

The Potency of Folktales in Enhancing Students' Receptive Skills in Secondary Schools in Orlu Metropolis, Imo State

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Abstract

This study focuses on the potency of folktales in enhancing students receptive skills especially in secondary schools in Orlu metropolis of Imo State. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study that had three research questions formulated to guide it. Adopting the Krejcie and Morgan formula, a sample of 186 respondents were carefully sampled from a target population of 1860 students, instrument for data collection for the study is a researcher made questionnaire that contains 11 items. Data collected for the study were analysed using the simple percentage

and chi-square statistic. Findings from the study show that folktale has the potency to provide students with diversity of cultural experiences, values and societal norms; the ability to learn a second culture, understanding the basics that need not be ignored as a good language teacher or instructor, inculcating the virtues needed by the society and discouraging vices, and so on. Recommendations were also proffered among which are: students should try not to mistake folktale with story-telling; they should try to adapt themselves to any culture they may find themselves and respect their cultural heritage.

Keywords: Folktales, receptive abilities, second language enhancing, cultural diversity.

Introduction

Folktale is a form of traditional oral literature that utilizes story telling as a technique or medium of communication. Folktales are usually stories told by Grandpas and Grandmas especially during moonlights. These stories are not only didactic, but culturally relevant as well as culturally bound in their interpretations. According to Babalola et al (2012), folktales have important values for the community in order to maximize their strengths and to be able to live comfortably in cultural diversity.

Folktales are targeted at inculcating virtues and discouraging vices. The characters in folktales may be animals, birds, mountains, forests, the earth or even water that have assumed the role of human beings. Such as the Tortoise in Nigerian folktales is known as a clever trickster, whose stock in trade is selfishness and deception, like the Ananse in Marriage of Anansewa in Ghanaian folktales. In English as a Second Language (ESL) environment, the Second Language (L2) learner is charged with the responsibility of learning a second culture. Over the decades, it has been observed that some language teachers still find it quite cumbersome to create enabling environment to

stimulate learners' interests in some topics such as listening and reading comprehension.

A good language teacher therefore ought to be conversant with the basics that need not to be ignored. In that case, listening skill becomes the primary language skill to be given adequate attention if academic progress must be recorded. Moreover, there are some 'Active Learning Instructional Strategies (ALIS)' such as Think –pair share, Prediction, Brainstorming and Collaboration among others that can be used by the teacher to engage, improve and minimize boredom in the classroom in addition to folktale as a sure-bet for enhancing the students' receptive abilities.

The Nature of Folktales

Folktales and story-telling are two sides of a coin. Folktales as the name implies are traditional oral history reflecting diverse cultural stories that have existed for centuries from one generation to another. Oral rendition is one of its numerous peculiarities. In our contemporary age, the advent of technological devices have made life easy in that other peoples stories could be adapted either for the purpose of acting it out on stage or oral rendition as poetry whether as an individual or group activity asynchronously. Folktales by their peculiarities provide diversity of cultural experiences, values, beliefs, norms and mores to the listeners (Mantra et al 2018).

Folktales by their nature celebrate diverse cultural backgrounds. By listening to and reading stories across cultures, students discover valuable insights about other people's way of life. Ezeala (2015) in Okoro et al (2017) states that story telling as a method of teaching is often mistaken for explanation or folklore. In the story-telling method, the teacher creates a story which is similar to the topic to be taught or which is suitable to illustrate a particular concept in the subject and topic at hand (p. 158). The

teacher looks into the eyes of the students and together they pay attention, and rehearse the story. The teacher facilitates the learning by recreating the actions through voice modulations, body gestures, and series of mental images. The students' responses from the onset of their listening signals to the teacher whether to step up or step down, elaborate or even round off. Corroborating the above stance, Amadi (2001) in Okoro et al (2017) highlights the benefits of story-telling as an instructional technique thus:

Listening to and telling stories, act as springboard for active participation and creativity – producing the desired stimulus and ideas for explaining characters and events. However, Ahukanna (2001) identified some pitfalls associated with story-telling method thus:

Value attached to a good story depends on the maturity of the audience and individual differences, in order words, what is good for the goose may not be good for the gander if the teacher is not careful enough to identify her target audience before choosing a story for a given topic.

Students may have difficulties in comprehending what they have listened to, and resolving the conflict that may arise from their cognitive schema over what they have already internalized. Time management to avoid loss of interest.

How Folktale Can Be Used To Enhance Students' Receptive Skills

The language skills are grouped into productive skills (speaking and writing) and the receptive skills (listening and reading). The hallmark of every linguistic transaction irrespective of context is to achieve mutual understanding and reciprocate appropriately. In the context of listening and reading which is our focus, the participants aim at absorbing information unlike in speaking and writing where the language users give out

information. Opara et al (2016) observe that “Despite the significant roles reading plays in one's intellectual attainment, most students do not read at all”. One must be able to comprehend what one reads if one's interest is properly aroused. It is a common saying these days that the reading culture among students in Nigeria has dwindled. UNESCO (2013) recorded about 774 million global adult population that are illiterate in the world. Most students suffer from alliteracy. They lack the desire to read. Alliterate people can read, but they tend to avoid engaging themselves in practical reading. Eze (2007), comments that the poor performance in many examinations is always a product of poor reading abilities and comprehension. When effective listening skill is developed in students, effective reading culture will be guaranteed.

Inadvertently, when effective reading culture is developed, students' linguistic and communicative competence in their use of language will also reflect in their academic achievements. By implication, the potency of incorporating folktales to improve their listening skill which is supposedly the first language skill becomes imperative.

Obviously, it will in turn facilitate the mastery of the other skills. Whereas a skill can be referred to as the ability or developed aptitude to do something well by using one's knowledge readily and maximally to achieve high performance. Listening and reading skills in the context of this discourse refer to the ability of the language user(s) to comprehend and interpret meaningfully a given text, situation or even semiotics which it is composed. When students recognize that they will be tested after a listening and reading passage, it will inform their decision to pay rapt attention. In that regard, a resourceful teacher creates the enabling environment by deciding; What to teach (choosing the topic).

Why it should be taught (the rationale).
How to achieve the stated instructional performance objectives (methodology).
In a classroom setting, the teacher having planned his lesson comes into the classroom and sets the following ground rules:
Listen attentively.
No noise.
No loitering.
No executive meditation (No sleeping).
Keep it short and simple (Kiss).
Be ready to answer questions put to you (Turn taking).
By way of introduction and set induction, the teacher poses the following questions. Do you agree? What do you think is responsible for poor reading culture and how do we resolve that?
Task 1: She reads a comprehension passage entitled “The Missing Flute”.
Teacher: Once Upon a time!
Class: (chorused) Time, time!

Teacher: In the land of Umueze, there lived a widow, Nkechinyere and her only son, Chimdindu. Chimdi as she often called him was an obedient child, respectful and humble. He was the best companion of his mother and the mother bought him a flute as a gift due to his supportive roles in the family. Chimdi would always help his mother in house chores and farm work. He cherished that flute so much that it became his own companion too. Anywhere he went, the flute was in his hands.

One day, Nkechinyere and her son went to farm. Chimdi hid his flute under a palm tree. When it was getting late, the mother hurriedly gripped him by the hand and they started going home. It was when they got home that Chimdi realized that he forgot his flute. He told his mother of his intention to go back to the farm and collect his flute, but the mother discouraged him because it was

night already and besides the spirits would be out by such a time of the day. He told his mother that he would go and come back successfully and left in search of his flute.

When he got to the junction where four parts meet, the spirits stopped him. Chimdi first of all greeted them.

Spirits: Where are you going?

Chimdi: Please, I forgot my flute, and I want to go and collect it.

Spirits: it's okay, you can go!

Chimdi: Thank you sirs.

As soon as he left, the spirits started planning good things for him because he was courteous. Chimdi got to the place he forgot his flute, collected it and started running back home.

On his way home, he met the spirits the second time, and they stopped him.

Chimdi: Good evening sirs!

Spirits: Did you see your flute?

Chimdi: Yes sir, I have collected it.

They gave him three bags containing different treasures. When he got home, he called his mother and they opened the bags one after the other and they discovered the hidden treasures in various bags. That was how their days of sudden abundance became a news. When one of their neighbour's son, Ikem heard about what happened, out of envy and jealousy, one day followed the mother to the farm and deliberately dropped his flute while going home. As soon as they got home, he told his mother that he would go back and collect his flute, but the mother insisted that he would not go because of the spirits. He paid a deaf ear and rushed out to go and collect his flute with the intention of receiving the same reward as Chimdi's. Eventually, when he met the spirits, they stopped him.

Spirits: where are you coming from and where are you going?

Ikem: Infuriated with the question, shouted 'Get out of my way, I'm going to collect my flute'.

Spirits: You stubborn child, go!

Ikem sighed and left. On his way back, the spirits stopped him and handed him three bags. He left rejoicing not knowing the content. When he got home, he didn't let anybody in even his mother. He locked himself up with the hope of enjoying the treasures all alone. Contrary to his expectation, when he opened the bags; he was overwhelmed by deadly reptiles, scorpions, bees and the likes.

Teacher: Hello students.

Class: Hello Auntie.

Teacher: Did you listen attentively to the reading?

Class: (Chorus) Yes Auntie.

Teacher: (The teacher divides the class into groups and gives them questions to answer in groups. They will choose their group leader after brainstorming, making predictions, think and pair their answers). In three sentences explain why Ikem and Chimdi were rewarded differently. Identify four moral lessons you have learnt from the passage?

Teacher: Divides the students into groups to collaborate, brainstorm, predict, think – pair and share their ideas as they engage in the activity.

Class Activity:

Read the passage carefully and answer the following questions.

1. Explain briefly how the spirits rewarded Ikem and Chimdi?
2. What do you think made the spirits to reward them differently?
3. List and explain at least three moral lessons you can derive from the passage.
4. In three sentences, summarize the passage.

Statement of the Problem

Taking into consideration the continued handicaps and

difficulties, often faced by students in their receptive skills on learning English as a second language for instance, it would be interesting to understand if some active learning instructional strategies (ALIS) which often help to engage, improve and minimize boredom in the classroom have been put into use in the past. It is against this backdrop that this study targets to ascertain the potency of Folktales in the enhancement of students receptive skills in secondary schools in Orlu Metropolis of Imo State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this discourse is to investigate the potency of folktales in enhancing students receptive skills in our secondary schools. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the nature of folktales present in our environment
2. Determine how folktales can be used to enhance the receptive skills.
3. Find out the extent to which identified benefits of folktales as key teaching method enhances students' receptive abilities in the school system.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for the study

1. What is the nature of folktales experienced in our society?
2. In what ways can folktales be used to enhance students' receptive skills?
3. To what extent does the identified variable of folktales as a key teaching method in the school system enhance students' receptive skills?

Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on the Activity Theory postulated by Vygotsky (1978). He visualized how the activity theory can be utilized to achieve transformational learning depending on the

strategy or method. Activity theory highlights the learning complexity that could be resolved by the adoption of mediated interactions rather than passivity or something opaque which happens in students' minds. Vygotsky does not see learning as transmission of ideas rather as transformation of other lives. Hashim et al (2007), proponents of Activity Theory postulate that the Activity Theory is a conceptual framework for the analysis and understanding of human interaction. Activity Theory aligns itself with the integration of folktales as potent tools for engaging students' in participation, hence its transformational benefits.

Task 2

The teacher assumes the role of a Narrator, narrates a folktale entitled 'Ahia Uya' meaning the 'Uya market' In a background information, she explains that there was a scenario where the Tortoise exhibited greed and craftiness by feigning Ezemuo (King of the spirits) due to famine in the land, but unfortunately was caught in a web after a frenzy success.

Narrator: Once upon a time.

Class: (Chorus) Time, Time

Narrator: In the land of the animals, there was famine to the point that many prominent animals started dying of hunger. The Tortoise devised a survival strategy by feigning 'Ezemuo' every Eke market day, terrorizing the community by carting away their goods. He would bring out his 'oji' (iron digger), decorated with beads, feathers and other metals before proceeding to the market square. The people in the market would take to their heels, abandoning all their goods running for their dear lives at the sound of the oji and his spirit-chanting thus:

Narrator: Ahia Uya sue sue

Class: (Chorus) Uyaaa, Uya mbele uya (2x)

Narrator: Egbe gbawa onwe ya

Class: (Chorus) Uyaaa, Uya mbele uya

Narrator: Agwada kuwa onwe ya

Class: (Chorused)Uyaaa, Uya mbele uya .

Narrator: Ahia Uya sue sue

Class: (Chorused)Uyaaa ,Uya mbele uya.

Narrator: The Tortoise did that successfully on two Eke market days. All the Sages in that community consulted and hazarded a solution to that problem. It is said that every day is for the thief, but one day is for the owner of the house. The elders brought out a doll-baby (toy) at the centre of the market decorated with 'Erontuochi' ,masking the doll-baby with a permanent smiling face and a goat meat leg all glued in her hand . On the D-Day, the Tortoise came begging the baby some portion of the meat, but when the baby didn't give him; but kept smiling the Tortoise got infuriated and slapped the baby and became glued. The Tortoise pleaded for mercy yet the baby kept beaming with smile. Eventually, the villagers gathered and discovered with utter dismay that Tortoise was the Monster terrorizing them. The story ends.

Narrator: Now, what do you think should be done to the Tortoise? Mention three character traits that every good child should avoid based on the story.

Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design on how folktales could assist to enhance students' receptive skills in secondary schools in Orlu Metropolis. Three research questions were formulated for the study. A sample of 186 respondents randomly selected from a population of 1,860 students in Orlu Metropolis in line with Krejcie etal (1970) formula for determination of sample size, was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was a 11 item questionnaire designed using the modified four point Likert scale that had Crobach Alpha reliability index of 0.83. Data collected were

analyzed using simple percentages and chi-square analytic methods.

Results

The results of data analysis using simple percentages and chi-square statistic are presented in the tables below

Research Question One: What is the nature of folktales experienced in our society?

Table 1

S/N	Item	Agree	%	Dis-agree	%	Total	%
1	Folktales go hand in glove with story-telling and is often mistaken	146	78	40	22	186	100%
2	Folktales provide diversity of cultural experiences, values, beliefs norms and mores to the listeners	171	92	15	8	186	100%
3	Folktales often celebrate cultural diversity where students discover valuable insights about other people's ways of life	177	95	9	5	186	100%
4	Folktales can be incorporated to improve students' listening skill	123	66	63	34	186	100%
	Average Mean		82.8		17.2	186	100%

The results on Table 1 revealed the outcome of percentage analysis of respondents' opinions on the nature of folktales experienced in the society.

Research Question Two: In what ways can folktales be used to enhance students' receptive skills?

Table 2

S/N	Item	Agree	%	Disagree	%	Total	%
5	Using folktales in teaching English becomes more popular among language teachers	139	75	47	25	186	100
6	By comprehending folktales students enhance their communicative abilities and broaden their global perceptions	127	68	59	32	186	100
7	Folktales enable students develop a greater appreciation of their own cultural heritage and that of other communities	153	82	33	18	186	100
8	Folktales can increase students language awareness, motivation, personal reflection and cultural understating	161	87	25	13	186	100
9	Engaging students in reading activity using folktales provides them with memorable experiences	178	96	08	4	186	100
10	Folktales have practical length which enable students to wrap up their discussion and analysis of the folktales in one learning session	149	80	37	20	186	100
11	Folktales help students learn how to make prediction conclusions about actions behaviours of characters in the folktales	130	70	56	30	186	100
	Average Mean					186	100

The result on Table 2 revealed the outcome of the percentage analysis of respondents on ways or benefits of folktales on students' receptive abilities.

Table 3: Result of chi-square analysis on male and female respondents' perceptions on the extent to which the identified variables above enhance students' receptive skills.

Gender	Respondents' Options	N	X ² cal	Df	X ² crit
	Yes	No			
Male	50	45	95		
Females	47	44	91	0.0051	1
Total	97	89	186		146.57

The result on Table 3 revealed the outcome of the chi-square analysis of male and female students/respondents' perceptions of the extent to which identified variables of benefit of folktales use enhance the receptive/abilities of students.

Discussion of Findings

The result on Table 1 revealed that respondents have high percentage acceptance of the four statements made in items 1-4 on the nature of folktale experienced around their environment. This goes to be in line with the position of Mantra et al (2018) when they stated that folktales have the peculiarities of providing diversity of cultural experiences, values, beliefs, norms and mores to the listeners.

Furthermore, the Table 2 results revealed the existence of a high percentage (79.7%) acceptance by respondents on the ways folktales could be used to enhance students' receptive skills in schools thereby talking about the benefits as stated in item 5-11 of the table. The findings to support the varied opinions of Lwin, 2009; Mantra et al (2018) Regan (2009) and Westland (2003) who perceived that through folktales, students can learn about new vocabulary, grammatical or tenses and generic structure of the

text; they can learn to tolerate other people's cultural heritage and make inferences or predictions in matters of urgent attention, among others.

Conclusion

In this discourse, the potency of folktales for enhancing the receptive skills of students in Orlu Metropolis was highlighted based on Activity as propounded by Vygotsky (). Findings revealed that if the Active Learning Instructional Strategies (ALIS) were earlier adopted by the teacher and folktales incorporated during lesson delivery especially comprehension exercises, chances are that the stated performance objectives of the lesson will be achieved and students' academic achievement in the receptive skills improved.

Recommendations

- Teachers should upgrade themselves through conference and workshops so as to be abreast of the current trends in teaching profession in this 21st century.
- Students should avail themselves the opportunity of listening before speaking because if you are not a good listener, you will not be a good judge. So listening as the first language skill should be given priority attention in its development.
- Students are encouraged to develop interest in listening in listening to and reading good stories especially those that remind us of our cultural heritage and practices for didactic purposes.
- Since learning a second language by implication is learning a second culture, students should widen their horizon by reading voraciously to be in tune with diversity of cultures.
- It is highly important that students' receptive skills be developed through folktales so as to awaken a lively reading culture among them.
- To be able to establish effective communicative competence in

the students' use of the language, listening as a primary skill must not be ignored.

- Granted that comprehension is the hallmark of any linguistic transaction at all times, therefore, to benefit maximally in a learning context, psychological, physiological, and environmental indices that can pose distractions must be put at bay.

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