shared their personal opinions about the police and how the police think they are always right. This resulted in the editor intervening in the deliberation and reminding everyone that they must always take a neutral position on issues as journalists and reporters. One of the editors remarked,*

*“We always say we carry the news.” He said this in response to the opinions shared by reporters about tollbooth accidents. He added that they should be able to differentiate opinions from expert knowledge and understand that the duty of the reporter is to carry the news. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

#### *Afternoon Editorial Meeting*

*The chair for the afternoon meeting asked those who monitored other stations to share their observations. One person struggled with his report. He quizzed the person, asking if he had written down anything from monitoring the assigned station. The reporter answered in the negative. The chair retorted, “There is a saying that a short pencil is powerful than a long memory.” The chair reminded the station monitors that they should write down main headlines rather than relying on their memories. He concluded that monitoring other stations helps open the mind and makes one critical. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

The deliberative nature of news story suggestions, though contentious, serves an instructive purpose. It presents opportunities for periodic reminders about institutional frameworks, ethics, and standards of journalism and journalists’ responsibilities. While often spontaneous, these pedagogical moments prove effective in commanding accountability and transparency while fostering a culture of continuous learning and personal development in the newsroom.

These informal and spontaneous teaching moments are reinforced through formally organized training sessions for news personnel. Editors in both Adom newsroom and Despite Media newsrooms stated that they organized periodic training workshops for their newsroom personnel and sometimes even personnel from affiliate stations. On December 9, 2022, I participated in an organized training session for all Adom newsroom personnel. This training session covered a wide variety of issues like corporate policies, dressing, communicating and conducting interviews, writing news scripts, editorial policies, newsroom culture, language, and theoretical issues like what news is, journalism, and ethics. While some of the training sessions are planned, most of the pedagogy is spontaneous. Where necessary, individuals with expertise in a particular area are called upon to shed light on the issue. For example, editors are called

upon for editorial guidelines on ethics and clarification on historical facts. On legal matters, journalists and presenters with a legal background are requested to shed light on the legality of doing certain stories. Also, in the Adom newsroom, heads of specialized desks are called upon to advise news personnel on matters related to their desks. The dual emphasis on spontaneous learning and structured training shows that both informal and formal elements of learning are comprehensive approaches to enhancing the competency of journalists and instilling journalistic values.

#### A. Story and task assignments.

The story assignment is the last segment of the editorial meeting. This is where the editor (in the case of Peace FM) or the chair (in the case of Adom newsroom) assigns approved story ideas to reporters. While story assignments are the prerogative of the editor or deputy editor, other factors influence these assignments. These factors include the experience of the reporter, interest of reporters, familiarity and continuity of a story, availability of reporters, and immediacy. News story assignments are done physically (face-to-face) or virtually through their WhatsApp Page. Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the story assignment is not fixed at the editorial meeting. Rather, it is a continuous practice. Peace FM newsroom practice is that before the editorial meeting, reporters and journalists are required to visit the assignment log book to see if their names have been entered and tasked to cover an event. Only correspondent reporters are exempted since they are usually stationed at a particular location, like the parliament correspondent stationed in the parliament house or regional correspondents. As stories come in, the editor continually assigns these incoming or developing stories to individual reporters or journalists.

The assignment has various levels: channel monitoring, social media monitoring, telephone calls, and voxpox. Channel monitoring is when individuals are assigned specific radio and TV stations and news websites to monitor and report on their news and current affairs programming. Channel monitoring forms an important aspect of new sources for storyboard ideas. These stations range from Multimedia Group's radio and television channels as well as news websites to their competitors like Peace FM, Onua FM, Okay FM, Angel FM, City FM, Star FM, Sky FM, and many more. Even though station monitoring is expected to be done by all newsroom personnel, the specific assignments for these stations are given to junior reporters. Channel monitors are expected to give detailed reports on and document news bulletin stories and discussion topics for current affairs programming from these stations. Station monitoring helps with generating story ideas, angling story ideas, and branding Adom news differently from other channels' news. On the international front, international news stories are purely editorial decisions. Usually, Adom newsroom prefers neighboring or regional stories on the African continent to other continents. This is because stories from the African continent are more relatable to Adom radio and TV audiences. International news stories are usually taken from international portals, mostly from the BBC and Al Jazeera. According to the editors, they consider these news stations credible.

Social media assignments are equally important. Newsroom personnel monitor the various internal social media platforms for news stories, whether developing or completed. More specifically, this is how Accra-based reporters on assignment outside the newsroom, Nhyira FM journalists and reporters from Kumasi, and affiliate reporters or correspondents communicate news stories fast and quickly. WhatsApp is the most popular and frequently used social media for transferring news stories to the newsroom. The Adom newsroom has about five different

group platforms on WhatsApp. There is a group account for all personnel in the newsroom, one for Adom TV stories, one for affiliates, one for editors, one for all multimedia journalists, reporters, and presenters, and one for editors. There are other accounts for particular purposes. Through my discussions with various reporters, I was told that there are also platforms that are nationwide whose members are from different and competing stations. Newsroom personnel stated that the WhatsApp platform is more efficient and convenient since they can access it on their phones at any time so long as there is internet connectivity. Some of these news items from the social media platforms do not make it to the storyboard ideas on the whiteboard since they can come in after the editorial meeting. These instances emphasize news-making as a continuous practice. In cases where these stories come in before or during the editorial meeting, they are added to the storyboard ideas. When a news story comes through the WhatsApp platform, the personnel monitoring the platform copies the news transcript into a Word document and uploads it into a centralized, networked news story folder on the computer in the newsroom. Stories are also sent via email, and they go through the same procedure.

Telephone calls are another means of getting story ideas. Adom listeners and the general public call the newsroom to tip them (or give leads to stories) about issues they are concerned about. Sometimes, they walk into the station to report a matter or request that the newsroom follow up on a particular story. There are instances when informants would request to meet with a particular reporter/journalist. Sometimes, such requests are granted if the matter demands the attention of that journalist or editor, but oftentimes, these requests are denied. Personnel monitoring phone calls or receiving informants must record the information and request the information of the informant for follow-ups. Sometimes, informants decline to give their contact information for follow-up; other times, they do. The personnel must report the information back

to any of the editors, who will determine whether the information should be pursued or not. On two separate occasions, I had the opportunity of receiving a phone call and seeing an informant in person. On one occasion, as detailed in my field notes below, an informant's story was rejected because Adom news had reported on that matter multiple times.

*July 30, 2021*

*An informant came to Adom News to report an issue that poses a health threat and danger to community members at Alajo Junction- a suburb in Accra. The informant stated that a certain man with a political connection to the regional minister owns a cattle ranch in the area. The ranch is dirty, unkempt and emits a pungent smell. Also, it is located right by a hospital. Aside from its unsanitary state and location, the cattle are left to roam about in the community, which poses a threat to the lives of community members. People are afraid to talk about this issue because of fear of retribution, as the owner has connections to the regional minister. I requested the informant's contact address for follow-up. The informant declined, stating that they were just a concerned citizen. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

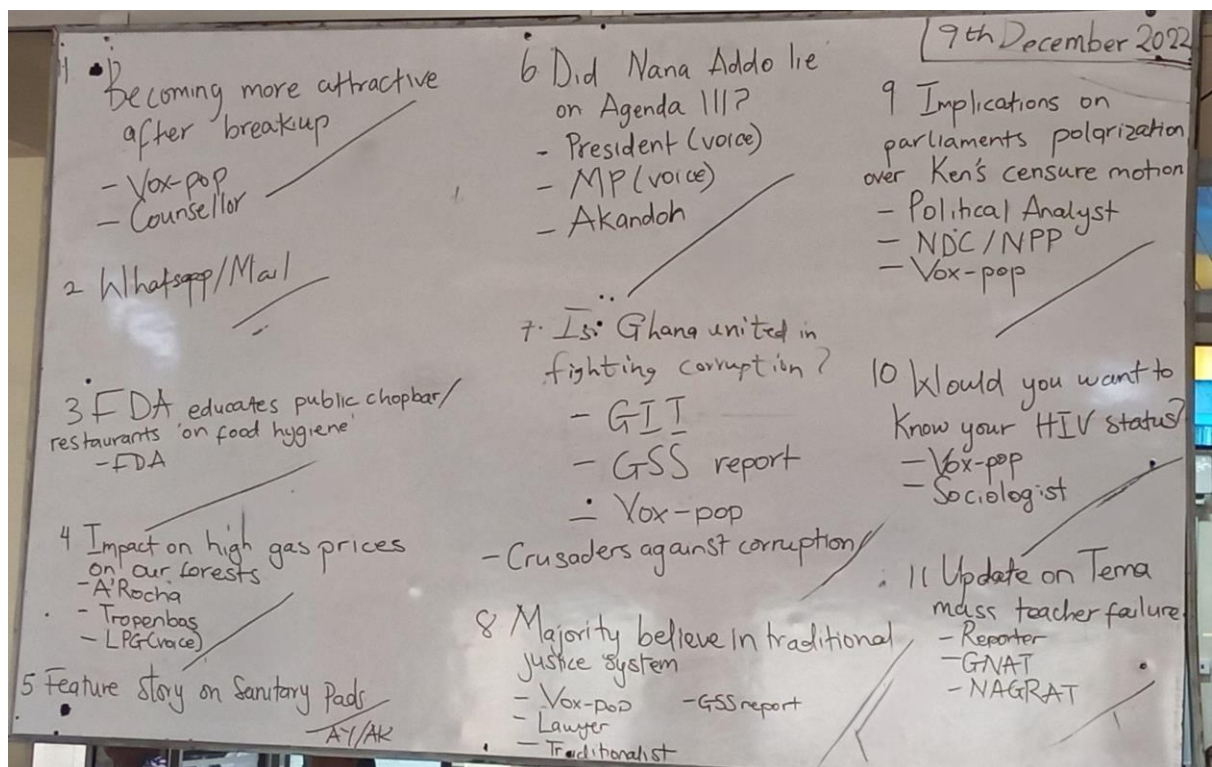
Rejection of this kind indicates a state of weariness about a matter in the newsroom, raising critical questions about how community interests are highlighted in public discourse and ultimately, the manner in which newsrooms practice their civic duty. The sentiment of exhaustion in the newsroom shows a sense of powerlessness, leading to a disconnection from a community problem that the news could have helped solve.

Vox Pop constitutes an important alternative news source and a type of citizen source. Vox pop is when ordinary men and women are interviewed on the street. Vox pop is used in various capacities and functions, including attracting attention, personalizing the news, increasing audience involvement, as a public opinion tool, illustrating a new story, exemplifying an issue, as a storytelling device, and a form of democratization in the news (Beckers, 2018; Bosch, 2014; Kleemans, Schaap & Hermans, 2017). Vox pop is usually recorded outside of the newsroom and later edited to be used as part of the news bulletin. In the Adom newsroom, vox pop is almost always on the editorial storyboard, even though it takes different formats.

Sometimes, vox pop is the main news source. Other times, vox pop is an angle of or subsumed under a main multifarious news story. When a vox pop serves as the main news story, the topic or question to be addressed, along with the selection of people to interview, is discussed during the editorial meeting. Following this, reporters are dispatched to gather opinions on the matter. Figure 7 shows an editorial news storyboard depicting the two vox pop formats. Story ideas numbers 1 (becoming more attractive after a breakup) and 10 (knowing HIV status) exemplify vox pop as the main news source, while story ideas 7 (fighting corruption), 8 (traditional justice system), and 9 (Parliament polarization over censure motion) illustrate vox pop as a story angle.

Figure 7

### *Editorial News Storyboard*



*Note. This image has been heavily edited to remove all identifiers and some sensitive information. This image is for illustration purposes. (N. A. Frimpong, 2022)*

Where the vox pop constitutes an angle of a news story, the vox pop is only one of the many angles of the story idea. While the vox pop emphasizes public opinion on topical and trending issues and lived experiences, therefore suggesting that commentators are likely not experts, sometimes vox pop angles of a multifarious news story combine elite/professional/expert sources with non-professional sources. While such interviews of professionals are separated from vox pop on the storyboard, this separation is only an artificial one since both vox pop commentators and professionals share opinions from different positionalities. Often, professionals and experts are asked to offer advice to listeners and viewers on topical issues that constitute opinions. Vox pop sources have often been characterized as randomly selected by journalists (Bosch, 2014). However, my observation of and interaction with reporters show that vox pop sources combine random selection with regular/self-dedicated contributors. Regular/self-dedicated contributors are people who have assured and dedicated themselves to offering their opinions on any vox pop topic. Combining random selection with regular/self-dedicated contributors on a vox pop assignment is dependent on the location and proximity of the journalist's location and the location for conducting the vox pop interviews. The closer the location of the vox pop interviews is to the Multimedia complex, the more likely the journalist will combine random selection with regular/self-dedicated contributors. Random selection is likely to be the choice format by the journalist when the vox pop interview location is further away from the Multimedia complex. My trip with some journalists on a few vox pop assignments revealed that reporters have established a cordial relationship with regular/self-dedicated contributors. On July 13, 2021, we visited one such regular contributor who was a shop owner on a vox pop assignment. It was obvious this shop owner knew the reporter, as he stated our mission even before we said anything, greeted us with much familiarity, and offered

us a seat. The excerpts below from my observation on July 13 and July 26, 2021, illustrate vox pop source selection.

*July 13, 2021*

*I went out with a reporter on a vox pop assignment. The interview topic was celebrity influence. I found out that one of the vox pop sources was a regular contributor and, upon sighting us, greeted and welcomed us warmly. It was obvious he was very familiar with the reporter. This contributor went ahead to ask us what the topic was and readily shared his opinion. After recording his contribution, we engaged in small talks and soon he was sharing private matters about how proud he was of the good relationship he has with his wife, how he started his business, and how to be a good and prosperous business person. We went to other people whom the reporter mentioned were regular contributors. However, they declined to speak to us and asked us to come another time. Other randomly selected people were willing to be interviewed but as soon as we mentioned that they would be recorded, they declined and mentioned that they didn't want their voices recorded. There were those who declined because of the issue of language. We approached two women who were mother and daughter. They stated that they weren't fluent in Twi and so weren't willing to be recorded. After much convincing, the mother did the interview in Twi, but the daughter refused. Another person we tried to interview told us that because she hasn't had any formal education, she wouldn't like to speak on record. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

*July 26, 2021*

*Today's vox pop question was why are people refusing to wear the nose masks. We decided to go to Circle and speak to the street traders. We started with mobile phone vendors and worked our way to other commodity sellers. The first group we spoke to said they had breathing issues. Others stated that wearing the masks makes them uncomfortable. Another group stated that COVID-19 was a hoax, and, thus, there was no need for a mask. There were those who mentioned that they were just about buying a mask, had tucked their mask somewhere in their pockets or bags (such people showed as the mask), or just did not have a mask. One of the respondents actually bought a mask in our presence. The last group of people mentioned that they were not wearing masks in protest of some government officials' disregard for the COVID-19 protocols. Most of the people in this group referenced a breach of the COVID-19 protocols at the funeral of the former general secretary of the New Patriotic Party (the party in government at the time). One of the respondents stated that if the government can break the protocols, they too can do the same. The reporter took pictures and videos. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

However, beyond proximity, frequency of and familiarity with a location also inform a reporter's selection of a vox pop source. Reporters usually establish contacts at both formal and informal structured locations. Consequently, they are likely to call on these contacts should their assignments warrant it. In such instances, reporters are likely to combine random selection with regular/self-dedicated contributors.

Another important source of news is what I call an editorial live broadcast. The editorial live broadcast is a kind of crusading editorial news segment on Adom FM and Adom TV's afternoon news bulletin. The editorial live broadcast is similar to vox pop only to the extent that it is an editorial decision to solicit public opinions about trending and national issues, but different because it is a live street production of public opinion and/or Adom news editorial crusade intended for advocacy, educational, and awareness purposes. An example of this editorial live broadcast is the news segment called *Adom Trotro* run by the Adom newsroom. The Adom Trotro is a weekday afternoon news segment. It is a socially and advocacy-oriented segment that highlights the opinions and expectations of the public/passengers. The main idea behind the Adom Trotro news segment is Adom Newsroom's goal of carrying their listeners along and bringing news production to the ordinary Ghanaian. The lexicon combines the "Adom" label and "trotro,"<sup>36</sup> which encapsulates Ghana's most popular and dominant commercial private paratransit transportation system. Trotro is the name of small buses that run commercially, moving people, services, and goods between two main locations and stop intermittently on a road network for passenger exit and entry (Kommey, Maazu, Adjei, & Issah, 2019; Dumedah & Eshun, 2020). This popular commercial transportation system is privately

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<sup>36</sup> According to Albert M. Abane (2011) "Trotro is a Ga word meaning three pence and represented the fare charged for wooden commercial local trips in the late 1950s and 1960s in Accra especially. The word is now used broadly to describe all vehicles engaged in such trade and include Nissan Urvans, Madza Urvans, Toyota Hiace minibuses, 207 Benz buses and even makeshift pick-ups fitted with roofs and seats" (p. 319).

owned (either by an individual or a union), collects and transports different classes of people, constitutes a sequence of road segments, has a seating capacity of between 12 to 30 and the labor structure consists of the driver and the bus conductor (locally referred to as the mate) and it is accessible, relatively cheaper and reliable. (Kwakye et. al., 1997). Some of the principles of their modus operandi include a fill-and-run system, a fixed route system, fixed fares set by unions, entrepreneurship, autonomy, and apprenticeship (Aggrey et al., 2023; Burchardt, 2015; Hart, 2014). The fill-and-run system is the loading mechanism of the trotros. When a trotro operates from a lorry park or bus terminal, the fill and run system operates on the basis of first-come, first-served; passengers take the first trotro in the line, eliminating passenger competition between vehicles, and depart only when all the seats are filled (Burchardt, 2015).

However, the trotros operating from regular bus stops have the same loading mechanism, except that vehicles compete for passengers and can depart regardless of whether all the seats have been filled or not. Between the start and stop terminals are trotro service stops, which may be prescribed or not, and are usually “reference to landmarks such as schools, hospitals, markets, shops, locations of high public usage, and leading personalities such as politicians and traditional chiefs (Dumedah & Eshun, 2020, p. 2). While most of the trotros (trotros drivers) are registered with a union<sup>37</sup> and therefore operate within a union system and from a lorry park or bus terminal, some trotro drivers have no such union association and thus operate from regular bus stops which contravenes transport laws about operating a trotro without being part of a transport union (Aggrey et al., 2023; Burchardt, 2015).

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<sup>37</sup> The Ghana Private Road Transport Union is the most dominant union in Ghana, constituting about 80% of Ghana’s urban public transportation services (Aggrey et. al., 2022). For the detailed political economy of trotro and the historical exigence of trotro and the Ghana Private Road Transport Union (GPRTU), see Jorgen Burchardt’s (2015) *Order out of chaos, self-management and public control of the paratransit sector: Case Ghana* and Jennifer Hart’s (2014) *Motor transportation, trade unionism, and the culture of work in colonial Ghana*.

The idea behind the concept of Adom Trotro fits into the corporate agenda of audience-centricity as discussed in the previous chapter. Adom Trotro started as a radio news segment where passengers (in a trotro- bus) listened to Adom radio news and commented on the stories broadcast. When it started, a reporter joined a moving trotro (commercial bus), which had their radio set tuned to Adom news. About halfway into the news, the news broadcaster calls the reporter, and the trotro passengers comment or share their opinions about the news stories they listened to before they reached their destination. Over time, Adom Trotro was introduced on Adom TV news. While it is still a live street production, it has metamorphosed, and the location has shifted from reporting from inside a moving bus (trotro) to lorry and taxi stations, bus terminals, markets, and traffic intersections. Additionally, listener perspectives have shifted from passenger commentary and analysis of the news bulletin to the public sharing opinions about topical, trending, and national issues, as well as a means for editorial advocacy. Two important factors that have propelled these changes are technology and, specifically, the impact of COVID-19. One of the news producers mentioned that live radio broadcasts of Adom Trotro would sometimes be interrupted by the absence of or poor network connectivity. In the case of COVID-19, safety and adhering to state-sanctioned protocols meant that the format and location had to be revised. Reporting from inside a trotro bus was no longer feasible during the COVID shutdown. As such, while the television segment of Adom Trotro continued, that of the radio was inconsistent and was suspended for a short period of time.

Adom Trotro is also used for Adom news editorial campaigns. At the time of the research, The Multimedia Group was running a “Respect the Red Light” road safety campaign dubbed “Red aso Masa Gyina” (literally translated as Stop, Mr! The red light is on) for the Akan brands. The campaign sought to mitigate motor rider’s disregard of traffic light signals. This road

safety campaign was to sensitize and educate motorbike riders to observe traffic lights, specifically the red traffic sign. The idea was to make visible the dangers of motorcyclists' disregard for the traffic signs. The campaign became an integral part of the news-making process, which used the name and shame and reward approach to get motorbike riders in line. This reward and punishment approach consisted of radio, television, online, and social media mentions of those flouting the traffic rules to shame them and applaud those respecting traffic regulations. Reporters are dispatched usually to a busy intersection where they report on the traffic situation and motorcyclist behavior on the road. Deciding on a location is open to all members of the newsroom, and sometimes, it is left at the discretion of the reporter on the Adom Troto assignment. For example,

*July 26, 2021*

*I requested to join a female reporter on an Adom Troto assignment. This reporter had two assignments: to do 'Adom Troto' and later attend a press conference. There were five of us: a driver, two reporters, a camerawoman, and me. We went to a suburb in Accra called 'Accra Central'. The crew decided to go to a busy traffic intersection by the Supreme Court. On arrival, we noticed a lot of motorbike riders flouting the traffic regulations. Immediately, when some street vendors noticed the Adom news crew, they came to us, narrating a tragic traffic accident a few hours before our arrival. The accident led to one death. While we waited to go live on the afternoon news bulletin, we witnessed an accident at the traffic light between a government-branded immigration truck and a bicycle. Fortunately, the cyclist was not harmed. This generated a discussion between the crew and the street vendors and passersby. A few minutes before going live, the reporter, camerawoman, and producer tested a good location to report from. The reporter in her report narrated the two accidents and interviewed a few street vendors about the traffic situation in that area and whether motorcyclists flouted the traffic regulations. I observed some motorcyclists going right through the red light. For these people who did not stop at the red light, the camera would capture their number plates, and the reporter would name and shame them on live television. But something interesting happened.*

*When some of the bikers noticed the Adom news crew, they stopped when the red light went on. It appeared that most of the motorbike riders knew about the "Respect the Red Light" traffic campaign. While we remained there and the reporter continued reporting, there was order at the traffic intersection. The reporter spoke to some of the bikers who*

*stopped at the red light and commended them for obeying the red light. (N. A. Frimpong, Field Observation Notes, Adom Newsroom).*

The reporter on Adom Trotro assignment reports to the location early before the afternoon news starts. While at the location, the reporter speaks to people in that vicinity for possible interviews and discusses the traffic situation in that location. The crew then runs a location, sound, and camera test before going live. The Adom Trotro format is very simple. The main news anchor introduces the segment from the studio. The reporter takes it from there and describes the area they are covering. The reporter closes with the word “away” imitating the trotro mates’ signal to the driver that the bus is full and the driver can set off. This signal closes the Adom Trotro segment. The general public is also encouraged to send pictures and names of motorcyclists who flout traffic rules. Names and pictures sent by the general public are posted online and on social media. The *Adom Trotro* segment serves as a conduit for transmitting and transporting the issues of citizens by encapsulating the characteristics of the commercial automobile transportation system of carrying people along and dropping them off at their intended stop. At the same time, it is a mode of citizen organization on a small scale that allows the Adom cluster to exercise its citizenship and civil duties. The idea of mobile news produced and transmitted from a commercial automobile. Fill-and-run the system, suggesting news on the move connecting multiple social communities networked by the road infrastructure and propelled by an automobile. It also reproduces and articulates the challenges and ambiguities of fill and run, where the next thing matters, the next passenger needs to fill the empty seats so that the car moves to the next destination.

While Adom News and Current Affairs is a service provider of news and current affairs programs for the Adom cluster, they are also fed by other centralized departments in the Akan cluster. For instance, sports news and entertainment news content are supplied by Asempa FM

and the social media department, respectively. Presentations of these are done by representatives from these departments. The sports team is under Asempa FM because Asempa's main focus is sports, political, and religious programming. They have a team responsible for sports programming and distribute the programs across the Clusters. The sports team does sports interviews, covers major sports tournaments, and does general sporting programming. There is a sports head who oversees sports programs for the Akan Brands, except for Nhyira FM in Kumasi.

#### 6.4 News scripting

In both Adom Newsroom and Peace FM Newsroom, news scripting is a shared interest and collaborative activity. Because news-making is time-bound and a continuous process, news scripting is a race against time. As such, newsroom personnel are more collaborative in executing the activities leading to news scripting, whether it is helping write stories, assisting with getting contacts for interviews, or providing information for a story. Even sometimes, when necessary, tasks are reassigned. Journalists and reporters often check in with each other at this stage to avoid writing the same story or working on the same issue. Newsroom personnel at this stage are in constant communication to ensure a productive writing process and also efficient coordination of news-making infrastructure like recording and editing devices and software, telephone, or call booths. Correspondents and reporters outside the newsroom complete their news stories and voices and post them on the newsroom WhatsApp platform.

The news scripting proper is done in English. Writing of news stories is in English, follows the inverted pyramid method of writing, and is guided by the conventional 5Ws and 1H. This writing format is enforced in both organizations' newsrooms, as emphasized by the Peace FM news editor below:

*Anything we do in the media space like this, regardless of your medium of communication, you are guided by the 5W's and 1H. That is why I told you earlier that if you come to tell me someone said something, who said it, where did he say it, by whom, and why, and all that. Those become the guiding principles for your story. So, if it meets that guideline, you are good to go. Yes, we are broadcasting in the indigenous language, but we are guided by these. I call them the pillars of journalism. (News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media)*

The majority of journalists and some editors cannot write and read in Asante Twi. So, even though a few of the editors<sup>38</sup> and reporters are literate in Asante Twi, they cannot do so because the presenters or news anchors are not literate in the Akan language. Moreover, journalists in Ghana are trained and instructed in the English language and these are the ones who are employed in Akan newsrooms. The editors in both Adom Newsroom and Peace FM Newsroom told me that literacy in Akan is not a criterion for hiring journalists. Editors also emphasize the need for scriptwriters to use basic English and choose simple diction when writing. As one of the editors in Adom News and Current Affairs asserted,

*The script is in English. You (the audience) depend on the comprehension of the presenter to get to the point. I have told them that once you are writing in English for somebody to read and translate, you should use basic English. Don't write words that will require that the presenter finds a dictionary. Because you know that in the studio, she cannot get one. (TV News Editors, Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

In one of the Adom newsroom training sessions organized on December 9, 2022, the TV editor reiterated the difference between classroom writing and writing in practice. Their presentation emphasized avoiding complex, complicated, and technical terms predominant in English (classroom) writing style. They added that the element of non-standardized and real-time translation in the newsroom makes such writing incomprehensible and unusable. As such, writing in practice should focus on the utility of script in the sense that the writing should be self-

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<sup>38</sup> In the Adom newsroom, two of the editors and about three of their reporters are literate in Asante Twi. Both the editor and deputy editor of Peace FM are also literate. However, the UTV news editor admitted that she cannot write Asante Twi even though she can speak it.

explanatory, and presenters must be able to grasp the substance of the story for easy comprehension, interpretation, and translation. This criterion is also used for writing headlines and crawlers (news ticker).

Completed news scripts are sent to a centralized point. Copy tasters audit the scripts for compliance with their editorial policy. The scripts that meet the editorial policy are sent to the (deputy) editor. The editor reviews the script and decides on the appropriateness of the story. All the approved news scripts are collated and arranged according to the instructions of the news editor. Numbers are assigned to the news in order of importance or prominence. The editor divides the news scripts between the news presenters. The news producer is responsible for writing out the headlines, arranging news scripts, and printing<sup>39</sup> out individual news scripts and giving them to the news presenters. In the Peace FM newsroom, apart from soft and printed copies of the news scripts, there is a logbook that is used to record all the approved news stories for the day. The headlines and brief summaries of the stories are entered into the logbook by the news producer on duty. According to the editor, adopting these various documentation formats helps the newsroom protect itself against accusations from the public about its news reports, and generally, they are a means of data backup.

## 6.5 Historicizing Akan news media practice in Akan Folkloric Tradition: An emphasis on Socio-Cultural Context

In the Akan newsroom, journalistic news production routine, style, and culture are linguistically inscribed in two languages and their associated communication and socio-cultural contexts. According to stakeholders in indigenous language media whom I interviewed, such as

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<sup>39</sup> I observed that in the Adom newsroom, while news scripts and headlines are printed out and handed to the radio news anchors, for Adom TV news, the presenters use a tablet in the news delivery. However, the TV news editor prints out the headlines only for their own use, and copies are given to the TV news producers and directors.

Linguistics scholar Professor Opanyin Agyekum and veteran journalist and media practitioner Mr. Amankwa Ampofo, contemporary Akan news programming is a derivative of Akan communication and information distribution systems and protocols, as well as technological advancements and general media conventions. More specifically, as shown by editors from both Despite Media and Multimedia Group-Akan Cluster, the contemporary concept of Akan news evolved from Ghana's folkloric narrative tradition of "Anansesem"- Ananse folktales. Therefore, Akan communication and information distribution systems and Ananse storytelling provide a reference point for understanding the principles of Akan news as (story)telling, timely, informational, educational, instrumental in nation-building and cohesion, cultural conservation, and character building. On the stylistic front, news-telling combines the conventional news writing style guidelines known as the inverted pyramid with Ananse storytelling techniques, emphasizing chronology.

My interview with Professor Kofi Agyekum and Mr. Amankwa Ampofo revealed that to understand Akan media practices, particularly news media, it is essential to situate them within the context of mass communication and information dissemination in Akan society. The Akan word for information or news is Kaseɛbɔ. Explaining the morphology of Kaseɛbɔ (news), Professor Agyekum emphasized that the Akan word for news means something that has already happened, the "leftover" "residue" of which you bring to the intended recipients. As Agyekum states,

*Kaseɛbɔ- /Ka /+ /see/ + /bɔ/.*

*This bɔ is related to 'amanee'- telling your mission/mission telling. Wobɔ amanee (You tell your mission). /bɔ/ means to strike. So you strike for something to come out. And /Ka/ means leftover and /aseɛ/ will be the down or the under/residue. So these are leftovers and we want to bring them to the hearing of people. So, assuming there was a gathering in town and people jaw-jaw, they talk about a lot of things. It's the duty of the journalist to say this is what happened. This is what the 'under' (residue) was, so I am now giving it*

*to you. And we use /Kaseɛ/ even in Palmwine. So, when you have that pot then they will always pour from the top. Sometimes, you get some impurities left under. “Nsa no ak’aseɛ”- the residue from the alcohol. And even in our family houses, when we are performing any traditional event, either marriage or naming or there is an arbitration, we normally use schnaps. When we do that, we will never empty the bottle. Never! There should always be a leftover to be used to inform people who were not there that a marriage took place. Something to signal that there was an event. That is “Kaseɛ” nsa na’seni (the remainder of the alcohol). Esi awie (It's already happened). So now this is a symbol to indicate that there was something that happened. (Professor Opanyin Agyekum, Linguistics Department, University of Ghana, Field interview)*

With this etymological reference, news or information is anything that has happened, the telling of which signals the happening of an event to an intended recipient. Responding to what news is, editors for both Adom Newsroom and UTV categorically stated that news is what has happened.

*First of all, what is news? Briefly put news is a happening in your society, in and around you, in the global picture that the audience must be made aware of. So, something has happened and you are telling somebody... So, the news we are giving you are things that are happening around us or have happened. Some continue to develop. And so we are just keeping you up to date with the things around you so it helps you make your mind (News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

*So the news is what has happened (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

The veteran media practitioner, Amankwa Ampofo, also added that news is a revelation and in the Akan tradition, news is formalized through state protocols of information dissemination. He states that

*Kaseɛ is any issue that has come to light which you want the public to know about. That is Kaseɛ. It is formal because any Apesɛmakani (modern-day translation will be a journalist) can announce/tell it. But normally, we didn’t have anything like the radio. If there is an issue, it is reported to the chief who will then follow the protocol of announcing the information. They weigh the issue and decide whether the entire community should be made aware. Then the Okyeame (king’s spokesman) will take up the case. (Veteran media Practitioner, Mr Amankwaa Ampofo, Field interview).*

Accordingly, information/news dissemination in the Akan state was state-sanctioned. News and information dissemination had to go through the proper channel of hierarchy before reaching the target audience. Answering the question on the agents of information distribution, Prof. Agyekum mentioned that there are various players depending on the type of information that needs to be disseminated and for what purpose. Ampofo also added that these players in news/information dissemination correspond with the different types of news in Akan society. Consequently, news/information dissemination protocols constitute agents, speech, musical instruments, sounds, and rhythms. The protocols included key figures such as Dawurobofoɔ (the gong-gong beater), Apesemaka (the journalist), Okyeame (the chief's spokesperson), Ahinkwaa (the chief's messenger), and the master drummer, who was responsible for drum language. These key agents are linked to the four modes of information dissemination. Agyekum and Ampofo referenced four different modes of information or news dissemination: face-to-face mass gathering, gong-gong beater, surrogate language, and errands.

While the chief is the arbiter of news and information dissemination, he is considered a participant based on the fact that, per Akan custom, the chief/king does not speak directly to the people. Nonetheless, any information that needs to be delivered en masse comes from the chief. The king/chief is an authoritative and official source of news and information. News sources are varied; however, all information must make its way to the chief/king, who will then sanction and authorize its dissemination accordingly. Information distribution in the form of announcements is delivered by the gong-gong beater-Dawurobofoɔ- who moves from one location to the other in the community to deliver messages from the chief. The duties of the gong-gong beater are state-sanctioned. His main work is to use the gong-gong instrument to call people to assemble for news/information. His main sound instrument is the gong-gong which is only a signal instrument

for gathering. The gong-gong beating prefixes and acts as an epilogue to the information he delivers. His announcement may be a call for mass gatherings, community-related activities, or sensitization about an issue like an outbreak of a disease. After the state-sanctioned assembling of the citizens, it is the Apesemaka who delivers the news to the people. The modern-day translation for Apesemakafoɔ (plural form) is journalists. The etymology of the word- Apesemaka- is someone who hunts for information to tell. Agyekum mentioned that in certain Akan jurisdictions and during times of war, the Apesemakafoɔ were spies. He explains further as follows:

*So if you take Apesemaka, it comes from Ape + se + ma +ka. So /Ape/- looking/hunting/searching; /sem/-word/statement; /aka/-say/speak/tell. “Na kyerese ope asem”- That is somebody who hunts for new things so as to get the opportunity to say it. However, there are some institutions within certain chiefs, I think... like Mampong and Akwapim, who have some Apesemaka. In those days when we had wars, they were like spies. So they were people who would hunt and scout for news to inform the warriors about what was going on. (Professor Opanyin Agyekum, Linguistics Department, University of Ghana, Field interview)*

Mr Amankwaa Ampofo also added, stating that

*There is Apesemakafoɔ. That means someone who is looking for something to say. It is the Apesemakafoɔ who gives the news. Only the Apesemakafoɔ can give the news. That’s what is called a journalist. The Akan word for a journalist is Apesemaka. We have protocols regarding news delivery... Whatever needs to be said was told in the palace. It is the duty of the Apesemakafoɔ to deliver information about domestic issues and the reason for assembling the people. But the ways and manner of delivering or breaking the news are learnt. One does not just get up to deliver or break the news. When the atwene [meaning drums] speak, it means something. The dawuro-gong-gong means something (Veteran media Practitioner, Mr Amankwaa Ampofo, Field interview).*

The chief’s spokesperson- the Okyeame- is an important agent in both public and mass communication. In fact, Professor Agyekum likened the chief’s spokesperson to the modern-day news editor in journalism, and explains the chief’s spokesperson’s role in the comment below.

*We come to the people who are bringing the news themselves. The news cannot get to the chief directly. It doesn't work that way. Anybody who wants to tell the chief something has to pass through the Okyeame. Okyeame, that's what you people call the linguist. But the Okyeame is rather the chief's spokesperson. Linguist is the wrong term. The linguist is the one who studies linguistics like me, a scholar of linguistics. Yes, they have some attributes of being linguists in their own way... They relay the information from the chief to the audience and from the audience to the chief... Because whatever the chief says is not supposed to have been heard until it is amplified by the Okyeame. The Okyeame then acts as the editor in journalism because he edits whatever comes from the chief. So, the chief may say something that is not pleasant. The Okyeame may have a way of embellishing it by adding some idioms and proverbs so that before it gets to the people, it will sound pleasant. In the same way, if somebody is not speaking well, the chief is not supposed to have heard. So the Okyeame will have to refine whatever was said. That's why the Okyeame can reprimand a person to retract a statement and request that that person come again. The Okyeame, apart from being orators, very eloquent and communicatively competent, were also spiritually powerful. So that if there is anything, the Okyeame can step it down before it gets to the chief. So that's how it worked. We call them animators-the Akyeame [plural form of Okyeame]. The chief will have to speak to this animator, and he will have to edit it before it gets to the audience. And if there is anybody there, he will have to also channel it to the chief, so backchannel. (Professor Opanyin Agyekum, Linguistics Department, University of Ghana, Field interview)*

In fact, the Okyeame is a representation of a state-organized information system and is both a medium and agent of news/information dissemination. The Okyeame is a prime relay agent. As indicated earlier, the Akan custom does not permit the chief/king to speak directly to the people and vice-versa. The Okyeame is the relay agent between the people and their king. He speaks for both the King and the people. He is communicatively eloquent and an orator. He curates language and information in the information distribution system and delivers them in a manner that sustains community cohesion. The other agent is the Ahinkwaa who is the king's messenger/errand boy. He runs errands for the chief delivering information to the intended recipients. The type of information this messenger delivers is segmented and tailored to a very specific audience and not the general public. The errand mode of communication is the only mode that is not delivered en masse.

Then there is the master drummer. The master drummer delivers messages by playing particular drums. This custom is known as drum language which is a prime example of surrogate language<sup>40</sup>. According to J. H. Nketiah (1954), there are three modes of drumming, including signal drumming, speech drumming, and dance drumming, as well as 3 agencies of drumming comprising popular bands drumming, associations drumming, and state drumming. Signal drumming and Speech drumming are formalized systems of message delivery. While signal drumming consists of “conventional code where pre-arranged signals represent a given message,” speech drumming is linguistic in nature and represents spoken language, simulating the tone and rhythm of actual speech, making speech drumming the expression of words (Finnegan, 2012, p.465). Consequently, the drum itself is considered as speaking. The master drummer engages in speech drumming, and it is state-sanctioned. *Kaseɛbo* (news) is one of the four types of drum language/communication<sup>41</sup> that the master drummer engages in. Drum language involves a master drummer and requires competence in and knowledge of the rhythm and language of the drum. Ampofo stated that drum language was taught by parents and in the school system during his time. Drumming requires the listeners to have knowledge of the tones and rhythm of the language to be able to decode and interpret the message.

On the narrative front, the Akan folkloric tradition has hugely influenced the Akan concept and practice of news and news production in contemporary times. Editors from the

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<sup>40</sup> According to Prof. Agyekum, surrogate language is any message that is carried to the people by a musical instrument. J. H. Kwabena Nketia (1971) states that “any form of communication by instrumental sounds rather than by word of mouth” with verbal basis and is “reinterpreted in terms of speech rather than in terms of music” is surrogate language (p. 701). In Akan communication, drumming is purposive communication; as such, drumming modes specify a range of message’s purpose or function and it is intended “as a means of stimulating or guiding social action or social behavior” (Nketia, 1971, p. 702; Asante & Appiah, 1979). These purposes may be to inform, persuade, teach, invoke or entertain.

<sup>41</sup> The other three are Awakening/evocation, Appellations, and Proverbial and indirection.

newsroom understudy categorically stated that Anansesem is foundational to Akan news. They stated that Akan news is storytelling, and as such, Akan news is news-telling, not news reading.

The Peace FM news editor describes it as follows:

*Remember that the concept of Twi news evolved from the concept of Ananse stories, where they used that as a medium of telling people what has happened, making them draw lessons from that, using that to educate and promote national culture and cohesion, and all that. Those principles have not changed except that the way of reading and presenting it has changed. Because you now have a mass medium where somebody sits somewhere and reads and at a goal, it goes to the world. You understand. (News Editor, Peace FM, Despite Media).*

Anansesem is a “story-telling art... by the Akan-speaking people of Ghana, and it is used both for the body of stories told and for the story-telling performance itself” (Sutherland, 1987, p. v). Anansesem is an Akan word that combines two words: “Ananse,” meaning spider, and “asem,” meaning word or statement. So Anansesem means “tales of Ananse” or tales of the spider, “Ananse stories” or “Ananse’s words.” (Asante & Edu, 2018; Yankah, 1983; Sutherland, 1975). Ananse, among the Akans, is considered the “origin of tales,” “originator of language,” and thus “linguistically witty,” and outwits his opponents using verbal ambiguity, so much so that one of the designs of the Akan royal spokesmen’s staff is the spider (Yankah, 1983). So, just like Ananse, the Okyeame is equally eloquent, an orator, and linguistically witty. The character of Ananse as “a hero/antihero full of ambition and folly” is portrayed as a trickster and as “emblematic of wisdom” (Peek & Yankah, 2004, p.141 & 827). Efua Sutherland (1987) succinctly articulates conventions of Anansesem in the following:

*Ananse appears to represent a kind of Everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve society as a medium of self-examination. He has penetrating awareness of the nature and psychology of human beings and animals. He is also made to mirror in his behavior fundamental human passions, ambitions and follies as revealed in contemporary situations... That Ananse is, artistically, a medium for society to criticize*

*itself can be seen in the expression, 'Exterminate Ananse, and society will be ruined.'* (p. v).

Peek and Yankah (2004) commenting on the character of Ananse as ubiquitous and “everyman” in Anansesem concluded that “Ananse is “Mr. In-Between” himself, able to be all things and none, simultaneously. As such, Anansi personifies possibility, and his preposterous misadventures are the stuff of humor with a didactic edge” (Peek & Yankah, 2004, p.7).

Anansesem is fictitious; nonetheless, the values of Anansesem, like timeliness, a medium for reflections of human and society flaws as well as mirroring retribution, didactic edge, cultural conservation, community, communication, and speech, show the interplay between various dimensions of reality and fantasy (Yankah, 1983; Sutherland, 1987; Peek & Yankah, 2004).

With these conventions, one can see the similarities between the Anansesem and the role and function of media as a distinct sensibility with different interrelated themes. Subsequently, the sensibilities of Anansesem infused into local language media in Ghana accentuate the character of indigenous language media in Ghana as ‘in-between’ and ‘everyman.’ Thus, programs like news and current affairs and Twinoveloas become the interstice of society for accountability, self-examination, and aspirational mobility.

Anansesem, as a traditionally domestic face-to-face performance, comprises the storyteller and their audience/participants who assume roles during the narration. Anansesem follows this structure: (i) an introductory declaration that suggests that the story is a fiction and participants are entering into a world of fantasy; (ii) the narration of the content of the story during which there is a dialogue between the narrator and the participants, riddles, songs and dance, and questions; and (iii) a closing declaration where the narrator states: “This is my story which I have related, if it be sweet, if it be not sweet, some may take it as true and the rest may praise me for it” (Yankah, 1983, p. 12). In some instances, when time permits, the closing

remark is a cue for turn-taking where the narrator will pass the baton to a participant to share an Anansesem.

It is these Anansesem sensibilities that have influenced Akan indigenous language media news and current affairs practice. These sensibilities mark the differences between English-speaking and Akan-speaking media practices, particularly regarding journalism and news practice. As such, Akan newsrooms differentiate between news reading and news-telling. This difference emanates from the stylistic conventions associated with journalistic newscasting in English. A news editor in Adom News and Current Affairs explains the difference between English news broadcast and Akan news broadcast.

*You see, the difference between the English news broadcast and the Akan news, which many people have not noticed, is that when you are learning journalism in school- the inverted pyramid, the format you are taught to write your news format in is for English. It is not for the Akan platform. Because Akan platforms are fused with our tradition “Yen to Anansesem emfiri awiey3 enkosi ahyasie3” (Ananse stories are not told from the end to the beginning). “Anansesem no” (The Ananse story)...you must sustain the suspense from the beginning... So you heighten the suspense; you get to the peak of it and then you just tell them. So a typical example will be that last week, we had a story about a man called Stephen Appiah who had killed his wife. We will not just start by saying a man in some remote village called Stephen Appiah has killed his wife. You have given the story away. Eneeno wo behye’sia Stephen Appiah akum ne yiri [Translated as With that you start with: Stephen Appiah has killed the wife]. Nti [Translated as so] people’s attention will now be drawn to Stephen Appiah. You tell them, but then you tell them Stephen Appiah ete kuro bia yefre ho Fankyenibegyichalk [Translated as Stephen Appiah hails from a town called Fankyenib3gyichalk]. So, we sustain. The inverted pyramid doesn’t work for us. So this is how you tell the story, and that is why sometimes you get people who feel you carry them along in your storytelling. So we’re actually doing storytelling not news (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

The TV news editor at Adom News and Current Affairs expanded on what she meant by doing storytelling and not news during the Akan news broadcast in the comment below.

*So the news is what has happened. The storytelling is where you are sustaining the interest of the listener, carrying them along... I ‘ll carry you along when I get to the peak*

*of it, and you are like, “Ah, is this what you were talking about?” ... Ours is how it happened to what happened. So we are doing the pyramid and not the inverted pyramid. That's how, at least, I see it from how we tell our stories. Because we are adopting news reports from Anansesem. “Woto anansesem- You tell Ananse stories. You don't start and tell me the end, that Kwaku Ananse was killed. You start and take me through, and then eventually, Kwaku Ananse was killed. You maintain that storyline for the Akan brand. (TV News Editor, Adom News and Current Affairs, MGL).*

The relaying of the information called news takes the narrative characteristics of storytelling. So, the newscaster tells the news to the audience, taking in the Akan narrative sensibilities of Anansesem. The idea of newscasting/ news reading as storytelling does not dismiss conventional journalistic and news production practices. Akan newscasting is executed differently owing to the doubly-bonded linguistic, cultural, and internally specific organizational cultural layers associated with Akan journalistic news production. The Peace FM news editor reiterated the two linguistic systems underlying Akan journalism.

*What is the script about? It is about a happening- a news item. Even though you are not going to do a verbatim reading of what I have given you in English. Because even though the script is in English, you are not going to do that. You are going to tell what is in there. You are not going to read what is in there, but you are going to tell us what is in there. That is the major difference between the English and the Akan one. In English, ordinarily, you would read whatever you have, but in Akan, you don't read; you tell the story. ... remember I told you earlier that in the vernacular news, we don't read the news; we tell you the stories.*

*When Peace FM was being set up, there was no radio station that broadcast in Twi or the Akan language. Everyone was doing English. It was the first radio station to program its activities and air its programs in the Akan language and it was a hit. The people accepted it very well, but then the interesting thing is that the news that we read on air, even though it is read in Akan, is written in English.... (News Editor, Peace FM).*

As seen in the quotation above, news-telling deviates from the conventional inverted pyramid stylistics of journalism. News-telling follows the socio-cultural practice of information relay among Akan-speaking people. Additionally, because of the nuances of translation, and the doubly bonded linguistic feature of news routine in the Akan indigenous language media, Mr

Ampofo emphasized that the inverted pyramid style of writing in English journalistic writing style will render a news story useless and meaningless when translated into the Akan language. Thus, the English news reading rules cannot be equivalently applied to Akan news-telling. The translation is not just linguistic, i.e., from English to Akan, but from literacy to orality. As stipulated by Rosina Lippi-Green (1997) written language and spoken language are “historically, structurally and functionally fundamentally different creatures” (p.7) Written language is more rigid than spoken language. In this sense, the newscaster reading news in English must align with the written script and read it verbatim. However, because orality and spoken language imply flexibility, the Akan newscaster shifts between rigidity and flexibility, deploying all the attributes of orality. The Akan news-teller occupies two linguistic spaces and routines at the same time. The newscaster simultaneously oscillates between the news script written in English and the oral delivery of the news.

As news dissemination is a communicative act, its delivery is situated in Akan cultural norms and values. Chief among the values are respect, target audience, and context. Because Akan tradition puts a premium on respect for authority and seniority, any communicative act prioritizes the target audience of the message, which determines the style and mode of the news delivery. Further, respect, target audience, and context determine the lexicon deployed in any communication. Manhyia Palace is considered the authority in using the Asante Twi language. The language used in daily communication cannot be used in the Manhyia Palace. In my conversation with Akan newscasters and program hosts, they were quick to point out that the Manhyia Palace<sup>42</sup> Language is different from the media language. Most of them stated that they use “street Twi” so that non-speakers of the Akan language can comprehend their content. Also,

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<sup>42</sup> Manhyia Palace is the seat and residence of the Asantehene (King of the Ashantis) of Asanteman (Ashanti Kingdom). It is located in Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region of Ghana.

street Twi is viable because of the metropolitan mix of the Akan language and languages of the other ethnic groups. According to Professor Agyekum, other values include social variables like gender, rank, age, power, and distance in terms of intimacy.

#### 6.6 News-telling rather than news reading: Akan News-telling as an Extempore Performance

The Akan newsrooms under The Multimedia Group and Despite Media have similar practices in their news presentation. Nonetheless, there are some observable differences. The similarities include the style of the presentation and process of translation, while the differences consist of the roles of the presenters within the news production process.

The Adom news and current affairs department has its own presenters. There is usually only one news presenter for Adom's morning and afternoon radio news and two co-anchors for the evening news. Adom TV news always has one main news anchor presenting the news. For Despite Media, Peace FM has two anchors for all their major news bulletins, while UTV has one for the morning and afternoon news bulletins and two for the evening and late-night news bulletins.

After the news script has gone through the required editorial protocols, the scheduled presenters are given the news scripts before going on air. Often, news presenters are given the news scripts an hour earlier to review them before going on air. While this is the norm, I observed an instance when a news presenter collected their news script about 8 minutes before the midday news bulletin. Presenters are expected to review the news scripts with the editors before the main news bulletins. Moreover, because the news scripts are in English, reviewing them helps anchors familiarize themselves with the content of news stories to enhance on-air translation of the news and enable a more natural and proficient delivery in the local language. Translating news stories during the bulletin is a uniquely individual communicative act and

extemporaneous because Akan news delivery oscillates between scripted and unscripted formats. While the news content is scripted, the translation from English to Asante Twi occurs unscripted in real-time. Scholars like Fasan Rotimi (2018) and Samuel K. Adesubokan (2023) have examined the interplay between traditional oral devices and written formats in mass media. Fasan (2018), writing about indigenous language newspapers in Nigeria- *Alaroye*, stated that the newspaper incorporated Yorùbá oral aesthetics in its written form. Specifically, this newspaper blended Yoruba oral resources with its written medium, deploying stylistics such as code-switching. This style was borrowed into radio newspaper review programs, which oralized the written format. Consequently, while indigenous language newspapers used an oral written style (meaning language is written as it is spoken and readers read the print as if it were spoken), radio newspaper review programs oralized a written genre. Adesubokan (2023) also writes that Yoruba radio newscasting draws from oral traditions and mass media performances. Focusing on the performance aspect of presenters on radio newspaper programs, Adesubokan finds that presenters move away from usual radio journalism conventions and use “a performative mode through the employment of various traditional oral devices, including proverbs, pun, extemporisation and fictional exaggeration” (p. 424). Both Fasan and Adesuabokan recognize indigenous news as performative (speech) acts. The phenomena of oralized written genre from Fasan and news as a performative act are important findings that characterize indigenous language broadcasting or mass media. For instance, as I will demonstrate briefly, Akan news delivery equally oralizes a written genre, and in its news performance, it uses extemporization in addition to other Akan narrative stylistic devices, hence the conclusion that Akan news presentation is news-telling.

Despite these similarities, particularly with the mixing of oral traditions with written formats, both Fasan (2018) and Adesubokan (2023) focused on the textual style and not on the production process. The concept of oralizing a written genre from the textual analysis framework shows that presenters are recipients of the news and are detached contextually and substantively from the production of the original news in the newspapers. Consequently, radio newspaper program anchors in adapting and (re)producing news from a print medium use improvisation as argued by Fasan and extemporization as argued by Adesuabokan. Furthermore, what these authors did not specify was whether these radio newspaper review program hosts were trained journalists or not, leaving a vacuum for the assumption that these hosts are journalists. Indeed, Akan news broadcasters oralize a written genre, but more importantly, it is one that can be described as planned and extemporaneous speaking. This is because Akan news broadcasters and their producers are active participants in news production at varying levels, from editorial decision-making, writing, and presentation. They are not adapting and reproducing news from an external source; rather, they are telling news that they participated in their production.

In the case of Adom Newsroom, all news anchors and producers, as well as current affairs show hosts and their producers, are part of the news production process and partake in journalistic duties in the newsroom. They are involved in the editorial meetings and are assigned stories to write. One of the presenters mentioned that under Multimedia Group, news presenters are not just news presenters; they are journalists. Their participation in the news-making process is necessary for various reasons, including to enhance their ability to translate the news script, tell the story appropriately and accurately, provide them with a contextual understanding of the news stories, and enhance recollection of the news stories. Some news anchors present for both radio and television, while others focus exclusively on television news. One of the television

news anchors shared that while their fluency in the Asante Twi is strong, it is constrained by the structural, speech performance, and stylistic requirements of radio news broadcasting. This news anchor explained that the structure, speech, and style of television news are such that the news presentation tasks are split between news anchors/broadcasters and news correspondents or reporters. Television news broadcasters present news headlines, introduce news stories and segments, coordinate continuity, and conduct interviews (when required). Reporters or news correspondents present the details of the main stories through pre-recorded voice-overs or live updates.

In contrast, radio news anchors undertake the tasks of presenting news stories, news headlines, and main details of the news stories in addition to conducting interviews, introducing segments, and coordinating continuity throughout the news broadcast. The only exception in radio news broadcasts is when there is a pre-recorded feature story. Consequently, the speech and stylistic burden on radio news broadcasters requires radio presenters to demonstrate advanced proficiency in the Asante Twi language. This testimony also confirms a very significant characteristic of spoken language, which is that “spoken language varies for every speaker in terms of speech sounds, sound patterns, word and sentence structure, intonation, and meaning, from utterance to utterance” (Lippi-Green, 2012, p. 20). Lippi-Green explains that this variation results from factors such as internal pressures of language, external influences on language, and language as a creative medium. Informal conversations with Akan news anchors and journalists confirmed that for most of them, geographical mobility and various forms of socialization impacted their fluency in the Akan dialects.

The participation of news anchors in news production at Peace FM and UTV newsrooms varies. Not all newscasters participate in the news production. However, news producers actively

engage in news production. For instance, in Peace FM Newsroom, the editor and deputy news editor, who double as news presenters and hosts/co-hosts of some of the social and current affairs programming, participate in news production. Also, journalists/reporters in the newsroom take turns in serving as news producers. UTV news editor and deputy editor serve as news producers on television. However, even though not all the anchors are actively engaged in the news production, in terms of proximity, they are close to the site of production and often engage with the journalists in the newsroom. Because news and current affairs presenters belong to a general pool of anchors, they could be assigned to present on either television or any of the radio subsidiaries under Despite Media. In fact, Despite Media news presenters undertake a multifaceted role. Their responsibilities encompass a variety of functions like serving as news anchors, morning show hosts and co-anchors, announcers, and hosts of social and political programs.

Akan news broadcasters and producers' participation in and proximity to the news production site changes how news is performed as opposed to how radio newspaper review programs are performed. First of all, as already explained in the editorial process of Akan newsmaking, the scripting of the news is in English. It adheres to professional journalistic norms, which differ from Fasan's description of the Yoruba newspapers in Nigeria. Akan news scripts are not written in an oral style, where writing mirrors spoken expression. Instead, the orthography employs a simple writing style rather than a complex one. This simple writing style allows for easy understanding, interpretation, and translation during broadcasting. Consequently, the interplay between news as a written text and news presentation as an oralizing performative act in Akan news is not improvisatory. Rather, it is dialectically extemporaneous, balancing structure and intentionality with spontaneity. The spontaneity occurs when transitioning from

written format to oral presentation. The manner of the transition takes the form of a translation done in real-time. Therefore, during translation, the news script serves as a guide for the presenter in delivering the news in Akan. It is during the translation that the news is recreated and constructed into an oralized performance. This is in accordance with scholars' description of newscasting as a performance (Fasan, 2018; Mohammed, 2019). Indigenous language newscasting departs from conventional radio journalism and incorporates indigenous knowledge systems and traditional oral devices like “proverbs, puns, extemporisation and fictional exaggeration” in the case of Yuroba radio newscasting and euphemisms and hedging in news presentation in Dagbani and Gonja in Ghana (Adesubokan, 2023, p. 424; Mohammed, 2019).” While Mohammed theorizes that Dagbani and Gonja presenters and journalists are journalistic griots in accordance with their culture, Akan news presenters are news-tellers. In the Akan news presentation, the news is told (news-telling), not read (news-reading). Akan newscasters are seen as news-tellers engaging in storytelling rather than reading news verbatim. As discussed earlier, the translation style is akin to the Akan oral folkloric tradition of Anansesem. The extempore nature of the delivery requires that Akan news tellers be linguistically astute, communicatively eloquent, good orators, and able to adhere to news values based on communal cohesion.

All the Akan news presenters I spoke to reiterated a similar translation process. First, read the news script; second, make sure you understand the story; and third, interpret the story for your audience. This cognitive process differs from what Mohammed found about Dagbani and Gonja news presenters, whose process included news memorization, translation, and presentation. The issue of memory is also found to be an important quality of Akan news presenters, but it is explained differently. Unlike Dagbani and Gonja news presenters and journalists who must memorize news content they did not produce, Akan news broadcasters and

journalists produce original news content. As such, memory serves the role of retaining and retrieving information, contextualization, and continuity, not merely memorization. For these presenters, memory plays an important role in news translation. The ability to retain new information in real-time and the historical circumstance of the news break are key. As such, Akan news presenters must keep abreast of historical events to help them efficiently translate and deliver the news. Background information is crucial to understanding the news story and accounting for the nuances and complexities of a story. As such, mere reading of the news script is insufficient for the news translation; background information helps contextualize the story and enhances proficiency and extemporaneous delivery. Sometimes, presenters, in telling a particular story, must rearticulate the genesis of a story to provide context for that story. Being part of the editorial process gives the Adom TV and radio news anchors an upper hand during the news presentation. They get enough time to engage with the news stories, their background information, and content before the news time. So, for Adom news anchors, news translation does not necessarily start in real-time with the oral delivery of the news; news translation starts at the editorial point. The news-telling itself is an interpretive practice that makes news presentation and translation more than just relaying information. It involves narrativizing news content to foster engagement with the audience while meeting the cultural nuances of the language. In Akan news-telling elements such as comprehension, memory, interpretive, and editorial insight are woven together to create an engaging and informative news delivery.

Real-time translation means editors are removed from the translation process since it is extemporaneous. The editor's detachment from the translation process makes the Akan news presentation subjective. Editors' immediate control over news translation is limited. Newsroom editors do not have control over the way and manner news anchors conduct their translation of

the news scripts in real-time. The UTV news editor explains this lack of control over the translation.

*...no, no, no, that one I would say I have zero influence on the translation from English to Twi. Everything in the newsroom is written in English. That one (the news script in English) I have some control over it in the sense that the reporter brings the news item or their story or their script; we go through it and if everything is on point then we give it to the anchor. The anchor is the one who is... supposed to translate because we give the news script to them at least an hour before time. They go through the news script to have an idea about the news item. Unless it's breaking news or something, and even then, we speak to you and make you understand what the story is about. So in terms of control over the language, no (we have no control) because they (the anchors) are the ones translating everything. But as much as possible, we know it's a ground rule that don't try and exaggerate the story. If it is A, say it is A; if it is B, say it's B. Do not say it is ABC (News Editor, UTV).*

While in English news presentations, editors have direct oversight and control over the actual news content in the form of the news scripts, editors in the Akan newsroom have little control over the translation of the news stories. Any real-time oversight or control is postponed until after the news delivery. The extemporaneity of translation of the news in real-time gives news anchors full autonomy over their translation. Every Akan news delivery is distinct and reflects the style of the anchor. Even when given the same script, the translation and delivery vary. This difference in translation is because of the flexibility that characterizes orality. As such, Akan news tellers have the flexibility of choosing any combination of diction from their work bank. So, the simultaneous translation and delivery is not just an individual experience but is unique to the presenter. The Peace FM news editor asserts that

*What happens is this, I will have to give you the facts of the issues I want you to present. Once you have the facts you are going to present them. The presentation is where your uniqueness comes in. It is unique to the presenter. Very very unique. (Responding to anchors' flexibility in translation within the boundaries of editorial policy) the beauty of it is that it is even so with the English we are speaking now. We all appreciate a little English but if I am telling you something that's happened, my diction may not be the same as yours. that is the flexibility in there for them. Your choice of words will be*

*different from my choice of words. Remember, you need, I call it word bank, not world. It is where you draw your words from to make up the story. To tell the story to the listener (News Editor, Peace FM).*

Fasan (2018), Mohammed (2019), and Adesubokan (2023) in their research confirm the subjectivity of oralized written genres like the news in indigenous language media. These scholars' findings suggest that news presenters make unilateral decisions about how news stories are constructed and delivered without any oversight. This phenomenon of unilateral decision-making is present in the two Akan media organizations under examination. Despite the inherent flexibility of Akan news delivery, this adaptability is governed by certain accountability mechanisms that enhance the integrity of the news process, including time constraints, newsroom and journalistic guidelines, internal surveillance, and censorship. Because news is time-bound, the seemingly limitless time bound to orality is unavailable to news anchors. News anchors must be quick on their feet and select words that effectively summarize the news story within the allotted time. Also, editors expect news anchors to adhere strictly to the values of journalism and in-house organizational guidelines. In Adom newsroom, the policy is that during any bulletin on radio and television, the editors must be present to oversee the bulletin even though the news producer is also present. Throughout my time with the Adom newsroom, either the editor or their deputies were present at every news bulletin. Similarly, the UTV editor and deputy editor were always present during a news bulletin. For Peace FM, the news producers played an oversight role. Additionally, during any bulletin, the transmission is listened to or watched in the newsrooms. The Adom, Peace FM and UTV newsrooms have radio sets and television monitors. Some senior members in the newsroom use these technologies to monitor the news, and should there be any blunder, they are queried.

## 6.7 Conclusion

As one of the editors of Adom News and Current Affairs admitted, journalism is a global practice localized in a geographically specific context. It is almost impossible to replicate it precisely in different contexts, primarily when conducted in a different language. The language element transforms the practice to suit the localized interests and sensibilities. As such, by exploring the production practices in Akan newsrooms focusing on Adom, Peace FM, and UTV newsrooms, I attempted to show how their news production is organized, which distinctively recast the understanding of journalistic practices to help answer the question: How do production practices of news shape our understanding of the nature of indigenous language media? Akan indigenous language media reflects both the global practice of journalism and the cultural elements of Akan communicative acts. Akan news production demonstrates how factual reporting intertwines with culturally inflected narrative depth, mirrors the diverse developmental phases of indigenous language media in Ghana, and exemplifies the changing landscape of journalism in Ghana. In the first place, the different structural approaches to news production reflect the operations of Adom Newsroom and Despite Media Newsrooms. The centralized model of Adom Newsroom and the decentralized platform model of Despite Media show the multifaceted nature of indigenous language media in Ghana. While the centralized model streamlines editorial decision-making processes, projects a unified voice, and shows the importance of converged newsrooms, the decentralized platform model fosters a more diversified perspective and greater independence in editorial operations. Both structural approaches are evidence of the balance between mass production and customized platform production, mimicking the technological innovations shaping information production and dissemination.

Through the framework of heteroglossia, it becomes evident that a key characteristic of indigenous language media is its linguistic adaptability. The newsrooms studied are bilingual. Official newsroom languages are English and Asante Twi, operationalized through written and oral forms. The seamlessness and naturalness of code-switching in the news production process make it difficult to detect any underlying tensions in their usage. Whether it is code-switching between English and Akan or translating from spoken discourse to written format, the intuitiveness and sophistication illustrate a skill set that is fundamental to Akan journalism in the newsroom. Though there is a clear stratification of language in the Akan newsrooms, this is organized functionally rather than hierarchically. The horizontal structure of language use in the Akan newsrooms supports the various phases and steps integral to the news production process. The dual linguistic structure is vital for collaboration and optimizing news creation and dissemination and the functioning of the newsroom. None of the two languages is superior since they are functionally significant at various stages in news production. The perceived superiority stems from the general view of written language as superior to spoken language based on arbitrary norms (Lippi-Green, 2012). However, within a postcolonial context like Ghana, the superiority of English has nothing to do with the differentiation between oral and written. After all, just like English, Akan is also a written literary language.

This linguistic adaptability facilitates diverse linguistic values, belief systems, and ideologies influencing journalism in Ghana. Heteroglossia represents more than just language variation; it establishes a link between language and ideology, reflects historical language modes and their dynamic nature, and includes discursive practices tied to language use and function. Using English and Akan in the newsrooms mirrors the interaction of editorial perspectives, varying cultural voices, and historical contexts. For instance, Akan folkloric tradition has

influenced contemporary journalism, reflected in the merging of artistic storytelling and conventional journalistic norms. Akan language media performs news-telling rather than merely reading news scripts as practiced in English language media. This shows that Akan journalism does not just verbalize a written genre. News presentation in this context represents a planned extemporaneous discourse that recognizes and applies a written script, demonstrates comprehension, and incorporates an individualized interpretive framework grounded in established editorial principles and perspectives. The news delivery historicizes each news story within the editorial process built on collaboration and considers the context of the news narrative. Thus, indigenous language media is marked by historical depth, flexibility, cultural significance, and storytelling. These markers resonate with local audiences since they reflect audiences' values and traditions.

## Chapter 7: Reproducing Audiovisual and Representational Dissonance: Translating Foreign Telenovela into Twinovela

### 7.0 Introduction

Foreign content in Ghanaian television has significantly reshaped the landscape of local broadcasting, with Adom TV and UTV leading the charge in adapting international series. Unlike the radio sector, which predominantly features locally produced content, television offers diverse domestic and foreign programming. One of the most popular forms of foreign content on Ghanaian local television stations is telenovelas, which have amassed a substantial audience due to their relatable storytelling and dramatic appeal. Telenovelas are appealing because of their low cost, which presents a significant economic advantage for Ghanaian broadcasting executives. This chapter delves into the concept and production of twinovela, a process of localization that transforms foreign serial dramas into the Akan language through dubbing. Using heteroglossia as a framework to analyze dubbing production is significant for explaining the intertwining discourses, voices, cultural and socioeconomic contexts that shape the poetics and aesthetics of telenovelas in Ghana. Further, heteroglossia is important for unraveling the layers of seemingly contentious representational ideas about local and global, foreign and indigenous, and how creatives and executives navigate and negotiate these tensions to create a unique form of programming that challenges normative ideas about indigenous (language) media. Heteroglossia provides a perspective to explore the production of twinovela, demonstrating ways multiple voices and cultures merge, contributing to larger discourses about identity and representation in indigenous television.

By examining the evolution, production, and reception of twinovelas, we can better understand their impact on Ghana's broadcasting industry. This analysis will enhance our

understanding of indigenous language media, highlighting the broader implications for cultural representation and audience engagement in a rapidly globalizing media environment. More importantly, examining twinovela production provides a critical perspective on the contradictions in the ideological foundation of indigenous (language) media rooted in resistance to non-indigenous influences. It reveals a stratified production system shaped by various factors, including economic motivations and shifting audience preferences. Through the innovative efforts of broadcasting stations like Adom TV and UTV, Twinovela has captivated viewers and sparked discussions around the relevance of local language programming in an age dominated by foreign media influences. This section will first explore foreign content and its influence on local programming. Second, it will detail the process of twinovela production, including the strategies involved in adapting these shows to Ghanaian audiences. Data used in this discussion are from field notes, interviews, organizational documents, informal conversations, and news reports. Third, it will address the implications of twinovelas for cultural identity and dialogue surrounding indigenous language media and foreign content.

### 7.1 Cultural Impact of Telenovelas

Brian Larkin's (1997) research on the pervasiveness of Indian Films in Northern Nigeria provides a foundational reference for unpacking foreign content on Ghanaian indigenous language media. Larkin writes that Indian films have been popular in West Africa for over forty years because they engage with the desires and conflicts in African societies. Writing about the pervasiveness of Indian films among Northern Nigerians, particularly those from the Hausa culture, Larkin sought to discover why Indian films resonated with Northern Nigeria. He found that Indian films are popular because they provide parallel modernity, an alternative to the secular West. He defines parallel modernity as "the coexistence in space and time of multiple

economic, religious, and cultural flows that are often subsumed within the term modernity” (Larkin, 1997, p. 407). Larkin argues that these films have been reworked and incorporated into contemporary Hausa social life. Indian films balance Nigerian tradition and Western modernity, depicting acceptable attitudes toward love and sexual relations. Larkin argued that Indian films provide Hausa viewers with traditions that differ from theirs while presenting a form of modernity free from ideological and political constraints.

Research on the impact of telenovelas in Ghana confirms Larkin’s parallel modernity, highlighting the multifaceted roles of telenovelas. Telenovelas serve as educational, cultural, and psychological tools that shape viewers’ experiences and insights. This perspective becomes clearer when one examines the reasons people watch telenovelas. Eunice Akorfa Adia’s (2014) study examined how watching telenovelas influences behavior in Ghana. The study found that viewers are motivated to watch these shows due to their identification with the characters and the connection to themes like love and the fulfillment of their intrinsic desires. Other reasons include escapism, relaxation, a sense of belonging, identification with characters, and sharing opinions, lifestyles, and experiences. Adia concluded that telenovelas serve as socializing tools and serve the audience’s idealistic expectations.

Further, Ussher and Ollennu (2023) studied telenovelas’ influence on promoting Ghanaian languages. They found that audiences prefer to watch telenovelas in Ghanaian languages because these shows act as stress relievers and educational tools. Participants reported that telenovelas help them relieve stress through humor and provide opportunities for family bonding. As a source of education, viewers learn about global fashion trends, foreign cultures, and social issues like love and marriage. Ussher and Ollennu also found that older participants indicated that telenovelas helped them learn new lexical items, while children expanded their

vocabulary and learned the Akan language. Asiamah and Ofori-Birikorang (2018) also conducted a study on telenovela viewing practices in some selected communities in Ghana, focusing specifically on the Indian drama series *Kumkum Bhagya*. They sought to examine the culture surrounding the viewing of telenovelas at both domestic and public television viewing sites. The authors concluded that viewing sites transformed into platforms for information sharing, social interaction, display of power between site owners and viewers, and peer discussions on social life, including morality, fashion, general life experiences, marriage, and more. Asiamah and Ofori-Birikorang (2018) also underscored that, besides the audience's appropriating telenovela narratives, they become narrative agents recapping previous episodes and analyzing them to speculate about future development. These studies by Larkin (1997), Adia (2014), Asiamah and Ofori-Birikorang (2018), and Ussher and Ollennu (2023) highlight the significance of telenovelas in Ghanaian and Nigerian social life in enhancing social bonds, shared experiences, and participatory storytelling, and challenging and redefining social conventions. For instance, themes of love, marriage, and sexuality help test the limits of social norms in a given period. Moreover, these studies suggest that telenovelas give the audience a perspective on the world. They explain why people engage with this genre, reinforcing the motivation for Ghanaian television stations to include telenovelas in their programming.

This research review shows that telenovelas have socio-cultural and economic significance, providing valuable perspectives on the influence of foreign content on local cultures. They provide a foundation for exploring the tension between foreign content and indigenous media. In fact, one of the key gaps Larkin (1997) sought to fill with his research was the lack of attention and criticism of Indian Films in Nigeria. Unlike Nigeria, where criticisms of Indian films have been sidestepped, telenovelas in Ghana have sparked public controversy and

debate, making it a medium for social discourse. Nonetheless, their popularity in Ghanaian television has not waned. Additionally, there is a gap in research regarding the production of telenovelas in a local context. The research conducted in Ghana by Adia (2014), Asiamah and Ofori-Birikorang (2018), and Ussher and Ollennu (2023) all focused on audience analysis. They showed audience perceptions and practices by utilizing research methods like ethnography, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Larkin's (1997) research indicated that Indian films in Northern Nigeria were aired in their original language, but in Hausa cinemas, subtitles accompanied them. While Larkin's research reveals that Indian films in Northern Nigeria often retain their original language or feature subtitles, this raises questions about the effectiveness of such approaches in audience engagement. In contrast, television stations in Ghana broadcast telenovelas in English or Akan. Ghanaian local language television stations exemplify a more nuanced approach by broadcasting telenovelas in both English and Akan, demonstrating a clear emphasis on linguistic adaptation and cultural resonance. The linguistic adaptation emphasizes localization in Ghana to ensure ultimate audience access and cultural resonance. It also points to how transnational cultural product consumption patterns differ across the region. The variation in production strategies in Northern Nigeria and Ghana underscores the need for more academic research into the methodologies utilized in different regions.

These studies show a significant gap in academic research concerning the production process of imported telenovelas, which warrants further exploration. By examining how cultural products are tailored to local audiences, scholars can better understand the implications of those practices on the indigenous broadcasting industry and cultural exchange. Furthermore, identifying production practices in localized contexts could aid in developing frameworks that

enhance audience accessibility, foster deeper cultural connections, and expand our understanding of indigenous (language) media.

Twinovela underscores the important interplay of cultural representation, the political economy of indigenous language media, and the influence of geocultural movements and audience desires. This form of media offers an opportunity to explore and understand these complex dynamics constructively. Twinovela is a platform for evaluating the coexistence and interaction of public interest and profit, along with foreign and local business interests, advertising objectives, audience desires, and stakeholder concerns in telenovelas. Moreover, the sonic and visual parallels produce audiovisual and representational dissonance that is alluring and tenuous. Thus, addressing this gap in the production process could be instructive for enhancing programming strategies for content creators and broadcasters across the region.

## 7. 2 Dubbing: From telenovela to twinovela

### 7.21 Emergence of Twinovela

Foreign content is one of the profitable sources of content for both Adom TV and UTV. Usually, these are movies and series from other African countries, such as North America, Asia, and the Middle East. Unlike radio production, where all content is locally produced and sourced, television production and programming comprise local and foreign content. Apart from foreign feature films telecasted in their language of origin or production, telenovelas have become a profitable and popular programming content on indigenous language television in Ghana. What makes telenovelas unique is the process of indigenization, which results in their reproduction into what is now known as twinovela. The lexicon twinovela, just like a telenovela, is a portmanteau that blends the words Twi (language) with novela. Twinovela articulates the (re)production of foreign serial drama/soap operas through dubbing by translating the drama

from its language of origin or production to the Twi language. In simple terms, twinovela is the (re)production of serialized drama from other countries like Brazil, Dubai, Mexico, India, the Philippines, South Korea, and Turkey. While dubbing television shows is not a new concept in Ghana, twinovela is quite novel. Adom TV and UTV are recognized as pioneers of twinovelas at different periods in time and levels of reproduction.

Before twinovelas, Ghanaian local television stations had been broadcasting serialized drama, most prominent being English soap operas and Spanish telenovelas. To put it into context, the state-owned television Ghana Television (GTV) has broadcast foreign programs in news, documentaries, sports, religion, cartoons, sitcoms, music, drama/soap operas, and feature films (Nuviadenu, 2005). Most foreign shows were from the USA, and a few from Europe, Asia, and other African countries. Some of the notable shows were Oprah Winfrey, The Cosby Show, Tom and Jerry, Aladdin, Captain Planet, Touched by an Angel, The Bold and the Beautiful, Days of Our Lives, Passions, Wrestling, CNN, Deutsche Welle (DW), Gillette Sports, and many more (Nuviadenu, 2005). All these shows were broadcast in English. In the late 1990s, there was a shift from American imported shows towards Asia and Latin America. For instance, GTV broadcast a Brazilian telenovela- *Isaura*, and Chinese dramas- *Oshin and Journey to the West in the late 1990s* (Nuviadenu, 2005; Ussher & Ollennu, 2023). Around the same time, TV3, an English-speaking private television station, started dubbing Spanish telenovelas into English using Ghanaian voice artists (Ussher & Ollennu, 2023). TV3's English-dubbed Spanish telenovelas became so popular that other television channels started doing the same. Then, when the craze for Spanish telenovelas intensified, more television stations got into the trend.

UTV, in its early days of broadcasting (July 2013), started showing Mexican telenovelas with a different twist. While they broadcast an English-dubbed Mexican telenovela, they

introduced pre- and post-discussion segments in which the host narrated and summarized the story in each episode to help the audience understand the telenovela better. The summary and narration were done in the Twi language. Panelists would then discuss relevant topics determined by the production team arising from the show. The discussion segment helped viewers who did not understand the English language follow the story and contribute to studio discussions about the show. The discussion segment was very important to the popularity of the show since the segment provided a recap of the episodes in Asante Twi. These discussion segments bridged the linguistic barrier and served as paratextual references for rereading and culturally reinterpreting these dramas.

UTV's first Mexican telenovela- *Wild at Heart*- was still in production while airing on UTV. It was shown every weekday from 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm, attracting many viewers and sponsors. The GeoPoll Media Measure report shows that between 2014 and 2016, UTV dominated the airwaves, with the highest audience share reaching its peak on weekdays between the 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm time slot. Although UTV was new in 2014, it competed strongly and obtained the highest audience share, averaging 696,000 viewers per half-hour, while Adom TV had 320,000 viewers (Elliot, 2014). In 2015, UTV had an audience share of 22.4%, experiencing its highest ratings during prime time on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, while Adom TV was fourth with 10.6% (Elliot, 2015). In the third quarter of 2016, an audience measurement report showed that UTV, Adom TV, and TV3 continued to compete for ratings from 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Nonetheless, UTV amassed the highest rating at the time. UTV had the top rating average of 5.73 between 8:30 pm and 9:00 pm and a 4.67 rating from 9:00 pm to 10:00 pm. UTV viewership was 19.9%, while Adom TV followed with a 16.7% audience share in 2016. These numbers show a correlation between telenovelas and UTV dominance within the

period examined. The statistics illustrate UTV's success in competing against established stations like Adom TV and TV3. Between 2014 and 2016, UTV consistently achieved high audience shares, especially during the 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm time slot. By 2016, UTV had the highest ratings among its competitors, indicating a strong correlation between the rise of telenovelas and UTV's growth in viewership.

UTV's approach motivated other indigenous language television stations in Ghana to start live chat shows before and/or after these telenovelas to discuss the episodes. These pre- and post-commentary shows consisted of a summary of the episodes and a discussion of the characters and lessons from the episodes. Adom TV wanted to do the same, but according to the Adom TV channel coordinator, this process was cumbersome. So, Adom TV channel executives and creatives decided to telecast the telenovela in the Akan language. Adom TV management thought that instead of dubbing these shows in English before telecasting them, it would be efficient and more productive to dub them in the local language. After all, the process and infrastructure required for dubbing into English were the same as those for dubbing into the Akan language. Their first twinovelas were an Indian drama series titled *Kumkum Bhagya* and *Veera*. *Kumkum Bhagya* was so popular and successful that it ran on Adom TV from November 2, 2015, until August 6, 2019. The popularity of the show was massive to the extent that it became the most watched program in Ghana with more than 15 sponsors; two hours of primetime was dedicated to the show every weekday with an omnibus on weekends; MGL brought some of the leading stars of the show to Ghana for a sold-out concert organized in their honor; the second lady of Ghana visited the set in India in 2017; and there was a national panic over the show's effect on education and the Ghanaian creative and movie industry (Adomonline.com, 2017). The show became a cultural sensation among the Ghanaian populace,

bringing economic benefits and revenue-generating opportunities. However, it also sparked discussions around political appropriation and resistance discourses, highlighting the multifaceted influence of the show, encompassing economic, cultural, political, and social aspects.

The influence of "Kumkum Bhagya" on Adom TV was significant, notably contributing to the channel's rise as a leading television station in 2017 and 2018. In 2017, Adom TV led television consumption with an average viewership of 662,000 per month, and by the end of the year, they secured a 12.7% audience share (Elliot, 2018). That same year, UTV occupied the third position with an 11.3% audience share (Elliot, 2018). According to GeoPoll (2019), Adom TV dominated the telenovela category in 2018, leading with three Indian soap operas: *Gangaa*, was broadcast daily from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm (it included one hour for the show followed by an hour of panel discussion); *Kumkum Bhygya*, aired daily from 7:30 – 8:30 pm time slot; and *Kuch Rang*, which aired in the 7:30 pm – 8: 30 pm time slot daily start in April 2018. *Gangaa* had a 3.6 rating, *Kumkum Bhygya* got a 3.3 rating, and *Kuch Rang* had a 3.9 rating. In contrast, UTV was sixth on the ratings with "Who Killed Libia" (2.6 rating), a Mexican telenovela shown from Friday to Sunday at the 8:00 pm – 9:00 pm time slot. TV3, an English-speaking television station, occupied the fourth position, with 2.8 ratings each for two Mexican telenovelas – *Till the End of Time* and *Elina's Ghost*.

Adom TV did not just dub the telenovelas into Twi; they also included a pre- and post-discussion segment, as well as a roadshow titled Adom TV Kumkum Keteke ("keteke" means train). Adom TV produces not less than seven twinovelas in a year. Four different telenovelas are telecasted on Adom TV at different time blocks weekly. Three are scheduled for prime time, while one is scheduled during daytime every weekday with an omnibus during the weekend. The

channel coordinator for Adom TV indicated that when Adom TV first started around 1997, all the foreign content came from Nigeria and sometimes from Eastern Africa. These contents were usually in the language of the country of origin, which would have subtitles in English. Now, Adom TV has expanded its acquisition of foreign content from India to Turkey, South Korea, Dubai, and the Philippines.

This multifaceted impact of the twinovela at this historical point shows multiple social forces with their associated values and belief systems covering the economic, cultural, political, and social. As shown, these social forces include the political class (represented by the first lady who visited the Kumkum Bhgya set), the economic class (represented by owners and management of Adom TV and UTV), the professional class (media industry stakeholders) and the general audience demography of Adom TV and UTV (made up of various professional, age, gender, and class groups). The decision to dub foreign shows created a situation that elicited a myriad of responses from these social forces responsible for creating historically and socially constructed groupings. These social forces engage in multiple discourses around profit and productivity, cultural significance, social relevance, and patronage of Ghanaian media content and the development of the media industry. The profit orientation of commercializing these twinovelas prompted media executives to proliferate these twinovelas, leading to increased revenues and, as I will demonstrate in subsequent paragraphs, employment creation. However, this profit-driven approach also puts Ghanaian content at an economic disadvantage, leading to Ghanaian broadcasting and film stakeholders' resistance to foreign programming. The entertainment and cultural value of twinovelas continues to resonate with audiences, as evidenced in the strong performance of Adom TV and UTV over the years. Additionally, their cultural and social appeal fosters political engagement among politicians. Despite the popularity

of twinovelas in Ghana, there are also opposition discourses from the public about their negative impact on education, culture, women, and the broadcasting/film industry, showing tensions and contradictions around the indigenization of foreign programming. For instance, in July 2022, various news outlets reported that a former speaker of parliament who held the position from 2017 to 2021, Prof. Aaron Mike Oquaye, condemned the practice of dubbing foreign telenovelas in Akan on Ghanaian TV stations at an inaugural lecture at the University of Ghana. He was reported to have said,

*I beg our actors and scriptwriters to come out with Ghanaian films. I get sick anytime I hear Twi words or Ga words pushed through some European or Asian lips. The practise should be stopped if we should develop as a people. These are the things that unmake a nation. It can never happen in Malaysia, it can never happen in India. It can never happen in any of the Asian countries... (Adomonline.com, July 8, 2022)*

His criticism demonstrates how foreign-dubbed content hinders national development and undermines cultural identity, preservation, and expression. The current speaker of parliament, who has held the position since 2021, Alban Sumama Kingsford Bagbin, is also reported to have said that he encourages women to stop watching telenovelas and read books instead (Cobblah, 2021). He is reported to have argued that these telenovelas lack relevance to Ghanaian culture and are corrupting and affecting marriages. A Ghanaian filmmaker, Ivan Quashigah, argued that twinovelas contributed to the collapse of the Kumawood movie industry, and if the practice persists, it will lead to unemployment (The Ghana Report, 2019).

This range of discourse confirms Kershner's (2011) claim that heteroglossia is the basic condition of human communication. Further, as Holquist argues, heteroglossia is a situation where a subject is surrounded by many responses which must be framed "in a specific discourse selected from a teeming thousands available" (1999, p. 104). The media's linguistic choice creates heteroglots and forms of stratification where various class interests converge, eliciting a

range of discourses, interests, and groupings. Twinovela has become a medium for stratifying discourses, highlighting indigenous media programming as a complex array of representational expressions and multidimensional dialogisms and voices. This section on the history of twinovela development has revealed the social forces responsible for producing various discourses that shape twinovela growth. The next section examines how the economic impact, cultural significance, and symbolic meanings and their complex interplay contribute to understanding twinovela and industrial practices of indigenous language media in Ghana.

#### 7.22 Exploring the Economic, Cultural, and Symbolic Dynamism and Dialectics of Twinovela

The dubbing of foreign telenovelas sparked a trend for twinovela in indigenous language television in Ghana. This dubbing production has led to the rise of twinovelas on Ghanaian indigenous language television. Following the overwhelming success of twinovela on Adom TV, other indigenous language television stations followed suit. In 2016, UTV established a unit that started dubbing telenovelas into Twi. UTV launched their first twinovela (re)production- *Simply María*. Just like or more than *Wild at Heart*, *Simply María* became popular and attracted a lot of viewers because of the voice-over translation done in Twi. Unlike Adom TV, which sources its telenovelas from different countries, UTV shows only Mexican telenovelas. Since its establishment, UTV's content has included a mix of foreign films, including those from the United States of America, Nigeria, and Mexico, alongside local Ghanaian content. Their tagline, "It's all about you," articulates their appeal to various demographics of the Ghanaian population. While Asante Twi is the predominant transmission language on UTV, English is also used, albeit to a limited degree. UTV shows both English and Twi-dubbed telenovelas. I must emphasize here that the English-dubbed telenovelas on UTV are not produced in Ghana. Instead, the English-dubbed telenovelas are sourced from the original producers in English. The English

telenovelas are shown on weekdays from Monday to Thursday during primetime (8 pm to 9 pm) and repeated in the daytime from Tuesday to Friday. UTV's twinovela is broadcast on weekends from Friday to Sunday (8 pm) and repeated on weekdays during the daytime. The UTV director at the dubbing department explained that the reason for showing both English-dubbed telenovela and Twi-dubbed telenovela is to be able to reach and target every Ghanaian. She said,

*It depends on the target. We believe that the Twi telenovela has its own target, and the English one also has its own target. So, we want to take both the corporate world and... people in the informal sector... Like both sides. We want to bring everybody on board. So, everybody gets his or her share. (Director, Dubbing Department, UTV, Despite Media).*

Showing English-dubbed and Twi-dubbed telenovelas was to appeal to different segments of the Ghanaian population, i.e., the ordinary Ghanaian and "corporate world"- affiliates. The corporate strategy of using English and Akan reflects the diverse constitution of Ghanaian society while simultaneously allowing them to appeal to a broader audience. UTV's bilingual programming approach reflects Ghana's social dynamic and cultural reality. This also demonstrates UTV's participation in language stratification at the programming level, contrasting MGL's approach at the structural level of media organization. Consequently, media institutions are stratifying forces working to create groupings, communities, and their associated discourses. So, whether it is programming or structural/organizational stratification, Adom TV and UTV approaches show how language is stratified and dialogically interanimated, linking linguistic and social differentiation for economic benefits.

The decision to import telenovelas from Brazil, Dubai, Mexico, India, the Philippines, South Korea, and Turkey is strategic not only for financial reasons but also for their socially acceptable and family-oriented content. Soap operas imported from these countries are characterized by their "cleanliness," which refers to the absence of sexual content, violence, drug

use, nudity, and strong language. A culturally sensitive and family-oriented approach makes them suitable for a wider audience. As indicated earlier, the Adom cluster is Christian-oriented. Consequently, their programs project Christian values; thus, they abstain from programs considered profane and an affront to Christian values. UTV's cultural preservation orientation also binds them to uphold Akan values. As such, the values associated with Akans influence the type of show Adom TV and UTV management procures. As already indicated, the storytelling art of the Akan people - Anansesem- is heavily didactic and serves as a medium for reflection. Every story must inform or teach its hearers about humans and society and seek to conserve culture, bond communities, and reveal the various dimensions of reality and fantasy (Yankah, 1983; Sutherland, 1987; Peek & Yankah, 2004). With these cultural and Christian sensibilities, Adom TV and UTV emphasize content that reflects these cultural and Christian values, focusing on morality and acceptable sexual relations, such as shows with fewer kissing or sexual scenes. In cases where there may be sexually provocative scenes, such scenes must be subtle and not explicit. Or they are scheduled for the late hours of the day since they are a family-friendly station.

The value alignment system of telenovela selection strains the discourse of Christianity as a guiding philosophy for this specific type of program. This is because morality is not exclusive to Christian thought. Many societies possess their own moral frameworks, which often intersect. Larkin (1997), for example, explains that the popularity of Indian Films in Northern Nigeria can be understood in cultural and symbolic terms based on the cultural similarities between Hindu Indian culture and Muslim Hausa culture rather than economic factors. Similarly, while most Spanish dramas center on Catholicism and Indian dramas on Hinduism, their common translation of acceptable behavior on social issues makes them appropriate for Ghanaian viewers. This

reinforces the idea that moral understanding transcends individual cultural and religious constructs. More importantly, it presupposes that foreign and indigenous people can coexist despite their intrinsic qualities and socio-ideological differences, which may harmonize and contrast with each other.

Unlike Northern Nigeria, the case of Ghana involves a combination of cultural, symbolic, and economic. Economically, these imported TV shows and their reproduction are cheaper than locally produced films/movies, and their reproduction creates jobs. Some series can cost \$250 per episode. Hindi dramas, for instance, cost from \$160 to \$300 per half-hour television episode, which is around 24 minutes of content after accounting for commercials and breaks. Filipino and Spanish dramas provide approximately 43 to 45 minutes in a full hour. The channel coordinator for Adom TV emphasized that

*Some series go for \$250 per episode. The Hindi ones; some go for. Normally, Hindi ones come in half a television hour. Half of the television hour is 30 minutes, but 30 minutes is not 30 minutes because, during the television hour, you factor in commercials and breaks, so if you are talking about 30 minutes of content, you have to set back 6 minutes for other things. The Indians bring their content to us in half a television hour. The Philippines and Spanish bring theirs to us in one tv hour, between 43 and 45 minutes. Half a TV hour in India, the last one we bought was \$160, and some go as far as \$300 for one television hour. (Channel Coordinator, Adom TV, Multimedia Group Limited).*

Acquiring distribution rights to any drama series depends on the overall budget of the television station. Even if a show is good, they will not purchase it if it exceeds the station's financial capacity. Beyond the acquisition cost of the show, dubbing and reproduction also incur substantial costs. These additional costs significantly affect the overall expense, including hiring various professionals like cast members, extras, sound engineers/editors, directors, video editors, etc. For example, dubbing alone may cost around 10,000 Ghanaian cedis (approximately \$644) monthly, excluding infrastructure costs.

Even with this economic advantage, audience acceptance of the show and their ability to sell the show to advertisers are equally important. Broadcasters recognize that while there is a financial edge with foreign soap operas, capturing audience attention is crucial for attracting advertisers. According to the channel coordinator for Adom TV, the decision to purchase a show is influenced by a good storyline, the length of the show (it should be short and not drag on), and sometimes recommendations from the audience. The Adom TV coordinator indicated that some Ghanaians who have seen a particular show would recommend it be dubbed into Twi because it has a good storyline, or they just want to watch it in the Twi language. Sometimes, they honor these audience recommendations and proceed to acquire the right to air the show in Ghana. This exemplifies how audience preferences shape programming decisions. The audience craze for a program drives what content creators push for television executives' approval, beyond a good storyline. For example, the Adom Channel coordinator acknowledged that the significant audience craze for telenovelas has impacted the decision to acquire and telecast telenovelas. Initially, viewers were drawn towards Ghanaian movies, but trends have changed, showing that audience tastes are not static; they evolve over time. Emphasizing this telenovela craze, the channel coordinator for Adom TV stated,

*We realized that it was the craze; the masses wanted it. They have developed an interest in foreign soap operas. So, what do we do? We can't give it to them in English because everybody is doing English, we don't do English. So, we said OKAY, we took it. The channel is unmixed...*

*For whatever reason, locally produced contents are sometimes more expensive than the foreign-acquired ones... The foreign ones are selling quicker than the local ones- selling in the sense that they have a lot of people who want to advertise on it.*

*Maybe people have developed that taste. As I said, from the onset, it's a craze; everybody wants to go in for that (referring to telenovelas), but we know with time, it will switch again. Once upon a time, it was a local movie, a Ghanaian movie. And you know our consumption is very dynamic. We change, so I believe a time will come when they will still rush for Ghanaian movies. (Channel Coordinator, Adom TV, Multimedia Group Limited)*

It also shows an understanding that audience consumption habits are dynamic and fluid, indicating that while telenovelas are currently in demand, there is an expectation that audience taste will shift back to local productions. Clearly, there is a complex interplay between economic advantage, audience preference, advertiser demand, and cultural trends. Broadcasters adapt their program offerings to meet audience preferences. Nonetheless, this does not mean locally produced dramas have disappeared from the airwaves. For example, during the field research, Adom TV had a series running titled “Ohinta Dwa Akyire.” This was known as Kumnovela. This show was broadcast four times a week from Monday to Thursday from 3 pm to 3:30 pm with an omnibus airing on Saturdays. On Fridays at the same time slot, there is a discussion segment titled “Ohinta Dwa Akyire” Chatroom on Adom TV, where the host facilitates discussions on lessons for social life. Adom TV commissioned this particular show. There were other third-party commissioned shows running. Even though local productions like Kumnovelas are still part of Adom TV’s offerings, telenovelas dominate audience interest. This audience interest significantly influences advertising revenue and the decision to continue a particular show. While specific revenue figures for foreign and local series were not disclosed, the Adom TV Coordinated confirmed that there are many sponsors on these twinovelas. For instance, the twinovela Kuch Rang opened with about twenty-eight (28) ad mentions and about fifteen (15) television ad inserts. The number of advertisements indicates a strong market demand for and confirms the profitability of these telenovelas and the value of advertising slots. He further added that even reaching a break-even point is not a compelling reason to continue airing a show. Responding to a question about how much revenue is accrued from airing telenovelas, the Adom TV Channel Coordinator I interviewed stated that

*I will not be able to tell you the amount, but we have a lot of sponsors for the program, and it is basically more than we spend. We will not break even and continue. If it is just*

*breaking even, then it is not worth it... The physical amount invested is what you are getting. Why continue? (Channel Coordinator, Adom TV).*

The coordinator indicates that merely matching advertisement revenue with production cost cannot justify continuing a show. This perspective aligns with broader commercial media practice where profitability is prioritized. The profitability of commercial media like Adom TV and UTV rests on a synchronized alignment of the audience, media company, and advertisers. The case of twinovela shows how stratified interests intertwine to help sustain profitable programming and media operations.

### 7.3 Dubbing Production: The Creative Process

#### 7.31 Recruitment

The dubbing process at Adom TV and UTV follows a similar structure. Once the negotiation to acquire distribution rights to a telenovela is finalized, the TV station receives the show unmixed. The unmixed package includes audio (dialogue and sound effects), visuals, ambiance, and an English script. The creative department transforms the unmixed content into what is known as a twinovela. This production phase involves voice recording of the show in Akan and carefully mixing the recorded voice with other audio elements and visuals. Whether the series comes in English or the production's language of origin, the English scripts are added to the unmixed content. Each station has a dedicated department responsible for producing the twinovela. This twinovela department comprises the director, casting director, the cast (voice actors), video editor, and sound and visual engineers. The director is responsible for pre-production and production tasks. The pre-production stage includes previewing the episodes, script adaptation, casting, and selection of voice actors. Previewing the episodes helps the director gain direction and understanding of the plot, prepare for and ensure continuity in the dubbing process, and plan the script adaptation.

Adom TV and UTV have different recruitment strategies. At Adom TV, voice actors are recruited from both internal and external sources. Although the production studio is owned by MGL and located on its premises, the voice dubbing production is outsourced to contractors, reinforcing the claim of providing job opportunities. Different directors are contracted to work on various telenovela projects simultaneously. In contrast, UTV adopts a different approach, focusing solely on internal recruitment. UTV's production crew consists of employees from Despite Media, including a casting director and a general director. The casting director finds and hires voice actors while the general director coaches actors on their vocal performances and provides context and understanding to the story. According to the UTV twinovela director, when UTV started dubbing telenovelas into the Akan language, they used Ghanaian (Kumawood) actors and actresses fluent in Akan. However, because of scheduling issues, absenteeism, artistry challenges with actors and actresses, and convenience, UTV gradually started recruiting voice actors internally. Dubbing serves as a secondary job for employees of Despite Media. Nonetheless, being an employee of UTV does not automatically qualify a Despite Media employee to participate in the dubbing process. Potential voice-over artists must audition for their roles before being cast. A key criterion for voice casting is the actor's ability to speak Twi or any of the Akan dialects. In addition to Akan proficiency, voice suitability and emotional aptitude are necessary for casting.

For UTV, internal voice actor recruits are desirable because they are skilled in dubbing, accessible, and need little to no training. On the contrary, the Adom TV channel coordinator stated that they prefer to outsource voice dubbing because it is more efficient, and they do not have to deal with scheduling challenges, which can delay the dubbing process. Both directors of twinovelas at Adom TV and UTV acknowledge that internal recruitment has its drawbacks, the

most prominent being scheduling and availability conflicts, where internal recruits' official work interferes with recording sessions. In both studios, I observed when some voice artists had to rush through and cut short a recording session because they were due to be on air for a news presentation. Recording session disruptions put much pressure on the directors and delay the dubbing process. If a voice-over actor rushes through a recording session, it is likely that the recording will be discarded and redone, causing delays and wasting time. However, their linguistic acumen, proximity, and expertise in the voice-over practice make them ideal recruits. While UTV's past recruitment strategy contributed to job creation opportunities in the Ghanaian local entertainment industry, its current internal recruitment strategy limits local actors' and actresses' opportunities. UTV's internal recruitment strategy heavily affects the talent pool for voice-acting roles, inhibiting any chance of developing and enhancing voice-over skills for these actors and actresses. This justifies criticisms that twinovelas have hindered the growth of the Ghanaian movie industry. Not only have twinovelas led to a reduced demand for Ghanaian films, but they have also limited opportunities for local artists by excluding them from voice-acting roles.

### 7.32 Translation

Translation is a complex phenomenon with ideological implications. Gazzalie (2018) defines translation as the “communication of meaning of a source language text by means of an equivalent-target text” (p. 229). According to the literary Scholar Andre Lefevere (1992), translation is one of the most influential types of rewriting because it can project the image of an author... in another culture, lifting that author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin...” (p. 9). Lefevere identifies three elements that determine and shape translators' strategies. These are ideology, poetics, and the universe of discourse. Ideology

dictates the basic strategy used by a translator as well as the solution to the problems about the discourse and language of the original source. Translators can be motivated to work in the service of an ideology, be influenced or constrained by an ideology. Poetics refers to both social systems of the work of literature (in this case, the industrial context of indigenous local language media) and what I will summarize as style-literary devices, genre, theme, motifs, symbols, etc. The universe of discourse is the objects, customs, beliefs, and thoughts unacceptable either in the culture of the original text or the translator's culture. At any point in translation, these three elements are employed, shaping the translator's choices. Translation, therefore, is both a material practice and a cultural phenomenon (Gazzalie, 2018). This duality underscores the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of both source and target texts, while simultaneously acknowledging the importance of the technical systems that facilitate the translation process.

Producers and directors undergo careful, systematic approaches, including planning, language analysis, audience examination, and cultural appropriateness, highlighting the complexity of dubbing telenovelas, resulting in increased translational density of the process. The process requires a deep understanding of Akan sociocultural dynamics as well as the program's content and aesthetics. Aligning appropriate registers with cultural expectations and assessing the moral weight of language shows the intricate relationship between culture and language. The ability to effectively and efficiently coordinate these during production illustrates ILM's translational complexity.

Producers of twinovelas undergo a multistep process of planning, doing language analysis, and examining audience dynamics to deliver an appropriate product to the audience to reinforce cultural appropriateness. The actual translation from English to Akan deploys Akan

communicative and linguistic features. Agyekum (2011) writes that Akans place great importance on politeness, etiquette, and respect for status - deference, age, chieftaincy, and traditional political systems that impact their speech forms and communicative events. It is expected that speakers use appropriate registers in any communicative act. Consequently, directors of twinovela consider Ghanaian society's sociocultural milieu when dubbing. They are careful not to use language that will offend their audience's cultural sensibilities and be labeled uncouth or uncultured. Conformity to these linguistic rules is expected to avoid embarrassment or humiliation (Agyekum, 2011). Another important point to raise about language use is that, according to Agyekum (2011), there is a direct link between Akan linguistic norms and routines and morality. He argues that individuals' moral character is judged by their degree of politeness in their speech. This is significant to mention because, especially in the case of Adom TV, whose mother company, MGL, is vocal about their Christian orientation, reinforcing the earlier argument that morality is not the purview of Christianity. Moreover, the heteroglossia framework emphasizes how language contains specific ideological belief systems that affect a text. Clearly, linguistic choice impacts the translation process by highlighting Akan's communicative belief system and behavior. At the same time, it shows the stratified discourses that dialogically influence production routines.

There is no word-for-word written translation of the English script into the Akan language. Rather, the language translation process is an extemporaneous creative process. The original English script is annotated, and the director marks specific lines and scenes that need transformation. Additionally, the director develops a direction document outlining a schedule for recording, changes to names, and decisions regarding the assignment of Akan dialect replacement. Previewing helps the director to adapt the script by identifying and planning the

degree of transformations to the original script. This kind of transformation is predominantly linguistic. To remain true to the premise and plot of the telenovela but achieve cultural relevance, directors adopt linguistic substitution, insertion, and omission in their script adaptation process. Each strategy allows the directors to focus on the text (dialogue) and the visual layout, enhancing the synchronization and synthesis of audio and visual compositions. The most obvious substitution is the displacement of the original characters' voices (dialogue) with speakers of the target language- Akan. But more importantly, dubbing telenovelas is not just translating from the original language into Akan; it involves navigating the complexities of cultural context, communication, linguistic rules, and audience reception.

The translational planning and strategies of substitution, insertion, and deletion reinforce the double-voicedness of this form of media content. The dubbing process is evidence of producers' awareness of the context shifts and linguistic displacement in twinovela. As Baxter (2014) explains, double-voicing is 'when a person speaks, they have a heightened awareness of, and responsiveness to, the concerns and agendas of others, which is reflected in the different ways in which they adjust their language in response to interlocutors' (p. 3). Essentially, double-voiceness helps explain adaptation strategies and prioritizes both the perspectives of the speaker (in this case, the producer) and the interlocutor (the recipient/audience). In the case of the dubbing production, creators are aware of the geo-contextual and cultural shift accompanying the purchasing of distribution rights of telenovelas. As such, the geographical and cultural shifts place the purchased media form in a liminal position between two continents and cultures. The ambiguity that accompanies this liminality underscores the complex layers of voices, meanings, and expressions inherent in this media form. The English transcript, sound, and visual manifest the voice, intentions, meanings, expressions, and narratives of the original creators. The

translation from the original language into Akan introduces a second voice, also overlaid with socio-ideological belief systems. As Jordan (1995) explains about double-voicedness in everyday speech, it is at once the language of the speaker and the language of others. Similarly, the production of twinovelas creates dual ownership where this media form simultaneously serves two different intentions and results in two voices, two expressions, and two meanings. Consequently, we find in twinovela a dialogue of languages, intentions, meanings, and aesthetics.

Both Adom TV and UTV twinovela directors acknowledge that direct translation may be inimical to audience acceptance. For broadcasters, it will be economic suicide if they ignore the generally accepted values and norms of the Akan language. For instance, plain and blunt language is frowned upon. As such, proverbs, euphemisms, similes, metaphors, and personification are used when speaking about sensitive subjects like death or criticism to ensure politeness. For example, the quotation below identifies navigating the complexities of direct translation, Akan communicative norms and values, and maintaining the integrity of the script. It shows how the phrase “That is nonsense,” when translated into Akan, hurts the cultural and linguistic sensibilities of the audience. It conveys a sense of disrespect that does not align with the Akan communicative value of politeness and deference. As such, euphemisms or proverbs may be used to achieve the same meaning as written in the script. This highlights one of the qualities of the Akan language, which is indirection. This quality of indirection in the dubbing process is explained in the comment below:

*Dubbing is a lot of work; once people accept it, you are good, and once they don't, you are closed. There is a lot to be done before it [referring to telenovela] goes on air. You have to be careful about the kind of language you choose. In our part of the world, some words are very abominable; you don't say some things. Sometimes, the script says, “That is nonsense.” You cannot say “NKwasiasem na woka” [translated as foolish talk, stupidities, or idiocy] in our local dialect. No. You have to find a way. So, we do a lot of*

*word changes, but we don't go off track. (Channel Coordinator, Adom TV, Multimedia Group Limited)*

Finding a way to exact word changes means using any of the elements of indirection, such as euphemisms and proverbs. Following the Akan linguistic routine is important because the economic value is linked to audience acceptance. As such, dubbing as a communicative event is culturally sensitive to audience dynamics and demography. Aside from following linguistic routines and norms, as part of the word changes, the director focuses on substituting specific locations, names, expressions, and phrases in the original script with those that have cultural relevance, identification, and resonance with the target audience. The channel coordinator for Adom TV explains this substitution process,

*First of all, we are trying to make the show very interesting for us Ghanaians. So, how will they identify with Mumbai Forest? Nobody even knows it. There was a forest scene in one of the episodes and we said Kakum forest just to identify with the forest. So, just for local identification, you mention some of these local names. But they are not in original script. We adopted it ourselves, and we did it. It was for fun and people really enjoyed it. (Channel Coordinator, Adom TV, Multimedia Group Limited)*

It is common to substitute towns, cities, and popular tourist locations in the original dialogue with names of towns, cities, and tourist sites in Ghana. As indicated in the quote from the Adom TV channel coordinator, the Mumbai forest is unknown to Ghanaians. However, Kakum National Park, one of Ghana's most visited tourist sites, is familiar. Thus, Ghanaians can easily identify that forest. There are also instances of insertions of ads (brand names) into the script. For instance, the names of sponsors can be incorporated into the script. The UTV director confirmed that they usually incorporate their sister companies under the Despute Group of Companies into the dialogue for promotional purposes. Other times, directors encourage adding lines that are not in the original script to help with lip synchronization or purely for comedic reasons. Changes to characters' names, places/locations, and expressions are not arbitrary. There are rules for the

name change. For instance, a character name change is based on familiarity with the name, whether the name is an English name or not, and the phonetic similarity between the original character name and the corresponding name in the target language. There is also an understanding that certain names become familiar and ubiquitous over time. The audience grows accustomed to them, so those names are maintained. An example of such an accepted name is Fernando. The director of the dubbing department at UTV states that

*Sometimes, we change the names, too. We write them down so that we don't forget. There is Oduro, and Dr Raymond Ofosu (These are Akan names). Instead of Henan, we use Nana; Megetere, we use Margaret; Solace, we use Solange; and Helberto, we use Raymond. Some of the names are normal English names. So we just maintain those ones like Gabriel. We just keep the name Gabriel like that. There is Fernando... You know, for Fernando, we have other series with Fernando. So, we know Ghanaians are okay with Fernando. Cecilia is normal. Nicholas is normal. And then we have Dante Ferrer. You know Ferrer is not a familiar name. But Dante sounds like a Twi name. So instead of doing Dante Ferrer, you will make it Mr Dante. Over time, Dante will take over. So that is how we do it (Director, Dubbing Department, UTV, Despite Media).*

These practical adaptation strategies reinforce the director's professional experience and understanding of the audience. They also show an understanding of creating audiovisual dissonance/counterpoint transcending aesthetics, challenging the idea that the tension between what is seen (image) and what is heard (sound) is simple and one-dimensional. Audiovisual dissonance defines a type of relationship between audio and image/visual elements that contradict or oppose each other (Chion, 1994). Michel Chion argues that audiovisual dissonance is recognized only at the exact point of meaning, influencing how text is interpreted, and it stands in opposition to convention. However, as Chion asserts, the problem with audiovisual dissonance is the tendency to dismiss complexities that exist in meaning in favor of assigning simplistic, one-dimensional meanings.

However, through the framework of heteroglossia, audiovisual dissonance in twinovela translates into a sophisticated representational ambiguity that is hyper-visible and exotically

pleasing. The layers of substitution recall memories of representation, advertiser interests, audience identification, cultural symbols, brand identity, and fidelity between source material and cultural resonance. The element of counterpoint-as-contradictory demonstrates levels of stratification: production, aesthetics, and ideology. The production relations presented are unconventional in the sense that with twinovelas there exists a transnational coproduction transaction that is mediated economically and represented culturally. This transnational coproduction shows remediation and re-representation independent of the individual cultural institutions involved. The origin country of production is not only geographically distinct from the target country of reproduction, but the cultural sensibilities, narrative, and aesthetic values can be significantly different, leading to a more complicated interpretation of cultural artifacts like film and media production practices. As such, audiovisual dissonance mirrors production dissonance, where the agents of production are different from the agents of reproduction, leading to a highly autonomous creative process. Additionally, production spaces and settings are vastly different. Reproduction of imported dramas happens in a closed-off soundproof studio as opposed to multiple location settings. As already indicated, UTV and Adom TV have a constructed studio specifically for dubbing and are equipped with visual and audio technologies like microphones, TV monitors, computer monitors, consoles, etc. UTV and Adom TV, as cultural production institutions, use practical adaptation strategies to achieve aesthetic values that resonate with Ghanaians, whether through name substitution, omission, or insertion. Aesthetically, sound constitutes a significant element of the reproduction process where cultural resonance, identification, and representation are achieved.

During the dubbing production, brand names are inserted into the storyline within the boundaries of a sponsorship agreement. The insertion of brand names is intentional and not

arbitrary. Brand name incorporation is based on the appropriateness and relevance of the product to the narrative context. For example, when a character in a scene offers a drink, mentioning a product such as “This Way Chocolate Drink” or “Special Ice Mineral Water” enhances the realism and relatability of the scene. This brand insert also serves to promote the commercial interests of the sponsors and the media company, as explained in the comment below:

*If someone is sponsoring this show, we mention their brand. Sometimes, we do ad mentions. But most of the time, we mention “This Way Chocolate Drink.” We would add something like “Should I serve you This Way, Chocolate Drink?” We also mention “Special Ice.” We mention those brands...  
Mentioning these products is not an instruction from the top. It is a department decision. We mention the ad only if it relates to the storyline or dialogue. But we don’t mention brands that are not sponsoring the show. We only mention a brand if they are our sponsor.  
(Director, Dubbing Department, UTV, Despite Media)*

The mention of a brand or product enhances the audience’s viewing experience and connection, not detracting from the narrative. Further, product mentions help create a seamless blend between advertising and storytelling. As the quotation shows, there is no direct instruction about including brand names in the show. The decision to incorporate advertisers’ products is solely the prerogative of the dubbing production crew. In this way, the creative freedom of creators is reinforced. Significantly, it also shows how creators are aware of the importance of advertising to the production, helping expand advertisers’ interest. By inserting brand names in the dialogue, the directors reinforce their audience-centric approach by aligning audience interest with advertiser interest through storytelling.

Sound in the form of dialogue is the medium where production, aesthetics, and ideology interact. For instance, twinovela directors utilize Ghanaian ethnic stereotypes when assigning voice-over characters and selecting the appropriate Akan dialect. Directors draw a link between original character types and voice-over characters’ dialects. Deciding on the Akan dialect for a character is usually associated with popular ethnic stereotypes. For instance, the Fantes are

stereotyped with Englishness because of their history with the Europeans and their practice of code-switching between English and Fante in a single sentence, giving an aura of sophistication and elitism. Asantes (Asante Twi) are seen as proud, wealthy, bossy, ambitious, and boastful. Akwapims (Akwapim Twi) are seen as very respectful and polite. Obviously, there is a link between speech types, dialects, and character types, reinforcing heteroglossia's emphasis on linguistic diversity and the coexistence of ideologies in a text. The director's interpretation of original character types in a drama attempts to correct the audiovisual dissonance. It is an approach to bridge the tension between the image on the screen and the sound one hears. Sound (dialogue) is used to displace the bodies on the screen, not in the sense of erasure or invisibility, but rather to build emotional and cultural resonance with the audience to reimagine the narrative space and time. At the same time, by utilizing Ghanaian stereotypes, there is a sense of identification with these characters.

During the dialogue recording, each voice actor is given a script of the show in English and informed about the episode and scene number. Voice actors read the portions of the script (dialogue) relevant to their scene and watch either the whole episode or the scenes of their characters. Evidently, this demonstrates that voice actors are heteroglots who are either bilingual or multilingual. Informal conversations with a few of the actors I interacted with showed that they could speak one or more of the Akan dialects and two other Ghanaian languages, which can be useful during the dubbing process. Before the dubbing starts, the television monitor is set to the specific episode and scene(s) to be recorded. Usually, they watch the relevant scenes more than once to familiarize themselves and acquaint themselves with the scenes' content, story, visuals, ambiance, emotions, and performance of the characters they are playing. Voice actors rehearse with the visuals several times until the director is satisfied with the voice performance

and lip synchronization. The rehearsal helps them familiarize and embody their characters, making the dubbing believable and relatable. Through this process, voice actors take on dual roles; they become spectators and actors/performers. Different scholars have written about audience engagement with film regarding their viewing experiences, practices (like ways of looking), or position. Solanas and Octavio (1976) theorized that spectators could be active participants, actors, protagonists, and accomplices of revolutionary cinema. Stuart Hall's (1980) subject positioning gives the audience agency in relation to media consumption, where the audience's social, political, economic, and historical relations lead to the audience's reading of a text as dominant/preferred, negotiated, or oppositional. Other scholars talk about spectatorship as resistance. For example, Scott (2005) argues that interpretation is a basis for activism.

Meanwhile, Hooks (1992) and Diawara (1993), taking a gendered perspective on black spectatorship, argue that black individuals' looking practices are political, stratified, a site of resistance and contestation, interrogative, and transgressive. Shobat and Stam (2014) talk about the looking practices of spectators who, through hostile looks (looking) and critical comments (speaking), return the gaze. At the production of *twinoela*, cast members as spectators not only look and speak, but they also imitate and act. Here, their "looking" is not hostile, nor is their "speaking" critical, as suggested by Shobat and Stam. Instead, they look to learn and speak to translate. They engage in observational learning to be able to model what they see and hear. As spectators, they are observers who interpret onscreen bodies and their actions and concurrently translate their understanding of those bodies, their actions, the script, and the director's vision into their voice acting. The goal of this level of spectatorship (observation and interpretation) is to be able to carry that character through voicing in the Akan language. However, there is another level of spectatorship whose goal is not to observe and imitate but rather to engage with

the show as audience members who are emotionally and intellectually invested in the show. In both Adom TV and UTV twinovela studios, I observed times when cast members, directors, and sound engineers discussed and debated themes and characters in the dramas.

As actors/performers, these voice actors bring to life their interpretation of the characters alongside and guided by the director's insight into the drama. At this point, voice actors read the script and, together with the director, discuss the appropriate dialogue translation. Also, the director guides the voice actors to maintain continuity in the dialogue by ensuring that omissions and insertions are appropriate and executed in the delivery. The process is collaborative and extemporaneous. While extemporaneous denotes an action without much preparation and is thus synonymous with impromptu, in public speaking, extemporaneous connotes a speech with preparation. As noted earlier, no transcribed/written word-for-word translation of the English script into the Akan dialects exists. There is a concurrent reading and translation of the script. This practice is similar to news presentation as practiced currently in Adom Newsroom and Peace FM newsroom, and during colonial times. The dual roles of cast members and directors raise questions about spectatorship at the production and reproduction levels. Specifically, what is the relationship between dubbing and spectatorship in twinovela (re)production and commercial indigenous language media? How might dubbing affect spectators and their looking practices?

The final stage of the dubbing process is the editing and mixing of the visuals and sounds. The audio recordings are sent to the sound editor/engineer for editing and mixing. Their work is to make sure that the visuals and sounds are properly synchronized. The completed work is previewed by management before it is exhibited on air. A team then reviews the final product to determine its appropriateness before being approved for airing on television. There are times

when the final product is sent back for corrections. The UTV twinovela director gave examples of times when the completed dubbed episode was sent back because, during the dubbing, they mentioned the name of a competitor's brand instead of the telecommunication brand that was sponsoring the drama. She states,

*I know one of the telecommunication companies that sponsored this show. There was a time when we mentioned the name of a competing telecommunication company instead of the one sponsoring us. The dubbed show was brought back... Or maybe you say something negative about the sponsor or product. You have to change it. It will be returned for correction. (Director, Dubbing Department, UTV)*

The dubbing process and quality control mechanism show the relationship between creative freedom and commerce. It also shows a commitment to accountability and a high level of scrutiny in balancing creativity and commercial obligations.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have specifically focused on the production process of twinovela as a television media form. I started by providing an overview of the scholar's understanding of the cultural impact of telenovelas in postcolonial contexts like Ghana and Nigeria, highlighting the cultural parallels that make this media form attractive to the audience, and subsequently, media executives ride on telenovela's appeal to continue purchasing and showing this film. Foreign content on local Ghanaian television did not start with Adom TV or UTV. However, the adaptation of telenovelas into twinovela has transformed indigenous broadcasting practices in Ghana, integrating foreign content in a new way. This evolution in foreign content integration has shaped the identity of indigenous language television in Ghana to the extent that Adom TV and UTV have established dubbing departments. The practice of foreign content acquisition and dubbing production practices has made both Adom TV and UTV very competitive to the extent that these two indigenous language television stations have, since 2014, always been part of the

top three television stations in Ghana. As such, the production of twinovela has boosted the marketability of ILM and strengthened the hold of the Akan language as a powerful medium of expression accessible to the majority of Ghanaians. Twinovela, as a television format, has revitalized indigenous languages in the media, helping redefine indigenesness in programming. By examining the production practices of twinovela, we gain insight into how creatives navigate and negotiate global and local influences. The adaptation process requires producers to maintain the essence of the original script while focusing on deploying Ghanaian cultural motifs that resonate with the audience. Producers show the potential of merging two contrasting representations (visuality and sound), demonstrating avenues for intercultural connections through content. These strategies by creatives and producers reinforce ILM's quality of translational density as well as bi-/multilingual discursivity.

The historical narrative of twinovela helped identify the social forces that shape ideologies and value judgments that enable the proliferation of twinovelas. It also allows us to see iterations of indigenizing frameworks that have historically offered a simplistic perspective on difference and representation. Rather than viewing differences and representation in indigenous contexts as oppositional and peripheral, dubbing demonstrates the complexity and diversity that coexist in a media format like twinovela. Through the framework of heteroglossia, dubbing production presents a thought-provoking paradox that neither detracts from the original narrative nor fully replicates experiences of local cultures but creates a dynamic interplay of multiple voices and cultural expressions. This interesting paradox presents that dissonance, often seen as discordant, can lead to a harmonious coexistence while harmony emerges from the contrasting and contradictory symphony of ideologies and value judgments reflecting a multifaceted understanding of intercultural interactions.

## Chapter 8: The tripartite character of Akan Commercial Indigenous language Media: Bi-/Multilingual Discursivity, Translational Density, and Audience-centricity

### 8.0 Introduction

This dissertation has examined commercial indigenous language media with a central question that focuses on how language choice, media industrial practices, and production methods shape understandings of Ghanaian commercial indigenous language media. Further, this interconnected concern of the study with language choice, industrial practices and production methods opened opportunities for investigating the structural organization of Akan indigenous language media, the various factors affecting their nature beyond language, the conditions and practices shaping perceptions of indigenous language media operations and how production practices in news and soap operas (twinovela/telenovela) reflect both global and local discursive trends.

With a focus on the institutional context of creation and using a triangulated methodological approach, this study adopted heteroglossia and political economy frameworks to analyze the two most competitive media corporations in Ghana, The Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media. The analytical frameworks and research methodology created opportunities for deeper exploration of the Akan commercial indigenous language media systems' complexities in their organization, structure, production, and dissemination context. Using political economy and heteroglossia as theoretical frameworks further comprehensively enabled a nuanced examination of the relationship between media, politics, and culture while assessing how multiple voices and perspectives from various linguistic, cultural, social, and stratifying agents coexist in indigenous language broadcasting in Ghana. These analytical frameworks also helped reconfigure indigenous language media not as politically isolated

productions of indigeneity but as ones whose organization and operationalization emphasize interconnected and interdependent forms of local and global cultural forces. The methodological approaches used (i.e., observations, interviews, and document analysis) in this research helped focus on the institutional context of creation and organization that provide insights into ILM's discursive negotiation between conventional media structure and journalistic practices, language stratification, and dialogical representations and identity expressions.

The object of analysis and theories deployed in this study foreground the point that indigenous media exist in multiple formations and have variegated practices. For instance, the case of ILMs in Ghana shows that private individuals provide funding streams for the running of indigenous media, and in the case of commercial media like the Adom cluster under Multimedia Group Limited (MGL) and Despite Media, advertising serves as a major funding source promoting expansionist business models with cross- and chain-media ownership structures. The organizational structures differ among ILM companies. These organizations are designed to function effectively in both Akan and English, demonstrating strong structural bilingualism. Nonetheless, the operational dynamics emphasize a preference for code-switching between English, Akan dialects, and other Ghanaian languages, prompting a character of multilingualism. News production practices highlight cultural principles of Akan information systems and global journalistic values. Entertainment programs like Twinovella not only promote multilingualism through dubbing but also cross over between foreign storytelling and local interpretations of foreign identities. So that indigeneity in indigenous language media is not just about localized and geographical expressions of identity and representation, but a representation of the duality born from a deeper connection that links local identities and discursivities with global narratives and contexts.

Additionally, the study helps confirm that (indigenous) media institutions are inherently heteroglots and stratifying forces. They serve as a hub for organizing, operationalizing, and reproducing various discourses and narratives. Despite the variation in media forms and practices across different geographical contexts, they share certain common themes like cultural preservation, democratic representation, and autonomy. The shared traits and diversity in formations and practices broaden research approaches and interpretations of indigenous media expressions globally, allowing for a holistic assessment of the role and relevance of indigenous media in different societies. As analyzed in Chapter 2, indigenous media is considered contentious, alternative, and antithetical to mainstream media (Spitulnik, 1999). It embodies activism (Shaw & Stammers, 2005), serves as a public sphere (Murillo, 2008; Henrich, 2022; Pietikäinen, 2008), and is recognized as a product (Ginsberg, 1991). Their multifaceted nature is evidenced through facilitating the exchange of ideas and as economic entities. These characteristics reinforce the common-sense perspective that indigenous media and mainstream media are ideologically opposite. While this assertion is generally true because it is founded in the dualism of colonial essentialism, the analysis of MGL and Despite Media shows a nuanced outcome. In Ghana, these ILMs do not operate on the margins of mainstream media and are not entirely removed from the ideological influences of mainstream media, secularism, religion, culture, neoliberalism, and politics. In fact, these media institutions are mainstream media organizations becoming a viable competition for scholarly-defined mainstream media organizations in Ghana. Further, it forecasts contradictions evident in the practices of indigenous language media, including the fact that indigenous media is an ideological entity, an economic enterprise, and a socially constructed exchange medium. Thus, the concept of mainstream media and its antithetical relationship to indigenous media needs to be revised. The element of

commercialization demands that scholars rethink how indigenous media has either been essentialized or constructively conceptualized.

Furthermore, by reflecting on the insights gained from analyzing the organizational structures, news production practices, and telenovela/twinovela production practices of Akan commercial indigenous language media, the analysis demonstrates the disciplining role and sensibilities that inform the structuring of Akan commercial indigenous language media in Ghana. The political economy of media and heteroglossia as analytical frameworks reveal three important interrelated characteristics of Akan commercial indigenous language media: bi-/multilingual discursivity, translational density, and audience-centricity. Subsequently, I will examine the mediating role of Akan commercial indigenous language media and their three interrelated characteristics: bi-/multilingual discursivity, translational density, and audience-centricity.

### 8.1 Mediating Role of Akan Commercial Indigenous Language Media

Most scholars have reiterated the role of indigenous language media and indigenous journalism as functioning as platforms for empowerment, resistance, counternarratives, watchdog, strengthening indigenous voices in the public sphere, creating mediatic culturally appropriate frameworks and agenda setting (Hansch, 2013; Wang & Katz, 2019; Henrichsen, 2022; Moraca & Nuntiis, 2022). Additionally, the media practitioners interviewed for this research reiterated that the primary media functions are education, information dissemination, and entertainment. Oftentimes, these roles are aligned with specific genres or programming types in the media, like news programs informing the public, while shows like talk shows and games provide entertainment. However, the format of the shows could combine two or more media

functions. For example, some news programming and sports programming provide entertainment education (edutainment) or infotainment.

Nevertheless, the role of the Akan commercial indigenous language media includes enforcing media standards, professionalism, and ethics. Additionally, it extends beyond the prominent focus on news and information in agenda-setting theory, which emphasizes salience transfer from the media agenda to the public agenda only (Valenzuela, 2019).<sup>43</sup> Instead, it constitutes an aspect of agenda setting that emphasizes their role in media alignment, balance, mediation, and shaping of cultural reality. This role focuses on the media's ability to align, balance, mediate, and shape the media's discursive frames, formats, and content in accordance with perceived public values and beliefs. This role refers to the geo-cultural mediation and socio-cultural politics, strategies, and mechanisms that structure and organize indigenous language media. The indigenous media's mediation function acts in accordance with perceived community ethos and emphasizes lived reality, cultural narratives, relationality, and resonance, rationalized by a sense of media responsibility towards the community to maintain cohesion and guide the audience towards culturally acceptable and negotiable ideas, representations, and expressions.

The focus extends beyond news and information to include all programs and allows ILM to subvert, reimagine, and reconstitute conventions surrounding the production of indigenous media. For example, the Akan commercial indigenous language media allows the crossing of indigenous and non-indigenous content. As such, the Akan commercial indigenous language media does not dismiss or oppose "other cultures," "foreign sensibilities," or "Western

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<sup>43</sup> The agenda-setting theory has been used to explain the effect of journalism on people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. Beyond salience transfer, Sebastián Valenzuela (2019, p. 1-2) argues that other aspects of agenda-setting include "the influence of journalism on the attributes of issues and people that make news; the networks between the different elements in the media and public agendas; the determinants of the news media agenda; the psychological mechanisms that regulate agenda-setting effects; and the consequences of agenda setting on both citizens' and policymakers' attitudes and behaviors."

modernities.” Instead, it deploys culture and tradition to discipline these external forces and discourses, acknowledging that external influences are inevitable, but their mediation is necessary for cultural preservation and harmony. Therefore, ILM acknowledges foreign influences and participates actively by using tradition and culture to mediate these influences to enhance cultural exchange. Akan commercial indigenous language media agents and stakeholders are aware of the presence of foreign or Western modernities and their impact on shaping audience tastes and preferences. Subsequently, they utilize this knowledge by disciplining Western encroachment and their extremities by invoking tradition and culture. In this way, the stakeholders participate in shaping how external influences are received and internalized. Through such negotiations, ILMs significantly transform external influences into something that aligns with local values and aesthetics.

Consequently, ILM continually tests the social fabric of Ghanaians through their storytelling in the news and entertainment shows like telenovelas (twinovela) to reshape cultural norms and expressions. Unlike indigenous media elsewhere, which is structured by the palpable presence of whiteness and/or coloniality and external forces (whether financing or audience), the Akan commercial indigenous language media system is structured in terms of cultural politics and internal forces. Akan commercial indigenous language media is about Who is here and now? This emphasis on proximity, immediacy, and the present invokes spatiotemporal rhetorics on balancing tradition/culture and global discourses. When globalization and its sensibilities overstretch, culture and tradition step in. The mediating role of Akan commercial indigenous language media is an alignment and a balancing act in perpetuity. It is an evolving act to contain the tensions and complexities of a changing mediascape. The choice of cultural preservation is

achieved through strategic mediation mechanisms of language, which then automatically invoke certain types of discourses, narratives, and bodies.

This balancing role is not built on representational separation but a representational dialogism where relations are arranged constructively for meaning-making. For instance, dubbing telenovelas highlights the media industrial practice of adapting foreign content to fit local languages, demonstrating how economic motivations and audience preferences shape programming choices. Additionally, news production reveals the impact of historical and socio-political contexts on local language media practices, showcasing the interplay between global governance of journalism, Akan communication and distribution protocols, and technological advancement. While political economy allowed for an assessment of indigenous language media in Ghana as commercial entities, heteroglossia helped examine the tensions between commercial viability and cultural interests/preservation, global and local influences, tradition and contemporaneity, and cultural identities.

## 8.2 Audience-centricity

The analysis of Akan indigenous language media in Ghana shows that the audience is at the focal point of media production and dissemination. Audience-centricity is a response to audience tastes and preferences, emphasizing the audience perspective and prioritizing the audience as the motivation for sustained profitability and brand impact. It also involves aligning the goals of advertisers, media agents, and audiences to enhance audience aggregation and maximization, and linguistic and cultural independence. The immediacy of the audience's prominence in Akan indigenous language media repositions an understanding of media production and content development. Scholars like Abiodun Salawu (2016) and Matsaganus et al. (2012) acknowledge that the target audience constitutes one of the defining dimensions of

indigenous/ethnic media. However, the audience as a defining phenomenon is usually at the periphery in indigenous media literature. Indigenous media consumption is usually geographically and culturally outside their sites of production and representation. Even more contentious is that the indigenous media content's target audience is often removed from the geography, communities, sociopolitical conditions, or production centers in terms of proximity. Additionally, indigenous media has been defined in relation to the state, culture, and politics (Wortham, 2004 & 2013; Villarreal, 2017; Shobat & Stam, 2008). However, Akan commercial indigenous language media puts the audience at the center of production and programming. Of course, prioritizing the audience is a reasonable conclusion when considering commercial viability. And their consumers are a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous people who reside in the culture and production sites.

Throughout my interviews with media executives and personnel, a recurring sentiment emerged: “It is what the audience wants.” This phrase encapsulated the guiding philosophy behind their strategic decisions and content creation, highlighting the importance of audience preferences in shaping the media landscape. This confirms Stanley J. Baran and Dennis K Davis's (2015) observation that the argument could be made that the media is merely responding to the audience when they, too, found that the phrase “We only give the people what they want” is a common theme among journalists (p. 265). For Baran and Davis, this statement constitutes an aspect of the ambiguity around the nature of the relationship between media and audience, whether it constitutes causality, influence, or dialogism. What this study found is that the relationship between indigenous language media and the audience is not a straightforward one. It can be described as a pull and push of neoliberal mechanisms and the nexus of variegated transactions and interactions. It constitutes a mutually inextricable logic of advertising, media

institutions, and consumer dynamics. They become the pull around which advertisers, producers, and media executives interrelate. Audiences are not just one of the variables; they are an important analytical category for structuring and operationalizing various aspects of indigenous media. They are the litmus test for the media organizations' commercial viability and their products. The success of any one particular content or format is measured by its acceptability and the numerical strength, thereby strengthening its hold in the said space.

The media organization's emphasis on the audience reveals that Akan commercial indigenous language media operates within paradoxes. It is the very paradox at the center of linguistic adaptability, journalistic norms, and conventional media practice. Their material and sentimental values are recast in the audience's ambivalence towards their practices. Here, while some of the audience critique and question its practices, they appreciate ILM's contribution in a competitive media landscape. ILM has managed to sustain its importance through cultural resonance and the ability to navigate a complex media ecology. It uses a community/society engagement approach through dialogue and participation to build connection, continuity, and stability.

### 8.3 Bi-/Multilingual Discursivity

The Akan indigenous language media exemplifies a bi-/multilingual discursivity. A bi-/multilingual discursivity refers to the simultaneous and successive presence and use of two or more languages and dialects within the structure and operation of indigenous language media organizations. This multilayered linguistic character not only reflects a sociolinguistic diversity in indigenous language media institutions but also hails the coexistence of stratifying forces with their associated discourses and ideas. In indigenous language media, two languages are predominantly used in succession and/or simultaneously. Sometimes, other languages other than

English and Akan are also used. This makes code-switching a common occurrence in the operationalization of the Akan indigenous language media.

The successive or simultaneous presence of languages/dialects has consequences on the way indigenous media is structured and organized in Ghana. The media organizations studied show that media organizations in Ghana are structured along language lines with creative, programming, and geographical impacts. These media institutions exemplify two strategies of bi-/multilingual discursivity including structural or organizational stratification and programming stratification. MGL's organizational setup is structured along language lines, where the two predominant languages in Ghana, English and Akan, serve as the critical elements for determining their business structure and mode of operation. As such MGL organizational structure is an example of structural or organizational stratification. MGL has English-speaking and Akan-speaking television and radio stations. On the other hand, Despite Media deploys a monolingualistic organizational structure where all their radio and television stations predominantly operate in the Akan language. Notwithstanding, their programming, especially on television, uses a bilingual strategy when a few of their entertainment programs, especially featured films, are either in English or a combination of English and Akan. Thus, UTV deploys programming stratification.

The presence of multiple languages is not just a structural feature or reflection of broader social dynamics. Additionally, it projects ideologies and discursive practices tied to the languages employed in the media institutions' practices. This is particularly true in how journalism is practiced in Akan newsrooms and the various issues that are highlighted in Akan broadcasting. Using English and Akan in the newsrooms mirrors the interaction of editorial perspectives, varying cultural voices, and historical contexts. For instance, Akan folkloric

tradition has influenced contemporary journalism, reflected in the merging of artistic storytelling and conventional journalistic norms. Akan language media perform news-telling rather than reading news scripts as practiced in English language media. This shows that Akan journalism does not just verbalize a written genre. News presentation in this context represents a planned extemporaneous discourse that recognizes and applies a written script, demonstrates comprehension, and incorporates an individualized interpretive framework grounded in established editorial principles and perspectives. The interplay of English and Akan, alongside other languages, illustrates not only the structural organization of media institutions but also the diverse ideologies and discursive practices that shape journalism in these contexts.

#### 8.4 Translational Density

The third feature this analysis shows about indigenous language media is its translational density. Translational density refers to the media corporations' ability to not only translate social, cultural, political, economic, religious, material, and ideological events and practices but also their capacity to transpose or invert and simultaneously encompass normative and hegemonic textualities. For example, news production accommodates both globally accepted news-making practices and Akan news and information systems. Additionally, translational density is a complex system of oscillating between languages, contexts, ideologies, orthographies, and oralities. It emphasizes the transmission of meaning-making and expressive constructions. It also includes the capacity of ILMs to use language as a conveyor of cultures, practices, and ideologies. It foregrounds continuous negotiation and disciplining of meanings in a diverse and globalizing linguistic and cultural world. It embodies nuances and subtleties of linguistic systems, contexts, and perspectives. It is about meaning-making in translation, relationality, solidarity building, and resonance.

Ghana's heterolingual and multi-diverse nature makes Akan indigenous language broadcasting a vital platform for intercultural networking and exchanges. Podkalicka (2008) argues that intercultural connections can be established via a shared language of television and storytelling. Moreover, media translation practices foster cross-demographic social connections (Podkalicka, 2008). The translational density aspect of the Akan indigenous language media prompts a multiethnic audience, especially through its dubbing practices. ILMs in Ghana enable cross-cultural exchanges not only locally but also internationally through their translational strategies and digitization techniques. This translational density characterization of ILMs recasts romanticized ideas about indigenous media, not merely a practice and entity of cultural preservation, but through its translational strategies, enhances cultural convergence and dialogism. The convergence and dialogism depict the paradoxical interplay of dissonance and congruity, reinforcing the complexity of multi-linguistic interactions.

#### 8.5 Implications for Indigenous or Ethnic Media

This study's findings have implications for indigenous/ethnic media and their practice globally. First, the idea of a culturally purist media needs to be revised to accommodate the evolving and cosmopolitan nature of consumers and producers of indigenous media. Cosmopolitanism and transcultural sensibilities have become markers of media consumers and platforms. Hence, ethnic media occupies such a cosmopolitan media environment and, for that matter, must accommodate the evolving nature of this media system, embracing and assuming a cultural mediator role that bridges traditional values with contemporary trends. This cultural function role allows the media to navigate foreign or external influences and simultaneously preserve and promote indigenous cultures.

Second, ethnic media must prioritize the audience's preferences, cultural context, and needs by creating content that resonates with their values and experiences. This audience-centric approach increases engagement, visibility, and reach. Related to audience reach and engagement is the need for ethnic media producers to be cognisant of developing bilingual or multilingual content, which can help broaden ethnic media influence, promote inclusivity, and enhance representation of diverse communities and their narratives. This multilingual approach creates opportunities for indigenous media outlets to inform, foster awareness, and create cultural dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous communities.

#### 8.6 Suggestions and Future Directions

In September 2022, Bolingo Consult (a translation service provider in African languages) launched the first news website in two of the Akan languages: Asante Twi and Fante. The website is named Akan Kaseɛbɔ, which translates as “Akan News.” It is the first online platform with all its content written in the Akan language. The goal is to help speakers of Asante Twi and Fante to access educational and entertaining content in their native language. This online news initiative aims to bridge the gap between Akan broadcasting stations that broadcast their programs in Akan languages but publish their content in English online. The launch is in line with Bolingo Consult's mission “to unlock confidence in African languages” and elevate their status in the digital age. Notably, their attempt is a means of helping to build an Akan corpus and minimize errors in Akan written forms online.

Such initiatives reinforce discourses on written form and orality in the digital age. Of course, digitality supports both written and oral forms of speech and language to the extent that multimodal formats are the norm. Consequently, future research can investigate ways digital media platforms influence the production, dissemination, and consumption of Akan language

content, including examining online streaming services, social media, and podcasts. Further, researchers can study how these media platforms affect audience engagement as well as language preservation. Digitalization has also expanded program reach and helped increase the popularity and impact of Akan program genres like the reality show, courtroom radio show, where the host adjudicates cases and assumes the role of judge and jury. Such programs integrate media into the justice delivery system, hence creating a tension between the established justice system and informal judicial practices. Such programs need to be examined to unpack their effect on legal issues related to justice and the policies that govern media programming.

The commercial viability, dynamism, and evolving nature of Akan ILM require continuous appraisal since their presence in Ghana has garnered appreciation and resistance. On one of my observations in the fieldwork, I accompanied a journalist who was tasked with collecting public opinion on a particular topic. One woman agreed to share their opinion until she was asked to speak Twi. She resisted stating that, though she could understand Twi, she wasn't fluent in speaking Twi. After a lot of persuasion, her daughter agreed to do the interview, even though she added that she may code-switch between English and Twi. Such interactions reveal resistance narratives resulting from tensions between dominant languages and minor languages. Hence, other studies can examine how different demographics perceive and engage with Akan ILM. Examining non-Akan speakers' connections and preferences can provide insight into the effectiveness and reach of Akan indigenous language media.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

### Colorado State University

#### Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Theorizing Indigenous Language Broadcasting: Ruptures, Transformations and Dynamism

Dear Participant,

My name is Nancy Achiaa Frimpong. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University working with my faculty advisor, Professor Hye Seung Chung in the Communication Studies Department of Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study on indigenous language media/broadcasting production processes and programming. Specifically, this study looks to examine the programming and production process of indigenous language media/broadcasting to understand how production practices offer insights into conditions and practices that define the medium. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how these production practices have brought about changes/transformations into the media system. We invite you to participate in this interview to share information about your organization. If permission is granted and you agree to participate in this study, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. This interview should last about 90 minutes. In addition to the interviews, I will also be observing the daily routines, and practices of the radio/tv station. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without any repercussions. The interview will involve questions about ownership profile of your station, decisions about programming, language choice, use and challenges, political affiliation of your organization, and advertisement. We will report broad themes from this study and use direct quotes to support those themes. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. After agreeing to being audiotaped, if you feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you do not wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time. I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by mail/phone to request this. Since recruitment will taking place in the context of the workplace, we cannot guarantee that other workers will not see or infer your participation in this research. However, efforts will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. We will strive to keep all data confidential, and no personal identifiers will be collected. All transcripts will be kept in an encrypted file on a password protected computer accessible to only myself and dissertation committee members. Information from this interview will be used in final reports, publications and/or presentations. If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

This research has no direct benefit to the participants, and I am unable to offer monetary compensation for your participation. We do not anticipate any risks in participating in this study, but it is possible that certain information about the company and your role may cause you psychological discomfort. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures,

but we have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential (but unknown) risks.

To indicate your willingness to participate in this research, please reply to this email to set up an interview time. If you have any questions about the research, please contact me at [na.Frimpong@colostate.edu](mailto:na.Frimpong@colostate.edu) or [ojoefam@gmail.com](mailto:ojoefam@gmail.com). If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at [CSU\\_IRB@colostate.edu](mailto:CSU_IRB@colostate.edu); 970-491-1553.

Nancy Achiaa Frimpong  
PhD Candidate at Colorado State University

#### CONSENT

Do you consent for your interview to be audiotaped?

☐ Yes

☐ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Nancy Achiaa Frimpong, a PhD student at the Communication Studies department at Colorado State University. I am conducting a research study on indigenous language broadcasting production processes and programming in Ghana. Specifically, this study looks to examine the programming and production process of indigenous language media/broadcasting to understand how production practices offer insights into conditions and practices that define the medium. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how these production practices have brought about changes/transformations into the media system. The title of the study is *Theorizing Indigenous Language Broadcasting: Ruptures, Transformations & Dynamism*. I am working under the supervision of my faculty advisor, Professor Hye Seung Chung in the Communication Studies Department of Colorado State University.

I am writing to request for permission to collect data for my PhD dissertation. I am currently looking to collect data by observing your station's news production process and programing and interview some members of your organization about the history, ownership profile, advertisement opportunities, programming, and language use and choice. The data collected will be used for PhD dissertation about indigenous language media/broadcasting. The data collected will be used by me and shared with my dissertation committee members in accordance with Colorado State University's protocols as well as your organization's protocols.

We will keep all data confidential. Any personal identifiers will be removed from the transcript which will be kept in an encrypted file on a password protected computer accessible to only myself and dissertation committee members. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

I have attached a letter of introduction from my department. I am happy to provide any other information about my research. Thank you for examining and considering my request for this observational study. I assure you that I will follow all protocols and privacy regulations strictly. If you have any questions, you can contact me on +1 9062312491 or email me at [ojofam@gmail.com](mailto:ojofam@gmail.com) or [na.Frimpong@colostate.edu](mailto:na.Frimpong@colostate.edu). I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards,  
Nancy Achiaa Frimpong.

## Appendix C: Interview Protocol A

### Colorado State University

#### Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Theorizing Indigenous Language Broadcasting: Ruptures, Transformations and Dynamism

#### Introduction

Hello. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. My name is Nancy Achiaa Frimpong. I am a PhD student from the Communication Studies Department at Colorado State University. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research and share information about your organization, role, and time with me. I have given you a consent form which explains the purpose of this interview and how we will use the information you provide.

- The questions that will be asked will focus on the ownership profile and history of this organization, language choice, use and challenges, advertisements, programming, and political affiliation of the organization.
- I will be tape-recording this interview. It will help me keep focused on our conversation and enable me to recall the details of your responses. Once the study is completed, the tape recording will be destroyed.
- This interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

Do you have any questions about the process or the consent form?

#### Semi-Structured Questions

##### History of the stations & Issues of political affiliation

- Can you tell me about how this station started? How was it founded? What inspired the start of this organization and why? What was the initial reason for the formation of the organization? What were its goals?
- What is the purpose of your station? What is the mission and vision of this station?
- Which people were instrumental in establishing this station?
- What informed the naming of this station?
- Who are your target audience and why?
- What service do you offer? What do you promise your audience?
- What were some of the challenges the station faced in its early years?

- How has it evolved or remained the same?
- Have there been major changes in this station? When and why did these changes occur?
- What was the original location of the organization? Did that location change? When, where, and why? What were the dates of construction of the structure(s) used by the organization?
- What social, cultural, political, economic, environmental, etc., impact did the organization have at the local, state, and/or national level? How did that change over time?
- What is the relationship between your station and other similar stations? How is this station different? Was the organization a part of a national umbrella organization?
- Does the station have any political affiliation to a political party? What has been the relationship between your station and national politics or governments? Has there been any political influences at the national level that affected the organization or influenced its founding, changes over time, or dissolution?

#### Ownership profiles of the stations

- Who owns this station?
- What is the hierarchical structure of the station?
- How many employees does your station have?
- How do you raise revenue or secure funding for the running of this station?
- What are your responsibilities as the owner of this station?
- What kind of corporation is your station?
- Which other companies do you own? Are they under the same parent company? How did you acquire them?

- How many other radio/television stations are affiliated with you station?

#### Advertisement

- Do you advertise your station? How do you advertise your station?
- What partnerships do you have with companies? What types of advertisement do you accept or reject?
- What relationship does the station have with advertising companies? Does that affect the kind of content you produce? Do advertisers have influence on production of content and programming?

#### Program construction and development

- What programs or contents do you offer?
- Who is responsible for the selection, creation, scheduling, and promotion of programs?
- Where do you get your programs from?
- What makes your programming unique?
- What rules govern your programming and news production?

#### Language choice and policy, and problems associated with local language use

- Which qualities do you look for in new employees?
- Are there any language requirements for employees?
- Do you require employees to be proficient in a particular language?
- What are some of the challenges you face because you broadcast in the Akan language?

#### Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time and for choosing to participate in this research. If you have any questions or concerns after this section, please do not hesitate to contact me. Additionally, if you think that there is any information or persons you can recommend for this research, I will be glad to hear from you.

Again, I appreciate your participation. Thank you!

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol B

Colorado State University

Consent to Participate in Research

Title of Study: Theorizing Indigenous Language Broadcasting: Ruptures, Transformations and Dynamism

### Interview Protocol

#### Introduction

Hello. Thank you so much for agreeing to this interview. My name is Nancy Achiaa Frimpong. I am a PhD student from the Communication Studies department at Colorado State University. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this research and share information about your organization, role, and time with me. I have given you a consent form which explains the purpose of this interview and how we will use the information you provide.

- The questions that will be asked will focus on ownership profile and history of this organization, language choice, use and challenges, advertisements, programming, and political affiliation of the organization.
- I will be tape-recording this interview. It will help me keep focused on our conversation and enable me to recall the details of your responses. Once, the study is completed, the tape-recording will be destroyed,
- This interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

Do you have any questions about the process or the consent form?

What is news in the Akan tradition or its equivalent?

What is the process of news in Akan like? What was the format of Akan news?

Who were the agents in news gathering and transmission? Who decided what news to publish, when to publish and to whom?

What was the news about? How often was the news published?

Who were the recipients?

What were the sources of news?

What values or guidelines/ standards shaped news production and transmission?

What medium was used?

What resources were used in news production?

What were the challenges in Akan news production?

What changes occurred due to colonialism and the advent of technology?

#### Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time and for choosing to participate in this research. If you have any questions or concerns after this section, please do not hesitate to contact me. Additionally, if you think that there is any information or persons you can recommend for this research, I will be glad to hear from you.

Again, I appreciate your participation. Thank you!

## Appendix E: Prah's (2005) Questionnaire

### **Questionnaire 2** *Depth Interview Schedule*

The following are issues to be probed through recorded depth interviews of staff and management of Community Radios. The interviews will be recorded. Additional issues will be added depending on the preliminary findings of Questionnaire 1.

1. Ownership profiles of Community radios.
2. Finance of Community radios.
3. Adverts on Community radios.
4. Programme construction and development.
5. Issues of political affiliation.
6. Language choice
7. Language policy (background, philosophy and rationale)
8. Review of history of radio station.
9. Problems of African language usage.
10. Advantages of African language usage.
11. Expectations from audience.
12. Attitudes of governmental authorities.
13. Attitudes of religious bodies to African language broadcasts.
14. Audience preferences
15. Scope of improvement in the work of Community/FM radios
16. Politics of Community radios
17. Maintenance of radio equipment

## Appendix F: IRB



Institutional Review Board  
Office of Vice President for Research  
208 University Services Building  
Fort Collins, CO 80523-2011  
970-491-1553

### Notification of Not Human Subjects Research Determination

**Date:** 12/3/2022  
**Principal Investigator:** Hye Seung Chung, Ph.D.  
**Grant or Protocol #:** Kualii Protocol # 4024  
**Grant or Protocol Title:** Indigenous Language Media Production and Programming Process

On December 3, 2022, it was determined that the above-referenced protocol does not meet the requirements of §45 CFR46.102(f). The study will not involve research with human subjects for which IRB has no oversight.

§46.102(f) Research means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

After review of the information regarding your project, *Indigenous Language Media Production and Programming Process*, it was determined that your activity as presented would not meet the regulatory definition of human subjects research §45 CFR46.102(f), and would therefore not be under the IRB's purview. The anticipated outcome is to gather data from open data sources with no human subject contact.

If the scope of your project changes, please contact the CSU IRB Office at [CSU\\_IRB@colostate.edu](mailto:CSU_IRB@colostate.edu) or #970-491-1553 to discuss future procedures.

# Appendix G: Public Records Administration Department (PRAAD) Ticket

Republic of Ghana  
PUBLIC RECORDS AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT  
(PRAAD)  
Application for a Searcher's Ticket

*Please complete section 1 and 2 and present this form to the Search Room staff together with proof of identity (Passport, driver's license, official invoice with postal address etc.)*

SECTION 1  
(TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT)

Surname FRIMPONG  
Other Name (s) NANCY ACHIAA  
Nationality [REDACTED]  
Home Address [REDACTED]  
Telephone Number(s) [REDACTED]  
University Official Address Colorado State University  
555 Howes, Fort Collins - Colorado  
Occupation Student

Please indicate and give details the purpose of search  
Academic ☒  
Official ☐  
Private ☐

The purpose of this search is for a pre-proposal research for my PhD dissertation. This is part of collecting data for my research.

Subject of Research  
Indigenous/Local Language Broadcasting

I have read and agree to abide by the RULES of the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD)

SIGNATURE: [REDACTED]  
DATE: June 22, 2021

SECTION 2

TO BE COMPLETED BY A REFEREE (EXCEPT WHEN A SEARCHERS TICKET IS BEING RENEWED)

Surname BOATFO  
Other Name (s) YAW AGYEMAN  
Nationality .....  
Home Address .....  
Telephone Number(s) .....  
Occupation .....  
I have known the applicant for 5yrs [Please state the length of time] and can vouch for his/her suitability as a searcher at the Public Records and Archives Administration Department

Signature

Date 22/06/2021

(OFFICIAL)

  
Referees should be reliable and identifiable from a professional director (e.g. Solicitor, Senior Government Official, Foreign Diplomat Staff, Schoolmaster, Tutor or Director of Studies. Foreign Students should also present a letter of recommendation from their place of study

SECTION 3  
TO BE COMPLETED BY PRAAD

Searcher's Ticket Number .....  
[If renewal please note Number of original ticket]

Name [Please Print] .....

Signature of Issuing Officer .....

Date of issue: .....

## Appendix H: GBC Archives Request Letter

Nancy Achiaa Frimpong  
[ojoefam@gmail.com](mailto:ojoefam@gmail.com) / [na.Frimpong@colostate.edu](mailto:na.Frimpong@colostate.edu)  
0500744002.

October 13, 2021

The Director of Radio  
Ghana Broadcasting Corporation  
Ring Road Central, Kanda  
Accra.

### PERMISSION TO USE GBC ARCHIVES

Dear Sir,

I am writing to request permission to collect archival information from GBC in preparation for my PhD dissertation between Thursday, October 14, and Friday, October 22, 2021.

I am Nancy Achiaa Frimpong, a PhD student at the Communication Studies department at Colorado State University. I research film and broadcasting texts and technologies as well as the role of language in postcolonial media. I examine how both official languages, like English, and indigenous languages, like Twi, are used by journalists to build their professional identities. This interest in language, culture, and power also appears in my research on translation and interpretation in media technologies and indigenous language broadcasting. I am currently looking to collect information on the history of broadcasting in the Ghanaian languages and the process your organization engages in the transmission and translation/interpretation of information from English to any of the Ghanaian languages.

My focus is on examining and collecting data on infrastructures/resources and technologies used in news production and other programming that involves any form of translating or interpreting original texts into a Ghanaian language or from any of the Ghanaian languages into the English language. I intend to use the information to prepare for my PhD dissertation proposal and subsequently inform the direction of my research topic. The information collected will be used by me and shared with my dissertation committee members in accordance with Colorado State University's protocols as well as your organization's protocols.

I have attached an introductory letter from my department. Thank you for examining and considering my request. I assure you that I will follow all protocols and regulations strictly. If you have any questions, you can contact me on 0500744002 or email me at [ojoefam@gmail.com](mailto:ojoefam@gmail.com) or [na.Frimpong@colostate.edu](mailto:na.Frimpong@colostate.edu). I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Nancy Achiaa Frimpong.

## List of Abbreviations

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation  
FM: Frequency Modulation  
GBC: Ghana Broadcasting Corporation  
GLLB: Guidelines for Local Language Broadcasting  
ICF: Industrialization of Culture Framework  
ILM: Indigenous Language Media  
IRB: Internal Review Board  
MGL: Multimedia Group Limited  
MIS: Media industry studies  
NMC: National Media Commission  
NCA: National Communication Authority  
PRAAD: Public Records and Administration Department  
PE: Political Economy  
PS: Production Studies  
(C)PEMC: (Critical) Political Economy of Media and Communication  
TV: Television  
UTV: United Television