THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Politeness a Critical Aspect in Bukusu Traditional Circumcision Songs

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Abstract:

Bukusu are among the seventeen tribes of the Luhya Bantu found in western region of Kenya. They are the largest tribe of the Luhya referring to themselves as Babukusu and account for about 34% of the entire Luhya population speaking Bukusu dialect. They practice male circumcision which as a cultural undertaking is held in high esteem by every male child. Circumcision initiation ceremony is spaced about two years apart with certain circumcision songs being an integral part of the entire process before, during and after the actual cutting is done. In essence circumcision songs portray an aspect politeness for they act as a carriage of salient and most critical messages not only to the initiates but to the entire community at large. The language in these songs is always highly coded and it behoves every targeted member of this group of the Luhya tribe to interpret these songs. Since these songs are functional in nature, aspects of politeness are unequivocally exhibited. The paper endeavors to tease out aspects of politeness that play out in Bukusu circumcision songs.

Keywords: Politeness, positive face, negative face

1. Introduction

Politeness in an interaction context may be defined as the means employed to show awareness of another person's face. Within the level of individual or group communication, politeness can fundamentally be accomplished in situations of social distance that the speaker and the receiver find themselves in. Johnstone (2008) observed that, politeness is one of the main reasons for which people are often indirect, not saying precisely what they mean but implying it. He continues to say that; politeness in this sense is much more pervasive and more necessary than the formal etiquette involved in making introductions correctly.

In view of the aforesaid, politeness is taken to be a critical aspect in the entire process of undertaking Bukusu circumcision rites of passage for boys; a process that undeniably holds politeness with the highest esteem in regard to the Bukusu culture. The Bukusu as a community is known to inculcate moral values during circumcision ceremony through the use of songs and advises. Succinctly speaking; these rites were critical since it was here where society's cultural historical values were highlighted (Bukunya and Nandwa 1983). Even though Njeru's (1981) study did not militate around the Bukusu cultural discourse, he opines that, boys' circumcision was the undisputed avenue that was employed to pass traditional cultural knowledge; indeed there was no room for anyone to evade this critical undertaking among the Meru as a community. This same seriousness was resonating with the Bukusu circumcision rites of passage ceremony. Since politeness undoubtedly happens to be a critical aspect during circumcision ceremony among the Bukusu, this study examines aspects of politeness in their traditional circumcision songs.

2. Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine critical aspects of politeness in Bukusu traditional circumcision songs as a rite of passage.

2.1. An Aspect of Bukusu History

The Bukusu is one of the largest sub-tribe among the Abaluhya community and belong to the Bantu group. Their history is intricate but it is believed that their history can be traced back to when they moved to *Embayi* in *Sirikwa* (Walubengo 2010), by this time they were referred to as *Babayi Basirikwa* (*Babayi* from *Sirikwa*) which stemmed from their livestock rearing practice. In the course of their migration they went through *Bugishu* which was in the northern part of Mount Elgon and here they discovered that the area was not appropriate for livestock rearing; thus forcing them to proceed on to *Mbayi/Embayi* and *Sirikwa* settling here since the area had good soils. From here they moved on and settled ones again at *Namarare* and *Solokho* in *Bugishu* and later moved on *Ebwayisouthof* Teso and Tororo. From here they moved to Bukusu a place they live to date. Currently; being the largest sub - tribe among the Luhya community majority of them are found in Bungoma County with the rest spreading in other areas such as Mount Elgon, Trans - Nzoia, Busia and Kakamega (Walubengo 2010).

The major clans of the Bukusu stemmed from their *Mubukusu* offsprings (Their sons); these are, *Abamalaba*, *Abamwalie*, *Abakikayi*, *Abasirikwa*, *Abamwayi* and *Abamwaya*. It is worth to note that the *Abang'oma* was not among the true Bukusu clan but belonged to the Tugen, a Kalenjin community who found themselves among the Bukusu after moving to that area (Walubengo 2010). Before the *Abang'oma* settling among the Bukusu they were referred to *Ngomanek*; on settling here they intermarried giving root to the *Abang'oma*- a Bukusu clan.

The Bukusu were ruled by *Omwamiowe pokoto* assisted by a council of elders known as *Abakasa*. *Omwami* was the one who settled disputes among the Bukusu clan. His oratory prowess was a clear trajectory which exhibited politeness in his language because it was a critical aspect that needed to be observed. *Omwami* was appointed from the clan of *Omwami* within the Bukusu clan, and where *Omwami* failed to appoint an heir a male son from the *Omwami's* own clan who indicated a sign of leadership was appointed.

The Bukusu believed in the existent of a supreme being *Wele* alongside the community re-known Bukusu elders. It is believed that *Wele* created the first male and female (being a husband and wife) *Mwambu* and *Sela* who gave birth to the Bukusu Community. There were other gods who had varying roles among the Bukusu such as: *Wele Khabumbi* (god of creation), *Wele Khakaba* (god of blessing) *Wele Mukhobe* (god of talents). Religion was of paramount importance and it is believed that it signified politeness among the Bukusu as a clan. The community also believed in the existence of Satan called *Wele Bimbi* who operated in realm of darkness and his work was to inflict pain whenever it was desired. He was believed to apportion calamities where and when they were desired; these calamities were such as, earthquakes, locusts infestation, drought, lightening, epidemics etc. these occurrences forced the Bukusu to retreat to certain shrines such as *Namwima* to seek *Wele's* intervention.

2.2. Aspect of Circumcision among the Bukusu

Maina was the leader of the Bukusu (*Omukasa*) during their numerous movements from time to time. He had two wives and two sons known as *Wakhulunya* and *Namunguba*; *Wakhulunya* is said to have disrespected his husband by engaging in a sexual affair with one of his father's wives. After a ritual to exorcise bad omen from the community, *Maina* fled his matrimonial home never to be seen again (Walubengo 2010) and it is believed that he started his life afresh elsewhere among the Kikuyu community – reason for the name *Maina* among the kikuyu. Even though *Wakhulunya* and his father were in the same circumcision age-set, not all boys faced circumciser's knife since it was a reserve for the ones in reign and those who had done some extraordinary things in the community and undoubtedly would have benefited the community in one way or the other. In view of this; *Namunyulubunda* son of *Wakhulunya* was circumcised at *Ebwayi* in the first age – set of *Kolongolo* during which the first famous circumcision ritual song *Kolongolo owe Ebwayi owalia enjofu nekhekendu* started. It is believed that the person who saw the birth of *Kolongolo* as a circumcision age – set ate a live walking elephant. The second circumcision age – set also had their first rite taking place at *Ebwayi*.

Owing to their nature of life, the Bukusu grew in their population forcing them to spread in areas beyond their initial area of settlement namely: *Batakhwe*, *Bakisiayi*, *Bameme*, *Bakhurarwa* and *Bakhone*. Ironically, even though *Mango* was an *Omukasa*, he had not been circumcised like his two sons *Malaba* and *Wanyanja* under the *Bakolongo* and *Namunyulubunda* age – sets. At a place called *Mwiala* there was a gigantic snake (*endemu ya bebe/khurwe ya bebe*) that preyed on people and livestock and owing to this kind of unprecedented occurrence the two sons of *Mango* (*Malaba* and *Wanyanja*) were killed. This unanticipated incident irked *Mango* prompting him to kill it after being prevailed upon to do so by one of his neighbors – *Barwa*. It is believed that, after his concerted effort he managed to slay the snake *endemu ya bebe/khurwe ya bebe*, and on learning about this rare and monumental occurrence *Wakhulunya* was elated and composed a song (*Woo haaha wowo haha*) which is sung to date whenever those to be circumcised are led from the river to face circumciser's song. It is a famous song that is known as *sioyaya/siboyo*. After this, *Mango* became a celebrity – a real *Omukasa* and requested to be brave and be circumcised. He was circumcised under the *Kikwameti* age – set and because *Mango* was well advanced in age when this took place the Bukusu always sing *sioyayo* attributing it to the advent of their painful circumcision to *Mango* of *Mwiala*.

The Bukusu as a community have eight circles of undertaking this rite of passage, namely; *Kolongolo*, *Kikwameti*, *Kinanachi*, *Kinyikeu*, *Nyange*, *Maina*, *Chuma* and *Sawa*, it is most likely these circles were anchored on one critical principle of politeness since they were like brothers calling each other *Bakoki* a critical aspect of positive politeness. In conclusion, the Bukusu do not practice this circumcision whenever calendar years fall on odd numbers which is referred to *Sikumenya* since this may be treated like inviting bad omen (that may lead to bleeding, improper cut, delayed healing etc) in the entire ceremony. In view of this, circumcision ceremonies are done in years appearing like: 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2016, 2018... in accordance to their belief and takes place when all the boys fall within the circle of 12 years.

3. Literature Review

Politeness in relation to language use by human beings is a critical aspect, although what may appear to be polite in one culture may end up being decoded as impolite by members of a different culture. Yuka (2009) in his study on politeness strategies in oral communication focusing on terms of address opined that Japanese has been categorized as 'negative politeness language', and the speakers do not often use positive politeness strategies in their talks unless the interlocutors are psychologically very close. On the other hand, in English speaking society, especially in the U.S., previous studies have pointed out that positive politeness plays an important role when forming good interpersonal relationships.

Buliba et al (2006) observed that, there is serious relationship between language, society and culture because since time in memorial language in many cultures has shown that even though certain words have not been banned; their usage is valid only in certain forums and by certain class of people. In essence, communities in many areas embrace use of language

that advocates for positive moral order. Other forms of taboo language try to prohibit or to delete certain aspects in language. In view of the above, it is clear to cite that the Bukusu on their part have certain aspects of politeness in language use that they hold dear in their circumcision rites songs– strategies of politeness in their circumcision rites songs.

Genre of song in oral literature has one crucial role in human life; that of promoting good interpersonal relationship among a diverse and elaborate audience that certain songs may end up being performed. While citing Freuchen (1962), Finnegan (1970) said that songs are powerful ideas that are performed by people after being possessed with inner power strength. This scholar's opinion underpins one fact; that any idea that human being may end up having deep in his/her inner self erupts after certain strengths grip them. Circumcision rites songs among the African societies practicing these rites of passage uphold the vital role played by such songs. Maneniang (1997) observed that when circumcision songs are removed from their ideal context they end up losing their intended purpose since they can only be meaningful within such contexts among the Kabras a sub-tribe among the Luhya community. Maneniang's study involved songs performed during circumcision ceremony among the Kabras sub-tribe and opines that; they play a very important role to the male child's rite of passage after birth, circumcision, marriage, old age and finally death.

Mwai, (1997) study confined itself to the strength of songs among the Swahili and found out that even though male masculinity strength is a reality among the Swahili marriage context; females have ways of expressing their feelings (pain, torture, love) through songs. Nkonge (2008) researched on stylistics and themes of a renowned maestro Kikuyu Benga musician the late Joseph Kamaru in relation to the varied occurrences in the community among the Kikuyu. These two studies have shown how an aspect of song is of critical concern to all areas of human life – circumcision being one such undertaking.

Gitonga (2009) study confined itself on the changes that have taken place on Aembu community circumcision songs before and after colonial rule in Kenya and found out that Aembu circumcision songs are very critical in inculcating major circumcision cultural knowledge as envisioned by this community. In view of this; politeness in Bukusu circumcision songs happens to be an explicit aspect that is known to be in tandem with this society's rite of passage, hence need to find out how politeness in Bukusu circumcision songs plays out.

4. Theoretical Framework

The politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987) is widely accepted and utilized as the basis for research by the researchers in the field of not only sociolinguistics but of psychology, business, and so on. They define 'face' as 'the public self image that every member wants to claim for himself', and claim that 'people cooperate (and assume each others' cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction'. They then divided the 'face' into two; 'negative face', the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, and 'positive face,' the positive consistent of self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by those involved in interaction. When people interact, they use politeness strategies to soften the threat to each other's face.

Two different types of politeness are used in interaction; 'negative politeness' and 'positive politeness'. Brown and Levinson defined negative politeness as 'a redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded (1987:129), and state that negative politeness is 'the most elaborate and the most conventionalized set of linguistic strategies' (1987:130). Typical examples of negative politeness strategies are conventionally indirect ways to request or to use honorifics. Yale (2005) observes this as negative politeness strategy which is most common in most English – speaking contexts, and acts as a face saving parameter. Positive politeness is defined as 'redress directed to the addressee's positive face, his perennial desire that his wants (or the actions/acquisitions/values resulting from them) should be thought of as desirable' (1987:101).

Positive politeness strategies include somewhat exaggerated elements or 'element of insincerity', and that separates a positive politeness strategy from ordinary daily conversation. Some of the typical examples of positive politeness strategies are complimenting, joking, responding emphatically, and using nicknames. As a postscript on the aforesaid; Bukusu circumcision rites songs may exhibit critical elements of politeness that can be examined linguistically since politeness is a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange.

5. Findings and Discussion

Circumcision rites songs among the Bukusu have critical roles like it has been attributed to other African communities with no much diverse difference. These songs are always aimed to inculcate knowledge not only to the circumcised but to the entire community by pointing out the importance of giving birth and tending to the Bukusu boy child to the level of facing the circumciser when time is due. These songs possess rich linguistic diction ranging from proverbs, riddles, innuendos, simile, euphemism, (figurative language) which target to embrace aspects of politeness since the entire community is involved. Politeness strategy that plays out here is negative politeness since the language used at this point is hedging technique-thus off record. Another aspect of these songs is to praise the initiates for their boldness for accepting to face that painful circumciser's knife the way Mango the renowned proponent of the act did. Accordingly; this has always been equated with positive politeness whose intention is to address threatening positive face of those involved.

Circumcision rites songs among the Bukusu are known as *Kimyenyakye sikhebo* and they are divided into three groups; those that are sung one night before the day preceding the circumcision (*Kimyenyakye khulanga*) which is known as *amba mutalya* (embrace *mutalya*) and it is performed when the initiates visit their clan members and friends inviting them to grace their occasion. During this period the lad to be initiated carries a bell with him known as *chinyimba* and

blows a whistle which resonates well with positive politeness strategy. In addition various songs are sung at this juncture, some being composed at that given time; these songs are such as: *mulongo*, *kongana*, *luwaya*, *babuya*, *lukembe* and *Amba mutalya*. *Amba mutalya* is a classical example of a song that depicts an aspect of positive politeness where positive faces of those being invited are taken care of. The songs that were sung during this stage in essence were meant to praise the Bukusu sub-tribe and to instill a sense of courage to the Bukusu initiate lads. Songs that are sung the night preceding the morning of circumcision are known as *kimyenya kye khuminya*; a good example is the *chinyanga chawe* whose connotation is: days are over and postulates that time is ripe for this act to be administered on the initiates. The last category of circumcision rites songs are those that are performed after that critical act is administered and they are referred to as *kimyenya kye khukhwiyalula* a classical example being *lelo mundubi embya* (today in the new basket) which in essence aims to praise the initiates for being a new and complete member of the community. In relation to an earlier observation; these songs have varying roles in the Bukusu Community: reprimanding those who go against the wishes of the community, acts as innuendos to those who show signs of cowardice, encouraging the initiates, giving guidance on how to lead a good life and to entertain.

After singing circumcision songs that are meant to invite members of one's clan, family and friends; songs that follow are anchored on five critical principles that are in line with Bukusu initiation ceremony. These principles must be undertaken by all and sundry within the Bukusu fraternity; this is an example of positive politeness in which case all are part and parcel. Each principle is always accompanied with a specific circumcision song. The five critical principles are:-

- Khuchukhila which refers to watering.
- Ebukhocha which refers at uncle's place
- Lichoni which refers stomach
- Esitosi/syetosi which refers to river
- Sikhebo/sisingilo which refers to circumcision

Khuchukhila which refers to watering is a very critical aspect in the initial stage of performing the cut. The initiator drinks traditional beer (*Busaa*-which is prepared by use of millet *limela* which is fermented with water). During this occasion of watering a song known as *sioyoyo* is sung which happens to be the first song that was sung when Mango the proponent of the act was initiated among the Bukusu. The song is believed to possess spiritual strength to a point of making anyone in the *omukhebi* (circumciser) lineage to shake uncontrollably and even to collapse. Once this song is performed the male child who was to be initiated must be initiated under all cost. The song praises the initiate for accepting the knife in turn he is sworn in as part of the community-here positive politeness plays out which addresses needs of positive face of the male child. Some of the words in the *sioyoyo* song happen to be innuendos which target to castigate those communities who do not ameliorate the act of initiating their male children; an example of such songs is the *musinde sirya mbalu oche ebunyolo* which means, 'boys who fear the knife and have not been initiated should flee and go to the country of Luos who are never circumcised.' This kind of statement may end up impacting negatively to the Luo community because as a community they are never circumcised, hence affecting their negative face if it is taken out of context of Bukusu circumcision ceremony rites song.

5.1. An example of Sioyoyo Song in Bukusu

Soloist	Audience
1. Hoo ooh kumwanawe	<i>hoo o</i>
2. Musindewe	<i>hoo o</i>
3. Khubolela	<i>hoo oo</i>
4. Hoo ooh khwarakho	<i>hoo o</i>
5. Oh siboyo	<i>hoo o</i>
6. Sye bakhale	<i>hoo oo</i>
7. Omusinde oteremaka acha ebunyolo	<i>haa ho</i>
8. Acha ebunyolo	<i>haa ho</i>
9. Acha ebunyolo	<i>haa ho oo</i>
10. Hoo ooh khwalotia	<i>hoo o</i>
11. Kumwanawe	<i>hoo o</i>
12. Khubolela	<i>hoo oo</i>
13. Omusinde sirya embalu siyambola	<i>haa ho</i>
14. Acha ebunyolo	<i>haa ho</i>
15. Kumwanawe	<i>haa ho oo</i>
16. Hoo ohh omusinde	<i>hoo o</i>
17. Khwalotia	<i>hoo o</i>
18. Khubolela	<i>hoo oo</i>
19. Eyefwe eye mwinyala wa Mango	<i>haa ho</i>
20. Onyikanyika	<i>haa ho</i>
21. Ese khubolela	<i>haa ho oo</i>

Table 1

Translated Version	
1. <i>Hoo ooh</i> you initiate	hoo o
2. You initiate	hoo o
3. I tell you	hoo o
4. <i>Hoo ooh</i> let us begin the song	hoo o
5. Oh the song of siboyo	hoo o
6. Of our ancestors	hoo oo
7. Any petrified initiate should go to the country of Luos	haa ho
8. Should go to the country of Luos	haa ho
9. Should go to the country of Luos	haa ho
10. <i>Hoo ooh</i> we are returning the courageous	hoo o
11. You initiate	hoo o
12. I tell you	hoo oo
13. He who fears to be circumcised is useless	haa ho
14. Should go to the country of Luos	haa ho
15. You initiate	hoo o
16. <i>Hoo ooh</i> initiate	hoo o
17. We are returning the courageous	hoo o
18. I tell you	hoo oo
19. Our circumcision of Mwiya of Mango	haa ho
20. You initiate walk with pride	haa ho
21. I tell you	haa ho oo

Table 2

In relation to the context that this song is performed; signifiers of positive politeness are elaborate, going by the text on line 10 and 17 it is undeniable that the phrase *we are returning the courageous* depicts a strategy of addressing the needs of positive face of the initiate by referring to him as courageous. The phrases on line 7, 8, 9 and 14 points out to a fundamental aspect of a coward and the advise being given; *Should go to the country of Luos* this is a good example of a deliberate positive politeness that is meant to allay fear of the would be petrified coward who ironically is not referred to by his name because if this was done; then, his positive face would have automatically been injured. Another critical aspect of politeness allows euphemism to play out and as such addressing needs of negative face of the initiates. In reference to the phrase on line 20 *you initiate walk with pride* is a good example of positive politeness that is meant to elate and boost the initiates' esteem for being ready to be initiated to the status of adulthood. Lines 4, 10, 17 and 19 underscore one crucial aspect of emphasizing closeness between speaker and hearer (initiates); which is seen as a solidarity strategy (Yule 2005). Yale continues to postulate that, this is the principle operating strategy among a whole group or it may be an option used by an individual speaker on a particular occasion (like *omukhebi* 'initiator') within an occasion when such rites of passage to adulthood are administered to a Bukusu boy child). The lines in reference tease out crucial aspect of 'closeness' that wraps up the entire Bukusu community if phrase on line 19 can aptly summarize the analysis (Our circumcision). This is positive politeness that makes anyone among the Bukusu to own up the occasion. Yule (2005) said that; 'linguistically, such a strategy will include personal information, use of nicknames, sometimes even abusive terms (particularly among males), and shared dialect or slang expressions. Frequently, a solidarity strategy will be marked via inclusive terms such as 'we' and 'let's'

In view of the above, *siboyo* is among the songs that are held in high esteem by the Bukusu as a community and as such it is only sung during special occasions which are monumental to the community as a whole. Initiates embrace the performance of this type of song because Mango underwent a painful cut that paved the way for this song to be composed and anyone who happens to be associated with Mango is revered and respected for withstanding the initiator's painful knife. In summary, the song depicts two aspects of politeness; positive and negative politeness, thus a face saving acts and face threatening acts. Face threatening acts are also part of *sioyoyo* since if lines 7, 8, 9 and 14 are to be critically analysed; then Luos as a community will have her negative face want threatened.

Ebukhocha which refers to uncle's place is equally a critical principle that sees uncle to the initiate performing rites that are in tandem with the Bukusu customs. Here, uncle to the initiate slaughters a heifer and hangs piece of meat known as *lukiki* on the neck of initiate and includes a few ribs. Here the initiate is smeared with a mixture of stomach refuse from the slaughtered heifer known as *buse*.

Likhoni which refers to stomach of a heifer within the context of the Bukusu circumcision rites ceremony comes immediately after *ebukhocha* at uncle's place and takes place at the homestead of the father to the initiate. The process involves overnight dancing which is known as *khuminya* where the father gives one of his heifers called *eunwa* which is slaughtered and the heifer's stomach is hanged on the neck of the initiate. The stomach so hanged on the neck of the initiate is removed the following day in the morning by untie of the initiate after the cut. The meat is cooked and eaten by untie who in return is assumed to have been blessed. During this occasion songs that are performed are aimed at castigating bad behaviors of infidelity by nieces who involve themselves in sexual intercourse with the brothers to the husband. These songs depict a crucial aspect of positive politeness to the entire community. Within the principle of *likhoni* there is also an aspect of face threatening act which is negative and meant to reprimand cowards who may end up not withstand the cut – like Luos.

- *Amba Mutalya*

Soloist	audience
1. <i>Bali nikhwembilisia bulai mutalya kuno khusuna mungaki nekhwlao</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
2. <i>Enje chelechenje kumumu kufwa mulamwa kasenda engubo</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
3. <i>Enje chelechenje kumumu kufwa mulamwa kandabula engubo</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
4. <i>Bali ututu munyanga echo, khusuna mungaki nekhwilao</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
5. <i>Bali nacha khusikulu sia bolingo nacha khukhesia nende Wele</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
6. <i>Bali nekhwembilisia busa mutalya kuno bulusya bosi nebengila</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
7. <i>Bali khwimbilisia lundi</i>	<i>Ah webale oyee</i>
	<i>amba mutalya</i>
8. <i>Khwimba mutalya kwe baluyia</i>	<i>Ah webale oyee</i>
	<i>amba mutalya</i>
9. <i>Embalu ye buluyia musibala muno bali Mango papa wakirera</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
10. <i>Bali ututu bali ututu munyanga echo bali Mango papa wakirera</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
11. <i>Nalangilisha lundi nalanga bona khane nalanga nende omubofu</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
12. <i>Nakhesia kwana kukhana kwanja khukhona kuli kumbafu,</i>	
<i>stiupidi khane Mango akubolele</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
13. <i>Kuli kumbafu, stiupidi khane ukimwi eli munda</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
14. <i>Bali ututu bali ututu munyanga echo khane ututu eli ne liloko</i>	<i>amba mutalya</i>
15. <i>Bali kwimbilisia lundi</i>	<i>Ah webale oyee</i>
	<i>amba mutalya</i>
16. <i>Khwimba mutalya kwe baluyia</i>	<i>Ah webale oyee</i>
	<i>amba mutalya</i>
17. <i>Kuno mutalya nawe oloba</i>	<i>Ah webale oyee</i>
	<i>amba mutalya</i>

Table 3

- Translated version of *Amba mutalya*

1. We are singing this <i>mutalya</i> well by jumping up and down	embrace mutalya
2. It was clear outside in the sun when an in-law stripped her cloths	embrace mutalya
3. It was clear outside in the sun when an in-law tore my shorts	embrace mutalya
4. Again and again in those days as I jumped up and down	embrace mutalya
5. I sojourned at the hill of <i>bolingo</i> and greeted God	embrace mutalya
6. We are only singing this <i>mutalya</i> when all Luyias are circumcised	embrace mutalya
7. Ones again we are singing	ah appreciate
	embrace mutalya
8. We are singing Luyia mutalya	ah appreciate
	embrace mutalya
9. It is said Luyia circumcision was brought by Mango in the world	embrace mutalya
10. Again and again it was Mango who brought it in those days	embrace mutalya
11. Look here, when I called again it was a blind person I called	embrace mutalya
12. I greeted a girl child and she started to abuse me fool, stupid since she was instructed ba Mango	embrace mutalya
13. Imagine fool, stupid because HIV/AIDS was in her belly	embrace mutalya
14. Repeating that again and again in those days it was a disease	embrace mutalya
15. Then we are singing again	ah shukrani
	embrace mutalya
16. We are singing mutalya of Luyia	ah appreciate
	embrace mutalya
17. You are disputing yet this is mutalya	ah shukrani
	embracemutalya

Table 4

This song like any other song sung during Bukusu circumcision rites involves participants in interactions living in a context which has created rigidly fixed social relationships around her; in such instances face wants are desired. In connection with these; the song has several lines that point out as to how face saving acts are teased out. On lines 1, 4, 6, 7,

8, 9, 15, and 16 Bukusu as a community in its entirety positive politeness sets in and addresses positive face of Bukusu. Although one of the in-laws involved herself in obscene acts; she was reprimanded without her name being called out. In reality, this is an example of positive politeness strategy addressing positive face of the culprit. On the same breath, there is also unnamed girl who is badly be have denoted for her hurling insults to Bukusu male children. Although the act is not acceptable her positive face wants have been considered which turns to be deterrent strategy to other Bukusu girls with such uncouth behavior in the community. Yule (2005) opines that there are some social circumstances where using a direct command as a bald on record expression is considered appropriate among social equals. Therefore; the song as a whole puts Bukusu in one fold, those behaving well and also those behaving badly. Audience response 'embrace' is a form of positive politeness that addresses negative face of the entire community; indeed lines 6, 8, 9 and 10 emphasizes closeness between speaker and hearer, thus solidarity strategy which upholds positive politeness and intends to save positive face of the community.

Esitosi/syetosi which refers to 'river' is another critical aspect that sees the initiate being escorted to one of the rivers which is considered to be sanctified in which case chances of the river drying up is a mirage even with prolonged drought. Such rivers are believed to be found in places called *lurende* which denotes springs. It is believed that in case such a river dried up, all those who may have been taken there during such crucial rites would have died or perished in a horrifying manner. Journey to the river (*esitosi*) as usual commence early in the morning before dawn with different songs being sung; such songs are *chinyanga chawe* denoting that time is ripe for the 'cut' of *orao babala* insinuating that initiate should place his penis well for the circumciser to chop his fore skin referred to *lifunga* among the community. Singing of *chinyanga chawe* is halted immediately circumcision contingent approached the river (*esitosi*).

The abrupt silence signified that the river was sanctified. After this undertaking the journey back home commences with a different and long route back home being preferred to allow circumcision contingent to arrive home with all members of the community to witness the real cutting which is performed at home. During journey home *sioyoyo/soboyo* is sung being led by one person who is always nominated beforehand.

There are other songs that are sung resonating well with this critical Bukusu rites impending occasions where those in attendance are singled out and by the use of negative politeness strategy they are communicated to. Negative politeness strategy in such a case is employed to enable those in attendance be abreast on crucial matters of the community as they unfold. Figurative language is used on such occasions following the fact that, those in attendance may be from varying social background; hence, application of off record strategy. Such type of a song is:

- *Omukhwe Webaya*

Soloist	Audience
1. <i>Omukhwe webaya ebweni</i>	<i>Sindu sikhukhupa wakwa</i>
2. <i>Papa webaya ebweni</i>	<i>Sindu sikhukhupa wakwa</i>
3. <i>Mayi yasenda ebweni</i>	<i>Sindu sikhukhupa wakwa</i>
4. <i>Senge yesinga bwangu</i>	<i>Sindu sikhukhupa wakwa</i>
5. <i>Eh masewa we khwarakho</i>	<i>Eh masewa we khwarakho</i>
6. <i>Eh mayi we khwarakho</i>	<i>Eh mayi we khwarakho</i>
7. <i>Eh musinde we khwarakho</i>	<i>Eh musinde we khwarakho</i>
8. <i>Hee hee</i>	<i>Haa</i>
9. <i>Hoo yee</i>	<i>Haa ha</i>
10. <i>Wayambonakho</i>	<i>Haa</i>
11. <i>Musinde we</i>	<i>Wayambonakho</i>
12. <i>Enje bwasia</i>	<i>Haa</i>
13. <i>Musinde luwele</i>	<i>Haa ha</i>

Table 5

- Translated Version

Soloist	Audience
1. You in – law, off in front	Lest you fall on being hit by something
2. You father, off in front	Lest you fall on being hit by something
3. You mother, move away from front	Lest you fall on being hit by something
4. Bathe quickly you auntie	Lest you fall on being hit by something
5. Eh you coward we are starting	Eh coward we are starting
6. Eh you mother we are starting	Eh you mother we are starting
8. Hee hee	Haa
9. Hoo yee	Haa ha
10. Have you seen me really?	Haa
11. Have you ever seen me you initiate?	Haa ha
12. Dawn is approaching	Ha
13. It is over you initiate	Haa ha

Table 6

The song is sung to make earnest requests to various members of the community to observe certain measures lest certain unprecedented fines are initiated against them. Since this song is sung when the initiate is nude, in – laws are cautioned not to be on the way of the initiate to guard them from seeing the initiate private part and allow him to pass. *Lest you fall on being hit by something* has been used figuratively meaning lest you are surcharged. This is classical example of a negative politeness strategy which is applied in order to guard the in – laws negative face wants. The person leading the song goes off record by hedging to avoid threatening negative face of would auntie in attendance. On the same breathe; failure by the soloist to name would be auntie ushers in positive politeness strategy which plays a crucial role of addressing auntie's positive face. In reference, lines 2, 3 and 4 are making earnest appeal to the father, mother and auntie to steer away from the vicinity lest they see the initiate's unpalatable body features. In order for the singers to avoid threatening their (father, mother and auntie) negative faces the singers employs figurative language. The initiate has questions directed to him, in any case this act may end up threatening his negative face; in order to mitigate that, singers opt for off record strategy by not asking initiates direct questions. It is worth to note that, in such situations, initiates perfect acts of decoding such statements to the satisfaction of the singers. This is a good example of negative politeness where singers go for off record strategy as a mitigating agent.

5.2. Sikhebo/Sisingilo Which Refers to Circumcision

On approaching the homestead of the initiate the song namely *sioyoyo* is halted abruptly while his dad heaves in front to welcome him covered in a blanket. Initially, they used to cover themselves in cow's hide. At this juncture father to the initiates gives his son final advice telling him why he needed to be bold since as his father he was brave and never feared *embalu* (circumciser's knife) and that the son needed to emulate his dad since their grand fathers never feared it (*embalu*), so was the community at large. After that precise advice from the dad's initiate, the main activity of the 'cutting of the initiate's foreskin is done (*lifunga*)', the circumciser vanishes unceremoniously leaving Bukusu elders to ascertain whether the cut was done according to the community's desired specifications. After auntie's breaks in an ululation mood referred to *sigalagalaa* song known as *khwera omurwa* (slaying the enemy) is sung. The singing of this song signaled the final stage of Bukusu circumcision ceremony rites. In essence, being a highly coded song; the song is meant to paint a picture of how the enemy is killed (fear) – the initiate has conquered fear by withstanding the pain of the knife (*embalu*). *Khwera omurwa* is sung in praise of the initiate thus saving his positive face.

Soloist Audience

- Yaya khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Omusinde khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Papa khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Mayi khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Sawa khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Bakoki khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Senge khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Omukosi khwera omurwaAah khwera omurwa
- Translated version

1. Brother we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy.
2. Initiate we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
3. Father we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
4. Mother we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
5. It's okay we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
6. My age – set we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
7. Unties we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy
8. Brethren we have slain the enemy	Aah we have slain the enemy

Table 7

As a positive politeness strategy the song was meant to bring all the members of the community together and own up the victory; thus solidarity strategy which served as a mitigating agent to the entire community. The song salutes all members of the community by calling them and opining one critical outcome after the initiate endearing that excruciating pain from the circumciser's knife (*embalu*). The phrase 'slain the enemy' has been used figuratively to refer to the intolerable acts of fear that may be displayed by a Bukusu male child during the entire occasion of such rites. In accordance to Yule (2005), this may be seen as an operating principle in which the whole group is brought together in this vital occasion that is held with high esteem by the community. The strategy may as well be referred to as explanation strategy since the discourse that played out was that of explaining the outcome of what the community expected in the first place. The enemy here was one – fear and since the young man never got petrified; then, all of them had every reason to partake in the outcome. All of them as a community had won acclaim – a mark of honor to the entire community. Yule

(2005) observed that; linguistically, such a strategy includes personal information, use of nicknames, sometimes even abusive terms... In this case, a coward was being referred to as fear.

6. Conclusion

Succinctly speaking, the study has attempted to show that the Bukusu as a community has rich diction of politeness exhibited in their circumcision songs which in essence take place during circumcision periods. There are various politeness strategies that are meant to mitigate face threatening acts such as positive politeness and negative politeness. These mitigating measures are always done in reference to all and sundry in the contexts of circumcision among the Bukusu. The songs have in no doubt shown existence of phrases that have astutely stood out as mitigating factors where a given member of the community may have had his/her face wants being imposed upon.

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