

Semiotics of Oral Literature: A Kinesics Perspective.

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Abstract:

This thesis attempts a kinesics analysis of oral literature - an art form transmitted through both the verbal and non-verbal communication (nvc) channels. Kinesics is concerned with body motions (e.g. gestures and dance), as related to non verbal aspects of interpersonal communication. Underlying the kinesics perspective is semiotics, a study of the verbal as well as the nvc signs and their meanings. The semiotic analysis, therefore, investigates the dynamics of kinesics communication in oral literature and the corresponding signification system between its verbal and non-verbal channels. The oral literature of the Yoruba people is used as a case-study.

The analysis highlights dance-kinesics as an essential art in Yoruba literary expression. Highly complementing the verbalised content, it also conveys and vivifies the salient concepts of Yoruba oral literature. In addition, the dance comes through as a crucial ostensive vehicle for other nvc signs in oral literature such as the sculpted and textile arts. Thus, dance-kinesics is projected as a fully integrated art form in Yoruba oral literature enhancing its meaning and aesthetic dimensions.

Furthermore, through the semiosis of the non-verbal arts, especially the kinesics of Yoruba oral literature, the world-view and customs of the Yoruba, which previously had been subjected to much misinterpretation because of their heavy symbolism and little known codification system, now assume deeper significance and more profound meanings. This subsequent clarification amply demonstrates the dynamic relationship between the verbal and the non-verbal arts in oral literature and attests to the significance of the full codification system in the literature of oral societies.

Keywords: Kinesics / oral literature/ body motion/ semiotics/ language/ codification system

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