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The utilization of children's oral literature as a literacy tool: Northern Sotho rhymes and folktales

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ABSTRACT

The comprehension of oral literature is very crucial as it is the literature that is readily available, that is at no cost most of the time. If used well, it can play a huge role in combating some of the issues of literacy. Due to oral tradition being part of many people's cultures, it is one literature that can be relied upon in a country that has varied socio-economic issues. It is considered that oral literature is an important entry point to the meaning of verbal texts and that it plays an important role in exposing children to words. This article analyses selected Northern Sotho rhymes and folktales as forms of oral literature that can be utilised in addressing literacy challenges, demonstrating how teachers and learners can use rhymes and folktales as a teaching and learning resource. The article has demonstrated that some rhymes can teach children sequence of events, colours, different animals, cooperation, social skills and be a form of exercise. Folktales add on to their vocabulary and impart some moral skills.

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Introduction

As much as there are many kinds of research on why South African children cannot read, most of these researches do not recognize oral tradition as an important piece of literature that can be utilized to curb illiteracy. Too much focus is on the written text. Finnegan (1970: 1) supports this view as she says: "The concept of oral literature is an unfamiliar one to most people brought up in cultures which, like those of contemporary Europe, lay stress on the idea of literary and written texts."

Before the written text, folklore was used to entertain, teach, caution, disseminate cultural norms and values and instill morals among children. Folklore, in African communities such as Basotho ba Leboa, is the richest oral tradition that emanates from evening storytelling sessions where grandmothers narrate stories and recite oral poetry to their grandchildren, sitting around the fire. It was mostly women who took on the role of this storytelling. That is why, even today, the renowned storytellers in indigenous languages are mostly women.

One can ponder and ask if indeed there is what is termed children's oral literature as all literature for children is often mostly regarded as children's literature. Ntuli (2011) defines oral children's literature as an art form that was used before people could write and it includes folktales and lullabies. More attention is often given to written text or the fact that the orature of this literature has mainly been reduced to texts. Finnegan (*Op cit.*) further states that the unwritten forms, however, are far less widely known and appreciated. Davies (1992: 23) mentions that: "Originally, narrated stories were for adults and children alike. Later, certain stories were considered more suitable for children, perhaps because of their didactic intent."

Hancock (2008) also gives clarity as he mentions that children's literature can be defined as literature that appeals to the interests, needs and reading preferences of children and captivates them as its major audience. Oral children's literature is one that is meant for children, and it is oral in nature. Some genres of this oral tradition are mostly narrated by adults. However, they do it for children, meaning that it has always been deemed to be relevant to children. Children do partake in this literature through various genres where,

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in some, they are the ones in control and leading the delivery of the literature, like in songs, rhymes, etc. Furthermore, Cullinan and Galda (1994: 137) mention three reasons for traditional literature being a very important part of children's literature. They say:

- i. Traditional stories and poems needed to have clear structures, plots, rhymes, or rhythms in order to be remembered because these features appeal to children.
- ii. Traditional literature invites participation. Listeners had to listen in order to learn these stories and poems, or else they would have died out. Traditional literature still makes an active and exciting entry point into verbal texts.
- iii. When it comes to children's fare, oral traditions are still stronger than written ones in many cultures. Therefore, traditional literature is a very vital part of multicultural literature.

The comprehension of oral literature is very crucial as it is the literature that is readily available, that is at no cost most of the time. If used well, it can play a huge role in combating some of the issues of literacy. Paul *et al* (2021) mention the importance of literacy saying that at this moment, literacy is crucial to economic development as well as individual and community well-being. This shows the need for mitigating literacy issue using any relevant resource at our disposal. Makena (2022) further mentions that teachers need to employ teaching and learning methods that accommodate various cultural notions learners bring to school, as this is likely to impart positively on their academic performance. Many learners come to school already having knowledge of some forms of oral literature such as rhymes and folktales.

It is considered that oral literature is an important entry point to the meaning of verbal texts and that it plays an important role in exposing children to words. There is a skill that is very crucial in oral traditions and that is the listening skill because the listener must listen carefully in order to learn them. Due to oral tradition being part of many people's cultures, it is one literature that can be relied upon in a country that has varied socio-economic issues. As mentioned before, it is free literature that only needs those who can aid it well for it to be beneficial to children. Street (1995) says that a family's socioeconomic status has more to do with a child's literacy. As per Dlamini's (2000) findings, teachers cite the lack of innovative materials, such as improved books, and the lack of teaching and learning aids, such as radio and video recorders as some of the problems facing oral teaching. However, Makena (2022) asserts that teachers need to exhaust every corner to help their students.

This paper will first review the literature, followed by a research methodology. A discussion which comprises of the subheadings; utilizing rhymes and utilizing folktales will be done followed by conclusion.

Literature Review

Oral literature, at face value, is literature delivered in an oral form or by word of mouth. As explained by Okpewho (1992), oral literature is identified by various scholars by such terms as oral literature, orature, traditional literature, folk literature, and folklore. This explanation shows how this literature is orally transmitted, the tradition associated with it, and how ordinary old people are associated with it. It is through the explanation that this literature is believed to be embedded so much in a culture that only those knowledgeable and with an apt amount of experience are regarded to be in a better position to pass it on from generation to generation. Furthermore, Cullinan and Galda (1994) say that traditional literature is the body of stories and poems that came to us by oral transmission and whose authors are unknown.

Oral literature is known as the literature of the old people narrated down to the young. It is because of the literature being narrated for the young that it is regarded as a form of children's literature. Jason & Segal (1977: 277) define oral literature as "The ethnography of its society, reflecting the modal and typical mental content of the people in the society". From the definition, oral literature is the type of literature that has made it possible for societies to pass down cultural customs and knowledge to future generations as it is about their origin, their being, and their way of life. Salama (2006: 9) defines culture as:

The spectrum through which one sees the world. It is not something that one downloads into one's psyche over a twenty-four-hour period. It comes over time, from the day one is born. The onus usually falls on the parents to show their children how their predecessors lived.

The above view implies how important it is for children to be exposed to oral tradition at an early age. The purpose of oral tradition is realised mostly when children are exposed to oral literature from an early age so that they grow with it. It is not possible to teach children their culture when they are old because it is not something that one can acquire in one day. It is a process; it is a way of life. This embracing of one's culture in children's books does not deny the need to have children's books that are culturally diverse because books also serve as a window. This means that children can learn and embrace other people's cultures through books. Therefore, it creates an opportunity for children to grow knowing people's diversity and somehow being appreciative of them. As quoted in Cullinan and Galda (1994), Bishop states that culturally diverse literature portrays what is unique to an individual culture and universal to all cultures. It accurately portrays the nuances and variety of day-to-day living in the culture depicted. It does not distort or misrepresent the culture it reflects.

Oral literature is mostly what folklore is. It has, for many years, played a role in transferring culture, passing down real life skills for real life situations, teaching and entertaining all at once. Brown (1995) confirms that a vigorous oral tradition has existed throughout

South African history and, in many ways, it represents the true original contribution to world literature. Despite this, oral literature is largely absent from accounts of literary history in this country.

South Africa has a very rich history of oral tradition, however, as Finnegan (1970) puts it, the unwritten forms are far less widely known and appreciated. This tradition existed at a time where most languages did not have orthography. When defining folklore, Cullinan and Galda (1994) mention that it comprises stories that were passed through generations by word of mouth before they were ever written down. This literature has always existed in South African communities. People have always had stories to tell, and it was done in an oral form.

Research Methodology

In this study an analysis will be done on the selected types of oral literature. The researcher chose these two types within the different genres of children's oral literature that she believes can assist the Sesotho sa Leboa speaking children with the issue of illiteracy. Regarding tales, the analysis will be done, not based on the structure but, rather, the teachings found in them. This study is guided by the emergent literacy theory as it focuses mainly on the pre reading skills. Oral literature plays a huge role in transferring these skills because it is mostly this form of literature that they get exposed to, sometimes unaware. Components of the emergent literacy skills can be addressed through the use of oral literature. Oral literature can be regarded as the first type of literature which children have access to for language learning. The study is also guided by family literacy theory, which involves various practices of literacy at home that can be reinforced by an enabling home environment that supports literacy.

Discussions

The discussions of this study will be done under the subheading utilizing rhymes and utilizing folktales.

Utilizing Rhymes

This part of literature reinforces cognition as capabilities as they can include memory, thinking and reasoning, spatial processing, problem-solving, language, and perception. Sesotho sa Leboa has different rhymes that can be used to help children with cognition. The rhymes used in this section are from the Nal'ibali website, https://nalibali.org/impact-reach_ Below are some of the children's rhymes that are found in the language:

Mapimpana

Mapimpana, Mapimpana samma,

Tsoga bosele samma.

Mapimpana, Mapimpana samma,

A re itokišetše go ya sekolong.

Mahlo ke hlapile,

Meno ke hlapile,

Matsogo ke hlapile,

Maoto ke hlapile,

Hlogo ke kamile,

Motepa ke jele.

Naa go šetše eng fela?

A! a! a! puku ya ka e kae?

A! a! a! pene ya ka e kae?

Ke di lebetše! Ke di lebetše!

(Little one

Little one, little one,

Wake up it is morning little one,

Little one, little one.

Let us get ready for school.

I have bathed my face,
I have brushed my teeth,
I have bathed my arms,
I have bathed my legs,
I have combed my hair,
I have eaten soft porridge.
What else is left that I have to do?
A! a! a! where is my book?
A! a! a! where is my pen?
I have forgotten them! I have forgotten them!

(ibid.)

Both the teacher and caregivers at home can use the above rhyme. At school, the teacher can rely on it as it teaches learners the sequence of events. The rhyme is about a set of events that a child goes through in the morning in preparation for school. Normally, children are not always very keen to wake up in the morning for school. The rhyme is a reminder about all the things they must do before they go to school. It reminds them about bathing, having breakfast and, most importantly, ensuring that they are not forgetting any of their books and pens. Anyone who has ever forgotten a book, pen, or pencil knows how frustrating that is. The rhyme is about important life skills. In as much as this rhyme is used, it is for language teaching. Life skills teachers can also leverage on it and use it for teaching some life skill aspects.

Kalinde and Vermuelen (2016) say that in children's songs, specifically, repetition can be argued as a useful technique in maintaining song simplicity; since it is combined with actions and movements, monotony may not be easily felt. Rhymes are performed like songs, they are sung. The rhyme may also assist children in identifying the mentioned body parts as they may be made to point at them as they mention each.

Below is another rhyme that can play a crucial role for the Sesotho sa Leboa speaking children:

Nonyana tše pedi,
Tša go tšwa Bopedi,
Tša go bolela Sepedi,
Godimo ga mohlare.
Ye nngwe ke Mantsho,
Ye nngwe ke Mošweu.
Fofa Mantsho, fofa Mošweu.
Boa Mantsho, boa Mošweu.
Halala Mantsho!
Halala Mošweu!

(Two birds,
From Bopedi,
That Speak Sepedi,
On a tree,
Another one is Blacky.
The other one is Whitey,
Fly Blacky, fly Whitey,
Come back Blacky, come back Whitey.

Halala Blacky!

Halala Whitey!

(*ibid.*)

Teachers can utilise the above rhyme to teach learners or children different things. For things to be mastered well, one has to do them repeatedly. A common aspect in rhymes is the repetition of words. This wordplay enables children to use words repeatedly, therefore reinforcing exposure to words and subsequently meaning. In the first three lines of the rhyme, there is the rhyming of these three words:

i. *Pedi*

ii. *Bopedi*

iii. *Sepedi*

The three words above can help children to distinguish words that seem to sound similar. They get to understand that *pedi* is a number and it stands for two. Learners then learn that *Bopedi* is a place, as it is where these two birds come from. Then, finally, they get to the language where they learn that these two birds, are from *Bopedi* and speak *Sepedi*. To test comprehension, some learners will show that they see the link between the three words. This can be seen in lines 1 and 2, where the rhyme talks about *Bopedi* and *Sepedi*.

From the very same rhyme, learners can be taught about gender. Symbolically, the black bird, which is *Mantsho*, in line 5, refers to a male bird whereas the white one, which is *Mošweu*, in line 6, refers to a female bird. The rhyme may also be used to strengthen the understanding of colours, as white and black are used.

The rhyme below is about a frog that attributes human characters as it seems to be talking and asking for things. One may say that it makes no sense at all and does not see the need for it, but teachers can leverage on it too as a tool to enhance brain activity and maximum function. The rhyme is about the frog that is crying and wanting to be carried. In this rhyme, children would have to mimic the frog and eventually hop around. The rhyme is also a form of exercise, although children do not see it that way as it is done in a fun way that mainly focuses on language. As Ntuli (2011) mentions, Zulu children's game songs reach children not only at an intellectual level but also at a physical level. The other important thing it does is to teach children to focus and to listen and perform the action. It is more about encouraging physical activity than intellectual activity.

Segwagwa

Segwagwa, segwagwa, segwagwa

Sa re go nna, go nna, go nna

Sa re etla, etla, etla

Nna ka gana, ka gana, ka gana

Sa re go nna, go nna, go nna

Sa re mpepu, mpepu, mpepu

Nna ka gana, ka gana, ka gana

Sona sa lla, sa lla, sa lla

Sa re gwaa-gwaa-gwaa-gwaa!

Sa re gwaa-gwaa-gwaa-gwaa!

(A frog

A frog, a frog, a frog

It said to me, to me, to me,

It said come, come, come,

I refused and refused and refused,

It said to me, to me, to me

It said, carry me, carry me, carry me.

I refused and refused and refused.

It cried and cried and cried.

And said croak, croak, croak!

And said croak, croak, croak!)

(*ibid.*)

Teachers in the Foundation Phase can also use songs or rhymes to teach learners social skills. Children's folk songs bring togetherness, as some songs have to be sung in a group or pair. These types of songs need children's cooperation as they rely on questions and answers accompanied by action. There is a song game that has the following lines:

Ke tšo bina motswalaka.

Ko kae motswalaka?

Ga bo Matšie motswalaka.

Ba di betha bjang motswalaka?

Ba di betha so, le so le so so so.

(I am from the dance my cousin.

Where is my cousin?

At Matšie's place my cousin.

How were they dancing my cousin?

They were dancing like this and that.)

(*ibid.*)

Children participating in the above song game would have to work together because, first, the child who is telling them that he or she is from a dance then picks any name of the next child who should emulate their dance style. When this is happening, children also gain confidence, because the child who is dancing often gets in the middle of a circle while others cheer them on. The shy ones eventually get out of their cocoon, and, in no time, everyone will be happy and waiting for their turn to shine. Philpott (2001) states that when children respond to rhythmic drive and percussive effects, through bodily actions and movement, active learning is implied.

Utilizing Folktales

The tradition of narrating folktales to children around a fireplace, mostly in the hut, is dying away. One can say the telling of folktales in the known traditional manner (that is, sitting around the fireplace, having the grandmother as the storyteller and others) is dying a slow death but it is not dead already. Many societal shifts resulted in this. When defining the shifts or change, Greenwood and Guner (2008) mention that these are changes of attitudes and behaviours that characterised a society. The change or shift is largely due to adaptation to improvements in a society's technological environment. It could be that families have moved from cooking by using a fireplace, therefore taking away that tradition. The other aspect is that many young families no longer live with grandparents in the same household. Young families have a tendency of moving to cities, therefore leaving the tradition behind. Another factor is the preference for the European languages that the children do at schools. Caregivers leave no room for the usage of the mother tongue, resulting in children losing the tradition in the language.

Folktales are known to be very long and complicated at times. It is in the complexity that children learn to connect events and have their own predictions of how the folktale may end. At this point, the brain gets activated and they strive to remember the details of the folktales. This is because children enjoy telling other children the things that happened or that they have heard.

Below is a suggestion of how the teaching of Sesotho sa Leboa folktales can be used to help curb the problem of illiteracy amongst the Sesotho sa Leboa community, and issues faced by its learners who cannot read for meaning.

From Serudu (1990) the following folktales, which are relevant for children can be found, *Ngwanammaleobu and Thakane le Thakanyane*.

See below, an analysis of the tale *Ngwanammaleobu*:

The tale 'Ngwanammaleobu' is one of the tales that are used to try and explain to children why things are the way they are. This tale gives children something to really ponder about. It is a myth explaining why a person does not come back when they pass on. It explains the unexplainable about death. In the Sesotho sa Leboa culture, a chameleon is known to be an animal that brings bad luck, its passing in front of one is a symbol of bad things. This then explains to children why the chameleon is not the most liked animal, as children are afraid of it due to its colour-changing tendencies when provoked. For children who go to Sunday school, this

challenges their minds even further as they will be having the Christian religious background of death and the mythical one from folktales.

Children have a tendency of playing around when they have been sent by their parents. This has also been depicted with the chameleon that was playing on the way while being sent. The lizard, being fast, managed to overtake the chameleon and brought the wrong message to people. Again, it shows how bad lies are, as they can cause real damage as seen in the tale. Should the lizard not have eavesdropped and decided to go and lie, people might have at some point gotten the correct message from the chameleon. The tale also gives a lesson to children not to play around when they are sent but go straight where they are sent to.

Giving children an opportunity to learn so many lessons in one tale will indeed help them in their reading of written texts. The listening and analysing of so many texts at once allow them to process meaning.

Another tale, *Thakane le Thakanyane* (Thakane and Thakanyane)

A typical behaviour of children is to play the blame game when they realise that they are in trouble, and this is what they did when they wanted to go through. Instead of acknowledging that both were in the wrong, they decided to point a finger at Thakanyane. The shocking part is when Thakane, who is Thakanyane's sister, failed to protect her sister and blamed her for breaking the rock. The teacher or parents can use this instance to address sibling rivalry and learning to stand together in trouble. Learning this can transcend to adulthood where one learns that if something is done in a team and it fails, everyone should take the fall for it, instead of pointing fingers and blaming one person, which is often what is done.

Thakanyane's emotions can teach learners what it feels like when friends leave one alone. Thakanyane got lost and arrived at a wild creatures' homestead. It was there where she was assisted by an old woman who helped her to run away. Children can learn that sometimes people need help to get away from danger or bad things.

From the tale, there is a lot of vocabulary that children can learn. There is the word *basetsana* (girls). The word can test if the learners know plurals and singular words because the singular for *basetsana* will be *mosetsana*. There is the word *ditau* (lions), which is the plural for *tau* (lion). There are nouns from the tale such as *letlapa* for a rock, *ngwana* for a baby, *mokgekolo* for grandmother. There are also verbs that learners can learn; understanding the action of a particular verb will mean that they understand its meaning.

In the tale, they also talk about a river which is *noka* in Sesotho sa Leboa. When learners get a chance to hear the pronunciation of the word, they also get its meaning. In Sesotho sa Leboa, the word *noka* can be understood in a context as it can be a homonym and a homophone. Outside of context, when children read the word *noka*, they can either pronounce it as *noka* for waist. It is pronounced with a high raised vowel 'o', while *noka* for adding salt to food, or *noka* for the river, both are pronounced with a low raised vowel 'o'.

From Makgamatha (1989: 39) in his book *Keleketla*, the following tales, which can also be classified as children's literature, can be found: *Nonyana senyamaswi* (A milk producing bird) and *Mabutle le Tau*.

See an analysis of the tale *Nonyana senyamaswi* (A milk producing bird) below:

The tale is about a family that was working on the farm, where they would spend the whole day hoeing the field, only to find the weeds back on the following morning. This happened for several days until the man decided to stay behind and see the culprit, which was a bird. From the tale, first, children can understand the importance of ploughing the fields because it is where food comes from. The actions of the bird can show children that it is wrong to do bad things to others because that hurts them and also that, when one does bad things, one will be caught, as it happened to the bird too. This message is not explicit but will require cognition for children to pick it.

The tale also exposes children to the power of negotiation as seen when the bird, upon realising its fate, opted to rather help the family with milk. This is in exchange for it not to be killed because of what it did in the field. Children are often known to not listen to what elders tell them, as they often do the opposite. This tale will teach them about the repercussions of that.

The parents told their children to not tell anyone about the bird that supplied them with milk. It could be because it is taboo in nature as birds are not known to produce milk as they are not mammals. Still, from this, children can then learn the differences between animals. If they can differentiate, the norm and what is not real, then they learn new things. The hard lesson is when the children in the tale listen to their friends and, eventually, let the bird out as it negotiated to dance for them outside. Then they are tricked as the bird goes far away in the bush, up until they are also eaten by wild creatures because they did not follow the orders of their parents.

See another analysis of the tale *Mabutle le tau* (Hare and Lion) in Makgamatha (1989:1):

The tale is about how a hare or rabbit managed to defeat the mighty lion not through power but, with intelligence. A lion is a strong animal which children know that it is unlikely to be defeated by any animal because it is generally considered the king of the jungle.

A hare, in Sesotho sa Leboa folktales, is often used as a smart animal as it uses trickery. In the folktale, it tricks other animals into entering the lion's den. It also tricks the lion into believing that it is removing a tick from its tale while it was nailing its tail to the roof of the structure, they were building to keep the meat. The lion dies because of that. It further tricks the monkey into believing

that it is the lion by wearing a lion's skin. When the monkey realises that it is just the hare and not the lion, when caught with the skin off, the hare runs away and then, again tricks a meerkat into leaving its hole by saying it is bad out there as everyone is running away. The meerkat got out and the hare hid itself inside that hole. In as much as it is funny, the teacher can use it to address small lies that children tell and have a discussion on how they can affect others.

See another analysis of the tale *Kgolomodumo* in Serudu (1990: 77):

The tale *Kgolomodumo* has a mixture of cultural elements in it. It is also a representation of myth, where it explains creation, resurrection, and the afterlife. Mokgoatšana (2020) mentions that *Kgolomodumo* is becoming extinct in Sepedi folklore with the risk of losing its deep structure and embedded meaning. A tale like this one is a great source of transmitting culture. Children can learn so many things through this. It evokes many emotions and takes the reader or listener through different emotions, disbelief and trying to make sense of some metaphor usage. The beginning of this tale is about death, where this creature killed animals and people other than just one woman. The remaining woman, instead of a man, shows how a woman is central to creation. Children are very curious, so explaining to them how the woman got her kids from the wound on her thigh would be interesting. Again, they can create a mental picture of this creature that no one knows what it looks like, however, it seems to be a very scary monster, whose gender is not even known. So, children can create their own mental representation of this creature. There are songs in the folktale that keep children entertained. The repetition of the word "*Kgolomodumo-dumo-dumo*" makes the creature even scarier as the creature even grew bigger and bigger. The storyteller can play around with the echo of the word to bring the scary element that will keep the children clued in anticipation of what will happen next. Mokgoatšana (2020: 7) unpacks the meaning of *Kgolomodumo* as a "compound noun derived from the adjectival, *-kgolo* (big, huge); and the nominal, *modumo* (sound)". The charactonym suggests a being with a large sound, an increasing loud deafening sound.

The tale gives a solution as children, in the end, learn that there is an afterlife, depending on what the teacher would like to do. Religion can also be brought in for the teacher to understand what children know about death and its permanence or non-permanence.

See the analysis of the tale in Makgamatha (1989: 67), *Ngwana wa kutu ya morula*:

This folktale has elements about gender that can raise many inquisitive questions for children. The main teaching from the folktale is clear; that when one is told not to do something by elders, it is always wise to follow the instruction because doing as one pleases can bring the unknown. The folktale has some hidden meaning that may not be understood by young children. However, when it comes to Mašilo having a child, they can question this, and children know that girls or women are the ones who can bear children or who can be mothers. The issue of how the child is conceived is one thing that is repeatedly hidden in Sesotho sa Leboa folktales. It seems to be taboo to explicitly explain the correct procedure of how a child comes about. This indicates how folktales were specifically made for children. Also, the element of herding is there as many boys in Sesotho sa Leboa folktales always take on the role of herding. This must have been a way of teaching children from a young age the importance of livestock, as girls are also taught the importance of crops.

In the above folktales, one can understand the difference of time as they talk about the morning and the evening, they are *mesong* and *mathapama* respectively. It teaches time. In folktales, many activities are done in the morning which shows the importance of one waking up early in the morning if they want to get things done. This is a skill that people from around the world write about. There are several published books that emphasize the importance of the morning. There is even a book by Robin Sharma titled 'The 5am Club' (Sharma, 2018). This is, to a point, where other people even call themselves the '5 am club', this is a group of people who believe in the morning.

The folktale also brings the family structure into perspective as it is observed that Mašilo only stays with his grandmother. It also teaches relations or kinship because they talk about the uncle '*malome*' and the uncle's wife '*mogatša malome*'. We can also observe cultural food *ditloo* which is Jugo beans, which differ from ground nuts. Jugo beans are not well known by children, more especially those whose parents or grandparents no longer plough the fields. It is food that is enjoyed more at night around the fire, especially when folktales are told. There are other teachings from the folktale that can still be interpreted.

There is another tale *Mašilo le kgaetšedi* in Makgamatha (1989: 101):

From the tale, there are so many teachings. From teaching about being an orphan, bullying, inheritance, struggle, and many other challenges. Mašilo is a character that goes through many challenges. Children can relate to him. He is clearly living in a child-headed home with his little sister as they are orphans. Many children in South Africa are orphaned, and they sometimes stay with siblings or relatives. Some children can relate to Mašilo's situation. No one takes them in after they lose their parents and it is only later, when they are old, that the uncle decides to stay with them. Luck seems not to be on Mašilo's side as he has no one to defend him. The universe seems to be protecting him as he gets messages on how to deal with challenges he is facing. This is observed on many occasions where nature saves him through a bird and the mist. Children can also learn about the afterbirth of an animal which is a placenta referred to as *mohlana*. This is a cultural element. There is also an instance where Mašilo shouts '*sebatakgomo*' (Please help!) when they are attacked and his wife is killed. Children can learn that, often, when they hear the expression "*sebatakgomo*", it means someone needs help. It is a word that they can also use when in trouble so that others can come to rescue them. Another thing that children can learn about that is something cultural. It is the crupper, a traditional clothing item that men wore or still wear. These days, only a few people wear it, and it is mostly during cultural events.

Generally, folktales can be viewed as a resource that is mainly focused on moral development. Most children in their foundation phase of schooling, are at what Piaget (1955) referred to as the pre-operational and the concrete operational, which is when children are between six and ten years old. In his views on moral development, Piaget (1965) refers to children who will most likely be in the foundation phase as being at a heteronomous or moral realism. Here is when children determine what is wrong based on the punishment they are given. They believe wrong is wrong based on the punishment. It is at this stage that parents or caregivers need to do the best they could because they could lose children at this stage. One can wonder how they will behave when they are at the moral relativism stage. How they will discern which rules can be changeable if their foundation was not effective.

Conclusion

This article has presented the two selected forms of oral literature that can be regarded as children's literature in the form of rhymes and folktales. It has shown how these readily available forms of literature can assist in helping children master some of the necessary literacy skills. It has made an analysis showing how these two forms of oral literature can be incorporated in teaching children reading. It has been noted that important literacy components such as vocabulary can be taught using rhymes. When talking about the issues of literacy, most of the time it is mainly aligned with only a few aspects and not a holistic approach of combating the issue. Other times more focus is on the written text and very few scholars have demonstrated how children can learn literacy components using oral literature.

Folktales can help in engaging children in interesting stories and discussions that impart important life skills. Northern Sotho rhymes has a lot of repetition in them which helps children with mastery of the words, they have lots of rhythm, which makes them fun and engaging for children as they easily get bored and they are purpose oriented, whether to teach counting, to teach colours, to teach different animals or a form of exercise. Some of the rhymes teach children cooperation as they rely on each other to ask and answer questions. They learn turn taking through such rhymes. In this article only a few Northern Sotho rhymes and folktales were chosen however more research can be done even in other African Language as literacy issue not only affect South African children but children from many African countries.

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