

The Folklorist as Teacher: Towards the Use of Story Telling Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT Child learns best in his mother tongue and through stories related to his immediate environment. Teachers too often find out that pupils are eager to read stories they have seen on the screen, because the stories mean more to them. Pupils' experiences are broadened through watching films and listening to stories. Youngsters also want to discuss and write about the make-believe experience they have shared as they strengthen their communication. Unfortunately, the art of storytelling is almost extinct in Nigerian schools. This paper focuses attention on re-developing the curriculum and re-defining the technique of story telling. Fifty Yoruba teachers were randomly selected from secondary schools in Ojoo and Yewa south local governments of Lagos and Ogun state, Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such as mean, standard deviation t-test and PPMC. The results indicate that there is significant difference between folklorist as a teacher and the use of storytelling pedagogy, listening to folktales influence or affects change of attitude, builds character, new concepts and ideas of the target audience. The implications for teacher education in the next millennium were highlighted.

INTRODUCTION

Modern technology, though a welcome innovation in our education coupled with the every growing body of knowledge about teaching and learning, has brought about advancement in education. Most classrooms in the elitist society today boast of a multitude of technical marvels, to enhance and increase learning. Such items as slide projectors, overhead projectors, tape recorders, television, etc., are a common sight in our classrooms for use by well-trained teachers.

The side-effects of the increase in the use of modern technology is the serious decline in one important aspect for personal communication-storytelling. Relating a story or a tale is perhaps the oldest form of literary expression. Storytelling has suffered greatly under the impact of technology. In fact, a major threat to this precious art is electronic story-telling. The teacher is often afraid to compete as many good folktales or other stories have been reproduced by record and film companies with professional actors as story-tellers, backed with full orchestras and special effects. Civilization and urbanization processes among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria have culminated in a state of cultural diversity and cultural integration which has led to cultural hybridity; and this has affected the Yoruba society both negatively and

positively. Some of the areas which are adversely affected are the Yoruba language, literature and culture. Research findings have revealed that the Yoruba language is endangered (Adejumo 2009). Chambers (1966) however stated that:

The productions are just those productions. They are not, in real sense, good substitutes for a story-teller. They have missed the essence and issue of the art of story-telling, that of personally relating a good story to a group of listeners at a given time in a given place.

Story-telling is, therefore, a highly personal experience, on a one-story teller- one group basis. The experience is one that develops and grows for a brief period and then disappears. The process can and should never be exactly the same again. The experience is a mutual creation, both the storyteller and the listener create together a world built around an imagination and the use of words. Story time, therefore, is a wonderful, almost secured, private time. Teachers should not fear the competition of the electronic story-teller; as such stories told cannot have the same magic and flavour. It is merely a substitute.

Folk literature began in the oral tradition and it lends itself easily to retelling, it has for hundreds of years delighted children and adults as it is still doing today. Oral tradition, otherwise known as oral literature, is passed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. It is

thus reproduced verbatim in from memory throughout the centuries. They are communal folk stories as such no one could claim individual authorship or originality.

Oladeji (1997) submitted in his paper thus: "Oral literature refers to that large body of poem, plays, stories which are not written down, but form the basis of methodology and legend throughout the world. It might not be far from the truth, therefore, to say that oral literature emanated from the inborn habit of our forefathers to tell stories and express in words some special aspects of human experience. In view of the morality of this branch of literature, the composition and performance take place simultaneously.

Adejumo (2009) opined that oral literature of the Yorùbá of southwestern Nigeria is fundamentally oral from inception. It was the introduction of Western culture/Western education that brought about the written tradition. With the threat of endangerment of the Yorùbá language as well as annihilation of the Yoruba indigenous culture, as a result of cultural integration, literature is often overlooked and neglected in collection, study and analysis as a component or human endeavour. Oral literature by definition is dependent on a performer who formulates it, in words, on a specific occasion, compared to written form a piece of work can be said to have an independent and tangible existence.

A good storyteller in performing oral literature has various visual resources at his beck and call. Being face to face with his public, he has a lot of advantages to enhance the impact of his story. He uses gestures, expressions and sometimes mimicry. Dramatic body movements expressed in form of dance, which the audience often joins, often accompanies the visual aspect. According to Cheung (2001), using popular culture (which s/he defined to include 'television, special-effect movies, highly stimulating music, gossip magazines, comics, fashion, computer games and the Internet' p. 56), to motivate a group of secondary school students in Hong Kong to learn English. S/he found that the students performed better with the use of popular culture. This implies that recognizing individual learners' backgrounds results in better educational outcomes. Based on the finding, Cheung recommended that language teaching should be made to benefit from popular culture.

The storyteller often involves his listener directly as a form of arousal and active participation to join in the choruses of songs, which he introduces into his narrative. The audience is carried along to perform. These qualities mark the distinction between oral and written literature.

Since the origin of our local folklore has been traced and linked with oral literature, it is pertinent to have a look at the composition of oral literature. Oral literature is seen by Africans as the work of a communal consciousness and group authorship rather than the inspiration of an individual artists. In this century, oral literature is seen as a potent weapon not only to forge national unity but for the purpose of national development. Literature (both written and oral) has helped our government to introduce new concepts, ideas or development in the century.

Educationally, oral literature has served as a strong tool for national development. One of the educative functions seen in listening to folktales or riddles is where one is expected to learn to change one's negative attitude and character in the society. A typical character in most Yoruba and Igbo Folklore is the tortoise (Ijapa in Yoruba and 'nibe in Igbo). He is usually presented as a crafty, greedy and unfaithful character who suffers at the end of his mischief.

Several tales are told of this crafty animal. At one time he stole his in-law's pottage and ended up losing the hair on his head. He also craftily took the Elephant captive by pretending to be leading the Elephant to his (the Elephant's) installation as king. The Elephant later fell into a hole concealed under the king's throne. Ijapa also tricked the Itare into running a race against him, which he won through his craftiness. Many youths have been educated on the importance of such virtues as patience and sincerity. Oral literature should then be seen as an indispensable instrument.

The curriculum can be enhanced by the use of the story-teller's art. The repertoire of the story-teller should not be overlooked. Tales of adventure can grow from a good unit in social or religious studies. Exciting stories from the early Africans can help deepen the understanding of how they lived and worked. The place of the good storyteller in the curriculum is without par tells his stories using famous figures in adventures, which the textbooks do not offer. Personal experiences or experiences of one's family are a good source of materials for tales.

Relating stories about oneself and one's families would always add a dimension that will foster a good relationship between the story-teller and his listeners.

Most story-tellers shy away from the term 'techniques' in story-telling, but the art of telling stories itself suggests technique. According to Olajide (2006), folklore and culture enhance philosophical grounding and world view which a learner could bring to the class and utilize for effective language learning. In developing the techniques, the first hurdle to cross is choosing the correct story. The best professional story-teller cannot tell every story. He builds a repertoire of stories that are best suited to his style and personality. He recognizes the correct choice when he comes to it and it clicks with his personality. One such professional storyteller on our screen today is Jimi Solanke who handles 'Story Land' with great dexterity. 'Story Land' is a creation of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) Network Service. Besides this, there is 'Tales by Moonlight' which is also a production of NTA network.

A good storyteller knows how to find a rich story. He gets familiar with all kinds of story collections and materials and then identifies those that are 'just right'. Hunting for these stories could be a delight. The next step is preparing the story for telling. This is a vital step moving towards the technique. It is important for the story-teller to note that he is not doing a recitation or a reading but telling a story that will live as a unique singular experience. Memorization has no place here, rather the outline should be known. These could be kept on cards for further reference to refresh the story-teller about the structure and episode.

Seating arrangement is also very important for successful story-telling. There are various arrangements depending upon the story-teller's bias and physical surroundings. The listeners, however, must be able to hear and see the story-teller's face and eyes without straining. The usual form of seating arrangement is the semi-circle whereby the story-teller sits and his listeners sit in a semi-circle around him. The essential thing is the informal and relaxed climate which must prevail.

The good story-teller has at his disposal his body in general and the face in particular. The face is often the mirror of the story. The face must be capable of mobility to smile or frown, cry or shed tears, show fears and apprehension

etc. The eyes in particular provide a clue during the story. A good eye contact is, therefore, essential for good story-telling. The voice must be expressive and effective with clear diction to present a rich vocabulary capable of building images.

The voice must be used as an instrument that can shout, whisper, exude excitement, fear, unhappiness, etc. Finally, the hands are a marvel to watch. They must be able to create magic by exploring, questioning, asking, in the form of gestures.

The story, of course, is the heart of any good story-telling situation, because the setting is devoid of stage setting, picture, coloured lights. The good storyteller depends on his imaginative worlds to create such pictures. As earlier mentioned, story-telling remains perhaps the oldest and the most effective art form. It must be revived. It has survived the printing press, camera etc. The art itself has value, be it aesthetical. It is an important and valuable ingredient in any classroom, especially in the teaching of the literature. The acquisition of the skill of story-telling takes time for it is an art. Teachers, therefore, should not fear competition from the electronic devices. They should not fear to tell stories.

Various home videos on sale in the markets today could be used to enhance teaching (as they are mostly dramatized tales).

There is no gainsaying the fact that there is proliferation of these home videos but we have some that are really doing the job they should do, that is teaching the society, in general, morals, and particularly, helping to mould the lives of young ones. Many of the home videos have actually been teaching while others have been cheating. One such video that has been helping the pedagogy is Kareem Adepoju (Baba Wande) T'oluwa nile (The Earth is the Lord's). The land is portrayed as being the sole property of God represented on earth by the lesser gods (Orisa). Baba Wande's attempt to sell the land brought wrath not only on the people but also on himself. The moral lesson here is that no one flouts the order of the gods and goes scot-free.

The situation to the problem of neglect of story-telling can be effected through a comprehensive teacher education programme:

- i. The curriculum must be developed and reviewed to provide for the introduction of story-telling across all levels of primary and secondary schools.

- ii. The teacher training programme should prepare teachers to cope effectively with the use of story-telling in classroom situation.
- iii. The poor attitude to the discipline which has hitherto hindered the study and teaching of the subject must be removed. Okanlawon (1977) observed that things are moving in the direction and the scenario has become brighter. For example, oral literature is now taught in many Nigerian Universities and is becoming one of the most popular disciplines in humanities.

Active research activities into the use of story-telling in the teaching of not only literature but other subjects should be encouraged and vigorously pursued.

METHODOLOGY

Fifty Yoruba teachers were randomly selected from secondary schools in Ojoo and Yewa south local governments of Lagos and Ogun state, Nigeria. Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Results were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics such mean, standard deviation t-test and PPMC.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Hypotheses Testing

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between folklorist as a teacher and the use of story-telling pedagogy.

The calculated t-value was 15.09, which was greater than the tabulated t-value of 2.01 at 0.05 level of significance (Table 1). This indicates that there is significant difference between folklorist as a teacher and the use of story-telling pedagogy. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This was supported by the observation of Adejumo (2009), that the need for the new media for the documentation of oral literature arose when it was discovered that the traditional media (story-telling pedagogy) were not inter-

active media. Interaction is important to an average Yoruba man because he sees himself as an integral part of Yoruba oral performance. The limitation of radio as a medium portrayed in the Yorùbá 'asò rò mágbèsì' (One-who-speaks-without-expecting-a-reply). The term is derogatory, because it is only a *sigìdì* (statue) that behaves as such within the context of the Yorùbá culture. With the new media, there comes a new lease of life for Yorùbá expressions in a natural way, because the new media provide facilities for interactivity. There are constraints to the use of culture and folklore as espoused in this paper. For example, most teachers may not be familiar with appropriate folktales. Also, a lot of parents no longer pay attention to cultural matters, probably as a result of current religious status. Many of the folktales used in schools across Africa are likely to have been published by foreign authors. In addition, most Basic Education curricula may not provide adequate opportunities for the use of folktales (the curricula in Nigeria, according to Olajide (2006) do not!). Even where such folktales have been significantly published by indigenous writers and relevant books are recommended by government (as of Nigeria), poverty may prevent parents from buying them for their wards. And government may lack the funds to make the books available for free.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between listening to folktales and change of attitude/character.

Results in Table 2 shows positive correlations and intercorrelations between COA, BCH, NCI, and LTF (0.812, 0.940, 0.906, $p < 0.05$) at 0.05 level of significance. This implies listening to folktales influence or affects change of attitude, build character, new concepts and ideas of the target audience. The results were in agreement with the assertion of Adejumo (2009) that the Yorùbá oral and written traditions have similar qualities. Some of the qualities are:

- the creative expression of personal experiences, emotions, ideas, or social experience for pleasure or moral education,
- the creative use of language for the express-

Table 1: t-test analysis of differences between folklorist as a teacher and use of storytelling pedagogy

Group	N	X	SD	Df	t-cal	t-tab
Folklorist as a teacher	50	2.12	0.94	4	15.09	2.01
Use of story-telling pedagogy	50	1.84	0.87			

t cal=15.09, df=49 $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation, and correlation matrix of change of attitude, build of character, new concepts of ideas and listen to folktales' =50

Variables	COA	BCH	NCI	LTF
COA	1.000			
BCH	0.804	1.000		
NCI	0.860	0.901	1.000	
LTF	0.812	0.940	0.906	1.000
Mean	1.82	1.74	2.10	1.84
S.D	0.80	0.75	1.04	0.87

Correlation is significant at 0.05 levels.

COA = Change of attitude

BCH = Build character

NCI = New concepts and ideas

LTF = Listening to folktales.

ion of personal experiences, emotions, ideas or social experience for pleasure or moral education,

- the use of the oral forms for either the symbolic or realistic representation,
- the creative exploitations of the communicative resources of language.

It could be inferred from the above that both the oral and written traditions have utilitarian and pedagogical values. Hence, they are taken as teaching courses/subjects at all levels of education in schools. However, the teaching and documentation of oral literature are given priority at tertiary institutions. According to Adejumo (2009) Funegan (1978), one of the educative functions seen in listening to folktales or riddles is to learn to change one's negative attitude and character in the society. A typical character in most Yoruba and Igbo Folklore is the tortoise (*Ijapa* in Yoruba and '*nibe* in Igbo). He is usually presented as a crafty, greedy and unfaithful character who suffers at the end of his mischiefs. Scholars like Adeyemi (1998) and Olajide (2006) believed that the medium of writing may have reduced the original flavour of folktales. In the olden days, elders gathered young ones, especially children, to tell them stories of dead people who had shown bravery, animal kingdom, birds, reptiles, and the gins. Those stories (folktales) have the following advantages.

- (1) They sensitize children to the immediate environment.
- (2) They help the children to develop self-confidence.
- (3) They also sharpen the children's survival instinct.
- (4) Folktales increase the children's patriotism.
- (5) They enhance moral development.

Lawal et al. (1997) exhaustively discussed the didactic and philosophical attributes of proverbs, recommending them for the language classroom. Also, Kachru (1991) and Olajide (2006) advocated the use of folktales in the teaching of English as a second language. There are different types of folktales, and many of them have been published as children's literature across Africa.

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to highlight the crucial role of story-telling in the teaching and learning situations in Nigeria schools. The revival of oral literature as a subject will not be an easy task but the society must be properly oriented towards its acceptance. Africans themselves must cease to regard it as primitive and practical causes in story-telling must be enshrined in the syllabi.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Yorùbá Studies Association of Nigeria, broadcasting stations and, even individuals should do everything possible to promote interest in Yoruba culture and oral literature. This will be to ensure real 'life' and preservation will be given to Yorùbá oral literature and culture and transmitting it to other parts of the world will be easier.

Education steeped in the cultural heritage of the people, especially in folktales, could go a long way to ensure the attainment of national literacy objectives.

A cultural element should be employed to enhance the teaching and learning of reading, writing, numeric and digital skills, which would result in teachers who are capable of fully grasping the requisite pedagogy to teach folktales to pupils/students.

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