

# *An Overview of Yoruba Primary School Rhyme as a Panacea for Child Functionality, Intelligent Inquiry and Cognitive Development*

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## *Abstract*

*Child's oral competency in the indigenous language is very important for cognitive development. Ability to communicate in oral and literal through reading is a good instrument for child's development. One of the ways of achieving this is through the teaching of Yorùbá primary school rhyme. This study investigated the extent of teaching of Yorùbá primary school rhyme in schools in South-Western States of Nigeria. The study was a descriptive survey. A sample of 200 teachers selected from a population of 4500 local language teachers in South-West Nigeria was used for the study. The findings revealed that, the extent of the teaching of Yorùbá primary school rhymes in primary schools in South-Western States of Nigeria was very low. The study results also revealed that greater percentage of Yorùbá language teachers do not use resources to enhance the teaching of Yorùbá primary school rhymes. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the teaching of primary school rhymes should be intensified in primary schools in South Western States of Nigeria and in all other states where Yorùbá language is taught. Teachers should endeavour to make use of adequate learning resources to teach Yorùbá language primary school rhymes in order to enhance the teaching.*

**Key words:** Oral poetry, Yorùbá primary school rhymes, child's functionality, intelligent inquiry, cognitive development.

## *Introduction*

The development of an African child is paramount to the educational system of the race. Much of their thought and ideas are on the child's cognitive development which they believe is the utmost priority to the total upbringing of the child so that his/her lives could be transformed. Prior to the school age, the mind of a child is virtually empty, coming directly from home, the child usually find himself in a strange environment different from the home and meeting people they have not seen before the child needs to be guided and gradually be integrated to develop his own world and get prepared for the primary education. According to the UNESCO report (2013) primary school education is the basic education which aims at preparing children to attain the competence needed to advance further in making a worthwhile contribution to the society. When the child is old enough to start school according to the rule and practice of the western education, he needs to be curious about so many things. He needs to be exposed to the environment

outside the family hut and gradually being integrated to the society. At this stage, he needs to be introduced to other educational activities with which to train him/her and put his/her feet on the right part towards achieving the whole education. Okoro (2006) was of the opinion that, at this stage, the intellectual training should be accorded.

The school is responsible for the experience that builds up an individual for a lifelong learning. The major reason for primary education in Nigeria is for the child to master reading, writing and arithmetic. It is also meant to develop permanent literacy and build the child up to acquire sound and standard of individual conduct and behaviour, to acquire some skills and appreciate the value of manual work. Ability to communicate in oral and literal through reading is also a good instrument and an evidence of good education. In the UNESCO report (2013) it also noted that, since reading forms the basis for all other areas of learning, it is necessary to ensure that children of the primary grades attain proficiency in reading. It is necessary that at this stage, learning should be pleasurable because there is no serious work that the child can be engaged in other than to sing. Songs can be used to develop the emotional thinking of a child. When a child is emotionally balanced, other things will follow. The child also needs to be guided in order to develop vocabulary skills in the indigenous language. According to Fafunwa (2004) the culture of the society involved the use of his indigenous language. This can be done through repetition of certain words. It can also be used to develop the child's listening skill.

The children can sing to the birds, reptiles, insects, they can as well learn from nature, learn to imagine things which will make them to discover knowledge on their own. Using a strange language at this stage will amount to taking the child away from the environment of which he/she is used to. For the actual realisation of his/her dream, the child's indigenous language is very important. Abiri (1976) noted that, the mother tongue which is the language that is naturally learnt by the members of a community and employed by them as their first medium of vocalised communication is a potent factor in their intellectual and cultural effulgence when a child is able to make himself or herself familiar with the rudiments of his/her mother tongue alphabets and lexis, he/she will not find it difficult to imbibe the language and eventually be proficient in it.

One of the ways of achieving this is the use of oral poetry. Oral poetry is a form of culture, tradition and value of society. According to Laurea (2014) oral poetry is part of our lives; it recollects the past to understand the present. It gets hold of the tradition but relocates it into modernity. Oral poetry can occur in different forms. It shows animal behaviour and the power to appreciate the nature. Hazlitt (1818) stated that, poetry is the language of the imagination and the passions. It relates to whatever gives immediate pleasures or fun in the human mind. Poetry is that fine particle within us that expands, rarefies, refines, raises our whole being, without it, man's life is poor as beast's. Akanbi (2014) equally observed that, there are crucial lessons that could enhance the peaceful co-existence of people within a community and that if the lessons are imbibed the world will be harmonious place to live. Yoruba primary school rhyme though it is written, is

still a form of oral poetry. These rhymes are widely circulated by oral means. This is usually done through repetition and they are mainly committed to memory to keep the spoken form alive. Most of the rhymes are composed by philosophers taken into considerations happenings in the society. It serves as a measure to prepare the children to read effectively in that; it indicates pauses and master punctuation effectively. Kennedy (2005) observed that, when children hear nursery rhymes, they hear the sounds vowels and consonants make. They hear how to put these sounds together to make words with which to make first sentences. This makes the children to listen carefully and pay attention with good melody.

For instance;

J	á	ì	à	n	á	t	ó	ń	t	à	n		
KF	FKF	KF	KF	K	KF								
T	ó	t	u	t	ù	t	ó	s	ì	d	a	r	a
KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF
M	á	d	ú	r	ó	d	o	j	o	o	l	a	
KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	F	KF					
A	k	o	k	o	ń	s	a	r	e	t	e	t	e
F	KF	KF	K	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF	KF

That is-

Pluck a sparkling bright flower  
 Fresh beautiful and good  
 Do not wait till tomorrow  
 Time runs very fast

The underlined sounds are consonants and vowels pronounced distinctively.

These rhymes also help the children to appreciate the indigenous language and assist to build up their interest in reading. It is a form of entertainment and a very distinct wilful enthusiasm. It serves as a great transition from oral to literacy since the Yoruba rhymes always come in form of chorus recitation. It gives room for interaction among the children thereby making them to feel at home while at school. The Yoruba primary school rhymes teach the children to be observant, cautious, to live and respect any creature.

Let us consider this; that is:

Yí	ẹ	ş	ẹ	r	ẹ	s	í	á	p	á	k	a	n	Turn your feet aside				
Má	ş	e	t	e	k	ò	k	ò	r	ò	n	i	Do not step on that insect					
Kò	k	ò	r	ò	t	í	i	w	ọ	k	ò	n	á	n	i	n	i	The insect that is not important to you
Ọ	l	ọ	r	u	n	l	o	d	á	a	It is created by God.							

According to Ayodele (2015) the Yoruba rhymes can be used to address the auditory sense of the children whereby the children can be given problem to solve which can aid intellectual development.

**For example;**

Adiye e mi  
 Èyí ti mo rà  
 Mo tójú rẹ̀  
 Ó sì dàgbà  
 Lọ̀sàn án ojú kan  
 Tí òjò n rọ̀  
 Èmi ko mò pé  
 Ó ti jẹ̀ lọ̀  
 Ó bọ̀ sí kòtò  
 Òjò sì paá  
 Baba ba mi gbée

Gbígbe ti mo gbée  
 Gbígbon ló n gbòn  
 Mo dáná fún un  
 Ara rẹ̀ sì yá  
 Ó yé mewaá  
 Ó pa mėsàn án  
 Ó fikan delé  
 Bómọ̀dé ò kú  
 Agba ní dà.

**That is;**

My hen  
 Which I bought  
 I took care of it  
 And it grows  
 One afternoon  
 When it was raining  
 Little did I know  
 That it has gone astray  
 It fell into pit  
 And was beaten by the rain  
 Father rescued it

As I held it  
 It was shivering  
 I kept it warm  
 It became healthy  
 It laid ten eggs  
 And hatched nine  
 Left one unhatched  
 A child that does not die young  
 Will surely grow old.

It is a good way of making the children to learn happily because it perfect their utterances and mark the beginning of the child academic career. It is often said that children will not become good at something they do not enjoy doing. The wordings of the rhymes are instantly and correctly register in the mind of the learner thereby complementing the acquisition of Yoruba language skills and provide learning opportunity for the children. How often these rhymes are sung and the extent at which the children listen and speak boost the level of interest in the literacy and this use to influence their communication skills. This serve as an added advantage in learning syllabic analysis and sentence construction.

**For instance;**

Kú-kù-kú  
 Là-gbé-bọ-n-ké  
 Kè-kè-ré-è-ke  
 Là-kù-kọ-n-kọ

**That is;**

Ku ku ku  
 Is the sound of a hen  
 Ke ke re e ke  
 Is the crow of the cock.

The underlined words are very distinct syllables. The work of syllable is to train an individual utterance to be proficient in the spoken form of the target language. Apart from this, it is cock that crows while hens just make ordinary sound to draw the attention of the chicks. This crow is very important in indicating time. Some of the rhymes are also used to teach good character, values and to correct ills in the society.

**Let us consider this;**

Tójú iwà rẹ ọrẹé mi!  
Olá á máa sílọ nílẹ ẹni  
Ẹwà a sì máa sílọ lára ẹniyàn  
Olówó ọ̀nì ń doloṣì bó dọ̀la

afterward

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Sùgbón iwà níí báni dé sàrèè  
Owó kò jẹ nnkankan fú ní

**And again another example is;**

Iṣé ni oògùn iṣé  
Múra sí iṣé ọ̀ré ẹ̀ mi  
Iṣé ni a fii di ẹni gíga

**Another example is;**

Èkọ̀ sì tún ń ọ̀ni dọ̀gá  
Múra kí o kọ̀ o dáadaa  
Bí o rí ọ̀pọ̀ ẹ̀niyàn  
Tí wọ̀n ń fí ẹ̀kọ̀ ọ̀rìn  
Dákun má ọ̀ fara wé wọ̀n

Another example;

Má fòwúro sere ọ̀ré mi  
Múra sí iṣé ọ̀jọ̀ n lẹ̀

Make haste when the sun shines

**That is**

Take good care of your character my friend  
Wealth will disappear some day  
Beauty will also fade away  
A wealthy person today may become a destitute

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But character is of a great value to the grave  
Money is insignificant.

**That is;**

Work is the antidote of poverty  
Work hard my friend  
Work is the tool for proficiency.

**That is;**

Education also do elevates to a higher position  
Make haste to acquire education  
And if you see people  
Making education a laughing matter  
Please do not emulate them.

That is;

Work hard, time wait for no one.

There are some of these rhymes that teach health issues and hygiene. They serve as pivotal to the children daily activities. They clap and make various exercises. They are involved in various agilities.

**Let us consider this;**

Bọ̀ ojú rẹ̀ bí o bá jì  
Run orín rẹ̀ pẹ̀lú  
Kí ò sì jẹ̀ ọ̀mọ̀ rere fún ọ̀bí rẹ̀  
Bí àwọ̀ bá wà lati fọ̀  
Ilẹ̀ láti gbá  
Jọ̀wọ̀ má ọ̀ sàì ọ̀ tìrẹ̀  
Bí ọ̀mọ̀ rere.

**That is;**

Wash your face as you rise early in the morning  
Rinse your mouth/teeth also  
And be a good child to your parents  
If there are ditches to wash  
Floors to sweep  
Please do not leave your chores undone  
Be like a good child.

The rhymes are very good in learning numeracy.

One – oókan

Two – eéji

Three – eéta

Four – eérin

Five – ààrún

In all these, good characters are emphasised, teaches to keep away from danger, to be smart to be able to endure and also teaches that there is dignity in labour in which in the work of Ogunlola (2012) forms the main idea of the Yoruba traditional education. Also Kenny (2005) noted that through this they learn memorisation and recall, they learn sequence of event and that they begin to learn how to understand stories and follow along they learn simple maths skills and learn counting. They develop mathematics and tongue muscles co-ordination of hand and body. They learn to imagine and be creative. All these are antidotes which can develop the child intelligence and personality to a reasonable extent. Children imbibe this by acquiring correct behaviour and make social interaction very easy. This is in line with Ogunlola (2012) who noted that, the main idea of the Yoruba traditional education is to build a child with good character. In all these, dignity of labour is emphasised which is very important in every area of life before one can make ends meet. Apart from this, there are times when these rhymes serve as a good interaction between the teacher and the pupils. Tisome (2009) noted the importance of teachers connecting with the students through interaction and that if they are unable to connect with them especially emotionally, then influencing their mind may not be possible. There are times when teachers need to prevent the pupils from being dose away and make the class to be lively by making any of the rhymes a repeat after the teacher. In line with this, Kenny (2005) said that, they learn to pronounce words easily by saying them over and over again and by practicing them without effort or pressure of criticism. These are the philosophies that are wanting in our education system, today everybody wants to speak, and nobody wants to listen. By doing these, the child will be able to develop certain activities that will carry him or her through the first phase of primary school stage.

However, observation reveals that, there is gradual loss of the teaching of Yoruba rhymes in the primary schools in south western states of Nigeria. It has also been observed that these rhymes are being replaced with other rhymes in foreign languages that these are very strange to the pupils and which they find difficult to understand and interpret. This has not made any positive impact on the pupils as a result, the minds of these pupils are not broadened to accommodate learning and their thinking ability remains very shallow. Alao (2008) remarked that the pupils we teach in our basic education system are increasingly finding it difficult to concentrate effectively in teaching and learning activities in the school and so the school system is finding it increasingly difficult to secure the attention of modern day pupils.

The researcher also observed that so many teachers are not familiar with these Yoruba

primary school rhymes, since they do not know them, it becomes difficult for them to teach as it is the usual saying that, one cannot give out what he or she does not have. Many times after teaching, these children look empty due to the poor foundation they are being exposed to. Observation also revealed that the pupils and teachers interaction is gradually fading away in primary schools. Ayodele (2015) noted that, a good interaction between the teachers and students is quite important to enhance progress in class work. It is often said that children will not become good at something they do not enjoy doing. In view of these, the study assesses the extent of the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes in order to proffer appropriate solution to it.

### Research Questions

1. What is the extent of the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes in primary schools in south Western States of Nigeria?
2. What are the resources used by teachers in teaching the Yoruba primary school rhymes?
3. To what extent will the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhyme influence the pupils functionality and intelligent inquiry?

### Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consist of all primary school teachers in all the primary schools in south western states of Nigeria. A sample of 200 teachers was selected for the study. The instrument used was a self-designed questionnaire for teachers.

### Results

**Research Question 1:** *What is the extent of the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes in South Western Nigeria?*

**Table 1:** Frequency counts and percentage of extent of teaching Yoruba rhymes in primary schools in South Western States of Nigeria.

ITEM	AGREE		DISAGREE	
	N	%	N	%
The teacher guides the pupils to express the rhymes orally	57	47.5	63	52.5
The teacher guides the pupils to express the rhymes in writing	27	22.5	93	77.5
The teacher leads the pupils to draw out the moral lessons	27	22.5	93	77.5

The teacher teaches and illustrates the rhymes	30	25.0	90	75.0
The teacher guides the pupils to copy the rhymes and paste in their will	15	12.5	105	87.5
The teacher guides the pupils to create rhyme board for Yoruba language	25	20.8	95	79.2
Average	30.2	25.14	89.2	74.86

From the table above, 57 (47.5%) of the respondents agree that the teacher's guide the pupils to express the rhymes orally while 63 (52.5%) disagree; 27 (22.5%) agree that the teacher's guide the pupils to express the rhymes in writing and draw out the moral lessons while 93 (77.5%) disagree; 30 (25.0%) of the teachers teach and illustrate the rhymes while 90 (75.0%) do not; 15 (12.5%) agree that the teacher's guide the pupils to copy the rhyme and paste in their wall while 105 (87.5%) do not and 25 (20.8%) of the teacher's guide the pupils to create brand for Yoruba language while 95 (79.2%) do not. On the average, 30.2 (25.14%) of the teachers teach Yoruba primary school rhymes very well while 89.2 (74.86%) do not. Therefore, the extent of the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes in primary schools in S/W Nigeria is very low.

**Research Question 2:** *What are the resources used by teachers in teaching the Yoruba primary schools rhymes?*

**Table 2:** Frequency counts and percentage of resources used in teaching Yoruba primary school rhymes

ITEM	AGREE		DISAGREE	
	N	%	N	%
Charts	28	23.3	92	76.7
Graphics and game, cartoon and clips	27	22.5	93	77.5
Allow pupils to read aloud	32	26.7	88	73.3
Teach, read and stage reading	27	22.5	93	77.5



Pictures	30	25.0	90	75.0
Explain terms	27	22.5	93	77.5
Bring only new words	27	22.5	93	77.5
Use the sounds in another word	27	22.5	93	77.5
Explain the articulation of voice	27	22.5	93	77.5

Table 2 above reveals that 28 (23.3%) of the teachers use charts while 92 (76.7%) do not; 27 (22.5%) use graphics, games and cartoons while 93 (77.5%) do not; 32 (26.7%) allow pupils to read aloud while 88 (73.3%) do not; 30 (25.0%) use pictures while 90 (75.0%) do not and 27 (22.5%) of the teachers explain terms, bring out new words, use the sounds in another work and explain the articulation voice while 93 (77.5%) do not do all these.

**Research Question 3:** *To what extent will the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes influence the pupils' functionality and intelligent inquiry?*

It is obvious from table 3 that 118 (98.3%) of the respondents agreed that Yoruba rhymes assist pupils to develop Yoruba language vocabulary and develop listening skills while 2 (1.7%) disagree; 119 (99.2%) agree that it assists pupils to acquire pronunciation skills and enables pupils to be creative while 1 (0.8%) disagree; 105 (87.5%) agree that it influences pupils' reading culture while 15 (12.5%) disagree; 92 (76.7%) agree that it shapes pupils' insights while 28 (23.3%) disagree; 117 (97.5%) agree that it builds pupils' imagination and enhances their participation in learning while 3 (2.5%) disagree respectively; 108 (90.0%) agree that it guides pupils to perform other daily activities while 12 (10.0%) disagree; 120 (100%) agree that it gives deeper understanding of life and enhances good character while 0 (0.0%) disagree respectively and 80 (66.7%) agree that it helps to recall other useful activities, solve personal problems, grows pupils to be diligent and improve their cognitive ability while 40 (33.3%) disagree respectively. Average, 104.9 (87.4%) of the respondents agreed that the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes influences the pupils' functionality and intelligent inquiry while only 15.1 (12.6%) disagree. Therefore, the extent of Yoruba primary school rhymes influencing pupils' functionality and intelligent inquiry is very high.

**Table 3:** Frequency counts and percentage of influence of Yoruba rhymes on pupils' functionality and intelligent inquiry

ITEM	AGREE	DISAGREE
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	N	%	N	%
Rhyming assists the pupils to develop Yoruba language vocabulary	118	98.3	2	1.7
Assists pupils to acquire pronunciation skill in Yoruba language	119	99.2	1	0.8
Influences pupils' reading culture	105	87.5	15	12.5
Develops listening skills	118	98.3	2	1.7
Shaping pupils' insights	92	76.7	28	23.3
Builds pupils' imagination	117	97.5	3	2.5
Enhances more participation in learning	117	97.5	3	2.5
Develops creativity in pupils	119	99.2	1	0.8
Guides pupils to perform other daily activities	108	90.0	12	10.0
Gives deeper understanding of life	120	100.0	0	0.0
Enhances good character	120	100.0	0	0.0
To recall other useful activities	80	66.7	40	33.3
To solve personal problems	80	66.7	40	33.3
Grows pupils to be diligent	80	66.7	40	33.3
Assists pupils to improve their cognitive ability	80	66.7	40	33.3
Average	104.9	87.4	15.1	12.6

## Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the extent of the teaching of the Yoruba primary school rhymes in primary schools in South Western states of Nigeria is very low. 30.2% of the respondents who are teachers teach Yoruba primary school rhymes effectively while the larger percentage of 74.86% do otherwise. This is in line with the researcher's observation that, so many teachers are not familiar with these Yoruba primary school

rhymes and since they do not know them, it becomes difficult for them to teach. The findings also reveal that greater percentage of the teachers of Yoruba language do not use resources to enhance the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes. This is in line with the view of Alao (2008) that the pupils we teach nowadays find it difficult to secure their attentions. The study also reveals that 87.4% of the respondents indicate that, the teaching of Yoruba primary school rhymes can result into the pupils' functionality and intelligent inquiry. This is in line with Ayodele (2015) submission that the Yoruba primary school rhymes can be used to address the auditory sense.

### Conclusion

On the premise of this it was established that the primary school rhymes can be a very good way of transmitting the culture and improving the intellectual growth of Nigerian children. It is therefore necessary that every teacher should teach the pupils effectively by using various resources which can enhance the teaching and learning of Yoruba language primary school rhyme. When children develop their mother tongue they are simultaneously fostering a host of other essential skills with which they progress to formal education (image credit 2017).

### Recommendations

- i. Based on the outcome of the study, the teaching of primary school rhymes should be intensified in primary schools in South Western states of Nigeria and in all other states where Yoruba language is being taught.
- ii. Teachers should endeavour to use adequate learning resources to teach Yoruba language school rhymes in order to enhance the teaching.
- iii. Teachers are also advised to update their knowledge in the subject from time to time in order to improve their teaching skills.

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