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CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OF LEARNERS THROUGH YORUBA VIDEO FILMS

By

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Abstract

This paper makes a case for the use of Yoruba Video Films as language and culture enrichment tools in schools as well as homes. It discusses the relationship between language and culture and also exemplifies Yoruba values as well as the role accorded Yoruba language in the education of Nigerian child. It categorizes Yoruba video films and highlights the constituent of the films that could enrich the linguistic reservoir of the learner and entrench him properly in his indigenous culture. Suggestion is also made about how Yoruba language teachers could present video films as enrichment tools. Teachers and academics of Yoruba are challenged to participate actively in producing language and culture enriched video films.

Introduction

Language is a key with which the culture of a people is unlocked and it is also repository knowledge about an individual's personality and his culture. It is therefore pertinent to note that language is part and parcel of a people's culture and it is the language and culture of a people that distinguish them from others. Language is important to man right from the beginning of time. While there are different kinds of language all over the world, the commonly known ones are expressed through speech (Oyewo, 2005). According to him, speech is the primary and natural form of language while other languages are artificial. Such artificial language which are expressed through body works and electrical signals. However, whether artificial or natural, language is the principal means by which man communicates to reveal his identity, express his feelings and values and produce meaningful message.

There is a strong relationship between a people's language and culture as language is an aspect of a people's culture. Edo (2005) defines culture as "the total way life of a people in a given society" (p. 1). According to him the total way of life include the type of food the people eat, their clothing, their beliefs about the existence of the world, religion, their perception of other people, marital life, political system, their language etc. Edo's definition is similar to that of Oyewo who defines culture as "the deposit of knowledge, experience, belief, value, attitudes, meaning, hierarchies, religious, notions of time, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possession's acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (pp. 68 & 69). As earlier indicated, a symbolic relationship exists between culture and language. For instance, language is the primary medium by which a people's culture is transmitted. Apart from being a veritable tool of communication, it (language) is equally a guide to social reality and it also influences an individual's perceptions, helps in transmitting meaning as well as moulding an individual's pattern of thought.

Yoruba Language and Yoruba People

Yoruba language is one of the three major languages in Nigeria (NPE, 1977 revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004). The Yoruba people are the major occupants of the south western part of Nigeria and according to Olajubu (1992), it is the first to become a written language among the indigenous languages in Nigeria.

Yoruba language has been functionally used in the traditional and formal settings. In the traditional society, it has been used in daily communication, greetings, oral literary performance, and regulation of human behaviours in the society, trade transactions, and expression of religious belief. In the formal setting, Yoruba language has been used as a medium of instruction in schools, churches and mosques as well is a medium of communication by the electronic and print media (Awoniyi, 1983; Makinde, 2004 a).

That Yoruba, the mother tongue of Yoruba learners in school is effective and the best medium of teaching them in their linguistic environment has been empirically established (Fafunwa, 1975; Olanrewaju, 1990; Makinde and Olabode, 2006). Whereas the Federal Government through the National policy on Education (NPE, 2004) has approved that the medium of instruction at the Preprimary and first part of primary education should be the mother tongue or the language of immediate community, this is not the practice in most schools especially the private elitist ones. Of course, such schools have the blessings of parents who have relegated their indigenous languages in favour of English language. Expectedly most learners perform very poorly in public examinations (WAEC, 2007) and many are not proficient speakers of their local languages (Makinde, 2004 b). There is therefore the need to arm them with the necessary communication skills considering the importance of oral/written communication in the day-to-day activities of human beings. The Yoruba people are enriched linguistically and culturally. It is however disheartening to know that most Yoruba youths do not cherish their language and culture, Lawal (2005) observes that the contact of Nigerian culture with that of foreign ones has made it difficult for traditional education to have its primary objectives achieved. According to him, many children in Nigerian society do not even know how to greet people talkless of prostrating or kneeling while greeting elders. Akin to this is the enviable traditional mode of dressing which is already giving way to foreign and embarrassing mode of dressing.

The Yoruba people cherish respect for elders and constituted authorities. Emphasis is placed on the development of ethical character, intellectual skills, as well as skilfulness in one vocation or the other. Appreciations of cultural heritage as well as participation in community development are given pride of place in traditional Yoruba society (Fafunwa, 1995).

Much damage is done to the lives of a people who are denied education in their indigenous language. Makinde (2004 c) argues that to deny an individual the study and use of his language is to deny him the local knowledge, competence, potentials, character in his community and this tantamount to des-empowering him.

Nigeria as a nation is already reaping the harvest of those seven cardinal sins identified by Mahatma Ghandi as cited in Omolayole (2002):

- (a) politics without principles
- (b) education without character
- (c) wealth without work
- (d) commerce without morality
- (c) science without humanity
- (f) religion without sacrifice
- (g) pleasure without conscience (p iii).

In as much as the role of education in the society is to serve as a potent weapon for the development of individuals in the society by making him an asset to himself and the society, educational programmes should therefore be packaged in such a way that he is not only indigenously enriched linguistically but also culturally.

Cultural Enrichment through Video Films

The film industry is one of the lucrative businesses in the Nigeria of today. Young school learners especially university graduates as well as old actors are gainfully employed Anyacho and Anyacho (2007).

There is a rapid growth in the development of home videos in the form of the Digital Video Disk (DVD) and the Visual Compact Disk (VCD) in Nigeria. During the late 1990s and early 2000s the digital video disc (DVD) player had the most successful product launch in consumer electronics history. According to the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA), which represents manufacturers and retailers of audio and video products, 30 million DVD players were sold in the United States in a record five-year period from 1997 to 2001. It took compact disc (CD) players 8 years and VCRs 13 years to achieve that 30-million milestone. The same size as a CD, a DVD can store enough data to hold a full-length motion picture with a resolution twice that of a videocassette. The DVD player also offered the digital surround-sound quality experienced in a state-of-the-art movie theatre. Beginning in 2001 some DVD players also offered home recording capability (Encarta, 2007).

While it is observed that some films/videos produced both locally and abroad are inimical to social, moral and emotional wellbeing of the youths, many are good materials for enhancing language development and ethical character. Many youths today spend much time watching films and videos and it must be borne in mind that what they hear, see and read have significant impact on them. In the light of this, film or videos on themes such as promiscuity, crime, violence, robbery, and pornography should not be encouraged.

Anyacho and Anyacho (2007) cited some studies in the United States of America that found that many sexually explicit materials abound in the television. One of the studies is that of Bethesda (1994) who found that 75% of Americans agreed that there are too many sexually explicit materials on the television. Another study is that of Kebby (2001) who corroborated this in his study those children between age ten and sixteen years of age in USA noted that what they saw on television encouraged them to take part in sexual activities too soon. The Parents Television Council (1999) also observed that language and sexuality were significantly affected by what adolescents watch on the screen. Decline in societal values is also traced to the television. Cases of sexual abuse committed by men, both young and old against little girls are unprecedented and the number of people afflicted with HIV/AIDS is on the increase (Anyacho and Anyacho, 2007).

As earlier noted when education – related films are presented before the learners, they gain a lot. According to Offorma (2007), video and television are audio-visual materials which present language more elaborately than any other instructional materials as they combine both pictures and sound sequentially as in real life situations. Offorma also added that learners are taken into the lives and experiences of others and they can be used in enhancing vocabulary development, grammar presentation or review, and the basic language skills activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a cross cultural setting.

Yoruba video films could be divided into six categories:

- (a) Historical Video (drama) Films
- (b) Religious Video (drama) Films
- (c) Songs
- (d) Non-religious General Themes Video (drama) Films
- (e) Purely Educational Films.
- (f) Investigative Journalism

Historical films could be a dramatized presentation of historical events of the past. Some of such events might have been published in literary texts. Examples include Basorun Gaa written by Adebayo Faleti and produced into CD in (2004), Efunsetan Aniwura by Akinwumi Isola, Basorun Ogunmola, Owo Eje—an adaptation of Kola Akinlade's novel and Ogun Agbekoya produced by Murton Film Productions.

Religious films are those produced with Christian or Islamic undertone or those with traditional religious background. Christian films like those produced by The Mount Zion Film Productions, Nigeria: Omo Majemu written by Mike Bamiloye, Ancedran National Films Project produced Esin Ajoji; Mount Zion Faith Ministries produced Apoti Eri written by Mike Bamiloye. Paradise of Truth Film Productions produced Aawo which was written by Sola Alo; Evom Films Incorporation produced Olori Ota written by Shola Mike Agboola. An example of film with an Islamic background in that of Golden Link Productions & Communication and Ajileye Films entitled Ogbun Aye, Songs in compact disks are innumerable. They could be religious or non-religious.

As for the Non-religious films these cut across several themes of love as in Ologini Tajo De by MMM Films: penalty for greed e.g. Jegudujera by Olaoye Global Concept Ltd. (2006) by Bola Adenitise. Other themes include honesty, reward for hardwork, struggle for supremacy e.g. Ija Oba by Cowrie House Nig. Ltd. Investigative Journalism Films like Nnkan Nbe (special) by Kolbim Communications Ltd by kola Olawuyi.

These films are produced in DVD or VCD. They could be viewed using the Computer or through a video machine attached to the Television. The films are good materials for language and cultural enrichment. Enrichment input refers to those materials (films) which learners are exposed to in order to enrich or equip them culturally and linguistically (Makinde, 2007). The films present language in the most practical and natural form.

Suggested Mode of Presentation

(a) Choice of Material

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The choice of material (film) to choose will be determined by the learners' characteristics: age, level of education, aptitude, interest and physiological fitness. Certain films like Efunsetan Aniwura may be too terrifying to children below age 14.

(b) Pre-viewing questions

It is believed that the teacher must have viewed a film before presenting it to the class. It will be gainful if the teacher could give some pre-viewing questions to the learners. This will place them on the alert to watch our for those things in the course of viewing the film.

Examples of such questions are:

- What is the title of the video film?
- Who is the writer and who directed the production?
- Mention the producer of the video film
- Who is the hero or heroin in the film?
- Mention the names of major actors and minor actors.
- What moral lessons can we learn from the film?
- Identify the Yoruba cultural values that are presented/promoted in the video film
- . Identify the figure of speech used in the film with copies examples
- Mention some things you like about the film
- Mention some thing you do not like about the film.

The range of questions presentable to a group of learners will be determined by their level of education.

(c) During Viewing

It be could be necessary for the teacher to comment on certain aspect of the film as the case may. This will make the learners to be on the alert and prevent their minds from wandering away. Some of them may even have questions to ask, like the meaning of certain words or expressions.

(d) Post Viewing Questions

Those questions asked at the pre-viewing level could be repeated at the end of the viewing. When learners respond to questions, it will help them to develop their skills of listening and speaking. They could be asked to write their responses and read to the class, thus helping them in developing their reading and writing skills.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Considering the damaging effect of obscene and crime inducing video films on the society, film industries should be adequately censored to reduce or stop their production. Such films should not be imported into the country and television houses should not present such for their viewers. Parents should have more time for their children and closely monitor their activities both within and outside the home. Life and values destroying video films should not be allowed in the home. Parents should encourage their children to view video films in their local languages and also motivate them in the use of the languages at home. Language teachers should select good materials for use in the language class. It is just unfortunate that most primary and secondary schools in Nigeria do not have the resources for the presentation of these language and cultural enrichment tools.

Yoruba language and literature teachers must be committed to the promotion of the language and the Yoruba socio-cultural values. The government must do its part by providing the material and human resources if the Nigerian youths will not be alienated from their linguistic and cultural environment.

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