

Pictorial Reading Strategy and the Learning of Proverbs and Riddles among Primary School Pupils

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ABSTRACT: The study investigated into the effect of pictorial reading strategy on the learning of proverbs and riddles with view to elucidating the need to uphold making children to be well- grounded in their first language. The study adopted quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test design. Three intact classes of Primary Six pupils were assigned to two experimental and one control groups. The treatment took a period of six weeks. Data were subjected to inferential statistics of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The results showed a significant effect with the pre-test level, $(F(2, 164) = .837; p > 0.05)$ and the post-test, $(F(1, 164) = 12.668; p < 0.05; R^2 = 0.63)$. Gender was not found significant, $F(1, 164) = .007; p > 0.05$. The study concluded and recommended that proverbs and riddles, which are linguistic structure of languages, be brought to bear in the learning process because their values in the development of language skills. Teachers should employ appropriate strategies such as pictorial strategy in the teaching process to motivate children into embracing their mother tongue as this will aid the learning of the second language.

KEYWORDS: Pictorial reading strategy, learning, proverbs, riddles, primary school Pupils.

1 INTRODUCTION

Civilization or urbanization has influenced generations both positively and adversely. There is virtually no aspect of human life that has not been touched, more importantly, the culture which is the total way of life of a group of people in terms of the behaviour, beliefs or even the language that distinguishes a group from another. The influence it has on culture has therefore created a wide generational gap to the extent that many valuable aspects of culture are gradually going on extinction or rather being endangered. The most disheartening part of it is the language which has highly been affected making values in the language pathetically becoming estranged to the upcoming generations. As a result, foreign language is being esteemed above the mother tongue, especially in Africa or to be precise in Nigeria.

It needs be pointed out that language goes beyond cultural traits; it is the direct expression of a people's national character and culture in a condensed form as explained by the nineteenth century's German romanticists. It is further expatiated on by American anthropologists who identified language as the most essential carrier of the people's common culture and that there is no how a people's culture may be understood without being acquainted with the language. It is through the language that the intellectual culture of the people is constructed, shared and maintained to manifest the social identity of the people. [1] stated that when a language is taken away from its people, all that remains is mere geographical expression. In other words, language makes a people unique when it is used appropriately and adequately. There are intricate structures in language that serve as embellishment to give the language its beauty and deeper meaning to the users as well as its complexity to non- users. When these intricacies are no more there, the value of the language is completely lost and nothing but emptiness remains. These intricacies are referred to as underlying linguistic structures [2].

In the case of Yoruba language, one of the major languages in Nigeria, proverbs and riddles are some of the intricacies that are embedded in the language. The language is examined based on the policy statement that mother tongue or language of the immediate environment should be used as a medium of instruction in schools from pre-kindergarten level to

primary three (Grade 3) while English language is to be used as a medium of instruction from primary four (Grade 4) upward [3]. The policy statement is in response to research-based evidence such as Ife-Six Years Project and linguists' standpoint that learners thrive well in the learning of the second language when they are well-grounded in their mother tongue [4, 5]. [6] further emphasized that when children learn through their mother tongue; they are not only expanding their knowledge of their mother tongue but also learning concepts and intellectual skills that are relevant to their ability to function appropriately in the second language learning. Stating further, he stressed that once a child learnt a concept in his/her mother tongue, he/she needed not to re-learn the concept rather he/she needs to acquire new labels or 'surface structures' for an intellectual skills already learnt and there would be transfer across languages in academic and literacy skills like ability to distinguish the main idea from the supporting details of a comprehension passage or story. S/he would be able to identify cause and effect, distinguish fact from opinion and map out the sequence of events in a story or historical account. [7] reiterated research evidence by stating that children's fluency and literacy in mother tongue lay a cognitive and linguistic foundation and speedy learning additional languages. Person's language is the language of thought from which novel ideas spring up in someone and that is a germane reason for advocating the acquisition of mother tongue. The implication would be that denying a child of his/her mother tongue amounts to stealing or killing ideas in a child. This is further reiterated by [6] that when a child is asked to leave his/her language at the 'schoolhouse door', it is tantamount to asking the child to leave a central part of who he/she is, that is, his/her identity out. In other words, children are given social rejection and they are likely to lack confidence and self-esteem to function actively in the class and thereby participate less in the classroom instruction. He further stated that the child's mother tongue is the child's identity that can foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to learn. Hence it has to be nurtured for proper educational development of the child.

Proverbs, a linguistic structure of the language, are the wise sayings used to give clearer explanations on discourse. They have both connotative and annotative meanings that are hidden but help to drive home discourse to a logical conclusion. [8] analogically referred to proverbs as the carvings on the legs of a stool that make it a pleasure to sit on, the embroidery on the garment that delights the weaver and the admirers as well as the paintings on the wall that aid the provision of a delightful atmosphere. By implication, proverbs add beauty and values to the language when the users are well-informed and versed in the usage. This is expressed by [9] that proverbs decorate speech and stand as the symbols of communication. [10] stressed this further that they are precursor of thought and when one is lost in thought, they are used to discover the basis or the nitty-gritty of the thought, they are therefore referred to as the horse of conversation. No wonder the usual song in Yoruba that;

Owe l'esin oro, (Proverbs are the horse for speech,)
Oro l'esin owe, (Speech, the horse of proverbs)
B'oro ba sonu, (If words are lost or strayed,)
Owe l'a o fi wa. (Proverbs are used to track it out).

This is to reiterate how important proverbs are in Yoruba language or culture. They are passed down from one generation to another for the purpose of continuity, and they serve as a method for the teaching and learning about historical lessons, acquisition of good morals and instilling social values from generations to generation especially among Yoruba [11]. [12; 9;13] explained that proverbs to Africans are stimulus towards imparting knowledge, wisdom, morality or code of conduct, beliefs and philosophy of life in their offspring because they touch every aspect of human endeavour and human relations. [13] reiterated further that proverbs give vivid information on the structure of the language. All these therefore show how valuable a person's language is when he/she acquires it. In the process of using proverbs in the African setting, young ones are expected to listen to elders attentively as they make use of them in speech. Riddles on the other hand, are statements with hidden meaning, to be discovered after a sharp mental review of the possibilities. It describes a person or a thing in a metaphorical form with the view to exercise the intellectual skills of the participants [14]. [13] also stated that riddles may be in question, songs, statement or description form with the purpose of sharpening the wits of children and widening their understanding. To [15] it is a method of instruction in the indigenous setting that aid in imparting knowledge and sharpening memory and reasoning ability of both the young and old. They are used to test children's judgment and problem-solving ability. [16;14] also asserted that riddles are as a medium for developing the child's reasoning faculty and decision-making skills. On the whole, the two intricacies are referred to as the source of great intellectual ability as they are widely used as methods of teaching or imparting a wide range of knowledge in the African society, especially among the Yoruba. Using proverbs and riddles tend to increase children's vocabulary wealth, grammatical structures as well as enhancing skills of language.

Despite the values of these intricacies of language, they are becoming endangered as they appear not only as aberration to the current generation but also fading away. The trend was observed even at the international level hence the United Nations advocated cultural sustainability and so in the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognition is given to the importance of cultural identity. Therefore in Article 31, it is emphasized as the right of every child to get acquainted to his/

her cultural life and the arts [17] and by this, policies were formulated to give adequate attention to not only the child's cultural life but also the language. Even, [18] and [19] pointed out the overlooked advantages of encouraging multilingual education in the early years by stating that when children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school. Children are to be taken thorough intellectual development through the use of his language or the language of his immediate environment. The goal is to make a child well-grounded in his/her culture, especially the language so that in the time of rapid change due to economic, social or even political changes, and more often than not this age of globalization, the child would be guided and guarded.

It is against this backdrop that this study was conceived to investigate the use of pictorial reading strategy on the learning of proverbs and riddles among primary school pupils. Pictorial strategy refers to the use of images or pictures to represent something. It is further defined as any two-dimensional representation in which the stimulus array contains at least one element that is not alphabetic, numeric or arithmetic [20]. It is assumed to be adequate as pictorial representations could control experience by helping in matching images to actions. [22] indicated that there is a strong relationship between image and the item or place it depicts and that the more we rely on images to communicate information, the more meaning we could get in relation to one's environment. [21] examining the truism that 'a picture is worth more than thousand words', have also pointed out that the use of imagery and illustration could serve as facilitators of learning in a variety of situations. [22] also pointed out that the contributions of pictures to the overall development of children's literate behaviour is overwhelmingly greater because, they serve as mental scaffolds to children thereby promoting children's language and literacy. [23] concluded that the incorporation of concrete-pictorial-abstract approach to teaching is a great means of increasing the chances of reaching all learners of diverse learning styles. He made this assertion after he has adopted the strategy in Mathematics learning and discovered that it helped the students to gain greater conceptual knowledge rather than mere procedural knowledge. It is therefore assumed that pictorial strategy would aid children in learning proverbs and riddles that are gradually fading out with the children's mother tongue. To carry out this research, the following hypotheses were formulated.

- i. There is no significant effect of the treatment on the learning of Proverbs and Riddles among primary school pupils.
- ii. Gender is not a significant factor in the learning of Proverbs and Riddles among primary school pupils.

2 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted quasi- experimental design. Three intact classes of Primary Six pupils were assigned to two experimental and one control groups. Pre-test was carried out to determine the entry point of the children before their exposure to the treatment. After which the two experimental groups were exposed to the proverbs and riddles using pictorial strategy. The control group was given **placebo** treatment. The treatment took a period of six weeks. Post-test was carried out after the treatment period. Data were subjected to inferential statistics of Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA).

3 RESULTS

Ho1: There is no significant effect of the treatment on the learning of Proverbs and Riddles among primary school pupils

Table 1: ANCOVA Summary of Treatment on Children's Performance in Proverbs and Riddles

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	281.464(a)	8	35.183	37.966	.000
Intercept	532.563	1	532.563	574.681	.000
PRE	2.327	2	.776	.837	.475
SCHOOL	23.479	2	11.740	12.668	.000
GENDER	.007	1	.007	.007	.932
SCHOOL * GENDER	.028	2	.014	.015	.985
Error	151.981	164	.927		
Total	6295.000	173			
Corrected Total	433.445	172			

R Squared = .649 (Adjusted R Squared = .632)

Table 1 shows the between-subjects effect of the treatment. At the pre-test level, the subjects were not different in the cognitive level before the treatment ($F(2, 164) = .837; p > 0.05$) which indicated homogeneity of subjects. The post-test shows a significant effect ($F(1, 164) = 12.668; p < 0.05; R^2 = 0.63$). Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant effect of the treatment on the learning of proverbs and riddles was rejected.

Ho₂: Gender is not a significant factor in the learning of Proverbs and Riddles among primary school pupils

Based on Table 1, gender is not a significant factor in the learning of Proverbs and Riddles among primary school pupils ($F(1, 164) = .007; p > 0.05$). Therefore the null hypothesis was upheld.

4 DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that there was a significant effect of the treatment (pictorial strategy) on the learning of proverbs and riddles among primary school pupils. This means that the experimental groups taught using pictorial strategy performed better than the control group in the learning of proverbs and riddles. This finding is therefore corroborating the assumption of [21] that indicated a strong relationship between image and the item or place it depicts and that the more we rely on images to communicate information, the more meaning we could get in relation to one's environment. So also [22] stressed the contributions of pictures to the overall development of children's literate behaviour as pictures serve as mental scaffolds to promote language and literacy in children.

The study discovered that gender is not a significant factor in the learning of proverbs and riddles using pictorial strategy. The implication is that whether male or female, children would do well on any concept when appropriate strategy(ies) is/are employed in the teaching-learning process. This corroborated Gujarati's finding that the strategy is a great match for learners of diverse learning styles with sex no exception. Any concept can be learnt by children no matter the sex so far teachers adopt suitable strategy.

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concluded that proverbs and riddles, which are linguistic structure of languages, are fading out in indigenous languages like Yoruba because the values have not been identified in the development of language skills. It is therefore recommended that teachers should employ appropriate strategies such as pictorial strategy in the teaching process to motivate children into embracing their mother tongue. Teachers should be exposed to regular training and retraining in teaching methods so that they will be abreast of information on current teaching procedure that will enhance learning process. Government should put in place educational implementation enforcement body that will see to the implementation of the language policy statement as contained in the National policy on Education. Activities on language promotion should be organized in schools for children. Parents should be reoriented on the values of mother tongue-based education in the best interest of the child's cognitive development.

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