

Curriculum Recycle Theory: A New Paradigm For Making The Reading - Writing Connection

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Abstract

Experience has shown that in the African environment children of pre-school age are creative in their use of language and inventive in the way they convert discarded tin cans, bicycle tyres etc. into functional toys. These imaginative skill and resourcefulness tend to decline or disappear later, along the line in the formal education system. The Curriculum Recycle Theory (CRT) therefore hypothesizes that there is something in the formal educative system that interferes with the creative talent of the child manifested earlier in life. It then argues that it is possible to rekindle the child's imaginative and creative talent. The transition from primary to secondary school imposes on the child tremendous reading and writing tasks to meet the challenges of the secondary school. The child's interest in these areas can be rekindled through transformations of folklores with which the child is familiar. The purpose of this paper is therefore to outline a general framework for the transformation of folklores and fairy tales based on the principles of the CRT. It will then demonstrate how this framework can be used to optimise the learner's cognitive, affective and psychomotor talents in reading in order to develop the capacity to apply and utilise these insights to enhance writing.

Introduction

The concept of transformations of traditional tales into new ones and the comparison of both variants as well as stories that students create to foster writing through reading could be relatively new in the Nigerian school curriculum but certainly not new in English language teaching. Indeed, it has a lot of publicity in the United States and Britain. Sipe (1993) in an article titled Using Transformations of Traditional Stories: Making the Reading-Writing Connection, demonstrated how sixth-grade students in the United States compared traditional tales and modern variants, and then created their own versions to enhance their writing through reading.

This is even a later example as there are much earlier applications of this teaching strategy. Turkle (1976), Yolen (1981), Crawford (1983), Cullinan (1987), Kellogg (1988), Calmenson (1989), Yirinks (1990) are all practical illustrations of the

use of folklore transformations to make the reading-writing connection in western nations. And even within the Nigerian school system, there have been tremendous use of story telling and other reading materials to enhance students' reading and writing skills. (See Ajayi, 1996).

What is new is the concept of curriculum recycle which is to put the ideas of using traditional stories to enhance students reading and writing, into proper perspective based on sound theoretical background and the underlying assumptions of the Curriculum Recycle Theory (CRT).

This is what this paper attempts to do. As a starting point the paper will clarify the concept of CRT articulated by Ebo Ubahakwe, Professor of Language Education at the University of Ibadan. Furthermore, it will clarify the concept of transformations. It will then spell out the goals of transformations and finally proffer a paradigm for making the reading-writing connection through transformations under a general framework for transformations.

Curriculum Recycle Theory (CRT)

The underlying assumption in CRT is that the goal of the educative process is to optimize the learners' cognitive, affective and psychomotor talents appropriate to a given learning situation and to develop the capacity to apply and utilize what has been so learnt in new situations (Ubahakwe, 1998). CRT then posits that creative learning is optimized in a formal learning situation under two conditioning:

- (a) The learning item is presented by utilizing the inputs of the learner, the society, the environment and the school.
- (b) The learning process begins from the position of the learner and incorporates the inputs of the society, the environment and the school in that order.

The curriculum is said to have been recycled when the learning item in the curriculum as outlined under a and above, is delivered back as a finished product in a new form to the learner who emerges enriched. Put in simple and clear terms CRT states that

Creative learning is optimized in a formal situation when the learning process integrates the inputs of the learner, the society, the environment and the school in that sequence and is a sustained harmonious relationship such that the learner is both the starting and end points in the learning experience (Ubahakwe 1998).

The theory therefore provides a framework which integrates the needs of the learner, the society, the environment and the school, in such a way as to ensure continuity and change in the educative process of maximizing the human, social, and environmental material resource potentials. Two main things are emphasized here-continuity, and change in the educative process. Continuity is emphasized because present knowledge and skills are built on past experiences just as they constitute foundation for the future. Change in the educative process is emphasized because growth and

development in any shape, form or context are dependent on flexibility, sensitivity and adaptability to a given environment.

CRT and the Concept of Transformation

It has been observed that in the African environment children of pre-school and primary school age are creative in their use of language and inventive in the way they convert discarded tin cans, bicycle tyres, wheels and package containers into functional toys (Ubahak, 1998). This imaginative skill and resourcefulness tend to decline or disappear later somewhere along the line in the formal deduction system. The CRT therefore hypothesises that there is something in the formal education system that interferes with creative talent of the child manifested earlier in his life. It then argues that it is possible to rekindle the child's imaginative and creative talent through a three process which would:

- (a) Isolate and identify the child's or learner's potential creative abilities.
- (b) Re-align the critical components of the curriculum to the setting of the creative traits of the learner.
- (c) Recycle the traits and the newly processed curriculum to the learner.

One possible way in which this can be done is to transform traditional tales, into new modern tales to connect reading and writing. It should be noted that there is no one pedagogical model that can be used to achieve success. Indeed, researchers generally agree that children do not learn as a result of a particular method, material, or teaching medium. Rather, they learn by evolving strategies that suit their own learning styles. Teachers develop a variety of methods which worked well for them, and which they tailor to fit a particular student or group of students. It is important to note that there is no one point in the school curriculum that evolving strategies to rekindled the learner's interest is not important. What is crucial however is that it should be properly timed. The ability to determine at what point to introduce a particular strategy to achieve a desired effect is therefore very important.

The transition from primary to secondary imposes on the child tremendous reading and writing tasks to meet the challenges of the secondary school. The child's interests in these areas can be rekindled through transformations of folklores with which the child is familiar. This process involves guiding the children to revisit and re-experience favourite tales from early childhood. The old fairy tales and folklore will live again in the imagination of the children. This engagement can be extended to the enjoyment of modern stories that are based on old models.

Transformations are therefore new stories which are deliberately modelled on older ones. Transformations may be parallel, demonstrated or extended versions of the original tale or the tale may be transformed through the illustrations (Sipe, 1993). In purpose, principles, and methods however, this approach could be used equally well with students of different age and language proficiency levels.

General Framework for Transformations of Folklores into Modern Stories

As we noted above there are three identifiable transformations as suggested by Sipe (1993).

- (a) **Parallelism:** This can be exemplified by "The Principal's New clothes" Calmenson (1989) in which even only the title can be a clue that the story will be based in some way on the "Emperor's New clothes".
- (b) **Reconstructions or transforms** very closely based on traditional stories: Yolen (1981) sleeping ugly's reconstruction of "Sleeping Beauty" which is a quite different story exemplifies this. Here only the title, a magic spell, a long sleep and a kiss are reminders of the original story. There is also Scieszka's (1992), "The Stinky Cheese Man" which contains deconstructions of "The Princess and the Pea" and "Little Red Riding Hood" into "The Princess and the Bowling Ball" and "Little Red Riding Shorts".

In these transformations there were conscious manipulations of a traditional story, a form of extended language play (Martinez and Nash, 1992).

The more modern stories usually play humorously off the traditional story, and are distinguished from stories that are variants or parallel versions from other cultures. Thus, we can have "The Oba's New Clothes" as a Nigerian Variant of "The Emperor's New Clothes" just as "Little Red Cap" (Crawford, 1983) is the American variant of "Little Red Riding Hood" story and "Lon Popo Young" (1989) the Chinese version.

- (c) **Use of new illustrations.** A story can be totally transformed using new illustrations alone. An example is the Browne's (1990) "Hansel and Gretel" which does not change a word of the Brother Grimm story. The story was merely set in modern day England which gave an entirely different feeling to the old tale.

There are numerous other ways of transformation of stories as can be seen in the chart below.

The list is by no means exhaustive.

Chart for transforming stories.

Adapted from Sipe 1993.

1. We can change the style, from old-fashioned to modern language.
2. We can change or add to the details in the plot.
3. We can change a few of the main events in the plots.
4. We can keep a few of the main events but change most of the plots.
5. We can change the setting (time and place) if the setting is changed, there will probable need to be more changes in characters and detail.
6. We can change the point of view.
7. We can change the characters in the story by
 - changing their occupation
 - changing their gender
 - reversing their roles in the story.
8. We can write a sequel to the original story.
9. We can keep the words of the original story but change the illustrations.

Goals of Transformations

The goal here is for students to develop insights and to be able to re-experience the fascination of traditional stories, while at the same time enjoying the humour and creativity in the transformations. Students should also develop tools of literacy understanding such as comparing and contrasting, the new and old stories being sensitive to setting, plot and characterization, and understanding the concepts of point of view and sequence. In addition, students should be able to write their own transformations, and so increase fluency and skill in writing through brainstorming; small and whole-group writing; and engagement in the writing process from talk to first draft to revision, editing and publishing.

General Framework for Transformations and Application: Making the Reading-writing Connection

It is a simple truth that one cannot write without reading. Reading is an inherent part of the writing process, it is the basis of our system for monitoring the meaning we construct when we write.

This is why Murray (1982) talks about the writer's first reader as the writer himself, when he shifts stances during the writing act to assume the role of reader. This is a clear example of an important way in which reading supports writing. Looked at from the other side, this stance also provides an opportunity for writing

to support reading. This means that, because we read our own writing while we are composing it, we are provided with an opportunity to learn to read with critical eye. we can ask whether the text we are reading carries the message we intended. And self-critical reflection should have a salutary effect on our dispositions to read the texts of others with the same critical eye.

If reading is to have full purpose a language in which students connect and transact, we must encourage them to produce texts where their own voices would be heard and where other people will also transact and connect with them (Onukaogweu and Ohia, 1997). Students should therefore be made to realize that reading and writing are interwoven. This can be done in two main ways first by providing avenues for students to write extensively and secondly to deliberate with them what they write. This is the approach suggested here through a step by step procedure.

1. Students should be made to read and discuss the pairs of stories- folklore and its transform. These will evoke literacy insights which would have been overhauled if the stories have been read singly. This will also reveal more depth and perspective and sensitize the students.
2. Students should be provided with the opportunity to transform a story themselves with different modelling techniques in order to help them see the possibilities in the transformation genre. For example, students could compose another version of "The King's Beautiful Daughter" under the title "The Lucky Bridegroom". The story will have all the details and overall organization of the original story, but with modern colloquial language using human names/ qualities in place of animal names and qualities. This could form a basis for discussing change in characters.
3. Students should be made to compare and contrast the pairs of stories visually deriving from them a number of literacy questions. As they read and discuss, the group can develop a chart, of the ways a writer can transform a story.
4. The whole class should be made to develop a transformation with the teacher being part of it. The teacher could write the final part of the story and the students contributing the ending or vice versa.
5. Students could be made to break into manageable group to enhance their social interaction.

Conclusion

Through the reading, modelling and discussions, students will broaden their choices and sharpen their thoughts for their own writing. In doing all these, they will be able to forge intertextual links to further improve the quality of their writing.

In the sense outlined above we have been able to employ curriculum recycle theory to transform traditional folklore into modern tales to make the reading-writing connection. By using traditional folklores with which the learners are familiar, we would have been able to isolate and identify the learner's potential creative abilities. By making the learners read the transformations comparing and contrasting the pairs

of stories we would have been able to re-align the critical components of the curriculum to the setting to the creative traits of the learner. By making students write their own transforms we would have been able to recycle the traits and the newly processed curriculum to the learner. This is because the learning items is presented by utilizing the inputs of the learners, the society, the environment and the school.

Thus, the learning process begins from the position of the learner and incorporate the inputs of the society, the environment and the school. This is sure a new paradigm for making the reading the reading-writing connection.

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The Relative Effectiveness of Indirect and Direct Instructional Strategies on Pupils' Acquisition of Writing Skills

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Abstract

The relative effectiveness of indirect and direct instructional strategies on pupil's acquisition of writing skill was determined in two public primary schools. The mediating effect of intellectual ability on instructional strategies on the acquisition of the writing skill was also investigated. Subjects comprised of 279 primary one pupils. Slosson Intelligence Test (SIT) was used to categorise the learners into their ability levels, while the pupils Attainment Test in Writing (PATW), designed by the researcher, was used to test the acquisition of the skill. The results revealed that the indirect instructional strategy was found more useful in the acquisition of writing skill.

Introduction

Handwriting is the universal skill of all the crafts. As a motor skill it has special significant for primary education. It lays a sound foundation for perception and spatial learning skills which beginning learners must acquire as early as formal schooling begins (Bakare 1977). Handwriting is training in orderliness and the primary element in aesthetic education. It is an education in self-knowledge and self-control. A good handwriting gives satisfaction to the reader and pleasure to others that will read. Handwriting has a place of importance in the educational system both in its own right and as an adjunct to the attainment of other basic learning skills in the school activities (Oduolowu 1998). For these reasons, handwriting features in the Nigerian primary education curriculum as one of the thirteen subjects (World Bank 1989).

In this study, writing is synonymously used to mean handwriting at the primary level of education. The skill of writing at this level involves two different types of movements, that by which the forms of letters are produced and as an instrument by which writing materials is manipulated. More value is therefore placed on the development of good handwriting during the primary school years.

The primary school years (6-12) mark the period of the development of the fine motor skill that is needed for the manipulation of writing materials. Balogun (1994) gives a profile of the normal development of a child at age six and observes that the