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**FOLKSONGS: CULTURAL ENRICHMENT INPUT
FOR THE ALIENATED YORUBA CHILDREN**

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Abstract:

It is a common feature in Nigerian cities to find people, including children, who are alienated from their cultural backgrounds. Such children and some of their parents find it difficult to communicate effectively in their local languages. Thus some of them are alienated from their culture and traditional values like their ways of greeting, respect for elders, and others. This paper discusses how folksongs could be employed as an enrichment strategy to bring such children closer to their cultural milieu.

Introduction

Nigeria is a multilingual country and this explains why most of her cities are inhabited by people from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. According to Crozier and Blench (cited in Nwaegeruo, 2002), there are about six hundred and eighty-seven (687) languages in Nigeria. Federal institutions, industries, multinational organizations and large business organizations are established in cities. The Federal Government ensures that people from the various geo-political zones are represented in each of the federal institutions and parastatals. This involves the movement of people from a cultural background to another. This accounts for the reason almost every ethnic group in Nigeria is believed to be represented in Lagos (Nigeria's industrial capital city) and Abuja (power seat of Nigeria).

The Yoruba people dominate the southwestern parts of Nigeria. They speak the Yoruba Language, one of Nigeria's major indigenous languages (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004, p.8). The Yoruba people could be found in these Nigerian states: Edo, Delta, Ekiti, Kwara, Kogi, Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Osun and Oyo. There are many dialects speaking groups of Yoruba language but the standard variety brings them all together. The standard variety is used as medium of instruction in Yoruba monolingual classes and also studied as an instructional area. It is also used by state governors in addressing the people through the electronic media. There are about seven newspapers in Yoruba language and the electronic media (radio and television) do broadcast news in it. It could be said to be the most developed among the three major languages when viewed in terms of available literature. (reference)

The Yoruba child is blessed with a rich literary environment. Yoruba literature comprises the oral and written forms. In the oral form, we have the poetic heritage like Ràrà (wailing chant); Oriki (Praise Song or Cognomen); ʔbà (masquerade chant), ʔkún Ìyáwó (nuptial chant), Orin ʔm?de (nursery rhymes or folksongs) and others.

In spite of the fact that the Yoruba child is blessed with a rich literary environment, it is sad to observe that Yoruba children and even some adults in cities could not communicate effectively in their local tongues or languages. In a discussion between this writer and a Lagos secondary school Principal on 29th August, 2005, the Principal confirmed that his students recorded mass failure in the major Nigerian languages. He noted that a committee was set up to look into the remote cause(s) of the problem and findings revealed that most parents could not communicate effectively in their local languages and most of them do not make the conscious effort to encourage their children to speak the languages. Both parents and children are alienated from their cultural backgrounds.

Alienation occurs when people are unable to relate to the world in which they belong; it is the estrangement of people from themselves (Omokhodion, and Dosumu, 2000:30). In this paper, alienation is a situation whereby Yoruba children are estranged from their cultural backgrounds. Such children resort to speaking adulterated Yoruba. Some do not speak it at all. This is the situation with speakers of other Nigerian languages.

Yoruba language is expected to be the medium of instruction in both pre-primary and the first three years of primary education in the Yoruba speaking states. It is also studied as a subject. Margaret (cited in Makinde, 2002) supports the teaching of the child's tongue for the following reasons:

- * The child's thought and ideas are in his own language and will be long after he is speaking quite good English. Therefore, to encourage the child to do self-thinking, he must be helped to think in his own language.
- * The child's culture is found in his language and such a language should be taught at its purest and best for him to appreciate the literature, stories, songs and poems of his community and perhaps make his own contribution to them (pp. 116-117).

Yoruba Folksongs As Cultural Enrichment Inputs

Folksongs constitute an aspect of oral literature usually in form of short poems and nursery rhymes. As characteristic of oral literature, folksongs have to do with performance and verbal or oral transmission (Makinde, 2004).

Enrichment input refers to those materials (in this case folksongs) which learners are exposed to in order to enrich them culturally including linguistic enrichment. McDonagh and McDonagh (1991) support the use of songs and rhymes on a regular basis in order to encourage children's language development. Dodwell (1999) too opines that the use of rhyme and song is of great importance in a multilingual playgroup, nursery and classroom as songs and rhymes introduce children to particular patterns of language, which facilitate the development of language.

Classrooms in cities like Lagos are multilingual and multicultural in nature. Due to the fact that Yoruba is the language of wider communication (LWC) in the Southwestern region of Nigeria, children in classrooms including L2 learners are compelled to learn Yoruba language especially as L1. Dodwell (1999) notes that rhymes and songs in children's first language (L1) can be learned and enjoyed by the whole class. Not only that, parents and other family members can be motivated to join in and teach favorite rhymes and songs in their home language and a resourceful teacher can ask permission to tape them for future use. Bruner (cited in Dodwell (1999) argues that story seems to be a universal human vehicle for learning and pleasure. Dodwell however adds that most fruitful stories are those ones, which use patterned language with repeated phrases (rhymes/songs).

Examples of Yoruba Folksongs

1. Counting Folksongs: These are invaluable for developing oracy as they contain carefully structured and repetitive arrangements. The example below is used to count the Yoruba numeral one to ten (1-10). English translation is provided line by line.

Ení bí ení (One by one)

Ení bí ení One by one

L?m?dé ñ kawó The children count money

Eji bí eji Two by two

Lagbalagba ñ tayò The old ones play the Ayo game

?ta bí ?ta Three by three

?j?ká tàrà wa l?r? Let us share gifts among ourselves

?rin bí ?rin Four by four

?ni rín ni láá rín Whoever derides us is derided

Árún bí árún Five by five

?ba má ?e wa lárungún May God help us not to be destroyers of heritage

?fà bí ?fà Six by six

?j? ká fara wa móra Let us embrace one another

Èje bí èje Seven by seven

Olúgbon òrò ó kije King Olugbon performed ritual for seven days

?j? bí ?j? Eight by eight

?ní bí ní lááj? We resemble him that begets us

?sán bí ?sán Nine by nine

?ba jál? ó san wa God helps us to have a better end [of life].

?wa bí ?wa Ten by ten

?ba má wàhálà wa May God not trouble us.

(Source: Anonymous)

From the example given above, apart from teaching the concept of counting, proper pronunciation of consonants like /n/, /b/, /ʔ/, /t/, /tʃ/, /l/, /s/, /w/ was also enhanced. Some vocabularies are also embedded. Some of these include Kawó (counting of money); tayò (play the Ayo game); arungún (destroyer of heritage/prodigal); j? (resemble) and others.

(b) Folksong warning against idleness.

?l? (The Lazy or Idle one)

?l? alápá ma ʔiʔ The lazy one whose hands are idle

?l? faʔ? iyà bora sun He covers himself with garment of sorrow

Iyá tó b?l? kò róm? bi His mother had labored in vain

? wa wáye ?l? o Come and see the pitiable life of the lazy one

Àó ʔe! What a pity!

(Source: Anonymous)

This song is meant to warn children of the danger of being lazy.

(c) Folksong for cleanliness

This song is meant to teach children the need to be clean.

W? kí o m? (Bathe and be clean)

W? kí o m? Bathe and be clean

Ge èékánna r? Cut your finger nails

J?un to dara lasiko Eat good meal at the right time

Máj?un jù Don't overeat

(Source: Anonymous)

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4. Folksong as Preventive Measure

Òjò ñr? (It is raining)

Òjò ñr? It is raining

Deré nínú ilé Play in-doors

Má w?nú òjò Enter not into the rain

Kí a^o?r? So your garment/dress

Ma ba à tutù Will not be soaked

Kí òtútù ma ba à mu? So you'll not catch cold

(Source: Anonymous)

Children in villages like playing in the rain and they could overdo it unless checked by adults. This song could serve as precaution for children not to endanger their lives.

5. Before school song

Bí mo bá ti dide lówùúr? (When I awake in the morning)

Bí mo bá ti dide lówùúr? When I awake in the morning

Máá múra I'll prepare myself

Máá gbadura mì sí ?l?run I'll say my prayers to God

Máá run orín I'll clean my teeth with chewing stick

Máá wa ohun tó dùn s?nu mì I'll eat something delicious

Bí mo run orin tan After using the chewing stick to clean my teeth

Máá ki iya máá ki bábá o I'll say to mum and dad

Pé o dàb?o That it's bye-bye

(Source: Anonymous)

6. Song Accompanying Folktale

Most folktales in Yoruba are accompanied by a song. They are always patterned to have leading verses and refrains. They are always melodious in order to arrest children's attention. Here is an example by a tiny bird named Kin-in-kin who sang to cause a cleared bush to grow again in order to punish King Aláràn-án who thought the bird was too tiny to do any clearing work in the bush:

?ba Aláràn-án B?w? (King Alaran-an begged for assistance)

Lilé (Leading): ?ba Aláràn-án b?w? King Aláràn-án begged for assistance

Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin

Lilé (Leading): Ob?kéré?ye He called the little birds

Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Lil
Lilé (Leading): O b? kéré ?ye And other birds	Èg
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	*S
Lilé (Leading): O da Kin-in-kin sí But never invited Kin-in-kin	(Sc
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Ap
Lilé (Leading): Ewé oko ? didé Bush leaves, arise	wo
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Co
Lilé (Leading): Èrùwà didé Ye grass of the bush, arise	Fr
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	enr
Lilé (Leading): Ká relé ?ba Let's go to the king's palace	dev
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	sec
Lilé (Leading): Ká l? jó bàtá To dance to the bàtá [drum] ensemble	wri
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	lite
Lilé (Leading): Bì bàtá ò ró If the bàtá [drum] does not	resc
sound well	disc
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	for
Lilé (Leading): Ká l? jó dùndún Let's dance to the dùndún	Enc
[drum] ensemble	1.
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	spe:
Lilé (Leading): Gb?ngúdú gb?ngúdú gb?nr: m: m: r: m: m: r: *	2.
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	usu
Lilé (Leading): Gb?ngúdù gb?ngúdù gb?nr: d: d: r: d: r: *	/n/a
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Ref
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: m: m: r: m: r: *	Dod
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	J. M
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: d: d: r: d: d: r: *	(pp i
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Fede
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: m: m: r: m: r: *	Mak
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Schc
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: d: d: r: d: d: r: *	Ond
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Mak
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: m: m: r: m: r: *	Yoru
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	MacI
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: d: d: r: d: d: r: *	Desir
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Chap
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: m: m: r: m: r: *	Nwac
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	of the
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: d: d: r: d: d: r: *	the n
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	(ANI
Lilé (Leading): Pokiti pokiti po r: m: m: r: m: r: *	Omol
Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin	Lagos

Lílé: Ñ lād?, lād? lād? p?nlá m: d: r: d: r: d: r: m: m: *

Ègbè (Refrain): Kin-in-kin Kin-in-kin

*Sounds produced by the drums using the Yoruba tones solfa

(Source: Anonymous but cited in Makinde, 2004)

Apart from the moral lessons derivable from the story, the rhythmic pattern and musicality of the song are wonderful elements that entertain children.

Conclusion

From the few examples of folksongs and nursery rhymes given in this paper, it could be observed that they are enrichment models in that they are of good and aesthetic and literary qualities capable of helping children develop their communicative skills. For instance, in a study conducted by Makinde (2004) exposing secondary school students to oral and written literary materials, there was a significant difference in the writing achievement of the experimental and the control groups. The folksongs and rhymes contain certain literary elements like figures of speech and carefully structured patterns that could enrich pupil's linguistic resources, extend their vocabulary and also help them in generating ideas on given topics for oral or written discussion. Collections of oral literary materials from one language could be translated into other languages for cross-cultural consideration. Such collections could be exposed to alienated children or L2 learners.

Endnotes

1. L1 stands for the first language, the mother tongue of a speaker whereas L2 refers to a second language to a speaker.

2. In Yoruba tones, d: stands for low tone [V], m: [^] for high tone and r: which is the mid tone and it is not usually indicated in vowels except where consonant /m/ or /n/ occurs as syllable in words. Consonants /m/ and /n/ are allophones of the same phonemes.

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