



EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL CONTENT DRAMA ON THE PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

The study investigated the effectiveness of using local drama content on the performance of students in reading comprehension in Secondary Schools in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design. Two randomly selected Government Secondary Schools (tagged as experimental and control group) were used for the study. Two intact classes made up of eighty students (i.e. 40 students from each class and from each school) were used for the study. Both groups of students were pre-tested to establish their homogeneity before the commencement of the treatment of the experimental group. Both groups of students were taught for six weeks. Two reading comprehension tests (cloze test and retelling test) were used as instruments to test the hypothesis postulated for the research. T-test was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that students taught reading comprehension using local content drama had a higher mean score than those taught using the conventional method. Based on this finding, the study recommended, among others that teachers should use local content drama to enrich and make their reading comprehension lessons more participatory, meaningful, concrete and pleasurable.

Keywords: effectiveness, local, drama, performance, reading, comprehension

Introduction/Background to the study

Reading is a fundamental language skill. As a matter of fact, it is one of the four language skills that students are expected to be taught in schools, at all levels of their education. During the reading process, a reader usually creates an understanding of the

material that is being read. This meaning making process (comprehension process) entails the construction of a mental representation of the information in the text, and this representation can be accessed later, when memory for the material is called for.

According to Yusuf (2015), there are different levels of comprehension referred to as literal, inferential, critical or deep comprehension deep comprehension. Students in reading comprehension classes in Nigeria have a lot of difficulties understanding meaning from the texts. The problem is further complicated when students are not knowledgeable in the specific domain and when the teacher who may not know much himself/herself in the domain has to teach both domains, concepts and grammar through reading materials, the content of which is hardly understandable by learners who are supposed to be knowledgeable in the domain. In this context, the teaching content and form may not be very inferential. Comprehension may be achieved early by learners, no matter the number of years of experience of the language teacher.

Reading comprehension is a multi-faceted process that includes more than just decoding words when teaching reading. Teachers are expected to incorporate a series of methods and activities that will promote reading comprehension. One of these methods which have formed the basis for this research is drama.

The use of local content drama in the classroom is essential to the development of literacy in the early stages of reading. Children involved in dramatic activities during reading and writing construct holistic and meaningful communication (Bidweli, 1990). They are able to gain meaning in a real way. Their learning is more concrete. Reading comprehension is a process that consists of making predictions, interacting with the text, decoding the meaning embedded in the text providing *“the active construction of meaning”* and building up schemata in reconstructing the text’s meaning (Kelner and Flynn, 2006, p.267). Likewise, during a drama activity, students interact with each other, decode what others say and do, and construct, by themselves.

“Literacy is concerned with reading and drama involves reading thus drama must help with literacy”

(Kelner and Flynn, 2006, p.267)

Integration of local content drama in reading comprehension lessons could foster students ability to create, experience, analyze, and reorganize, thereby encouraging intuitive and emotional responses in reading comprehension (Huckin, Haynes Coady 1993). Drama can increase self-discipline and motivation, contribute to a positive self-image, provide an acceptable outlet for emotions, and help to develop creative and intuitive thinking processes not always inherent in other academic disciplines (Kelner

and Flynn, 2006). This study is aimed at determining the effectiveness of local content drama in reading comprehension lessons in secondary schools in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Review of related literature

Drama, especially as it is used in classrooms for learning purposes, exists for the benefit of the participants. The word *drama* comes from the Greek word *dran*, meaning "to do or act." Students and teachers do act, and create in the moment, which is, improvisational. Drama is often used in classrooms for learning purposes. Participants' acting and dialogue usually are parts generated spontaneously for their own self-expression and learning. Using no sets and few, if any, costumes and props, drama does not result in a polished production. Drama revolves around the creative process (Milord, 2007).

There are strong, natural, and meaningful connections between reading comprehension and drama. Basic acting, training and the very purpose of drama dovetail beautifully with reading comprehension strategies. (Milord, 2007)

Piagetian theory ensures the same pattern as classroom drama. Piaget believed that children learn through interaction with their surroundings and environment. When drama is used in the classroom, it creates an "interactive situation" whereby the learner is interacting with others in the classroom, the classroom environment itself and maybe other aspects of their surroundings (Milord, 2007).

Jean Piaget, explained how effective classroom drama is to early childhood learning. Vigotsky suggested that thinking can be related to social interactions that people have with one another and "that out of these children create their own way of thinking which incorporates what they see around them." Vigotsky (1978) called this internalization. This method of internalization also called social speech transference is one of the methods used to create and understand literature, develop understanding in an improvisation and analyze content in drama.

The three basic acting tools are imagination/mind, voice, and body. To be proficient, actors must use these tools well. In addition, there are a variety of complex skills that effective actors use. For classroom drama work, however, students need the basics. The two basic acting skills are cooperation (working as an ensemble) and concentration. To participate in classroom drama, it is essential that students develop these tools and skills.

The use of drama as a teaching tool in reading comprehension (in this study) is based on the simple premise that an involved child is an interested child, an interested child, will learn, and drama directly involves the child (Smith, 1972). However, a study by Bolton (1985) showed that in North American schools, students and teachers

overwhelmingly thought classroom drama was the equivalent of “*doing a play*,” a project usually associated with an elaborate production. Thus, teachers may avoid using drama in the classroom because they fear it will involve tedious, time-consuming preparations. Unfortunately, this view can cause educators to overlook an important tool for teaching in general and for the teaching of reading and language arts in particular.

In a study conducted by Dupont (2000), fifth grade students who employ creative drama as part of their instructional strategy scored higher on the Metropolitan Reading Test than those who did not. Creative drama builds and enhances knowledge skills. It also creates a more positive attitude towards learning. Children are eager and willing to work cooperatively with one another. In secondary, primary school, pre-school and kindergarten, drama is a tool utilized to teach many concepts and to develop students’ social skills. The children are taught to act out scenes in their texts. In doing so, they are learning to memorize and improvise. These are important strategies needed by emergent readers. Emergent readers are children who are starting to obtain a “*network of strategies and skills to help them establish control over print and develop as readers*” (Hucki et al, 1993 p.26).

Drama is an invaluable tool for educators because it is one of the few vehicles of instruction that can support every aspect of literacy development. Drama encompasses all four of the language arts modalities and is an effective medium for building, decoding, vocabulary, syntactic, discourse, and metacognitive knowledge. Drama activities encourage the emergent literacy, accomplishing this within a valuable social context. Drama begins with the concept of meaningful communication and provides multiple opportunities for social interaction and feedback. These interactions offer the kind of support Vygotsky (1978) deems necessary for internalizing new knowledge. Above all, drama activities are extremely effective in fostering a community of learners who choose to participate in independent reading activities.

One of the important features of drama is the variety of communication experiences it offers children. Drama is thinking out loud: it develops oral language skills as the child defines, articulates, expresses, and verbalizes thoughts in the context of improvised activities. By participating in drama activities, children develop listening skills on two levels: (a) the basic listening skills that are required in order for the sessions to continue, such as listening for cues; and (b) the evaluative listening skills that develop as children act as audience members, considering how the activities are progressing and what they would do differently if they were performing (Stewig, 1974).

Drama builds on something children do naturally – pretending. By building on a natural ability, all students can experience success from the start. These initial successes may not involve any actual reading; in fact, they may be chiefly pantomime.

However, with each success, the child is more willing to take risks, allowing script work to be introduced. Borden's (1970) study using drama to motivate poor readers led her to comment that successful participation in a drama after learning one or two lines of dialogue by reading and repeating them over and over can change a child's entire view towards reading. Reading is suddenly something the child can succeed in and is self-filling as well. The knowledge that reading can be its own reward comes to many as a complete surprise and becomes a source of increased motivation for reading (Bordan, 1970).

This study is aimed at determining the effectiveness of local context drama on the performance of students in reading comprehension in secondary schools in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Above all else, the reason drama is cited again and again as an effective method for building interest and motivation in reading is that children enjoy it. Drama is just plain fun. It allows learners to use their feelings, their thoughts, and their imaginations to express themselves to and with others, all the time growing in language ability (Flennoy, 1992).

Objective of the Study

To determine the effect of local content drama on the performance of students in reading comprehension in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Research Question

What is the effect of local content drama on the performance of students in reading comprehension in secondary schools in Kaduna state, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the performance of students taught reading comprehension using local content drama and those taught using the conventional method.

Methodology

The study adopted a quasi-experimental pre-test and post-test control group design. Data collection occurred over a six (6) weeks instructional treatment period. Two Junior Secondary Schools, Government Secondary School, Doka and Government Secondary School, Narayi in Kaduna metropolis were used for the study. Two intact classes made up of eighty (80) junior secondary students in class two (i.e. forty (40) students from each school) were used for the study. Both groups of students were pre-tested to establish their homogeneity before the commencement of the treatment of the experimental group. Both groups of students were taught four reading comprehension passages for six (6) weeks. Two reading comprehension tests (cloze test and retelling test) were used as instruments to test the hypothesis postulated for the research. T-test was used to analyze the data at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Mean score of students in the pre-test and post-test for experimental and control groups in reading comprehension test no. 1 (Cloze test)

Group	N	Df	Pre-test \bar{X}	Post-test \bar{X}	Gain Scores	Standard deviation
Experimental	40		45.46	54.55	9.09	12.25
Control	40	78	43.65	49.12	5.47	11.12

The data on table 1 shows a difference in the performance of students in the pre-test and post-test scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The mean score of students in the experimental is higher than those of students in the control group.

Table 2: Mean score of students in pre-test for experimental and control groups in reading comprehension test no 2 (Retelling test)

Group	N	Df	Pre-test \bar{X}	Post-test \bar{X}	Gain Scores	Standard deviation
Experimental	40		48.47	56.50	8.03	8.60
Control	40	78	47.96	52.01	4.05	7.45

The data on table 2 shows a difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of students in the experimental and control groups. The scores of students in the experimental group is higher than those of the control group in reading comprehension test no2. The answer to the research question which says "*what is the difference in the performance of*

students taught reading comprehension using drama and those taught using the conventional method" is that there was a differences of 5.43 and 4.49 in the post test scores of students in the experimental and control group in cloze and retelling tests respectively. The mean score difference recorded in the performance of the experimental and control groups could be probably as a result of the six weeks instruction that both groups were exposed to. Both groups were taught reading comprehension for six weeks. The result, however, revealed that the use of local content drama has a more positive effect on students' reading comprehension. The students in the experimental group had a higher gain scores of 9.09 and 8.03 in test 1 and test 2 respectively while the control group had 5.47 and 4.05 gain scores respectively.

Table 3: Comparison of mean scores of students of the two groups in reading comprehension no1 (Cloze test)

Group	N	Df	Pre-test \bar{X}	Post-test \bar{X}	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Experimental	40		45.46	54.55	2.08	1.95	Reject
Control	40	78	43.65	46.67	1.20	1.13	Reject

Table 4: Comparison of the gain scores of students of the two groups in reading comprehension test no.2 (Retelling test)

Group	N	Df	Pre-test \bar{X}	Post-test \bar{X}	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Experimental	40		48.47	56.50	1.94	1.62	Reject
Control	40	78	47.96	52.01	1.52	1.41	Reject

The hypothesis earlier stated for the research was tested using T-test as a statistical tool. The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the post test gain scores of students in the experimental group and those of the control groups.

Table 3 and 4 indicates that students in the experimental group performed better than those in the control group. The mean score of students in the experimental group is much higher than those of the control group. One could therefore conclude that the use of local content drama could improve one's reading comprehension performance by motivating students through positive social interaction between teacher and students and between student and students.

This finding is in line with Bidwell (1990), Bordan (1970), Kelner and Flynn (2006) who asserted that in order for children to extract meaning from print, they must move beyond plodding word by word decoding and achieve fluency through repeated reading of the same material. Repetition and practice are inherent in many drama

activities, with added incentive that the repetition is meaningful for students. Students have the opportunity to read and re read with the purpose selecting a piece of the text for performance. When drama especially local content drama is used in reading comprehension lessons, it creates an interactive situation whereby students interact freely with each other in the classroom, its environment and other aspects of its surrounding. Students in the experimental group were seen co-operating with each other as they interact by acting out their individual roles.

The study has revealed that combining drama with reading comprehension strengthens students' abilities on reading. Using reading comprehension within a dramatic context gives students the skills and awareness of what they need when they approach a text. It's like working out in a gym. They are training and developing their muscles so they can run the race i.e. they can read and understand a text. Comprehension goes through the "roof" (that is beyond the literal level) each time the experimental group performed or acted the content of the reading passage in a drama.

Conclusion

Based on the empirical evidence presented, the experimental group has gained more than the conventional group. Thus, the performance of students in reading comprehension using local content drama was greatly enhanced and improved. This researcher therefore joins other researchers like Bidweli (1990), Bordan (1970), Kelner and Flynn (2006) in saying that teaching reading comprehension using drama is a positive deviation from the traditional "*talk and chalk*" method where students are always passive not active. Students in the experimental group were able to build and enhance their knowledge and skills through repetition of lines in drama. The students were eager and willing to work co-operatively with one another through drama. Students in the experimental group were seen interacting freely with one another. Combining drama with reading comprehension could strengthen students' abilities in reading. Students in the study were able to connect with the author in the reading passages. Lessons were lively because students were actively involved.

Drama is such an effective tool for the development of metacognition in that students preparing a scene are actually re-creating an entire story, rather than simply recalling bits of what has been read. If children can't find the detail they need for the scene (whether it's what happens next, a town's name, or the attitude of a character), they must reread, confer with peers, or look in other sources to supply the missing pieces. Otherwise the scene cannot continue. Children in the study had to self-evaluate

and participate in group evaluation consistently during the various stages of the dramatization.

Recommendations

- Teachers should expose students to local content drama that will encourage students to interact meaningfully with texts during reading comprehension lessons. This should be done through multiple activities and experiences.
- Teachers should as much as possible, use local content drama in reading comprehension lessons. This will encourage interactions and cooperation among students in the classroom. It will not also help students to obtain meaning from the text through seeing, speaking and doing.
- Involving students in local context dramatic activities could help students to self-monitor their involvement and their ability to stay on task. Teachers can also easily observe students in their dramatic activities and assess their comprehension of the story that was created from the reading comprehension passage.
- The use of local content drama in reading comprehension lessons could be creative inspiration for curriculum planners, textbook writers, teachers and students. The result of this study should inspire curriculum planners, textbook writers and instructional material designers to include local content dramatic activities in students' textbooks, students and teachers' guides. Teacher training colleges should provide courses in reading instruction to prepare teachers to teach reading at various levels of education.
- Teachers should be flexible in teaching reading comprehension. They should adopt strategies that suit students' interest, attitudes and abilities. This will motivate students to make use of their innate schemata to make reading enjoyable and more meaningful.
- Teachers should encourage every student in class to participate actively in the dramatic activities organized during reading comprehension. This is in line with the Chinese proverbs that children learn faster by doing: *"Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand"*.

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Appendix I

Sample lesson guide

Step 1: Teacher introduces the lesson by asking students some thought provoking questions that could stimulate their interest in the passage they are about to read.

Step 2: Teacher asks students to read the passage silently. Students discuss the various scenes and roles. That can be acted in a drama.

Step 3: Teacher asks students to read aloud the passage and mention characters that can be acted.

Step 4: Teacher guides students to identify the various scenes and various roles that can be created from the passage

Step 5: Teacher guides students in the selection of roles and characters. She allows students to voluntarily choose their roles and characters

Step 6: Teacher groups students according to the various scenes created from the passage.

Step 7: Teacher and students work jointly together to develop props for the scenes of the drama

Step 8: Students dramatize or act out their scenes based on their props.

Step 9: Students repeat or rehearse their presentation.

Step 10: Teacher evaluates the lesson by asking students relevant questions based on the passage they have acted out.

Step 11: Teacher concludes the lesson with an assignment.

Appendix II

The Bundle of Sticks (Working Together)

An old man gathered his ten children around him to give them some good advice. He pointed to a bundle of sticks and said to his eldest son, "*Break it.*" The son strained and strained, but with all his efforts, he was not able to break the bundle. The other sons and daughters also tried, but none of them was successful. "*Untie the bundle,*" said the father, "*and each of you takes a stick.*" When they had done so, he called out to them. "*Now break,*" and each stick was easily broken. "*You see what I mean...*" said their father, "*Unity gives strength*". There is strength in unity.

None of the children could break the whole bundle of sticks. But, if each child broke one stick, the entire bundle could be broken. "*Together, they stand but divided they fall*".

Questions

- 1) Why do you think the children couldn't break the bundle?
- 2) What do you think "*Union gives strength*" means?
- 3) How have you worked together with others to get something done?

Introduction

Teacher should introduce the passage above by asking some pre-reading questions such as:

- 1) What does it mean to live in peace?
- 2) Why do we need to live in peace?
- 3) What are the benefits of living in peace with our classmates, schoolmates and neighbors?
- 4) What does the title of the passage suggest?

Presentation

Step 1: Teacher should stimulate meaningful discussion on the passage through the above questions.

Step 2: Teacher should read the first sentence and ask the pupils what they think the passage is about.

Step 3: Teacher should read the first paragraph together with the pupils to confirm their predictions.

Step 4: Teacher should read the first sentence of the second paragraph and ask the pupils why "*the teacher decided to come to the class with six bigger boys*"

Step 5 Teacher should read the second paragraph with the pupils to confirm their predictions.

Step 6: Teacher should read the first sentence of the last paragraph and ask the pupils "*why the entire became friends with the new boys and Tunji became an outcast*".

Step 7: Teacher should make pupils demonstrate and act a short drama on the content of the passage.

Step 8: Teacher should discuss answers to the comprehension questions.

Evaluation: Teacher should discuss ways of making peace and what pupils can do to live in peace with one another. In addition, pupils should answer the questions after the comprehension passage.

Conclusion: Teacher should give students homework to list ways they can live in peace with their fellow classmates.

Appendix III

Ada, the little child of peace

Little Ada and her mother spent Saturday afternoon cleaning out the kitchen. The mother took it upon herself to explain the function of each equipment to young Ada. She was intrigued. She tries putting to work some of the equipment: the electric and gas cookers, switch on the gas cylinder and off; set the light/flame to the acceptable mode; switch between electric current and gas freely without making mistakes; try toast some bread; blend some juice; manage the kitchen. She was grateful to her mother for everything. Indeed, she confessed it was her best moment spent in the home and with her mother ever. As the job wears them down, they sat at a stool and ate some of the food little Ada just prepared *"if you continue like this my darling daughter, you will be one of the greatest chefs Nigeria will produce"*, her mother said.

She studied her mother closely and saw tears forming in her eyes. *"Mummy! Are you ok!"* she asked. Her mother nodded on the affirmative. She came down from her stool, with some tissue paper together and handed it to her. *"You are the best mum in the world and you are very beautiful"*, she said. *"Is it daddy?"*

For some time now, Ada had noticed that her father seldom come home early, and when he comes, he goes straight to bed. They don't eat together anymore. No more movies. He no longer helps her to do her homework or ask her who offended her in school. Little Ada knew that that is what is making mother to sob. She left the kitchen in a hurry. She went straight to daddy's room. This time her father was awake, with the Saturday paper in his hand. *"Good morning daddy"*, she greeted. Her father invited her for a hug but she declined. He made to catch her but she ducked. He finally grabbed her but she wriggled out of his hold. *"Leave me alone,"* she yelled.

"Ok princess, what is it this time" her father asked. *"You don't seem to love mummy anymore. She is crying in the kitchen. Now go and talk to her"*. He looked at his daughter and thought for a moment. *"My daughter just four years, saying this? Her mother must have gotten into her head."*

"Alright little mum, I will go talk to her later" *"No dad. Right now"* she replied. Her father stood up although reluctantly and strolled through to the kitchen. He grabbed his car keys in a way that Ada didn't notice. The next thing she heard was a car engine buzzing. She rushed outside and saw her father driving off. In less than ten minutes, he was back. She could see a big gift wrapped in a colorful wrapping paper at the back of the car. *"Where is mummy?"* *"In her room, upstairs"*. He walked through the stairs to his wife's room, little Ada following behind. He knocked at the door. *"Mum, open the door"*, she cried. When the mother heard her, she opened the door. She was not pleased with

Ada because she was with her father. *“What is this Ada?”* she asked. *“Dad, say something”*, Ada said.

Her dad gave her the gift and said he was sorry for everything. That he never thought of doing anything to hurt her but Ada’s mum rejected it. *“Mum, please. Dad said he is sorry for everything”*, Ada pleaded on her father’s behalf.

Together, they embraced and from then on, peace reigned supreme in their house, thanks, however, to little Ada.

Answer the questions

- 1) What drove Ada to make her father apologize to her mother
- 2) Do you think she is rude to her father?
- 3) Why do you think Ada wanted her father to make peace with her mother.
- 4) What would you have done if you were in Ada’s shoes?
- 5) Why is it always good to make peace in the home?
- 6) What is the overall lesson learnt from this passage?

Presentation:

Step 1: Teacher should stimulate meaningful discussion on the passage through the above questions.

Step 2: Teacher should read the first sentence and ask the pupils what they think the passage is about.

Step 3: Teacher should read the first few sentences together with the pupils to confirm their predictions.

Step 4: Teacher should read the passage and ask the pupils why we need to make peace with all members of our family in our communities.

Step 5: Teacher should make pupils demonstrate and act a short drama on the content of the passage.

Step 6: Teacher should discuss answers to the comprehension questions.

Evaluation: Teacher should discuss ways of making peace and what pupils can do to live in peace with one another. In addition, pupils should answer the questions after the comprehension passage.

Conclusion: Teacher should give students homework to list ways they can live in peace with their fellow classmates.

Appendix IV

Working for the common good of all

One day, it occurred to the members of the body that they were doing all the work and the belly was getting all the food. They held a meeting, and after a long discussion, they decided to go on strike until the belly did its proper share of the work. For a day or two, the hands refused to take the food, the mouth refused to receive it, and the teeth had no work to do. After a while, the members began to find that they themselves were not in good condition. The hands could hardly move, the mouth was parched and dry, while the legs were unable to support the rest. So, they found that even the belly, in its quiet way, was doing necessary work for the body, and that all must work together or the body will not be well. In the same vein, we must all play our individual role in every situation in achieving a common goal for the good of all.

Questions

- 1) The members of the body thought that belly wasn't doing its fair share. What happened when the members of the body stopped doing their fair share?
- 2) For each job, everyone must do their fair share by completing their part of the job. What does a job entail?
- 3) What can you do to care for the planet earth?
- 4) How do you intend to play your own part in caring for the planet earth?

Introduction

Teacher should introduce the passage above by asking some pre-reading questions such as:

- a) What does it mean to work for the common good of all?
- b) Why do we need to work together?
- c) What are the benefits of working together for the common good of all?
- d) What does the title of the passage suggest?

Presentation:

Step 1: Teacher should stimulate meaningful discussion on the passage through the above questions.

Step 2: Teacher should read the first sentence and ask the pupils what they think the passage is about.

Step 3: Teacher should read the first few sentences together with the pupils to confirm their predictions.

Step 4: Teacher should read the passage and ask the pupils why all members of the body should work together for the common good of all.

Step 5: Teacher should make pupils demonstrate and act a short playlet on the content of the passage.

Step 6: Teacher should discuss answers to the comprehension questions.

Evaluation: Teacher should discuss ways of making peace and what pupils can do to live in peace with one another. In addition, pupils should answer the questions after the comprehension passage.

Conclusion: Teacher should give students homework to list ways they can live in peace with their fellow classmates.

Appendix V

Bride Price

Just then, Nkechi came in carrying a wooden dish with kola nuts and pepper. She gave the dish to Machi, her father's elder brother, and stretched out her hand, very shyly, to her suitor and his relatives. She was about sixteen and just ripe for marriage. Her, suitor and his relatives looked her over to make sure that she was beautiful and ready for marriage.

Nkechi's hair was combed up to a crest along the middle of her head. Her skin smelt of scented wood. She wore a string of black beads around her neck. On her arm were red and yellow bracelets, and on her waist four or five rows of waist-beads. After she had held out her hand to be shaken, she returned to her mother's hut to help with the cooking.

Nnkechi stood in the presence of her parents and suitors' relative holding a wooden dish. The men in the hut were preparing to drink palm wine which Nkechi's suitor had brought. Okonkwo could see that it was very good wine, for white bubbles rose and spilled over the edge of the pot.

That wine comes from a good tree, said Okonkwo, Obierika's friend. The young suitor, whose name was Ibe, smiled broadly. He filled the first horn and gave it to his father, Ukegbu. Then he poured wine out for the others, starting with Nkechi's father, Obierika. Okonkwo brought out his big horn from the goat skin bag, blew into it to remove any dust that might be there, and gave it to Ibe to fill.

As the men drank, they talked about everything except the thing for which they had gathered. After the pot had been emptied, the suitor's father cleared his voice and explained the reason for the visit. The two families drank wine together as they discussed.

Obierika then gave Ukegbu a small bundle of short sticks. Ukegbu counted them. They are thirty? He asked.

Obierika nodded.

'We are at last getting somewhere'; Ukegbu said, and then, turning to his brother and his son, he said: *"...let us go out and whisper together"*. The three rose and went outside. When they returned, Ukegbu handed his bundle of sticks back to Obierika. He counted them; instead of thirty, there were now only fifteen. He passed them over to his elder brother, Machi, who also counted them and said:

"We had not thought to go below thirty. But as the dog said: "if I fall down for you, and you fall down for me, it is play". Marriage should be a play and not a fight. So we are falling down again! He then added ten sticks to the fifteen, and gave the bundle back to Ukegbu.

In this way, Nkechi bride-price was finally fixed at twenty bags of cowries. It was already evening when the two parties came to this agreement.

Both parents exchanged a bundle of sticks to be used for determining the bride price. Go and tell Nkechi's mother that we have finished, Obierika said to his son, Maduka. Almost immediately, the women came in with a big bowl of rice. Obierika's second wife followed with a pot of soup and Maduka brought in a pot of palm wine. As they ate and drank palm wine, they talked about the customs of their neighbors. *"...it was just this morning"*; said Obierika, 'that Okonkwo and I were talking about Abama and Aninta'.

"All their customs are upside-down", said Okonkwo. *"They do not decide bride-price as we do, with sticks. They bargain as if they were buying a goat or cow in the market"*.

"That is very bad", said Obierika's eldest brother. *"But what is good in one place is bad in another place. In Umunso they do not bargain at all, not even with sticks. The suitor just goes on bringing bags of cowries until the party tells him to stop. It is a bad custom because it always leads to disagreement"*.

Appendix VI

The Greedy Leper

There were once two friends; one was a blind man, the other a leper. These two friends survived by begging to be able to feed themselves. After sometime, they hardly get alms from the people because of the terrible hunger that took over the entire village and its neighbors.

The leper suggested they would learn a trade. Both of them decided to visit a herbalist who gave them a mixture of some powerful magical herbs to drink. The herbs gave them the powers to compose songs. They would compose interesting songs lamenting on contemporary issues confronting the society.

The blind man said instead of learning a trade, they should go visit a herbalist.

They made a lot of money from this by visiting markets, village squares, drinking joints and a host of other social gatherings. The blind usually do the singing with a "*talking drum*" while the leper beats a dual metal gong complimenting the songs as they sing to the joy and delight of listeners.

The leper usually hides half of the money obtained from each outing in his box. He keeps the remaining amount for their feeding, clothing and other necessities of life. But because greed had taken over the thoughts of the leper, he suggested they would go to neighboring market to entertain and make more money.

On reaching the market, they went to a drinking joint. They were served local brewed drinks in a calabash. As they were drinking and waiting for the arrival of customers, a madman also arrived. His laughter's made the blind to inquire whether it was the voice of a new customer. The leper told him the voice was that of a madman. The blind then ordered drink for the madman who was grateful.

So, because the leper had already made his plan perfect, he removed some poisonous substance tied in a polythene bag and poured the contents into the blind's drink. He excused his friend and went out pretending to ease himself. As soon as the leper went out, the madman got up quickly and exchanged the blind's drink with his leper friends'. The leper came back and continued with the "*exchanged drink*", thinking of the next line of action.

After some time, the leper told his blind friend he had forgotten his dual metal gong and as such, would at once go to get it before customers could come. So, he set off for home thinking he had perfected his plan. He was half way to their house before the poison, took over his entire internal organs. He died in agony as a result of the poison.

Love for one another breeds joy, happiness and fulfillment. But lack of love breeds distrust, selfishness and greed.

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