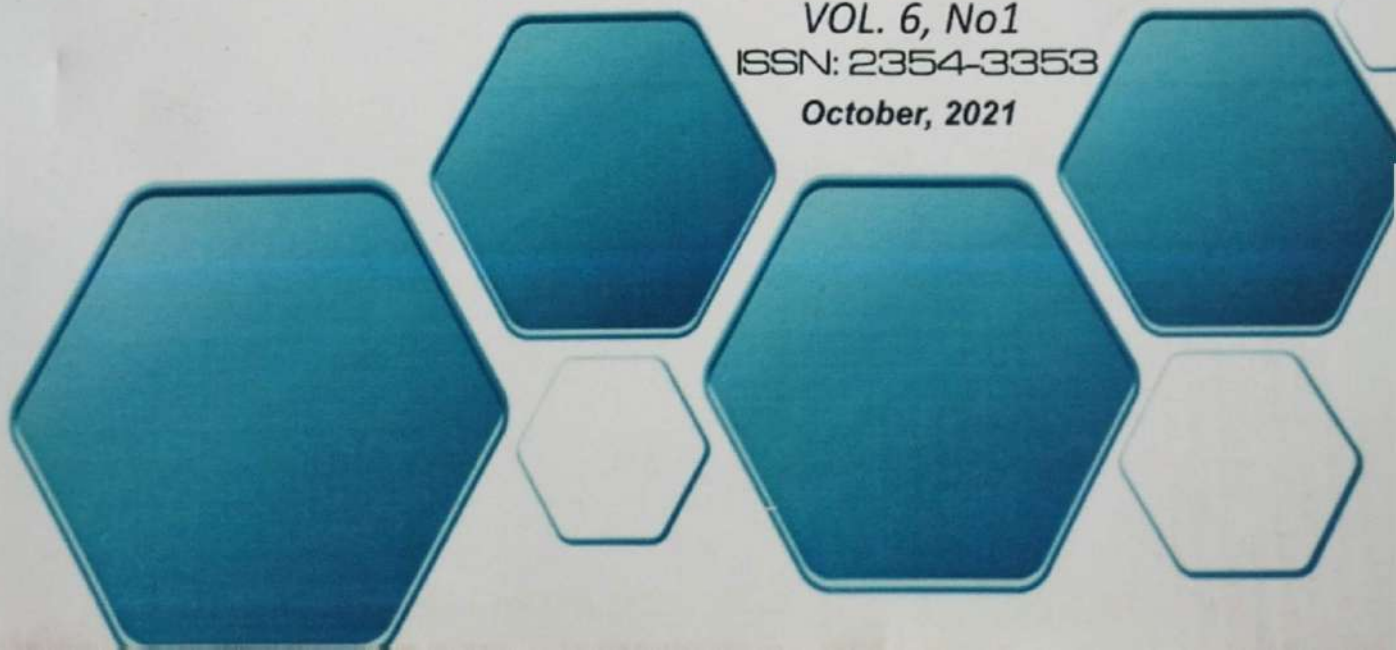




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STYLISTIC FEATURES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS' LANGUAGE USE IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

AHMED, KAZEEM SABI

English Department, School of Languages

Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

ahmedsabikazeem@gmail.com, +2348038829484

AJADI, BABATUNDE MUSTAFA

English Department, School of Languages

Kwara State College of Education, Ilorin

mustafaajadi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study thoroughly looks into the stylistic features of language use of kindergarten teachers due to the invaluable foundation and importance the pedagogy sets for later acquisition of knowledge in every literate life. The researcher domiciled his study to Ilorin East local Government Area of Kwara State. In the research, key concepts in the fields of education, linguistics and psychology were reviewed. The research population includes thirty nursery and primary schools in Ilorin East Local Government Area of Kwara State. The sample is twelve schools, ensuring a fair representation principle of sampling. However, the instruments used to gather the data used for this research include participant observation and checklist, having properly supervised their validation and reliability. The checklist used is made up of twenty four serially structured questions targeted towards the elicitation of non-verbal linguistic peculiarities of kindergarten teachers while participant observation was used to extract the verbal language use. It is therefore, recommended that researchers and stakeholders of education and English language should further their research in kindergarten education in order to keep them abreast the role of language in concretizing knowledge into their students.

Keywords: Techniques, Style, Kindergarten and Feature

Introduction

Kindergarten or pre-school system is significant like other stages of education although some studies dispute this. Kindergarten is the earliest form of primary education given to kids to aid the development of their cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic skills. Kindergarteners are usually children between the ages of one and six years. However, many countries in the world have different age-group policy for kindergarten education while kindergarten is obligatory in some countries; the reverse is the case in another.

Issa (2017) is of the opinion that young children do not learn or assimilate if their curricula activities are not presented with paralinguistic and kinesthetic activities; Activities that range from playing with toys, colors cards, singing, going through images, symbols and other form of gesticulations that can aid pedagogy. According to him, this is because the age groups

involved in pre-school system are children between the ages of two and six; the children with minimal linguistic ability and less developed cognitive system to interpret complex words and long-winded sentences.

This study however, seeks to study different way in which their teachers are entrusted with the responsibility of selecting simple words; words with not more than four syllables, words with simple or reduced clusters to illustrate whatever that is being taught to them. Teachers assigned to these classes are expected to possess high degree of educational and linguistic knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the importance of early years' education in the later development of acquiring knowledge in tertiary institutions, little attention has been paid to teacher pupils' linguistic interaction in the classroom. This research notes that the peculiarity of language use among pre-school teachers has not been carried out; so it aims to carry out the stylistic features of kindergarten teachers' use of language.

Purpose of the Study

The thrust of this essay is to properly discuss and examine the inherent features of language use among kindergarten teachers in Ilorin-East Local Government of Kwara State. By doing this, at the end of this research, the researcher will be able to fully establish different stylistic features of teaching kindergarteners and also describe the usefulness and contributions of the mentioned styles to kindergarten education.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

- What are the stylistic features of kindergarten teachers' use of language?
- How simple or complex is the language of teaching kindergarteners?
- How has the complexity or simplicity of language use of kindergarten teachers contributed to kindergarteners' academic performance?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are tested in the study:

- H01:** There is no significant stylistic features peculiar to the kindergarten teachers' use of language.
- H02:** There is no significant difference in simple or complex is the language of teaching kindergarteners
- H0 3:** there is no significant impact of Simplicity or complexity of kindergarten teachers' use of language on the academic performance of kindergarteners.

Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is restricted to nursery and primary schools situated within Ilorin, East Local Government Area in particular, because of the need for an in-depth analysis of the data. Also, in order to arrive at credible results in the investigation, five schools were randomly chosen; both private and public owned. Information gathered from these schools was analyzed at the phonetically, phonological, morphological, and graphological.

Significance of the Study

Carrying out this research does not only widen the applicability of stylistics to the field of education but also serve as reference point for individual researcher who might want to carry

out further studies into the importance of selecting styles of language for teaching little children. Also, this research is significant as it provides both linguistic and pedagogical information to kindergarten teachers.

Methodology

The data used for this study were collected using checklist method and participant observation as they both enable the researcher to actively get involved in the field of study. Participant observation is one of the most common methods used for quantitative data collection. It requires that the researcher becomes a participant in the culture or context being examined. Also, the researcher makes use of tape recorder in recording the classroom teacher-pupils dialogue. Checklist method connotes the production of standardized reference points that enumerate all the features and entries expected of the textbook. It has numerous advantages (McGrath 2002 cited in Karamoozian and Riazi 2008) that convinced the researcher to adopt it.

The data collected were analyzed using the descriptive method. Other sources of data used in this study were internationally published books, articles and journals. Finally, while every action of judgment made by the researcher was strictly based on majority, the researcher also makes sure that necessary tools for the analysis were genuine and most importantly analyses.

Stylistics

Style and stylistics are two different concepts although there are areas of similarities between them. Leech and Short (2007) describe "style as choice of vocabulary in a given context by a given person, for a given purpose". Lawal (2012) also, stresses the importance of style to stylistics, in his word, style can be approached from either a 'popular' layman view or specialized perspective. In another voice, Babajide (2000) emphasizes that where there is no style, there is no stylistics. What can we call style? Generally, it refers to manner of doing things.

Providing answers to the questioned in the above paragraph, Bell (2008) defines the term style "as what an individual speaker does with a language in relation to other people". In his view, style is indispensably interactive, denoting interpersonal and intergroup relations. According him, "style derives its meaning from the association of linguistic features with particular social groups". Illustration of this definition can be exemplified within this research by saying that the teacher assumes the position of the speaker; delivering lectures to his social group: the kindergarteners.

Alternatively, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) opine that style is synonymous to register, they are of the view that style is a situational dialect that is observed when a speaker speaks in different settings. They distinguished between formal and informal style of speaking, with the informal style permitting the rule of English contraction, slangs and abbreviations while formal is observed when speaker speaks with conscious use of diction, without the intrusion of slangs, abbreviations and other forms of colloquialism.

To Bussman (1996) the concept of style states that:

"Style is the characteristic use of language in a text. When referring to the speaker, style is more or less the controlled choice of linguistic means, whereas in referring to texts, style is the specific form of language. For the reader or listener, style is the variation (or confirmation) of possible expectations".

Bussman's definition portrays style as a concept that is evident both in spoken and written communication. For this reason, style is a version of language, used in any form of communication, either verbal or nonverbal but stringently conditioned by the context surrounding the conversation.

Level of Stylistic Analysis

The following are the levels of stylistic description. The discussion of the kindergarten teachers' use of language will be done based on these hierarchical levels of language analysis.

Phonetic level: Phonetics is the study of the description of how sounds in human languages are produced. It studies the production, perception and transmission of sounds. Unlike phonology, phonetics is language universal; its study is not specific to particular sounds of a language and it has three main branches: acoustic, auditory and articulatory.

Phonological level: Akmajian, Richard, Ann K. and Harnish (2010) define phonology as "the subfield of linguistics that studies the structure and systematic patterning of sounds in human language". It involves studying a language to determine its distinctive sounds. The core of study in phonology is phoneme. Phoneme is the minimal contrastive segment in a language. Arokoyo (2013) cited in Issa (2017) describes phonemes as "the distinctive sounds in a particular language". Phonology in the realm of stylistics deals with the analysis of sound system.

Morphological level: Hayes (2009) defines morphology as the "branch of linguistics that studies the structure of words". Words are the distinctive meaningful unit in a language that are either composed of one or more morphemes. The basic concept studied in morphology is morpheme. A word may be simple or complex depending on the number of morphemes it encompasses. There are various morphological devices in human languages e.g., affixation, blending, coinage, clipping, reduplication, etc. In stylistic analysis, morphology involves the analysis of how various chunks attached to words can be separated into their various meanings.

Lexico-Syntactic level: This is a compound word which can be split into lexis and syntax. Lexis refers to the words in a language vocabulary. Yusuf (2011) believes that "syntax is the study of the arrangement of words to form sentences". That is, how constituents are structured to form meaningful utterances in a language. To conclude, syntax is the study of how words are ordered or patterned to form meaningful utterances in a language. It studies various type of sentences e.g., simple, complex, compound, compound-complex, declarative, interrogative, imperative and subjunctive sentences.

Graphological level: 'Graph' means character or diagram. Graphology is the study of written characters to explicate some features in printed works. Alabi (2007), defines graphology as a graphological discussion of style among other features which entailed the foregrounding of structures, the full-stop, the colon, the comma, the semi-colon, the question mark, the dash, lower case letters, and bold print, capitalization, small print, spacing, periods and full stops.

Research Findings and Discussion

Data collected in this study were collated, analyzed and interpreted along the res questions and hypotheses.

Phonetic Features

Tempo: This is an acoustic phonetics term which refers to the speed or rate of speaking. Contrasts in the pitch and tempo of utterance are analyzed in the suprasegmental aspects of phonology. Kindergarten teachers often speak as slow as possible in order to allow the little pupils to place boundary between morphemes and words.

Careful speech: This term is used oppositely with rapid speech in the field of linguistics. Careful speech is characterized with clear enunciation of string of sounds in a word. The pitch level of kindergarten teacher's tone during conversation is not harsh; very flexible and soft.

Phonological Features

Kindergarten pupils are expected to have perfected their mastery of phoneme and syllable before proceeding to the level of making meanings out of these suprasegmental components. So this aspect deals with the stylistics usage of sounds in the kindergarten teachers' utterances. **Repetition:** On the spur of teaching the kindergarten pupils, their teachers always make use of repetition, choral drill and read-aloud. Read-aloud is when the teacher utters a letter which begins a word and the children chorus after teacher. The effect of this on kindergarten pedagogy is that it enables the pupils to gain accurate pronunciation of both letters, and words. For example: The kindergarten teacher reads with passion as she points to the black board. Example:

Teacher: A for apple
Pupils: (Repeat) A for apple
Teacher: B for ball
Pupils: B for ball.

De-clusterization/Reduce: Due the on-going development of the kindergarteners' articulatory organs, certain sequence becomes unpronounceable. Their teachers are aware of this and often try to imitate them in order to achieve their pedagogical aim. For instance, whenever the teacher says /sku:l/, the pupils end up pronouncing /su:l/. From the example above, it is evident that the cluster is broken. The term 'reduce' in phonology is used to refer to a process of simplification which affects certain types of sound sequence and it's a childish phenomenon. More examples of these are:

Gloss	Underlying representation	Surface representation
a. Sport	/spɔ:t/	[pɔ:t]
b. Clown	/klaʊn/	[kaʊn]
c. School	/sku:l/	[su:l]

Intonation: This is the falling and rising of tone or pitch level during the production of utterances. Kindergarten teachers make use of exaggerated intonation to give prominence to some parts of the study, to arouse feelings and to make sure that everyone in the class is carried along.

Syllable: A syllable is a unit of pronunciation that coincides with chest pulse. In a less technical term, a syllable is a sequence of sounds that can be pronounced once. The structure of a syllable is divisible into two components: the onset and rhyme in which the latter splits into obligatory core and optional coda. In the kindergarten teachers' utterances, there are no words of more than three syllables and if there are, they are attested only in written books and not in spoken discourse. For example, words such as 'diversification' or 'experiment' are not used when teaching because the kids articulators are still developing and they have few words in their lexicon.

Monosyllabic: These are words that can be segmented into one syllable. Closed class words are typical examples.

- a. Article: a, an, the, some, that, etc.
- b. Conjunction: and, but, so, etc.
- c. Preposition: on, down, up, in, etc.

Disyllabic: These are words made up of two syllables. They are the most common types of word found in kindergarten books and kindergarten teachers' instructions. For example, rabbit, tortoise, table, pencil, ruler, teacher, beside, above, etc., are disyllabic words.

Trisyllabic: These are words whose components are divisible into three parts. The occurrence of trisyllabic words is very low in the kindergarten teachers use of language although there are instances where they are used in the textual form. For examples: butterfly and pre-nursery trisyllabic words.

Phonaesthesia/Onomatopoeia: This term refers to words whose meaning can be predicted from the way they sound. In the kindergarten teachers' use of language, these types of words are typical because the teachers believe they are easily understood by kindergarteners. Examples of these are: the booming of gun, buzzing of bees, mowing of bull, barking of dog, splashing of water, etc.

Morphological Features

Since children go to kindergarten classes as pre-readers with less knowledge on how words are detachable into individual meaningful units, their teachers always select some type of words that are easily understood by this category of people. In this section, we attempt to make characteristics of the structure of words used by kindergarten teachers.

Affixation: This is a process of forming new words by adding certain morphemes to the root in order to derive another meaning or to inflect the current meaning. Affixes attached before the root are called 'prefixes' while the ones attached after the root are called 'suffixes'. Base on this pattern, a word maybe simple or complex depending on its morphemic structure.

Simple word: This refers to a word that has single morphemic structure. That is, when a word stands as a root-word, without other appendages like suffixes or prefixes. Kindergarten teachers do not always select simple words consciously, but as a result of their inevitability in the spoken discourse.

Complex word: This refers to words with more than the root. That is, there are affixes attached either before the root or after. Words with at most, one or two affixes are evident in the styles of kindergarten teachers. The table below shows the evident examples.

Words	Morphemic structure
a. Pre-Nursery	Pre+nursery
b. Books	Book+s
c. Singing	sing+ing
d. Quickly	quick+ly
e. Duckling	duck+ling

Reduplication: It is a morphological process that is attested in nearly all human languages. It occurs when a morpheme is copied in a part or in whole to produce new words. Total and partial are the two types of reduplication. Both total reduplication and partial are used by kindergarten teachers. Examples are: wee wee, bom bom, fast fast, poo poo, etc.

Morphological inflection: The linguistics of kindergarten teachers is not a straitjacket. That is, the elements of concord in their utterances are not rigid. Kindergarten teachers' language use is flexible; its features include little morphological marking in the area of contrast between past and present tense, singular and plural.

Lexico-Syntactic Features

In this section, we present the structural features of various parts of speech that make up the utterances produced by pre-school teachers.

Parts of Speech: Kindergarten teachers primarily focus on content words though there are few cases of functional words appearance. Basically, the lexicons of human language are divided into two: Content and functional. Content words are open-class words. They are nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs while functional words are closed-class words. Words in this group are pronouns, articles, prepositions and conjunctions.

Nouns: They are naming words. They name persons, entities, things or places. There are various types of noun. Evident in this study are abstract and concrete nouns.

Abstract Nouns: These are nouns whose reality exists in our imagination. We only feel them with some of our senses. They cannot be seen or touched. There are few abstract nouns in the kindergarten teachers' use of language because they cannot be represented with images or re described in a concrete form. For example: air, breeze, hunger, happiness, etc.

Concrete Nouns: These are nouns that are tangible and have physical manifestation. We can see, feel and touch them. Concrete nouns are the main types of noun used in the kindergarten pedagogy because of their easy reference both in graphics and in physical world. Examples of these nouns are:

- a. Yusuf broke the chair.
- b. The book is in my bag.

Verbs: These are grammatical categories that express what the subject does in a sentence. Verb in present and present continuous tenses are typical features of kindergarten teachers language use. For example:

- a. I am going home.
- b. We eat food to survive.

Adjectives: Apart from nouns, adjectives have the highest number of occurrence in the kindergarten teachers' use of language. Adjectives are words that enable us to describe nominal entities. They give more information about people, entities, places, and things. For example:

Adjective of Color

- a. a red apple
- b. a white cloth

Adjectives of Size

- a big house
- a small book

Adverbs: They are words that modify verbs and adjectives in a sentence. Adverbs provide information about manner, degree, place, frequency, time, etc. The following sentences illustrate the use of adverb in the kindergarten teachers' language. For example:

- a. The food is very sweet.
- b. He ran quickly.

Prepositions: They are words that express the position or location of nouns and pronouns in sentences. The examples are as follow:

- a. The book is on the table.
- b. Cynthia slept on the mat.

Pronoun: A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun or the entire noun phrase in sentence. Examples of these are:

- a. He is dancing.
- b. I want colour green.

Determiners: These are grammatical categories that determine the definiteness or indefiniteness of nouns in sentences. Example of determiners attested in kindergarten books and utterances are articles, cardinals, numerals, possessives and quantifiers. Examples of this are as follow:

- a. The butterfly is flying.

- b. Maxwell loves his mother.

Sentence: This is a group of linearly ordered words which communicate meaningfully complete information. There are four structural types of sentences: simple, complex, compound, and compound-complex. Compound and compound complex sentences are generally avoided in kindergarten texts because of their intricate structures. Simple and complex sentences are the most common.

Simple sentence: It consists of a subject and a predicate. The subject is the logical performer of an action while the predicate expresses the action performed and its recipient. Examples of this are:

- a. Helen is flying her kite.
b. The ball is in the net.

Complex sentence: It refers to a sentence that consists of one matrix clause and one or more dependent clauses which are conjoined by subordinating conjunctions. For example:

- a. We eat food to survive.
b. Tom is a cat while Jerry is a rat.
c. Nigeria is a country while Africa is a continent.

Graphological Features

During the course of data collection, the physical properties of the kindergarten books were observed with reference to the entries provided in the section B of the earlier mentioned checklist. Since kindergarten books are another means through which kindergarten teachers communicate their ideas to the pupils, it is our duty to state the features of this aspect of language use.

Paragraphing: A paragraph is a well-structured unit of writing; it is usually made up of several sentences dealing with a single subject. Graphologically, a paragraph begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. Stringing several sentences together is a feature of adult utterance because adults have a broadened knowledge of language use but in kindergarten education few sentences make up a paragraph in order to maintain the purpose of communication.

Sizing and Spacing: Unlike in adult's books where size twelve of font is strictly expected to be used, writers of kindergarten books adopt a less strict font size and the usage varies from one subject to another or one author to another. The heading of the page is written in bigger size while the body is written in smaller size. Spacing deals with the gap between lines of written sentences. In kindergarten books, there are lots of wide and white spaces in between lines of sentences so as to make what is written glaring and easily noticed by kindergartners.

Font: Popular among types of font that are usually used in adult texts are 'Arial' and 'Times New Roman'. These are used in children books also, because it is scientifically assumed that these fonts are visible enough to nearly all human beings, including those with minor eyes defect (myopia).

Bold Print: The issue of boldness is not without controversy, some kindergarten authors bold print everything in their book. The headings of every concept of study are in bold print. For example, kindergarten Handwriting books are almost written in bold prints.

Capitalization: In kindergarten texts, the title or topic of study is written in capital letters just as in adult instructive materials. Also, paragraphs are written with capital initial word in order to create emphasis or draw children attentions to the concept of study.

Punctuation: These are conventional marks used in writing to mark or divide phrases from clauses. They help readers to indicate where to pause temporarily, where to exclaim and where to stop. The punctuation convention in kindergarten textbook is the same as the adults' textbooks but it is minimally marked. Devices such as colon, semicolon, apostrophe, hyphen,

ellipsis have minimal appearance unlike devices that are inevitable in every write up such as: exclamation marks, question mark, comma, full stop are used.

Colour: Little kid's books are eye-catching and not always written in one color or ink. Authors use different types of bright colors when printing kindergartener books because it easily lures the pupil's attention to the subject of study, also it allows for emphasis and attractiveness of presentation. Examples of colors that are unavoidably used in the kid's books are: yellow, blue, green, red, black, etc.

Conclusion

The choice of words we use in our daily life is determined by the habitats we find ourselves. That is, there is no point in gainsaying that everyone is born multi-stylistic, we either switch styles intentionally or compulsorily, when there is a break in conversation. Under the umbrella of this topic, "Stylistic features of kindergarten teacher use of language", this study has been able to thoroughly investigate various kinds of styles used in pre-school classes, the structure of the instructors' communication system and how germane they are to the development of promising youth in the nearest future.

Recommendations and Suggestion for Further Studies

In the view of this research, as a linguist and educationist, It is hereby recommend to the government and other educational bodies that: Firstly, adequate provision for the creation of uniform pedagogic materials in teaching little children should be made. Secondly, there is the fact that it is not an easy task, educating little children, so the government should endeavor to promote the interest of pre-school teachers, provide them with free seminar courses and see their profession as indispensable as lecturing in the University. Finally, in the course of this research, it is realized that pre-school education serves as inputs to language acquisition, cultural assimilation, cognitive development and therefore, should not be seen as an option rather, obligatory in the Nigerian educational system.

The language of teaching kindergarteners has some degree of peculiarity and this peculiarity enhances the solid foundational education given to pupils around these age bracket. Therefore, this researcher suggests that if adequate attention is given to kindergarteners' linguistic pedagogy, large body of information that will enhance primary education can be discovered. This research has only delimited its scope to some selected schools in Ilorin-East Local Government area of Kwara State. In light of this, the researcher urges other researchers to carry on further studies on language use of kindergarten teachers.

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