

Teaching and Learning Hausa Language Through Proverbs

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Abstract:

In Hausa pedagogy, various genres of literature e.g. proverbs are exploited methodologically in order to make teaching and learning more realistic, interesting, and effective. Thus, the importance of teaching and learning Hausa language through proverbs cannot be overemphasized. Against this background, this article examines Hausa Proverbs as used in the teaching and learning space, highlighting the pragmatic significance thereof for effective pedagogy as perceived by a select group of students. Some of the Hausa proverbs examined are drawn from thematic fields of Hausa worldview like peace (zaman lafiya, knowledge (ilimi), honesty/truth/objectivity (himma + kwazo), caution (taka-tsantsan), resoluteness (himma), goodness/virtuosity (nagarta + kirki), etc. The paper adopts the quantitative descriptive research design, and involves a sample of fifty-two (52) students of the B.A. (Education) Hausa programme of Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria. An eight-item structured questionnaire was adopted as instrument to generate the required primary data of the research. Accordingly, respondents' perception regarding the pedagogic significance of the proverbs is analyzed using the simple descriptive statistics, highlighting the distributions by frequencies and percentages. Results show that majority of the focused students agree that proverbs are veritable tools for facilitating the effective teaching and learning of Hausa language.

Keywords: Term Hausa, term learning, term proverbs, term teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

Hausa is one of the largest and most widely spoken languages in West Africa. It has been classified as a member of Chadic group of languages of the Afro-asiatic phylum extraction. Presently, especially in Nigeria, Hausa is taught and learned as a core subject at the different tiers of the country's education system. Since both teaching and learning are procedural, they naturally and necessarily involve the use of certain methods and techniques for the teaching and learning processes to become effective and resulting into the maximum achievement of the set objectives. In Hausa pedagogy, various genres of literature e.g. proverbs are exploited methodologically in order to make teaching and learning more enthusiastic and motivating. Thus, the importance of teaching and learning Hausa language through proverbs cannot be overemphasized.

Teaching and learning can take place in both formal and informal contexts in most societies. Ideally, in all societies proverbs are suited for commenting on the behaviours of others and, therefore, are

integral parts of a people's literature and culture. In the Hausa society, one of the most prominent African societies, since time immemorial proverbs are considered as an informal school through which people learn much about their ancestral values including how to co-exist better. Therefore, a society's proverbial assertions in their entirety remain a most powerful and effective instrument for teaching and learning as well as for transmitting culture, morality, positive manners, ideas, etc. from one generation to another. Against this background, this article examines Hausa Proverbs as used in the teaching and learning space, highlighting the pragmatic significance thereof for effective pedagogy as perceived by a select group of students.

Proverbs generally are short and pithy expressions of truism used in culture born out of observations of phenomena and experiences in people's life and environment that are passed on from one generation to another (Milder, 2004). Teaching and learning proverbs in schools can help not only in making the learners/students speak language more naturally and fluently but also in increased motivation (Porto, 1998).

Hausa proverbs are highly effective in exerting social control. They express the morals or ethics of the group, as they are convenient standards for appraising behaviour in terms of the approved norms. Right from inception of the Hausa society, the memberships has always been admonished via their proverbial heritage to act wisely because, it is believed, wisdom increases and enhances understanding on how individuals can deal with their fellows as well as how they can navigate through difficult issues and/or situations.

1.1 HAUSA WORLDVIEW IN PROVERBS

Expounding on proverbs in the context of the Hausa people's worldview, Amin (2002: 156 - 243) highlights the under listed as the attributes of the Hausa proverbs:

1. Transient/temporary
2. Hard/difficult/over burdening
3. Complex/complicated
4. Capricious/vicissitudinous
5. Deceptive/illusory/unreal
6. Haphazard/unplanned
7. Enjoyable/alluring merry
8. Didactic/admonitory
9. Unkempt/filthy
10. Attractive/enticing
11. Contemptible/despicable
12. Subduing/subjugating
13. Hierarchical
14. Fastidious

1.2 EXAMPLIFIED HAUSA PROVERBS ON WORLD VIEW

Hausa is rich in proverbs by means of which the Hausa people express their worldview. For the present purpose, a few of these proverbs are exemplified thematically, highlighting their significance, thus:

1. Goal of Life or Peace Proverb [Zaman Lafiya]:

Hausa Form: *Zama (n) lafiya ya fi zama Dansarki*

Gloss: Living in peace is worth more than being a Prince.

Pragmatic Significance: The proverb teaches that no matter what our aspirations are, they are worthless if we have no peace.

2. Proverb of Knowledge [Ilimi]:

Hausa Form: *Ilimi gishirin zaman duniya*

Gloss: Knowledge/education is the spice for successful living.

Pragmatic Significance: The proverb teaches that for one to lead a successful life, including co-existing with others in peace and harmony, one needs education/knowledge as prerequisite.

3. Proverb of Honesty/Truth/Objectivity [Gaskiya]:

Hausa Form: *A dad' e ana yi sai maigaskiya*

Gloss: To be successful is to be always honest, truthful, and objective.

Pragmatic Significance: This proverb stresses that strict adherence to truthfulness, honesty, and objectivity is the only guaranty to becoming successful person. *Gaskiya* in Hausa as an ethical concept is indeed a broad term that covers truth, honesty, sincerity, faith, fairness, and objectivity. This is why *gaskiya* needs to be taught and learned as a pre-requisite for any worldly undertaking.

4. Proverb of Caution [Taka-tsantsan]:

Hausa Form: *Duniya a bi ta a sannu*

Gloss: Worldly affairs should be pursued cautiously.

Pragmatic Significance: In essence, this proverb teaches that in order to successfully deal with complex and unpredictable situations one has to be strategic and cautious.

5. Proverb of Resoluteness [Himma/K' wazo]:

Hausa Form: *Duniya ba ta auren rago*

Gloss: The world does not marry an indolent.

Pragmatic Significance: The proverb emphasizes that one cannot be lazy and expect to excel in life.

6. Proverb of Goodness/Virtuosity [Nagarta/Kirki]:

Hausa Form: *Nagari na kowa, mugu sai mai shi*

Gloss: The good one is for everyone [while] the evil [one] is only for his kith and kin.

Pragmatic Significance: The proverb emphasizes the need for one to good be mannered for one to be embraced by others. In its broad sense, this proverb encompasses many traits such as obedience (*biyayya*), good-naturedness (*alheri*), love of relations (*zumunci*), respectability (*girmamawa*), etc.

2. OBJECTIVES

This study was motivated by the generally acclaimed instrumentality of proverbs not only in cultural transmission but also in language pedagogy, thus sets out to explore Hausa proverbs, examining their use in Hausa pedagogy, and highlighting the significance thereof as perceived by a select group of students involved in the learning of Hausa.

3. METHODS

The paper adopts the quantitative descriptive research design, and involves a sample of fifty-two (52) students of the B.A. (Education) Hausa programme of Kaduna State University, Kaduna, Nigeria. An eight-item structured questionnaire was adopted as instrument to generate the required primary data for the research from the sampled students who were requested to express their views on what the paper assumes to be the pedagogical significance of the teaching and learning Hausa proverbs. For every item, three options (*Agree*, *Uncertain*, & *Disagree*) were provided, from which the students chose the one that suited their view. Accordingly, the respondents/students' perceptions are analysed using the simple descriptive statistics, highlighting the distributions by frequencies and percentages.

4. RESULTS

The results of the research are presented in the tables below:

4.1 FIGURES & TABLES

Table 1. Distributions of Hausa proverbs in language communication

Proverbs	Students Divided Into Groups (A, B & C)
Can lesson on proverbs be regarded as a communicative language education?	Learning a Hausa proverb makes a difference in our lives and experience on how we should behave.
Do proverbs assist in effective communication in and outside the classroom setting?	To communicate effectively in Hausa in and outside class, you need to learn more proverbs and use them effectively.
Why are proverb considered necessary in communicative language?	Knowing and understanding Hausa proverbs will improve our writing, reading, listening and comprehending skills.
Why should students be encouraged to describe Hausa proverbs in their daily lives?	We need to practice our communication by using Hausa proverbs to improve our lives as they are categorized in different aspects of life.
What did you learn in using Hausa proverbs in communicative language?	Hausa proverbs are important in understanding Hausa culture.
What interests you in learning Hausa proverbs outside the classroom setting?	Hausa proverbs teach us code of world living, such as goal of life among others.
What excites you to learn Hausa proverbs inside the classroom setting?	Learning Hausa proverbs inside the classroom setting helps one to express himself using figurative language.
What do you think of teaching Hausa	Hausa proverbs should be included in Hausa textbooks and

proverbs in institutions of learning?	be part of the Hausa language curriculum.
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5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Learning Hausa proverb makes a difference in our lives and experience

The results suggest that the majority of Hausa students 28 out of 52 or 54% think the importance of learning Hausa proverb make differences in our lives and experience on how we should behave, as illustrated in table 2.

Table 2. The number and percentage of students with the view that learning Hausa proverbs help to create an attitude that support the tendency toward Hausa

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	28	54	16	31	8	15

Out of the 52 students who responded, 54% were in agreement, 31% were uncertain, and 15% expressed disagreement with the statement that learning Hausa proverbs help to create an attitude that supports the tendency toward Hausa.

5.2 To Communicate Effectively in Hausa in and outside Classroom setting, you need to Learn and use More Hausa Proverbs

Table 3: shows that of the 52 students who responded to the question, 82% find proverbs to be used effectively in and outside classroom setting. That shows the importance and need of learning the Hausa proverbs.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	42	81	6	11	4	8

The table above expresses how most of the students agree that to communicate effectively in Hausa in and outside classroom setting, one need to learn and use more of the Hausa proverbs.

5.3 Knowing Hausa Proverbs will Improve Hausa students Reading, listening and comprehending Skills

Table 4: The number and percentage of students who think knowing proverbs will improve reading, listening and comprehending skills, illustrates that 73% of the students gather significance in proverbs for text comprehension.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	38	73	6	12	8	15

5.4 We Need To Practice Our Communication by using Hausa Proverbs to improve our lives as they are categorized in various aspects of life

Table 5: The number and percentage of students who have the view that we need to practice our communication by using Hausa proverbs to improve our lives as they are categorized in various aspects of life.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	40	76	6	12	6	12

Table 5: As presented above, 76% of students agree that we need to practice in our communication by Hausa using proverbs to improve our lives as they are categorized in various aspects of life.

5.5 Hausa Proverbs are Important in Understanding Hausa Culture

Table 6: The number and percentage of students who view Hausa proverbs are important in understanding the Hausa culture.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	32	61	18	31	2	8

Table 6: Shows that 61% of students agree that Hausa proverbs as an important tool in understanding the Hausa culture.

5.6 Hausa Proverbs Teach Codes of World Living, for example the Goal of Life among other valuable principles

Table 7: The number and percentage of students who view Hausa proverbs teach code of world living among other valuable principles.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	52	100	0	0	0	0

Table 7 Shows a unanimous understanding of Hausa proverbs as an important source of teaching code of world living principles.

5.7 Learning Hausa Proverbs inside the Classroom setting Helps in expressing oneself using Hausa Figurative Language

Table 8: The number and percentage of students agree that learning Hausa proverbs inside the classroom setting help in expressing oneself using Hausa figurative language.

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	28	54	20	38	4	8

Table 8 as seen above, 54% of the students agree that they find learning about Hausa proverbs in the classroom setting very helpful in expressing oneself in Hausa figurative language.

5.8 Hausa Proverbs should be included in Hausa Textbooks and Part of the Hausa Language Curriculum

Table 9: The number and percentage of students who hold the view that Hausa proverbs should be included in the Hausa textbooks and should be part of the Hausa language curriculum

No of Respondents	Agree	%	Uncertain	%	Disagree	%
	44	84	6	12	2	4

Table 9: Depicts the significance of Hausa textbooks and the Hausa language curriculum being inclusive of proverbs, 89% of the learners agree with this notion.

6. CONCLUSION

This article examines teaching and learning Hausa language through Proverbs as used in the teaching and learning space, highlighting the pragmatic significance thereof for effective pedagogy as perceived by a select group of students. Some of the Hausa proverbs examined are drawn from thematic fields of Hausa worldview like peace (zaman lafiya, knowledge (ilimi), honesty/truth/objectivity (himma + kwazo), caution (taka-tsantsan), resoluteness (himma), goodness/virtuosity (nagarta + kirki), etc. Accordingly, respondents' perception regarding the pedagogic significance of the proverbs is analyzed using the simple descriptive statistics, highlighting the distributions by frequencies and percentages. Results show that majority of the focused students agree that proverbs are veritable tools for teaching and learning Hausa through proverbs by facilitating the effective teaching and learning of Hausa language. Proverbs touch almost all aspects of life which include culture, religion, politics socialization, knowledge, economics, love for one another as well as peace and conflict resolution, to mention a few.

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