

Radio Drama Ninde for Development in Burundi

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Abstract

This article examines how Kirundi radio drama Ninde ‘visualizes’ sensitive everyday life issues for an invisible audience through the medium of dramatic sound to prompt development. Ninde is a new style of communication borne from the interaction between tradition and modernity to communicate artistically to the Burundian community in order to lead abandonment of beliefs and practices that are considered old-fashioned, dangerous or harmful. The question this article attempts to answer is “how is Ninde framed as a radio play form?” The argument that the article advances is that radio Ninde is framed as a theatre of the mind whose main purpose is to correct people by means of satire especially its inflection – ridicule. The empirical material on which the argument is based is a sample of Ninde plays from Burundi. The analysis employs Erving Goffman’s concept of framing whose major premise is that particular frames instil a specific worldview in peoples’ minds through priming and making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. The article concludes that Ninde relies on dialogue mostly: the comedic, exaggeration, metaphor and a formulaic approach, often one that simply contrasts characters of good moral standing against those of dubious repute to influence the imagination of its imagined audiences. It is an edutainment genre (entertainment content designed to educate) through which the bitter pill of verbal correction of human follies and foibles is sugared with amusement to trigger social change. To use Ninde in communication for sustainable development objectives can pass well because narratives are something into which people realise themselves. As a recommendation, radio drama projects need to be financially supported very much like other local development initiatives.

Key words: radio drama Ninde, theatre of the mind, communication, social change, development



Introduction

Across Africa, there have been a number of initiatives and campaigns that capitalize on the use of television and radio to promote social change because it is believed that ‘edutainment’ or ‘enter-education’ that is programmes whose entertainment content is designed to educate are efficacious in educating the public on a variety of social topics (Singhal & Rogers 1996). One such communication strategy is through the use of TV and radio dramas and soap operas (Ligaga 2008; Mbogo 2012, Tanganika 2012, & Sambai 2014). This article is situated within those studies on the development of edutainment programmes in East Africa.

This article explores the framing of radio drama *Ninde* as an ‘edutainment’ genre, that is, entertainment content designed to educate Burundians by embedding didactic lessons into some familiar form of drama. Entertainment-education (E-E) is defined by Singhal and Rogers (1999:5) as “... the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour.” *Ninde* plays, artistically frame a variety of societal issues and social situations prevailing at the time it is performed.

Ninde literally translates as: “Who is that?” a term that derives from

the opening tag line of that radio programme. Radio drama *Ninde* is used not only to entertain people but also to build their knowledge, develop their skills and influence change of attitude. It is the longest running Kirundi radio drama programme in Burundi, pre-recorded and aired on national radio once a week every Sunday at a 8.30pm, Bujumbura local time, since 1981. Each *Ninde* episode is a once-off play, with sufficient lessons to the imagined audience in the course of the story’s development. Radio *Ninde* is a popular drama that attracts both young and adult audience and one would not be wrong to compare its popularity among its popularity to Bollywood (Hindi cinema) and Nollywood (Nigerian movies) among their audiences. However, while Bollywood and Nollywood are visual, the performance of the drama *Ninde* takes place through the radio/audio medium.-

This article deals with oral literature within the context of modern technology. I am aware that there is a link between orality, performance, and new media (as in TV & radio). I am also aware Walter J. Ong’s (1982) observations about orality and performance in the new spaces created by technology, although my research variables are not about technology. In his seminal work, Ong talks about the use of verbal expression within societies that are unfamiliar with technologies of literacy. Following Ong, this article focuses on the technology of

audio sound. I look at radio *Ninde* as technology-mediated orality.

According to Gervais Ndiwokubwayo,¹⁰⁷ one of the current *Ninde* radio producers, whom I interviewed, *Ninde* episodes are the product of collaboration between professional media communicators from the National Radio of Burundi (a state broadcaster) and the folk in given social contexts. This fact leads me to argue that the production of *Ninde* is informed by ‘official’ as opposed to popular discourse, a field that has attracted a lot of academic work in Africa (Barber 1997; Newell 2002). Yet the subject matter of this drama is informed by everyday life; it is reflective of the issues, concerns, anxieties and joys of those who consume the ‘drama-aired’ narratives. We can say that *Ninde* tends to push official positions but does it in popular language. In this article, *Ninde* is analysed as a popular product, that is, a drama of, for and by the people without problematizing but acknowledging the relationship between radio *Ninde* and the state broadcaster for which it is produced.

The interest of this type of drama in terms of oral literature is that it is in a large sense spontaneous, unwritten, and improvised. In fact, *Ninde* plays do not follow a well-developed script. On the contrary, each text is the collective creation of the group which improvises a storyline presented by one of its members or the radio

programme producer, according to the same interview with the *Ninde* producer. This concurs with Kerr’s (1998) opinion that African narratives are based on a tradition of improvised creativity rather than individual authorship. The function of the stories is not only to provide entertainment, but also informally educate, and instil social control through techniques of characterisation, narrative comment, and deep structures embedded in motifemic sequences.

Ninde producers/actors have created a distinct style that has made it easy for listeners from both urban and rural areas to appreciate its patterns for a period of over three decades, so far, with the same enthusiasm. The format of presentation of *Ninde* has to a great extent helped to sustain the interest of its audience. The opening and closing formulas are borrowed from the African oral tradition of storytelling, which makes the drama all the more captivating.

Indeed, storytelling is a long tradition in Africa. But due to cultural upheavals relating to the industrial age that rendered storytelling sessions around the fire place, obsolete; oral literature or ‘orature’ as a non-material component of folklore adapts itself to operate in this new technological and consumer oriented society to reconstruct and transform traditional practices which are no longer relevant in their original form and to thus envision new healthy social lifestyles. The radio *Ninde* is a variant of artistic communication that uses interaction

¹⁰⁷ Gervais Ndiwokubwayo, oral interview, National Radio of Burundi, 28 April 2015.

between tradition and modernity to communicate to the Burundian community artistically in order to transform beliefs and practices that are considered old-fashioned, dangerous or harmful.

Therefore, I read *Ninde* as a cultural form that displays both traditionality and innovation. Radio drama has given rise to a modern style of communication on everyday life issues to both the literate and the illiterate. The importance of orality, through the authority of radio and popularity of the programme, *Ninde* help to reach out to even the hard to reach rural population and empower them through educative information, while at the same time, entertaining them.

I interrogate framing not only as social but also as cultural aesthetic expressions that are deployed in *Ninde* performances and particularly in the plays under analysis, that is, by identifying the aesthetics and rhetorical conventions that are deployed in drama to package messages for an imagined Kirundi audience. I look at radio *Ninde* as a form which communicates in a particular way; which I choose to call the “blind”. It assumes that the audience cannot see (it is blind) and it is thus only expects to listen. All images are created through language and sounds. The article looks at how the drama uses available techniques through the audio medium to enhance the audience’s imagination for change.

Objective

The paper looks at the framing of the radio drama *Ninde* as an audio ‘edutainment’ genre, that is, an entertainment content that is designed to educate Burundians by embedding didactic lessons into some familiar form of entertainment through the sound medium. The question this article attempts to answer is: “How is *Ninde* framed as a radio drama?” The article argues that radio *Ninde* is framed as a theatre of the mind whose main purpose is to correct people by means of satire through ridicule. The undying relevance of *Ninde* as a form of communication for social change is due to the artistic structure of its narratives that has sustained the interest of its audiences over a long period of time of more than three decades.

Theoretical Considerations and Methodology

In order to adequately answer our guiding question, the analysis is undertaken in view of Erving Goffman’s (1974) views on the theory of framing. Framing is a concept introduced by Bateson (1972) and developed by Goffman (1974) to account for how speakers signal what they think they are doing when they say something in a certain way in a given context (Tannen 2005). Framing refers to the process by which people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about a given subject. “... the strongest frame will exert the greatest influence

on individual opinion, regardless of repetition” (Chong & Druckman 2007:104). The major premise of framing theory is that particular frames instil a specific worldview in peoples’ minds through priming and making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. A particular frame conditions the packaging of messages so as to either encourage or discourage certain interpretations. Framing, therefore, has the ability to alter and influence the public’s perception by controlling discussions and interpretations of issues. Frames perform the necessary function of directing, even limiting debate by engaging in verbal play of selected key terms, examples, comparisons, and conceptual metaphors through which participants can comprehend and discuss a topic. A frame represents the content of the story through which individuals and groups come to recognize their world.

Frame analysis as a critical discourse method used to dissect and understand how *Ninde* as a programme ‘visualizes’ issues and projects social change in the dramatic form. For Goffman, a frame consists a particular scheme of interpretation that people depend on to understand and respond to different situations and events. Frame analysis is a discourse analysis method that is primarily concerned with dissecting how an issue is defined and problematised, and the effect that this definition has on the broader discussion on the issue. In this article, I appropriate

the term framing to refer to the main strategies that are used to package and communicate *Ninde’s* artistic productions for development. *Ninde* narratives are analysed taking into account how plays use language and characters to display social behaviour, roles and relations. This article drawn from the research I conducted for my doctoral thesis (Nibafasha 2017). The data analysed is drawn from six *Ninde* plays selected from *Radio Télévision Nationale du Burundi* (RTNB), [Burundi National Radio and Television] during fieldwork for that research. The six plays are listed in the references section from number one to number six and they are referred to within the article according to the number of the play in list of references.

Design of *Ninde*, the Radio Drama

Unlike stage theatre, film or television, which have advantage of ‘spectacle’ that enlists multisensory experiences of audiences, radio drama solely uses an audio medium usually referred to as ‘theatre of the mind’ which depends on sound and imagination. Therefore, edutainment radio drama producers have to pay attention to the use of sound and other techniques (Ligaga 2008; Tanganika 2012), requirements that *Ninde* plays fulfil well. The real strength of *Ninde* is its “... ability to infiltrate the mind, to unleash the most powerful dramatic weapon of all: the imagination of the listener”,

as Hand and Traynor (2011:33) would put it.

In radio, the actor appeals to the audience through one's voice only. Actors must be able to select those words and those things which allow the audience – which is actually composed by any person who is listening to the programme from anywhere – to ‘see’ the performance through their ears. The story therefore affects listeners “by way of analogy” (Kincaid 2002:137). In radio, as in the case of *Ninde*, scenes take place behind the curtain, since we are concerned with the voices alone. The point of concentration of characters is to show the who, where, what, and how, by voice and sound alone, without telling it in so many words, since each play lasts only one hour. Character and action, rather than spectacle are central in such a case. Characters often relate and animate events, thus placing a great emphasis upon actors and their ability to capture the audience’s attention and imagination without assistance from the regular theatrical devices employed on the stage, since in the context of radio drama, the stage is the mind.

Ninde depends mainly on dialogue and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters and story. They use some ways to guide listener in stories. This is in agreement with Hand’s and Traynor’s observation that there are certain narrative conventions developed in radio drama to compensate for the absence of physical

theatre and to ensure that listeners can be ‘hooked’ in easily (Hand & Traynor 2011:36). *Ninde* uses uncomplicated narrative structure, involving a few characters who engage in a mixture of dialogue and soliloquy for the storyline to progress.

The themes in the *Ninde* radio drama are expressed through local language, register, plot or storyline, setting and characterization. Radio drama *Ninde* is “... a genre that operates within the sociology of everyday life” as Ligaga would put it (Ligaga 2008:6). Although a similar programme has recently started air on television every Tuesday at 9.30pm, its potential is significantly limited by the small audience the programme is able to reach because of the inaccessibility of television sets by majority of Burundians.

The Comic and Satirical Aspects of *Ninde*

The essence of *Ninde* and drama, in general, is that it is concerned with conflict. If people were in harmony with each other and their surroundings, there would be little need for an audience to listen to and watch plays in order to understand the human condition; there would be no confusion to work out, no need for interpretation. But what is more important to notice is not only how *Ninde* presents conflicts but also how it resolves them.

Ninde storyline always resolves issues at the end of each play because of the one-off story format in an

average of eight short scenes lasting about seven minutes each. This setup allows actors to deal with an issue thoroughly and making it relevant to the everyday lives of listeners. Instead of having the same characters week after week in “classic soap opera style” (Kerr 1998:144), *Ninde* has different characters in the one-off plays though actors are almost the same in the various episodes.

As old wine in new gourds, the radio “... has provided an environment in which a new storytelling genre has been born” as Crook would put it (Crook 1999:3). The drama has a sociological nature as both a record and as an interpretation of social life (Goffman 1974). The performance becomes the space in which the audience’s world is reflected upon. The performance takes place through the sound medium, in which the drama is presented (Ligaga 2008:38).

Ninde plays are one hour didactic satires which depend on the comic improvisatory talents of actors and directors. The purpose of every comedy, particularly satirical comedy, is to hold a mirror up to society to reflect its follies and vices, in the hope that, they will, as a result be mended. It is commonly perceived that satire is the most “serious” form of comedy and that the aim of satirical plays are not only to please and amuse but also to instruct. Satirical comedy has a strongly ethical bent. In *Ninde* plays, the offending characters are severely chastened for their faults for need of example. Through characterisation,

the audience is shown, at any rate, what is to be avoided. Hence, in the sense that there is moral criticism, the *Ninde* series of plays can be said to be morality plays. In fact every play has a moral lesson.

Within this article, the moral story is understood as a text that is able to influence the behavioural patterns of the perceived listeners. In the design of *Ninde*, as a morality plays, there is the defeat of vice and the triumph of the virtuous character over a vicious one because in a satirical play, the audience must be shown extreme forms of character and behaviour. As an illustration, in the character of Nkinahoruri *Play1: Urya umawe ukinovoraintuntu*¹⁰⁸ / “When you eat your relative, you digest grief”), authors/directors try to show that behaviour that contradicts the prescribed social norm is unacceptable. They stigmatise Nkinahoruri’s foibles and frailties. The price to be paid by those victims for acting contrary to the views of the majority is isolation and exposure to ridicule. When Ngendanganya who is Nkinahoruri’s wife gets traumatised and runs mad, Nkinahoruri is ridiculed by other men and he is coerced to get her medical care. The play ends well with husband and wife happily living in perfect harmony; by implication this is the suggested remedy for men out there who abuse their spouses. That kind of comedy is said to be satirical. Its vital principle is ‘ridicule’.

¹⁰⁸ It means that “When you abuse your relative, you reap grief/regret”, accept and understand relative as a member of your family by birth, marriage or adoption.

Ninde is a satirical comedy because in addition to the fact that it entertains its audience, it has a moral function. This notion of ‘moral’ is intimately linked to the notions of values and attitudes. These moral attitudes are of paramount importance because they are, among others, elements which determine overt behaviour. Furthermore, adherence to certain values and norms goes with the formation of corresponding attitudes, that is, the disposition of reacting in a manner which is characteristic of certain stimuli. These in this context, are situations of everyday life.

The genre’s formal features include what Goffman has termed ‘abnormality for normality’, that is, the ability for the play to portray an abnormal behaviour in the character with the purpose to construct a normal behaviour or to enhance ideas about acceptable moral values of the Burundian society. It is an aspect of development communication that is applied in entertainment-education. What is drawback with this frame, however, is that the audience can take the means for the ends.

Most of the time, *Ninde* uses the ‘abnormal’ character as an aesthetic strategy to teach ‘normal’ behaviour and to make people laugh, forgetting that one may be laughing at themselves, what is known as punishing vices laughingly or what has been called “telling the truth laughingly” (Ruganda 1992). The relationship between laughter and comedy is an important issue. In some critical discussions the

two are treated as synonymous terms. But this attitude does not do full justice to the complexity of comedy. Besides, entertainment or amusement does not necessarily mean laughter. Therefore, even though the audience may laugh during the performances of *Ninde*, it cannot be summed up in terms of laughter alone. After all the objective of pure comedy is not just laughter. The six *Ninde* plays under consideration are comedies since they are mainly concerned with the presentation of characters with a serious mission.

Apart from presenting what people should not do, in one character for entertainment purpose, *Ninde* also teach people what they ought to do. In other words, we can say that *Ninde* uses a double character format. It teaches what people should do by making salient what they should not do. The performances in *Ninde* are often set against expressed or implied proverbs or popular sayings that are always stated towards the end of performances so that the moral may not be lost in the entertainment. Four out of the six plays that are used in this article are set against an expressed proverb as shown above. These are *Play1: Urya umawe ukinovora intuntu* / “When you eat your relative, you digest grief”; *Play2: Izija gubona zibera mu rubongore* / “For cattle to get exterminated, it all starts from the cowshed”; *Play3: Inkoni uzokwishimikiza ushaje uyica ukiri muto* / “The stick that you will lean on when you get old is cut when you are

still young”; *Play4: Intabarirwa ibarirwa n’uko amaso atukuye* / “A person who never listens to advice is convinced when his eyes get reddish. The proverb genre is one of the fundamental framing devices in *Ninde*.

To enhance the reception of the message, audio *Ninde* uses the technique of repetition. Repetition is crucial in orality. In *Ninde*, certain phrases are repeated as in oral performances to evoke the oral nature of the radio play. A series of actions always reveal feelings and emotions. The latter are intensified or reduced. When there is necessary to emphasize a point that needs to be stressed, the producers/actors highlight it through repetition of phrase(s) in order to put across a message. We have examples of repetitions in the various *Ninde* performances under analysis. Repetition has more specific stylistic qualities in *Ninde*. It does not only serve to stress the message but also serves as an aesthetic device. This view concurs with Okpewho’s (1992) observation when referring to repetition in oral performances. Repetition in verbal art has both an aesthetic and a utilitarian value: “... [T]he repetition of a phrase, a line, or a passage does have a certain sing-song quality to it” (Okpewho 1992:71), in addition to stressing the message to be communicated.

For instance in *Play2: Izija gubona zibera mu ruhongore* / “For cattle to get exterminated, it all starts from the cowshed”, the repetition highlights the key message which is about avoiding

mother-to-child HIV transmission by getting tested before getting pregnant in order to benefit from follow-up care if found HIV positive. That repetition feature is also present in another dramatic narrative (*Play5: Aba niho mba ndi* / “That is where I would have been”) about forced/early marriage, a traditional practice in some regions in Burundi, which is still being carried out, depriving young girls of the opportunity to grow and develop to maturity. The play concludes with a monologue in which Shantare regrets having dropped out of school to elope with a man, who ends up disappointing her; which implies that if she had not dropped out of school, she would have also been celebrating her diploma like her sister Jozerine who chose to pursue her studies instead of accepting the forced marriage.

Ninde also uses the technique of duplication of scenes or ideas. Recursive theme or motif in *Ninde* is involved with different places/settings and different characters through duplications of the key message into the scenes of an episode. *Ninde* encompasses the idea of a staging or amphitheatre in the mind of the individual as much as is on the physical stage. A similarity this radio drama shares with physical theatre is that each play is divided into scenes and the latter vary between seven, for the shortest, and nine for the longest. The boundary between one scene and the next is marked by a musical jingle or signature tune.

This specific music is equivalent to the curtain falling between scenes. The radio performance assumes that the audience is blind. So, the framing ensures conditions of both the listener and spectator inside the mind of the listener, hence my use of the expression ‘theatre of the mind’ from Crook (1999:8).

Contrary to theatre on physical theatre, the stage in the case of radio drama, is the mind of the listener. That is in agreement with Hand and Traynor (2011) where they observed that “[t]he mind of the listener is as pivotal to radio drama as the screen is to cinema” (p.33). While the audience listens to an episode of *Ninde*, they are ‘watching’ with the mind’s eye and the mind generates an image which is ‘emotion’ and ‘feeling’, an essential feature of human experience in drama (Crook 1999:61).

The popularity of *Ninde* derives from its framing because it draws its nourishment from its roots in Kirundi language and culture and immediate environment, that is, from everyday experiences that the audience can easily identify and relate to. *Ninde* plays effectively use techniques of flash back and internal monologue. Given that the time on air, for each *Ninde* episode is limited, and in order to allow a lot of information to be known, it uses the internal voice device (soliloquy or monologue) in many scenes. This device ensures that audiences can be made aware of a lot of important information which is not dramatized

and which allows the audience to follow easily the dramatized parts. We get back into the past and forward into what will happen in the future through this device in the plays under analysis. “In the monologue, there is description of what is happening (or what the character thinks) than to dramatize, which would involve several actors and more studio time” (Hand and Traynor 2011:37) and thus monologues allow economy of time.

Ninde uses various techniques to achieve its objectives of entertainment and education. Within the plays under consideration, one is captivated by how the *Ninde* storyline is spiced with the irony device. For instance, it is ironical to hear that Riyera and Banzubaze in *Play2* test HIV positive after Riyera has been saying “Since my husband and I don’t suspect each other [*Eeh*], we really trusted each other. I saw that my husband seemed healthy, and he saw that I seemed healthy too.” Irony is also used in *Play3* titled *Inkoni uzokwishimikiza ushaje uyica ukiri muto* / “The stick that you will lean on when you get old is cut when you are still young”, a drama intending to raise people’s awareness and encourage them to make savings in a microfinance for future wellbeing. It is really ironical to notice that the money that Rwangara¹⁰⁹ and his wife Sinarinzi¹¹⁰ thought to hide from thieves in a broken pot is eaten by mice. They refuse to save in a microfinance institution and keep their money in a broken pot for fear of getting their

¹⁰⁹ *Rwangara* literally translates to: “carelessness”

¹¹⁰ *Sinarinzi* literally translates to: “I was not aware”

money robbed, while everyone in the community is encouraged to take their money to some form of a bank. Mice come and eat more than five hundred thousand francs they had saved for the purpose of buying a cow unaware of the pending misfortune. The irony of the situation is that when it is time to carry out their plan of buying the cow, they check only to find that all the banknotes have been eaten by mice, leaving behind some small pieces.

At the end of *Play4: Intabarirwa ibarirwa n'uko amaso atukuye* (“A person who never listens to advice is convinced when his eyes get reddish”), it is really ironical that what Gihushi stole from his wife Sabokwigura is in turn stolen from him by the ‘other’ woman that he himself brought to the house (when he is asleep), she does not even leave behind an underwear for him. It is also ironic in *Play5: Aba nibo mba ndi* (“That is where I would have been”) to hear that the daughter Shantare whom Nyirigo was proud of is cast out of her home by her husband and goes back to the Nyirigos during the time Nyirigo is enjoying the celebration of the diploma of the daughter he had despised and thrown out of the house when she rejected a forced marriage. Parallel to that, the end of *Play6: Ni iyo yibaruriye*¹¹¹ (“He has been the cause of his own fate”) is ironical. The protagonist Rusimbi who was expecting to cheat on his

wife by selling her land is the one who is thrown off the land!

In general, *Ninde* plays are of an amusing nature since the very aim of *Ninde* is to entertain its audience while instructing it. Perhaps the most obvious link with oral narratives is the moral authority which the radio drama tries to exercise on listeners, similar to that of folk tale traditions. Many listeners think of these plays as “real” especially as they use actors whose voices plausibly fit the characters. Thus when the audience is enjoying a *Ninde* play, they are simultaneously made aware of human follies and weaknesses shown by the situation of the play. The audience, depending on the final revelation of the narratives, is shown what fate awaits one whose behaviour is seen to have digressed or is contrary to societal expectations. At least one of the characters in every play is anti-social in the sense that one is not accepted in society. Comic characters generally visibly personify some qualities dominated by a single passion or obsession which renders them, at least temporarily, unfit for life in a well-adjusted society. Their behaviour or ideas cast doubt on the codes of practice and belief which the majority of people accept as sane and normal. This is enough to make the comic character ridiculous and amusing to the audience. That means that the other characters as well as the audience do not sympathise with such a character. They are insensitive to his condition. Indeed, laughter

¹¹¹ Literally translated as: “He is the one who prepared/planned the way he is taking/following”.

or amusement does not go with emotional involvement.

Ninde exploits all avenues to deliver humour and comedy to its audience. Actors use humorous language, make unexpected statements, crack jokes and tell humorous anecdotes aimed at ensuring that the main story and theme of the play reach the audience. The language used as a comic drama contributes a great deal to the overall humour (Kabuyenge 1994).

The structure of *Ninde* can be reduced to a basic formula of parallel sets or contrasting sets of images used to reinforce the message to be put across. By image is meant chain of actions or sets of actions. Images are created by sound in the mind of the listener. How is the creation of images made possible given that images are achieved more powerfully and effectively through the visual than the auditory? How are the images constructed through sound? I argue that in radio drama, the dialogue and sounds become more important than stage drama. The language helps to ‘visualize’ or to make visible the invisible. *Ninde* tries to approximate a stage: actors create image for the audience through dialogue. We have an imagined visuality.

To enhance the imagination of the audience, *Ninde* relies on the richness of the Kirundi language, such as the use of proverbs, metaphors, analogy, repetition, parallelisms and contrasts in addition to sounds. It is this kind of language that tugs at the listener’s heartstrings to arouse emotion. This

is in perfect agreement with Ingram (1994) where he states that “... the theatre of the mind is an emotional theatre, where feelings are the primary currency, mixed with mood, memories and imagination” (Ingram 1994 cited in Crook 1999:61). Kirundi proverbs are used as prominent framing devices in *Ninde* to pass on messages more firmly. The strength of *Ninde* plays lies essentially in the fact that they are dramatic performances which by combining some elements from tradition with elements of contemporary life provides amusement, relaxation and education to its audience through a medium they can easily relate to.

The characters display human vices and weaknesses for the purpose of social criticism. This holds true for *Ninde* since, for instance in the selected plays, we are shown violent, stubborn, and unfaithful or dishonest people in action. In satire, such deviations are ridiculed with the intention of preventing the audience from ever thinking or acting in a similar manner. Thus in the aforementioned plays, we are warned not to be violent, stubborn, unfaithful, or dishonest since in the end we cannot benefit from it. Satirical comedy has a strong ethical bent. The offending characters are severely chastened for their faults so that their fates serve as examples to listeners; through characterisation, listeners are shown what is to be avoided.

These moral attitudes are of paramount importance because

they are, among others, elements which determine overt behaviour. Furthermore, adherence to certain values and norms goes with the formation of corresponding attitudes, that is, the disposition of reacting in a manner which is characteristic of certain stimuli. In this context, therefore, situations of everyday life are dramatized. The moral system is in fact of great importance in shaping behaviour. Thus, *Ninde* is useful both to the individual listener and to the nation as a whole. In fact, as in almost every *Ninde* play we can depict an ethic to which everyone should approximate ones behaviour and thereby the identity of the nation is shaped. Thus, *Ninde* has a social function. It is presented as not only comic but also satirical to create social transformation.

In addition to its power of entertainment and its moral and social function, *Ninde* has other qualities. In fact, in the current rapidly changing societies in Africa, hardly any one is concerned with art for art's sake. Everyone has some attitude towards socio-economic development. This is mirrored in works of art.

The imagined Audience, its Engagement and Modelling

Since *Ninde* audience is imagined by the text, this section attempts to present how radio drama texts make it possible for listeners to grasp lessons from the way issues are framed, and how they invite listeners to apply the lessons to reality. My idea

of imagined audience is borrowed from Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities (2006). The people who are listening to the radio are an imagined audience.

Research on framing effects indicates that altering the way an issue is presented in the media can influence people's perceptions significantly (Sambai 2014:20). Goffman (1974) emphasizes reflective aspects of social life, that is, the ways in which what we think about what we do, affects the performance of the activity itself. Goffman defines frame as a way of organising experiences; we use frames to identify what is taking place. Frames are communicative strategies of organising experiences. They might indeed be performatively constructed as 'scenes' or 'stages'. Elements of radio drama are the elements of drama on stage but there are differences between the radio drama and drama on the stage.

All drama assumes an audience and *Ninde* does not make exceptions. I argue that both the stage drama and the radio drama begin from the same notion. All of them are about stage. In other words, the stage is there before they are enacted. The purpose of a stage is in visibility, while on radio it is dialogue and the dialogue is performed in a way to create 'visibility'. Given that there is no physical contact between radio drama and the audience, radio drama has alternative strategies of bridging this gap. Radio has its own techniques of communicating drama to enhance

its audience's imagination as it tries to approximate a stage. But how does this particular radio drama *Ninde* assume an audience? Being an audio medium of communication, *Ninde* essentially relies on proverbs, dialogue, metaphor, comic, characterisation and sounds in order to bridge the gap. However, other dramatic techniques come into play in the creation of image, setting and mood to achieve the total dramatic effect.

The audience of *Ninde* is imagined as "both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 2006:6). The audience is imagined because the members of even the smallest *Ninde* audience will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them. In fact, the audience is not in contact with the performers like in the case of a physical stage. Therefore, it is to be distinguished, not by its falsity or genuineness, but by the style in which it is imagined.

Kirundi is the language through which the audience of *Ninde* is imagined. For the play to have effect, its perceived audience must be able to understand its intentions. This process of activation involves the application of lessons learnt from the play to ordinary events. Sometimes this application takes place immediately, where the imagined audiences see direct links between a story and its experiences. Other times, this application takes place at the level of example where this audience's point of view is that of

an observer rather than a participant. These forms speak of social realities and are useful measurements and guidelines through which members of a society can read their lives and tolerate conditions of their existence (Ligaga 2008:32). The fact that the imagined audiences of radio *Ninde* are meant to use the lessons for their own purposes is of great interest because they are supposed to interpret cultural product based on their social everyday realities.

The *Ninde* texts imagine users who are individuals scattered throughout the country and who make an imaginary audience that only exists by virtue of being addressed, and involve them towards a way of receiving the intended meaning. This is done through a number of strategies that the texts adopt to draw the audience into receiving them in a particular way. How images, the voice and sounds are used is of paramount importance to 'visualize' the character choice and behaviour.

One of the ways in which radio drama in *Ninde* has managed to speak to its imagined audience is by use narratives that reflect social reality in Burundi. *Ninde* plays are presented as stories that dramatize different aspects of everyday human relationships. These stories do not exist in a void but are drawn from people's experiences in real life. The other way in which radio *Ninde* imagines its audience is through building its storyline in a dialogue form in order to convey ideology. The dialogue form is a

powerful technique to influence the audience because any one can identify oneself with the speaker or addressee. The dialogue technique also allows a reflection on the values desired by society to be imparted to its members. In fact, dialogue serves two strategies: one is to attract and maintain audiences' attention through the use of the pronoun "you"; the other purpose that dialogue serves is that through direct address, members of the audiences cease to become the unseen spectators and passive recipients of the message but they are conceived as active participants in the dialogue by virtue of the fact that the performer is directly addressing them and it is as if one expects a reactions from them (Sambai 2014).

Dialogue or the conversational form is more violent in emotional impact than the experience of merely reading a description in the third person. Conversation turns a narrative into a performance, turns it into a very lively play with the qualities of direct address, exclamation and dialogue. Performance has a physical effect on audience and that is what makes a play different from a written poem or a novel. Another important element of the dramatic conversation that makes it lively are the short replies of the addressee. When one listens to *Ninde*, one hears sounds (such as *M'bu*, *Mm*, *Eeb*) that prove that participants in the conversation are indeed interacting because they are heard to be attentive. Dialogue ensures audience participation. "[I

n performances of all kinds", notes Goffman, "the obligation to provide continuity for the audience, that is, constant guidance as to what is going on, accounts considerably for the manipulation of participation status and the enactment of channels" (Goffman 1974:234). Direct address, exclamation and dialogue make radio performance very lively. That is also how the identity of character who speak is known: a boy, girl, woman, man, wife, husband, doctor, district chief, and so forth. This direct address sends us to orality. The sounds tell the listener where the character is speaking from while the tone of the voice reflects the mood of the speaker.

The other way *Ninde* addresses its imagined audience is through the use expressions showing acceptable behaviour, especially proverbs. This happens often in African cultures with the intention of instructing or giving advice. A similar vision is that of Finnegan (2012: 339), who observes that "... [p]roverbs may also be specially suitable even in everyday situations of advice or instruction where the hidden tensions that are sometimes inherent in such relationships are controlled through the use of elliptical, proverbial speech". Proverbs have the tendency to attract the imagination of listeners. This is because proverbs are recognized as "eternal truths", to use Okpewho's term (1992:231). It is in this regard that they are often referred to in *Ninde* plays with the purpose to convince or

advise the imagined audience. In fact, there are elements of orality in radio *Ninde* such as proverbs and formulas used as aesthetic elements in order to communicate effectively to the imagined audience. Arguing for the significance of these elements from oral traditions in the genre of radio drama, we look at this aesthetic as one of the strategies through which the play invites the listener to consume it as a local play.

Last but not least, audience imagination, engagement, and modelling are achieved through characterisation. *Ninde* texts use parallel or contrasting sets of images to enhance the audience's imagination of characters depending on the finality of the play. *Ninde* uses contrasting characters to help the audience 'visualize' the character choice and behaviours. With regard to the use of characters, radio drama *Ninde* as a piece of edutainment rely either on transitional characters who are shown as transforming their lives from, for example, reckless living to living cautiously with the hope that the audience can emulate on the one hand, or avoid and condemn on the other. This engagement is a process in which audiences are meant to learn by imitation and modelling or condemnation and avoidance. Listeners learn by identifying with (imitation) or aspiring to be like specific characters (modelling) or avoid being like given characters presented to them. The setting and characters become useful models

through which to pass intended messages.

How are characters created in *Ninde*? You see individual characters develop from either bad to good as the story unfolds or from nothing to something. This is seen for example in *Play1* where Nkinahoruri, who is very cooperative with his wife, he is seen in the last scene of the play regretting and repenting of the wrong things that he used to do. It is also seen in *Play3* where Rwangara's and Sinarinzi's conviction to start saving their money with a microfinance after suffering a major loss when the money they had kept in a broken pot was destroyed by mice. Good and bad characters are contrasted in *Ninde*. In *Play5*, Nyirigo throws his daughter out the home after refusing to go into a forced marriage and choosing to pursue her studies is contrasted with Mushingantahe's compassionate attitude of welcoming the girl in his home and paying her school fees for the remaining three years until completion.

There are also examples of stubborn characters who do not change and whose fate, in the end, serves as a moral lesson to the audience. For instance in *Play4*, there is the woman Sabokwigura and the man Gihushi who is similar in character to Rusimbi in *Play6*. Their realistic portrayal of bad people, the message to the audience is that they should never imitate them. The most striking feature of characterisation in *Ninde* is antithesis. This figure of speech is

used to the delight and amusement of the audience, although the anti-model behaviour of the character would be scandalous in real life.

To a great extent, *Ninde* uses round characters mainly as its goal is transformation of people's attitude on social issues. Round characters are complex and undergo development, sometimes sufficiently to surprise the audience and therefore to impact it since *Ninde* is mainly meant to model its listeners. "The story affects [the audience] by way of analogy." (Kincaid 2002:137). Names are important aspect of characterisation, for example, we have Ngendanganya (I walk with a heart full of anxiety), Rwangara (carelessness), Sabokwigura (They – men – do not deserve to sacrifice oneself for), Sinarinzi (I was not aware), and Sahukwasama (Here is not the place to talk utter nonsense) among others. The name is part of the final message the play intends to communicate.

The foregoing is in accord with Kerr's (1998) observation that [radio] programmes rely on a formulaic approach, often one that simply contrasts characters of good moral standing against those of dubious repute (contrasting set of images). The storyline is built on a duplication of a dubious repute and the audiences have to learn the preferable ways of living in the larger society through the moral lesson which can be drawn from the character of bad moral standing in form of remorse. The characters, such as the man Gihushi

and the woman Sabokwigura in *Play4* are a good example of stubbornness. They end up regretting as to why they did not heed advice to abandon their promiscuous lifestyle before it was too late. As a critic, there is, of course, no guarantee that every person in the audience is balanced and intelligent enough to be exposed to and learn from the anti-model character. Here I argue that the danger of this format is that the performed narratives might end up legitimising the actions of those who rebel against standard societal behaviour. This framing strategy may end up 'normalizing' the abnormal.

Of importance in this section is also the formulaic opening and closing of *Ninde* when addressing its imagined audience. The opening formula is made of four important elements. First there is the *Ninde* signature tune. This is followed by, at most, two short opening sentences from the play, either by one character or an interaction between two characters, to introduce the play to stimulate the audience's appetite. The last component in the opening formula is another *Ninde* specific tune before the first scene starts. The four components speak directly to listeners as individuals while respecting the maxim of politeness. The question 'who is that' is posed at the beginning of each play, and the audience listen to the plays trying to find out the answer to that question; they 'spectate' in order to 'see' with the mind's eye the types of characters framed by the play, and in the end they get the

lessons intended. Each individual from the imagined audience enters into the play with the assignment to identify: “Who are they then?” (If ‘it is not me and that it is not you! Who are they?’). That question can be read as an implicit assignment for each listener to check if they are not the people in question or if such people are not in their community.

Proverbs form a particularly interesting feature of *Ninde*; it is presented just before the play closes, it is part of the last few words of the play, which reinforce the message. The actor’s last words recall the moral lesson or the central message of the theme of the play in form of a proverb or a proverbial statement, most of the time, so that the lesson may not be lost in the entertainment.

The closing formula also follows the maxim of politeness through the opening questions but they are presented in the past tense. It is as if the assignment to find “Who is that?” given at the beginning of the play did not get a response and therefore remains hanging in the audience’s mind. The formula avoids blaming any member of its audience of being the incarnation of the satirised follies. However, the message has gone has been passed. The end of *Ninde* stories is interesting for the way in which the radio drama formula of domestic morality can be transformed to provide subtle analysis of changes in community values.

From the preceding discussion, it is evident that *Ninde* has a specific

formulaic tag line. This compares favourably with the formulaic openings and endings of most African narratives. In that regard, *Ninde* borrows from the story-telling tradition. However, narratives are to be performed before an audience and there is a close interaction between the narrator-performer and audience. As an audio medium, the imagined audiences of *Ninde* relate to it at the level of voices and sounds rather than visually, as envisaged in the stage theatre (Ligaga 2008). These formulas are a sort of framing because they are culturally variable, similar to plots and characters. The *Ninde* opening and closing formulas are not only an aesthetic element but also have a thematic affinity to the story. Those interrogations are seemingly no more than a rhetorical device: ‘Who is that?’ may therefore be you, I, any of us, or all of us.

In *Ninde*, there is an allusion to visibility and the dialogues are designed to create it. Radio assumes the audience is blind and therefore uses words and sounds to help the audience to ‘see’ images. Images are created through language and sounds. There is an imagined visibility. The performers in the radio drama create a world, in the mind of the imagined audience, that the latter try to ‘visualize’, imagining the entire thing. The listeners imagine the setting and the characters. The dialogue becomes very important in radio drama much more than in stage drama.

Proverbs are the most common strategy that *Ninde* uses to enhance

the audience's imagination, but also to infuse the radio plays with wisdom and vitality. Proverbs as a genre of folklore are very important means of expression because they help to express abstract ideas in a concrete way. The place of proverbs in the verbal art of African people is aptly described by Chinua Achebe as "... the palm oil with which words are eaten." These proverbs are an integral part of the narrative design. They lend an air of historical authenticity to the language and ideas. The proverbs help make the dialogue of the characters and reflect the everyday setting, while at the same time providing a means of evaluating and defining the characters.

Kirundi proverbs are mostly used as rhetorical aids and stylized verbal forms. Proverbs therefore function as a strong tool for the conceptualisation of images. They also help to establish the authority of a statement or a custom in situations within the *Ninde* narratives. They are used to make a point in a metaphorical way. The factor that gives proverbs power is the understanding that they are inherited from ancestors. This ensures that when a Kirundi proverb is uttered, 'it strikes like an arrow into the heart' of the listener, to use William Bascom's words. Proverbs are metaphorical statements since they reflect a general truths – but not always absolute – by reference to a specific phenomenon or experience that supposedly once happened in the past. Because proverbs originate from tradition, they are endowed with greater value,

prestige and spiritual dimension since they are considered a spiritual legacy of our forefathers. They have been proved to be effective in exercising social control and in the maintenance of institutions of Burundi culture in the past (Nibafasha 2013).

Therefore, proverbs in *Ninde* are a form of framing because they condense and make us see the message carried in the drama. They are verbal and thus catalyse, in our mind, certain images so that when they are used, one begins to think about a parallel: the fight in the home, domestic violence, the gender quarrel, the consequences of violence, promiscuity, stubbornness, irresponsibility, and many others. Proverbs act, in fact, as a bridge between the human mind and culture. In fact, for someone to whom Kirundi is a foreign culture, the proverbs produce little effect.

Since *Ninde* uses the audio medium, a proverb can be easily retrieved from memory and the image that it communicates keeps recurring in the mind of the listener even later on when the radio performance is over. The literary aspects of proverbs enhance their sense of didacticism and education by expression of an abstract idea in concrete terms. The neatness, the beauty and shortness with which proverbs are framed gives them a mnemonic quality which is fundamental in orality. For Kirundi listeners, it is enough to hear a Kirundi proverb once and it will be fixed in the mind once and for all.

Conclusion

This article has explored the framing of *Ninde*, a radio drama, as an ‘edutainment’ genre through a sound medium. It is an edutainment genre through which the bitter pill of verbal correction of human follies and foibles is sugared with amusement to trigger social change. *Ninde* is a one hour didactic satire which depends on comic improvisatory talents of actors. Satire is used as a dressing to communicate on social issues, anxieties and concerns with a long lasting impact than telling plain truths. In the structure of *Ninde*, there are elements of orality, such as, proverbs and Kirundi idiomatic expressions as aesthetic elements and vehicles through which to convey meanings.

The plays, very closely, address development of problems faced by Burundi society for which the performances are designed. *Ninde* imagines its audience as individuals who are listening to the performance of narratives and speaks to its imagined audience through dialogues. So, here there is imagined visuality because all images are created through terms. *Ninde* relies on dialogue mostly, the comedic, exaggeration, metaphor and a formulaic approach, often one that simply contrasts characters of good moral standing with those of dubious repute to influence the imagination of its imagined audiences. *Ninde* imagines its audience through communicative techniques which give to the plays not only communication effectiveness but also Burundi radio

drama style. The stock of Kirundi imagery and artistry gives *Ninde* a feeling of freshness for every listener and a sense of ‘Rundiness’ for Burundian audience.

Using this drama for development objectives can pass well, given its popularity among Burundi, because it helps reach and empower the poor and disadvantaged by providing educative information in an easily accessible channel of radio. From that fact, we see that art is one of the pillars of sustainable development because narratives are something into which people realise themselves. As a recommendation, radio drama projects need to be financially supported very much like other local development initiatives.

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Play2: *Izija gubona zibera mu rubongore* (2011)/ “For cattle to get exterminated, it all starts from the cowshed”, (00:53:54).

Play3: *Inkoni uzokwishimikiza ushaje nyica ukiri muto* (2010)/ “The stick that you will lean on when you get old is cut when you are still young”, (00:57:47).

Play4: *Intabarirwa ibarirwa n’uko amaso atukuye* (2006)/ “A person who never listens to advice is convinced when his eyes get reddish”, (00:56:34).

Play5: *Aha nibho mba ndi* (2014)/ “That is where I would have been”, (00:59:53).

Play6: *N’yo yibarurije*¹¹³ (2015)/ “He has been the cause of his own fate”, (00:56:01).

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¹¹² It means that “When you abuse your relative, you reap grief/regret”, understand relative as a member of your family by birth, marriage or adoption.

¹¹³ Literally translated as “He is the one who made the way he is taking”.