

DEPLOYING YORUBA RIDDLES IN PROMOTING HUMAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

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Abstract

Every human society appreciates the importance of a safe and secure societal and environmental atmosphere. In realising human and environmental security, therefore, different tools are deployed. The Yoruba people have at their disposal various means to conscientise members of the public on the need to be security and ecocritical conscious. Àlò Àpamò remains a veritable pedagogical instrument that is being deployed to promote security of humans and that of the ecosystem. It is in view of the foregoing, therefore, that this study explores the deployment of Yoruba riddles in promoting human and environmental security. With the above that is full of benefits, exploration, it is recommended that Àlò Àpamò should be employed in sensitising members of the public about security issues.

Keywords: Àlò Àpamò, Human society, Environment, Security

Introduction

The issue of security is germane to the development of every society. In actual fact, there can be no meaningful development in an insecure atmosphere. Ways through which we can find lasting solution to increased and unresolved conflicts range from individual, natural, religious, regional, and to international levels. At these various levels, efforts are intensified on how to ensure stable security. It is noted that there is nexus between peace and security; wherever there is lack of security, there can be no peace and a society that is peace free will definitely be devoid of development. Francis (2006) cited in Alabi (2013:3) defines peace as

...the absence of war, fear, conflict, anxiety, suffering and violence, and about peaceful co-existence. It is primarily concerned with creating and maintaining a just order in society and the resolution of conflict by non-violent means. In general, six meanings of peace are agreed on by many peace researchers, including peace as the absence of war (absence of direct violence), peace as justice and development (absence of structural violence), peace as

respect and tolerance among people, peace as *Gaia* (Balance in and with the ecosphere), inner peace (spiritual peace), and peace as ‘wholeness’ and ‘making whole’.

The author stresses further that “there is a recent view of security, which includes human security, and economic security” cited in Naidoo (2001). This paper, therefore, focuses attention on the use of Yoruba riddles for promoting human and environmental security.

In traditional African society, especially Yoruba, Àlò Àpamò (riddles) is a way of examining the thinking ability of the younger ones, especially in order to prepare them for future situations and challenges, so they will be able to think fast in finding possible solution to whatever challenge that comes their way (Adegboodu, 2021:21). Besides, Àlò Àpamò could be deployed in addressing security for life and property for both individual and the general populace.

Olagunju (2005:74-75) avers that ‘*Traditional African education encourages intellectual growth and development through observation, imitation and participation.*’ He makes reference to proverbs, riddles and tongue-twisters as some of the intellectual exercises used to bring out the meaning of obscure points in conversation and arguments. This is in line with Bamgbose (2017:40) who posits that “*There is training in intelligence through the use of riddles which encourage both observation and logical association.*”

It is worthy to note that teaching process started with the child right from birth among the Yoruba; the child will be growing day by day with different instruction(s) given to him/her which will equip the child for better tomorrow. Isola (2010:104) asserts that

from the very first day in the life of Yoruba children, they started hearing poetry performed. It would usually be by the grandmother or some other women welcoming the new member by chanting the family oriki. During childhood a proper and effective mode of instruction was ensured through the use of literature.

Every other necessary information needed to ensure continuity of tradition is usually given to the children right from childhood; every necessary thing needed for proper upbringing of a child is embedded in Yoruba literature. This is in line with the view of Fafunwa (1974:20)

that *traditional African education is multilateral and that the goal is to produce an individual who is honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative and conform to the social order of the day*. When a person has fulfilled the foregoing codes of conduct, he or she could be referred to as a well-behaved person as – Omoluabi – in Yoruba polity.

From the aforementioned, it is very clear that the goals of education are apparently interwoven but the important thing that concerns us in this study is the aspect of intellectual skills development, development of sense of belonging, as well as understanding, appreciating and promoting peace and stability which is paramount to cultural heritage.

Yoruba Riddles

There are various explanations given to the term ‘riddle.’ It is described as a knotty question that is asked to test someone’s intellectual capacity (Adegboodu, 2021:15). It also has to do with a situation whereby someone talks in a more difficult way or in a way which is not easily understandable. According to Akómólédè cited in Ajíkòbí (2013:32),

Àlò Àpamò jẹ̀ ibéèrè kúkúró tàbí gígùn tí a fàyo nínú àkíyèsí àyíká ẹ̀ni, èyító n fẹ̀ idáhùn. Àwọn Yorùbá gégé bí èyà kan fẹ̀ràn láti máa fi ara balẹ̀ wo gbogbo ǹnkan fínifínní. Ifarabalẹ̀ wònyí ló bí Àlò Àpamò láti tọ́ka irísí tàbí ihùwàsí àwọn ǹnkan tí Àlò n ́ dale lórí. Oríṣiríṣi ǹnkan ni Àlò máa n ́ dále, àwọn ǹnkan bí ohun-èlò inú ilé, ohun-òṣìn, èniyàn, ohun-ògbìn, ẹyẹ, igi, ẹranko àti bẹ̀ẹ̀ bẹ̀ẹ̀ lọ.

Àlò Àpamò is a short or long question derived from what we observed in our environment, which demands an answer. The Yoruba as a race are fond of closely studying things. It is this attentiveness of the Yoruba that gave birth to Àlò Àpamò centres on. Àlò may centre on many things, such as domestic items, domestic animals, plants, birds, trees, animals, and so on.

This explanation by Egbe Akómólédè cited above explains the way Yorùbá people do things around them which calls for critical thinking. This critical thinking goes a long way in

having perfect personal and environmental security. In other words, critical thinking helps us solve problems, make decisions and reach our goals. According to www.securityinformed.com

“security and safety practitioners responding to evolving threats make decision everyday based on uncertainty, insufficient information, and too few resources for textbook solutions. Unsurprisingly, security informed that critical thinking, decision making and communications skills are key characteristics for job success.”

This implies that the Yorùbá know the importance of critical thinking as it plays vital role in the issue of security of society; that is why it is included in the training of little children.

Earlier scholars like Bascom (1982), Dathome (1966), Babalolá (1974), Yáí (1976), Finnegan (1970), Ọlátúnjí (1982, 1984), Ọlábímtán, (1982), Ọ̀gúndèjí (1991, 2000), Olúkòju, (1992), Adélékè, (2008/2009), Akínyemí (2015), Adégbódù (2020a, 2020b and 2021) and some others preoccupy themselves with the collection, definition, classification as well as critical analysis of Yoruba riddles. Therefore, this present work analyses the use of Yoruba riddles in promoting human and environmental security. In doing this, some thematically relevant Yoruba riddles are selected for critical interrogation. It is evident that the world at large has experienced different security challenges ranging from individual to societal at large. This work shows how Àlọ̀ Àpamò can be used to curtail and address security threats.

Analysis of Selected Yoruba Riddles with Special Emphasis on Security Matters: Yorùbá riddles discussed below, depicts the interaction among human and non-human characters as related to their security conciseness in the society.

1. Apàlọ: Ààlọ o
- Agbáàlọ: Ààlọ
- Apàlọ: Onímú n gbé imú rẹ̀ bọ̀ ọ̀jà tú o.
- Ìdáhùn: Ọ̀kọ̀

(Adésuà1978)

Riddler: Ààlọ o

Audience: Ààlò

Riddler: Owner of the nose is coming to the market, the market scatters.

Answer: Vehicle

As depicted in the above cited riddle, whenever people gather and a vehicle is coming, they will usually make way for the vehicle. This is the picture being represented in the riddle. “Oja tu” denotes the scattering of people in order to make way for the coming vehicle towards their direction. The Yoruba people say “aabo ara eni laabo ilu”, meaning individual security is tantamount to communal security. Thus, everyone should be security conscious so as not to create disaster in society. In addition to the torch of security concept, the above analysis when linked with primary education system can be useful and helpful in the teaching of literary devices such as personification as well as environmental study like market.

2. Apàlò: Ààlò o

Agbáàlò: Ààlò

Apàlò: Mo sumí bàrākàtà

Mo fì ewé bàrākàtà bòó

Ìdáhùn: Ilẹ̀ àti isánmò

(Adélékè 2008/2009)

Riddler: Ààlò o

Audience: Ààlò

Riddler: I had wide defecation

I covered it with wide leaf

Answer: Earth and Sky

The word ‘barakata’ is employed to illuminate the size of the object being referred to. It is also a form of visual image as it appeals to the audience’s sense of sight. Ordinarily, the message that the riddle passes across to the children is to be hygienic. When someone defecates without properly disposing of it is very dangerous to human health. For instance, when the housefly

touches it and also comes back to touch food items, it can cause health-related problems. This is why children are taught to take care of their waste products. The above analysis can be adopted in the teaching of magnitude in Mathematics and exhortatory product in Basic science. These are borne out of health education concept (hygiene) which is the focus of the analysis.

3. Apàlò: Ààlò o
Agbáàlò: Ààlò
Apàlò: Kín ni n bá ọba mutí?
Ìdáhùn: Esinsin

(Bamgbose 2017)

- Riddler: Ààlò o
Audience: Ààlò
Riddler: What wines with king?
Answer: Housefly

Apart from the fact that this riddle portrays the supremacy of God in checking and balancing the excess of the power that be, it is a pointer to the fact that anyone can be eaten and wined with housefly which can just be coming from infectious substances torching it as depicted in riddle

(2). In this wise, everyone should be conscious of their health through food consumption. The above analysis can be used in the school curriculum to teach superiority and inferiority complex i.e how egocentric nature can be controlled. One should be conscious of his/her position in strata of life so as not to be intoxicated with the position.

4. Apàlò: Ààlò o
- Agbáàlò: Ààlò
- Apàlò: Òrúkútindítindí
- Òrúkútindítindí
- Òrúkúbíigbaomọ
- Ó sán gbogbo wọn ní tòbí
- Ìdáhùn: Ìsápá
- (Ọlábímtán, 1982)
- Riddler: Ààlò o
- Audience: Ààlò
- Riddler: Òrúkú praise name Tindí tindí
- Òrúkú praise name Tindí tindí
- Òrúkú has two hundred children
- And puts on each a woman's tobi (skirt)
- Answer: A port-herb (Hibiscuss sabolariffa)

Apart from the reproductive ability of women portrayed in the riddle, the influence of women on children is also emphasised in this alo. Giving all the two hundred children *tobi* (skirt) shows the provision of the needs of those children. Anyone who fails to provide necessity of life for their children cannot be said to be security conscious because such children will be creating nuisance in society.

5. Apàlò: Ààlò o
 Agbáàlò: Ààlò
 Apàlò: Kín ló n kojá lójúde ọba tí kò kí ọba o?
 Ìdáhùn: Àgbàrá òjò

(Bámgbósé, 2017)

- Riddler: Ààlò o
 Audience: Ààlò
 Riddler: What passes in front of the palace without paying its respect to the king?
 Answer: Flood water

This riddle centres on the proper care of the drainage/culvert which is detrimental to fertigation that can caused flood. The flood can affect life and property if it is not well taken care of. This riddle reveals that the king has done what is expected of him by taking good care of his drainage; if the flood water pays visit to the king, that means there is flooding. It means that the king is also security conscious. This is not pointing to the king alone but to the fact that every individual should do the needful so as to avert loss of lives and property.

Conclusion

The focus of this study is on the use of Yoruba riddles in primary education system. Riddles are used to teach children how to be security conscious in society at large. When children are taught properly, they will hardly forget because their brain is like computer. This will go a long way in making them aware of how to tackle some problems relating to security matters and it will make us live peacefully and happily in society.

As it is reflected in the above five analysis of selected Yoruba riddles, the evidence of reflection are as follows:

- Usable in the teaching of poetic devices such as personification in language curriculum
- Useful in the teaching of marketing in stoical studies.
- It can be adopted in the teaching of magnitude in mathematics.

- Relevant in the teaching of basic science curriculum.

Recommendations

The need to ensure the continuity of some quintessential oral traditions cannot be overemphasised. It is indubitable that some African cultural literary traditions have gone into extinction while some are already endangered. To forestall this occurrence, Africans should acknowledge the richness and socio-environmentalist relevance of these literary traditions. As examined in this study, Àlò Àpamò could be employed in sensitising members of the public about security issues.

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