50. Teaching Hausa Language through Literature

Haruna Alkasim Kiyawa
College of Arts & Science (CAS),
School of Education and Modern Languages,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, 06010, Malaysia
kiyawaharuna@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This paper aims at highlighting the use of literature as a current method for teaching basic language skills (i.e. reading, listening, writing and speaking). Also, it deals with language areas such as vocabulary development, grammar and pronunciation. Fundamentally, the paper uses Hausa short stories as source of data to analyse the language skills teaching in Hausa language classroom. As such, the paper uses ethnography research method in evaluating the data. In addition, the paper outlined some reasons for using literary text in Hausa language classroom as well as the criteria for selecting appropriate texts for teaching in language classes. Moreover, the paper tries to points out the vital reasons and the criteria for language educators using Hausa literary texts.

Keywords: Hausa language, Literature, Language skills, teaching and Short stories.

Introduction

The importance of teaching Hausa language through literature can hardly be exaggerated in the course of teaching different language skills, various genres of literature re exploited in order to make language teaching more realistic very interesting and effective. The works of researchers such as Skinner (1982), Yusuf (2011) Jaggar (2001), Salim (2009) and Muhammad (2013) Mamman (1999) Mamman (200) Isa (2002) testifies that Hausa as a language; is spoken as a lingua franca in varying degrees over most of West Africa over the centuries. Hausa language has benefitted greatly from the two worlds of writing systems the ‘ajami’ writing which developed from Arabic letters used mostly by people educated in the Arabic oriented schools and the ‘boko’ writing which is an adaptation of roman letters, used mainly by people educated in western schools.

Literature is all about human experiences and human reactions to different situations around the classroom and the learners find literary texts more motivating and it’s a store house of human ideas, emotions which both educate and entertain the audiences such as learners or readers. Furthermore, among various genres of literature, short stories captivates the eyes and interests of various scholars such as Lopez (1996), Hismanoglu (2005), Pardede (2011), Mukti (2012), Aydinoglu (2013), Kaya (2014) to mention but few.

Brief History of Hausa language

Hausa is one of the largest and most widely spoken languages in West Africa. It is characterized as a member of Chadic group of languages from the Afroasiatic language families. According to Yusuf (2012):

The language is spoken in Northern Nigeria and southern part of Niger Republic. There are large number of Hausa speaking communities found in major cities and towns of West Africa particularly; Chad, Cameroon, Togo, Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Niger, Libya, Mali, Egypt and so on. Hausa is the first language of more than 15 million members of the native speakers and also about 14 million non-natives having become lingua franca (p.4).

From the above estimation we understand that the Hausa language is been use in the education system and their way of living. Hence, short stories are used in broadening the skills of youth concerning various perspectives, their thought are also enhanced on backgrounds concerning day-to-day activities. Even within societies around the globe, short stories are one of the most important ways of teaching language skills that have been documented in the literature. Thus, it is not
surprising to discover that a lot of literatures have been written on the role of short stories in the teaching of language skills which this paper aids partly to contributions of short stories in teaching Hausa language.

Definitions of Literature

'Literature’ as the term is used today derives from the Latin ‘Literatura’ meaning Writing; and has come in to English via the French ‘lire’ meaning ‘to read’ Therefore, various scholars have defined the term as “the use of language effectively in suitable conditions” (Baird, 1968, p.203 in Turkey, 1999, p.300). Also Griffin (2012) defines literature as “that which is written or read” (p. 24.). Mcrea (1994) defined the literature in a different way by distinguishing “the capital L’ and small l’ Literature with a capital L represents the classical e.g. Marlow, Shakespeare Dickens… and literature with small l represents the products of popular fiction e.g. fables, elegies, lyrics’ (p. 15.). More so, according to Longman Dictionary (2007) literature may be defined as “printed information produced by people, who want to sell or say something” (p. 12).

Definition of Short Stories.

Poes (2011) defined short story as a narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours and that is limited to “a certain unique or single effect” to which every detail is subordinate (Abraham, 1970, p.158).

Methodology

This paper uses ethnography research method to evaluate the data. The paper also uses the works of previous researchers in building facts concerning teaching short stories in Hausa language classroom. For instance, there are many studies that looks at the interface between short stories, classroom teaching and English as foreign or second language learning such as Hill (1994), Hismanoglu (2005), Crumbley and Smith (2010), Rahman and Arju (2013) to mentioned a few that suggested different reasons for the selection of short stories in teaching English as second and or foreign language, which are:

- Teach culture
- Motivation
- Introduce literature
- Critical thinking
- Reinforce and expand the students’ knowledge
- Based upon the assumption that stories being written
- To get the students to write an entertainment and competent term paper

Fortunately enough, these ideas influence the teaching of Hausa language through literature, because in Hausa short stories are innovated to teach youths or student’s cultural ways of living, motivates the students on endurance in any kind of hardship, avoids any sort false living, and so on. For example, the short story of the cat and rat indicates how the rat betrayed friendship with the cat by taking false excuse.

The narrative says: “what delicious yam porridge! I must find a way to eat what is left of it alone! 'Then rat said to cat: ‘Stop, I have forgotten my snuff box at home”. Here, the students’ knowledge pertaining to avoidance of false living in particular is enhanced.

However, Hill (1994, p.15 in Eren, 2004, p.42) cited criteria for the selection of short stories which include:

- The needs and abilities of the students
- The linguistic and stylistic level of the text
- The amount of background information required for a true appreciation of the material.

Furthermore, Lopez (1996, p.37) gave the criteria of evaluating short stories in classroom which include the following:
- Introduce the story, give the title, the author or his/her cultural background, in addition, events, characters, feelings.
- Read the short story two- three times, use the appropriate phonological forms and other body language to make students/audience feel excited, their participation is needed.
- Ask the students to summarize the short story themselves ask for various versions, highlights the potentiality of more than one appropriate understanding both the content and its clarity.
- Distribute five- ten statements about the story to the students, working individually to decide the given statements are (1) true or probably true (2) false, or probably false. The purpose of the above given task is to analyse both focus and accuracy their factual interpretations and develop their language skills.

**Teaching Hausa language through short stories: A review**

Studies on short stories are conducted globally on various perspective by various scholars, for instance Eren (2004) studied some ways of using short stories in teaching English language to the students of public high school in Turkey where the teachers in the school teaches the grammar rules by using mechanical drills and given them lesson plan which comprises a number of dialogues such as ‘study these’ section to read and memorise some linguistic forms i.e. vocabulary and grammar. Meanwhile, he suggested some advantages of teaching literature in English language classroom such as why using short stories, how to choose the right text, and concludes how to use story map which encourage the student to gather meaning from the text given and enhances their habit of reading and speaking skills.

In teaching Hausa language, short stories are use in expressing models that enhanced the cultural and personal growth of the students. Here, the instructor moderates samples of words in the narrative for the students to be proficient with.

For instance the narrative of the cat and rat gave a scenario of their friendship. In that story students were made familiar with words such ‘dish’, ‘yam porridge’, ‘delicious’ e.tc. An exact from the story says: “one morning, before they set out for the farm, they cooked a very delicious dish of yam porridge”.

This goes in conformity with the assertion of Bibby & Mellroy (2013) that revealed varying viewpoint of using three different models that enhanced literature in teaching English language which includes (i) the language model (ii) the cultural model (iii) the personal growth model. Furthermore, he suggested five different criteria for choosing literary text which includes; genre and narrative structure, relevance and accessibility, syntactic and lexical accessibility, balance between and description.

Furthermore, during classroom session in teaching Hausa language, the teacher uses short stories to teach language skills by given the students some minutes to read the title only for example ‘cat and rat’ for the students to understand what to expect in the content. This gives the instructor the priority to test the student’s centre approach. And the student’s centred approach is adapted in teaching so as to give space for the student to formulate their own ideas or feelings about the issues they expect the story to contain which encourages interaction among them. Hence, the paper agree with views of Arju & Rahman (2013) that conducted research on the effective use of short- stories for instruction in the classroom for teaching English as a foreign language. They made mentioned of four learning skills which includes reading, speaking, writing, and listening. They also identified some characteristics of literature such as (i) it encourages interaction (ii) it expands language awareness (iii) it educates the learner (iv) it is motivating etc.

However, Hausa people uses short stories traditionally to teach critical thinking and ways of communication to the young children at home and at elementary level in line with the affirmation of Crumbley & Smith (2010) that examined the use of short stories for teaching critical thinking and communication skills to undergraduate accounting students who took tax courses in Louisiana University. The tax instructor use short stories in the classroom and aloud each student ‘to evaluate courses on tax, accounting or business for using formal and informal techniques that help the student to improve their writing. That has been the case in Hausa language classroom, the instructor uses such skills in (i) anticipation phase (ii) building knowledge phase (iii) to consolidation phase which
includes introduction of the story title and asking the learners questions about the topic they are about to study in the class and tells the student to build knowledge from what they heard in the narration of ‘cat and rat’ and asking the students some strategic question like what do we learnt or know?

Kaya (2014) investigates on how short stories serve as a tool in the English language teaching as a foreign language. The study concludes that using short stories provide some activities for the language skills development, more especially in the aspect of linguistic and literary models. Just as in Hausa language, short stories are used in developing student’s vocabulary; enhance level of memorization, serves as medium of motivation, etc.

Conclusion

This paper explains the teaching of Hausa language through literature. It uses short stories; a form of literature in building justification for the paper. The paper understands that using short stories in Hausa language teaching helps the students to communicate effectively and develop the language skills as well as their vocabulary. Moreover, this paper indicates how the language learning instructor makes the students creative thinkers; develop their level of proficiency, writing and dialogues. It also portrayed how the students are exposed to critique and methods which makes them more responsible towards the classroom. Finally, using short stories in to the curriculum will help to develop any language in this world.

References


A long time ago, cat and rat were very good friends, they lived together, cooked together, played together and eat together, wherever one went, the other went along too. One morning, before they set out for the farm, they cooked a very delicious dish of yam porridge. They eat and eat, until they were satisfied. Then, they left some to eat in the evening when they would have return from farm. Away they went, with their hoes, machetes and baskets to the farm. They had not gone very when rat began to think: ‘what delicious yam porridge! I must find a way to eat what is left of it alone!’ Then rat said to cat: ‘Stop, I have forgotten my snuff box at home. You know that I cannot do away work unless I snuff my ground tobacco’ But we’ve gone far already. Surely, you can do without your snuff for one day,’ Pleased cat. Rat would not listen. He knew that his snuff box was in his pocket. But all he wanted was to go back and finish the yam porridge that was left.

‘I must go back. I must go for my snuff box,’ Rat insisted. And off he went home. Cat sat down by the bush path and waited for his friend rat to return so that they could continue their journey to the farm. Cat waited, and waited, but rat did not return. Cat became worried about the safety of his friend. He decided to go back home to find out what had happened. Meanwhile, rat had tipped the porridge pot over while he was eating up the porridge. The pot covered rat and he was trapped inside. He tried as hard as he could, but could not get out. When cat got to the house, he called ‘Rat! Rat! Where are you?’ There was no reply. He searched all the corners of the houses but he could not find rat. Suddenly, the pot moved a little. Cat went closer to the pot. He wondered what could trap inside the pot. Then he decided to turn the pot over.