

PROVERB: A TOOL FOR TEACHING UNITY AND PEACE AMONG ACCULTURATION STUDENTS

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Abstract

Peace and unity have been recognized by scholars as the primary condition for progress and nation building but reverse is the case when it comes to Nigeria, disintegration, chaos and war are order of the day. This is one of the reasons why acculturation programme was established to foster peace and unity among Nigerian students especially among second language learners. It is in this view that this paper appraises the relationship between proverb, unity and peace, using Hermeneutics theory to analyze each proverb that can be taught among the acculturation students in Igbo and Yoruba languages. The paper explains how proverb could be utilized to promote peace and unity among the students that are learning Igbo and Yoruba as L2. The paper adopted research method by consulting others scholar's works and visited net to source for materials. The major finding is that, opportunities provided by proverbs have not been applied to achieve peace and unity among Nigerian students. The study concluded that, it is our bounded duty to cultivate the habit of using proverb in our day to day activities in order to promote team spirit among children/students. The paper recommended among other things that Proverb should be included into the schools Curriculum as General studies (GSE) for higher institution in Nigeria

Keywords: Proverb, Unity, Peace and Acculturation

Introduction

Where there is no effective languages of communication among the citizens of a nation, there is no how meaningful national development can be attained. Therefore, whatever may be the medium of transmission either verbal or written; the language must be lucid and rightly decoded by the recipients. In consonance with this, Abifarin,(2004:60) opines that the speaker must make use of every conventional linguistics and paralinguistic approaches to enhance his communication. Among the approaches are the use of proverbs, idiomatic expression and other figures of speech.

The use of proverbs plays a significant role in student's life. Akinlabi and Waheed (2015:7), opines that peace and unity making start from home. If the home is peaceful, so shall be the nation. They explain that effective proverbs use aids understanding of thoughts, ideas and purposes. If that be the case, the effect of proverbs in teaching unity and peace cannot be overemphasized. On the other hand, Ogunremi (2009) says, improper uses of proverb stir up dissension. A student that is surrounded with disintegration, war, and insecurity need proverbs that will make him realize the consequence of disunity and while they have to live in harmony with their fellow students. This will bring about sustainable peace

In any nation state, unity and peace are major benefits obtainable from acculturation. When students of different culture and color participate in acculturation and abide by the same rules, fairness and equity are often regarded by a regulatory official. Consequently, student of the same school see other participants as their opponents and unite to participate in the acculturation programme (Akinlabi. 2012:180-182).

Strength, practically speaking, underlies unity and peace, and whenever student act in unison with one another, their strength increases thousand fold. The importance of unity and peace can never be over

rate. Little drops of water make the mighty ocean. This is instance of the benefits of proverbs in teaching unity and peace among the acculturation students (Akinlabi and Waheed, 2015:8-9).

Unity and peace are input for acculturating student to nation building but disintegration and war are the reverse of unity and peace. Chaos, disunity and war are what we have when citizen are killed or when women are raped and families are destroyed for reasons of ego. Unity and peace are what we have when disintegration and war are absent, it is an essential environmental factor of national development. (Uche and Ebiuwa, 2013).

When proverb that teaches unity and peace are used, students are able to realize their full potential and instead of subscribing to drugs, violence and restiveness, acculturation programme can be organized for students, where they will be exposed to reasons for national unity, cohesion with other peoples' cultures. When proverbs are used to teach acculturating students, it will provide peace, unity, healthy platform for youthful academic competition and encourage the participation of young people in nation building. Therefore, this paper believes that, making use of proverbs that teach unity and peace will not only brings peace and unity, it will also foster integration and harmony

Theoretical Framework: Hermeneutics Theory.

The term "hermeneutics", a Latinized version of the Greek "hermeneutice" has been part of common Language from the beginning of the 17th Century. Nevertheless, its history stretches back to ancient philosophy. Addressing the understanding of religious intuitions, Plato used this term in a number of dialogues, contrasting hermeneutic knowledge to that of "sophia" Religious knowledge is knowledge of what has been revealed or said; it is a contrast to "sophia" (knowledge of the truth-value of the utterances).

In religious studies and social philosophy, hermeneutics suggests the study of interpretation theory, and can either be the art of interpretation, or the theory and practice of interpretation. Traditional hermeneutics (including Biblical hermeneutics) refers to the story of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. Contemporary or modern hermeneutics encompasses not only issues involving the written text, but everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, preunderstandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and Semiotics.

In contemporary times, hermeneutics has also been concerned with the interpretation and understanding of human action, especially with human action through political, cultural and economic and kinship institutions. Philosophical hermeneutics refers primarily to Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of knowledge as expressed in *Truth and Method*, and sometimes to Paul Ricoeur. However, in literature, the main impetus of hermeneutic theory, derives from the conflation of German Higher Criticism of the Bible and the Romantic period. Hermeneutics, in its broadest sense, describes the interpretation of meanings – explication, analysis, commentary. Originally applied to the interpretation of the Bible, Hermeneutics comprised valid readings plus exegesis (commentary on how the meanings were to be applied).

In the nineteenth century, hermeneutics came to be considered as a general theory of interpretation applied to texts of all description. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833- 1911), the German philosopher, developed Friedrich Schleiermacher's idea of the "hermeneutic circle" – the paradox which emerges from the fact that the reader cannot understand any part of the text until the whole is understood, while the whole cannot be understood until the parts are understood. Dilthey imported the notion of Hermeneutics from theological discourse to philosophy and clearly defined the methods of "sciences of the human spirit" as opposed to the scientific methods of natural science. He was primarily concerned with essential meaning and essence, and understanding. He postulated the difference between "understanding" and "explanation" as underlying the basic distinction between human sciences and natural sciences.

According to *E.D.Hirsch*, who sees the hermeneutic circle as nonvicious, valid interpretation involves a correct interpretation of the author's willed meaning. Such a construal takes into account the author's purview or perspective, his horizon of expectations – generic, cultural and conventional. For Hirsch, verbal meaning is stable and determinate. By contrast, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer insists on the historicity and temporality of interpretation (Heidegger conceives of "Dasein" as constituting a temporal structure of interpretive understanding, which is already engaged in the activity of interpretation). For them, meaning is always codetermined, the reader's horizon of expectations attempting to fuse with the author's. An inescapable relativity and indeterminacy is thereby introduced into the notion of interpretation.

Gadamer argues that an interpretation of past literature arises from argument between past and present. Our present perspective is definitely associated with our past; simultaneously, the past can only be grasped through the limited perspective of the present. So, the reader's involvement in the creation of meaning also becomes significant. A text's interpretation depends on the knowledge, assumptions, cultural backdrop, experiences and insights of its readers. Thus, hermeneutical methods and ideas have had tremendous impact on phenomenology, reader response theory, especially on prominent theorists as Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Georg Gadamer, E.D. Hirsch and Stanley Fish.

Jurgen Habermas argues that there are limitations to the scope of hermeneutical analysis. He notes this mode of analysis considers interpretation only in terms of everyday language, rather than in terms of forms of social life

Literature Review

It is expedient to discuss some concepts to facilitate their understanding under the issue of Proverbs, Unity, Peace and Acculturation.

Proverbs

Mieder (1994) describe a proverb as taken its root from the Latin word "Proverbium" translated as "word or nay word". It simply means a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated which expresses truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity. They are often metaphorical.

Similarly Essien in Oguntade (2001) highlighted the features of proverbs thus:

- (i) It is colorful, full of imagery and illustrations. This enables the hearers to visualize its message, thus creating a life lasting impact on his mind.
- (ii) Proverbs contents are real, practical and situational appropriate thus they create no illusion on the mind of the hearers.
- (iii) It is usually short; this aids quick application to situations.
- (iv) A short proverb can encapsulate a long moral story.

Although the above quotations from various scholars are simple to comprehend, this paper still has the following to say about proverbs:

- (i) Proverb is synonymous with 'adage' and 'a saying'. They are referred to as words of the elders which are handed down as legacies from one generation to the other.
- (ii) Most proverbs are anonymous that is, their authors are not mentioned. And nobody can lay claim of the authorship of most proverbs in our society.
- (iii) Users of proverbs do acknowledge the origin by saying "---tribe say---" for instance, "Àwọn Yorùba bò wọn ní ---" or Hausawa su kan ce---" or "Ndi igbo na-ekwu si na ---- --" That is: "the Yorubas or the Hausas or Igbos came and say---"
- (iv) Furthermore proverbs are coined with witty and concise words full of imagery.
- (v) Most often proverbs are rendered in poetic form. This distinguishes them from lay man's language.

Unity

The importance of unity in a nation can never be overemphasized. The edifice of a nation, to say the least about the usefulness of unity cannot stand unless there is a sense of unity at bottom. To speak the

truth, society is a unit of a nation and when there is essential unity in the organization of a well ordered society. It will undoubtedly contribute to the organic unity of the nation of which it is an indivisible part

Gotep (2000:116) says, one of the inherent strength of unity is that it protects against any harm from outside. Thus, it is self-evident that unity pays in every sphere of human activities, whereas disunity is liable to lead to rack and ruin. National unity is highly important because it shields a country in time of crisis. Nwana (1989) as reported by Akinlabi (2012:182) believes that, national unity is necessary on the basis that if opposing parties do not start to work together, the country could either lose the war or fall into even worse depression. He says the parties are united by their love for the country and this unity often helps a desperate country make important decision

Looking at the importance of unity and national integration Alapiki (2005:49) opines that, unity is an important collective and strategic goal under virtually any circumstance. However, unity is only of paramount importance when it is in the service of a functional policy or system. The question of unity is therefore subject to the condition of political functionality. If unity helps to achieve an indispensable national goal, then it is of paramount importance, if it is an insurmountable obstacle to an overriding national imperative then it cannot be considered of the first importance.

Sometimes, history teaches functional national unity can only be achieved following a period of deep, sometimes even severe, disunity in order to achieve the primacy of a reasonable political approach over an unreasonable one. When political dysfunctionality becomes overwhelming, sometimes unity cannot and even should not be achieved or maintained (Anele, 1999).

At this juncture, one can define unity as state or quality of being one, the act or quality of forming a whole from separate parts or mutual agreement, harmony or concord. Unity implies the oneness, as in spirit, aims, interests, feelings etc or that which is made up of diverse element or individual

Peace

Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice of law of order in short of government. Albert Einstein, in its most myopic and limited definition, peace is the mere absence of war. O'Kane (1992), sees this definition as a vacuous, passive, simplistic and unresponsive escape mechanism too often resorted to in the past without success. This definition also commits a serious oversight; it ignores the residual feelings of mistrust and suspicion that the winners and losers of a war harbor toward each other. The subsequent suppression of mutual hostile feelings is not taken into account by those who define peace so simply. Their stance is that as long as people are not actively engaged in overt, mutual violent, physical and destructive activity then peace exists. This of course, is just another way of defining cold war. In other words, this simplistic definition is too broad because it allows us to attribute the term "peace" to states of affairs that are not truly peaceful (Copi and Cohen p.194). This definition of peace appears to be the prevailing one in the world. It is a kind of peace maintained by a peacekeepers through strength posture that has led to the arms race, stockpiles of nuclear weapons and the ultimate threat of mutually assured destruction. This version of peace was defended by the peacekeeper. The point here is that a peace which depends upon the threat and intention to kill vast number of human beings is hardly a stable or justifiable peace worthy of the name.

Those in charge of waging war know that killing is a questionable activity; otherwise they would not use such euphemisms as collateral damage and smart bombs to obfuscate it.

Akinlabi and Waheed (2015:8-9) identify two types of peace, these are cold peace and hot peace; when talking of cold peace, there is almost a neutral view of a previous enemy. There is little mutual hostility but there is also a lack of mutually beneficial interaction aimed at developing trust, interdependence and collaboration. There may be a longing for an enemy because nothing has replaced it as an object of natural concern. In this situation, isolation and nationalism occur simultaneously. There is no clear objective because there is no well-defined enemy.

By contrast, hot peace involves active collaborative efforts designed to build bridges between and among past and present adversaries. This involves searching for common ground and the developments of new non-human enemy's threats to the health and well-being of humankind and the planet. These new enemies could include human right abuses, air, and water pollution, dividing energy resources, the destruction of the ozone layer, famine, poverty, and ignorance. Hot peace promotes and the object is the proliferation of cooperative relation and mutually beneficial outcomes. Hot peace thinking imagines peace and the abolition of war.

Wools (1985) identified negative peace and Positive peace; negative peace is defined as a state requiring a set of social structures that provide security and protection from acts of direct physical violence committed by individuals, group or nations. The main strategy is dissociation, whereby conflicting parties are separated. In general, policies based on the idea of negative peace do not deal with the causes of violence only its manifestations. Therefore, these policies are thought to be insufficient to assure lasting conditions of peace. Indeed by suppressing the released of tensions resulting from social conflict, negative peace efforts may actually lead to future violence of greater magnitude.

Positive peace in contrast is a pattern of cooperation and integration between major human groups. It is about people interacting in cooperative ways, it is about social organizations of diverse peoples who willingly choose to cooperate for the benefit of all human kind. It is called a system in which there are no winners and losers. All are winner, it is a state so highly valued that institutions are built around it to protect and promote. It also involves the search for positive conditions which can resolve the underlying causes of conflict that produce violence. The strategies used for this purpose are called "associative" and they are characterized by a high level of social interaction which enables more rapid resolution of conflict by providing maximum contacts through which solution may arise.

Acculturation

The process of cultural change and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures is called acculturation. While method of teaching a second language in which the learners' second language (L2) is the medium of classroom instruction is called language immersion (Okazaki, 2009:211). Mark (2003) adds that, learners study many aspect of language and will also be allowed to interact with the people of the community so as to improve their spoken language. Having recognized the importance of teaching Nigerian languages in Nigerian schools, the government recommends that:

In addition to appreciation of language in the education process, as a means of preserving the people's culture, the government considers it to be in the interest of national unity that each child should be encouraged to learn one of the three major languages other than his own mother tongue. In this connection, the Government considers the three major languages in Nigeria to be Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.
(National policy on Education) Revised

The three languages are not only taught and learnt in primary school but up to Ph.D level. In order to understand the aforementioned languages, acculturation/language immersion programme is mandated as compulsory course for (L2) students in Nigeria colleges of Education at different centres thus:.

The Igbo L2 students do have their three months acculturation programme in National Institute for Nigerian languages in Aba, Abia State. Hausa L2 student acculturation center is situated at Federal college of Education (FCE) Kano, in Kano state, while their Yoruba L2 counterparts do have their programmes at Federal College of Education (Special) Oyo, in Oyo state. We also have other language immersion programme centres for L2 French students at Nigeria French Village at Badagry in Lagos state. Moreover, Nigeria Arabic Language village for Arabic L2 students at Gamboru Ngala in Borno State. Igbeaku (2003:111) identifies importance of acculturation and benefits of second language acquisition, some of the importance of Acculturation programme are:

1. **Unity:** Nigeria is a multilingual country that has over three hundred languages and different ethnic groups. In their former three major regions, that is, Northern, Southern and Eastern have adopted Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba as the language of communication in their respective regions, apart from their mother tongue. Those who learn any of the three languages as L2 will be united in their various regions.
2. **Bilingualism:** Whoever learn Nigerian languages as L2 apart from their mother tongue will become a bilingualist.
3. **Job opportunity:** Learning other Nigerian languages apart from mother tongue is great opportunity to secure employment in any of Nigeria regions
4. It can also encourage inter-cultural marriage.
5. Promotion of norms, custom and tradition of ethnic groups

Furthermore, Akinlabi and Ojo (2012:173-183) adds that, acculturation is good for security reasons, it makes ones business thrive i.e. It makes buyer to get things cheap when one can bargain in the language of the speaker and it makes one to be acceptable to the speakers of the language one acquires

Proverbs as catalyst for Unity and Peace.

Apart from the aims and objectives of the Federal Government of Nigeria in establishing acculturation centres for national unity, there are lots of proverbs on unity which the L2 students can be taught. For instance, in Yoruba and Igbo settings, the L2 students can be taught the following proverbs. Gradually, the inculcation and application of these proverbs can foster peace and unity in Nigeria. Some of these proverbs are:

i. Zzr0 m1ta k8 7 da [b2 n6

Meaning: Three hearthstone cannot turn down the soup

Apart of unity and peace, this proverb is talking about cooperation. Yoruba people believe that three hearthstone cannot turn down the pot. Looking at the idiomatic meaning of this proverb and relate it to peace and unity it means there is need to teach acculturation students culture that will make them to live in unity with other tribes and live in peace where ever they find themselves in any part of the country. This shown that teaching proverb to acculturation students can foster peace and unity and have a positive effect in the affective domain of the students and have the quality of been one. We need to make every effort to see that Nigeria is one

ii. Igi kan k0 l4 dqgb9 xe

Meaning: A tree cannot make a forest

When will talk of forest, truly there is no how a tree can make a forest that is, many trees make up a forest. Meaning we need to complement each other, we need to assist each other; we need to support each other. There is no how each tribe in Nigeria can work in isolation; we need to work in unity and harmony. Using theoretical frame work to analyze this proverb, it means acculturation students will have a sense of belonging. They will know how to relate to their counterpart from other colleges and live in peace and unity within the period of the programme and afterward

iii. Gaga [w= kan k0 le gbql2 k9 m-

Meaning: A stick of broom cannot sweep the ground cleanly.

Looking at the idiomatic meaning of this proverb in line with theoretical framework it means students need to be united before they can achieve. The proverb is teaching the students that, they cannot stand alone without the supportive effort of other people in the society; they cannot achieve alone when they are divided. It is when we are united that we can fight both internal and external enemies confronting the society. Teaching acculturation students this proverb will create the heart of friendship, make them to be united and participate in a community duty they find themselves after the acculturation programme, Also, teaching them this proverb will create the heart that love and not hate. They will love their neighbor as they love themselves and have the spirit of oneness within themselves.

Igbo language is not exempted in preaching language of unity and peace. There are lot of proverbs in Igbo language that can be used to promote peace and unity among the acculturation students learning Igbo language as L2. For example:

iv. A nyuk[[mamirri [nu, [gb[[ufufu

Meaning: Many hand makes work light

Whenever a group of people join hands in doing something, it produces good result. This implies that if the acculturation students learn the need to carry out a task jointly it brings about unity and peace

among them, this show that, there is power in unity and unity produces peace. This is in line with Alapiki (2005:49) that says:

Unity is an important collective and strategic goal under virtually any circumstance. However, unity is only of paramount importance when it is in the service of a functional policy or system.

v. **Igwe bu Ike**

Meaning: Unity is Strength

There is strength in collective efforts, also it is better to be in group than to be alone. Which means that the acculturation students from different languages meet and see themselves as one group, it will foster unity and peace among them than hatred. Not only this, there is power in togetherness, there is power in coming together to achieve a specific assignment. The proverb teaches unity and peace, because in united we stand and divided we fall.

vi. **Gidigidi bu ugwu eze**

Meaning: Crowd of people boosts king's fame/ A tree cannot make a forest.

When many people come out to achieve a particular goal, it gives more honour. For instance, if one organizes an occasions and had many people in attendance, his/her prestige will be boosted, but if only few people attends it, people will look down on the organizer. Relating it to the subject matter, it means mutual cooperation between the acculturation students, organizers and the society at large. This means a tree cannot make a forest. Coming together for a specific task in any given society gives room for the society to grow and this can go a long way in developing a nation.

vii. **Ezuo ka a ha eri udde, a t[itu o ngiga**

Meaning: When quorum is formed, official deliberation kicks off

When like minds gather together for a particular works, the work becomes easier. In the same vein, if acculturations students gather/join hands in doing something the task becomes easier and thereby bringing about peace and unity among them. This proverb is talking about oneness and living in harmony, when we live in harmony, we can be united to work together as family.

Conclusion

Disintegration whether engendered or spontaneous is not compatible with peace, unity and nation building. Therefore for a country to attain the goals of national development, it must make the required sacrifice that could lead to peaceful coexistence and mutual trust as well as apply the opportunities provided by acculturation and proverb education to achieve the benefits of national development.

The growing culture of disunity is a concern by well-meaning Nigerians because under many decades of self-governance, the political equation and that of national unity are far from being balance, but if proverbs can be taught in most Nigeria schools and both Federal and State governments organize acculturation programme for first and second language learners, there is an assurance that citizenry will shun crises and embrace the spirit of love, peace and unity.

Finding: The study found that:

- Teaching and learning of Proverb has been recognized as the primary condition for progress and development
- Leaders in positions of power are those who usually make use of students to cause disorderliness in the society. But proverb can be taught to change their orientation so that students can behave aright
- Opportunities provided by proverbs have not been applied to achieve peace and unity among Nigerian students.
- Through teaching and learning of proverb, it empowering individuals to achieve a just society in which all human rights of every citizen is valued and respected
- Teaching and learning of proverb will make students to be more proficient in the language (Igbo and Yoruba) especially whenever they find themselves in any of the community where the language is been spoken.

- The peaceful resolution of conflict and prevention of violence, whether interpersonal or societal, overt or structural, is a positive value to be promoted on a global level through teaching and learning of Proverb.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion that proverb is a tool for peace and unity, recommendations are made which if implemented will enhance national integration and harmony among Nigerian students.

1. Religious leaders should disseminate the message of tolerance, unity and peace education.
2. Parents and guardians should create time for their wards at home and make use of proverb that have to do with unity in order to disseminate the message of tolerance, integration and harmony.
3. Both Federal and State Ministries of Education and Curriculum Developers should make sure that proverbs are incorporated into the various school curriculums or it should be taught in line with Civic Education.
4. Teaching of moral, language, peace and unity education should be made compulsory in all our higher institutions of learning. Under this, there should be proper monitoring to see that both State and Federal schools are teaching aforementioned subjects (Moral, Language i.e three major Nigerian languages, Peace and unity education). These should be inculcate into the school Curriculum as General studies (GSE) especially higher institutions in Nigeria

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