Bachama Folktales and the radio today

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Abstract
Folktales in African societies act as repositories of moral, social, religious instructions as well as traditions primarily narrated by grandparents and parents through time This paper, using the functionalist theory, examines how Orature survives through its relationships with electronic mass media in the form of radio. To collect data, a survey questionnaire, three semi-structured interviews, and analysis of a radio program were employed. Sixty respondents (aged 20-50 years) provided responses to the questionnaire; the interviews were held with two community members alongside an acting director to gain their perspective of how radio has impacted the narration of traditional folktales. Findings indicate that Orature such as the Bachama(Bwatiye) Folktales are like fossils that refuse to die; rather they adapt and adjust, and still re-emerge as formidable means of entertainment and education. Narrators on radio put efforts to ensure that certain characteristics found in the primary orality are still maintained in the secondary narrations. There is a need to preserve oral traditions, as these oral traditions are gradually declining and the mass media provides an opportunity to reach to a wider range of audiences, which will promote preservation.
Keywords: O*rature, mass media, fossils, Bachama, folktales*

Introduction

Folktales in African societies act as repositories of moral, social, religious instructions as well as traditions which have been primarily narrated by grandparents and parents through time (Abrams, 2004; Amali, 2014). A review of literature identifies folktales as part of African's belief system (Akporobaro, 2006; Dorson, 2011; Nnyagu, 2018;). Ezeigbo (1991) for example, enumerates fables, myths, tales of heroes, fairy tales, and ghost stories as examples of folktales, and forms part of the culture of a group of a society. The purpose of these folktales is to teach morals and values through entertainment (Buba et al., 2018). They were told mostly by mothers to their children and wards at night, mostly under the tree after a busy day's work accompanied by singing and clapping. When folktales are narrated in their primary form (via grandparents and parents), they are usually accompanied by vocal reflections, facial expressions as well as contextual gestures and is transmitted through this folktale, carnivals, proverbs, parables as well as poetic renditions. Participation from the children is encouraged as they are asked to retell the lessons, they learned from them.

The *Bwatiye* people which are popularly known as *Bachama* refer to a group of people that speak *Bachama* dialect from Adamawa state of the Northeastern Nigeria. They are spread across the Southern part of Adamawa State occupying two major Local Government Areas of *Numan* and *Lamurde*. *Numan,* also known as, *Nomeh* (meaning hilltop) is a town and a Local Government Area in Adamawa State, Nigeria. It is a port town that lies on the confluence of Benue River and Gongola River. It is known that the *Bwatiye* people have similar heritage with the *Batta* people and were separated due to a family dispute from the two ancestral sons of the royal heritage (Nissen, 1991).

The radio which is part of the electronic media is one of the major sources of information for most Nigerians and acts as a reservoir of information on various topics including politics, fashion, culture, social issues, and more. Ukam (2018) highlights that understanding the role which radio plays in society is important, because the radio is a functional organization that carries out specific roles in society. It is also important to note that the role of the radio has changed over time, but it is still critically examined in furthering our understanding of society. Several studies such as Ukaim, Daramola and others seem to agree that the radio has its effects if used in programs and campaigns that are carefully prepared according to communication theory and principles. Daramola & Oyinade, (2015) argues that the radio plays a very important role in contributing to the socio-economic development of countries in Africa and also in the transmission of social values, norms, cultures, beliefs, and more. Kamble et al., (2016)

asserts that the radio is one of the most powerful instruments of communication in this decade of knowledge and awareness. there is a huge and grand role of the radio. It helps to promote the right things at the right time and gives a real picture of what the world about. However, we cannot refuse the real fact that we all are bounded directly or indirectly with loads of social problems and issues. Social issues include poverty, violence, corruption, bribery, suppression of human rights, rape, discrimination, and crime, killing in the name of honour

ABC YOLA storytelling program is an example of secondary orality which is characterized by narrativity and performance in a different dimension as against the primary orality found in the traditional storytelling session. *Bwatiye* program on ABC Radio is one of the five major languages been used in the production of news. The stories projected enhance, promote, and construct the Bachama society. FM stations such as ABC Yola and FM Gotel that make use of vernacular play a vital role on different occasions. These stories (folktales) sensitize children to the immediate environment, help the children to develop self-confidence, sharpen the children's survival instinct, increases the children's patriotism as well as enhance their moral development. It is used to transmit information from one generation to another as well as sustaining traditions; it is also used as a play and leisure tool, in educating on the *Bwaitye* cultural values, identity and continuity, in indoctrinating younger ones into the Bachama society by telling stories that inform them of their duties and obligations as members of society. It presents various situations human beings face and the right or wrong ways they handle such situations. It also helps in building the moral framework of a given society, educating them on how to behave and treat others. The areas of concern in folktales range from the ordinary to the supernatural. Some stories focus on nature. They tell about Earth and its animal residents. Human interaction with nature is also a frequent theme. Others illustrate the lives of ordinary people, their behaviour, the lessons they learned, and the difficulties they faced. Tales about supernatural beings also is a recurring theme.

This paper attempts to analyze the interface between the radio and Bachama folktales. It seeks to analyse the impacts of radio on Bachama folktales as well as to investigate how the medium of the radio keeps folktales alive in the face of the rapid decline of its primary orality. Currently, no other study has researched how the radio has promoted folktale thereby, promoting the local culture of Africans.

Materials and Methods
This research relied on primary and secondary sources derived from a survey questionnaire, two semi-structured interviews, and analysis of a radio program. Sixty respondents (aged 20-50) provided responses to the questionnaire; the respondents were aged between 20 – 50 years and cut across different religions. The interviews were held with two community members alongside an acting director to gain their perspective of how radio has impacted the narration of traditional folktales. The interview questions were developed in order to answer the research question: "what is the interface between the radio and Bachama folktale, and how does the medium of the radio keep folktales alive in the face of the rapid decline of its primary orality?".

The research also examined the current radio programs that transmit folktale stories. Principally, the storytelling programme which was examined was *Nga wudo vra nga bado* meaning ("listen listen listen") broadcasted from 10:30 pm to 10:45 pm daily, five times a week excluding weekends and the Ramadan month which is slated for fasting and prayers where all programmes and entertainment being suspended to allow audience to devote their time to worship. From 6:30am to 6:45am the folktales were broadcast too on the same days. There were several appreciation and contributions were received from the populace.

Results
In this section, the findings from this study are summarised succinctly. Bachama folktale broadcasted on the radio retains all the criteria by which we judge what is folklore and what is not. it is socially relevant, based on tradition, and applied to the current needs of its society. It is an example of secondary orality which is characterized by narrativity and performance in different dimensions as against the primary orality found in the traditional face to a face story session. Folktales in its primary state is a communal event thus, it usually takes place within the confines of the society occasionally during the

time of the year when there is little or no work which is between November to March when there is no rain.

The narrator in the radio could also present folktales with lots of songs and where adults are the audience, the narrator employs sophisticated expressions and language full of idioms and proverbs. The beauty of the folktale narrated is reflected in the language used. This appears to be an attempt to mirror the traditional approach when folktales are told in their primary form via narration by grandparents and parents. The employment of songs in-between narration by the radio narrator is also an approach to promote continual attention of the listeners.

The folktales narrated in ABC Yola are usually presented to its audience through the use of suspense to keep listeners glued to the radio. Suspense is a key element of the folktales told primarily as it provides an opportunity to sustain the attention of the listening audience, since the audience becomes curious on what the next line of the story will become.

In the primary narration form, events in the folktale are narrated in chronological order such that all the happenings are presented sequentially. It was found in this study that Folktales presented on ABC Yola radio, employ the linear plot thereby dissolving the rigidity of the plot.

Some stories in which animals were presented as characters to satirize human behaviour could also be used to present humans as characters on another occasion. In such stories, the size of an animal serves as a parameter for measuring the social status of an individual that is being satirized. For instance, an individual with high social status is represented with big animals. Strong persons are replaced with animals that are known to be strong like the lion, elephant, and so on, thus, symbolizing strength and authority. Sometimes, individuals who seem to be cunning could be presented as Tortoise, Hare, and Hyena. They are mostly presented as unscrupulous and crafty characters and so the audience who already know how these animals behave are not surprised at their actions as they already have a preconceived idea and so when the storyteller mentions these animals, what runs through the mind of the audience is craftiness.

Discussions

This study examined Bachama folktales in relation to the social contexts and local colour that is transferred to the new venue which is the radio; thereby projecting what differentiates them from those obtained in other societies. The folktales convey the beliefs and custom of people thus embodying the values that the older generation transfer to the younger ones through its narration and performance. The media, which for the current study is the radio, appears to currently take over the responsibilities of grandparents who are raconteurs of the folktales and narrated folktales orally.

The findings from the current study confirms that Orature such as Bachama (Bwatiye) folktales are like some fossils that refuse to die. Rather, folktales appear to adapt to new situations, re-emerges and functions as ever before to serve the same purpose of entertainment, education, conscientization and propagation of human values. This research, therefore, argues that the electronic media, rather than diminishing, enhances and sustains the existence of human values. Furthermore, the radio as a means of mass media communication provides a platform to reach out to several other communities which may have not been accessible if delivered orally as done in its primary form. This finding is coherent with the findings from a few authors who have elaborated on the effectiveness of mass media in transmitting folktales to a large audience which may have not be reachable conventionally.

There is an overall change in the behaviour and attitude of those who are exposed to several radio contents that are alien to African culture Usman Bukar (2013). Children and youths are now thinking in terms of other countries currency, other countries clothing, other countries music, film, communication skills, etc. They are selectively looking and adapting the lifestyles of which they are exposed to, which may lead to the erosion of the native values in African society. However, the current study argues that the migration of folktales from its primary form provides an opportunity to sustain African values.

Babajo (2011) notes that orature loses its "oralness" as soon as it is written down and reduced to the "text". But it is a consolation when it is realized that such materials thus collected are not an end in themselves. By its nature, orature admits challenges resulting from changes in narration and generation gap. Because of this fluidity in its nature, a written or recorded edition is for that age and not intended as an inhibitive factor for the creation of new orature by subsequent generations. The findings from this study provides some evidence to the ways in each some of the elements of primary orature may be maintained when folktales are migrated to secondary forms.

The audience engagement on the radio programme could also be regarded as participatory just as seen in the primary orality: here, the audience is only conversant with the name and voice of the narrator of which their responses are determined by their wide listenership. This is majorly because the narrator gets to his audience through an electronic sound wave of the radio which cuts across so many people regardless of their location at the same time. The narrator here is saddled with the responsibility of capturing its audience emotionally to maintain its listeners. This is because just as the readers skip pages while reading a book when it no more captures him or her, so does the audience tune to other stations if he is not able to capture them. However, the narrator, in trying to carry his audience along employs certain techniques which include the use of drama in his narration thereby creating a picture; which is sensual, enabling the listener to identify a feeling, a sound, colour, texture, expression, movement or silences through his sense. In conveying his folktale, the artist imitates the actions of his characters by mimicking them. For instance, whenever a story is about love and chivalry, characters are employed to describe movement. The songs reflect the mood, theme, characterization, as well as moral of the tale.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the study of Bachama Folktales and the radio today has found out that the folktales narration has tried to adapt and mirror the primary narration approach. A lot of effort is invested by the narrators to co-opt the features found in the primary orality into the secondary orality using the radio which is functionally linked to Bachama culture and in order to entertain, inform and educate the people. There appears to be a need for other societies to maximize the media that best fit into its people's cultural and social demands. This is to enable the media preserve its oral traditions as these oral traditions are gradually declining and the mass media provides an opportunity to reach to a wider range of audiences, which will promote preservation.

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