

PERFORMATIVE AESTHETICS IN THE SPEECH ACTS OF YORÙBÁ OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS ON RADIO KWARA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the performative aesthetics inherent in the speech acts of Yorùbá obituary announcements aired on Radio Kwara, Nigeria, in order to highlight how they mirror cultural continuity and adaptation within a rapidly transforming socio-technological environment. This is because the theme of death remains a sensitive subject that is often surrounded by psychological, religious, and cultural emotions in many cultures of the world. The study thus interrogates how these announcements deploy speech acts as performative devices to convey sympathy, provide information, and sustain cultural values in the face of modern influences such as digital media. Through the adoption of a qualitative research design, 30 obituary announcements broadcast on Radio Kwara between January and June 2025 were analysed using content analysis, guided by butlers (1990) theory of performativity, the Speech Act Theories of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) as well as Grice theory of implicatures (1975). These functional models of communication are employed to interrogate how subtle and indirect linguistic strategy transmit cultural meaning in ways that moderate the harsh reality of death, reducing its bluntness, roughness, and related unease in the Yoruba society. The findings reveal that Radio Kwara announcements largely rely on expressive and informative speech acts that lessen the emotional trauma associated with death for listeners, while harmonizing traditional Yorùbá values with contemporary broadcasting practices. The study further underscores radio as a vital platform for cultural preservation and adaptation, and provides insights into how indigenous modes of communication operate within globalized media spaces. Further research recommended.

Keywords: *Performative aesthetics; Speech act; Yorùbá obituaries; Radio broadcasting; Nigeria*

ملخص البحث: تتناول هذه الدراسة الجوانب الجمالية الأدائية الكامنة في الأفعال الكلامية لإعلانات النعي اليوروبية التي تُبث على إذاعة كوارا في نيجيريا، بهدف تسليط الضوء على كيفية عكسها للاستمرارية الثقافية والتكيف في بيئة اجتماعية تكنولوجية سريعة التغير. ويعود ذلك إلى أن موضوع الموت لا يزال موضوعًا حساسًا غالبًا ما تحيط به مشاعر نفسية ودينية وثقافية في العديد من ثقافات العالم. وبالتالي، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية توظيف هذه الإعلانات للأفعال الكلامية كأدوات أدائية للتعبير عن التعاطف، وتقديم المعلومات، والحفاظ على القيم الثقافية في مواجهة التأثيرات الحديثة كالإعلام الرقمي. ومن خلال اعتماد منهجية بحث نوعية، تم تحليل 30 إعلانًا للنعي بُثت على إذاعة كوارا بين يناير ويونيو 2025 باستخدام تحليل المحتوى، استنادًا إلى نظرية باتلر (1990) للأداء، ونظريات أفعال الكلام لأوستن (1962) وسيرل (1969)، بالإضافة إلى نظرية غرايس للتضمينات (1975). تُستخدم هذه النماذج الوظيفية للتواصل لدراسة كيفية نقل الاستراتيجيات اللغوية الدقيقة وغير المباشرة للمعنى الثقافي بطرق تُخفف من قسوة واقع الموت، وتُقلل من حدته وفضاعته وما يرتبط به من قلق في مجتمع اليوروبا. تكشف النتائج أن إعلانات إذاعة كوارا تعتمد بشكل كبير على أفعال كلامية معبرة وإعلامية تُخفف من الصدمة العاطفية المرتبطة بالموت لدى المستمعين، مع مواءمة قيم اليوروبا التقليدية مع ممارسات البث الإذاعي المعاصرة. كما تؤكد الدراسة على أهمية الإذاعة كمنصة حيوية للحفاظ على التراث الثقافي وتطويره، وتقدم رؤى ثابتة حول كيفية عمل أنماط التواصل المحلية ضمن فضاءات الإعلام المعولمة. يُوصى بإجراء المزيد من البحوث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجماليات الأدائية؛ الفعل الكلامي؛ نوعات اليوروبا؛ البث الإذاعي؛ نيجيريا

INTRODUCTION

Language, in its most profound sense, is far more than a simple vehicle for conveying information. It functions as a medium through which humans perform social actions, express emotions, encode cultural norms, and negotiate communal identities. Within the Yoruba-speaking communities of Nigeria, the performative dimension of language is vividly exemplified in the genre of obituary announcements. Far from being mere notifications of death, Yoruba obituaries represent complex discursive events, functioning simultaneously as conveyors of factual information, vehicles of communal mourning, and affirmations of deeply held cultural and spiritual values (Fernandez, 2006; Benjamin, 2020). In Yoruba communities, language is imbued with the capacity to bridge the temporal and spiritual dimensions of existence, transforming the private grief of families into a shared cultural experience that both comforts the bereaved and reaffirms communal cohesion. Hence, the performative aesthetics in Yoruba obituary language is perceived in the ways in which the announcement stages the life, virtues, and social roles of the deceased, often blending poetry, proverbs, and cultural symbolism in its repertoire.

Language is therefore a very strong force in the announcement of death in Yoruba communities. It specifically occupies a central position within the communication landscape of Kwara State in Nigeria through Radio broadcasting, particularly that of Radio Kwara, which serves as a pivotal medium for the dissemination of such announcements due to its ability to reach audiences across diverse geographical, social, and linguistic divides. This broadcast is done in Yoruba language to ensure that knowledge of a death is not confined to immediate family members or neighbours but becomes a matter of communal awareness, fostering a collective response to loss (Joseph-Oluyemi et al., 2021). This implies that the

announcements are rich performative texts, where language, imagery, and ritualistic expression converge to construct public memory and social identity.

The submission above indicates that Radio Kwara broadcasts of obituary announcements are imbued with speech acts that facilitate the processes of emotional solidarity and social coordination that are integral to Yoruba cultural life. The station's application of standard Yoruba alongside local dialects such as Igbomina and Ilorin ensures that announcements are accessible to a broad spectrum of listeners, encompassing diverse literacy levels, social backgrounds, and cultural knowledge. This linguistic inclusivity is critical, as it preserves the pragmatic and cultural integrity of the announcements while fostering a sense of shared identity across the Yoruba-speaking population where Radio announcers serve as cultural intermediaries, translating private experiences of grief into public performances that reinforce social cohesion and communal solidarity (Fernandez, 2007; Benjamin, 2020).

Thus, Radio Kwara serves as a veritable site of negotiation between tradition and modernity in contemporary radio broadcasting of Yoruba obituary announcements. The intersection of tradition and modernity is vividly apparent in its mode of transmission, which demonstrates how contemporary media accommodates traditional forms of expression while expanding their reach. To this extent, the historical and cultural significance of Yoruba obituary announcements is reinforced by the ways in which these broadcasts integrate traditional rhetorical and poetic forms. Proverbs, honorifics, and metaphorical expressions, central to Yoruba verbal art into the announcements with layers of meaning that resonate deeply within the cultural imagination. These cultural elements not only celebrate the life and achievements of the deceased but also convey moral lessons and reinforce communal values, highlighting the enduring pedagogical and social functions of language in Yoruba society (Ergin, 2022; Boge, 2023). The application of such devices in radio broadcasts therefore exemplifies how indigenous communication practices adapt to modern technological contexts while retaining their essential cultural and social functions.

From the foregoing, this study examines the mechanisms through which language enacts social functions, mediates emotional experiences, and encodes cultural knowledge through Yoruba obituary announcements on Radio Kwara. This is because prior research has examined obituaries in print media, digital memorialisation, and religious discourse (Meyer, 2020; Fowler, 2021; Eriksson, 2022; Meyer, 2020), but there remains a notable gap in empirical research that focuses specifically on speech acts. This gap provides the impetus for the present study, which seeks to explore how speech acts, pragmatics, and cultural linguistic elements converge in Yoruba obituary announcements broadcast media. These insights extend beyond the Yoruba context, offering a lens through which scholars can understand the broader intersections of language, culture, and media in African societies. Ultimately, this underscores the enduring importance of indigenous modes of communication, demonstrating that even in the context of rapid technological and social change, traditional communicative forms can retain their vitality, adaptability, and cultural significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE YORUBA WORLD VIEW ON OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Obituary, derived from the Latin word *obitus*, meaning “departure,” occupies a distinctive and significant space in both linguistic and cultural studies. Across societies, obituaries function as formal notices of death; however, within Yoruba culture, they assume a far more complex role. Death, in Yoruba cosmology, is not merely a biological cessation but a profound transition from the temporal world to the ancestral realm. Consequently, obituary announcements are not limited to conveying factual information; they operate as socially sanctioned performances that honour the deceased, console the bereaved, and reinforce communal solidarity. In this sense, obituary discourse aligns with contemporary understandings of ritualized communication as performative social action (Butler, 2010; Duranti, 2015; Agha, 2020). The announcement itself becomes a performative act fulfilling practical, social, and symbolic functions, thereby situating obituaries as fertile ground for linguistic, pragmatic, and anthropological inquiry.

Social realities in Yoruba obituary announcements are evident in the staging of the life, virtues, and social roles of the deceased. The strategic deployment of praise forms, metaphor, and rhythmic phrasing transforms the obituary into a cultural performance that simultaneously honours the dead and reinforces communal values. This resonates with recent scholarship on African verbal arts and performativity, which emphasizes the constitutive power of discourse in shaping socio-cultural values (Finnegan, 2012; Barber, 2018; Agha, 2020). Within Yoruba communicative traditions, speech acts are not merely descriptive but world-making, consistent with contemporary pragmatic theories of performativity and indexicality (Silverstein, 2017).

In Yoruba cosmology and ontology, the stylistic and rhetorical features of obituary announcements are particularly rich. Euphemisms, metaphorical language, and stylistic embellishments are employed to soften the emotional weight of death while maintaining cultural decorum. Expressions such as “*O ti simi*” (“he/she has rested”) exemplify linguistic strategies that frame death as peaceful transition rather than abrupt termination. Such usage corresponds with recent research in intercultural pragmatics demonstrating how euphemism mitigates face-threat and regulates collective emotion in sensitive discourse domains (Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Allan & Burridge, 2020). Metaphorical constructions like “death came to the market” further illustrate how culturally grounded imagery mediates abstract existential realities. These devices are not ornamental; rather, they are embedded in religious, social, and moral frameworks, signaling respect, adherence to norms, and recognition of communal affect.

Yoruba obituary announcements are further enriched by the inclusion of *oríkì* (praise poetry), proverbs, and religious invocations. *Oríkì* encapsulates achievements, lineage, and identity, positioning the deceased within a broader historical continuum. Contemporary scholarship on African oral traditions underscores how praise poetry functions as an archive of social memory and moral philosophy (Barber, 2018; Newell, 2020). Proverbs provide condensed ethical reflection and communal wisdom, while religious invocations; whether Islamic, Christian, or indigenous Yoruba spiritual references offer spiritual solace and reinforce identity. In a context of religious plurality and media transformation, such hybrid

discourse practices align with studies on religious language in African public spheres (Meyer, 2020; Hackett, 2022). Together, these elements transform obituary announcements into multidimensional social acts that merge personal grief with collective meaning-making.

Obituary announcements in Yoruba culture are therefore not decorative but inherently performative. They encapsulate respect for the deceased, express condolences, encourage participation in funeral rites, and reaffirm communal hierarchies and expectations. This multifunctionality aligns with contemporary speech act theory and ritual discourse studies, which emphasise how language accomplishes social action beyond information transfer (Duranti, 2015; Haugh & Kádár, 2017). When intentionally framed, the obituary becomes a ritualized, time-bound aesthetic event characterised by strategic linguistic mitigation and celebratory narration. Therefore, Yoruba obituary announcements may be ascribed as complex linguistic and cultural performances extending far beyond their ostensible function as death notifications. They operate as instruments of social cohesion, ethical reflection, and cultural continuity, mediating between private grief and communal solidarity. Through pragmatic strategies such as evaluative stance-taking, indexical alignment, and metaphorical framing, these announcements encode and transmit Yoruba values while facilitating collective participation in mourning rituals (Silverstein, 2017; Agha, 2020).

Recent scholarship also distinguishes between informative and evaluative (opinative) obituary forms within global media discourse (Eriksson, 2022; Fowler, 2021). Informative obituaries primarily present factual details such as name, age, occupation, funeral arrangements whereas opinative forms foreground virtues, accomplishments, and legacy. In Yoruba practice, these forms frequently co-exist within a single announcement, reflecting the dual communicative purpose of informing and commemorating. An announcement may first provide logistical information and then transition into praise poetry or proverbial reflection. This blending underscores the performative nature of Yoruba obituaries, wherein language functions simultaneously as information, celebration, consolation, and socialization.

RADIO BROADCASTING OF OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENTS IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Radio broadcasting in Nigeria has been a vital medium for communication, cultural expression, and social engagement since its introduction in the early 20th century. Historically, the colonial government introduced radio through the Radio Diffusion System (RDS) in the 1930s, which relayed British programmes across key urban centres before evolving into the Nigeria Broadcasting Service and later the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) under legislative act in the 1950s (Adegbija, Fakomogbon & Adebayo, as cited in Igwebuiké, 2022). Following independence, the establishment of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) institutionalised public broadcasting as a tool for national development, education, and information dissemination across diverse linguistic groups and regions. FRCN's extended network of transmitters allowed radio to penetrate remote and urban communities alike, reinforcing its role in promoting national unity and public service objectives.

The deregulation of the broadcast sector in the early 1990s marked a significant transition, enabling private entities and state governments to own and operate radio stations under the supervision of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). This shift catalysed

a proliferation of commercial and community-oriented stations that have diversified content offerings, expanded audience participation, and created platforms for local cultural expression. Contemporary scholarship highlights radio's role in cultural preservation and indigenous language promotion. Studies of Yoruba-language broadcasters (e.g., Amuludun FM and Orisun FM) reveal that stations broadcasting in indigenous languages attract strong local listenership and foster cultural identity by integrating local language, music, and traditional storytelling in programming (Rauf, Adekoya, Ademola & Molomo, 2023). Beyond language use, investigations into language policy implementation show that Nigerian radio stations adopt diverse linguistic approaches depending on legal frameworks and audience needs, reinforcing multilingualism. (Obiorah,2025).

In line with the aforementioned broadcasting deregulation policy, Kwara state broadcasting corporation also known as Radio Kwara, as an indigenous media platform in North central region of Nigeria was established in 1956, and has historically played a critical role in sustaining Yoruba oral traditions. Adegbite (2002) highlights how this radio station has leveraged the Yoruba language to promote cultural continuity, blending traditional rhetorical forms with modern broadcasting techniques which offer immediacy, emotional resonance, and accessibility, which enables announcers to reach a linguistically diverse audience. It also allows for prosodic and paralinguistic features such as tone, pace, and intonation as well as proverbs, eulogies and metaphoric expressions to convey empathy, respect, or urgency among diverse audience thereby enhancing the performative impact of the announcement.(Falola & Genova, 2009).The celebratory and commemorative functions of these announcements serve to honour the deceased, uphold cultural and moral values, and offer lessons for the living (Boge, 2023; Ergin, 2022).Through this approach, Obituary announcements depicts the intersection of tradition and modernity, functioning as structured communicative events governed by cultural expectations while allowing room for stylistic creativity. Genre theory (Miller, 1984) frames these announcements as goal-oriented social actions, constrained by convention yet capable of innovative variation in communication.

To this end, Radio Kwara obituary broadcasts exemplify the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, highlighting the adaptability, resilience, and enduring significance of indigenous communicative practices within contemporary media landscapes Egbokhare, 2004 , Fernandez, 2006; Merolla, 2014; Joseph-Oluyemi et al., 2021; Boge, 2023; Ergin, 2022; .This is because Radio Kwara provides a shared communal space where these social and cultural functions are publicly enacted, ensuring accessibility and continuity of tradition across socio-economic and generational divides. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, highlighted the adaptability of these practices, as restrictions on communal gatherings necessitated innovations in the dissemination of information and condolences (Joseph-Oluyemi et al., 2021). Announcements broadcast via this radio outlet not only informed audiences of deaths but also facilitated virtual communal participation, ensuring that social rituals and expressions of solidarity continued despite physical constraints. This adaptability demonstrates the resilience of Yoruba obituary discourse, illustrating its capacity to integrate new communicative technologies while maintaining fidelity to cultural norms and expectations (Merolla, 2014; Egbokhare, 2004).

Despite their enduring significance, It is worthy of note that Yoruba obituary announcements on Radio may face contemporary challenges. Competition from digital media platforms, declining fluency in indigenous languages among younger generations, and shifting cultural norms pose threats to the sustainability of traditional practices (Merolla, 2014; Egbokhare, 2004). Nonetheless, the performance of Yoruba obituary announcements on Radio Kwara demonstrates remarkable resilience. Announcers employ stylistic and pragmatic strategies to maintain relevance, including formulaic structures, culturally resonant metaphors, and expressive speech acts. These adaptations reflect a careful negotiation between preserving heritage and embracing modern communication modalities.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the interplay of theories on speech act, performativity, and pragmatics offering a robust platform to examine the communicative and cultural dynamics of Yorùbá obituary announcements broadcast on Radio Kwara. At its core, these frameworks posit that language functions not merely as a vehicle for conveying information but as a performative act that enacts social realities, sustains cultural values, and mediates complex emotional experiences, particularly those surrounding death. These frameworks provide a comprehensive analytical lens for examining the linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural dimensions of Yorùbá obituary announcements broadcast on Radio Kwara. By foregrounding language as action rather than mere description, these theories enable an exploration of how obituary discourse functions not only to transmit information but also to perform social, emotional, and cultural work within a community.

Judith Butler's (1990) theory of performativity complements the aforementioned perspective by situating language as a constructive force in social life. This is based on the idea that language, action and social behaviours do not describe reality but create reality through performance. Butler posits that identity, social norms, and cultural practices are not static entities but are continuously enacted through repetitive, culturally sanctioned performances. Yorùbá obituary announcements on Radio Kwara exemplify performativity in that each broadcast not only communicates factual information but also reproduces and reinforces cultural rituals surrounding death. The structured recitation of names, genealogical references, and funeral protocols embodies a ritualistic performance that affirms communal solidarity and inter-generational continuity. In this way, the radio medium becomes a site where traditional practices are both preserved and adapted, demonstrating the resilience of Yorùbá cultural forms in a rapidly changing media landscape. By situating obituary announcements within performative theory, it can be adduced that these texts operate at the intersection of ritual, memory, and social critique. They not only commemorate but also perform social hierarchies, moral values, and communal belonging, revealing the dynamic ways in which Yoruba culture negotiates life, death, and remembrance.

Additionally, Speech act theory, formulated by Austin (1962) and extended by Searle (1969), provides the foundational ambit for understanding the functional dimensions of language in the aforementioned obituary announcement. Austin in his seminal work introduced the concept of illocutionary act on three interrelated levels; the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts while emphasizing that utterances are performative and their functions goes beyond stating facts because they do not merely represent reality but actively shape it through socially meaningful actions. Locutionary act on one hand, pertain to the literal content of the language. Notched within the purview of Yoruba obituary

announcements, this speech act forms the background information of the announcement and ensures that listeners clearly understand the event being reported. They reflect how the announcement expresses factual details about the deceased through information about the name of the deceased, age, lineage, occupation, and time of passing of the deceased with burial arrangements. Without this foundational layer of meaning, the announcement would lose its essence. Hence, the locutionary act refers to the literal meaning of an utterance or sentence. However, while the locutionary dimension is essential, it represents only the surface structure of the discourse and does not fully capture the depth of meaning embedded in the announcement.

On the other hand, illocutionary acts capture the intended communicative force of the announcement or the social functions performed by the speaker, which acknowledge loss, console the bereaved, and invite the community to participate emotionally and socially in the mourning process. In Yorùbá obituary announcements, illocutionary act is especially prominent and culturally significant. Through carefully chosen expressions, announcers perform acts of condolence, empathy, praise, reverence, and moral evaluation. Utterances such as “*ó ti sùn*” (“he/she has rested”) or the use of proverbs and *oríkì* (praise poetry) are not merely descriptive statements about death; they are culturally charged acts that affirm spiritual beliefs, uphold communal values, and frame the deceased’s life within socially approved narratives of honour and dignity. These illocutionary acts simultaneously acknowledge loss, console the bereaved, and invite the community to participate emotionally and socially in the mourning process. They serve to regulate appropriate emotional responses, guiding listeners toward expressions of sympathy, respect, and solidarity.

And lastly, the perlocutionary act, involves how Yoruba language shapes the effects that the announcement has on its audience. In the case of radio obituary announcements, these effects are often profound and far-reaching. Listeners may experience sadness, reflection, empathy, or renewed awareness of communal bonds. They may also be prompted to take concrete actions, such as visiting the bereaved family, contributing financially to funeral arrangements, attending burial ceremonies, or offering prayers. These responses illustrate how linguistic performances can produce tangible social outcomes, extending the impact of speech beyond the moment of utterance into the domain of communal behavior and social obligation. Perlocutionary effects are particularly significant in broadcast contexts such as Radio Kwara, where a single announcement reaches a dispersed audience simultaneously. The collective reception of such messages helps to synchronize emotional experiences across the community, reinforcing shared values and social responsibilities. In this way, obituary announcements do not merely describe death but actively shape the social reality surrounding it, mobilizing communal participation and reaffirming networks of mutual support.

Interestingly, Searle (1969) refinement of illocutionary speech act theory further enhances the analytical framework by classifying speech acts into five functional categories: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. Each with distinct communicative purposes. In the context of Yorùbá obituary announcements discourse on Radio Kwara, each of these categories can be observed, to varying degrees. Representatives are employed when factual information about the deceased is conveyed, such as biographical details and funeral arrangements. Directives occur when listeners are invited or encouraged to attend ceremonies, pray for the deceased, or support the bereaved family. Commissives,

though relatively rare, are used when families or communities express their commitments to preserve the memory or legacy of the deceased.

Expressives, unequivocally, constitute the most dominant category within this genre. Through expressions of sorrow, admiration, gratitude, and reverence, Radio Kwara announcers articulate socially sanctioned emotional responses to death. These utterances perform the important cultural function of legitimizing grief while containing it within acceptable boundaries of dignity and respect. Declaratives also appear in more ritualized forms, particularly in statements that symbolically mark the transition of the deceased from the world of the living to the ancestral or spiritual realm. Through expressions of sorrow, admiration, gratitude, and reverence, announcers articulate socially sanctioned emotional responses to death. These utterances perform the important cultural function of legitimizing grief while containing it within acceptable boundaries. Such utterances carry institutional and cultural authority, reinforcing shared metaphysical understandings of life, death, and continuity. These acts function collaboratively to reduce psychological trauma for listeners while reinforcing communal bonds and social norms. By deploying language in ways that are both informative and emotionally supportive, announcers mediate the tension between the harsh reality of death and the need for social and emotional coherence within the community.

Furthermore, Grice's (1975) theory of implicature provides an additional layer of analytical depth to the discourse by explaining how meaning is conveyed indirectly through context-sensitive language. Grice argued that speakers often rely on conversational maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner to communicate meaning subtly, allowing for nuanced and contextually appropriate exchanges. Since Yorùbá obituary announcements frequently employ euphemisms, culturally coded phrases, and indirect expressions to soften the emotional impact of death, thereby adhering to community expectations of decorum and respect. Such implicatures serve a dual function: they manage the listener's emotional response and maintain the dignity of both the deceased and their family. In this sense, language functions pragmatically, negotiating the tension between the need to inform, console, and preserve cultural integrity. This is the reason Grice; speakers frequently communicate more than they literally say by relying on shared cultural knowledge and conversational expectations. In Yorùbá obituary announcements, this indirectness is a defining feature of the discourse. Rather than stating bluntly that someone has died, announcers employ euphemisms such as "*ó ti lọ sí ilé bàbá wa*" ("he/she has gone to our father's house") or metaphorical expressions like "death came to the market." These utterances function as conversational implicatures, allowing listeners to infer the intended meaning while preserving cultural norms of politeness and emotional restraint. Such indirect strategies are particularly important in societies where death is regarded as both sacred and emotionally delicate. By avoiding explicit or harsh formulations, announcers demonstrate respect for the deceased and sensitivity toward the bereaved, while also maintaining the aesthetic qualities valued in Yoruba verbal expression. The deliberate use of implicature thus serves both pragmatic and cultural purposes: it mitigates emotional distress, upholds social decorum, and reinforces collective understandings of mortality as a transition rather than an abrupt termination.

In sum, the convergence of these aforementioned theories underscores the complex relationship between language, culture, and media. The integration of Performativity, Speech Acts and Grice's Theories of Implicature offers a holistic framework for understanding

Yorùbá obituary announcements as complex communicative performances in pragmatic and social linguistics domains. Performative theory projects the cultural significance of Yoruba language while Speech Act Theory clarifies what is being done through language; informing, consoling, inviting, honouring and Gricean pragmatics explains how these actions are often accomplished indirectly, through culturally resonant expressions that rely on shared interpretive conventions. Together, these frameworks reveal the intricate interplay between linguistic form, social function, and cultural meaning. In the same vein, the theoretical frameworks project how the medium of radio introduces modern socio-technological dynamics, enabling the cultural performance of mourning to reach wider audiences while adapting to contemporary broadcasting conventions which enables a systematic examination of how announcers design their messages to fulfill multiple objectives simultaneously in order to convey accurate information, express collective sympathy, reaffirm cultural values, and elicit appropriate responses from listeners. This illustrates how indigenous communicative practices can persist, evolve, and interface with globalized media systems without losing their cultural specificity.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs a qualitative research design, analyzing 30 Yorùbá obituary announcements aired on Radio Kwara between January and June 2025. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in Yorùbá and translated into English to preserve linguistic and cultural nuances. Metadata including announcer details, deceased demographics, and broadcast context were collected to enrich the analysis. Sampling focused was on announcements that were culturally representative and clear in linguistic structure. Interviews with announcers were conducted to understand pragmatic intentions and stylistic choices. Analysis drew upon Speech Act Theory to classify locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary implicature acts, Performativity Theory to contextualize socio-cultural influences, and Cultural Linguistics to identify embedded metaphors, proverbs, and euphemisms. Ethical considerations included anonymizing family and community information in respect of privacy and cultural norms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the 30 Yorùbá obituary announcements aired on Radio Kwara reveals that they are multifaceted performative acts that blend expressive, informative and directive culturally mediated linguistic strategies, to negotiate grief, maintain social cohesion, and affirm communal identity. Beyond announcing death, these announcements function as cultural texts that preserve collective memory and guide social interaction. This means language has the power to construct social reality. Yorùbá obituary announcements on Radio Kwara exemplify this social reality in that each broadcast not only communicates factual information but also reproduces and reinforces cultural rituals surrounding death. The structured recitation of names, genealogical references, and funeral protocols embodies a ritualistic performance that affirms communal solidarity and inter-generational continuity. They communicate grief, honour the deceased, provide logistical information, and encourage community engagement, demonstrating the performative and pragmatic complexity of the announcements. The incorporation of stylistic features, tonal variation, honorifics, proverbs, and metaphors ensures that each announcement resonates culturally, emotionally, and socially with the audience.

Expressive linguistic choices within aforementioned obituary announcements also illustrate careful attention to cultural and emotional sensitivity on the part of the Radio announcers. They utilise subtle and indirect linguistic strategy for transmitting meaning in ways that moderate the harsh reality of death, reducing its bluntness, roughness, and related unease. Euphemisms such as *o simi* (“he/she has rested”) and Islamic phrases like *Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raji’un* (“From Allah we come, to Him we return”) are used to soften the reality of death and express the spiritual belief of the deceased. Expressive acts, such as formulaic condolence phrases like *A kú òrò ẹyàn*, reflect the Yorùbá value of communal mourning, demonstrating how language is used as performative art to convey sorrow and show respect for the deceased. These expressions also serve a social function by reinforcing solidarity and empathy among community members, ensuring that grief is shared collectively rather than privately. The integration of proverbs, metaphors, and *oríkì* (praise poetry) further elevates the announcements, highlighting the deceased’s social and spiritual significance while preserving cultural norms. Metaphorical expressions, including references like *wúrà* (gold), serve to elevate the deceased’s value, honor their life, and express communal admiration. These devices reflect the fusion of cultural, spiritual, and emotional meanings embedded in Yorùbá obituary announcement on Radio Kwara. By doing so, these announcements reinforce communal identity, preserve cultural practices, and provide a platform for public expression of grief and solidarity in a subtle and communal manner.

Apart from the expressive speech acts already highlighted in the Radio Kwara obituary announcements, it is also discovered that Informative speech acts also provided practical details about funeral arrangements, including the date, venue, the deceased’s biographical information and burial arrangements. These announcements ensure that listeners are aware of relevant facts, enabling them to participate in mourning rituals and contribute to communal support for the bereaved family. The announcements often follow a structured pattern, beginning with an invocation, followed by a biographical summary, and concluding with funeral arrangement details. This tripartite structure ensures clarity, consistency, and cultural appropriateness, while allowing announcers to incorporate stylistic elements such as repetition, parallelism, and *oríkì* (praise poetry) to personalize each message. Directive speech acts, though less frequent, are equally used to mobilize communal participation. Announcers invite listeners to join in funeral rites, prayers, and support for the bereaved, demonstrating the social function of the announcements in reinforcing communal responsibility. By prompting listener action, these directives transform the announcements from mere informational statements into performative acts that shape social behavior and reinforce communal bonds.

Furthermore, the findings equally highlight that Yorùbá obituary announcements on Radio Kwara are structured yet creative linguistic performances because they effectively balance tradition and modern broadcasting, combining culturally rooted language with accessible radio formats. This type of broadcast approach ensures that the messages are accessible to a wide audience, including those from urban and rural areas and with varying levels of literacy. The broadcasters act as cultural intermediaries by blending traditional rhetorical forms with contemporary format while translating private grief into public expression and at the time maintaining cultural norms and linguistic aesthetics. The Radio Kwara obituary announcements therefore exemplify the continued relevance of Yorùbá oral and cultural practices in contemporary media, highlighting how radio functions as both a communicative and cultural institution within Kwara State. Despite pressures from digital

media, changing cultural norms, and generational shifts in language proficiency, these announcements demonstrate resilience and innovation. This balance between tradition and modernity underscores the importance of studying indigenous media practices in African societies, not merely as relics of the past, but as living, evolving communicative forms that continue to shape social life. This function demonstrates how radio serves as both a technological medium and a site of cultural preservation, enabling Yorùbá communities to sustain social cohesion and collective solidarity. This highlights that traditional practices of mourning are re-contextualized within modern media environments, facilitating cultural continuity, emotional regulation, and communal solidarity in the face of social transformation.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Yoruba radio obituary announcements in Kwara State, Nigeria, constitute far more than routine notifications of death. Through the combined lenses of Performative. Speech acts, and pragmatic theories, this study establishes that these broadcasts function as socially consequential acts embedded within a rich cultural and linguistic framework. Rather than serving a purely informative function, they operate simultaneously as expressives, directives, representatives, commissives, and declaratives, thereby enacting respect for the deceased, solidarity with the bereaved, and continuity of communal values. The analysis of thirty representative announcements reveals how Radio Kwara obituaries draw extensively on Yoruba linguistic resources; proverbs, *oríkì* (praise poetry), religious invocations, metaphors, and culturally grounded euphemisms to negotiate the sensitivities surrounding death. These stylistic and pragmatic strategies enhance the illocutionary force of the announcements, ensuring that they do not merely report loss but actively shape emotional responses, prescribe appropriate social conduct, and reaffirm shared moral expectations. In this sense, obituary broadcasts emerge as dynamic social performances that both reflect and reproduce core Yoruba values such as reverence for elders, collective responsibility, and spiritual continuity.

Also, by aligning obituary discourse within the context of broadcast media, this study fills a notable gap in the literature. Through qualitative transcription, systematic speech act classification, and thematic analysis, it provides empirical evidence of how indigenous linguistic forms are adapted to modern media platforms without relinquishing their cultural potency. Ultimately, Yoruba radio obituaries exemplify the intersection of language, culture, and media in contemporary African societies. They illustrate how traditional oral aesthetics can be recontextualized within broadcast formats to sustain cultural memory, reinforce communal cohesion, and mediate the relationship between tradition and modernity. Future research may extend this inquiry through comparative studies across Nigerian states, investigations into digital transformations of obituary practices, and audience reception analyses to further illuminate the evolving role of indigenous media in shaping social life.

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