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DEC 2015 GESTE ET VOIX N° 22 ISSN 1840 - 572X

Revue Scientifique

Geste et Voix

2/2

Groupe d'Etude Geste et Voix
(GEVOIX - BENIN)

UNIVERSITE D'ABOMEY-CALAVI

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Availability, Use and Relevance of Yoruba Songs and Rhymes in Pre-School Education in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State

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Abstract

Music is an aspect of Yoruba oral literature because it contributes to logical, mathematical, linguistic, spatial and interpersonal intelligence of children. Early childhood stage is the period of rapid development and the most critical period in a child's musical growth. Children are accorded due respect in Yoruba oral poetry in the likes of folktales, lullabies, cognomen and mnemonics as they ensure the mental and psychological health of the child. While these folkloric elements are in the culture of the Yoruba and taught at the primary level of education before, socialization and modernization have brought in foreign songs and rhymes at the expense of indigenous ones in both public and private schools. Four research questions were raised in this study while an instrument ($r = 0.73$), divided into four sections, was used to collect data. Validation of the instrument was done accordingly. A simple random sampling, formed the subjects for this study. Data collected were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that teachers agreed that Yoruba songs and rhymes are available ($\Pi = 2.82$) and that children recite rhymes. They used songs and rhymes to teach other school subjects but their perception of relevance in teaching differed. The study therefore recommends the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes in nursery education in order to enhance learning.

Keywords : songs, rhymes, school education, Yoruba, health, socialization

INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the Study

In children literature, one cannot rule out music and songs. They are so important because of the roles they play in the lives of children. According to Gardner (2003), music intelligence is equally in importance to logical mathematical intelligence, linguistic intelligence, spatial intelligence and interpersonal intelligence. In the opinion of Armstrong (1994), intelligence is galvanized by participation in some kind of culturally-valued activity and that the individual's growth in such an activity follows a developmental pattern in which each activity has its own time arising in early childhood.

Making music and song is as much a basic life skill as walking or talking. Peery and Peery (1987) suggest that it is desirable for children to be exposed to and trained in music and songs. It is a birthright for all children to be able to sing in tune and march to a beat. To ensure a comprehensive learning experience, music must be included in early childhood education.

Early childhood, a period of rapid change and development, is the most critical period in a child's musical growth and has been identified in literature as the "music babble" stage (Moog, 2006; Gordon, 2008) or primary music development (Levinowitz, 1988). The years from birth through age six are critical for learning how to unscramble the aural images of music and to develop representations for organizing the music of the culture (Holahan 1987). This process is similar to that which unfolds for language during the "language babble" stage. The body of knowledge acquired through research thus far supports the notion that, like language development, young children develop musically through a predictable sequence to basic music competence, which includes singing in tune and marching to a beat.

Yoruba oral literature accords due respect to children in its poetry which comes in the likes of folktales, lullabies, oriki (cognomen) and mnemonics which serves as aid – mnemonics for counting from one to ten (Majasan, 1969; Isola 1995). Lullabies and oriki according to Isola (1995) serve as the origin of literature as they ensure the mental and psychological health of the child, thus promoting a robust intellectual development. Hornby (1974) had earlier submitted that lullabies are the oldest form of songs and can be found in every culture in Africa. It is a language that children understand and soothes little ones whenever they are crying. However, when a child is restless, a lullaby like:

*Ó tó ọmọ mi ò dáké,
Şe bí mo bè ó léèkan?
Á bó o láşejù lówó?*

*It is enough, my child keep quiet,
Did I not pacify you a while ago?
Or are you stubborn?*

is sung after which mothers, especially elderly women in the home, resort to chanting the oriki (cognomen) of the child and this, according to Isola (1995) and corroborated by Ogundeji (1998), has proved to be very effective over the years. This is because no sooner had the cognomen begins than the child sleeps off.

Other study on children literature like Atanda's 'Ewì fún àwọn ọmọdẹ; (1972), Abiodun's 'Àròfò àwọn ọmọdẹ' (1976), Adeboye Babalola's 'Àkójopò Àlò Ìjápá' (1973, 1979) and Ojo's 'Ìjápá Tíròkò Ọkọ Yánnibo' are geared towards building moral and character training in the Yoruba child and making him or her fit squarely into the culture of the society. We have other different rhymes which teach children skills, for instance, counting

skill like “Ení bí ení...” that is “One by one...”, some that teach hygiene while there are rhymes which promote values of skill, competence and virtues.

2. Statement of the Problem

Yoruba culture is considered by many scholars to be very rich and what it takes to be a useful member of the society is embedded in Yoruba traditional education which encompasses its songs and rhymes and the child is taken through these processes right from the cradle. However, it has been observed that socialization and modernization have introduced a lot of foreign rhymes into our system of education hence, most schools do not teach these Yoruba songs and rhymes again. Not only that, proliferation of private schools, occasioned by incessant strikes and poor teaching conditions made many parents to send their children to private schools who emphasize instruction in foreign language and strongly abhor speaking indigenous language by children in school, thereby eliminating it from the school time table has not helped matters. This study determines to examine the availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes in pre-school curriculum, their use and relevance today with particular reference to Ondo West local government area. It also sets out to identify the different skills that are derived or learnt in Yoruba nursery songs and rhymes.

3. Research Questions

The study supplied answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent are Yoruba songs and rhymes available in public/private nursery and primary schools in Ondo West Local Government Area?
2. To what extent do the public and private nursery and primary schools use Yoruba songs and rhymes to aid academic development of the children?
3. What is the perception of the teachers in public and private nursery and primary schools about the relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes?
4. Is there any significant difference between public and private schools in the levels of: (i) availability (ii) use (iii) perceived relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes?

4. Methodology

The research design is a descriptive survey research. The population of the study consists of teachers in Nursery II in both private and public schools in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. Out of the all the primary schools in the area, one hundred

(100), comprising of fifty private and fifty public schools were selected for the study through simple random sampling method. All teachers in Nursery II were selected making a total of (200) two hundred teachers as subjects.

The research instrument used for this study is attitude questionnaire for teachers of nursery schools, public and private schools. It consists of four sections. Section A deals with the demographic data of teachers. Section B was designed to gather information on the availability of songs and rhymes in their schools. Section C was designed to obtain information on the use of songs and rhymes by the teacher teaching the nursery classes while Section D is to collect information on the perception of the teachers about the relevance of songs and rhymes.

The questionnaire was given to experts in language education and senior secondary school Yoruba teachers to ascertain its face and content validity. Amendments and corrections were made before they were administered on the subjects. To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was first administered on twenty subjects as trial test to students who did not form part of the main study in another local government. Cronbach alpha technique was used and a reliability co-efficient of 0.73 was obtained. The final draft of the instruments was administered on two hundred teachers of nursery pupils.

The questionnaire was administered and collected and data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistical tool such as frequency count, percentage, mean and standard deviation and t-test analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent are Yoruba songs and rhymes available in public/private nursery and primary schools in Ondo West Local Government Area?

Table 1: Availability of Yoruba Songs and Rhymes in Public and Private

Nursery and Primary Schools

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1.	Yoruba songs are available in our schools today	43 (22.4)	78 (40.6)	66 (34.4)	4 (2.1)	2.82	.82
2.	Children in nursery and primary schools still recite Yoruba rhymes	37 (19.3)	100 (52.1)	43 (22.4)	11 (5.7)	2.48	.82
3.	It is only English songs that children sing in my school	19 (9.9)	52 (27.1)	89 (46.4)	32 (16)	2.30	.86
4.	Yoruba songs are commonly sung in my school	15 (7.8)	49 (25.5)	107 (55.7)	17 (8.9)	2.28	.81
5.	Songs and rhymes in Yoruba are now obsolete	16 (8.3)	65 (33.9)	80 (4.7)	25 (13.0)	2.42	1.62
6.	There is no relevance of songs and rhymes to the teaching of pupils in schools	13 (6.8)	26 (13.5)	78 (40.6)	72 (37.5)	1.86	.91
7.	When pupils recite rhymes, the lessons derive from them are emphasized	72 (37.5)	108 (56.3)	5 (2.6)	7 (3.6)	3.28	.69
8.	Yoruba songs and rhymes are interesting to pupils	93 (48.4)	87 (45.3)	4 (2.1)	7 (3.6)	3.38	.75
9.	Yoruba songs and rhymes should be included in the nursery and primary school curriculum	131 (68.2)	53 (27.6)	3 (1.6)	4 (2.1)	3.61	.68

10.	The use of Yoruba songs and rhymes aid pupils understanding while teaching	138 (71.9)	42 (21.9)	5 (2.6)	3 (1.6)	3.60	
Weighted average 2.84							

Table 1 reveals that the teachers agreed that: Yoruba songs are available in the schools today ($\bar{x} = 2.82$); children in Nursery and primary schools do recite rhymes ($\bar{x} = 2.84$); that when pupils recite rhymes, the lessons from these are emphasized ($\bar{x} = 3.28$); then Yoruba songs and rhymes are interesting to pupils ($\bar{x} = 3.38$); they agreed that they should be included in the curriculum. ($\bar{x} = 3.61$) and that they aid pupils understanding while teaching ($\bar{x} = 3.60$). But the teachers disagreed that it is only English songs and rhymes that children sing ($\bar{x} = 2.30$); that Yoruba songs are commonly sung in their schools ($\bar{x} = 2.28$); that Yoruba songs and rhymes are obsolete ($\bar{x} = 2.42$) and that songs and rhymes have no relevance ($\bar{x} = 1.86$).

From all these, it shows that 63% of the teachers agreed that Yoruba songs and rhymes are available in their schools while 37% indicated that they are not available. Therefore the extent of availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes is just above average number of the schools observed.

Research Question 2: To what extent do the public and private Nursery/Primary schools use Yoruba songs and rhymes to aid academic development of the children?

Table 2: Extent of the Use of Yoruba Songs and Rhymes in Schools

N	Statement	VO	O	R	N	Mean	S.D
1	How often do pupils sing Yoruba songs in the class?	24 (1.25)	48 (25.0)	115 (59.9)	2 (1.0)	2.46	.78
2	I lead children into reciting Yoruba rhymes	19 (9.9)	119 (62.0)	45 (23.4)	5 (2.6)	2.75	.75
3.	I teach children songs when I want them to relax	34 (17.7)	114 (59.4)	30 (15.6)	13 (6.8)	2.89	.80
4.	There are different learning skills that are	74 (38.5)	55 (28.6)	47 (24.5)	10 (5.2)	2.96	1.04

	impacted when Yoruba songs are included in learning						
5.	Songs and rhymes are taken as soon as children enter their classes	72 (37.5)	55 (28.6)	41 (21.4)	22 (11.5)	2.90	1.07
6.	There is a specific time for songs and rhymes on the school time table	73 (38.0)	36 (18.8)	45 (23.4)	37 (19.3)	2.74	1.17
7.	Topics on Yoruba songs and rhymes are in the school curriculum	42 (21.9)	39 (20.3)	24 (12.5)	84 (43.8)	2.17	1.25
8.	I use Yoruba songs and rhymes to teach or illustrate topics in other subject	30 (15.6)	74 (38.5)	42 (21.9)	43 (22.4)	2.44	1.05
9.	Pupils in lower primary schools enjoy Yoruba songs and rhymes than those in upper primary	104 (54.2)	49 (25.5)	27 (14.1)	9 (4.7)	3.32	1.13
10.	My pupils are always excited whenever I teach them Yoruba songs and rhymes.	104 (54.2)	71 (37.0)	14 (7.3)	1 (0.5)	3.43	0.74
Weighted average 2.84							

Table 2 reveals that the pupils often sing Yoruba songs in the class ($x=2.46$); teachers often lead pupils into reciting Yoruba rhymes ($x=2.75$); teachers often teach Yoruba songs and rhymes when they want pupils to relax ($x=2.87$); pupils often recite rhymes on the assembly ($x=2.96$); pupils often take Yoruba rhymes as soon as they enter the class ($x=2.9$); there are specific times for Yoruba rhymes and songs on the time table ($x=2.74$); pupils in lower classes often enjoy Yoruba songs and rhymes than those in upper classes ($x=3.32$) and

pupils often enjoy the teaching of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($x=3.43$). However, there are rarely topics on Yoruba songs and rhymes in the school curriculum ($x=2.17$) and the teachers rarely use Yoruba songs and rhymes to illustrate or teach other subjects ($x=2.44$).

From this, it could be inferred that teachers often allow pupils to sing or recite Yoruba songs and rhymes for relaxation or during assembly but they rarely use it to teach.

Research Question 3: What is the perception of the teachers in public and private nursery and primary schools about the relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes?

Tables 3: Teachers' Perception about Yoruba Songs and Rhymes

S/N		Yes	No		
1.	Yoruba songs and rhymes go a long way in impacting knowledge to pupils	F	%	F	%
		182	94.8	7	3.6
2.	When songs and rhymes are sung and recited children learn fast	184	95.8	5	2.6
3.	Knowledge is retained when Yoruba songs and rhymes are in place	179	93.2	10	5.2
4.	There are different learning skills that are impacted when Yoruba songs and rhymes are included in teaching	187	97.4	2	1.0
5.	Yoruba songs and rhymes are only sung in public primary schools	65	33.9	121	63.0
6.	Yoruba songs and rhymes are outdated in our Nursery and primary schools nowadays, they are no more in vogue	110	57.3	75	39.1
7.	I admit that the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes help my teaching.	149	77.5	40	20.8
8.	Yoruba songs and rhymes help pupils' understanding of other school subjects	160	83.3	29	15.1
9.	Yoruba songs and rhymes should be used in teaching at all levels of primary education	137	71.4	48	25
10.	I love Yoruba songs and rhymes	176	91.7	11	5.7

Table 3 reveals that the teachers perceived that Yoruba songs and rhymes go a long way to impact knowledge to the pupils (94.8%); that when songs and rhymes are sung and recited, children learn fast (95.8%). In addition, the teachers agreed that knowledge is retained when Yoruba songs and rhymes are used (93.2%). They admitted that different learning skills are impacted when songs and rhymes are included in teaching (97.4%). However, they concluded that Yoruba songs and rhymes are outdated and they are no more in vogue (57.3%) yet the use of songs and rhymes help teachers' teachings (77.5%). Furthermore, teachers also agreed that songs and rhymes help pupils' understanding of other subjects (83.3%). They admitted that songs and rhymes should be used in teaching at all levels of primary education (71.4%). It could be concluded that teachers love Yoruba songs and rhymes (91.7%) but are mostly in public primary schools.

Research Question 4: Is there any significant difference between public and private schools in the levels of:

(i). Availability (ii) Use (iii) Perceived relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes?

Table 4: Summary of t-test Analysis showing differences between public and private nursery and primary schools in the availability, use and perception of relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes.

Variables	N	Mean	S. D	T	Df	Sig (p)	Remark
Availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes							
Private Schools	99	28.74	3.67				
Public Schools	93	28.02	3.17	1.443	190	.151	Not Sig
Use of Yoruba songs and							

rhymes							
Private schools	99	28.47	4.92				
Public Schools	92	27.67	4.97	1.104	189	.271	Not Sig
Perceived Relevance							
Private schools	99	17.32	2.87	-	190	.041	Sig
Public schools	93	18.42	3.24	2.484			

Table 4 reveals that there is no significant difference between public and private schools in the availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=1.443$; $df=190$; $P>0.05$; use of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=1.104$; $df=189$; $P>0.05$) in their schools but there is a significant difference between teachers in public and private schools in the perception of relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=-2.484$; $df=190$; $P<0.05$). The perceived relevance mean score of public nursery school teachers is higher (18.42) than their counterparts in private schools (17.32).

5. Discussion of Findings

This study has revealed in Table 1 that teachers agreed that Yoruba songs are available ($\bar{x}=2.82$) and that children in nursery schools do recite rhymes ($\bar{x}=2.84$). This may be because they are aware that there are English songs in schools, definitely there should be Yoruba songs as well and that there are some books on Yoruba songs and rhymes.

In another finding, it was revealed in Table 1 that Yoruba songs and rhymes are interesting to pupils ($\bar{x}=3.38$) and that it should be included in the curriculum ($\bar{x}=3.61$). This means that the teachers know the importance of Yoruba songs and rhymes in the academic achievement of children. It was revealed also that songs and rhymes aid pupils' understanding. This table again revealed that teachers disagreed that it is only English songs that are sung in their schools ($\bar{x}=2.28$), it means that teachers agreed that Yoruba

songs are sung in their schools and not only English. It was also shown in Table 1 that teachers disagreed that Yoruba songs and rhymes are now obsolete ($\bar{x}=4.7$) this agreed with the report that Yoruba songs are sung in their schools.

The study revealed in Table 2 that teachers lead pupils to recite rhymes ($\bar{x}=2.75$) and that they teach children songs when they want them to relax ($\bar{x}=2.87$). Teachers should take Yoruba songs and rhymes as important as other subjects they teach because they are equally educative. It was revealed that they often use them to teach other subjects ($\bar{x}=38.5$). This should be encouraged because pupils will easily get the message the teachers are passing across to them through the use of songs and rhymes.

For example, the song:

*"Sere, erele, erena
Igbe, ebibi, okudu ..."*

teaches the months in a year, while this one:

*"Eni bi eni
Eji bi eji
Eta n tagba"*

teaches counting in Yoruba

Furthermore, on the findings of this study, it was clearly observed that teacher perceived that Yoruba songs and rhymes go a long way to impact knowledge to pupils (94%) and that it helps children to learn fast (95.8%) and knowledge is retained when songs and rhymes are in place (93.2%). This is because children love repeating things learnt and in so doing, they always remember the lessons learnt. Teachers even agreed that Yoruba songs and rhymes helped pupils' understanding of other subjects but the question is, why did the teachers agree that Yoruba songs and rhymes are no more in vogue and that they are obsolete? (57.3%). This calls for further study.

Furthermore, Table 4 revealed that there is no significant difference between the private school teachers and the public school teachers in their perception about availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=1.443$; $df=190$; $P>0.05$). Also, there is no significant difference in the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=1.104$; $df=189$; $P>0.05$) but there is a significant difference between teachers in public and private schools in the perception of relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes ($t=-2.484$; $df=19$; $P<0.05$).

This study agreed with Dasylyva (2009) that the various literary devices and quality of the writings are important pointers to the changing trends in the literary history and development of Yoruba children's literature. The study also agreed with Isola (1995) who said children literature provides solid foundation in language acquisition and the fruits are reaped throughout life. It agreed with Odejide (1986) as well agreed who said children literature should enrich the life of children, stimulate their imagination and help them to develop their intellect.

6. Summary of findings:

Based on the analysis above the following are the findings of the study.

1. Majority of teachers agreed that Yoruba songs and rhymes are available in their schools. Therefore the extent of availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes is just above average the number of the schools observed.
2. Teachers often allow pupils to sing or recite rhymes for relaxation or during assembly but they rarely use it to teach.
3. Teachers perceived that Yoruba songs and rhymes help in impacting knowledge and that different learning skills are impacted when songs and rhymes are in used in schools.
4. There is no significant difference between public and private school teachers in their perception about availability of Yoruba songs and rhymes but there is a significant difference between teachers in public and private schools in the perception of relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes. The perceived relevance mean score showed that teachers in public schools have a higher perception of the relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes than their counterparts in private schools.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended to assist the teachers in the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes and their perception about them towards the academic achievement of children in both public and private nursery schools.

1. Teachers should take Yoruba songs and rhymes as serious as every other subject they teach in their schools.

2. Teachers should not only teach songs and rhymes when they want their pupils to relax but they should teach them so as to bring out important lessons out of them.
3. They should also be aware and know that different learning skills are derived from the teaching of Yoruba songs and rhymes like: hygiene, counting skills, respect for elders, coordination of hands and legs etc.
4. Government should make it compulsory for schools to have Yoruba songs and rhymes in the curriculum.
5. School owners should emphasize the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes in their schools.
6. Teachers in public and private Nursery schools should have interest in the teaching of Yoruba songs and rhymes.
7. Book writers should go back to the writing of Yoruba songs and rhyme.
8. Government should make it compulsory for schools to have Yoruba songs and rhymes in the curriculum.
9. School owners should emphasis the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes in their schools.
10. Teachers in public and private Nursery schools should have interest in the teaching of Yoruba songs and rhymes.
11. Book writers should go back to the writing of Yoruba songs and rhymes.

8. Conclusion

From this study, it could be concluded that steps should be taken by both government and private school owners to orientate teachers on the relevance of Yoruba songs and rhymes and to use them in impacting knowledge in the pupils because they are the most important methods through which young learners learn fast and retain what they have learnt for a long time. Teachers should be trained to present their lessons in songs and rhymes at this level of education because it is the stage that children are still trying to associate meanings to concrete things. hence, it is called pre-operational stage.

Also from the study, it could be concluded that teachers at the nursery and primary level of education in Nigeria believed that the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes aid pupils' learning hence, it is needful that they be trained on the use of Yoruba songs and rhymes to teach other school subjects. This is with a view to ensuring that there is synergy in what is taught in school.

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