AFRICAN ORAL LITERATURE: ANALYSIS OF VISUAL RESOURCES AND IMPROVISED TECHNIQUES IN SELECTED BUKUSU CIRCUMCISION SONGS

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Background to the Study

- Bukusu is one of the seventeen sub-community that comprise the Abaluhya cluster.

- They practice traditional circumcision to male children through circumcision songs.

- The performers of circumcision songs were responsible for the listeners' comprehension of the content, structure, and form as they demonstrated their expertise and understanding of the performance.

- Integration of VR and IT within songs significantly impacts the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of the Bukusu community.

- However, because of the rise of Christianity, the impact of modernity, urbanization, and the general socioeconomic situation of most Bukusu people, traditional circumcision and its original accompaniments were either unavailable or unaffordable to many boys.

- The growing call to abandon Bukusu traditional circumcision may also result in the loss of important visual assets and improvised techniques that were once incorporated into the BCS.

- There was a need for a literary analysis of VR and IT components in the wholeness of actualization of BCSs, without which the songs could be deemed incomplete.

- Understanding the importance of these components in actualizing BCSs brings about the preservation of important cultural values and traditions, which are slowly fading due to

Statement of the Problem

- BCSs heavily draw upon use of visual resources and improvised techniques to accompany the verbal evocation during their actualization.

- The songs were conveyed through verbal evocation and the observed bearing of the performer and audience-performers.

- These components of BCSs are likely to vanish because of the social and cultural dynamics as the younger generation adopted literal literature and visual media.

- Reclaiming and preserving these disappearing components in BCSs affirms Bukusu's cultural identity and pride.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to:

i.   Examine the role VR and IT play in the actualization of BCSs;

ii.   Assess social-cultural values attached to VR and IT in BCSs;

iii.   Analyse dynamisms of VR and IT in BCSs.

The Research Questions:

The research questions were:

i.   What role do VR and IT play in actualizing BCSs?

ii.   What are some of the social-cultural values that are exhibited through VR and IT in BCSs?

iii.   What dynamics influence the employment of VR and IT in BCSs?

The Assumptions of the Study:

The assumptions of the study were:

i.   Visual resources and improvised techniques influence BCSs.

ii.   Social-cultural values are attached to VR and IT in BCSs.

iii. Different factors determine the employment of VR and IT in BCSs.

Justification of the Study

- The studies so far done on BCSs were not only scanty but also general on the employment and purpose of VR and IT.

Significance of the Study

- The study provides reference material and theoretical approach to oral and performing arts researchers.

- Teachers and students in schools and colleges where subjects such as songs, music, and oral art, would find this work valuable in understanding the critical role of VR and IT.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

- The study focused on the role, dynamic nature and social-cultural values of VR and IT in the actualization of BCSs of the Bukusu sub-community of Luhya community in Kimilili sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework.

- The study's conceptual framework depicts the link between the study's independent, dependent, and intervening variables.

- Independent variables were roles, social-cultural values, and dynamism.

- The dependent variable BCSs.

- The intervening variable education.

Dependant Variables
Roles
- Composition
- Aesthetics
- Performance

Dynamisms
- Performance
- Changes in themes
- Education
- **Social-Cultural Values**
- Cultural fabric
- Myth, taboo, believers
- Ritual efficiency

Dependant Variables

Bukusu circumcision song

Intervening variables
Education

Theoretical Framework

- The present study used the performance theory (PT).

- PT interprets by examining the context within which they are delivered.

- PT is of understanding that an oral arts involves several aspects of decoding its message.

- It upholds the concept of keys to performance and classifies each performance as a part of the song's meaning.

- PT also looks at the non-literal meaning of the words spoken and sees the performance as an "event."

- BCSs just like any other oral art forms, had basic characteristics that must be present before and during their actualization.

- Considering that BCSs are flexible and infinite, their actualization was greatly determined by both the performer and audience-performer, a performance-centred approach needed to be used.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

- Jansen (2010) defines research design as a logical and systematic arrangement prepared for the aim of directing on how to undertake a research study.

- In this study, the researcher used mixed methods research designs.

Target Population

- According to Enon (1999) target population is the people the researcher expects to meet and give them information concerning their area of study.

- In this research study, it targeted the native Bukusu community members, specifically those who still impress traditional circumcision.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

- A total sample size of 187 native Bukusu community members were used in the study.

- The sample size was split as follows; parents of circumcision candidate 37, circumcision candidates 32, and circumcisers 36; Bukusu traditional circumcision custodians 32, it also consisted of 50 audience- performers.

- Rahman (2016) states that qualitatively inclined sample size should not exceed 50.

- Four drama experts were involved in helping shed light on the interpretation of VR and IT in BCSs.

Sampling Techniques

- The researcher used two non-probability sampling approaches.

- The study integrated snowball sampling and purposive sampling that led to a symbiotic relationship.

Purposive Sampling

- Informants were handpicked because they were informative and possessed the required information.

Snowball Sampling

- The approach requires identifying initial participants with desired characteristics using purposeful sampling.

- This sampling process was used to sample out 100 respondents.

Validity and Reliability of Data

- According to Macmillan et al. (2001) validity is the degree to which the interpretation and concepts have mutual meaning between the participants and the researcher.

- While reliability is the degree to which the research findings are independent of accidental bias.

- The researcher used; Triangulation, Thick Description, Peer Review methods to check on validity and reliability.

Data Analysis

- The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

- The responses were analysed, compared, and subsequently categorized.

- According to Boaduo (2006) statistical data are insufficient to analyse data in any research study;

- They must refer to concepts established through qualitative analysis to make those quantitative numbers reasonable and valuable.

- Miles (1994) asserts that a fairly qualitative analysis follows this pattern:

Research Report

Interpreting and accounting data

Describing and connecting data

Required data

Source: Milles, 1994

- The quantitative data was analysed using the rating scale as follows: Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1; Disagree (D) = 2; Agree (A) = 3; Strongly Agree (SA) = 4.

- Qualitative data was analyzed thematically.

Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

- The study's first objective sought to examine the role VR and IT play in actualizing BCSs; the researcher examined; composition, aesthetics and performance.

Role of Composition of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- The findings demonstrated that the majority of respondents at 76 (40.6%) plus 30 (16.1%) agreed and strongly agreed that the composition of VR and IT played a role in the actualization of BCSs, elements like gestures, costumes and dramatic features like body movements, facial expressions and tonal variations revealed the beauty and semantic content of the song and the performance.

Role of Aesthetics of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- As per the findings respondents indicated that women were interested in the aesthetics of VR and IT, 08 (39.8%) strongly agreed and 07 (37.1%) agreed.

- The findings implies that women's interest in aesthetics in BSC had a role in using VR and IT through ululation which brought in the happy mood of the mother and aunties of a CC.

- Youth and aesthetic, the study found that majority of those who agreed and strongly agreed had a representation of 20 (66.3%).

- This implies that youth believed that aesthetics had a role through VR and IT like costumes was associated with the seriousness of the initiation process.

- The findings established that men liked aesthetics of VR and IT.
- The result indicated that 19 (37.1%) strongly agreed and 16 (33.6%) agreed.
- These implies that men like women and youth, were interested in aesthetics exhibited in BCS through VR and IT that made the song exciting.
- VR and IT in BCSs had their messages as well as their aesthetics which were learned through drum, clapping of hands and body movements of the performers;
- The participation of the audience, and their imitation of the other audience-performers and the ululations by aunties and mothers made the song evocation enjoyable.

Role of Performance of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- Concerning the performance of VR and IT, the study established that 68 (36.5%) of respondents agreed.

- VR and IT were employed by both the performer and audience performer to make a song lively, 45 (24.1%) of the respondents concurred..

- Performance encompassed facial expressions, gesture, emotional situations, and humour.

Social-Cultural Values Attached to Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques in Bukusu Circumcision Songs

- The study's second objective sought to discuss social-cultural values attached to VR and IT.

- The researcher examined; cultural fabrics, cultural beliefs, and ritual efficiency.

Cultural Fabric as Social-Cultural Value Attached to Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- The finding showed that majority of the respondents concurred that the cultural fabric of VR and IT influenced social-cultural values as 76 (40.6%) agreed and 30 (16.1%) strongly agreed.
- Participants and audience who did not participate in the circumcision process were viewed as civilized.
- In contrast, those who did participate were considered uncivilized, lowly people, traditional and unchristian.
- The initiation ceremony was highly regarded among the Bukusu as it united people and enhanced unity and harmony.

Cultural Beliefs as Social-Cultural Value Attached to Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- On cultural beliefs, the study established that 68 (36.5%) agreed followed by 45 (24.1%) respondents strongly agreed.

- Some VR and IT were only used during specific stages of the process; eye contact of a CC could not blink after leaving his uncle's home state; it was believed that blinking meant cowardice.

Ritual Efficiency as Social-Cultural Value Attached to Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- As per the findings, the respondents indicated that circumcisers believed that VR and IT impacted the ritual efficiency of BCSs as 39 (40.5%) and 29 (30.1%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively;

- Parents believed that VR and IT influenced the ritual efficiency of BCS;

- The study found that majority of those who strongly agreed had representation 45 (45.9%) and those who agreed at 29 (29.7%).

- Respondents demonstrated that youth believed that VR and IT impacted the ritual efficiency.
- The results indicated that 34 (35.2%) and 32 (32.4%) of respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively.
- Women and ritual efficiency, the study found that majority of respondents strongly agreed at 47 (48.7%) and those who agreed at 18 (18.9%).
- Audiences and oral performers of BCSs could not do without VR and IT during the performance of the songs.

Dynamisms of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques.

- The third objective of the study sought to analyse the dynamism of VR and IT in BCSs.
- The researcher emphasized on performance principles, change in themes, and education.

Performance Principles as Dynamism of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- The findings established that performance principles of VR and IT impacted BCSs as 67 (35.8%) agreed supported by 52 (27.7%) who strongly agreed.

- Audience and performers demonstrated artistic skills that allowed each of these groups to be much more aware of each other, at what point to go in, and what VR and IT to use at a particular time and setting.

Change in Themes as Dynamism of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques

- The findings demonstrate that 41 (21.9 %) and 72 (38.5%) of respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively.

- The performers of BSC changed their artistic prowess through the use of VR and IT depending on the message they wanted to pass across to both the audience and audience performers;

- In all circumstances, the performer varied use of VR and IT to suit the situation.

Education as Dynamism of Visual Resources and Improvised Techniques.

- The findings showed that majority of the respondents at 116 (62.05%) concur that education influenced VR and IT.

- During rendition, the young, educated masse became apathetic while the older looked discouraged.

- Some respondents preferred listening to a recorded BCSs in a compact disk (CD) than participating and watching it live.

- Other parents of CC preferred to take their circumcision candidates to the hospital.

Conclusion

- The study's first objective examined the role VR and IT play in the actualization BCSs.

- The findings established that VR and IT had a role to play.

- The study's second objective examined social-cultural values attached to VR and IT in BCSs.
- The findings showed that majority of the respondents concurred that social-cultural values were reflected through VR and IT in BCSs.

- The third objective of the study analysed the dynamism of VR and IT in BCSs.
- The findings demonstrated that the majority of the respondents agreed that these factors; education, performance principles and theme change influenced VR and IT in BCSs.

Recommendations of the Study

i.   In regard to the objective of study number one, the study recommends that the roles of VR and IT in BCSs cannot be ignored; There is need for the government of Kenya and other cultural stakeholders to appreciate these components and initiate programs that promotes traditional circumcision songs as a source of tourist attraction activities in Kenya.

ii.   Concerning the second objective, social-cultural values of VR and IT, the study recommends that the aesthetic-artistic skills and techniques employed by both the audience-performers and soloist can be modified and applied in contemporary commercial songs for sustainable socio-economic development.

iii. Based on the third objective of the study, whose focus was on dynamism, the study recommends that the government of Kenya reconsider preferring hospital circumcision to traditional circumcision; the government need to facilitate those interested in traditional circumcision carry out the process in a clean and hygienic environment, the practice promotes courage, confidence and self-reliance in young people.

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