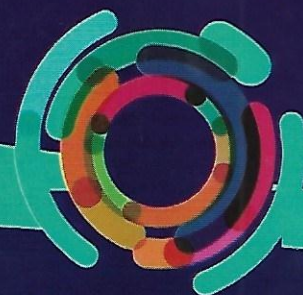


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Assessment of Basic School Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ìlòrín South Local Government Area

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Abstract

Despite the significant roles Yorùbá riddles play in promoting and aiding pupils' critical thinking ability, its performance both at home and in school is declining. Most Yorùbá children cannot engage in riddling session, while some who do engage in it cannot give appropriate responses to riddles posed. This paper examined middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ìlòrín South Local Government Area of Kwara State. Through stratified and random sampling techniques, three public and three private schools were selected. One hundred and eighty respondents were randomly selected from the six schools. A 15-item researcher-designed test of Yorùbá riddles was used to elicit responses from the subjects. The data collected were analysed using mean, percentage, the t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance. It was found that the pupils had average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles; there was no significant influence of gender and class on pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles respectively; and school type significantly influenced pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that children should be exposed to Yorùbá riddles at their formative years.

Keywords: Basic School, Pupils, Knowledge, Yorùbá Riddles, Assessment

Introduction

Every Yorùbá community has various means of nurturing and guiding their younger ones jealously to enable them become critical thinkers and problem-solvers that would be capable of tackling personal challenges and other life problems intelligently. One of such means is through oral literature, which is traditional stories, handed down from one generation to the other through spoken words. Yorùbá oral forms of literature include proverbs, folktales, folksongs, folk festival, tongue twisters, legends, myths and riddles, among others. The roles of each of these forms in entertaining, educating, moral teachings and in maintaining social orders among the Yorùbá children cannot be underestimated (Adéyemí, 2013). Some of these oral forms, such as riddles are mainly for children; this is because riddles telling or performance is majorly for sharpening and enriching knowledge of the Yorùbá youth. This, however, is not to say that the adults do not participate in riddling.

Riddles have significant social roles that may be latent; these include roles that may be described as cultural, educative, intellectual, ideological, cosmological and political. Riddles teach logic, they compel audience to engage in the contemplation of plain language. Ajayi (2015) regards Yorùbá riddles as a game which constitutes a very vital genre of oral literature. In Yorùbá societies, riddles are common and have been extensively collected; they are often closely related to proverbs. Like proverbs, riddles are expressed briefly and concisely which involves analog, meaning, sound, rhythm or tone and bring the meaning to the audience. Riddles could also be regarded as questions deliberately worded in puzzling manner and presented as problems to be solved. In addition, a riddle is a mysterious question about a person, thing or a situation that people, especially young ones should guess based on the description given.

In the traditional Yorùbá society, when the tired farmers gathered with their children in the village square to take relief and to entertain themselves, they usually engaged in riddling in order to refresh their body and mind. Doing this for few hours could make them to forget their physical labour, tiredness and make them feel relaxed, happy and make them exercise and refresh their brain. In addition, it helps to detect cleverness among one another.

Yorùbá riddles are questions that demand quick and witty answers. Àmáli (2014) opines that riddles are used among the Yorùbá to amuse, entertain, educate and use as a serious test of imaginative power. A riddle is a question, puzzle, a phrase or a statement devised to get unexpected or clever answer. It is a folk genre, as well as rhetorical dunces often having a veiled or double meaning. Teachers use it as a question which could be a prolong challenge for the learners to figure out themselves or it could be a funny comment intended to entertain the audience (Adéyemí, 2013). As in other African societies, riddling in the Yorùbá society involves a performer (narrator) and an audience. The narrator is the person who calls and poses riddles to be solved, while the audience is expected to proffer appropriate answer (solution) to it.

According to Àjàyí (2015), Yorùbá riddles are a form of amusement, educative and a serious test of imaginative power. Yorùbá riddles often involve metaphorical or poetic comments to which respondents must try to puzzle out the correct answer. Thus, it is obvious that Yorùbá riddle can help both sides, that is, the teacher and the pupils in creating a more interactive classroom atmosphere in which they will generate active responses.

Kí ló lẹ̀ṣẹ̀ mèérín tí kò le rìn? (What has four legs, but cannot walk?)

Answer: *Tàbíli* (Table)

This is to suggest that Yorùbá riddles do not only present to the children an opportunity to learn the language but also to play with it. In other words, students can play with the language to make them active during teaching-learning process.

Functions of Yorùbá Riddles: Riddle seems to serve certain functions which are not always expressed. Firstly, they help in keeping the audience mentally awake before folktale is told, being often used as spices between long sessions of folktale narration. Secondly, like folktales, they have an entertainment value coming as they do at the end of the day's work, they provide an opportunity for corporate life; people laugh at one another's wrong answers and the competition to solve riddles creates a cordial atmosphere. Thirdly, riddles exercise and wit audience to display their imaginative power in answering or solving them. In oral literature, riddles serve as the competition of wit. If the audience knows the answers; they take pleasure in listening to them repeatedly. This is because riddles enrich the oratory skills and develop audience vocabulary. The following are some other of functions of Yorùbá riddles as identified by Aládéjána (1979).

It introduces pupils to intellectual humour: laughter is important to happiness and health in addition to being a very good way to motivate people to continue working after a long monotonous day. It helps to relax the brain and body and also helps to release stress and makes children feel great and attentive.

A working brain for pupils: problem-solving ability and critical thinking skills are two most important and sought after qualities in society today. This is demonstrated by the importance of standardised testing when getting into institutions of higher learning. Engaging in Yorùbá riddles could help the children to be critical in thinking and be creative in solving problems which could make them perfect in the society.

Expand pupils' vocabulary: when children encounter words that they do not understand they figure them out through context. Yorùbá riddles give words a great deal of context which makes it easier for children to learn, remember and use appropriately. In the same vein, Yorùbá riddles force pupils to ask questions about words they do not understand.

Entertaining Function: as Yorùbá do at the end of the day's work, they provide an opportunity for corporate life during the period of telling riddle in environment. The participants display their imaginative power in

answering the riddles that describe object in a poetic manner (Aládéjána, 1979).

Interpretation and Explanation of Some Selected Yorùbá Riddles: The following five (5) Yorùbá riddles were solved, interpreted and explained accordingly.

Lílẹ̀: Àlọ́ o!

Ègbè: Ààlọ́...

Ìyàrá ọlómọge

kíkì ìgbẹ̀ ẹ̀ran, kín-ni ò?

Ìbẹ̀pẹ̀!

Call: Riddle!

Response: Riddle...

The room of a fashionist is full of filths.

What is it?

- Pawpaw

Lílẹ̀: Àlọ́ o!

Ègbè: Ààlọ́...

Ọ̀nà tìn-ń-rín méjì, ẹ̀sẹ̀ méjì ló lẹ̀ gba bẹ̀

lẹ̀ẹ̀kan soso. Kí ni ò?

Sòkòtò!

Call: Riddle!

Response: Riddle...

A road of two tiny lanes, only two legs can

ply it at once. What is it?

- Trousers

Lílẹ̀: Àlọ́ o!

Ègbè: Ààlọ́...

Òrúkú tìndì tìndì, òrúkú tìndì tìndì,

Òrúkú bí igba ọmọ,

Gbogbo wọ́n ló lẹ̀ tìròò fún

Kín ni ò?

Call: Riddle!

Response: Riddle...

A puzzled puzzle for puzzling,

A riddled riddle for riddling,

The puzzled riddle gave birth to two

hundred (200) children and dressed them

all with kohl.

What is it?

- Bean

Èwà

Lílẹ̀: Àlọ́ o!

Ègbè: Ààlọ́...

Ọ̀pá tìn-ń-rín kanlẹ̀, ó kan òkè. Kí ni ò?

Ọ̀jò

Call: Riddle!

Response: Riddle...

A tiny rod touches the heaven and the

earth. What is it?

- Rain

Lílẹ̀: Àlọ́ o!

Ègbè: Ààlọ́...

Pósi tìn-ń-rín gba egbẹ̀je òkù. Kí ni ò?

Ọ̀nà

Call: Riddle!

Response: Riddle...

A shallow coffin takes over seven hundred

corpses. What is it?

- Road

The above sampled riddles, among other Yorùbá riddles, help to develop what is called syllogistic deftness in children. The Yorùbá riddles are aesthetically used to inculcate the deductive method of reasoning among the children by leaving them in twilight of critical thinking in order to find the apt nexus between a phenomenon and the tacit thesis that is given about it. For instance, the first of the above riddles states that the room of a fashionable lady is full of filths. It is thus left to the children to think of what could be around them that is very attractive and pleasing to the sight but within it are irritable or unpleasant things. The response to this is "pawpaw", that is as fresh and attractive as pawpaw is, when sliced, there are some seed-like wastes that are not edible. These seed-like wastes are compared to the excrements of goats which we, therefore, have to throw away.

Similarly, with the four other sampled riddles: the second riddle implies that the two pairs of trousers are compared as two lanes of a road. Given that only two legs can be thrust into the two pairs at once, the pairs are thereby compared to two lanes with the notion that only two legs can walk the lanes at once. The third one shows that for a bean crop to produce its grains, it is natural for all the grains to have some black spots with some whitish spots at the centre of each. This is likened to the application of kohl to the edges of the eyes. The fourth riddle is used to depict raindrops, that is, when rain falls, each drop touches both the heaven and the earth before it gets absorbed into the crust of the earth. The fifth riddle likens the shallowness of a road to the thin nature of a coffin but contrary to the latter, the former takes more people walking on it than the latter, which only takes a corpse. In a nutshell, Yorùbá riddles shrewdly help to cultivate the habit of critical thinking among the children.

The performance of Yorùbá oral literature especially riddles, in the formal, semi-formal and informal settings is gradually going into total extinction. Most Yorùbá children cannot narrate a good tale, speak proverbially and complete a riddle that could have awoken their intelligence, and aid their creative and critical thinking ability. The situation is worrisome and demands prompt and adequate intervention. Answering Yorùbá riddles which could sharpen individual's memory and enhances one's ability to give prompt and provide a precise answer to any given task or problem, is gradually becoming a thing of the past.

The rich cultural values identified with the Yorùbá people are fading out because of what some people tagged modernisation and westernisation. The western culture and literature are gradually replacing Yorùbá culture and tradition, and by extension, Yorùbá literature, especially the oral form. Yorùbá adults are no longer vast in the performance of oral literature, let alone the younger ones who are mainly school children. Hence, Yorùbá oral literature performance both at home and in school is at a declining rate.

Some scholars such as Akinmádé (2012), Fáşorò (2012), Olájídé (2013) and Badru and Ogunniiran (2019) have researched on Yorùbá oral literature-related forms. For instance, Akinmádé (2012) investigated the decline of Yorùbá proverbs as a creative oral expression among the Òndó people of Nigeria. The research finding indicated that proverb is widely used by the people and it remains an important aspect of the Òndó culture. Fáşorò (2012) researched into myth and proverb as a vehicle of moral education among the traditional Yorùbá. The researcher found that Yorùbá myths and proverbs are tools to eradicate moral decadence from the society and concluded that, the Yorùbá society should not close its eyes on anything regarded as tradition.

Also, Olájídé (2013) worked on secondary school teachers' knowledge of Yorùbá in proverbs in Ilorin, Nigeria. One of the study's findings revealed that the respondents possessed high knowledge of proverbs. The study also reported that the variable of gender significantly influenced respondents' knowledge of proverbs. To the best knowledge of this researcher, none of these studies assessed pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles, especially in the area covered by the scope of this study. Similarly, Badru and Ogunniiran (2019) assessed senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Irèpò Local Government Area of Oyo State. The results of their study showed that the students possessed average knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs and there was no significant influence of gender on students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs. However, there was a significant influence of school type on students' perception of Yorùbá proverbs,

Research Question

The following research question was answered in this study:

1. What is the middle basic pupils' general knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area?

Hypotheses

The following three null hypotheses were postulated and tested in this study:

1. There is no significant difference in male and female middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area
2. There is no significant difference in public and private middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area
3. There is no significant difference among basic 4, basic 5 and basic 6 pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey of a cross-sectional type. A descriptive research is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behaviour of a subject, population or a phenomenon in a very factual and accurate manner. The population for the study comprised all the basic school pupils in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State, while the target population was all the middle basic school pupils in the LGA. Six (6) schools (3 private and 3 public) were randomly selected from the LGA. Thirty (30) pupils were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools to give a total of one hundred and eighty (180) respondents.

A researcher-designed questionnaire was used to elicit response from the subjects. The questionnaire contained a fifteen-item Yorùbá riddles which the respondents were expected to give correct answers to in order to assess their knowledge. Each correct answer attracted two (2) marks. Therefore, the maximum obtainable mark was thirty marks (30). One research question was raised, while three null hypotheses were postulated in this study. The research question was answered using frequency count, the mean and the percentage. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were tested using the t-test, while Hypothesis 3 was tested using One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), all at 0.05 level of significance. A mean score of 0-10, 11-20 and 21-30 was adjudged to be low, average and high respectively.

Results

Research Question One: What is the Middle Basic School Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ilorin South Local Government of Kwara State?

Table 1
Frequency Count and the Percentage Analysis of Middle Basic School Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area

Knowledge	Critical Range	Frequency	Mean	Percentage(%)
Low	0 – 10	22		12.22
Average	11 – 20	101	17.77	56.11
High	21 – 30	57		31.67
Total		180		100.0

Table 1 shows the pupils' general knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government of Kwara State. It can be seen that 12.22% (22) of the respondents had low knowledge of Yorùbá riddles, 56.11% (101) had average knowledge, while 31.67% (57) had high knowledge of Yorùbá riddles respectively. With a mean score of 17.77 which falls within a critical range of average knowledge, it thus can be said that middle basic school pupils had average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in male and female middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area

Table 2

The t-test Analysis on the Difference in Male Female Middle Basic Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ilorin South LGA

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Male	82	17.50	3.08	1.133	178	.412	Not Rejected
Female	98	17.87	4.89				

$P > 0.05$

Result from Table 2 shows the t-value yielded 1.133 which is not significant with P value $.412 > 0.05$. This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. This means that there was no significant difference in the middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles, suggesting that both male and female pupils had average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles ($t_{(178)} = 1.133$; $P > 0.05$).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in public and private middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area

Table 3

The T-test Analysis on the Difference in the Private and Public Middle Basic School Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ilorin South LGA

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Private	90	16.51	10.2	2.321	178	.014	Rejected
Public	90	18.67	10.6				

$P < 0.05$

Result from Table 3 shows the t-value yielded 2.321 which is significant with P value $.014 < 0.05$. This shows a significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there was a significant difference in the middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of school type ($t_{(178)} = 2.321$; $P < 0.05$). The difference can be seen in the mean score (18.67) of the public school which is greater than the mean score (16.51) of the private school, i.e. $18.67 > 16.51$.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference among basic 4, basic 5 and basic 6 pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area

Table 4

ANOVA Analysis on the Difference in Basic 4, Basic 5 and Basic 6 School Pupils' Knowledge of Yorùbá Riddles in Ilorin South LGA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	99.800	2	49.900			
Within Groups	1698.790	177	17.513	2.849	.063	Not Rejected
Total	1798.590	179				

P > 0.05

From Table 4, result shows the df (2, 179) and F-value yielded 2.849 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected since the p-value .063 is greater than 0.05 (.063 > 0.05). This means that there was no significant difference in the middle basic pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of class, implying that all the classes had average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles ($F_{(2, 179)} = 2.849$; $P > 0.05$).

The following were the findings generated from this study:

1. Middle basic school pupils in Ilorin South LGA had an average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles with a mean score of 17.77.
2. There was no significant difference between the male and female middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South LGA ($t_{(178)} = 1.133$; $P > 0.05$).
3. There was a significant difference in the middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of school type with the public school pupils claiming higher mean score (18.67) than their private school pupils counterparts who claimed a mean score of 16.51 ($t_{(178)} = 2.321$; $P < 0.05$).
4. There was no significant difference among basic 4, basic 5 and basic 6 pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South LGA ($F_{(2, 179)} = 2.849$; $P > 0.05$).

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the respondents had an average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. This finding is in line with Fásorò (2012) who noted that riddles are traditional verbal expressions which contain one or more descriptive elements, a pair of which may be in opposition, the referent of the element is to be guessed. The result also supports those of Badru and Ogunniran (2019) who reported that senior secondary school students in Irepo Local Government Area of Oyo State had average knowledge of Yoruba proverbs. However, this finding does not conform to that of Olájidé (2013) that found that teachers had high knowledge of proverbs.

Findings of this study also revealed that there was no significant difference in the middle basic pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of gender ($t_{(98)} = 1.133$; $P > 0.05$), implying that both male and female pupils shared the same level of knowledge. This finding is in consonance with Badru's (2013) finding who reported no significant difference between male and female teachers in their assessment of Yorùbá curriculum. The result is also in line with the finding of Badru and Ogunniran (2019) that gender did not play an influential role in senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yoruba proverbs. However, this study finding negates those of Bùkóyè et al. (2012) and Odebòdé et al. (2017). The scholars found a significant difference between male and female respondents' perception in their respective studies. The study also negates that of Olájidé's (2013) who reported a significant influence of gender on respondents' knowledge of proverbs in Ilorin, Nigeria.

The third finding of this study showed that there was a significant difference in the middle basic pupils'

knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of school type ($t_{(98)} = 2.321$; $P < 0.05$). The finding supports the submission of Badru and Ogunniran (2019) that private and public senior secondary school students differ significantly in their knowledge of Yoruba proverbs, with public school students claiming higher knowledge than their private school counterparts.

Another finding revealed that there was no significant difference in the middle basic pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of class ($F_{(2, 99)} = 2.849$; $P > 0.05$). This could be as result of exposure of the respondents to the same background and school environment. This is to suggest that there was no difference in the level of exposure of these three categories of students to Yorùbá riddles at home and the content been taught in the school.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that majority of the respondents had average knowledge of Yorùbá riddles in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State, and also there was no significant difference in the middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of gender. However, there was a significant difference in the middle basic school pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of school type. It was also concluded that there was no significant difference in the middle basic pupils' knowledge of Yorùbá riddles on the basis of class.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that children should be exposed to Yorùbá riddles in their formative years. This will make the children have a deep knowledge of their language and culture. Also, it will give room for good and culturally informed interactions between parents and children, between and among children and also between the older and younger ones in the society. Children should be encouraged to engage in Yorùbá riddling to make them appreciate their language and culture better. Yorùbá teachers should endeavour to teach Yorùbá literature well, especially the oral genre to help the children to become creative, critical thinkers and problem solvers.

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