The Communicative Genre of Traditional Public Comforting: Perspectives on Traditional Bukusu Religion in Kenya

by

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Abstract

Supporting the view of pragmatic factors as central in communicative genre formation, this paper focuses on interactions in funeral event among the Bukusu people of Kenya that hosts Traditional Bukusu and Christianity, among other religions. It argues that the co-existence of Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions provides room for influences manifested in communicative genres through the use of verbal communicative techniques. Using principles from communicative genre analysis, the study examines communicative genres of traditional public comforting based on Traditional Bukusu religion with the aim of showing how verbal communicative techniques are used to reveal discursive heteroglossia, i.e., the coexistence of distinct religious beliefs within a single language.

Introduction

Attending funeral events in parts of Bungoma County of western Kenya, and especially those of elderly male members of the Bukusu ethnic group, one is caught in the exchange of religious debate between the complementary and/or contesting Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions, and this is especially revealed in the practices accompanying and clustering around the main practice, burial.

Situated in a context with many other religions, the two religions have been in co-existence for over 150 years and have stepped up the dialogue especially since the Vatican council II. This has been in pursuit of the key mission of the Christian religion: to evangelize with the aim of changing people and their cultures. The target religions have responded in varied ways; for instance, members of the Traditional Bukusu religion have not only refuted the Christian beliefs that are inimical to the Traditional Bukusu religious beliefs and practices, but they have also endeavoured to legitimize Traditional Bukusu religious beliefs and practices (Nganga, 2018).

The dialogue via practices is especially intense during death, which not only, in the words of Willmott (2002:2), disrupt 'the meaning with which everyday practices are routinely endowed', but it also calls for the use of rituals that 'make death invisible or at least minimally disruptive normal appearances' by reassuring participants of a 'form of afterlife where loved ones are reunited' (Willmott, 2000:4).

In the context of the Bukusu funeral, lamentation, visitation, gathering around the deceased, invitation to burial, Traditional Public Comforting among other rituals from the Traditional Bukusu religion, co-occur and/or overlap with vigil, gathering around the deceased, prayers, mass (the sermon) from the Christian religion (Nganga, 2018). Hence, the subsequent interaction characterized by the incorporation of ideas from practices belonging to the partner religion reveals the religion the participants align to and, more importantly, the right way of coping with death. It also raises a question as to what role language plays in the attempt to incorporate aspects of the Christian religion in one of the practices, Traditional Public Comforting.

In this paper, we argue that Traditional Public Comforting - and what goes on within it - not only exemplifies a context that does not only index religious meanings, but it also shows how religious meanings are revealed and what role the religious meanings play. The meaning of Traditional Public Comforting is situated in the Bukusu religious landscape. Pressure to convert to Christianity on the one hand and an exhortation to retain Traditional Bukusu religious beliefs and to shun Christianity on the other hand constitute the background against which this practice emerges and in which religious allegiance is debatable.

After explaining the communicative ecology of the Bukusu funeral, showing where, when and why Traditional Public Comforting takes place, we briefly begin by anchoring this work in recent trends in communicative genre studies, and especially those that have to do with the constitution of genres in intercultural contexts. Performances such as Traditional Public Comforting have been studied under rituals; however, in this paper taking ritual as a religious practice (Turner, 1967) and considering communicative genre as a model that can be used to study such performances, we analyze ritual as a case of a communicative genre (Nganga, 2018:43). In line with the interest in how language is used in burial practices, we focus on the communicative techniques used to make heteroglossia relevant. Heteroglossia relates to appropriation of the beliefs, ideas and assumptions from the Christian religion, as well as 'acceptable' forms of behaviour during the funeral. We argue that semi-direct speech, etc. cue heteroglossia that serve to create an interdiscursive environment for the refutation of Christian religious beliefs and legitimization of Traditional Bukusu religious beliefs.

Background

Research in Intercultural communication demonstrates that discourses in interactional settings comprising diverse cultures are 'multi-voiced' in nature. This has the implication that, as practices, different discourses draw aspects of form and/or content from other discourses within and across culture.

Thus, for instance, while the pragmatic context of the encounter between the Christian and the Traditional Bukusu religions determines how practices belonging to the two religious cultures are constituted, it is also shaped by these practices. This paper examines communicative techniques used by the comforter to incorporate Christian beliefs and practices in Traditional Public Comforting.

But just how diverse are the practices and, indeed, the cosmologies underlying the Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions? The Christian and the Traditional Bukusu religion are based on diverse cosmologies underlying the understanding of death; hence, each of the two religious systems organizes the funeral experiences in different ways (Nganga, 2018). For the Christian religion, among other practices vigil and prayer on the days preceding burial and a funeral mass shortly before burial are recommended for a baptised member (Adam, 1991). While some practices are fixed, for instance prayers, other practices such as the sermon embedded in the burial mass allow participants the freedom to explain the Christian religious beliefs, ideas and assumptions. Underlying these practices is the focus on the life, death and resurrection of Christ, not just as a model but as a source of - and a means to - redemption for the deceased (Durrwell, 2004; see also Nganga, 2018). In death, the union between the deceased and Christ are completed in anticipation of the final perfection at apocalypse (Durrwell, 2004).

The Traditional Bukusu religion recommends wailing, visitation, and gathering around the deceased among other practices before burial and determination of debts, Traditional Public Comforting among other practices after burial (Nganga, 2018). Of these practices, while wailing and lamentation are simple and take a certain prescribed form, Traditional Public Comforting has a complex internal order that involves many verbal and non-verbal actions. At the heart of the cosmologies underlying the Traditional Bukusu understanding of death is the focus on the deceased, who, according to tradition is not 'dead'; rather, he already lives through sons and grandsons (Nganga, 2018:67). The understanding that tradition 'houses' life and that through it the deceased lives is elaborated in Traditional Public Comforting, with focus on the process of 'making life' to counterbalance death (Nganga, 2018:67).

The differences notwithstanding the two religions have co-existed for many years. Contact - and indeed - the engagement between the Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions date back to about 150 years. For all these years the need to evangelize and to transform other cultures to conform to the Christian religious beliefs and ideas has been the guiding mission within the Christian religion (see *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20). The consequence of this has been contact (and dialogue) with other religious groups, providing room for mutual and in many cases one-sided influences. Contact and dialogue has for the case of Africa been especially problematic since there exist many dissimilar ethnic-based religions in Africa whose members have all along been hesitant to convert to Christianity. This is partly one of the reasons why the Christian religion has modified its approach to other religions from time to time.

Describing the nature of contact between the Christian religions and Traditional African religions in Africa in general, which applies to the situation of contact between the Christian religion and Traditional Bukusu religion, Lado (2006) observes that since the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the engagement between the Christian religion and the traditional African religions can be summarized in three phases: colonial Christianity, inculturation and ongoing dialogue (Lado, 2006).

The colonial Christianity constitutes the initial and largely violent encounter between the Christian and Traditional African religions. During this period, the Christian missionaries set out to replace traditional African religions with Christianity, by destroying the sacred sites and levying social sanctions upon some Africans who resist Christianity (Masuku, 2007). During the Vatican council II, within which inculturation was conceived, the violence that characterized the initial encounter between Christian and African religions was discarded (Lado 2006). But this did not mean that the two diverse religious systems in dialogue were equal partners; African religions were expected to adopt the Christian religious beliefs and ideas fully.

Over the years, the need to change other people's way of life (and of believing) has been articulated in Christian religious practices in different contexts. The context of death is particularly crucial as it is a moment of loss and a time when important questions about the meaning of life and what follows death are raised. In this paper, we argue that within the Bukusu funeral context, practices based on Traditional Bukusu religion reveal the reaction of Traditional Bukusu religion to death and to the Christianization of the Traditional Bukusu beliefs and practices. We further argue that the response to Christianization is evident in Traditional Public Comforting based through the use of verbal communicative techniques, such as semi-direct speech.

The Traditional Public Comforting

The expression 'Traditional Public Comforting' was first used by Wagner (1949) in reference to the activity of *Khu:swaala/khusweena kumuse* among the Bukusu people (Wagner, 1949) (see also Wanjala, 1985). What the activity is and why it is performed can be gathered through a close analysis of the descriptive term *Khu:sweena/khu:swaala kumuse.* Nganga (2018:110) argues that while *khu:sweena* and *khu:swala* mean 'to trample', *kumuse* refers 'to the path, the participants and the dynamic combination of the two aspects'. Nganga (2018) further argues that consolation among the Bukusu people involves turning to life; hence, Traditional Public Comforting enacts the 'making' of life, an enactment within which the deceased is ushered to the invisible world and new life 'transmitted' to the visible world. As one of the cultural ways of communicating about death, Traditional Public Comforting is, thus, a space in which age-old traditions are handed down to the succeeding generations (see Nganga, 2018 for detailed discussion on the function of Traditional Public Comforting).

Comfort among the Bukusu people has both a private and public dimension, and this is evident when one considers participation in Traditional Public Comforting. Joining the comforter is the bereaved family (wives and children of the deceased), and the object of the activity, the deceased (the grave) on one side and the elders (drawn from the bereaved and other clans) on the other side. In response to the question as to whether women and children attend, Nganga (2018:110) explains that many women and children do not attend, and this is partly because the meaning of the idioms and proverbs used is difficult to decipher and also because even the few women and children present - mainly drawn from the bereaved family- only participate passively. Thus, Nganga (2018:110) concludes that it can be argued that in Traditional Public Comforting elders negotiate traditions in the presence of women and children.

Traditional Public Comforting has links to selected clans and they include: Bakitwika, Bachemai, Basang'alo, Bakitang'a, Bakwangwa, Babuya, Bakhwami, Babangachi, Bayitu and Babuulo clans of the Bukusu ethnic group. The clan is an important social organizational unit that bestrides the visible and the invisible worlds. This means that in selection and installation of the comforter as well as in the performance of his duties the invisible world is invoked and involved. Thus, Traditional Public Comforting originates from certain relations in the invisible world: the clan lineage, his own father, his mother and so on, and it is bestowed upon an elderly male member with grandsons. Installation of the comforter - a man of good repute and one who demonstrates a mastery of tradition - takes place at the public shrine, *Namwima*, one of the dwelling places of the members of the invisible world, and it happens in the presence of the comforter's maternal uncle, a distance relative and elders (see Nganga (2018:111) for the detailed description of installation). The comforter performs with the skin, an ivory armband, a skull-cap and the fly whisk, items given to him during installation.

The venue - a space near the grave - is specially arranged by an elder from the bereaved family before the performance begins. The bereaved family (women and children) sit on the ground in a line according to their ages (especially the children and women sit according to when they got married). With their legs stretched before them, the members of the bereaved family face the sun. Clan elders sit on stools a few paces away with their backs to the morning sun. At about 8 in the morning, the comforter gets into the venue from the South East direction and walks between the two audiences to the North West direction.

Throughout the entire performance that ends at around noon, the comforter walks to and fro talking, stops occasionally to dialogue with both audiences and spits regularly. The diagram below taken from Nganga (2018:116) shows the participant arrangement at the venue.
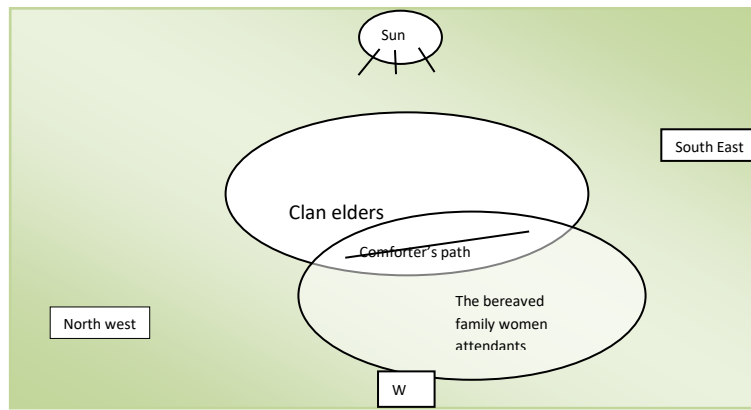
Figure 1 Venue Arrangement

The basis of Traditional Public Comforting is an analogy between sexual intercourse and life and death. Death engenders the clan members to enact the 'making life' (see Nganga, 2018) for a detailed description of symbols and how they interact). Themes negotiated in Traditional Public Comforting include the 'making' of life, nurturing of life, death and continuity. The themes reveal no specific order with respect to how they are organized; in fact, Nganga (2018:111) argues that 'beginning with any one of the four themes the comforter establishes connection with the remaining three'. Thus, by taking a cyclic orientation, Traditional Public Comforting contradicts the argument by Günthner and Knoblauch, (1995) that communicative genres have a definite beginning development and conclusion (Nganga, 2018:111). The performance reveals the following characteristics with respect to the organization of topics (see Nganga, 2018: 122-4).

a) Lack of a clearly stated topic: the comforter does not explicitly explain what he intends to or what he does during the performance.
b) Embryonic presentation of topics: ideas introduced by the comforter are left undeveloped
c) Unpredictable topic shifts: the comforter changes topics unexpectedly
d) Lack of definitive topic ending: shifting topics abruptly implies that the comforter does not provide a smooth transition by guiding the participants how he does what he does. In fact the performance ends rather abruptly.
e) Subdivision of topics into opposing domains: the entire performance is an analogy of a hut occupied by man and woman; while the man represents the invisible world the woman represents the visible world. In the performance the bereaved family represents a woman, while the clan elders represent a man.
f) The cyclic treatment of topics: in the opposing pair, described in (e) above man and woman relate sexually; the man is the 'giver' of life and the woman the 'receiver' of life. Two key metaphors link the opposing domains: the journey metaphor (evident in the comforter's action of walking to and fro) and the give and take metaphor (evident in the comforter's enactment of tradition, the source of life).

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The focus of this paper is on the reflexive interaction between the surface features and the performance in the activity of 'making life'. Interest is on generic conventions and especially the verbal features, and how they reveal heteroglossia.

Communicative Genre Studies

Although there is growing literature on cultural determination of communicative genres especially within the European context, the question of cultural determination of communicative genres and especially from within the African continent continues to draw a lot of interest. This has happened against the backdrop of change from studies which embedded genre in the speech event (Hymes 1972) to approaches that put communicative genre at the centre of interaction as 'frames for the orientation that interactants refer to in producing, as well as interpreting, communicative action' (Günthner and Knoblauch, 1995:6), frames that are also hybrid in nature. Current research adopts a performance-centred approach to genre and has moved away from consideration of genre as static, monological products. It also takes into cognisance the reality that as a result of improvement in transport and technology people no longer live in isolated localities; rather, they live in the context of growing cultural co-existence (and possible mixes), and this reality is not only true about Europe or Asia but Africa as well.

The argument that communicative genres are cultural products and that they serve specific functions has been demonstrated in literature. For instance, Günthner and Knoblauch (1995:8) explain that communicative genres are 'historically and culturally specific prepatterned solutions to complex communicative problems'. Communicative genres are in this sense 'central communicative means' that are 'prepatterned' with respect to the preference and predictability of communicative actions according to the 'cultural norms and values', and they have identifiable features at the internal (formal), situative and external (functional) levels (Günthner and Knoblauch, 1995). From this argument, therefore, it is possible to identify two kinds of cultural communicative activities: generic and spontaneous, with the generic activities being 'socially constructed activities which organize, routinize and standardize' the communicative action (Günthner and Knolauch, 1995:6). Based on shared expectations about how communication takes place and how interactants interpret their communicative actions, communicative genres 'solve' 'specific problems of communication action' (Günthner and Knoblauch, 1995:6), which include: evaluating behaviour as being inappropriate, dealing with certain forms of asymmetries etc. The cultural perspective to communicative genres has implications for our study, since it raises a question as to how communicative genres in a non-European context pattern and what problems of communicative action they are intended to solve.

Thus, while research on constitutive features of communicative genres especially within the European context has churned out interesting findings, the cultural approach to communicative genres raises the need to examine communicative genres in Africa to determine how they are formed. One central finding has been that the differences among communicative genres lie in communicative actions that cultures seek to emphasize.

For instance focussing on interaction between teaching assistants of Korean origin and students from America, Tyler and Davis (1990) explain that emphasis in communicative genres is on the internal level. While some communicative genres emphasize aspects of attentive listening (Günthner, 1994), other communicative genres exploit strategies of indirectness (Kotthoff, 1993). To account for some communicative genres one requires the situation in which they take place (Kotthoff, 1999); in others one needs to focus on culture (Gumperz, 2001).

As discussions above show, two interrelated dimensions to genre emerge from literature: communicative genres as 'sediments of socially relevant communicative processes' and communicative genres as interactional spaces that are 'open to change and cultural variation' (Günthner and Knoblauch, 1995:5, 6). Within a culture, communicative genres can be categorised under domains depending on their functions. Nganga (2018:32) argues that these domains are not necessarily exclusive; that is, genres draw aspects from other genres within the same domain and across domains within a culture, leading to what Günthner and Knoblauch (1995:6) call the 'differentiation of communicative conventions'. The differentiation of communicative conventions also takes place in the context of 'increasing cultural pluralization', in which people who do not 'share the same conventions of communication' meet and have to interact (Günthner and Knoblauch 1995:7). One such context, as we argue in this paper, is that of the Bukusu funeral event where members of the Traditional Bukusu religion meet Christians. We further argue that this encounter leads to the differentiation of communicative conventions and that this is evident in Traditional Public Comforting through the use of communicative techniques.

Thus, by analyzing heteroglossia in Traditional Public Comforting, and thereby extending the theoretical and methodological principles to an African context, this paper contributes to recent discussions on pragmatic factors in communicative genre formation. Together with Günthner and Knoblauch (1995) the paper considers Traditional Public Comforting as, firstly, a central communicative means in coping with death among the Bukusu people and secondly as a communicative genre that reveals a mixture of beliefs drawn from the Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions that share the funeral context. Following Bakhtin (1981) this paper further argues that differentiation does not necessarily take place at the internal (formal) level; rather it occurs at the functional level leading to a mixture of beliefs, ideas and assumptions. While this study focuses on face to face interaction, unlike Keppler (1994) who focuses on Argumentation and Heath and Knoblauch (1999) who focus on workplace interaction among other notable studies, this study- being part of a broad study on funeral communicative genres- focuses on funeral interactions. Funeral genres especially within the Georgian context have been examined by Kotthoff (1999), this study examines funeral genres within an African context, and unlike Kotthoff (1999) who looks at Lamentations this study analyzes Traditional Public Comforting.

Heteroglossia in Literature

A closer examination of Bakhtin's (1981) discussions raises a number of questions that have in time characterized studies in heteroglossia, and the questions arise from the definition of heteroglossia as 'discourse which combines forms and contents' (Leppännen, 2012:236). Since the 1960s, Viewed as a feature of bilingual speech, heteroglossia within linguistics has mainly been approached from the perspective of form and has been studied under code switching (Milroy and Muysken 1995:7). Code switching has been explained as alternations in form motivated by structural factors on the one hand and as alternations motivated by pragmatic factors on the other hand. The former approach has followed growing interest in the 1960s in 'the grammaticality of mixed utterances'. For instance Cantone (2007) explains that code switching is not random, but it is a phenomenon that is shaped by grammatical conventions. Thus, specific boundaries within a sentence constitute points at which code switching either occurs or is likely to occur (Cantone, 2007:61).

Focus on code switching not as a deficiency but as a strategy that is motivated by pragmatic factors was pioneered by (Gumperz, 1982) who underscores the discourse type/function, the speaker and the context as motivations to language use and alternation. For Gumperz (1982) while language alternation is context-based it is also tied to speaker aspirations and goals. Thus, what is mixed is not just form but also speaker intentions. This argument is in line with Bakhtin (1981) who further distinguishes intentional from unintentional heteroglossia. Unintentional heteroglossia refers to a combination of two or more complementary cultures; there exists no gap between the cultures at interplay. Instead of showing membership to two cultural systems or communities unintentional heteroglossia 'indexes …membership in one community' (Leppänen, 2012:240). Within intentional heteroglossia there exists a gap between two or more cultures at interplay. In line with this, Bakhtin (1981) explains that in intentional heteroglossia one language/culture is to be viewed within the lens of another language and culture. Bakhtin's characterization of intentional heteroglossia has the implication that one language can host a number of complementing and/or conflicting cultures.

Since heteroglossia is global phenomena, within east Africa alone, studies in heteroglossia characterized as language mixing and code switching are relatively deep, and they reveal an attempt to explain the phenomena - and to come up with a typology - of code switching and language mixing using data from Kenya and African contexts (Myers-Scotton 1983,1992,1993a), to determine the nature of sheng (Abdulaziz and Osinde, 1997; Githinji, 2006), to show grammatical constraints in trilingual code switching with examples from Kiswahili, English, Ekegusii and Sheng (Ogechi, 2003) and to destabilize the position of English as a foreign language within the East African interactional settings (Higgins, 2009). Together with this, language alternations have been examined in the contexts of school classrooms (Muthwii & Kioko, 2004), in casual conversation (Abdulaziz & Osinde, 1997; Blommaert, 1992; Myers-Scotton, 1993a), and in song lyrics (Githinji, 2006).

By focusing on the mixing of content, this paper goes beyond what has been witnessed in studies in heteroglossia within East Africa by examining when, how and why a single language, Lubukusu, is used to evoke the cosmologies underlying the Christian and Traditional Bukusu understanding of death. This study differs from such studies in three ways. Firstly, most studies focus on forms and how they are alternately used for structural and pragmatic reasons. While this study approaches interactions in the Bukusu funeral from the perspective of Lubukusu language, its focus is on contents and how they are evoked. Secondly, studies in heteroglossia used diverse approaches for instance post colonial linguistic approach (Higgins, 2007) and conversational analysis (Higgins, 2007) to show how forms interact. On the contrary, this study uses principles from communicative genre analysis infused with interactional sociolinguistics to establish how alternation in contents shapes the communicative genre of Traditional Public Comforting. Thirdly, studies in heteroglossia revolve around the interaction between the language of the colonial master, English with local languages and some studies propose to destabilize this position (Higgins 2009). The study on how with the use of semi-direct speech heteroglossia is revealed in Traditional Public Comforting leads to the understanding of the nature of the relationship between Christian and Traditional Bukusu religions as revealed in the use of a local language, Lubukusu. Semi-direct, writes Aikhenvald (2008:385) is a speech report that contains an 'incomplete shift in person (within the quote content) so that the 'current speaker may be co-referential with the original speaker' i.e. the current speaker is cast as if he/she 'were also the original speaker when he/she is not'.

Data and Methods

The present study is a qualitative study, reporting on an investigation of the use of communicative techniques by the traditional public comforter to construct heteroglossia during the performance of Traditional Public Comforting. Recordings were made three days after the death of a venerable old man, head of the family in 2012 and 2013. The deceased must have grandchildren, especially many grandsons and must be a member of clans that practised Traditional Public Comforting. Traditional Public Comforting took place between 8 am and noon and this was recorded.

Initially, the researcher approached the comforter requesting him to participate in a research project involving the recording of the performance. The comforter was also requested to provide a list of homes where he was scheduled to perform. Traditional Public Comforting happens in a context where performances from other religions including the Christian religion take place. The comforter and the Christian priests are members of the same ethnic group, the Bukusu. However, due to allegiance to different religions based on diverse cosmologies their relationship (and indeed that of the two religions) was rather hierarchical, the Christian religion being more diffuse.

The setting of the performance (within the context of a funeral) was chosen because it provides naturalistic talk and an ideal opportunity to observe talk as an instance of social action. The bereaved family also gave their consent to take part and have the performance video-recorded.

Since as a rule only the comforter was allowed to stand during performance, permission was sought to have a camera situated at a strategic point in the venue. The request to have the comforter carrying the voice recorder was refused, so the researcher sat among the clan elders with a recorder turned on. In addition to recordings of the performance, two recordings of interviews with the comforter were also made.

Each performance lasted between 40 and 90 minutes (roughly 5hours in total), while interviews lasted one hour each (a total of two hours in total). Aware that he is being recorded, the comforter might have altered his manner of performance, for instance by avoiding certain topics. But the transcript shows that the comforter exhaustively discussed a range of topics including socially inviolable topics such as death, sex among others. The study focused on the comforter's use of language to draw aspects of the Christian religion, excluding sections that dealt mainly with aspects of Traditional Bukusu religion.

The performances were analysed at the level of 'content and prosodic organization' (Gumperz (2003) and each occurrence of heteroglossia was identified, highlighted and then coded for the function it played in the performance. If heteroglossia served to refute the Christian beliefs hostile to the Traditional Bukusu beliefs, it was coded as 'heteroglossia for the refutation of Christian beliefs and practices'. If its function was to legitimate Traditional Bukusu religious practices, it was coded as 'heteroglossia to legitimize Traditional Bukusu beliefs and practices'. Though the focus is mainly on verbal communicative techniques, we recognize the view that non-verbal techniques also importantly interact with verbal techniques to index certain meaning. Thus, in our discussion we also include non-verbal communicative techniques that enrich our argument.

Instances of heteroglossia were transcribed using the GAT transcription system (Selting, et. al 2009) that allows the researcher to make a basic transcription that can then be fine-tuned with respect to the question at hand, and analysed (against interview data) in detail, focussing on morphological, lexical, syntactic and prosodic features that cued heteroglossia. In particular, the comforter's use of contextualization cues and how they served to signal a mixture of beliefs, ideas and assumptions from the Traditional Bukusu and the Christian religions were examined in terms of whether they were consistent throughout the performance and in terms of what they revealed about the nature of the relationship between the Christian and the Traditional Bukusu religions. Thus, we use the following examples to illustrate instances where aspects of - as wells as practices based on - the Christian religion are drawn into Traditional Public Comforting. This happens against a backdrop of the non-verbal practice of walking to and fro that metaphorically constructs the understanding of death in terms of sex or 'the making of life'. In the following, we organize discussions under the functions of heteroglossia, beginning with heteroglossia for refutation of Christian beliefs.

Heteroglossia for Refutation of Christian Beliefs

The data on Traditional Public Comforting provides evidence that aspects or practices of Christian religion that are inimical to Traditional Bukusu practices are drawn into Traditional Public Comforting or illustrated in order to be refuted. I discuss three examples below to illustrate this point.

Example 1 is drawn from the introductory parts of Traditional Public Comforting. The comforter explains transition from life to death as a shared process involving parents and children. In the excerpt, the comforter explains what happens when the children considered the source of continuity turn to Christianity.

Example 1

> 01 *oli MAWE afwa::- (2.4)((faces the bereaved)) bali bacha mulufu; (.)*
> When the mother dies and the people gather for the ritual of transformation
> 02 *((faces the elders)) MALA OMWANA waloba; (-) ((faces the elders))*
> Then the child refuses
> 03 *((low voice)) ali kutimoni:- (-) mao ne rarao bati:mila waena; (-)*
> and says that 'the demon'. Where do your mother and father err?

The explanation of why death involves not just the children but parents as well is captured in line 1. The expression *oli mawe afwa* 'when his/her mother dies' introduces the recurrent problem of death. With *mawe* 'his mother', the comforter reveals the Traditional Bukusu understanding of the visible world in terms of a mother; mother and father constitute permanence. The utterance *oli bacha mulufu* 'when mourners 'go' to the ritual of transformation', indicates one of the practices dramatizing the transition of parents, and in this case the mother. With the locative *mu-* 'in', transformation is metaphorically viewed as a 'container'. Thus, which *bacha* 'they go' participation in the transformation is viewed as a journey. The transformation of permanence, as a 'container', incorporates the cyclic continuity or change represented by *omwana* 'child' in line 2. Thus, with the utterance *mala omwana waloba* 'and the child refuses', the comforter voices the breakdown between permanence and continuity, and the reason for the breakup is framed as semi-direct speech. With semi-direct speech introduced by the quotative index *omwana waloba* 'the child refuses' the comforter quotes the refusal: *kutimoni* 'a demon'. The word *kutimoni* 'a demon' introduces the Christian association of the profane with a demon; hence, for the new convert, the practice of transformation is satanic. Having highlighted the Christian disapproval of the funeral practices belonging to the Bukusu religion, with a rhetorical question *mao ne rarao batiimila waena* 'where do your mother and father go wrong?', the comforter refutes the Christian view of practices belonging to the Traditional Bukusu religion.

Example 2 also has to do with the Christian perspective on the Bukusu funeral practices. The comforter begins by enumerating persons who have died within his clan. In the following, the comforter explains how he has to cope with death according to the Traditional Bukusu religion.

Example 2

01 *ne NOma ndi nonde ekhafu*
     If I say that 'I drive a cow,
02 *nja khufua omwana wa papa; (3.9)*
     I go to sacrifice (in honour of) the child of my father
03 *papa bukula ekhafu eyeyo khuche*
      father take that cow we are going
04 *khufue rarao; (.) eNGElekha eyo; (2.1)*
     to offer a sacrifice in honour of your father across the river
05 *aloma ali:- (--) ali kutimoni; (.) bali ndoma ndi*
     He says that 'a demon'. They say that I should say
06 *lipaska lia rarao ba:s:- (2.4)*
     'the paschal of your father' well then.
07 *… muokoke; (1.5) nyanya khulomo; (2.4) nyanya khulomo*
     a demon? The saved digest ideas, digest ideas

The comforter uses semi-direct speech four times. The first two instances introduce the practice of *khufua* 'to sacrifice' according to the Traditional Bukusu religion and in the third and fourth instances the comforter reveals the expectation according to the Christian religion. The first instance of Semi direct speech is introduced by the quotative index *ne noma* 'when I say' that indicates that the comforter quotes himself. The complementizer is *ndi* 'that'. The quote is in part a subjunctive as shown by the *-e* affixed to the verb *nond-e*. Within the quote, the pronoun I signalled by *n-* of the verb *n-onde* refers to the comforter in the quote and at the moment of presentation. The first person pronoun I signalled by *n-* affixed to the word *n-ja* 'I go' refers to the participant in the quote and to the comforter. The second instance of semi-direct speech introduced by the quote is embedded in the first and it is introduced by the quote framed as an imperative *papa bukula ekhafu eyeyo khuche khufue rarao engelekha eyeyo* 'father take that cow and let us go and offer a sacrifice for your father across the river'. Within the quote the second person pronoun implicit in the order refers to the 'son' in the quote and the participants in Traditional Public Comforting, while the second person possessive pronoun your signalled by the morpheme *-o* (of *rara-o*) refers to the participants in the context of the quote and participants in Traditional Public Comforting. In the like manner the first person plural pronoun indicated by *khu-* on the words *khu-che* and *khu-fue* refers to the participants in the context of the quote and participants at Traditional Public Comforting. Thus, with semi-direct speech the comforter addresses participants in the context of the quote and at the Bukusu funeral.

The third instance of semi-direct speech is introduced by the quotative index *aloma* 'he says'; the complementizer is *ali* 'that'. The one-word quote *kutimoni* 'a demon' introduces the Christian condemnation of the practice of offering sacrifices. The forth instance of semi-direct speech embedded in the third is the son's (Christian's) suggestion on what the father (Member of the Traditional Bukusu religion) should say; it is introduced by the quotative index *bali noma* 'that I say'; the complementizer is *ndi* 'that'.

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The quote *lipaska lya rarao* 'your father's paschal' indicates Christ's paschal mystery on the one hand the son's desire (and indeed that of the entire Christian religion) to have practices based on Traditional Bukusu religion aligned to those of the Christian religion. The second person possessive pronoun 'your' signalled by the morpheme *-o* (of the word *rara-o* 'your father') refers both to the participants in the context of the quote and those in Traditional Public Comforting. Having highlighted the Christian views on the Traditional Bukusu practices the comforter using a metaphor in line 6 criticizes the Christians (as well as the Christian religion. With the word *muokoke* 'the saved', the comforter metonymically reveals the Christians in terms of the saved, and with the utterance *nyanya khu lomo* 'digest the ideas', the comforter urges the Christians to think before speaking. The verb *nyanya* 'chew' contextualizes the metaphorical understanding of the process of thinking in terms of 'eating', hence ideas is an analogy of food.

The need within the Christian religion to control other religions by recommending ways of doing things is also evident in the following excerpt. Unlike in example 2 where the Christians suggests to the comforter how he should describe the practice of offering sacrifices, in example 3, a Christian pastor citing the Bible explains what will happen to the comforter on the day of judgement.

Example 3

01 *owasiange ba:ya:, (1.1) khwasi:kha omwana wa Yairo bali:- (.) Khaemba*
    My mate, dear friends, we buried Jairo's child called Khaemba.
02 *ali ba:- (1.6) ali bona lubaso:- (1.0) ali lwa:bo:la:- (1.3)*
    He said that- he (said) that 'see the scripture'. He (said) that 'it says'
03 *ali lwabo:la bulai sana; (1.1) kane mutikhinyi:- (1.6) bali- (-)*
    he (said) that 'it says very well. Tomorrow they will (say) that
04 *KHEMUche namuli- (--) aKHWESELA ano LISIELO:- (1.7) na:muli:- (---)*
    You go. Namuli is dragging his skin here. Namuli
05 *ALIaKA:; (-) emuliango wa papa; (1.0) ne lisielo emuliango; (1.6)*
    will not enter the door of the father with his skin'
06 *NA:loma ndi WE:lwacha BUlai BUsa baya:; (1.0) omukinyikewu:; (3.8)*
    I said that 'you have preached well, friend, member of kinyikewu age group
07 *sina siakhuyila KHUna:muli;*
    group, what has driven you to Namuli

With the use of semi-direct speech the comforter further draws part of the sermon - that condemns the practice of Traditional Public Comforting - into his performance and refutes it. This is in line with Bakhtin (1981:338) argument that reported speech enables speakers are able to evoke words of other speakers in order to comment on them. There are two major instances of the use of semi-direct speech. In the first instance introduced by the quote content *owasiange baya ... khaemba* 'my mate, my friend… khaemba', the comforter quotes a priest/pastor who cites scripture (referred to by *owasiange* 'my mate').

By repeating the complementizer *ali* 'that', the comforter adds details of the quote *ba ...bona lubaso...lwabo:la ...lwabo:la bulai sana ...kane mutikhinyi bali khemuche namuli akhwesela ano lisielo...namuli aliaka emuliango wa papa ne lisielo emuliango* 'they...see the scripture...it says...it says very well... early tomorrow morning they will say go Namuli pulls his skin here...Namuli will not enter the father's door, with the skin at the door'. With the use of analogy, it is possible to see two religions at interplay; on the one hand, the noun *lubaso* 'scripture' reveals the analogical relationship between Christ and the Bible and with the verb *lwabo:la* 'it says' the metaphorical understanding of the Bible in terms of God's speech is contextualized. The locative *emuliango* 'at the door' reveals the analogy between the invisible world and an enclosed space, and by extension the Christian idea of judgement. On the other hand, the noun *lisielo* 'the skin' contextualizes the analogical relationship between tradition and the skin. With semi-direct speech embedded in what the priest quotes members of Traditional Bukusu religion inviting others to the event of Traditional Public Comforting. Before the priest quotes what scripture says, he - with the use of semi-direct speech - enacts a real life example of members of Traditional Bukusu religion inviting fellow members to the event of Traditional Public Comforting (referred to metonymically using the noun *lisielo* 'skin'). Thus, semi-direct speech introduced by *kane mutikhinyi* 'early tomorrow morning', interrupts the quote index *lwabo:la bulai sana* 'it says very well' and the quote content *namuli aliaka ...ne lisielo emuliango* 'Namuli will not enter the father's door...with the skin at the door'. Semi-direct speech allows the priest to embed scripture in the funeral sermon, i.e. to illustrate a practise that can be categorized as sin and can, hence, be condemned. In this case scripture providing the guideline for condemnation is used to refute Traditional Public Comforting. The Christian religion considers the entrance to the invisible world analogically as a narrow door through which only individuals free of sin can enter. Thus, sin (and in this case Traditional Public Comforting) is viewed analogically in terms of a 'burden' that hinders successful entry to heaven. With the future tense indicated by the morpheme *li-* 'will', a future orientation of the Christian religion is revealed; judgement is to be meted out at a future unknown time.

The comforter's comment based on the priest's condemnation of Traditional Public Comforting is also framed as semi-direct speech introduced by the quote index *naaloma* 'I said'. The complementizer is *ndi* 'that', and the quote content is framed as a rhetorical question *welwacha bulai busa bayaa omukinyikeu sina siakhuila khu namuli* 'you've just preached well my friend member of the Kinyikeu age set, why do you attack Namuli?'. Thus, with semi-direct speech the comforter in turn refutes the priest (and the sermon). The noun *omukinyikeu* 'member of Kinyikeu age set' contextualizes one of the sources and indeed 'stores' of tradition, age sets, and by this word the comforter embeds the priest in Traditional Bukusu religion as a basis for criticizing him (the priest). Thus, by preaching against Traditional Bukusu religion, the priest- according to the comforter - contradicts himself.

Evidently, semi-direct speech reveals dialogue between the Christian and Traditional Bukusu religion through the practice of Traditional Public Comforting. Through this technique the comforter also address different sets of participants, showing the relevance of the quoted message to the current set of participants.

For instance, the first person plural pronoun 'we' indicated by the morpheme *khu-* of the verb *khuasikha* 'we buried refers to the participants in the reported speech and the participants in the current event. With the pronoun used together with nouns such as *owasiange* 'the comforter underlines the need for a peaceful co-existence between the members of two religions. The first person singular pronoun 'he' indicated by the morpheme *a-* of the complementizer *a-li* '(he) that' reveals the priest in the reported speech and the priest in the current event. Used together with analogy *lubaso* 'scripture', *emuliango* 'at the door' and *lisielo* 'the skin', the comforter shows the current participants how priests (and Christians on the whole) condemn aspects of Traditional Bukusu religion. With the first person singular pronoun 'I' of the morpheme *n-di* the comforter refutes the priest in the quoted speech and the priest participating in the current event. Thus, while metaphor and analogy contextualize the two religions, semi-direct speech reveals the nature of dialogue between members of the two religions, and by extension the relationship between the two religions.

From the examples 1,2 and 3 and indeed from the entire data it is clear that aspects drawn from the Christian religion include ideas, beliefs and practices held by the converts to Christianity or performed by members of the clergy. Examples 1 and 2 are ideas articulated by the converts, while in example 3 the comforter incorporates the section of the sermon where the priest makes reference to the Bible. To draw aspects of the Christian religion into Traditional Public Comforting the comforter uses semi-direct speech. The two voices (in the quote content) viewed in the perspective of the current speaker, enable the current speaker (the comforter) firstly, to address two sets of participants: participants of the quoted event and participants of the current event who subscribe to Christian beliefs.

Secondly, it enables the comforter to comment on and mainly refute beliefs, ideas and practices expressed by the original speaker. As examples in the data show, the comforter uses rhetorical questions, metaphor and analogy to refute Christian practices opposed to Traditional Bukusu religion. Thus, I view metaphor in the sense of Cameron and Deignan (2006:674) as dynamic and adaptive; that is the two parts of metaphor 'interact and co-adapt [...] producing something new, emergent, greater than the sum of its parts' (Cameron and Deignan, 2006:674). In example 2, with the use of *nyanya* 'chew' thinking is viewed metaphorically in terms of chewing (food). This implies that beliefs and ideas are analogically viewed in terms of 'food'; the established part and whole relationship is here understood hierarchically in the sense of Ross' (1982:133, 134) representational analogy in which 'the differentiating relationship is x represents y, or similar relations like x is an example of y, x is a picture of y'. In this way, beliefs, ideas represent are similar to 'food'.

Having examined excerpts in which ideas, beliefs and practices from the Christian religion are drawn in order to be refuted, I now turn to examples in which the comforter makes reference to Christian religious beliefs, ideas and practices as a way of legitimizing Traditional Bukusu religious ideas, beliefs and practices.

Heteroglossia for the Legitimization of Traditional Bukusu Religious Beliefs

In order to legitimize ideas, beliefs and practices the comforter does not only incorporate beliefs, ideas and practices of the Christian religion, but he also shows that both the Traditional Bukusu and the Christian religions have the same origin, i.e. the same creation myth. In the following examples and throughout his performance, the comforter uses the Christian creation myth as a background upon which he enacts the cosmologies underlying the Bukusu understanding of death.

In the following excerpt, God the father dialogues with God Mukhobe (Adam); God the father instructs God Mukhobe (Adam) to eat all types of food, and God Mukhobe (Adam) requests God the father to create a helper (Eve) for him.

Example 4

01 *WA:BO:LELA:; (1.4) WELE MUKHOBE:; (3.8) ali KHOLIE:, (2.8)*
   He told God Mukhobe that 'eat

02 *nakhuwele biakhulia:- (1.69) kholie:, (3.0) WELE mukhobe; (1.0)*
   I have given you food.eat'. God Mukhobe

03 *WE:senda:; (1.1) wa:sikama; (1.2) wa:saba papa Wele:; (1.2)*
   moved. He knelt and prayed to God

04 *ali papa::-(1.3) WA:mbele biakhulia mungo:- (1.3) ndikho*
   that 'father, you have given me food in this home.

05 *ndia bikhilile:- (1.6) ne embeo:- (1.2) embeo ye si:lo:- (2.0)*
   I am eating; It is abundant. And what about the cold, the cold of the night

06 *niye NGACHULA naYE TWA::- (1.2) mbe owasiange:- (---)*
   I don't have the one I talk with. Give me a mate.

07 *mbe omundu:; (1.0) niye NGACHULA naye:; (1.3) chitalang'i:- (---)*
   Give me a human being, the one I talk with. The leopards,

08 *etalang'I eli ao yong'ene:- (2.4) ne khubo:lana sekhunyalana ta:- (1.2)*
   the leopard is there alone. When we talk we do not understand each other;

09 *chindemu nekhubolana sekhunyalana ta:- (1.0) kamatete*
   When I talk with snakes we don't understand each other. Grasshoppers jump

10 *kasunile eyi:- (1.6) chukuni asunila eyi:- (1.3) ndolele:- (-)*
   on this side. Ants jump on this side. Search for (me)

11 *ndolele omundu niye ngachula ne naye:;*
   look for (me) a person with whom I talk

With semi-direct speech the comforter draws the conversation between the first human being and God in the Garden of Eden. In the narrative of the Garden of Eden, it is not indicated that God dialogues with Adam over a possible helpmate, but in the example above the comforter presents it in terms of reported dialogue between God and the first being.

In the comforter's version, the first human being presents his need for a helpmate in terms of a prayer, introduced by the quote index *wesenda wasikama wasaba papa wele* 'he moved, he knelt, he prayed (to) God'. Within the quote index, the verb *wasikama* 'he knelt', metonymically contextualizes the Christian prayer practice of kneeling. In the in the prayer that follows the complementizer *ali* 'that' and is framed as a quote content, the first human being explains why he needs a mate. While there is plenty of food evidenced by *wambele biakhulia mungo ndikho ndia bikhilile* 'you have given me food in the home; I am eating- it is plenty', there is also cold, especially at night as shown by *ne embeo , embeo ye si:lo* 'but the cold, the cold of the night'. The first human being also needs a helpmate with whom he can talk *ndolele niye ngachula ne naye* 'find me the one I can speak with'. Within the Christian creation myth, the comforter infuses aspects of Traditional Bukusu religion. With the word *mungo* '(in) home' the comforter contextualizes the universe according to Traditional Bukusu religion and with *biakhulia* 'food' the central aspect in existence is metonymically revealed. The reasons that the first human being gives for wanting a 'helpmate' suggest the gender of the mate. He needs a helper to cover him from the cold, especially at night. Thus, with the word *embeo* 'cold' women are analogically revealed in terms of warmth; hence the verb *ndia* 'I eat' metaphorically reveals sex in terms of food and the verb *ngachula* 'I talk' contextualizes sex in terms of talk or an exchange. The focus on food and sex in this excerpt whose background is a Christian creation myth is aimed at showing that the two religions have the same origin and that the performers draw information from the same source. By doing this, the comforter aims at legitimizing aspects of the Traditional Bukusu religion.

Example 5 is a continuation of the creation story. God the father has created both God Mukhobe (Adam) and Eve (Namakanda) and in the excerpt below he cautions them not to eat the fruit of a certain tree.

Example 5

   01 *WAlaka:; (2.0) ali mukhakhola murio; (.) litunda eli elio*
       he ordered that 'do not (under whatever circumstances) eat that fruit
   02 *mwaliakho ta; (4.1) mukhakhola murio- (.) mwalia khwitunda*
       do not (under whatever circumstances) eat that fruit'
   03 *elielio ta; (8.4) LITUNDA LIAba busa; (2.1)*
       the fruit remained untouched
   04 *ne anyuma ao yabecha:nga yaba:- (1.0)*
       And there before, whenever
   05 *yaba omuso‿ (.) omuSOLELI NE KE:NYA KHU:LUKHA:, (---)*
       a boy wanted to rest, he goes
   06 *acha mukhwa: lu:beka LU:KHASI, (3.0)*
       he goes to the 'female armpit'
   07 *se acha luse:cha ta a:cha lukhasi:;*
       He does not go to the 'male'. He goes to the 'female'

Excerpt 5 also takes as a background the Christian creation myth and especially the part when God prohibits the first human being from eating a fruit from a certain tree. God's interdict is framed as reported speech introduced by *walaka* 'he ordered' and it is repeated and prefaced with the Lubukusu expression used to introduce a warning *mukhakhola murio* 'do not (under whatever circumstances)'. But in order to legitimate the emphasis on 'making of life' within the Traditional Bukusu religion, the comforter modifies the Christian creation myth by explaining that the fruit stands for sex. This is evident in the use of the verb *mwalia* 'you eat' that reveals sex in terms of the act of eating; thus sex is viewed analogically in terms of the fruit (food). The modification of the Christian creation myth is backed up by the Bukusu creation myth introduced by *ne anyuma aho* 'and there before' and *yaba* 'whenever'. With the use of *KHUHULUKHA* 'to rest' in the Bukusu creation myth 'sex' is contextualized in terms of 'rest' for a man, and with *acha* 'he goes' sex is further revealed in terms of a 'journey'. In this excerpt the comforter shows a change in the understanding from viewing the act of sex as 'resting' to the view of sex as 'eating'. Sex is understood as part of 'food', the central aspect in the nurturing of life within the Traditional Bukusu cosmology.

Emphasis on food - and indeed - the analogical understanding of sex in terms of food is also evident in example 6 where the first human being requests God for an 'eating' mate.

Example 6

      01 *SIBALA:; (4.5) wasikama; (1.7) wasaba rarawe ali- (.)*
           The world! he knelt. He prayed to his father that
      02 *mbe:; (--) NIye ndia naye:-*
           'give me the one I eat with'

The basis of example 6 is also the Christian creation myth and especially the part where God creates a helpmate for the first human being. In the Christian version, God 'sees' that the first human being, Adam, is lonely and he (God) decides to create a helpmate on this basis. In the comforter's version, the first human being - in a prayer - requests God to grant him a helpmate. Thus, it can be noted that to the Christian creation myth the comforter adds certain details. For instance, with the verb *wasikama* 'he knelt' together with *wasaba* 'he prayed' the Christian prayer practice is contextualized. This detail is built upon ideas drawn from Traditional Bukusu religion. For instance, the noun *sibala* 'the world' contextualizes the Bukusu universe: the visible and the invisible worlds in one universe. Thus, with *rarawe* 'father' God is contextualized in terms of family/clan head, and with the verb *ndia* 'I eat' the comforter reveals sex metaphorically in terms of 'eating'. This also implies that the expression *niye ndia naye* 'the one I eat with' specifies the helpmate: she has to be a woman. With this example, it is evident that the comforter situates Bukusu universe in the Christian creation myth and manipulates the Christian beliefs and practices to fit in the frame of the Traditional Bukusu religion. By so doing the comforter succeeds in showing that Traditional Bukusu and Christian religions have the same origin, and that Traditional Bukusu religion is equally legitimate.

Examples 4,5,6 show that together with the incorporation of the Christian beliefs, ideas and practices in Traditional Public Comforting the comforter also modifies them to fit in the Bukusu cosmologies. Thus, examples show that underlying the comforter's performance is the Christian creation myth, which he, in line with Bakhtin (1981:338), 'transmit[s], weigh[s]' and in this case modifies. The entire Christian creation myth is, as the examples show, some kind of a speech report. The juxtaposition of the Christian and Traditional Bukusu beliefs, ideas and practices and the narrative about their origin is particularly evident in instances where the comforter uses semi-direct speech that enables him to highlight areas of similarity and difference in the Christian and Traditional Bukusu cosmologies. With semi-direct speech the comforter does not only address two sets of participants, the participants in the quoted speech and participants in the current event, but he also situates the Bukusu creation myth within the origin of the Christian creation myth, thereby legitimatizing the Bukusu religious beliefs and practices.

Conclusion

This article analyzed data from Traditional Public Comforting, an event that takes place on the third day after burial among the Bukusu people, investigating how with the use of verbal communicative techniques the comforter draws aspects of the Christian religion into a performance that belongs to the Traditional Bukusu religion. Among the study's major findings, religious ideas and beliefs are revealed by metaphors, analogies and semi-direct speech. Contrary to what is revealed in literature, heteroglossia (i.e. the presentation of opposing religious 'voices') is contextualized using a single language, Lubukusu. With semi-direct speech, the comforter addresses two participants (participants in the reported event and participants in the current event) and by so doing he highlights contesting religious beliefs and expresses his perspective on them. Thus, this paper establishes that using semi-direct speech the comforter, firstly, draws Christian ideas and practices that are hostile to Traditional Bukusu religious beliefs and practices in order to refute them. Such practices include activities related to death, i.e. offering sacrifices, Traditional Public Comforting etc. Secondly, with the use of semi-direct speech the comforter incorporates aspects from the Christian religion and embeds aspects of Traditional Bukusu religion in them. The aim is to legitimate aspects of the Traditional Bukusu religion. While the study questions whether the dialogue envisaged in the Vatican Council II within the Christian religion has been effective or not and using empirical data offers insights into the nature of dialogue at the moment, there is clearly a concern about the nature of the power relations between the two religions as revealed through language.

Transcription Symbols

Capital   loudness
[ ]   overlap
(2.5)   duration in seconds
(.)   duration in time less than 0.5 sec
(-)   level intonation
(:)   lengthening of a vowel
(,)   rising intonation
(;)   falling intonation

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