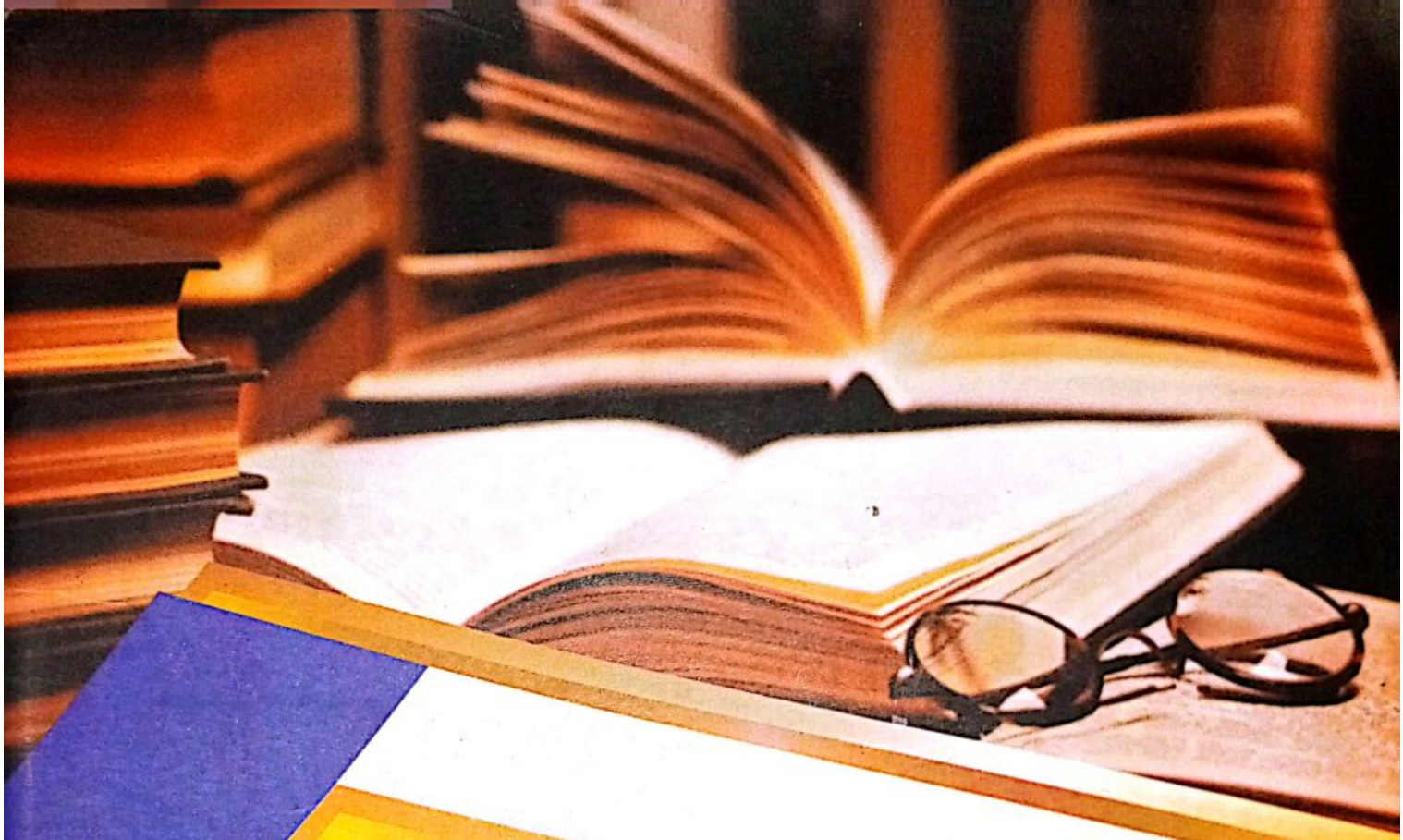

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ASSESSMENT OF SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF YORÙBÁ PROVERBS IN ÌRE□PO□ LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF Ò□YÓ□ STATE

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Abstract

This paper assessed the Senior Secondary School (SSS) students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ Local Government Area (LGA) of Ò□yo□ State. The specific purpose of the study was to assess: SSS students' general knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs; the influence of gender; and school type on students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs. The study adopted the cross-sectional sub-type of the descriptive survey method. A sample of one hundred and twenty (120) respondents was randomly sampled from the twelve (12) SSS in the LGA. The study adopted a researcher-designed questionnaire titled: Senior School Students' Knowledge of Yorùbá Proverbs in Ìre□po□□□ Local Government of Òyó□ State". The instrument contained twenty open-ended Yorùbá proverbs which the respondents were expected to complete. Frequency count, mean, percentage indices and t-test statistic were used to analyse the data.

The results of the findings indicated that the knowledge of students in Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA was average; there was no significant difference in students' knowledge based on gender ($t_{(118)} = .123$; $p > 0.05$); and there was a significant difference in the students' knowledge based on school type ($t_{(118)} = 3.142$; $p < 0.05$.

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that parents should endeavour to teach their children Yorùbá proverbs; teachers should endeavour to teach Yorùbá literature, especially proverbs; and Government should facilitate the effective implementation of the national policy on education with reference to the teaching of Yorùbá language and its literature.

Keywords: *Knowledge, Assessment, Proverbs, Yorùbá Proverbs, Students*

Background to the Study

Literature is a very important aspect of human life; all the daily activities of an individual revolve around the literature of the particular environment the person belongs to or lives in. In Yorùbá society, literature is given high prestige because their daily activities revolve around their literature. In fact, their literature serves as a museum in which their cultural heritages, beliefs, norms, values or ethics is being stored. Yorùbá literature is divided into two, oral and written literature. Oral literature is known to be among the Yorùbá before the coming of the White or the introduction of

civilisation in the kingdom. This type of literature is believed to have been passed down from generation to generation. It encompasses all genres of literature, just like in written literature, i.e, Drama (which includes; *Eré-Onísẹ, Eré-Onítan*), Prose (which Includes; *Ìtàn Àròsọ, Ìtàn Ìwásẹ̀*) and Poetry (*Ewì Alohùn*) which includes; *Ìwi Egúngún, Ẹkún Ìyàwó, Ìjálá, Rárà, Alọ́, Òwe* (Proverbs) which is the focus of this work.

Proverbs are enigmatic and universal phenomena present in all cultures. Essentially, one can say that proverbs, which are found in all ages, societies and language of all nations, do indeed bear philosophical insights inasmuch as all proverbs constitute philosophical. Every culture or human race has ways of projecting their cultural heritage, philosophy, world-view, beliefs, ethics and values. Proverbs, therefore, are one of such ways. Proverbs are instructive tools, and therefore perform communicative function. This very special means of communication and highly valued wisdom-lore of the people is employed by writers of literary genres to instruct and impact lives. They are prescriptive, serving social charters to recommend and condemn practices (Finnegan, 1976).

Proverbs serve as social charters, to praise what the society considers to be virtues and condemn bad practices. Reverting to proverbs is the most important and most effective strategy the Yorùbá people have has devised to optimise the efficaciousness of speech (Owómọ́yẹlà 2012). Just like many other races of the world, the Yorùbá people of the South-western Nigeria hold the use of proverbs in high esteem, because Yorùbá proverbs serve as the spinal cord of the Yorùbá language, carrying the symbol of culture and tradition of the people. It is indeed an embodiment of their cultural values, norms and philosophy. To the Yorùbá people, proverbs are the horses of speech, if communication is lost, proverbs is used to innovate it (Bámgbósẹ́, 1986).

Adédimẹ́ji (2009) regards proverbs as wise saying that address the hearts of the discourse in any given context truthfully and objectively. To this extent, proverbs are held in high regards among the Yorùbá of South-western Nigeria and some other African tribes. Proverbs are treasures in speech-giving and making. Illuminating the grey aspects of any discourse as representation of distilled thoughts and wisdoms of a people or a race; proverb gives a road-map marking that could be towed by participants in a discourse. Furthermore, proverbs are carrier of culture; they convey the nuances of cultures and ensured the continued relevance of such nuances by their transmission from one generation to another. Akporobaro (2012) opines that proverb is the form which has proved itself of continuing relevance to modern man. It has been and remains a most powerful transmission of culture.

According to Coker and Coker (2008), Yorùbá proverbs are replete in the philosophical and cultural ethics. In actual fact, it can be said that only the intelligent people can make good use of proverbs. This postulation, perhaps is indeed justified by the following proverbs *Lọ́we lọ́we là á n lùlù àgìdìgbo, ọlọ́gbọ́n ní jó o, ò□mọ̀□ràn ní í mọ□ ò□n* (The *Àgìdìgbo* drum is sounded in proverbs; only the wise dance to it, only the knowledgeable understand it).

In the Yorùbá society, proverbs have been and still remain powerful and effective instruments of transmitting ideas, motive, knowledge and social morality from generation to generations.

This is because proverbs reflect societal values of the people. Like any other group of people, the Yorùbás are interested in the maintenance of morals, customs, norms, cultures, ethics, and works of their ancestors. Among the Yorùbá people, proverbs are relics, preserved and transmitted over generations.

Furthermore, Yorùbá proverbs serve as an instructive function as they are employed for instructional, cognitive and corrective purposes. In Yorùbá society, the elders, regarded as the custodians of cultural heritage, employ proverbs to instruct and guide the young people on the social values of life. They instruct and guide on respect for elders, consideration for others, cooperation, hard work, tactfulness and other behaviours that befits the proper Ọmọlúàbí of the Yorùbá society (Ọlaóyè, 2012). In addition, in the Yorùbá cultural life, proverb has continued to function as a living, vigorous and current rhetorical device for transmission of moral wisdom; teaching òf the young ones. It also used to advise and criticize.

Difference among the school children is considered to be the most outstanding characteristic of them. This is because children differ in mental ability, sex and rate of growth, background experience, interest, development, social and maturity, and in many characteristics which influence their achievement in school subjects (Daud, 2001). These could be contributory factors that may influence students' understanding and use of Yorùbá proverbs.

Gender and school type are some of the variables that can influence students' knowledge of Yorùba proverbs. Gender is a natural concept which draws biological differences in human make-up particularly between male and female human being, while school type is a status of being either a public or private school. Studies have been carried out to examine the influence of gender on students' understanding of concepts. For instance, Martins and Smith (2009) opined that some people believed without any empirical support that men are dominant and even the superior sex, they are perceived to be intrinsically having better brains and learn much than women. Daud (2001) found that female proportion of all students taking examination in Islamic studies decreases as the level of the subject increases and male students are found to perform better in Islamic studies than their female counterparts. Similarly, Abdulsalam (2010) found that school type has a great influence on students' performance and achievement in school subjects, Yorùbá inclusive. The researcher reported that private school students are more academically adept in school subjects, especially languages than their male attending public schools. The two intervening variables are considered in this study to examine their influence on senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ Local Government Area of O□yo□ State.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers have neglected the teaching of Yorùbá proverbs in schools, especially in secondary schools. The problem of this study stems from the dilemma created by the neglect of proverbs in the general education process in Nigeria. Many scholars have written a lot on Yorùbá Proverbs from different standpoint using different data. For instance, O□lájídé (2013) worked on an assessment of secondary school teachers' knowledge of proverbs in Ìlo□rin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The scholar found, among others, that the respondents demonstrated high

knowledge of proverbs; and gender significantly influenced teachers' knowledge of proverbs. O□láoyè (2012) researched on principles and concepts of Yorùbá language and 1,122 Yorùbá proverbs.

Similarly, Akínmádé (2012) investigated the decline of proverbs as a creative oral expression among the Ọ̀ndó people. The researcher reported that proverb is a fundamental part of the Ọ̀ndó people. He also found that proverbs are facing extinction in Ọ̀ndó culture. Adégbóyèga (2017) worked on philosophical issues in Yorùbá proverbs, just to mention but a few. None of these previous researchers investigated or assessed senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs. This created a researchable gap, part of which this study filled.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to assess the extent of senior secondary school (SSS) students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ Local Government Area (LGA) of Ọ□yọ□ State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study assessed:

i. senior secondary school (SSS) students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA;
ii. whether gender influences SSS students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA; and
iii. whether school type influences SSS students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study.

1. What is the senior secondary school (SSS) students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA?
2. Is there any difference in SSS students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA on the basis of gender?
3. Is there any difference in SSS students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA on the basis of school type?

The Concept of Yorùbá Proverbs

They are often metaphorical in nature. Proverb (*Ọ̀we*) can be defined as *Àkojopọ□ ọ□rọ□ ọ□gbọ́□n tọ́ kún fún às□a□, ìs□e, is□e□, ìhùwàsí, è□sìn àti ìgbésíayé àwọn àwùjọ kan* (Proverbs is the evaluation of meaningful words, sentence or speech which comprises the culture, norms, values, practices, beliefs of a particular society). Proverbs, among the Yorùbá also serve as means of achieving clarity and conciseness in discourse. For example, when a Yorùbá proverb says that *Òwe l'esinòrò, bí òrò bá sonù, òwe ni a fi ń wá a* (A proverb is the horse which carries a subject under discussion along; if a subject under discussion goes astray, we use a proverb to track it). This shows that in every statement made to reflect decisions taken by Yorùbá people, proverbs are vehicles used in driving home their points. Owómóyèlá (2012) observes that *Ọ̀we* is a speech form that likens or compares one thing or situation to another, highlighting the essential of similarities that the two shares. Yorùbá proverbs guide our thoughts and actions, and warn us of the hidden dangers along life way.

Yorùbá proverbs are wise sayings which project the wisdom, ethics, cultural heritage and worldview of the Yorùbá people. They are tool used in designing and settling life's difficulties; and they are of great value in that they present very clearly possible and ready-made solutions and advice to the multiplicity of human situations. Proverbs are enigmatic

and universal phenomena present in all cultures, ages, societies and language of all nations (Ọ̀jọ́, 2015). She (Ọ̀jọ́) stresses that proverbs bear philosophical insights because each proverb constitute philosophical statement.

Proverbs are central to indigenous education and various themes of traditional education were imparted through the vehicle of proverbs. Underscoring the importance of proverbs in traditional societies, Akínmádé (2012) notes that in African societies, proverb will continue to be of great advantage to man. He argues that proverb is the most powerful and potent vehicle for culture dissemination from one generation to the other. Proverbs express the nature of African wisdom as they perform diverse functions such as bringing peace where there is conflict and misunderstandings, giving hope where there is despair and light where there is darkness in human relationships and interactions (Akínmádé, 2012). Proverb can justifiably be described as language in action, as it constitutes a special class of oratory skills operating in human communication that marks out speakers with its mastery in particular from the ordinary language users.

The Yorùbá people value proverb; they considered them to be the wisdom lore of the race. And because proverbs are considered to be traditional and originate from the observation of natural phenomena and human relations, old people are regarded as repository of proverbs. Anyone who does not know, or cannot understand the application of proverbs is regarded as unwise (O□látúnjí, 1984). Among the Yorùbá people in Nigeria, proverbs are considered to be the spirit and soul of the language use. A fact borne from such sayings as *Ọ̀we le□sin ọ̀□rò̩□, ọ̀□rò̩□ le□sin ọ̀we, bí ọ□rò̩□ bá ṣọnù, ọ̀we la fi ń wá a* (Proverbs are the prongs of discourse and if a discourse is riddled with meaning it is proverbs that we use to loosen it). Such statements as the one above who in themselves are considered proverbs affirm the assertion that culturally conscious Nigerians, especially the Yorùbá believe that the heart of nearly all conversational engagements is the use of proverbs.

Proverbs play a very significant role in the everyday language of the Yorùbá people. They are a means of communicating ancient wisdom from one generation to another and encapsulate a wealth of indigenous experiences, traditional knowledge and perspective of the Yorùbá people. Proverbs serve an instructive function as they are employed for instructional, cognitive and corrective purposes (Akínmádé, 2012).The store of Yorùbá proverb is inexhaustible and the subject and imagery which forms the basis of the proverbs, covers the entire spectrum of life. Many of the Yorùbá proverbs are profound in their philosophical and moralistic formulations of the realities of the life of man.

Proverbs which are repository words of wisdom have the elders as their main custodians (Ọ̀jọ́, 2015). She remarks that proverbs are part of traditional communication, often serving to persuade, exhort or criticise. Proverbs are therefore, a vital instrument of communication in inter-personal relationship. In addition, they are important and relevant socially, culturally, politically, and above all, educationally. Anyone who uses proverbs and understands them in Yorùbá society is considered wise, because the use of proverbs requires creativity, skillfulness, and dexterity and weaving together of materials since proverbs are words of experience and wisdom.

Forms and Functions of Yorùbá Proverbs

Proverb is the most powerful and potent vehicle for culture dissemination from one generation to the other. Proverbs express the nature of African wisdom as they perform diverse functions such as bringing peace where there is conflict and misunderstandings, giving hope where there is despair and light where there is darkness in human relationships and interactions (Akínmádé, 2012). Proverbs are another form of verbal arts; they convey tremendous educational ideas and values. The Yorùbá people have an extraordinary number of these. Adults, who are regarded as the embodiments of knowledge and wisdom, have the privilege of using proverbs, while young ones must ask permission before quoting a proverb in the presence of adults.

Like folktales, proverbs express Yorùbá morals and ethics. They are convenient standards for appraising behaviour. They are used to express social approval and disapproval. They are conveniently applied to express praise, criticism, ridicule, warning, defiance, derision of an enemy or rival, advise, and counsel. For example, to the Yorùbá, a counsellor who understands proverbs soon set matters right. But more significantly a Yorùbá saying states that, A proverb is the horse (backbone) of conversation. When the conversation among Yorùbá of South-western Nigeria droops, a proverb revives it. That is the core of its value.

Proverbs are highly regarded due to the wisdom they express. It is significant that, although sacred myths have been questioned and rejected since the coming of foreigners, educated Yorùbá have retained and respected their proverbs. Every culture or human race has a way of projecting their cultural heritage, philosophy, world-view, beliefs, and ethics. Proverbs perform communicative function. Owómóyèlá (2012) see proverbs as a highly valued wisdom-lore of the Yorùbá people and a special means of communication employed by the Yorùbá to instruct and impact lives. They (proverbs) are prescriptive, serving social charters, to praise what the society considers to be values and virtues, and condemn bad practices. Reverting to proverbs is considered as the most important and the most effective strategy the Yorùbá have devised to optimise the efficaciousness of speech (Owómóyèlá, 2012).

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey research of a cross-sectional sub-type was adopted in this study. The population for this study comprised all Senior Secondary School (SSS) students in Ìre□pò□ Local Government Area of Ò□yó□ State. Thirty students were randomly selected from each of the sampled schools. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-designed questionnaire comprising a test of proverbs. The instrument was divided into two; the first part (Section A) of the questionnaire will sought demographic information (such as, gender and school type) from the respondents. Section B presented 25 open-ended proverbs that each respondent was required to complete. The reliability of the instrument was tested through test re-test method. The results were correlated using Pearson's (r) and obtained a result of 0. 63.

Data Analysis and Results

In this chapter, the data collected were analysed to answer the three research questions. The one hundred and twenty (120) copies of the questionnaire that were administered were all retrieved. This gave a retrieval rate of 100%.

Data Analysis and Findings

Three Research Questions were raised in this study. Research Question 1 was answered using frequency count and percentage, Research Questions 2 and 3 were answered using the t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Research Question 1: What is the Senior Secondary School Students' Knowledge of Yorùbá Proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA of O□yo□ State?

Table 1: Frequency Count, Mean and Percentage Description of Senior Secondary School Students' Knowledge of Yorùbá Proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA of Òyó□ State

Knowledge	Frequency	Mean	Percentage
Very Low	4		3.3
Low	6		5.0
Average	30	3.55	25.0
High	64		53.3
Very High	16		13.3
Total	**120**		**100.0**

Table 1 shows the general knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs among Senior Secondary Schools Students in Ìre□po□ Local Government. It can be seen that 3.3% (4) of the respondents have a very low knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs, 5% (6) have a low knowledge, 25% (30) have an average knowledge, 53.3% (64) have a high knowledge and the remaining 13.3% (16) have a very high knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs. Thus, it can be said that majority of the respondents have a high knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs among SSS students in Ìre□po□ LGA.

Research Question 2: Is there any difference between the male and female senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA of Òyo□ State?

Table 2: The t-test analysis on the difference between the male and female senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□po□ LGA of O□yo□ State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Male	54	16.5	3.08	.123	118	.902	**Not Rejected**
Female	66	16.6	4.89				

P>0.05

Result from Table 3 shows that the t-value yielded .123 which is not significant with P value .902 > 0.05. This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference between the male and female SSS students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA ($t_{(118)}$ = .123; P > 0.05).

Research Question 3: Is there any difference in senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA of Ò□yó□ State on the basis of school type?

Table 3: The t-test analysis of school type difference in the senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA of O□yó□ State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Private	62	17.6	3.17	3.142	118	.002	**Rejected**
Public	58	15.3	4.74				

P<0.05

Result from Table 4 shows that the t value yielded 3.142 which is significant with P value .002 < 0.05. This shows a significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ Local Government on the basis of school type ($t_{(118)}$ = 3.142; P < 0.05). The difference can be seen in the mean of the private school students, 17.6 which is greater than the mean of the public school students, 15.3 (i.e., 17.6 > 15.3).

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that the respondents had an average knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs among SSS students in Ìre□pò□ Local Government. This is in line with Ojó (2015) who note that proverbs which are repository words of wisdom have the elders as their main custodians and that proverbs are a part of traditional communication, often serving to persuade, exhort or criticise.

Findings from this study showed that there is no significant difference between the male and female senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA ($t_{(118)}$ = .123; P > 0.05). This agrees with the findings of Akínmádé (2012) who reported no significant difference in respondents' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ondo, Nigeria. He stated that the average performance of students spread across both gender.

The outcome of this study showed that there is a significant difference in students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ Local Government on the basis of school type ($t_{(118)}$ = 3.142; P < 0.05). This is in line with Daud (2001) who points out that students who attend private schools are often exposed to better teaching facilities which help to ensure that learning take place in a conducive environment and also, private schools ensure that learning facilities such as reading tables and chairs and laboratories are made readily available

for the use and betterment of students therein. This might be one of the reasons why the private school students learn better than their counterparts in public schools.

Conclusions

Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that the senior secondary school students in Ìre□pò□ LGA of Ò□yó□ State had an average knowledge of Yorùba proverbs. This implies that the students have not been adequately exposed to Yorùbá proverbs, and invariably not making use of it. There was no significant difference between the male and female senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA of Ò□yó□ State. This could be as a result of both male and female students sharing the same background knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs. School type significantly influenced the senior secondary school students' knowledge of Yorùbá proverbs in Ìre□pò□ LGA of O□yó□ State, implying that private secondary school students had higher mean score than their public school counterparts. The reason for the difference might be as a result of the teachers handling the subject or home background of the students.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn from the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Parents should endeavour to teach their children Yorùbá proverbs. This will make communication flow, as they do not have to talk much before their children understand the message they are trying to pass across. Also, it will give room for good and culturally-informed interactions between parents and children.
2. Children should be taught and encouraged to use Yorùbá proverbs. This will also make them appreciate their mother-tongue.
3. Yorùbá teachers should endeavour to teach Yorùbá oral literature well, especially proverbs. They should also try to make use of different methods/techniques and teaching aids in teaching in order to motivate and spur the interest of the learners.

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