

**EXPLORING CULTURAL RESOURCES AS PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS FOR  
LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A CASE OF TWO PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN  
UGANDA**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

In 2007 Uganda launched a new curriculum called the thematic curriculum that emphasizes the use of home languages as the medium of instruction in lower primary classes and the use cultural resources such as local stories and songs as pedagogical tools to improve literacy instruction. The purpose of this study was to examine how Lugbara cultural resources like stories, songs, and riddles ‘travel’ from community sites into classrooms and how teachers used them to enhance language teaching and learning. The study was informed by the New Literacy Studies (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Street, 1984), which focus on literacy as a situated social practice. This was a qualitative case study that used lesson observations, interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis as the main data sources.

For data analysis the study loosely drew on Hymes’ (1974) SPEAKING Model which views discourse as a series of speech events within a cultural context by describing the **S**etting, the **P**articipants, the **E**nd, the **A**ct sequence, the key, the **I**nstrumentalities, the **N**orms and the **G**enre of the speech event. Findings from the study revealed that cultural resources ‘travel’ from the community settings where they are traditionally performed to new sites in the classrooms as hybrid forms ranging from strong (retaining a large number of key elements from their place of origin) to weak (with limited elements from their place origin). Strong cultural resources have great potential to transform classroom practices and enhance language teaching and learning, whereas weak cultural resources are stripped of their transformative potential. Thus, cultural resources do not have an intrinsic resourcefulness as pedagogical tools. Their resourcefulness depends on the extent to which they retain their key traditional elements

in the course of travelling from the community sites into the new settings. Teachers thus need further training to understand how the cultural resources function as both community and classroom resources to make their best use as pedagogical tools. The study informs the language policy and the new thematic curriculum in Uganda. It brings a much needed non-Western perspective to New Literacy Studies theory by building on literacy as a socio-cultural practice.

## **Preface**

Ethics approval for this study was obtained on March 15, 2010 from the University of British Columbia Behavioral Research Ethics Board within the broader “Global Learning Network” study of which Dr. Maureen Kendrick was the principal investigator. The certificate number is H09-02706. As co-investigator I was responsible for the data collection, analysis and writing of the thesis under the supervision of Dr. Maureen Kendrick and Dr. Margaret Early of the University of British Columbia in the Department of Language and Literacy Department.

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this study to my dear mom Sarah, and is in remembrance of my dear dad Silas Maandebo who gave their all to educate me and taught me that with God all things are possible!!*

# **1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In Uganda, in the last two decades, children's performances in literacy and numeracy have registered an appalling decline. Surveys conducted on the persistent decline in students' performance by Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB, 1999) revealed that in Primary 3, in reading and writing 20% of students passed at a level that was judged as adequate, while among the Primary 6 students it was even much less - at about 15 %. In yet another survey carried out by Education Standards Agency (ESA, 2002), pupils performance in literacy, numeracy and life skills were judged to be very poor. Such decline was attributed to the use of a foreign language as medium of instruction in primary school. Parry (2000) for example argues that one of the reasons why literacy is hard for people in Uganda (and other parts of Africa) to achieve is because it is too often delivered in an alien language, in English for the case of Uganda.

In order to address such concerns there has been a policy shift and the introduction of a new curriculum called the Thematic Curriculum; both emphasize the use of mother tongue as a foundation and cultural resources as pedagogical tools for language and literacy instruction. The role that cultural resources play in the teaching and learning of language and literacy has been recognized by many scholars like Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005), Kwikiriza (2000), Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981), and Serpell, (2001). One of the reasons advanced by African scholars who advocate for the use of indigenous languages and their attendant cultural resources in schools is the need to propagate indigenous cultures for the purpose of retaining African identity. This argument is premised on the understanding that language and culture are so inextricably

linked that you cannot divorce one from the other (Ongarora, 2002). They further contend that since language is a product of culture, the act of emphasizing colonial languages like English and French in African schools is symbolic of the negation of African socio-cultural system and values. Ongarora (2002) asserts that language is culture and culture is language. The advocates of the use of African languages as medium of instruction further argue that by using foreign languages as a medium of instruction African children are being deprived of one of their basic human rights; namely, the right to receive education in their mother tongue or at least in a language already mastered by them at the beginning of their formal education, which effectively compromises their learning achievements.

This study specifically explores the use of Lugbara cultural resources such as local stories, riddles, and poems, for literacy development in two primary schools in North Western Uganda. The rest of this chapter provides: an overview of the policy context; the problem statement; the purpose of the study; the research questions; the justification and significance of the study; the researcher's position statement; and finally an overview of the organization of the thesis.

## **1.2 Policy Context**

In order to understand the place of cultural resources in Ugandan education system we need to examine and place it in the broader language policy and curriculum contexts. The next section discusses the language policy in Uganda.

### **1.2.1 The Language Policy in Uganda**

The Language Policy in Uganda is enshrined in the Government White Paper that was enacted in 1992. The policy is framed around the recognition that children learn with

more ease when taught in their mother tongue. It envisions among other things the rapid achievement of permanent developmental and functional literacy, which is to be achieved through the use of local language as the language of instruction from primary one to primary four (grade one to grade four). Uganda is a multilingual country with over forty different languages and dialects. However, the policy recognizes only the teaching of five area languages in primary schools; Luganda, Luo, Runyakitara, Ateso/Akarimajong and Lugbara. These local languages have become the medium of instruction in the rural areas, with English being taught as a subject from Primary 1 to Primary 3 (grade one to three) and then becoming the medium of instruction from primary five onwards. The two schools included in this study use Lugbara as the medium of instruction in the lower primary levels.

In order to implement the language policy highlighted above, a new curriculum known as the Thematic Curriculum was introduced in 2006 as part of ongoing reforms in education to make education relevant and more beneficial to children. The thematic curriculum is based on three main principles: a rapid development of literacy, numeracy and life skills at lower primary (P1, 2, 3), the treatment of concepts holistically in learning areas arranged under themes familiar to and of immediate meaning and relevance to the learners; and the presentation of all learning activities in local languages familiar as a medium of instruction (National Curriculum Development Center, 2006). English is taught as a subject from Primary 1 to 3. Primary 4 provides a transition from mother tongue as medium of instruction to English while mother tongue is taught as subject. The curriculum also aims to revitalize the use of local cultural resources such as stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, poems, dances, and drama in order

address the inadequacies in the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy, and to help the teachers enrich their methods of teaching in an interesting and meaningful way. A second aim of using the cultural resources is to promote and preserve Uganda's customs and traditions (Ministry of Education, 2008). Some African scholars like Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) contend that the death of any African language is the death of knowledge contained in that language and the weakening of any African language is the weakening of that language's potential for cultural preservation, knowledge production and socioeconomic transformation. The purpose of this research is therefore to investigate how four teachers used Lugbara cultural resources, as recommended by the curriculum, for language instruction in Obizea and Aramua Primary schools and how students responded to the use of the cultural resources as pedagogical tools.

### **1.2.2 Context of Place**

The research was done among the speakers of Lugbara in the Lugbara community who are the ethnic group of people occupying the districts of Arua and Maracha, an area in the northwest of Uganda, in the West Nile region. The West Nile region is bordered in the north by the Republic of Southern Sudan and in the west by Democratic Republic of Congo. Other ethnic groups in the same West Nile region are the Alur in Nebbi District, the Madi in Moyo and Adjumani Districts, the Kakwa in Koboko District, the Aringa in Yumbe District. These groups fall into two discrete language families: the Sudanic speaking group which include the Lugbara and Madi, and the Nilotic group which include the Alur, Jonam, and Kakwa (Leopold, 2005).

Lugbara land is approximately 500 kilometers away from Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. This remote location kept the Lugbara away from foreign influence for

many years. Middleton (1992) confirms that there is little known about them in the “documentary sense” (p. 2). The remote location of the land made it difficult for British colonial government to establish effective administration in the areas for quite a long time. Unlike the Bantu language groups in Southern Uganda, the traditional social units among the Lugbara have historically been small-scale, kinship-based, segmentary societies with clans being led by clan leaders – elders usually referred to as ‘*ba ’wara*’ (big men or distinguished men) or ‘*a ’bi*’ (grandfathers) connoting the most senior, respected, wise, knowledgeable, leaders in the community (Leopold, 2005). The Lugbara elders wield a lot of cultural influence in the local communities. They settle conflicts of various natures ranging from interpersonal disagreements between husbands and wives to fights between different clans. Some elders are believed to have powers to make rain, to curse, and to intercede between the living and the dead (Middleton, 1992). They are generally regarded as the custodians of cultural knowledge and power and as such are highly respected. The elders among other things imparted social and moral values and norms in the young.

While commenting about who the Lugbara are, Middleton (1992) stresses that he found the Lugbara as independent, hardworking, generous, good mannered and warm hearted people who pride themselves a lot on their identity and abilities. He asserts that among the Lugbara the doors were never closed because theft was unheard of and that the commonest sounds heard among them were those of human talk and laughter. It should be noted that these social values Middleton observed were imparted and passed down generations through the various oral cultural resources like stories, riddles, songs, proverbs, sayings, rhymes, tongue twisters, and many others.

The introduction of Christianity and formal education has undermined some of the cultural resources and their values especially in the urban areas but the influence of culture is still very strong among the Lugbara particularly in Terego County where the two research sites are located. Of all the three counties of Arua District, the people of Terego are most known for upholding their oral traditional cultural practices in homes and communities. Teregians, as the people are called, are respected for their love of traditional songs, folktales, riddles, proverbs, and rhymes in different social contexts. For example, during national and regional functions, cultural groups from Terego are frequently invited to perform cultural songs and dances to entertain important guests.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

In the course of doing my work of mentoring and supporting the teachers in the schools, I have observed that the new curriculum especially the use of local language seems to be making positive impacts on children's literacy skills development. A report by Uganda National Examinations Board (2009) on the national assessment of progress in education in the area of numeracy and literacy revealed that performance was better at Primary 3 in comparison to Primary 6. According to the report, the Primary 3 performance was better "perhaps due to the thematic curriculum, which demands that pupils in lower primary be taught in the local language, thus enabling the children to understand and develop interest in learning" ( p. 83).

The curriculum requires the use of the local cultural resources. These resources are available in the communities, but have not been documented among the Ugandan communities and worse still among the Lugbara. This is because Ugandan society is predominantly an oral society (Mushengyezi, 2003). The idea of reading and writing is



viewed as a Western tradition that has recently reached most African countries. The African has been described by Sunkuli and Miruka (1990) not only as a creator and performer but also always a lover of the verbal art and has for centuries passed down to all generations by word of mouth an “organic library” of oral cultural resources like songs, poems, proverbs, riddles and many more oral literary forms. This is confirmed by the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census main report by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2005), which reported that about half of the households in Uganda (49.2%) rely on “word of mouth” for their information while 1% relies on print. Under such conditions where the cultural resources are in their oral forms within communities, the curriculum encourages teachers to ‘collect’ the cultural resources from communities (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2008, p. 2) and draw on them to teach literacy. Kwikiriza (2000) suggests that reading and writing can best be encouraged in Ugandan schools by making children draw on the oral resources of their own cultures and languages. Hill (2000) also argues for the use of these traditional oral materials in reading instruction, not only because such materials are familiar but also because while being simple in form, they are rich in context.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of this study was to examine how Lugbara cultural resources like stories, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, rhymes, poems, songs, dances, and drama “travel” (i.e., how they are resituated) from home and community sites into classrooms for language and literacy development, as emphasized by the Thematic Curriculum. The study also investigated how teachers used the local cultural resources to enhance

language teaching and learning, and how learners responded to the use of these cultural resources during teaching and learning processes within a classroom context.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions:

- 1) How can local cultural resources become pedagogical tools for language teaching and learning in rural primary schools in Uganda?
- 2) How do teachers use these resources in their classrooms?
- 3) How do students respond to the use of these resources in the classroom?

### **1.6 Significance/Justification of the Study**

Uganda has taken a practical step to reform its education system and improve literacy through the introduction of the Thematic Curriculum that emphasizes the use of local language and local cultural resources. While the curriculum's emphasis on the use of local resources is good, it should be appreciated that in Uganda, like in other parts of Africa, these local cultural resources are passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Since the curriculum is relying on the teachers to collect or "transport" these resources from homes to the classroom for the full success of the curriculum, this study will therefore provide insight on how such local cultural resources in predominantly oral societies like Uganda can be "re-sourced" (Stein, 2000) from the local community sites into the classroom to enhance language and literacy teaching and learning.

In terms of implications, I draw on current research to suggest how school-community relationships are important in developing innovative pedagogical tools for effective teaching and learning. In general, the research adds to the body of knowledge

on mother tongue and multilingual education and the opportunities for incorporating home-based multiple literacies in educational contexts. By highlighting how policy is being implemented in classroom contexts, insights from the research also contribute to language policy in Uganda that promotes mother tongue education for children's full enjoyment of their right to education as enshrined in Section 30 of the constitution of Uganda (1995). In addition, the National Curriculum Development Centre may draw on it to make improvements on the newly introduced Thematic Curriculum. Teachers and teacher educators too can draw on the findings of the study to improve their professional practice. It will also be of interest to other researchers who may draw on it for further research.

### **1.7 Researcher Position**

In 1983, when I was just five years old my father always took me along with him to the village school where he taught. He left me in the Primary 1 class where I was supposed to wait for him until he finished his day's work at 4.00pm. Interestingly, as my father narrated to me later, I fitted well in the Primary 1 teacher Yemimah's class. In this class the teacher preferred teaching her class through the use of local cultural resources. Because my own grandmother and father used to tell me stories at home, I quickly joined the class in the storytelling, the riddles, singing local songs and rhymes, and playing local games.

By the end of the year my teacher Yemimah promoted me to Primary 2. In Primary 2 it did not take long before I began to read and write well in Lugbara my mother tongue. I remember clearly at the end of that year, I read the scriptures in church on the day of my baptism and this amazed the whole congregation. My father attributed

my consequent success in school to Yemimah's use of cultural resources and on his deathbed he told me to ensure that I look for and appreciate Yemimah. My interest to research on the use of Lugbara cultural resources and literacy skills development was therefore partly influenced by my own personal experience with the use of cultural resources. Having grown and experienced the Lugbara culture and my knowing of the language in the same culture helped me put things in context as opposed to relying on translation where I would not understand the broader context. As I personally benefited from mother tongue-based multilingual education I strongly believe that cultural resources play a significant role in language and literacy skills development especially in the formative years of a child's education.

I also work in Arua Core Primary Teachers' College (CPTC) as a coordinating centre tutor (CCT) at the College's outreach program where I work in 20 schools with about 200 teachers. One of my roles is to mentor and support the teachers in their professional practice and their implementation of the new curriculum. This professional involvement further inspired me to research on this subject, especially when five years after the implementation of the curriculum no research has been carried out to investigate how the cultural resources were being used in the classroom. I was interested in documenting how the use of Lugbara cultural resources enhances the language and literacy skills development, the challenges teachers face in trying to use Lugbara cultural resources, as well as strategies through which such challenges could be overcome.

Through this role I had already become an established member in the communities of the two schools I worked with; I was placed in a good position and so I was able to gain easy and genuine access to the schools and participants. It also turned

out to be useful that I was working with the teachers both as a researcher and teacher support person and mentor. Potentially this relationship could have compromised and influenced how participants interacted with me; however throughout the research period I related with the teachers as a mentor rather than an inspector and I assured them that my primary interest was to support them. In other words, the purpose of the research was not to evaluate them but to better understand their use of cultural resources, the challenges they face, and the ways the cultural resources can be enhanced. Giving them such assurance and interacting and working with them in a collegial relationship made me build collaborative relationships with the research participants, as a result of which they were able to build trust and confidence in me, and share their experiences freely.

### **1.8 Organization of the Thesis**

The second chapter of the thesis is the literature review. It is divided into five main areas. The first is an overview of the major theories regarding literacy as a socially situated resource, next the literature on home/community and school connections is reviewed, a review of multiliteracies literature follows, next I draw on and review the work of key scholars of multimodality and finally, I end with a justification of the need for a study that considers how Lugbara cultural resources function as ‘placed resources’. The third chapter describes the site and sample selection, the participants, the research methodology and design, including a restatement of the research questions and an outline of the five methods of data collection for the study. It also discusses the method of analysis, the limitations, and ethical considerations and addresses the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. Chapter four presents the major findings of the study, linking them to the three research questions posed. It juxtaposes the cultural resources of songs,

riddles and stories as realized in the context of the community and the context of school.

In the final chapter, I discuss my findings around a set of themes that emerged from an analysis across the lessons and provide implications for theory, pedagogy and research.

## **2. THEORITICAL FRAME AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine relevant theory and research to highlight the potential role cultural resources play as pedagogical tools for literacy instruction. I draw on Street's (1984) notion of viewing literacy through the ideological lens as situated socio-cultural practice and Prinsloo's (2005) notion of "placed resources" to explain the role of local cultural resources. I will also explore the literature that encourages teachers to view children's out of school experiences as potential resources for literacy development in making home-school connections. I then examine the literature that portrays literacy as multiple and multi-layered. Next, I argue that literacy is multimodal and draw on the works of multimodal scholars to make my case. I will discuss the importance of the cultural resources in children's language and literacy learning. Finally, I end with a conclusion that justifies the need for a study on how Lugbara cultural resources function as placed resources.

### **2.2 Literacy as Socially Situated Resource**

For a considerable period of time, the dominant discussion of literacy amongst researchers, practitioners, policymakers and even development partners like UNESCO has been that literacy is a technical set of skills that was defined in terms of print and structural aspects of reading and writing (Street, 1984, 1997; Verhoeven, 1997). Street calls such a traditional definition of literacy the "autonomous model", a construct he uses to label literacy representation as an entirely cognitive, technical, mechanical, universal and neutrally transferable skill across cultures and societies. He explains that this traditional concept of literacy has its roots in Western traditions and contexts influenced

by their own traditions and cultures. In his view this kind of outlook uses literacy to propagate dominance. Consequently those who manage to acquire the skills of reading and writing are labeled as being literate, modern, superior and developed. On the contrary those who have not are labeled as illiterate, backward, uncivilized and underdeveloped.

Street (1984) points out that proponents of the autonomous model (e.g., Goody, 1968, 1997; Olson, 1977) stereotype societies that are characterized by oral traditions of communication, like most African/Ugandan and Lugbara societies, as lacking features and abilities for logical, critical and scientific thinking. It should be pointed out, however, that these societies had their own way of educating their children before the introduction of print through the Christian missionaries (Ssekamwa, 1997). Parents and communities taught children through oral traditions in their different forms of expression like storytelling, proverbs, riddles, tongue twisters, poems, songs and dances (Kwikiriza, 2000). This form of education was done in homesteads as the school, the fireplace as the classroom and everywhere human activity took place as the laboratory (Ssekamwa, 1997). Socio-culturalists contend that the autonomous model is insensitive to different contexts and rather ethnocentric because it focuses a lot upon Western forms of literacy at the expense of local traditions and meanings. Galtung (1980) argues that using the Western theoretical model in all contexts is an act of linguistic imperialism and Blaeser (1993) calls this a new act of colonization. According to him, the Western model is inappropriate for application to indigenous stories because the emphasis on print limits the level of understanding especially where it cannot portray the storyteller's gesture, tone, rhythm and personality.



There has however been a paradigm shift that challenges this notion of literacy as autonomous (Purcell-Gates 2007). This is the socio-cultural perspective that has provided for an alternative and powerful perspective of what literacy is. It offers the ‘ideological’ model that looks at literacy beyond the technical definition but instead looks at literacy as a social practice with literacy activities deeply embedded in social, cultural, political and ideological formations.

According to Street (1984, 1997) literacy should not be viewed as one single unified construct with one meaning. Street thinks we should not even be talking of “literacy” as such but rather we should talk of ‘literacy practices’ in the different cultural contexts. To this end literacy varies from one context to another and the meanings of literacy are not just individual or cognitive but rather meanings are embedded within social institutions and are only knowable as they are practiced by different social-cultural groups. Street thus argues that the perception of literacy should be left open to local variations. As such those who advocate for a socio-cultural perspective like Street (1984, 1997), Agnihotri (1997) and Barton and Hamilton (1998) suggest that we should abandon the notion of literacy as a single, linear, “robotic acquisition and automisation of universal skills” (Luke, 2005) Literacy should now be seen as multiple because different literacies are recognized by different contexts of time and place as more or less legitimate and meanings depend on the context in which the practices are situated. This notion of ‘literacies’ thus privileges the inclusion of other modes of communication and meaning making, which may be as powerful as reading and writing in some societies, to conceptualize the term literacy. In other words according to Street (1997) the definition of literacy associated with reading and writing represents only one form of literacy and it

had excluded and narrowed our understanding of literacy to exclude other equally powerful modes of communication especially in non-western contexts. I find the view of literacies appropriate for Uganda it has had the oral tradition since the pre-colonial times to date (Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990). The use of cultural resources as pedagogical tool is therefore consistent with Street's liberatory definition of literacy.

Street's view of literacy as 'social' focuses on communication and social relations. He stresses that in this view the making of correct punctuation or spelling as emphasized in schooled literacy is not so much the focus. What entails the social view of learning are the social relations within the context, including relations between the facilitator and the learner.

Street (1997) contrasts the two models, autonomous and ideological, and points out their pedagogical implications. He argues that since the ideological model is grounded in real social practices, there will be use of "real" materials in teaching and an emphasis on meaning. For Street (2001) becoming literate is more than acquiring the technical skill of reading the artificial text books/primers, the formalist precision and the "technical pedagogy and skill taxonomy" (Luke, 2005, p.ix) advocated for by the autonomous model, which has led to rote-like learning and lack of critical enquiry and interaction. According to Agnihotri (1997), the local literacies make use of human resources, and the methods and materials are "not imposed from above in hierarchically organized structures but will be generated in close collaboration with the community in question" (p.176). That is why Street (2001), like Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) point that this approach demands a lot from the teachers who must necessarily become ethnographers who are sensitive to their learners' cultures. Luke (2005) stresses that it

requires teachers to get out of the staffroom and away from the teachers' guide to search for materials that are relevant for a particular context.

Prinsloo (2005) emphasizes the point of context as an important factor in the promotion of literacy. This is based on multiple ethnographic research studies on the use of computers in a project entitled the Children's Early Literacy Learning (CELL) project in three provinces in South Africa. From the study it emerged that the assumed potential of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) as a resource was not realized in this context as teachers used their traditional ways of literacy teaching using the computers. This was probably because teachers and students did not encounter computers in their everyday life such that computers only acted as specialist, exotic tools and an index of social status tied up in larger discourses about wealth and prestige. Prinsloo uses the notion of placed resources to illustrate that resources like cultural artifacts do not have an intrinsic value in themselves. Rather, they derive their resourcefulness from the context that they have been inserted in and the associated literacy practices. The resources function differently in different contexts depending on the way they are re-appropriated and re-sourced in the new context.

Prinsloo (2005) draws on Luke (2000) to assert that children's literacy activities outside of school are more frequent and therefore richer and more meaningful than their encounters within the school. He emphasizes the importance of drawing on children's prior funds of knowledge (in the case of my research, the Lubgara cultural resources) for literacy to succeed in schools.

Prinsloo's view is consistent with Pahl and Rowsel's (2005) account where they argue that children's literacy comes from home; the home is an important site where

children learn much of their literacy skills. They recognize that out of school literacy can take place in many diverse sites, like homes, community centers, and street corners and home literacies may not be the same as school literacies, yet these “texts” are re-contextualized through the school. This implies that children go to school with a wealth of knowledge, dispositions, identities, stories, artifacts, memories, and resources – a kind of cultural capital that can be drawn upon for schooled literacy activities. Cultural resources constitute forms of linguistic resource that can be adopted and translated for pedagogical purposes but their effect will depend on the way they have been re-appropriated.

### **2.3 Home-School Connections**

In agreeing with the notion of multiple literacies, Barton and Hamilton (1998) elaborate on the importance of the local literacies in people’s everyday literacy practices in different contexts. Purcell-Gates (2007) cites print literacy, visual literacy, digital literacy and oral literacy as some examples of the multiple literacies. Barton (2001) asserts that the study of literacy in everyday contexts is best viewed as an ideal starting point for any endeavor aimed at promoting reading. He argues that reading is only one of the ways in which people make sense of the world. The teaching of literacy, according to Barton, needs to be pursued in the context of a range of media. Indeed as Barton has rightly argued, in real life most learning about literacy often takes place outside the schools. It starts in the home, before children go to school, and it even continues alongside schooling. Homes are important sites for learning because home practices provide an important context for children’s first exposure to literacy practices. For example, in rural settings in most of Africa and more specifically among the Lugbara,

children learn to communicate through storytelling, anecdotes, riddles, songs, dances. In towns and urban areas, homes expose children to literacy through the newspapers and magazines that parents bring home, and television sets that characterize urban family practices. It is for this reason that, as Barton explains, school learning needs to be located within the broader context of learning in the home and community.

Barton (2001) further asserts that the basis of vernacular literacies by which he means literacy practices in everyday experiences is that they are rooted in and serve everyday purposes. Barton stresses that vernacular literacy practices are more likely to be voluntary and self-generating and not imposed externally because of their relative freedom from formal institutional control. Barton recommends relying on vernacular literacies as pedagogical tools because they are a source of creativity, invention and originality. In his view, vernacular literacies can give rise to new practices – improvised and spontaneous – that embody a different set of values than dominant literacies. He however encourages a greater reflection on the complexities of existing practices as a starting point for promoting literacy. As Barton and Hamilton (1998) stress, schools need to build upon the richness of their learners' prior knowledge not as a deficit but as deep levels of identity and epistemology in such cultural resources, which will help learners adopt the new schooled literacy quickly as they move from known to unknown mental spaces. The home is a distinct domain of life with a richer view of literacy than is often portrayed and defined by schools (Barton & Hamilton, 1998.) According to Barton and Hamilton, for effective language learning to take place, schools should not only concentrate on the lettered, alphabetic literacy and its acquisition but should draw on the rich experience of literacies from homes like storytelling, riddles, songs, and proverbs.

In support of sustaining the vernacular/local literacies, Agnihotri (1997) recognizes that the local literacies include any system of knowledge that may be oral or written and that constitutes reflective behavior, symbolization and a community's identity. For him, systems of local poetry, music, and dance are all part of such literacies. Agnihotri calls upon educators to understand and sustain these local systems of knowledge.

Dike (1995) supports Barton's (2001) views on literacy and argues that literacy as the ability to read and write is a relatively recent phenomenon in many developing countries that have a culture and tradition built on a strong oral literacy. Dike maintains cultural resources are vital to a child's socialization both in their own right and in laying the foundation for literacy. The importance of cultural resources and the enthusiasm of children for them represent both a gap and an opportunity. It becomes necessary for literacy educators to draw on resources of literacy and the spoken language backgrounds of the children to promote literacy in schools. Thus, according to her, mediation of oral traditions and other cultural resources needs to take place in school settings to promote literacy and encourage children in their efforts given the low reading levels and the limited materials for reading in less resourced countries.

Barton (2001) and Dike's views on literacy are also shared by Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) who introduced us to the concept of "funds of knowledge" to emphasize the importance of drawing on children's and parents' lived experiences for classroom instruction. They assert that "people are competent; they have knowledge and their life experiences have given them that knowledge" (p. ix). The notion of funds of knowledge powerfully represents communities in terms of resources and it alters

perceptions of rural poor communities as lacking and views them in terms of their strengths and resources. Gonzalez et al. (2005) encourage educators to be willing to venture beyond the walls of the classroom to learn from students and their respective communities to improve their professional practice. They argue that instruction must be linked to students' lived experiences, the local histories and community contexts. Their perspective is that learning does not just take place "between the ears" (p. ix). Learning is a social process in which learners construct their knowledge as part of the process of engaging with the social world around them.

Serpell (2001) on his part proposes a culturally contextualized conception of literacy development. According to him, becoming literate involves acquiring membership in a community of practice – acquiring a sense of ownership of the cultural meaning system that informs the literate activity of a particular community through participatory appropriation. He asserts that appropriation of a cultural practice involves not only the adoption of resources that were created by earlier generations such as language, but it also involves reflective application of these pre-existing resources to the individual's own personal experiences and the gradual crafting of a personal perspective of the world.

According to Serpell (2001), novices to the activities of literacy learn not only from explicit instruction in technologies of reading and writing but by sharing the process of planning, problem solving, bargaining, and entertainment that are mediated by literacy. He strongly believes that as novices participate in social activities, they come to understand the relevance of text to these cognitive processes and become able to use reading and writing as resources for achieving goals that are more their own than

someone else's. Serpell (2001) stresses the need for teachers to be trained to consider the mediation of intellectual connections between the cultures of their students' homes and the macro-societal culture of educational establishment. He also stresses that it is important for teachers and parents to communicate cooperatively about the developmental goals and needs of children and to co-construct opportunities for the children to appropriate the cultural resources for effective literacy teaching and learning.

Cadzen (2000) explores how teachers and literacy instructors can take cultural factors into account while designing literacy programs and pedagogies. Borrowing from Bernstein (1990), she emphasizes that cultural differences should not be a barrier to education and so educators need to break any barriers to the flow of communication between the school, classroom and the community from whom schools should draw. Based on her Puente research in California in 1995-1996 with marginalized Mexican American students, Cadzen demonstrates the possibility for teachers to create both textual and human bridges through using culturally appropriate materials and local community members who act as mentors for students.

Cadzen (2000) argues that taking cultural background into account takes care of individualizing instruction, recognizing collective identities, and inculcating positive intergroup attitudes. She further argues that every literacy practice in the classroom potentially has the repertoire of discourses and representational resources that are learner's personal accumulation from previous design experiences and those which are now conventionalized in the mainstream society that the teacher introduces into the class. She maintains that learning is enhanced if the learner makes some connection and finds some continuity between the two designs especially in literacy learning. She also



encourages teachers to learn about the cultural background of their students in order to build that continuity. The use of local cultural resources in the context of my study was one way the teachers were creating this continuity in the two designs in the classroom.

Drawing on Heath (1983) and Kotil (1973), Cadzen echoes the need for teachers to be ethnographers to devise informal ways of inventorying students' knowledge as an indispensable beginning whether or not that knowledge fits what would have been the teachers' own pre-professional conceptions about relevance, stressing the importance of placing a public value on students' culture.

In her study on "Empowering Parents of Multicultural Backgrounds", Hensley (2005) examines the widespread perception about parents in Tucson, Arizona as lacking in parenting skills, education and knowledge, and what this implies for the education of their children. The study highlights how her home visits to take ethnographic accounts of potential resources in her students' homes gave her an opportunity to view the students differently and led her to discover the funds of knowledge that parents had. She illustrates the kind of impact such potential resources had on her teaching and learning and how the parents started viewing themselves differently. She was able to, for instance, tap the potential of artists, fashion designers, dramatists, musicians, poets, cooks, and gardeners among the parents for literacy promotion.

In a very moving narrative style, Henley describes how the incidence of bringing her students' parents into the classroom became a turning point for one of the parents who rediscovered himself and was transformed with a new identity as a talented leader of the Parent-Teachers' Association. This author reasons that the act of teachers validating parents' knowledge and skills is critical in motivating parents and children to get

involved in school programs. It makes parents feel important and valued as it breaks the barrier between the professional and home caregiver and develops a permanent teacher home relationship. She suggests ways through which teachers can discover the funds of knowledge of their students and parents. These include visiting homes, listening actively to parents' stories, interviewing parents, field trips and conducting projects with parents. Hence Hensley makes the conclusion that teachers need to value and include parents and families in the formula for educating children, saying it is the only key that unlocks the door for a bright future for children and their parents.

Wright (2004) stresses the need for the decolonization and "Africanization" of literary studies in Africa not through "ghettoization" but through integration and interconnection between African knowledge and non-African (Western) knowledge systems and ways of knowing. He asserts that the students' vast storehouse of non-school knowledge and experience needs to be made relevant in literacy classes. He claims that though orality has remained underutilized in Western cultural studies, it is traditionally the most dominant and widespread form of African expression in homes and communities. He explains that modes like drama should be a bridge between school and community as a means of addressing local and natural problems, a means of promoting and utilizing orature and as a bridge between orality and print literacy.

Wright advocates for a new hybrid form which centers on orality and performance and involves African cultural workers becoming instructor – in essence, a conjunction of orality, performance and written forms taught and studied through observance, participation and reading. He further argues that print is ossified and

anachronistic and limits one to being an observer and passive consumer and the elements that make stories great in oral forms simply cannot be adequately captured in writing.

## **2.4 Multiliteracies**

The New London Group (2000) challenge the notion of viewing language only as a stable system based on rules such as sound-letter correspondences as the only literacy pedagogy. They advocate for the multiliteracies approach that focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. They argue that meaning is made in ways that are multimodal. This means there are many ways through which human beings construct meaning including the visual, audio, and the gestural means and the written linguistic modes of meaning making constitute only part of a range of the processes. Learning processes therefore, they insist, need to recruit as a resource rather than “attempt to ignore and erase the different subjectivities, interests, intentions, commitments and purposes students bring to learning” (p. 18). They take the stand that the role of pedagogy is to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having to leave behind different subjectivities. In their view teachers and managers are seen as designers of teaching and learning environments and not as bosses who should dictate what those they are responsible for should think and do.

The New London Group (2000) use the terminology *available design*, *designing* and the *re-designed* to explain how meaning making is an active and dynamic process with no static rules to be followed. They assert that the learning processes is an act of designing and redesigning where people reproduce and transform a given knowledge, by producing new constructions and representations of reality through their co-engagement in designing. In the process of co-engagement people transform their social relations

with each other and end up transforming themselves and their own identities. They argue that people transform and make meaning by drawing on and rearticulating a new use of old materials as available designs, thus, resulting into a new meaning relevant to their contexts which allows these meaning makers to reconstruct, renegotiate and remake themselves and their identities. Two important concepts explained are hybridity and intertextuality referring to how people create and innovate by articulating new ways and conventions within and between different modes of meaning.

## **2.5 Multimodality**

Like The New London Group (2000), Kress (2000) emphasizes the dislodging of the written language mode from the central position it has held for centuries. He stresses the notion of multimodality as rooted in the scientific facts of ‘biology and physiology’ (pp.184), that human bodies have a wide range of means of engagement with the world through the use of the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch from which people can draw to communicate among themselves in any given cultural context. Kress argues that different cultures select from and choose which modes to develop differently. He thinks therefore it is important to ask what modes a culture uses as their means for the expression of meanings. He for example points that literate Western societies prefer and have insisted for centuries on the sense of hearing sounds of speech and seeing graphic representations of letter sounds in print form. According to Kress other communication modes like music have been peripherally situated. He challenges the prioritization and privileging of the graphic representation of sounds by letters over such forms of representation like music in Western societies. Kress also thinks that imposing modes which are most valued by one culture onto members of another culture makes such

members ‘affectively and cognitively’ at a disadvantage over those whose preferred modes are being used. In other words, using the preferred modes in ones culture makes the members gain affectively and cognitively.

The assumption underlying a multimodal approach to communication and representation is that human beings naturally use many means made available in their cultures for representation because they offer different potentials for representation and communication. Kress makes a strong case for the inclusion of other modes of communication and representation for language and literacy instruction in schools. This, he believes, will make it possible for children to draw on a wider range of meaning making and representation which will in turn facilitate their literacy development.

Pahl and Rowsell (2005), who argue that home is where children learn much of their literacy, focus on how children’s experiences of literacy at home interact with literacy at school. They draw on their research on children’s literacy at home in which they found that children always engage in multimodal ways of text making and that these texts are always taken to school. They use Dyson’s (2003) theory of re-contextualizing texts to explain that in their research they found children’s texts do cross sites into new domains and that at each crossing point an idea is transformed. I am interested in this transformation in my own study as the cultural resources are taken from homes into classroom.

Pahl and Rowsell believe in Moll’s (1992) wealth model and think that the family’s cultural capital can be drawn upon for schooled activities, suggesting that educators for instance should listen to the storytelling patterns of communities. They use the term “syncreticism” to explain that children take on different sociocultural influences

to produce new hybrid forms. They therefore urge educators to incorporate children's out of school texts to understand and build their literacy practices in a classroom setting. In my research, which seeks to find out how local resources aid learning, it will be important to attend to how teachers support the texts that learners bring to the classroom and how these hybrid texts transform the teaching and learning of literacy.

Mushengyezi (2003) examines the significance of cultural modes of communication like storytelling, music, drumming, and dancing within Ugandan socio-cultural context. He asserts that these local indigenous forms of media, which are embedded in the cultural ideology of the people, play a great role in communicating messages in African communities and could be utilized as one of the most respected, trusted and acceptable forms for social transformation including education.

Mushengyezi believes that culture shapes the environment within which a message is encoded/decoded. The indigenous media forms continue to present themselves as effective modes in rural societies where the population is predominantly orate or oral-ate rather than literate. He explains that in these orate societies, songs, drums, and dances are a means to enhance oral messages. He mentions that elders (who are widely viewed as the custodians of knowledge in many African communities) have logistically filled in the gap of the absence of written records of information in these oral societies by keeping information in memory through songs, poetry and other forms of recitation. His view is that the physical factor in dancing, drumming, and singing hugely increases the emotive impact on people's psyche. This is why my research also seeks to find out students' responses to the use of cultural resources in the classroom.

Quoting a former president of Tanzania who remarked that storytelling sessions were the classrooms for imparting wisdom before formal education was introduced in Africa, Mushengyezi (2003) recounts that storytellers are the encyclopedias of society's history, culture and practices that embody moral, religious and ideological instruction. He holds the view that these indigenous forms can still be made more versatile and relevant through cross-fertilization of ideas leading to indigenization, hybridization, borrowing and discarding. To emphasize his point, he concludes with a common African proverb; "the pumpkin in the old homestead should not be uprooted" (p. 117), which I find appropriate because it emphasizes the importance of cultural resources and alludes to the importance of not uprooting cultural resources but ensuring they travel with a strong association to their context of origin from which they draw their vitality and dynamism.

Stein (2000) describes in detail her two-year mini research project with her undergraduate ESL students in South Africa who used video cameras to document home resources used for literacy development. She introduces us to the notion of "re-sourcing resources" by which she means "the taking of invisible, taken for granted resources to a new context of situation to produce new meaning" (p. 336). She believes that when the resources are rearticulated in a new site, then students come to see what they have and what they know in a totally different way. According to Stein, study resources can be re-sourced through multimodal pedagogies, which recognize students as agents in the learning process who are re-makers, transformers, and re-shapers of the representational resources available to them. She asserts that the exploration of conceptual and practical issues in relation to representation and the activity of meaning making in a classroom are central to language and literacy teaching. She further argues that multimodal pedagogies

work in multiple ways for meaning making and they have the potential to incorporate the rich variety of the various representational resources students bring to the classroom.

In line with Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) articulation of social semiotics and multimodality, Stein (2000) makes the case that the process of "knowing" begins with conceptualizing classrooms as semiotic spaces where learners are looked at as agents of their own meaning making and producers of multimodal texts. Stein views learners as active agents, not passive recipients of knowledge. This semiotic work, Stein argues, produces change in both the object being changed and the individual who is the agent of transformation.

In agreement with Kress (2000), Stein (2000) observes that the representational resources are not neutral in all cultures. For socio-cultural and historical reasons, she points out that different communities privilege particular representational resources and foreground others and notes that in most African homes oral, gestural and musical modes of communication are far more preferred and used than print literacy (i.e., reading and writing). Using the cultural resources as pedagogical tools for literacy development would thus be the best way to tap children's lived experiences to make learning exciting for them, which would potentially enhance their participation and performance in class.

This socio-cultural framework emphasizes the need to have insights about ways in which literacies are practiced and valued in a community, insights that should be able to help the design of literacy instruction so that it is more relevant and authentic to that community. Kafero (2000) helps us to understand the literacy practice in Ugandan communities well. He echoes that African/Ugandan societies value and depend on orality for communication more than the written word. Ortiz (1992) calls oral tradition as "the



consciousness of the people” (pp. 26), because it evokes and embodies the whole belief system of a given society. Bukenya, Gachanja & Nandwa (1996), Kwikiriza (2000) and Ssekawma (1997) enlist some forms of oral/cultural expressions and resources that exist in Uganda such as the stories, songs, dances, rhymes, proverbs, sayings, idioms, similes, metaphors, tongue twisters, riddles, puns, and many other traditional games.

Ssekamwa (1997) mentions that to make learning interesting and easy, children in the various Ugandan communities were taught through the use of these various local cultural resources as forms of local literacies. In the same way, Kwikiriza (2000) advises that schools should use indigenous cultural practices in teaching language as a way of bridging the gap between children’s school and home literacies. She argues for example, that oral stories serve a great purpose to teach morals and to keep the history of the community and advises that storytelling should be started right from the lower primary classes supplemented by reading and writing, which in turn can become a rich resource. Archibald (2008) believes that indigenous stories are at the core of cultures as they have the power to make people think, feel and be good human beings because a good story can reach into one’s heart, mind, and “has the power to make our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits work together [and] when we lose a part of ourselves, we lose balance and harmony, and we may feel like coyote with mismatched eyes” (p. 12) According to her we can only said to be having true education when our hearts, minds, and souls work together. As accurately has Archibald articulated, I too believe that every good education should aim at developing the whole person using such local cultural resources as stories as these authors have articulated so well.

Oral storytelling also has the potential to aid independent writing skills (Perry, 2007). In her study of the storytelling tradition among the Sudanese refugees in the USA, Perry (2007) shows that the oral storytelling tradition among the refugees was being transformed within this ethnic group to educate the wider world through written stories about their experiences during the three decade long civil war. Similarly, in Botswana, stories that were previously told orally have now been written down in books in Setswana for children of all levels, from elementary to the university to read (Molosiwa, 2007). Hough, Bahadur, Magar, Yonjan- Tamang (2009) assert that oral histories were an untapped resource in helping to develop language and literacy education. These authors recognize that oral traditions record their histories in ways that are as good if not superior to those in literary ones. They insist that the knowledge and use of a vast variety of mnemonic devices makes oral traditions the world's best means for memorization, especially if the information to be stored is recorded in form of songs, poems and chants. Other ways for storing information that they mention are repetition, dance and body movements and the contextualization for the information to be stored in the form of story. They argue the use of contextualizing objects like beaded or knotted strings that can be seen, felt, heard, or even tasted further enhance memory. Hill (2000) agrees with this observation and adds that such structures already present in oral narratives work well with the teaching of language as this kind of repetition in meaningful contexts helps language learning.

Hough et al. (2009) consider modern education's doctrine that urges learning materials to be graded, simplified and reduced to easily learnable and identifiable chunks of words, to be boring, de-contextualized and serving to dumb out large numbers of

students. They posit that oral stories memorized in a contextualized cyclic rhetorical style helps children remember even complex words and grammatical structures and the context allows for both overall comprehension and gradual acculturation. From this view it is not just senseless rote memory that children do but rather, a deep involvement of the whole person. Hough et al. suggest that Western educational standards and practices including communicative approaches to language instruction and classroom management require critical re-examination and radical restructuring. They encourage educators to use the vast untapped resources (like local resources) in the local communities for methodology and mother tongue medium of instruction to enrich formal education in the classrooms.

The New London Group (2000) refers to this as hybridization of established modes across boundaries of conventions, which according to them, creates new conventions. They argue that people create and innovate more by hybridizing as they draw from different cultural contexts. Gee (1991) adds that without hybridization, school-based, specialist, academic and public sphere forms of language often cause people to abandon their life worlds and in the process minority and poor children are denied the value of their life worlds. The New London Group sees a lot of benefit to linguistic and cultural pluralism.

Kembo-Sure (2002) illustrates the usefulness of hybridization through his use of local riddles to teach discourse analysis to his university students in Kenya. According to him, because of the learners' familiarity with riddles, the students found his discourse analysis class very enjoyable. He asserts that riddles are a language game very rich in figures of speech, allusions and conversation management techniques therefore

constituting a very useful communication tool for young speakers. He contends that riddles sharpen children's cognitive skills of identifying relationships and classifying items, yet in an entertaining manner. He further explains that part of the entertainment was the rewarding of the winner in the riddle who gives the most plausible answer to the question posed. All this develops cognitive and turn-taking patterns of culture bound communicative competencies, which are all important as one learns a language. This entertainment in riddles is traditionally organized in the form of competitions among children in a home or neighborhood to find out who can think fast and use imagination best (Molosiwa, 2007). Kwikiriza (2000) agrees that using riddles develop children's creativity, imagination, and their literary and oral skills.

It is important to note that riddles constitute a genre with a communally constructed "text" and this text, as Kembo-Sure (2002) correctly points out, is so culturally bound that if the riddle is translated into another language its beauty would diminish and the written rendition of the text eliminates interesting prosodic features that enliven the spoken occasion. This makes the oral form a unique one. For the African, riddles constitute a treasure trove of wisdom in refinement.

Other important cultural resources mentioned are the proverbs and wise sayings, which Kwikiriza (2000) believes instill wisdom and help learners to grow into intelligent and wise citizens. Idiomatic expressions make the language rich and uniquely associate one with a certain class of people. The idiomatic expression and proverbs flavor the language such that one would not be a boring speaker. This should be the aim of language teaching and learning so that learners do not lack words and expressions to put forth what they would like to say in a manner that can appeal to both the mind and the

heart. Kwikiriza thinks that to best teach literacy it is better to integrate these different forms of oral tradition especially through drama so that learners use their dramatic sense to write interesting pieces that have the use of such proverbs, riddles, and idiomatic expressions. According to her, drama enhances collaboration among learners. The consistency from a known oral form to a written form of literacy will eventually create independent writers for the country. Besides, she believes like Pahl and Rowsell (2005) that students gain a sense of ownership of the materials that they themselves have developed and they read them with more interest.

Songs and dances are other forms of oral literacy in Uganda. There are particular songs and dances for different occasions like marriage, funerals, circumcision, spirit appeasing, and bear parties (i.e., Kwikiriza, 2000), each with a different type and meaning of songs and dances. Kwikiriza explains that each of these songs acts as an authentic literacy event to teach many different lessons. Perry (2007) points out researchers like Purcell-Gates, Jacobson, and Degener (2004) now acknowledge the effectiveness of including such sorts of authentic text into literacy instruction as well as authentic purposes for reading and writing. Purcell-Gates (2007) considers such non-academic (vernacular literacies) primarily of non-mainstream learners not as deficient but rather as strength and as different from the literacy privileged in school. She adds that validating such community literacies in schools motivates students to learn from language instruction.

In their study of the bottom-up multilingual project, a project that both empowers and is empowered by indigenous systems in Nepal, Hough et al. (2009) share that many of the qualified teachers in the villages did not actually have enough knowledge about

the cultural resources and local languages because the teacher training programs fail to recognize local knowledge. This is reminiscent of schooled literacy, which focuses on certification and credentialing of students without being relevant to the local community (Perry, 2007). Sanyu (2000) expresses the same concerns about teachers trained in the Primary Teachers' Colleges in Uganda where their curriculum does not cater for indigenous languages but rather English.

Besides the qualified teachers having the School Leaving Certificates, Hough et al. (2009) illustrate how the program has recruited and integrated the local indigenous knowledge (IK) holders from the community, who are being invited to schools to fill the knowledge gap through storytelling and creating learning materials while the students and teachers become learners. Such an idea is useful in predominantly oral societies like Uganda where these local resources have not been documented for the teachers.

These authors also suggest that the communities be enabled to make video documentaries of their own progress. They think that this way the communities will realize that their knowledge is deep, valued, and valid and will find the opportunity given to them to develop their materials as empowering. Hough et al. (2009) assert that such activities lead to a critical indigenous pedagogy that is grounded in indigenous epistemologies and values. What they recommend here is in line with the study that Archibald (2008) did on story work among the First Nations people in Canada. In her work she argues that these stories are the backbone of the curriculum. She shows how elders have played various roles like guiding the process of development of the indigenous people's curriculum, verifying all materials before they are published,

visiting schools to tell stories as cultural teachers, attending meetings that focus on documenting cultural knowledge and even verifying teachers' lesson plans.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

From the discourse in the literature reviewed above, there is an overwhelming agreement among scholars that literacy is a social practice that stands to benefit significantly from the use of cultural resources as pedagogical tools. It has also emerged from the literature reviewed that the exclusion of some modes of meaning making and representation over others makes it difficult for schools to draw on some children's cultural background to develop school literacy. A study on the use of Lugbara cultural resources for literacy instruction in primary schools in Uganda is therefore consistent with the many concerns being expressed over the inability of schools to draw on children's lived experiences in homes and communities for pedagogical improvement. In the next chapter, I describe the research methodology that I used for my study including the main methods of data collection and data analysis.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will describe in detail the research sites, the research participants, methods of data collection and analysis, limitations of the study as well as ethical considerations.

#### **3.2 Site and Sample Selection**

Duff (2008) asserts that case selection and sampling are among the most crucial considerations in case study research arguing that the first decision in case selection is what entity will constitute the case. This research is a case study focused on the use of Lugbara cultural resources for language instruction in two rural primary schools in Uganda, Obizea Primary and Aramua Primary under Obizea Coordinating Centre in Bileafe Sub-county, Terego County, Arua District in Northern Uganda. I agree with Dyson and Genishi (2005) that even when educational case studies are located in a classroom, researchers need to pay attention to the physical layout of the schools themselves because it may matter where the classrooms are located. The following is a description of the two sites.

##### **3.2.1 Obizea Primary School Site**

Obizea Primary is a rural government aided school located along Arua Rhino camp Road about 15 km away from Arua Town. It was established by the Anglican Christian Missionaries to teach Christianity and secular knowledge and skills. The school, the church and the coordinating centre share the same compound. Obizea Primary School hosts Obizea Coordinating Center (CC) offices where the researcher works as a Coordinating Centre Tutor (CCT) mentoring teachers and giving continuous



professional development support to over 200 teachers in the 20 primary schools within the Obizea Coordinating Center catchment area. This proximity made access to the school easy for me. The school has got a high student population of 1300 and a staff population of 20, as per the 2010 official pupils' enrollment and staff establishment records. It has four classroom blocks (although the roof of one of the blocks was blown off by wind), and seven classrooms. The Primary 2 and 3 classes that I observed attend lessons in one of the new classrooms with glass windows and metallic doors. According to the teachers' registers in the Primary 2 class there were 84 students and 89 in the Primary 3 class. Both classes were usually so crowded with students who sat at their desks in groups of four or five people per small desk. The classes only had small spaces close to the chalkboard, where the teachers stood while teaching their lessons. In most cases this is where I sat while observing the lessons since there was no space to sit at the back of the class.

### **3.2.2 Aramua Primary School Site**

Aramua Primary School is also a rural government aided school with 1300 students and 18 teachers. It is located only 1km away from Obizea Primary School. Unlike Obizea, it was established by the Roman Catholic Church and shares the same premises with the Aramua Catholic Mission, where the offices of the Parish Priest and Aramua Health Centre run by the nuns at the mission are based. Adjacent to Aramua Primary is Aramua Secondary School. The two schools share the same football ground. The school has four classroom blocks one of which was condemned by the district Engineers years earlier but continued to be used by the Primary 2 class until 2010 when the school built a new classroom block. The school now has nine classrooms but only

eight are being used. The Primary 2 class has been transferred into a fairly new classroom with glass windows; it formerly belonged to the Primary 6 class, which has now moved to the new building. The Primary 1 class has remained in an older classroom that is very dark because the roof is so low. The school now affords an extra space and so the Primary 1 class has been split into two streams. My research focused only on stream 1A. As the Primary 1 teacher explained, in class 1B, they had isolated underage students (age 3-5) whom the parents sent to school because of the free education under the Universal Primary Education. The teacher felt the students would be ready for learning the coming year and so did not agree to my observing their class.

In the study I was interested in examining the use of Lugbara local cultural resources in the teaching of language and literacy in two rural primary schools that were implementing the thematic curriculum that emphasizes the use of cultural resources. I therefore purposively selected Obizea and Aramua primary schools because they were both rural and implementing the curriculum. They were also selected on the basis of their proximity to Obizea Coordinating Centre offices where I worked, thus allowing easy accessibility to the sites. It would have been more difficult for me to travel to some of the schools under my supervision that were over 60 kilometers away from the coordinating centre. With the proximity of these two schools I was able to access the teachers more easily since Aramua Primary is barely one kilometer away from the coordinating centre. I could have chosen to have my research entirely at Obizea Primary School, which shared the same compound with the coordinating centre office, but because the lower primary teachers in Obizea all happened to be female, I chose to include Aramua Primary as a second site in order to include a wider representation of participants.

### **3.3 Research Participants**

Four focal research participants, two male and two female teachers, were included in the study. The participants were selected on grounds that they were all teaching at the lower grades (grades 1-3) and had all been trained in the six-day national training to implement the teaching of the Thematic Curriculum. In Obizea Primary School there were two focal research participants – both female teachers: Karen and Becky. Karen taught English, Oral literature, Creative Performing and Religious Education in Primary 2. Becky taught Literacy Hour, Mathematic and Creative Performing Arts in the Primary 3 class. In Aramua Primary School, there were also two focal research participants (both male): Simon and Ronny. Simon taught Oral Literature, Physical Education and literacy Hour in the Primary 1 class while Ronny taught Literacy Hour, Religious Education and physical Education in the Primary 2 class. Whereas the rest of the learning areas are meant to be taught for 30 minutes, the Literacy Hour is a one-hour lesson where the focus is on teaching reading and writing. It is taught for one hour because the major objective of the Thematic Curriculum is to improve literacy and numeracy. During the Literacy Hour, the teacher is encouraged to make use of the cultural resources like storytelling that cannot be adequately used within short 30-minute classes.

In Uganda in the past years students joined the Primary Teachers' College right after Primary 6, trained for four years and obtained a Grade Two Teaching Certificate. Now teachers join the college after obtaining an ordinary level certificate in Senior 4. At the Primary Teachers' College, she/he trains for two years to qualify for a Grade Three Teaching Certificate. The teacher can then upgrade for another two years minimum to

get a Grade Five Teaching Certificate. Here after she/he can upgrade further to get a first degree. All the teachers in the study hold Grade Three Teaching Certificates with one (Becky) who started as Grade Two and upgraded to Grade Three. Karen has also upgraded from Grade Three to Grade Five. All of them had at least five years of teaching experience.

**Table 1 Participants**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Education level</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Class Level</b>	<b>Cultural Resource</b>
Simon	male	Grade 3	Aramua	Primary 1	Riddle
Ronny	male	Grade 3	Aramua	Primary 2	Story
Karen	female	Grade 3	Obizea	Primary 2	Folk song
Becky	female	Grade 3	Obizea	Primary 3	Story

### **3.4 Research Design and Methodology**

My research was part of a larger collaborative research project with multiple sites in different parts of Uganda and Kenya. The study was designed to be part of a project between professors from the department of Language and Literacy Department (LLED) at the University of British Columbia and researchers and teachers in East Africa. This particular research was a qualitative case study centering on two research sites.

In this study I used five methods of data collection; namely, observations, interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis and collection of artifacts. Geertz (1973) argues that through collecting observations, talking with other people, and collecting artifacts, the case study researchers aim to enter into other people's

‘imaginative universes’ thus allowing researchers to construct interpretations of other people’s interpretations-of others “real worlds” (p. 13).

### **3.4.1 Observations**

According to Chelisa and Preece (2005), qualitative research always requires that the researcher is present in the setting not just to hear what participants say, but to see, smell and touch as they interact with the participants. Such a natural setting provides a wider scope to witness people’s realities as they occur. Thus observation was one of my major sources of information during data collection. The teachers allowed me to enter their classes to be able to personally observe how they used cultural resources in their lessons to teach language and literacy. During these observations, I was particularly interested in observing how the teachers made use of the cultural resources, which cultural resources they used, where and how the cultural resources were obtained, the challenges teachers faced in trying to use the cultural resources, how students responded to the use of cultural resources and the extent to which the use of the cultural resources enhanced or did not enhance the teaching and learning of language. I was able to take field notes to document my observations of the use of the cultural resources in the classrooms. I also audio recorded some of the lessons as they proceeded. Photographs were also taken to contextualize the observed behavior.

**Table 2 Outline of lessons observed.**

<b>Date of lesson</b>	<b>Name of teacher</b>	<b>Class observed</b>	<b>Cultural resource observed</b>
June 10, 2010	Karen	Primary 2	Story
August 4, 2010	Karen	Primary 2	Song
August 5, 2010	Karen	Primary 2	Traditional song/dance
August 6, 2010	Karen	Primary 2	Story
August 6, 2010	Karen	Primary 2	Riddle
June 25, 2010	Becky	Primary 3	Rhymes
July 15, 2010	Becky	Primary 3	Story
August 5, 2010	Becky	Primary 3	Song
August 6, 2010	Becky	Primary 3	Rhyme
August 6, 2010	Becky	Primary 3	Story/ riddle
July 2, 2010	Simon	Primary 1	Riddle
July 16, 2010	Simon	Primary 1	Tongue twisters
July 2, 2010	Ronny	Primary 2	Story
July 9, 2010	Ronny	Primary 2	Rhyme

### **3.4.2 Interviews**

Kvale (1996) defines a qualitative interview as a construction site of knowledge, an *inter-view*, as an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. In my case, I carried out post lesson observation interviews with my participants to complement the data collected and deepen my understanding of what I observed in the classroom. The interviews were conversational, guided by the broad

theme of the use of cultural resources in language and literacy instruction. In these sessions teachers freely evaluated their lessons in which they used cultural resources. After completing a class observation, I occasionally also took time to informally interview the students in the classroom to deepen my understanding of the ways they felt about the use of cultural resources in the classroom. Dyson and Genishi (2005) assert “quick informal conversations right after a child finishes an activity or in an interactional lull can be effective because researcher and child share a common reference point” (p. 77).

### **3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions**

Duff, Wong and Early (2000) argue that focus group interviews reveal in a fairly short time several perspectives or a multi-vocality on an issue. In that spirit, I held a focus group with the four teachers who converged at Obizea Primary School. The idea behind the focus group discussion was to bring the teachers together in one place to share their experiences with one another and corroborate the information obtained from other sources. The focus group discussions also provided opportunity for me to further interrogate issues that were not clear in the first instance and those that could not have featured in our earlier interactions. The discussions were based on semi-structured questions, which generated lively discussions among the research participants. The focus group was useful to make me understand, clarify and gain insight into a range of responses and how people perceive a particular situation (Chilisa & Preece, 2005).

### **3.4.4 Document Analysis**

I reviewed documents on the language policy in Uganda and the Thematic Curriculum documents. The purpose of reviewing these documents was to have a better

understanding of the broad policy context and how the thematic curriculum frames the use of mother tongue and cultural resources as pedagogical tools for language instruction in schools. I also reviewed the teachers' schemes of work and lesson plans to have a better sense of how they plan the use of these cultural resources. Chelisa and Preece (2005) argue that public and official documents are an important source of data that enable the researcher to access the language and words of the informants. They also act as support evidence for other data collected from other sources.

### **3.4.5 Artifacts**

Chilisa and Preece (2005) argue that cultural artifacts bring to life topics and other categories of thought otherwise missing in the literature. In line with this argument I collected written texts/artifacts of the cultural resources like proverbs, stories and tongue twisters collected by the teachers, students and local communities as a representation of the availability of cultural resources in the community. All the texts were hand-written. The texts helped to both triangulate data from other sources and answer some of the research questions. These too yielded very useful sources of information that enhanced the richness of the data collection.

### **3.5 Research Questions**

As stated in the introduction in Chapter 1, the questions that guided my research were:

- 1) How can local cultural resources become pedagogical tools for literacy and language learning in a primary school in rural Uganda?
- 2) How do teachers use the cultural resources in the classroom?
- 3) How do the students respond to the use of the cultural resources?



### 3.6 Data Analysis

Dell Hymes' (1974) **SPEAKING** model of speech analysis provided some general guidance as frame for analyzing the data that helped to answer question one which examined how cultural resources travel from community sites into classrooms to become pedagogical tools for language learning. Hymes's model has been drawn on and applied loosely, in a largely exploratory manner, to gain insights and understandings from the data rather than rigorously applied as an analytical tool for a detailed ethnography of conversation. Hymes' model promotes the analysis of discourse as a series of speech events and speech acts within a cultural context. Hymes advocates for the analysis of a discourse by describing the **S**etting and scene of the speech event, the **P**articipants by which he refers to the speaker and audience, the **E**nd or purpose of the speech event and act, the **A**ct sequence or the order of the event, the **K**ey, the **I**nstrumentalities, the **N**orms and the **G**enre of the speech event and act. The ways in which the cultural resources travelled to the classroom were thus analyzed using the model to find out how well or how problematic the travelling. The model was useful in the identification of the themes with respect to how the cultural resources 'traveled' across contexts, that is, how these various units or elements were changed, adapted or totally culturally 'redesigned' in their movement from one social context to another. The data from the four classroom contexts was analyzed iteratively to address research questions two and three.

Being a Lugbara myself, the data analysis also depended a lot on my own personal and lived experience with the use of cultural resources among the Lugabara. This is because I grew up participating practically in the use of cultural resources in my

family. My grandmother and father were key people who engaged me in performing the cultural resources. I also used member checking with elders and other members in the community who are knowledgeable on the use of the cultural resources in the home context.

In the process of trying to understand the place of cultural resources in the community, I was advised to consult with the chairman of Lugbara Elders' Association. When I approached him to ask how the cultural resources have traditionally been used, he suggested that the best approach would be for him to invite a representative number of his colleague elders who can offer a historical account of the way the resources have traditionally been used among the Lugbara. Although I did not plan for this kind of meeting I was persuaded to arrange it because of the necessity, and indeed when I held this meeting in June at the residence of the chairman with ten elders the meeting yielded useful information not only on the importance of these resources but also how they were performed and the specific purposes for which they were performed. They generously shared with me their own experiences on the use of the cultural resources in regard to the context, the participants, the end/purpose, the act sequence, the key, the instrumentalities, and the norms and genres of using the different cultural resources in the home.

The main unit of analysis in the study was classroom literacy practices that included the use of cultural resources. With respect to the themes that emerged and formed the basis for the discussion in Chapter 5, the following staged, analytical procedures were conducted: (1) reading across the data from the four classroom contexts together with the understandings that were derived from it (and reported in Chapter 4); (2) generating categories and themes; (3) re-testing the emerging themes against the

reported lessons and identifying and selecting exemplary events from the data; (4) looking for exceptions; and (5) writing the chapter. In short, using an iterative process of thematic analysis (Spradley, 1980) emergent, recurring descriptive themes were generated for discussion in the final chapter of the thesis.

### **3.7 Limitations of the Study**

The major limitation to this study is that since I was working with these teachers before and especially in a position of authority as their support supervisor it might have affected the way they conducted their lessons and responded to some of the questions I asked them. However, since I was conscious of this relationship and endeavored to make it clear to them that my aim in the research was not to evaluate or judge how they were teaching but to better understand how cultural resources function in the classroom. Through such professional conversations I held with them I managed to gain their confidence and trust that enabled them to share their experiences with me freely. I therefore believe this limitation did not affect the reliability of the findings of this study. Secondly, while the study addresses the use of cultural resources in rural primary schools among the Lugbara community, the findings may not be exactly true to another society in an urban setting.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

I sought official permission from the school authorities, that is, the head teachers of the two schools Obizea and Aramua. They gave their approval in a written letter that allowed the research to be officially carried out in their schools. I also did a detailed explanation of what the research was about to the teachers, explaining potential benefits

and risks. The participants voluntarily gave both verbal and written consent to participate in the research. The participants' identities were protected by the use of pseudonyms.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness of Inquiry**

Finally, the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study are outlined here. In quantitative studies, measures of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are addressed. Lincoln and Guba (1986) have proposed the construct of 'trustworthiness' as an alternative to such concepts in qualitative studies such as that undertaken here. The credibility of this study rests in the triangulation of the multiple methods used by the researcher, the direct observations and field notes taken by the researcher, the participant interviews and post lesson reflections, and the focus group interviews. I have articulated my subjective position as a teacher-educator and mentor with a Lugbara cultural background with a previously established relationship with the teachers and how this relationship has evolved during the course of the research. I also did a member check with the elders in my community with respect to my understanding of the songs, riddles and stories within Lugbara culture. In this way, I tried to ensure that my subjectivities were articulated, to the best of my abilities, so that the emerging themes could be checked and tested against my subjectivities. My research supervisors also constantly acted as checks in this regard.

### **3.10 Summary**

In summary, this was a qualitative case study that used qualitative data collection techniques. I used lesson observations to get first hand information from the four classrooms. I also used post lesson interviews with the teachers and students to get their own assessment of the use of cultural resources. I used focus group interviews, artifacts

and document analysis to have a better understanding of the Thematic Curriculum. In addition, I made use of my experience with the use of cultural resources as a Lugbara. In the next chapter is the presentation of the data. A juxtaposition of the use of cultural resources in the home/community and school contexts has been done to show the way the cultural resources ‘travelled’ from community to school contexts. In doing so the way the teachers used the cultural resources and how students responded to this use is also presented.

## **4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter includes integrated descriptions of how cultural resources become pedagogical tools in primary classrooms (research question 1), how teachers used these resources and how students responded to them (research questions 2 and 3). I include four salient examples of lessons that I observed in the two primary schools. These lessons are situated along a continuum of having strong to weak parallels to the way cultural resources are used in home/community contexts. The descriptions present a juxtaposition of the way cultural resources were used in the two different contexts of community/home and school to examine how they traveled from their context of origin to the new classroom context. The data in the community/home context are obtained from two main sources: 1) my lived experience as a Lugbara who grew up in the culture of using these cultural resources, and 2) my consultation with elders and cultural leaders who are viewed in the local community as custodians of Lugbara culture. The data in the school context are from my lesson observations in the classrooms where the participating teachers made use of the cultural resources. I begin with the use of a song first in the context of community/home followed by the use of song in a Primary 2 class at Obizea Primary School. I then provide juxtapositions of riddles in a Primary 1 class at Aramua primary school, and lastly a juxtaposition of stories in a Primary 3 class in Obizea primary and in a Primary 2 class at Aramua primary school.

### **4.1 Songs in the Community/Home Context**

The setting and participants for songs depends on the ends or purposes, as well as the type of song. Most songs are taught at an event or occasion like a marriage ceremony or funeral. In the homes songs are taught in the evening when every one has come back

from the day's work. It is usually preferred to be taught under the moonlight so that everyone can have a view of the performance. It is taught in an open arena so as to allow people to feel relaxed and get a free space for performance. At a societal level, songs can also be composed in big intergenerational gatherings like funerals and festivals. It is worth providing an example of the setting of a typical Lugbara dance commonly called *dra ongo*, the death dance, which is usually performed to mourn and celebrate the passing on of a person into the spirit world, which the Lugbara believe is an extension of the physical life on earth.

The teaching and learning of the song may take place in homes at the fireplace and people may sing the songs as and when they get into the mood of singing. However the actual performance of the *dra ongo* dance is usually done at a cleared space outside the main compound because of the large number of people it usually attracts and the extended number of days it lasts. In his book on the Lugbara of Uganda, John Middleton, who did one of the most extensive anthropological studies on the Lugbara, describes a typical scene of what takes place during the dance:

While the dancing was going on, couples ran out of the throngs of watchers to the outskirts of the arena. There the man cried his *cere*<sup>1</sup> call and shot arrows into the bush (or mimicked doing so) and the woman called her *cere*. There was no expected relationship between the pair, except that they were never husband and wife; they might be lineage or other kin, or merely close friends. The expressed

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<sup>1</sup> Middleton (1992) refers to the *cere* as long high pitched falsetto whooping cry. Every adult man and woman had his or her own to which words were fitted. They were traditionally used to call for help and at dances. Men called when coming home drunkenly from beer parties, so that they would be recognized in the dark, and also to show that they mattered. It was a big insult to cry another person's *cere* except at the one occasion when a man's heir cried the dead man's call immediately after his death to announce the tragedy.

purpose of this action was that it showed other lineages that the pair wished to avenge the death... I soon saw the death dances were of great importance. They were the occasions for the greatest coming together of kinsfolk. (p. 77)

Whether in homes or at an occasion, songs are usually taught by an elder in the home or community who knows the history of the song that relates to the occasion at hand. The elder and mostly grandparents or parents may teach a song to members of their family or community for a particular reason. The song usually addresses an issue to do with the members. It may therefore be intended for particular members in the audience or it may be a song that addresses general issues and so its message applies to all members in the audience.

Singing and dancing was an important aspect of social life among the Lugbara (Middleton, 1992). The Lugbara had various types of songs serving different social functions and purposes. Middleton describes his experience of the Lugbara's association with singing and dancing as follows:

On moonlit evenings there were courtship dances that drew people from a wide area, with young men vying to attract unmarried women who danced with glistering skins and with flowers in their hair. By most evening, people were returning home to eat and talk. I recall vividly the wide evening landscape dotted with plumes of smoke from hundreds of cooking fires, the songs of women as they trudged home from washing and fetching water and the tinkling of bells tied around the necks of livestock. (p. 9)

According to Middleton (1992), while the most common type of dance among the Lugbara was the courtship dance, the most elaborate type of dance was the *dra ongo*



(death dance), which attracted a large number of people from afar and was danced according to kinship lineages. Middleton highlights the types and purposes of Lugbara dance thus:

There were many variations but always two main dances: the wailing dance and the leaping dance. Each consisted of several distinct dances with their own songs telling the dead person's life and way of dying. As in most Lugbara songs, there was much bitter and sarcastic allusion to the failings of other lineages, and so there was a good deal of airing grievances and thereby disposing of them. (pp. 76-77)

Middleton (1992) further explains that the death dance was not only a moment of grieving and mourning the dead, it was moment for celebrating the life of the dead person, strengthening relationship, recounting family and clan histories, settling long-standing disputes and echoing the fragility of life on earth.

Others types of dances among the Lugbara include *koro* and *walangaa* (dances of play), which are mainly performed to express happiness, to entertain or to have fun for example after a good harvest or upon a great achievement. The dancing of a song is to release a person of stress or to express happiness physically. Songs are also danced for physical fitness. Some songs are used to coordinate work. Songs are also used for entertainment and amusement, to express feelings about human experience, and to warn, praise, criticize and advise people on different aspects of life.

Thus, the importance of a Lugbara song depends to a large extent on its content and the message it conveys to the audience. So every Lugbara song has a message that the singer wishes to express. When an elder observes misconduct among some members

of the family or community or a misfortune or even something exciting, they talk about it through songs. Songs are the notes for the young to read once they learn the song and it is inscribed in their hearts. Some songs are taught to reflect and remember an event that happened in the past. Songs are also a means of relaxation for the family after a day's hard work. Songs are a great way for families to get together and share family friendship and love, and feel as one united family with strong bonds. Songs are used to develop the talents of the young in a home or community. Thus, the purpose of singing and dancing very much depends on the occasion for which a particular song or dance is performed. These ranged from personal expression of happiness to fulfillment of societal roles and obligations.

As stated earlier, songs are always led by an elder. The elder starts teaching the song by giving a background to the song. He explains who/which community composed the song, when the song was sung, where it was first sung, why it was sung, what occasion it was sung in and the effect it had on the singers that time. The lead singer says the words of the song and the meaning of the song in that context. He explains the instruments used for singing and dancing the song. He then introduces the tune of the song, giving particular emphasis to the words and expressions that matter in the song. The participants learn the tune and words of the song as they sing along. The leader sings on, encouraging people to sing with him using gestures. As the audience's singing improves the leader introduces a beat to the song using one of the instruments that he is at the same time demonstrating to play.

As people become confident and continue singing, the leader hands over the instrument in his hand to another willing person in the audience. At the end the audience

takes up the instruments and they become the players. As the instruments are being played people begin to sing more loudly as excitement and/or morale builds up. People then naturally select and wear the different/appropriate costumes while the women join in with clapping. By this time the excitement will be so much almost all the members of the audience automatically get on their feet dancing to the tune, melody and rhythm, such that there will no longer be an observer as everyone becomes an active participant in the singing, dancing, clapping or drumming. The women will be the ones primarily singing the words or lyrics, ululating while the men will only hum and shout their *cere*. The women clap and play the shakers, which they wear on their feet while the men sway flywhisks in the air to the rhythm of the song.

As the singing and dancing moves towards its climax, people pair or group up within the larger group to have a better feel of the excitement. The pairs and groups dance with all their energy, with high morale, and they can talk and comment about their excitement and the content of the song as they dance. This is to enhance more intimate relationships. The pairs keep running around the larger group to stand out to show their excitement. As people get tired and their energy levels begin to reduce, they leave the arena one by one until the leader remains with another member of the opposite sex to show their best talents and styles for the participants who have withdrawn to become an audience. As the pair ends their dance, the drums continue for a little while and finally stop and the whole audience/participants burst into shouting, ululating and whistling loudly in joy and excitement.

In the cultural context, Lugbara songs are usually taught orally. The person leading the singing asks the rest to repeat the words and sentences after him. Once people

have understood the meaning of the words and sentences and mastered their sequences, the leader then begins to sing them out while the rest of the people follow the tune. As the leader teaches the song he demonstrates the meanings of the words in the song so that the participants can learn the song more easily. In relation to tone, when teaching the song the leader sings more loudly than all the rest and then begins to withdraw to listen to the audience singing. If it is a sad song, right from his explanation of the meaning of the song, he has to use a sad tone and vice versa for a song of joy. At a certain time, people may dance silently, with only instruments playing. Songs are performed with instrumental accompaniment, clapping, stamping of feet to provide a beautiful melody. This accompaniment adds to the beauty in melody to soothe the heart and cause enjoyment. The songs and dances are a form of dramatic performance. The performers usually use dancing costumes, make-up and props to create visual effects (Bukenya, Gachanja & Nandwa, 1996). Typically, women tie leaves and flowers around their waists and heads, while men sway flywhisks, wear horns, carry sticks and spears, bows and arrows and blow whistles. Women use their high-pitched voices to sing out the words or lyrics. They bend while clapping but dance with their heads and breasts high up to show their confidence. On the other hand men hum the tune with their deep voices while jumping straight in the air to show their strength and prominence. People paint their faces with mud and ash for a sad occasion like a funeral while they smear their faces with *iraka* (river soil paint) for happy events like marriages.

The Lugbara songs are usually as short as one line, with a few simple words that allow people to learn and remember them easily. Any complex or unfamiliar words are to be explained before the song is taught. Though the songs usually have simple words,

the meanings may be deeper than the words portray because some of the words may be figurative carrying symbolic meanings. That is why it becomes necessary to explain some of the meanings to the young people who may not easily interpret the deep meanings behind the expressions.

With respect to norms, Lugbara songs, accompanied by a dance, are usually short, sometimes made up of one to ten lines but they can be sung for as long as the audience/participants are tired. Typically, the timing cannot be appropriated in terms of hours as the dancing of one song leads to another. The death songs at funerals can be danced for hours and days and the performance can go on for a whole week. People keep singing and dancing and those who feel tired move aside to rest for a while and join back in. People are allowed to talk, laugh or cry in a sad song as a way of releasing their stress in the song. No one is forced to dance. People are invited to a dance by the excitement of the song. If someone cannot dance or sing well he is not to be told that he is not doing it right. He perfects as he performs. Instead a person who knows better can go to pair up with him to dance with him so that he observes. The instruments are categorized according to gender. Women are not allowed to drum just like men cannot clap. Any other person in the neighborhood or community is always welcome to join the dance if they find it interesting.

After providing some background on the cultural context of songs in the community, the next section turns to an example of a song being used in the context of school, specifically, a Primary 2 classroom.

### **4.2.1 Background**

This first example is taken from observations of lessons taught in Karen's Primary 2 class at Obizea Primary School. According to the teachers' guide to the Thematic Curriculum for Primary 2, the teacher was supposed to be teaching the curricular theme "Accidents" through a traditional folk song. The class had already been working on this theme for the entire week. The teacher, Karen, had earlier on complained to me that she did not know any traditional folk song related to the week's theme. She told me not even her colleagues would be aware of such a song. We then decided that the best thing would be to consult with members of the community who are knowledgeable in such songs. Immediately the teacher had in mind an elder who represents the elders in the Parent-Teachers' Association, Mr. Sulumani Agondua. So, on this day the 64-year-old elder from the community came to teach the theme. The elder/resource person arrived timely at the school. By 8:50 am he was ready to enter class. At 9:30 am the teacher invited him to her Primary 2 class where most of the students ranged in age from 7-9 years.

### **4.2.2 Songs in the School Context**

The Primary 2 classroom setting was well arranged with desks packed with little or no space in between them. The class of more than 70 students sat in order at their desks. However, the presence of the elder in this class generated a lot of excitement and interest in the class. As Mr. Agondua entered the class the students spontaneously stood and began clapping to welcome the elder. Their faces beamed with happiness just at his presence in class and they were curious and expectant to receive knowledge from him. They welcomed him with singing and clapping. Karen introduced the elder to the

children and said he had come to teach them a Lugbara traditional song, related to their theme of the week “Accidents.” The respected elder said he was happy to have been invited to the school and to the Primary 2 class to teach a song. He then turned to the blackboard and wrote a four-line song.

*Enuka di ama aji bani aru.*

*Iyaa mbati yo, a'di ama azako nia?*

*Bani mi ali, Nyio ma imbia mvi Inianga ru.*

*Ma undre angu muzu ti, ma adre bali!*

*(Enuka has embarrassed us among the people.*

*Mother has no single child, who will help us?*

*Let people's eyes rest, the rest of the Nyio people should return to Inianga.*

*I have searched for where to settle in vain, I have surrendered.)*

The elder explained that there were eight different types of Lugbara cultural songs, each with a different purpose, which he listed. He explained the occasions in which each type of song was sung saying; “there were many types of traditional songs among the Lugbara. *Nambi* is usually sung when there is happiness e.g., in marriage ceremonies; *ari ongo* is usually sung when a dangerous animal is killed; *mutre*, *baiko* and *kijio* are sung during sadness e.g., at funerals; *o'dua* – usually sung for fun and as curtain raiser” (Field notes, August 5, 2010). He then told the learners that he was going to teach them the *mutre* type of song, because *mutre* is sung when there is sorrow and sadness caused by different reasons, like accidents and death. He explained the different types of instruments and costumes used for dancing the *mutre* songs. He told the learners

that “the *mutre* types of songs are sung using particular types of instruments i.e., three drums, three *lumute*, *agbalanga*, *a’di*, and *mari*” (Field notes, August 5, 2010). He regretted that some of the instruments like *lumute* were disappearing.

This particular song was about an accident that killed the son of a certain man in the community and so the man sang the song to express his sorrow. The song was about an accident that a certain man’s only child called Euka had, leaving the man without a child. The meaning of the song was so sad and this was to help the learners develop values like empathy and love towards victims of accidents.

After the elder had written the song on the chalkboard and had explained more generally about songs in the community, he told the students about this particular song. He gave the background of the song by saying it was sung by a man in the Nyio community, the very community in which the Obizea Primary School is built, who had lost his son in an accident. He further explained that among the Lugbara no death occurs without a human hand. For Lugbara, when somebody dies they will always look for the cause and they will easily attribute the death to a person in the community whom they suspect does not wish the family well and could have killed or said bad prayers for such an accident to occur. Though the child Euka died in an accident the father does not believe that the accident happened by accident. He believes somebody with an ill heart made him die. That is why he sings, “Let people be happy,” in which case he means the person who made his son die. The song, he explained, was a way for the man to unload his burden of sorrow that had come upon him because of the death of his son. So, the elder saw it necessary to help the students understand all the sarcasm and such deeper meaning of the song if the students were to understand and enjoy it.



After giving this background, the elder read through the song he had written on the chalkboard. He explained key words in the song whose meaning or origin the learners needed to know. For example, he explained that *Iniang* was the *Nyio* community's great, great, great grandfather. He stressed the use of the full stops, commas and exclamation marks in the song. The elder also used a lot of gestures and body language to explain the meaning of the song. Characteristic of the Lugbara, he kept flapping his hand when singing the second line, "mother has no child, who will help us," to show the sorrow and helplessness that the father of the son felt when he lost his son. This made the sadness clearer. He also would look left and right to demonstrate how the father looked around for his son but only realized that his son had passed away. This increased the sympathy for the father in the song. This being a sad song, the tone in which the elder introduced the song was also a sad one. The elder kept stressing it to the learners to sing the song in that sad tone as there was nothing to rejoice over the death of a child.

Mr. Agondua then started teaching the tune by singing out loudly and pointing to the words on the chalkboard. The students listened, read and followed the tune after him. As the students read they could not sing the tune well. The elder kept reminding them not to sing in a linear, "straight" form as if they were reading a book. He told them to sing in a "round" manner. The teacher stepped in at this point to sing the tune with the elder and later to point at the words as the elder led the tune. Once the students sang the tune well the reading became better. He also encouraged the girls to sing loudly and forcefully with their high-pitched voices while the boys hummed the song producing a melody just like in the home setting. The children enjoyed hearing this so much.

The elder, then, introduced the instruments like the drums, the shakers, the *vuvuzellas* (a kind of local trumpet made of animal horns), calabashes and costumes like flywhisks, and the horn of a wild but prestigious animal in Uganda called the “Uganda Kob” to give the song a beat and to teach the playing of the instruments. He demonstrated the way the instruments are played and then handed them to the students who willingly came to the front to play them. The elder handed over the drums to volunteers among the boys who ran to pick them up to play. He gave out all the three drums, the shakers, and asked girls to come in front to clap to the rhythm. These instruments increased the morale in the class. The children picked up the long animal horn to wear, the flywhisks and everyone stood up on their feet dancing. Though women are not supposed to play some instruments, the teacher who was a female played the drums during the demonstration. This was so amusing for the class and they laughed loudly and enthusiastically at this unusual sight.

The classroom no longer had enough space to freely express the excitement. Even the neighboring classes were attracted by the excitement and joined to observe the live dramatic performance through the windows and doors where they also sang and danced. The teacher realized the space was no longer enough when students started pushing the desks behind to create more space for themselves. The teacher then decided to divide the class into two groups of dancers (for as explained previously, dancing naturally accompanies song in Lugbara culture) with the aim that one group would act as the audience while the other performs. But even then the group that was supposed to sit down at the desks to watch the performance could not sit. They kept standing up, dancing on top of their desks.

The excitement had built to a climax. By this time the 30 minute lesson had gone for one hour, and the bell for break had been rung but the students who were absorbed in the dancing either did not hear the bell or they were not interested in going out for break. The children were highly engaged dancing with all their energy, and as they danced the singing became even that much freer and better. Such was the enthusiasm and investment in the lesson that children from the other classes joined at the windows and door to observe and dance to the song. The deputy head teacher also joined in, taking up one of the drums and playing it until the lesson ended. In this instance, he did not chase away the many students standing by the door and windows, as would have been his common practice.

Suddenly the teacher stopped the students and told them it was already past break time and they needed to have a short break before the next lesson. This end was too abrupt for the learners. They grumbled at the teacher because they wanted to dance to the end. The teacher then told them the elder wanted to talk to them. At this they sat down and the elder gave them advice. The elder then told them about the importance of songs in the Lugbara culture saying songs were the notes in which the Lugbara people wrote their feelings of happiness and sadness. The elder also emphasized the need for children to have respect for elders, teachers and all members in the community.

Bearing in mind the three research questions posed in this study, considerations of what can be understood from these cross-context accounts of songs will now be briefly discussed. Drawing loosely on Hymes' SPEAKING model, it is immediately apparent that the settings are very different in the two contexts. In the community, children learn songs in a variety of settings, in the home, at church, and in public spaces

such as festivals, related to their purpose. In all of these community contexts, there is always some space allocated for body movements and dance that are closely intertwined with the singing of a song in Lugbara culture. In the classroom setting, more than seventy children and their desks are tightly packed into a classroom, so that their freedom to move is severely constrained. Initially, there was only a small space directly in front of their desks but as their enthusiasm grew the children transformed the space to accommodate their desires to move authentically to the tune of the song. The presence of the elder, in addition to the teacher and children, strengthened the similarity regarding participants across the contexts.

While songs have many purposes or ends in the community, one is to teach, just as in the school context, so once again an aspect of the cultural resource ‘travelled’ into the classroom as strong, with many of the elements from the point of origin, the home. The rich and varied tones that the elder demonstrated and taught to the students was identical to that used across the community settings in which songs are sung. The norms and genre of the songs were consistent across the contexts, with the exception of the female teacher playing the drums much to the amusement of the children. This represents an example of an instance where a cultural resource traveled to the schoolroom with a large number of its key elements. In this example, the teacher took up the song as a pedagogical tool most effectively because of the strong relationship with the song’s context of origin in the community. In the home/community context such traditional folk songs are taught by elders. She invited the elder in so that the song was employed, as a pedagogical tool in as authentic a manner as possible. She mediated between the elder and the children, only when she saw that it was needed. For example she intervened to

help with pointing of the words of the song on the chalkboard for students to read as the elder taught the tune of the song. The teacher was also willing to adapt her classroom space and her control of it in some considerable measure to fit the new practice. The children responded enthusiastically. They invested in their learning, they paid avid attention, and they participated eagerly even to the point where they wanted to forfeit their break to continue with the lesson. Next, I consider the use of riddles across community and school contexts.

#### **4.3 Riddles in the Community/Home Context**

In Lugbara homesteads, riddles, commonly known as *koyikoyi* are treated as part of the oral performances. Regarding setting and participants, just like storytelling, riddles are mostly performed in the evenings when people have done their daily chores and have converged home. They sit around the fireplace to relax after the hard day's work. In the home context, the setting is very informal. People sit the way they want. For example the family head, who is usually a man, may sit on his *meme koyi* which is a long chair on which you can stretch yourself as if you are lying on a bed but at an elevated angle. Some people sit on stools and logs. Others, especially women sit on mats and the bare floor where if you are not careful you might be stung by small black ants that are fond of hiding in the sand. In order to economize space, young people, particularly the boys, are usually encouraged to squat or kneel on the floor or sit in any way comfortable for them. Although the sitting arrangement is random and each person chooses where they want to sit, in the end the sitting arrangement tends to gravitate towards the fire thus creating a circular pattern around the fire. The atmosphere during these performances is very

informal and people have the freedom to do whatever they want without anyone supervising what is going on.

The elders are involved in telling riddles but not as much as the children. Riddles are looked at as a children's play, which adults introduce to children when they are still quite young. The elders lead the riddle telling session with one or two riddles but in most cases children take more active part. The adults sometimes give such riddles to find out if the children can remember the answers to riddles they paused over in the previous days. They then hand the task over to the children who continue telling the riddles till they are tired. The elders sit and listen to the children's riddles and laugh with the children about the creativity and wit shown.

The riddles are performed competitively where either each person competes in a whole group or people form groups to compete against. Because by its very nature riddles entail asking questions to test other people's intelligence, each person or group tells a riddle with the aim of winning by telling the best and most complicated riddles which the rest will fail to answer. The audience can get the answer to a riddle by remembering the answer, if the riddle is a common one. The riddles may have so many answers. But the teller only accepts the answer that he or she intended to give or the one that is most plausible. Usually the answer should be the most logical for everyone to believe. It is this hidden logic that makes a riddle what it is. If the audience is not convinced by the logic behind the answer that the teller provides, they may put him or her to task to explain. The teller then has to explain logic in the answer.

Regarding ends/goals, the purpose of reciting riddles was to refresh and relax people through laughter after a hard day's work. The amusement comes with uncovering

of a unique logic and complex description of a simple subject. The riddles are to aid memory since they are short and loaded with meaning. They also develop logical thinking. Riddles can also be a source of entertainment for workers in the local community such that the laughter that riddles bring is meant to make stressful, hard labor/work seem lighter. Riddles are meant to develop people's intelligence, wit and reasoning ability through its questioning techniques. Riddles develop confidence and self-esteem as children are free to tell their riddles with no one telling them their answer is wrong. It also provides opportunity to impart tolerance and respect for other people's views as each person listens to their colleagues' answers however implausible and illogical they may be. This makes everyone feel valued as a member of a family and community. Riddles are also used for language development especially the spoken form of the language. Much as they entertain, riddles also teach social values and norms, especially those riddles that describe and make fun of those who misbehave in the society like liars, thieves and gluttons.

Concerning acts, tone and genre, traditionally, a riddle is always started with an opening, *koyi koyi* (Puzzle, puzzle) and the audience answers, *gbiya* (let's eat it). This opening is to alert the audience to draw their attention to the coming riddle. The riddle teller continues saying, *ma afa azi alu* (I have one thing) and the audience answers, *eeh* (eeh/yes). In that way, the performer gets the attention of the audience who must confirm that they are ready to listen to the riddle. The riddle teller then poses his/her riddle to an attentive audience. The audience is given three chances to answer the riddle. If they answer correctly, the riddle teller accepts the answer by saying yes or gesturing and nodding his/her head to show that the answer is correct. If the audience fails to find a

solution to the riddle, then the riddle teller has to be given a prize of his choice. Many children ask for things they would desire to have but cannot practically afford, for example, they can ask for a car, or ask to reach the capital city, or ask to be a king/queen or they ask for something funny that can amuse the audience further. A girl may ask to have some boy for a husband. The teller may accept the prize or demand a better one. The audience keeps mentioning prizes one of which the teller then accepts and gives the solution to the riddle. When the child tells the answer the audience laughs and claps to honor the teller's intelligence and wisdom.

The riddle teller says the opening words in a characteristic high pitch and vigor to alert/awaken the audience. The audience also answers back loudly and forcefully to show that they are awake and ready. This is the time for the audience to sit well and look at the riddle teller directly to show that they are alert. The riddle teller also looks at them directly to show that he/she is in charge and about to challenge them with such a tough question. The teller's posture must give all impression of the hard riddle to come. This posture helps the audience to face the challenge of the riddle. The teller uses tone and gestures to highlight the complication in the riddle. Before telling the answer the teller has to pause in silence for a while to give the audience time to prepare and hear the answer clearly.

Riddles always take the form of question and answer. Simple language is used to describe more complex phenomenon. Exaggeration/hyperbole and irony are commonly used in riddles to amuse the audience and paint a picture of the impossible to complicate the riddle. Riddles are presented metaphorically and it is required that the respondent provides the meaning in literal terms (Sukunli & Miruka, 1990). In most cases the



knot/problem in a riddle is tied in logic. For others to be able to answer a riddle correctly, they must be able to uncover the logic behind it. They must also be a critical thinker who has the ability to make connections so that they can arrive at the correct answer through deduction.

Riddles are generally performed amidst noise and laughter because they are meant to lighten people's spirits and emotions. However, when the riddle teller pauses, there has to be silence to allow everyone to listen to the challenge. People can then talk and discuss/consult among themselves what the answer to the riddle could most likely be. At this point the teller keeps quiet and waits for their answers. Anyone with an answer puts up their hand and the teller chooses among them the person she/he wants to give the answer. Everyone has to listen to the answer being given. If the teller says the answer is wrong, more people will put up their hands to give better answers. The teller gives the answer after three chances. The audience only gets to hear the riddle once. The teller is not allowed to repeat the riddle. This is to teach good listening skills and to enhance their memory.

In the rule guiding the speech event, during riddle telling sessions the audience is free to laugh because of the riddle or the answer as freely as they wish because it is a time for relaxation. The laughter can be so loud that the neighboring families will know there is fun in that home and they are allowed to join to listen and compete in riddle telling. It is not generally allowed for the audience to refute a teller's answer openly. If the audience does not think the solution is plausible then they ask the teller to add some light by explaining the logic in the answer. If the answer is still not understood by the rest, the audience may remain dissatisfied but they accept to move onto the next person.

If the audience easily provides the teller's solution, they simply laugh and the next person takes the stage.

A riddle is a short form of the oral art that contains a puzzle to be solved by a respondent. It may contain a puzzle as short as one word, phrase or statement and this type has a fixed answer usually learnt by memory. There is another type of riddle categorized under epigrams of riddles comprising a series of short puzzles requiring not only memory but also logic and wit to unravel with a final question based on the stated situations. The riddle is made of short statements of not more than three sentences. Unlike stories that take time to narrate, riddles are so short that it gives time for almost everyone to get a chance to talk/recite their riddles. Riddles in the school context are considered next, after providing some background to the example.

#### **4.4.1 Background**

On the occasion of this example, I met the Primary 1 teacher, Simon, to guide him on how to use the cultural resources to teach the themes in the curriculum. Because the teacher felt that he had now understood the concept of using the cultural resources very well, as prescribed by the Thematic Curriculum, he asked me to come back the following day to observe how he uses a riddle to teach the sub-theme of the week "Diseases in our Community."

#### **4.4.2 Riddles in the School Context**

The riddle lesson I observed was at 9:30 in the morning at Aramua Primary School in a Primary 1 classroom. The children had just come from their morning prayers and this was the first lesson of the day. The children sat at their desks to listen and participate in riddle telling, though during the session the children looked physically

uncomfortable behind their desks. They looked full of energy as they told the riddles and so the desks seemed restrictive for them. They tried their best to disengage themselves from the desks. During the session some of the children even tried to stand up and sit on the desks to sit more freely and participate more fully but the teacher who was very conscious of orderliness and discipline (especially at the beginning of the lesson) kept moving to such students and told them to sit properly at their desks. But as the lesson progressed, he gave up forcing children to sit the way he wanted.

Both the teacher and students participated in the riddles either as performers or as the audience. The teacher started the riddle telling session himself. After instructing the students on the goal and purposes of using riddles, which was to learn and think about “Diseases in our community,” the curriculum theme of the week. He told them they were to think out riddles in relation to the theme. He posed one riddle as an example. In his lesson plan, there were three other riddles but once he gave the first example children started to put their hands up, ready to tell their own riddles that they had thought of/composed. The teacher therefore gave them the chance to do it. The speech act and norms were different from those experienced by the children in their homes. For during the first part of the lesson, the teacher kept commenting after each child’s riddle. While he commented, the children did not pay attention to his explanations of the meanings of the riddles. The children were not used to hearing comments and explanations of their riddles. Later in the lesson, the teacher attentively listened to all the children’s riddles and laughed with them without commenting much.

The lesson continued when a child who was ready to tell his riddle put up his hand and was chosen by the teacher to be first to come and tell his riddles. Later, the

children chose the next persons to tell a riddle themselves. Each individual child was competing against the whole class. Each of the students worked to the best of their ability to compose their own and most complicated riddle about common diseases in their community. The children composed the riddles by reflecting on the diseases in their communities and making a description of the signs and symptoms, treatment or effects of the diseases. These riddles were being composed by the children there and then in the classroom and so the children were not simply remembering but exploring in their minds, thinking critically and logically and discussing and reflecting on their observations and experience with the common diseases to get the riddles and the answers. Sometimes their answers were right and sometimes they were wrong.

The teacher's aim was to teach the theme in the curriculum, "Common Diseases in our community." However, by having the learners compose the riddles themselves the children ended up displaying their creativity, critical observation, critical and logical thinking and reasoning as they creatively described the signs and symptoms, treatment and effects of various diseases in their community through riddles.

Regarding the act sequence and genre, the teacher introduced the riddle telling through the usual opening words among the Lugbara society; "*Koyi koyi!*" (Puzzle puzzle) and the students all responded by saying, "*bgiya!*" (Let's eat it). Next in the sequence the teacher said, "*Ma afa azi alu!*" (I have one thing) and the students replied, "*eeh*" (Eeh/yes). This opening was able to make the students gather their attention ready for the teacher's riddle. The teacher then posed his riddle as, *Ma fe imi ruati la fo, i'di dro diri, ma a'du ni ya?* "I make your body itch until you begin to swell, what I am?" (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

He then gave a chance for the learners to answer his riddle. The first child whom he chose gave the correct answer, “*Ayiribe*” (scabies). The children laughed at the fact that the teacher’s riddle had been answered with ease. They might have expected the teacher to pose a more difficult riddle than the one he did. Each and every student who told a riddle followed the same sequence and got the same focused attention that the teacher got.

For those riddle tellers whose riddles the audience failed to provide an answer, they were given prizes before they gave their correct answers. The audience would shout the prize to the riddle teller in a chorus saying, “*Opi, imu, Kampalaa!*” (The king/prize is for you to go to Kampala). All the tellers liked this prize and so they did not ask for other alternative prizes. They then proceeded to give the correct answers. In the following riddle the students failed to provide the correct answer and the riddle teller was very excited to get her prize:

Riddle teller (girl): *Koyo koyi*. (Puzzle, puzzle)

Students: *Lya/bgia* (let’s eat it).

Riddle teller: *Ma imi lo hu ka ma imi na ndo. Ma aduniya?* (I drill a hole into you before I eat you up. What am I?).

Student 1: *O’bu ba alea ri* (Worms in the stomach).

Student 2: *O’bu ba alea ri* (stomach worms).

Student 3: *O’bo ba aleari* (stomach worms).

Riddle teller’s answer: “*O’bu ni, te ba si lo piri i*” (the answer is worms, but it’s the one that makes a hole in the teeth and destroys it.) (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

Each child who came to the front to tell a riddle started the riddle with a high morale and said the opening phrases, *Koyi koyi*, in a high pitch and very loudly and energetically. Some even shouted it while pointing in the air. This not only alerted the listeners but also gave confidence for the one about to tell his riddle. While saying these opening words, the riddle tellers would look directly in the audience's eyes to show a brave face and intimidate those who may tell the answer easily. The audience also responded to each one of the children's introductory openings loudly to show that they were ready for any challenge.

Some children stood akimbo to show their confidence and to give a bodily impression that their riddles were not be easy to answer. Some chose to speak very fast though articulate enough as a way of making hearing their riddle hard. Tone was very much used. Like in the home setting the riddle tellers used all kinds of strategies to confuse the listeners. Some spoke softly, in a low tone to stress the meaning in their riddles, thus confusing the audience further. For instance in the following riddle the girl used a very low tone to stress her point of thinness:

Riddle teller (girl): "*Ma fe mi zo izia, izia ma a'di. Ma aduni?*" (I make you grow so thin, so thin (pointing to herself) like me.

Pupils' answer: "*Silimu, silimu, o'bu*" (HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS, worms).

Riddle teller's answer: "*Di ina azo bani omve abiri ri*" (This is the disease of food called hunger).

Some students also used demonstrations to paint a better picture of their description of the diseases. The teacher himself made the first demonstration that made the children understand the task at hand very easily. They were able to use their own

demonstrations to make their riddles more exciting. For example in the following riddle the child demonstrated the thinness by stretching himself upwards with hands raised up to show that the “growing” he meant is not the healthy one but one caused by a disease that makes people thin. This helped the learners to guess answers as shown below.

Riddle teller (boy): “*Ma amu miru, ma fe mi ondri, mi zo: Ma aduni?*” (I come to you, I make you grow, thin and tall. What am I?)

Pupils’ answers: “*Silimu, malaria, ale azo za.*” (HIV/AIDS, Malaria, stomach pain)

Riddle teller’s answers: “*O’bu*” (stomach worms).

They demonstrated itchy bodies caused by certain diseases by scratching their bodies vigorously; they imitated swollen stomachs using their arms as in the following example:

Riddle teller (boy): “*Ama aa pipi ra, amu arojoa le. Arojoa le ba ga mani aro fe ko si. Te ma amvi vule doa ayiko ayiko. Ma aduni?*” (My stomach got swollen so big. Then I went to the hospital. In the hospital the nurses refused to give me medicine/treatment. But I came back home very happy. What am I?).

Pupils’ answers: None

Riddle teller’s answer: “*Oku ka ki mva osu bo, ipi a ki aca amboo ‘dipi (obi dri si). Iki mu arojoa le ra, ‘ba fe ipini aro ku. Te iki amvi vule ‘doa ayiko ayiko, mbati atru dria imi a’ dini.*” (When women are pregnant, their stomachs become so big like this (He demonstrates a protruding stomach with his hands). They go to the hospital and are not given medicines, but they come back home happily with a

baby like you people”) [He points at the children whom he refers to as babies (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

Another child used similes/comparisons that brought the picture clearer to describe yellow fever by referring and pointing at the children’s yellow school uniform shirts saying:

Riddle teller (boy): “*Ma fi imi mafia. Imi mi fira yiru. Ma imi mifi oja aria yunifomu a’di ni. Ma adu ni?*” (I enter into your eyes, turn them to water. And turn them yellow like Aria Uniform. What am I?).

Pupils’ Answers: “*Mi ndre, adrami, yelo fiva*” (Tears, trachoma, yellow fever). Before telling their answers some children deliberately paused unnecessarily long to cause suspense, thus making the audience more expectant of their answers and also creating admiration for themselves.

The children mostly used simple language. They also made a lot of use of hyperbole/exaggeration, irony, similes and metaphors in order to paint a more complex and amusing picture of the thing they described, for instance, in the riddle about growing thin because of hunger. In this riddle this girl who was very thin indeed, used a simile where she compared the thinness caused by the disease she described with her own body.

Another child built a picture of the disease called ‘*amurua*’ by comparing the swelling that it causes with a drum:

Riddle teller (girl): “*Ma ari si mi ayakoa, ma adi ni?*” (I build a drum around your cheeks, what am I?)

Pupils’ answers: [silence]

Riddle teller’s answer: “Amurua.” (A throat infection that causes a swollen neck)



The riddle session was generally noisy as should always be the case. Children kept laughing and talking about the riddles that were paused. They thought out the answers loudly, they discussed among themselves if some of the answers given by the riddle teller were plausible and demanded explanations from the riddle tellers in some of the cases. For the above riddle that they all failed to answer, they laughed loudly at the riddle teller's answer as suddenly it occurred to them that the girl's explanation about the *amurua* disease was logical. That is why they said to one another loudly, "Yes, she is right, this disease makes the people's cheeks swell so big." Putting their hands on their cheeks to imitate the swelling caused by *amurua* the students told the teacher that the treatment for *amurua* was to blow into a pot while shouting loudly *amurua, amurua*. They laughed loudly as they imitated this. The teacher also laughed saying he had never known that.

The students competed in telling the answers and so they would ask the riddle teller loudly to choose them to tell the answer. The noise though was an organized noise as the learners were guided by the norms in riddle telling. When the riddle teller introduced his riddle and said it out loud, at that moment the children always maintained some silence that allowed them to listen to the riddle. They made noise as they put up their hands and competed to be chosen to tell the answer. The teller gave them three chances to tell the answer. Each time the audience answered the riddle correctly they laughed freely and loudly in excitement. They also clapped thunderously for the riddle teller for his correct answer that the whole audience had failed to come up with. The teacher stood by and allowed them to have fun with the sessions. Indeed, the teacher now stood aside only to call out the next person to tell their riddle. The atmosphere became

increasingly free as the teacher left things in the hands of the students and just listened to the children's riddles instead. Students from the other class also joined to attend by the windows and doors. In some moments they discussed among themselves if the answer was correct or they turned to the teacher to ask if it was correct. A child for example gave the following riddle and answer that the audience felt was unsatisfactory:

Riddle teller: "*Ma imi rua ti fe dro diri, ma aduni ya?*" (I make you have itchy and swollen body, what am I?)

Pupils' answers: "*Silimu, ayiribe, o'bu.*" (HIV/AIDS, scabies, worms)

Riddle tellers' answer: "*Hania.*" (Hernia)

At this answer, I saw pupils talking and discussing among themselves, some asking what a hernia was. And a girl shouted, asking the teacher, "Is it true that a hernia makes the body itch?" The teacher said he did not know, and he advised them to go back home and observe more critically and also ask the nurses when they go to hospital.

Much as the children were asked to tell riddles the challenge was for them to use the curriculum theme of "Diseases in our community" to come up with new riddles. It was not just a matter of remembering the answer to an old riddle. The compositions were original and fresh and so to compose or get the answer right demanded that the participants reason and think critically. All the children's compositions were new and so it was a sign of critical observation and thinking.

Returning again to the research questions, the next section considers, what can be understood from these cross-context accounts of riddles (home/community and school) with respect to the three research questions. Drawing on Dell Hymes' SPEAKING grid, again it is apparent that the settings in the two contexts vary a great deal. In the home,

riddles are told mostly at night after a hard day's labor to refresh people, while in the school it was done in the morning, and moreover it was the first lesson of the day, when children were probably still fresh and energetic. In the home setting, people sit in a free and relaxed manner. In the school the children were initially restricted to sit behind desks with their legs underneath for the purpose of creating order and control. However, as the excitement in the class grew it recreated the seating arrangement when children freed themselves from the restriction of their desks by standing up and sitting on the desks. At first, the teacher was controlling the movement but he eventually yielded as children insisted on creating for themselves freer space on and between the desks. The teacher let go of his control and this brought about a relaxed atmosphere experienced in riddles in the community.

The active involvement of children in riddles as the sole participants was also heightened as the teacher like the elders in the home setting started the riddle session with one riddle and later stood by as an observer and handed control of the whole session over to the children. In the home, riddles are done spontaneously with no particular theme. In the school children were restricted to the curricular theme, "Common diseases in our community." This made the children come up with hybrid riddles where they used the cultural logic to generate riddles using their own ideas and experiences with the diseases in the community.

The act of starting the riddles was exactly the way they are started in the community. The competitive manner of telling riddles also travelled to the classroom with strong parallels to the home/community context. It was this competition that generated passion and excitement among the students as each of them worked to

compose, win and take a prize. The norms guiding the riddle telling session remained just like in the local community setting except for the teacher initially commenting on each riddle. The children, however, resisted this by grumbling, showing their impatience, and running to the front to tell their own riddle. The teacher realized their impatience with him and so stopped commenting. The session then became like in the home with learners fully in charge.

This riddle, thus, represents an instance of cultural resources taking a hybrid form where the teachers helped children learn the curriculum theme/content but through keeping aspects that link the cultural resource to the community setting. The hybrid riddle had many of key cultural elements from the situation of origin that travelled to the class (e.g., the riddle posing pattern) while elements that did not travel took on new forms and transformed the riddle session in school into a community-like setting. The teacher made use of the riddles as a pedagogical tool very well. He had children compose their own riddles using the cultural structure and logic of riddles, yet using the themes/content in the curriculum. He gave one example of such a hybrid riddle and then stood by as an elder might to observe the learners perform. He let go of the traditional order/control of classroom to create the relaxed atmosphere for riddle telling. This free atmosphere made the children consequently act, laugh, and compose freely. They participated fully to the extent that when the lesson came to an end after thirty minutes they, like their counterparts in the Primary 2 classroom, were not ready to go out for break.

I now turn to a consideration of stories in the context of community and school. After the discussion of stories in the local community, examples from stories in two distinct Primary 2 and 3 classrooms will be given.

#### **4.5 Storytelling in the Community/Home Context**

As in most traditional African societies, storytelling has historically been a common practice among the Lugbara. With respect to the settings and participants, in the evenings, after working hard during the day, families converged around the fireplace commonly located in the middle of the compound or the verandah of the main house to listen to stories as part of the daily routine. Young people had the responsibility of ensuring that every evening there was enough logs/firewood, locally known as *acisi* (literarily translated as the teeth of the fire) to make a fire that can last from around 7.00 pm to midnight. As night creeps into the village, and the serenity of twilight descends upon the homesteads, people would begin to light the heaps of firewood around which members of the family would gather to enjoy cultural performances in the form of songs, proverbs, riddles, and stories. The light would put women under pressure to bring out dinner. By 7.00 pm the sweet smell of food would fill the air as the sound of the motor used for pounding cassava flour and the roaring of the grinding stones receded amid spontaneous waves of laughter. The most important stories, for example, stories that teach moral lessons, are reserved for after supper when everyone has a full stomach that can allow them to listen with interest. This was a time for creating laughter and if you really wanted to “break people’s ribs with laughter,” you needed to know the right timing.

Stories told while waiting for supper are usually short ones meant for relaxation and light entertainment. Others are told while people do some light work (for example piling nuts) as they enjoy the warm evening breeze around the fire. However, in the past not all stories were told in the evenings. Some stories were told as an interlude during work that takes a lot of time to complete like construction of a granary, communal digging, weeding and harrowing so as to divert people's attention in order to make them work for longer hours. But the typical storytelling time was in the evening when people have full stomachs.

Storytelling served several purposes in the Lugbara community. Some stories were told to make people relax after working hard in the day. They were told to have fun, to make people forget the worries of the day and focus on the happy side of life. Such stories were filled with humor and they made people laugh in the course of their performance. They helped to put smiles on people's faces and reduce stress. Other stories were told to impart moral lessons and societal values like care, hard work, kindness, generosity, empathy, and sympathy in young people so that children grow up as sensible and responsible community members. The telling of a particular story might be triggered by a queer and unacceptable or anti-social behavior in the home or community. In such a situation the story is meant to correct such behavior. Some stories are told to explain mysteries about the world. In other cases, stories are told to make people reflect on, and encourage and reward those with good behavior. Thus, to a large extent the telling of stories is influenced by what is happening in the community at a particular time.

During the storytelling exercises, people usually sit in a circular form. Children sit with elders, in layers, with children in front and adults mostly behind them. The

storyteller, who can be any member of the family, usually sits anywhere in the circle. The speakers in a story/storytellers are both the parents/elders and the children/young. While telling a story the speaker must always work hard to develop rapport with the listeners through a good start of the story. The speaker keeps eye contact with the audience. He/she takes up the voices of all the characters he is talking about. Storytelling is intergenerational. It is told to the whole audience as the listeners but the lessons derived can be meant for a particular category of the same audience/the addressees. The audience can join in singing a song or make a list of things the teller is explaining. The audience can react or respond when a point is striking to them. Storytelling starts spontaneously once people have gathered together.

Every story has a beginning, middle and end. To begin a story, there is usually a familiar way of introducing the story as, *Adio ndi!* (*A true story!*). The audience responds, *Ndi taya!* (True indeed!) and the narrator continues to say, *Adio mani aluoo!* (I have one story here!), and the audience responds, *Eee* (yes). The storyteller declares what/who the story is about. For example he/she might say my story is about Mr. Hare and Mr. Hyena. In the middle of the story there is always the problem or contradiction that leads to a climax where there is a twist in the events before the story moves towards the end. There is also a common way of ending the story. The storyteller announces that he has ended the story by saying, *A'dio mari asi dia* (This is the end of my story). Or "*Adio nga ama dria hawu*" (My story has flown over my head). The audience laughs or claps when a story has been completed to demonstrate their appreciation of the story and to thank the narrator for a job done well. This end triggers the next activity. There is usually an interactive session back and forth between the adults and the children where

both children and adults ask questions and provide answers to them. The questions are usually an analysis of the characters, why they behaved the way they did, and the audience makes a choice of character and gives reasons for their choice. The protagonists in the story are usually admired because they are presented as having magical/admirable powers, abilities, and character traits.

After a story has been told there is sometimes a discussion of the moral lessons learned from the story, which may be followed by another story or other forms of oral literature. Storytellers tell stories to demonstrate their wit and oral/narrative skills so that people may enjoy the story. There is no one correct way of telling a story. At every opportunity, the storyteller tries to give his/her whole while narrating. The narrator uses various narrative techniques at different intervals to arouse and sustain the audience's interest and imagination. They use persuasive speech through the use of rich descriptive language to talk about the characters and events, rhetorical questions, and body language such as eye contact, facial expressions, lip movements and posturing. The whole body, from the top of the head to the tips of the toes is put into motion to make the story exciting.

The narrator may imitate, demonstrate, or act out the characters' walk, talk, cry, laugh, whisper, voice, or manner of talking to create an effect. The tone the narrator uses will very much depend on the type, occasion and purpose of the story. Characteristically, stories for relaxation need a humorous tone; others need a serious tone, low tone or high tone. The narrator may use whispers, suspense, and hyperbole/exaggeration to make the narration vivid. He/she may decide to introduce a song within the story to make the story



even more exciting. Ordinarily in the home setting no costumes are used but on special occasions or during special events costumes may be used.

Usually simple/pictorial figurative language and expressions are preferred to ordinary everyday language. This is usually informal and casual not formal language. Repetition of words and sentences is used a lot during storytelling in Lugbara. There are no formal rules but social etiquettes that guide the storytelling process. The story is usually interactive, engaging the audience as much as possible through songs, rhetorical questions, and clapping. There is no such thing as complete silence but an integrated story where the audience is allowed to respond, speak back and make comments on an interesting or contradictory point as the story is being narrated. The audience can laugh freely as a natural reaction to anything they might find striking or amusing in the story. But the audience usually naturally conducts itself in a manner that allows the storyteller to lead the story. The manner in which members of the audience respond and conduct themselves also depends a lot on the eloquence and creativity of the storyteller. Interruptions that divert the storyteller like questions are reserved till the end, as it is usually hoped that the story answers most questions that people might have during the telling. People can collaboratively join to sing a song in a story and they automatically know to keep quiet when the storyteller proceeds with the story.

Next, two examples of stories as a pedagogical tool in the classroom are provided, one in a Primary 2 class and the other in a Primary 3 class. They serve to illuminate two different ways that stories might travel across community-school contexts.

#### 4.6 Story in the School Context

In her Primary 3 class at Obizea, I observed teacher Becky's use of storytelling as a pedagogical tool. The room was small; approximately eight meters long and six meters wide, where over 70 students sat at desks well arranged in rows all facing in the direction of the teacher's table that was placed right in front of the class. From this vantage position, the teacher had a good view of the whole class and could keep an eye on every child. It was a crowded room with almost no space left between the rows. It was not easy for the children to move while in class. Becky's lesson was conducted in the morning at 11:00 am, just after the thirty-minute break time during which children are expected to have something to eat. However because most children can not afford to bring any snacks and the school could not provide any feeding for the children, the children spent this time playing games on the school compound. So Becky, the teacher, started this lesson after this break. First she wrote the topic of the day on the blackboard. She then asked a child to read through it and one girl correctly read it as "Children's rights and their basic needs." The teacher thanked her for reading very well. To review the previous lesson on the same topic she asked the children to mention what their rights were and the children did this with ease. They mentioned the right to food, clothing, shelter, and medication. The teacher then introduced the day's lesson by telling the children that they would learn about the basic needs of children through a story. The children were very excited to hear this. They prepared to sit well to listen. The teacher/storyteller stood right in front closest to the first two columns while she told her story. The teacher started the story by saying, "*Adio ndi!*" (A true story), and the children responded, "*ndi taya!*" (True indeed!). The teacher continued with the story as:

My story is about *Ayiko* (Happy) and *Candia* (Miserable). Once upon a time, there was a young boy called Happy. Happy came from a very wealthy family. There were well built houses at Happy's home. At Happy's home, good food was always eaten. They ate a balanced diet. Their compound was very clean. But the boy called Candia (miserable) came from a home where the parents were very poor. Miserable's houses were grass thatched. Miserable slept on a papyrus mat. Miserable had one cloth. Happy was a schoolboy. Miserable was also a schoolboy. Both of them were in Primary 3. When Happy comes to school he wears his uniform, shoes, hangs a school bag along on his back. His bag is full of books; he has two pens, a pencil and a mathematical set. When on his part, Miserable is coming to school, he just picks his only book. He has no pen; he wears torn up clothing. When the teacher then says students should get out their books to write, Miserable starts to look around and beg for a pen from friends. Everybody finishes to write first before Miserable can write his work if at all. Happy sometimes lends Miserable a pen. One day the teacher started a song in the class. I know you know this song (She starts the song and students join in to sing): *Oh mother, I feel so embarrassed, oh mother I feel so embarrassed. My friend says I have torn clothes; the teacher says I have no uniform.* When this song was started and sung in the class, Miserable started to pity himself. (The teacher continued). Miserable felt so miserable. Why not, he truly had torn clothes; he had no uniform, no books. When the mathematics teacher comes in, Miserable writes his work in the book and hands it for marking. Then when the teacher of English comes in [here, the teacher reduces her tone and speaks with

sympathy], Miserable then has no book. He does not write. When the teacher wants to punish Miserable, he says his book is for marking. What to do, the teacher just sympathises with him and leaves him. If his book is brought back by the mathematics teacher, then Miserable might write. Miserable was so miserable indeed! Here my story ends.

The participants in this storytelling event were the teacher (Becky) was the storyteller and her Primary 3 students were the audience for her story. Because she stood at a central position in front of the class, she was able to have a good view of her audience who sat in front of her and kept good eye contact with them. The teacher used her story to teach the sub-theme in the curriculum “Basic needs of children.” The addressees in her story were those very poor children in her class, who just like the protagonist in the story, did not have even the very basic needs like food, clothing, a good house, books and pens. Almost every child in this class was being addressed because almost all them lacked the basic needs described by the teacher. Nearly all of them had no shoes on their feet. Many had worn out clothes. The teacher used real names to talk about the characters in her story. In fact some of the children in this very class were called by the names *Candia* and *Ayiko*.

In her story Becky contrasted the one character called *Ayiko* (Happy) who had all the basic needs with the other character called *Candia* (Miserable) who came from a very poor home where he was not given his basic needs including books and pens. Through the contrast she aimed at highlighting the plight and misery of those children who do not have such basic needs. The ends or goal of her storytelling was that she wanted the children to understand that those who have all the basic needs perform better at school as

they are well facilitated and those who do not have the basic necessities will always suffer, feel miserable, suffer low esteem and end up failing in school and life. Her intention was to have the children reflect on their plight, feel sorry for themselves, and work or ask their parents to provide them with the basic needs. Such a lesson in a story was contrary to the home stories that always aimed at encouraging the lowly.

The teacher used a story because she was directed by the curriculum to teach the theme “basic needs of children.” The teacher followed the known structure/formula for starting stories. She introduced the story in the usual “salutatory” formula among the Lugbara (Sunkuli & Miruka, 1990), that is, *A'dio ndi!* (A true story!). The children automatically responded by saying, *Ndi taya!* (True indeed!). As is usually the order, she then declared that her story was about *Ayiko* and *Candia* as the main characters. She also used the opening formula, “Once upon a time” to begin the story. Her story started logically with one character *Ayiko* presented as happy and successful while the other character *Candia* was shown as a poor and miserable boy. The plot systematically moved to show the climax of *Candia*'s suffering where he could not write in class because he did not even have a mere pen, and he went home to his mother to share how embarrassed he was at school because his teacher and friends keep telling him he has torn clothes and no uniform. The story however ends without a twist in the events. *Candia* remains as miserable and unsuccessful and *Ayiko* as happy and successful.

The teacher used detailed description, as is in the home setting, to compare and contrast the two characters in the story. She described *Candia* as having one book, one tattered shirt, sleeping on a papyrus mat, having small grass thatched huts, no good food, no pen and no school uniform, while *Ayiko* has many clothes, a school uniform, a school

bag full of books, Her use of non-verbal expressions and body language were also appropriate and consistent with the way stories are performed at home. She too used her tone, facial expressions, lip movements, and posture to arouse and sustain the listeners' interest from the beginning to the end. She made sad faces, burying her cheeks in her hands to demonstrate *Candia's* misery, which would cause the children to become really sad. She would a make a happy face with broad smiles, walk proudly with both arms swaying in the air to demonstrate how happy *Ayiko* feels, which would attract cynical laughter from the children. The teacher had no costumes but she perfectly mobilized the children's imagination to her story through her use of body language to show *Candia* as thin and miserable and *Ayiko* as rich, fat and happy.

Though she narrated her story while standing in front of the learners, she used the space in front to move from one child to another to dramatize *Candia's* misery. She moved to those seated in front for example extending her hand towards them to beg in the manner that a beggar on the streets does, to imitate/demonstrate how *Candia* always begged for a pen from students in the class. The students' sympathy for the character could be seen as she acted out this begging.

The teacher also made appropriate use of her tone. Whenever she talked about *Ayiko* the teacher used a jovial, rising and forceful tone to signal *Ayiko's* power, happiness, and ability. On the other hand when she talked about *Candia*, her tone was sad, low, weak, and faint to show *Candia's* misery, incapability, weakness, and powerlessness. All these aroused the learners' emotions that made them sympathize with *Candia*.

Turning to a consideration of the norms, as it usually is in the home setting, the teacher used the informal, day-to-day, simple, and ordinary language of storytelling. This informal conversational language not only made the listeners keen but also made them understand and therefore engage in discussions actively. She mixed the use of both past tense and present tense. She even used very simple and familiar names of the children to talk about the characters. The names of the characters were also symbolic. For example in Lugbara, the name Ayiko means ‘happy’ while the name Candia means ‘miserable’. This symbolic naming made the children have the real picture of happiness and misery as they listened to the story thus providing the children an opportunity to understand the story better. The teacher made use of repetition nicely. She repeated the name *Candia* for over eight times in the story, placing special emphasis on the word *Candi*, which means misery, so as to make the children feel the pain of his misery. She repeated sentences and words a lot to make the children make connections and remember the words, story and content and especially feel the pain of misery.

Becky did not emphasize rules of silence during her storytelling. When she introduced her story using the opening formulas the students immediately tuned to listen. This does not mean that the teacher was a solo speaker during the storytelling. The students were involved and listened actively. They kept whispering and adding some lines/words to the list of things that *Ayiko* had or *Candia* did not have. However, they made their contributions in a way that did not distract the teacher.

The teacher used a song as one socially acceptable norm to involve the audience. The song formed part of the story and echoed the meaning of the story in a powerful way. In her story she gave cues for the learners to join in the singing when she said, “I

know you know this song” (Field notes, July 15, 2010). The song was indeed familiar to the learners. They all joined and sang the song with the teacher in a sad tone. The song heightened the learners’ sympathy for *Candia*.

The children listened attentively as the teacher narrated this story. The teacher announced the end of her story saying, ‘Here my story ends.’ This familiar ending naturally called upon the students to clap for her loudly. The closing was followed by the interaction/discussion where the teacher asked the children oral questions first about the moral lessons learnt from the story and then about the characters in the story. The students actively engaged in the discussions and were able to make their choice of character.

Tension then came about the teacher’s second question where she asked the children, “Who of these two boys will perform better in class and succeed in school?” While the teacher’s protagonist was *Ayiko*, the students identified with *Candia*. In their analysis of the characters, the teacher and students viewed the story from different angles. The students contested the teacher’s presentation of *Ayiko* as being more successful, and supported *Candia* with such arguments as, “*Candia* will perform better because he will aim high to get his own things in future. *Candia* will aim at ending the poverty in their home and so will read hard to succeed. *Ayiko* will say he already has enough things in their home and so there is no need to read hard. *Ayiko* will be too proud in school about the things they have so pride will kill him. *Ayiko* will be too proud to sit in class. *Ayiko* will think that since they have the nice houses, they are his and so there is no need to study hard. *Ayiko* will think he is above the rest; that he is above sea level” (Field notes, July 15, 2010). The students’ answer to this question was surprising to the



teacher because it diverted from her topic. The teacher however did not reject their answer. Instead she changed her own line of argument and agreed to take the learners' interpretation of character. She agreed with their argument and said, "In our story you said that even if you do not have these things you can still pass well, so you can become better in future. I think...if you come to school in rags, can't you hear what a teacher says?" (Field notes, July 15, 2010).

The teacher Becky also slowly negotiated with the learners to mention the most basic necessities for children by saying "The only unfortunate thing with having nothing is that you can easily become a thief" (Field notes July 2010). So she asked them to mention the things they really needed as children especially if they did not want to become thieves as they prepare to go to boarding secondary schools. Here the children then mentioned basic needs such as *naka, aro yinifomu buku, kalamu seti, begi, jijima, beseni sanduku mufaliso sende* (food, medicine, uniform, book, pen, set, bag, shoes, basin, suit case, mattress, money) (Field notes, July 15, 2010).

The teacher then wrote these words down on the chalkboard and later asked the learners to read them. They read through so fast and so well that the teacher showed appreciation for their fast and accurate reading. After this long discussion the teacher asked the students to sing a song called *Driwala* (Freedom/Rights). The children also sang the song with a lot of interest. She then asked them to spell the words that they had written on the chalkboard and later on to copy them in their exercise books and write more about things that they thought were basic to children.

Clearly, the setting and the participants were different in the classroom and the home. Although different in content, Becky's narrative was an effective mixture of the

ends, acts, tone, norms and genre of the traditional folktale and the curriculum content to create a new hybrid story. The story she narrated was her own creation but in many respects it drew very closely on the traditional communicative aspects of Lugbara storytelling as a speech event. The story ‘travelled’ with the traditional Lugbara way of opening and closing stories. The Lugbara open their stories as, *A’dio ndi!* (A true story!), and they close it as, *A’di mari asi dia!* (Here ends my story!). Becky’s hybrid story also adopted the traditional aspect of Lugbara folktales juxtaposing two contrasting participants/characters. The use of a song to enrich the narrative, audience involvement, and enhance comprehension also travelled with relatively strong parallels to the context of community origin to the classroom. The teacher used a song about the character in the story, which the learners joined to sing. The song and detailed description of the characters heightened the learners’ sympathy for Candia. She related the story to the curriculum context. Unlike in the traditional context, where stories are randomly narrated to echo social realities broadly, the teacher used the story to teach specific curriculum content centering on “basic needs of children.” The use of the real names was rather unusual yet it played an important role of helping the children easily identify with the issues highlighted in the story. In Lugbara folktales, animal characters are usually used to symbolize human actions and characters but in the hybrid story the teacher created she used real human names. The teacher’s manner of narrating the story, her use of real names and the curriculum theme made the children interpret the names and relate the story to their personal experience and made it possible for them to contest the teacher’s interpretation of “children’s basic needs” passionately. Although the story was not an original Lugbara folktale, but a hybrid story with the content and theme, and some

aspects of the context of the school curriculum and classroom, the teacher composed and performed it in such a way that this cultural resource – the story, travelled with many components of a Lugbara cultural story. This made the students respond and attend to the narration with keen interest and they participated in the discussions enthusiastically.

#### **4.7 Story in School Context**

A second example of storytelling in a classroom context is taken from Ronny's Primary 2 class at Aramua Primary School. I observed as Ronny entered his classroom and wrote the theme of the day on the chalkboard, "Things we make in the community." He then started the lesson with a song:

*Angara pi enya be*

*Aparaka alenia yo*

*Ayia ni di za awa si*

*Ata ni di za nya si*

*Anzi ni di su nya si*

(Salted fish and bread

There is no joke with them

The mother keeps dividing the meat

The father keeps eating away the meat

The children keep eating the soup)

The children sang the song with a lot of excitement, shouting at the top of their voices. Shortly the teacher stopped the singing and thanked the students for singing very well, but I heard a child shout, 'let's sing again.' The teacher gave him a long gaze and told him, "Listen to what the teacher has to say." He then told the class that they were

continuing with the theme “Things that we make.” Before he asked a question I saw the children putting up their hands. The teacher told them, “It is not a matter of telling me the answer; instead if a person knows the answer he should go and write it on the blackboard.” A handful of children rushed to the chalkboard to write words from the previous lesson that the teacher loudly said out: *kobi, acalaka, birisi...* The children were able to write these words well except the word *uluke*, which was not spelled correctly. The teacher asked another child to go and correct it.

He then told the class that the second thing he was going to do was to narrate for them a story about “Things we make.” I was a little surprised by this because according to the teacher’s guide he was supposed to be teaching a rhyme, not a story.

The teacher asked the children to listen to the story carefully as he started it: “Who created you?” There was some silence before a girl shouted “Adam.” The learners laughed at this. Another child then said, “God.” The teacher then continued with his story, which he interrupted several times to discipline children in the classroom:

“God created every thing on earth. Among these things he gave us wisdom. (*Now look at that boy who is busy doing his own things! Stop it.*) God gave wisdom to each person to use and make different things with our hands. Because God gave us a lot of wisdom, (*Pointing at some children who were talking, “I said you must listen. Remember I am going to ask questions here after”*). God gave us wisdom, this wisdom he gave us; we can use it to make different things that we usually use in the kitchen. (*Listen to me well*). Things that we use in the kitchen like mingling sticks... (*And look at that girl. She is doing her own things*). Like mingling sticks, a motor for pounding cassava flour, local stoves for cooking. With that wisdom

we make mats for sitting. (*Ojaku is doing his own things. When I start asking questions, you will see. You better watch out*). With the wisdom we make pots. Not only that we make baskets using ropes. Using sisal fiber, for example, what is this? (*The teacher shows children the sisal rope he brought as instructional material*) and pupils answer in chorus ‘sisal fiber’). We need to thank God for this wisdom he has given us. I have finished my story” (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

After the story the teacher asked children oral questions about things we make that he had mentioned in the story. He asked some to go and write the names of the “things we make” in words on the blackboard. The children rushed to the chalkboard to write the words *kobi, atuluku, jiki, birisi, amvu, ndri baka, uluke, mbeguba*. They wrote the words correctly except the word “*mbeguba*” The teacher sounded out the syllables that make up the word ‘mbe-gu-ba’ and asked the children to pronounce it after him. He then wrote the correct form and asked them to copy it in their books.

Ronny then introduced Literacy II (the writing part of the lesson) and wrote the pattern for ‘u’ in the air. He asked some children to go and write it on the chalkboard. By this time there was so much noise in the class. The teacher decided to calm the class with another song that the children quickly joined to sing:

*Osu we osu ni enya nya were,  
angagra we angara ni enya  
nya dopi.*

(With beans you eat so little

Oh the Salted fish, with the salted fish

You eat this big).

The teacher stopped the song after they sang only one round and started teaching again the writing of the letters *j i u*. He asked them to write it in the air and on the chalkboard in the lines that he had drawn. He emphasized the writing of ascenders, descenders and normal letters. He then introduced the words with the letters taught: *jiki*, *uluke*. Students also came to print the words on the chalkboard. To end the lesson he gave them a gap filling/spelling exercise of names of the things made at home. The teacher circulated round the class marking the students' work. The lesson ended just on time and children happily rushed out for their lunch break.

In many ways, Ronny's story was stripped of all the cultural elements of story telling in the home/community context. The story was the teacher's own creation/composition related to the curriculum theme, "Things we make." The story neither conformed to the setting, participants, end, act sequence, key, norms, nor the genre. Unlike the home context where stories are mostly told in the evening around the fireplace after the evening meal, Ronny's story was told in a fully packed classroom of 156 students, from 12:00 pm and promptly ended at 1:00pm. By the time the lesson ended, the hungry children were ready and eager to go out for the lunch break. When the bell rang, they quickly dashed out of the classroom. The story unusually started with a question, *Adi o'ba ama ni?* ('Who created us?'), instead of the traditional opening, *A'dio ndi!* (A true story!). The story had no moral lesson discussed, as would be the purpose in community storytelling. It had no participants, not even real or animal characters. It simply mentions God as having given people wisdom. The teacher did not display any familiar key or manner of narration. The story was culturally stripped of the components

that give it life. Consequently the story did not resonate well with the children who continued to make noise and distract the teacher instead of participating and listening to his narration. Their disorder also annoyed the teacher who threatened the students verbally and non-verbally. However, the teacher introduced a song during the lesson and children participated actively in singing the song. He basically introduced the song to gather the students' attention. Unfortunately he made them sing the song for too short a time and so immediately after stopping the song the children started their noise making again. The teacher concentrated most of his efforts on teaching the learners the writing of words on the chalkboard and in their exercise books.

The examples of the stories illustrated above were both meant to be hybrid stories. They were composed by the teachers in relation to the theme in the curriculum. The two stories however differed in the way they travelled. The first story that Becky composed in relation to the theme "children's basic needs" travelled with a great number of elements from their situation of origin (the home) and was well embedded with most of the cultural aspects of Lugbara storytelling. The students listened and actively participated in its narration and discussion. The second story that Ronny composed to teach the curriculum theme "Things we make" was essentially stripped of its cultural aspects including the setting, participants, end, key/tone/manner of narration, the norms, and even the genre. The result was that learners were not interested in the story. They could not listen to the teacher's narration or discussion.

In the next chapter, I discuss the major themes that emerged in relation to the ways cultural resources 'travelled,' how teachers used these resources in the classroom and the students varied responses into further detail.

## **5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, I discuss the major outcomes of the use of cultural resources as pedagogical tools based on the data presented in Chapters Four and make links to literature discussed in Chapter Two, which leads me to draw conclusions and make recommendations for a way forward on the use of cultural resources in primary school contexts in Uganda. The major themes discussed in this chapter are as follows:

Heightened levels of attention and engagement, improved relationships, ownership, agency, identity and investment, creativity and innovation, multimodality versus inattention and disengagement, poor relationships, literacy from skill-based perspective, traditional teacher fronted pedagogy.

### **5.2 Heightened Levels of Attention and Engagement**

Most important of all, the study has revealed that when cultural resources ‘travel’ are relocated as culturally embedded/strong, they have the potential to increase children’s attention and engagement in class. For example, as it is the tradition among the Lugbara, when an elder is speaking and teaching, children are expected to pay maximum attention and listen attentively. I saw this happening when the elder started speaking when he came into Primary 2 class in Obizea to teach a song. The level of the children’s attention was very high. They listened with a remarkable keenness to everything the elder said. As an elder, he knows the context in which each type of Lugbara song is sung, the message it conveys and the way the singing is performed. And as is always the sequence for teaching a song, the elder took a long time to explain to the children that the Lugbara have eight different types of traditional songs. In the post lesson interview that I held



with the class teacher and the elder, the class teacher Karen reported that there was an increased student interest with the coming of the elder:

Doris: Was there anything you liked particularly about the resource person?

Karen: It makes the children more attentive and active in the class. They were also more interested. (Post lesson interview, August 5, 2010).

After the children had learnt to sing the song that the elder taught, he then introduced the instruments, the costumes and the dance. At this point when the learners saw the drums, the excitement was eminent. The introduction of the musical instruments completely changed the atmosphere. There was an increase in the tempo and morale in class. The students were excited to see these multimodal objects like drums they play with at home being brought into the classroom. The elder demonstrated how the drum and the shakers are played and the clapping and the dancing. When he asked for some of the children to come to the front of the class to try playing the drums, children rushed in and picked up the drums, shakers, the flute, the costumes and they wore the flywhisks, and long horns of the Uganda kob. Immediately, the class was immersed in the students' rhythmic singing, drumming, clapping and dancing, ululating, whistling, humming, shouting and laughing. It was an amazing scene.

By this time the children had taken over and assumed full ownership of the lesson. The students became active participants. They were no longer on the receiving end but actively participated in the performance. They were deeply engaged in the lesson. The use of the song greatly facilitated active participation and engagement that culminated into a sense of ownership by the learners of their learning process.

The same engagement was true in Becky's lesson. In this lesson the teacher had composed her own story related to the theme in the curriculum, "The basic needs of children." While using the content in the curriculum the teacher used the traditional structures of a story to make up the story. She followed the traditional act sequence of starting a story among the Lugbara as: "*A'dio ndi!*" (A true story!), and the children responded as: "*Ndi taya!*" ("True indeed!") "*Adio mani do...*" ("This story of mine is about..."). She then started narrating the story that she had composed about Ayiko (Happy) and Candia (Miserable). She ended the story logically by saying, "*Adio mari de do i 'dia*" (Here my story ends).

It was important that the teacher used these known formulas for opening and closing the storytelling. The opening/introduction is a logical frame that the audience is already aware of because it is used in the home setting. The salutatory formulas that she used provided the first opportunity for her to draw the attention and interest of her students to get engaged. With its characteristic rising pitch as in a question, the salutatory opening provided a way for the storyteller to ask for "permission" as "a matter of convention" to which the students agreed to enter into an "agreement" with her when they responded "*ndi taya!*" (Sukunli & Miruka, 1990, p.114). This was why throughout the narration process, the students listened really keenly and attentively to the narrator and their level of concentration was such that nothing in the physical world, like the noise that I kept hearing from the next class, could distract them. Bukenya, Gachanja and Nandwa describe the delight an audience experiences with the use of these simple well-known formulas for opening and closing the folktales. They assert that:

The well-known formula for starting a folktale carries the audience to an ancient world; it takes them to a past, gently prepares the audience for the wonder and fantasy that take place in the world of the folktale...the opening formulas invite the audience to a world of adventure, fantasy, fear and wonder...the opening formula, in a simple manner, sets the story in motion and prepares the audience for the wonder and delight that we encounter in a folktale... and the closing formulas, in a pleasant manner, call the audience to come back from the magic, dream and fantasy into the ordinary world, (1996, pp. 68-69)

The teacher also used the closing formula to logically end the story. That was why the students clapped spontaneously for the teacher after she completed the story for they were aware the story had come to an end. It was clear as the students listened, though physically they were in the classroom, in their minds they were in the world of the tale. They listened so attentively to the story and the amazing impact was seen when they engaged in discussions. Such a resource that can arrest an audience's attention is ideal for the lower primary children who have short concentration spans and potentially get distracted easily.

It should be emphasised the students did not listen passively. Throughout the narration they participated and joined in singing the song that the teacher introduced about the character Candia. Herskovits (1961) observes that audience participation in such performances is a deeply rooted cultural thing saying, "African conventions of politeness do not approve of permitting anyone to talk into a void of silence" (p. 454). The teacher's use of song made the storytelling so engaging and interactive (Glasgow, 2007).

Being entertaining, stories are also didactic and these moral lessons are an inevitable part of the storytelling process (Dike, 1995). Inevitably, when the teacher asked the students oral questions to allow them to discuss the moral lessons they had learnt from the story, I saw all the children's hands rise up in big numbers and many of them even stood up to put up their hands so that the teacher could see their hands better. Some even put up both hands to increase their chances of being seen and selected by the teacher. The children actively participated in telling these moral lessons. They gave such lessons they learnt from the story as: "we should always give to the poor", "do not laugh at the poor", "children should be given books", and "children need more than one dress" (Field notes July 15, 2010).

The real engagement was seen when the teacher gave the children an opportunity to interact, discuss and share their own thoughts and interpretations of the story's character and moral lessons from them. In answering the question, the lesson took the form of a dialogue. In the story, the teacher had presented Ayiko as being happy and having better prospects because he had all the basic needs and therefore in a better position to succeed, while Candia was presented as miserable and poor because he did not have any of the basic needs including food, clothing, shelter, and scholastic materials and was consequently a failure. The students were observed being highly engaged in discussing which of these two characters would succeed in school. They did not simply listen to the teacher's meaning and interpretation because it was not consistent with what they believed or their lived experience. The lesson became very interactive, discursive and dialogic (Bahktin, 1981). It was no longer the teacher pumping knowledge into the learners' heads. They did not just tell the teacher an answer but went ahead to back their

arguments with logical reasoning. The students chorused that Candia would perform better in school than Ayiko. They made arguments such as; “Candia will perform better because he will aim high to get his own things in future. Candia will aim at ending the poverty in their home and so will read hard to succeed. Ayiko will say he already has enough things in their home and so there is no need to read hard. Ayiko will be too proud in school about the things they have so pride will kill him. Ayiko will be too proud to sit in class. Ayiko will think that since they have the nice houses, they are his and so there is no need to study hard. Ayiko will think he is above the rest; that he is above sea level” (Field notes, July 15, 2010). The learners were highly engaged in making these arguments because these are arguments derived from the students’ lived experiences of the misery of lack and how despite it they have seen such poor people progressing better in school and life. The students also live within a culture where you sympathize with the disadvantaged. As Middleton (1992) points out, the Lugbara never laugh at the poor instead the poor will be adopted and when he grows up he is given animals to pay bride price for his wife so that he begins a good family of his own. Thirdly, the students know the Lugbara concept of naming where every name has a meaning, for a example, many Lugbara names symbolise specific circumstances under which a child is born (Leopald, 2005). The name Candia is given when a boy child was born in a miserable condition or in hardship and poverty. Such a name however is never a mark that determines the child’s future. On the contrary, those whose names have negative connotations always work hard to reconstruct the meaning of their names to live a better life. The name thus becomes a motivation or incentive for hard work and progress. Lastly the students know that a sad story must always have a happy ending at least where the victim is innocently

being treated badly. In the tradition of storytelling the weak must always be sympathised with.

Having a simplistic way to interpret the African names, conditions of living and ways of achieving success, the teacher had her own logic in the story for saying Ayiko would perform better as he was well facilitated. But for the students who have had their own local experience, poverty or lack is not necessarily an obstacle or an end, but can be an incentive for hard work and success. Thus these lived experiences are more authentic to them. The children view their local realities different from the way the teacher views and there was no way the teacher could impose her view of “basic needs” in which she looked at materialism and success as synonymous. Meaning was no longer with the teacher. The students were engaged in explaining to the teacher their reasons. What was observed was that the teacher instead became a learner listening to the students’ own content and explanation. This is consistent with the Freirean (1970) notion of dialogism that challenges the banking concept of education, which assumes that children know nothing and their role is to receive information. Freire posits that useful education is that in which there are no fixed positions where someone knows and the other does not know. Instead the roles change with each one as a learner and teacher. He thinks education should take this form of dialogue where meaning is negotiated not imposed. The use of a story in this lesson seemed to have had that liberatory effect on the children. Through it power structures were altered. It gave the children an opportunity to speak up and to express themselves. The students got empowered to talk and challenge the teacher’s views about “children’s basic needs” to a point that the teacher was able to listen, recognize and appreciate the children’s reasoning and argument. It can therefore be seen

that the hybrid story gave children an opportunity for engagement because it has a component that the students are already familiar with and so could actively participate in, as there is something they already know in the content. Much as the teacher composed and aimed to present Candia as miserable and at risk of failing in school and life to discuss her curriculum content, the students recomposed and redesigned the meaning to present Candia as capable of achieving, thus producing a new construction of the teacher's content and meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). The teacher at last had to negotiate meaning with them when she said, "In our story you said that even if you do not have these things you can still pass well, so you can become better in future. I think...if you come to school in rags, can't you hear what a teacher says?" (Field notes, July 15, 2010).

From the teacher's comment she was already changing her former idea of presenting Candia as miserable and failing. She is acknowledging with the learners that even the poor can pass well. The teacher became more accommodating and democratic, and engaged in dialogue with the students. The New London Group (2000) point out that through co-engagement in designing, people transform social relations and transform themselves. From this episode there is clear evidence of shifts in relations and identity. Even when the teacher, Becky, wanted to engage the children in reading and writing the key words, she did not simply impose but negotiated for these words. She was also aware that the Lugbara detest stealing and so Becky used that knowledge and told the students, "The only unfortunate thing with having nothing is that you can easily become a thief" (Field notes July 2010). In order to make them accept her point of view she had to appeal to their values in the culture. They therefore made a list of their basic needs and the

teacher captured about twelve key words like food, books, pens etc. which the students read and spelled with a lot of interest. This was only done after reaching a negotiated meaning of what it takes to succeed in education.

With the use of riddles, the same improved engagement could also be seen. By its very structure, riddles as a genre are naturally engaging, interactive and conversational between the riddle teller and the audience that participates in making the guesses (Kembo-Sure, 2002; Quick, 2007). Bukenya, Gachanja, and Nandwa (1996) discuss the cultural outline of how a riddle works. They assert that a riddle has six parts beginning with the challenge. The way the riddle is started traditionally is that the performer begins with that characteristic rising tone and it ends in suspense. The riddle teller begins the challenge by saying “*koyi koyi!* (puzzle, puzzle) and the audience accepts it by saying, ‘*lya*’ which means eat it or we accept it. Among the Lugbara the riddle teller repeats, “*ma afa azi alu-o!*” (“I have my one thing!”), and the audience responds by saying, “*eeh*”(Yes). The effect of these openings was that they drew the audience’s attention, made them alert and ready to engage in the task, and mobilized and aroused their interest and curiosity to the challenge. That dialogic interaction through the repetition makes the riddle very participatory. Thus in the whole process of riddling, there is a lot of interaction going on between the riddle teller and the audience that generates that sense of participation, engagement and attentiveness that makes riddles exciting to the children.

So the teacher in this class, Simon, used this same structure for the riddle, with the content of the riddle taken from the theme in the curriculum i.e. “Diseases in our Community.” The teacher’s riddle for example was as follows:



Teacher: *Koyi koyi!* (Puzzle, puzzle)

Students: *(bgyia)!* (eat it)

Teacher: *ma afa azi alu!* (I have my one thing)

Students: *Eeeh!* (Yes)

Teacher: (scratching every part of his body) *Ma fe imi rua ti la fo, i'di dro diri, ma a'du ni ya?* (I make your body itch until you begin to swell, what I am?)

(Field notes, July 2, 2010)

The use of this short riddle genre made the teacher's riddle authentic and whole. The children received it as something familiar and so they listened to him and were eager to answer his riddle. When the teacher asked them to compose their own riddles restricted to the theme he was dealing with in the curriculum "diseases in the community", the students were invested in composing their riddles because they found it familiar. They actively participated in composing and telling their own riddles in the class. In the guessing part of the riddle, as is usually the norm, the audience/learners were given up to three chances to answer the puzzle. Through the use of just one riddle four children would have spoken in class. The learners were very engaged in composing and making logical guesses. Throughout the lesson the students were alert and made comments and asked questions about the various riddles told. Such questions showed that they listened keenly.

### **5.3 Improved Relationships**

Viewing literacy as a social practice focuses on social relations that are altered as people interact with literacy (Street, 1997). One of the major findings of this study is that when the local cultural resources travel from home to the classroom with minimum

changes to their cultural elements they hold significant transformative pedagogical potential. The use of cultural resources as pedagogical tools significantly altered and improved relationships among the different stakeholders not only in the class but in the whole school community. In the four lessons presented above I observed in all cases the shifts in relations depending on whether the cultural resource travelled with strong parallels to their use in home/community contexts. This was because the performance of cultural resources is usually a community affair drawing in people from all walks of life.

The storytelling and riddling sessions are usually open for neighbors to join. When Karen, the Primary 2 teacher brought in an elder to teach a Lugbara traditional folk song in her class for the first time ever, it created such excitement as never seen before. The excitement was not just confined to the Primary 2 class alone; it spread in the whole school. When the deputy head teacher of Obizea Primary School who was patrolling the school with a cane in his hands heard the singing, drumming and dancing coming from the Primary 2 classroom, he simply threw away his stick, entered the class and joined the children in singing and drumming. He grabbed one of the drums and began demonstrating his skills in playing the drum to the great excitement of the children. He continued to participate until the lesson ended. As if the numbers in the classes were not big enough, the performance of the song attracted more participants who joined the dancing and riddling from neighboring classes that had no teachers at that time. The students crowded the doors and windows of Karen's classroom after hearing the excitement. They too joined the class by the windows and door, becoming an active audience that did not only watch but participated in the singing and dancing from outside. This is consistent with the use of songs in the homes where the communities are

allowed to join in the excitement in their neighborhood. This is the very reason such dance performances in the Lugbara community were done in the open arena as “outsiders” are bound to join just at the hearing of the sound of the drum, however distant the sound might be (Middleton, 1992). In fact as Awedoba (1990) rightly puts it, the bigger the number the more enjoyable and interesting the sessions for performing these cultural resources. This enjoyment was evident in the large classes in these two primary schools in particular. Each of the classes observed had no less than eighty students in the class. In the Primary 2 class in Aramua the teacher told me, “I have got 157 pupils in one class. And reference books or resource books, they are not there” (Focus group discussion, August 6, 2010). But on top of such already large classes more children joined from the neighboring classes and as these large classes performed the stories, riddles and songs together, their social relations improved.

Thus the deputy who is usually in charge of discipline and order allowed the “noise” of the dancing group in the Primary 2 class. He could not even chase away these children who joined and participated by the windows and the door. The use of the song created a community of learners in the school. As Bakhtin (1984) puts it, the power structures collapsed as people of different hierarchies, ages and professions—the deputy head teacher, the elder, the teacher and the children—mixed freely during the singing and dancing which improved the relationships among the different stakeholders.

This incidence further reveals that when a cultural resource travels as culturally embedded and strong with many of the elements at their situation of origin; its setting may change but it may begin to recreate the setting and the setting becomes like the original setting. For example when the elder came into Karen’s class, the classroom

almost became like home/family. His presence in the class altered relationships at different levels. The children extended their respect for elders in the community into the classroom and viewed him as a parent, father figure, and custodian of cultural knowledge in whose presence they were safe. While he treated the learners as his children and was teaching them the songs as he ordinarily does in the home context. The relations became informal. It is possible that it was this transformation of relationships and the creation of a home-like atmosphere that drew people from everywhere in the school and made it possible for the different stakeholders to participate in the singing, drumming and dancing that ensued.

The same improved relationship was seen with the use of a riddle. The use of riddles caused the teacher to be unusually friendly to the learners. Because riddles are meant to be performed in a relaxed atmosphere to make the audience have fun and relax, the teacher gave the learners their freedom to express their excitement the way they wanted, so much that the atmosphere became so relaxed and friendly. This was unusual because the Ugandan teacher usually has a cane in one hand, a piece of chalk in the other hand and a book under the armpit. In this lesson the teacher saw no need to cane the learners because he saw learning taking place. This lesson was generally characterized by laughter. The learners kept laughing for various reasons. They laughed at the funny descriptions and gestures their colleagues made; they laughed at the way some learners expressed disappointment when their answers were told; they were amused at the way some of the learners expressed pride and excitement after winning a reward or prize that was a verbal expression of what the riddle teller would like to be or have. They laughed

at how some learners outwitted them with their riddles. One of the riddles that amused the learners most was:

Riddle teller (girl): “*Ma fe mi zo, izia, ma a’di ni. Ma`aduni ya?*” (I make you grow so thin like me [pointing to her self]. What am I?)

Pupils’ answers: “*silimu, silimu, o’bu*” (HIV/AIDS, HIV/AIDS, worms)

Riddle teller’s answer: “*Di azo azi bani omve ina azo*” (This is the disease of food called hunger).

The learners found this particular riddle amusing for many reasons. One, just the previous year, 2009, this community had experienced severe famine where in most homes people could live for two to three days without tasting any food and so almost everyone lost weight because of the hunger. Even on a daily basis the learners were coming to school without breakfast; they had no food during lunch and many homes could not even afford supper everyday. Many of them could still remember how they used to sleep at night on hungry stomachs thus making them grow thin and emaciated. The memories of hunger are fresh to the learners because they live with hunger everyday. So they loved the girl’s allusion to this lived experience and laughed loudly at her reference to lack of food as a disease.

The laughter and excitement drew learners from the next classes to the door and windows of this class to enjoy the fun and again like in Karen’s class in Obizea Primary School, the teacher, Simon could not even chase the children who joined by the windows away, as would usually be the case. The relaxed atmosphere that the teacher allowed created room for the children to interact informally, thus making learning painless (Bukonya, Gachanja & Nandwa, 1996) and fun, consequently improving relationships

among participating members and that is precisely what children enjoy. The relaxed atmosphere allowed social relations among students and the teacher in this class to bloom.

When it was time for the lesson to end, the students kept on laughing even when the teacher wanted them to go for a break. To control the class and bring order, the teacher did not show anger or use a cane. He simply started another song that was related to the theme instead of using the cane. This was a nice way of drawing students' attention. Since the song was also related to the theme at hand, it probably not only brought order but was a good way of consolidating what was learnt about diseases and hygiene:

*"Baba, ine ma si, onyi ru!"*      Dad, look at my teeth, so clean!

*"baba, ine raya? alaru!"*      Dad, have you seen? so clean!

*"Oooo, alaru!"*      Ooh, so clean!

*"Oooo, alaru!"*      Ooh, so clean!

Throughout the lesson the teacher was so friendly, tolerant and appreciative of the students' efforts to recite/perform their own riddles. He was impressed with the students' performance of the riddles. To express his happiness and appreciation, he offered to sing for them another song to thank the learners; in this song, which was joined by the learners, the teacher expressed the fact that the learners actually taught themselves in this lesson:

*"Aria ri daa, eeh"*      There sits a bird, eeh

*"arai ri daa"*      There sits a bird

*"anzi imbaki imbata bo!"*      The children have taught a lesson!

Even in Becky's Primary 3 story class where the children had been engaging actively in discussing with the teacher, relations improved too. After all what annoys teachers most in these big classes in Uganda is when they lose control and students can no longer maintain silence and order. But when through the story Becky was able to get the children engaged, they became too busy to disturb her peace and so relations were automatically built. The teacher's tone and language with the students even improved. Every time the learners made a contribution the teacher encouraged them with kind words. For instance when a girl read the topic well, the teacher commented, "*Awa'dini. Eeh, 'ba ojo dri odi la kobokobo Nyakudolea ni laa awa 'di a'di ni*" (Good, yes, this topic is read exactly the way Nyakudolea has read) (Field notes, July 15, 2010). When they read the twelve key words she had written on the chalkboard the teacher said to the students, "*Ma ai do sadisi ra 'ba di ini do afa lazu 'bo*" (I now believe you people have learnt to read) (Field notes, July 15, 2010). And when the students spelled all the twelve words she had written down on the chalkboard very well, moreover with their heads bent on the desks and with eyes closed, the teacher's comment was, "*Awadifo amboo. Andre do imi sadisi afa la ala ngonja ribo. Ma ai do ra imi nga munduti la muke*" (Thank you very much. I can see you now know how to read very well. I am confident you will now read English well) (Field notes, July 15, 2010). All these words of encouragement made the learning atmosphere so friendly for the learners that they were able to freely engage in the lesson with the teacher. On the other hand the teacher's cane that she carried in her hand for purposes of disciplining the children was not used to cane any child; instead the teacher used it to point to words on the chalkboard.

After reading the set of twelve words on the chalkboard the teacher noticed that the students were beginning to get tired and rowdy. Before she could introduce the more tasking work of spelling the twelve words, she decided to use a song in order to sustain the learners' interest. There is a wide saying that the ears of an African child are on their buttocks and for them to understand they need to be whipped, but with the use of cultural resources like songs the teachers are finding alternative ways of helping the children follow instructions. The use of the song was a perfect example in this lesson. The use of a song was not only a more friendly way of controlling the class than using the cane as had been the case in this school but the song was related to the theme "children's rights and freedoms," meaning that the song at the same time consolidates the theme being learnt. As people interact and perform together it allows time for them to bond as a family or community of learners. The cultural resources thus changed the usually formal and tense atmosphere in classrooms to become informal and allowed people to freely interact. These cultural resources showed their potential as indeed a socialization tool (Dike, 1995) that can "promote unity and group cohesion" (Awedoba, 2000 p. 36).

#### **5.4 Ownership, Identity, Investment, Agency**

With the use of cultural resources children came to own their learning for different reasons. The enthusiasm with which the children danced the traditional folk song in Karen's class was very unusual in the school context. From the lesson it was clear children enjoyed the song and the lesson very much. When I asked them in a post lesson interview/conversation why they enjoyed and highly engaged in singing and dancing the traditional folk song the children freely expressed their unique reasons as: "*Ndri mani onzi!*" (It is great fun!). "*Idi fe ba ojo driori ki iga!*" (It makes us remember



the past!). “*Idi fe ama avi nga ani omu ‘di pi ojo ku.*” (It makes us not to forget these visitors). “*T’di muke idi ama omi nzi.*” (It is good; it opens our brain). “*Ba avi ani afa bani emba ‘bani azini afa bani laari ku.*” (What has been taught and read will not be easily forgotten). “*Amani muzu ama vule ka ki embazu akuale beni.*” (We shall use it for teaching our siblings at home). “*Ongo tuza ni fe ‘ba adre oria ako ru.*” (Dancing gives us confidence). “*Ba ani adre ondoa ru.*” (It makes one become bright). “*Eco fe mini acazu ba ongo tu piri ru dria le ra.*” (It can make you become a great dancer in future). “*Idi fe mi ojo va.*” (Makes you understand meaning of things).”

Clearly, the learners were invested (Norton, 2000) in the use of the song as a pedagogical resource for language learning for a variety of reasons. For one, it helped them remember what they had read as they were singing orally what was read in print. For the others it was great fun, it enhanced their retention, it made them remember the past, and it made them more confident. For yet another who enjoyed the experience of receiving the elder in the class, the song was a way to remember the visitor and for yet another child who dreams of music as a future career, such dancing trains him to become a great dancer in the future. It was for these various reasons that the learners had assumed full ownership of the lesson and their own learning.

Another familiar feature that increased the learners’ agency and taking up of ownership of the lesson was the Becky’s use of two characters in the story. Comparing and contrasting two characters is very common with the traditional Lugbara folktales. Bukenya, Gachanja and Nandwa (1996) indicate that numbers are culturally generated. Whereas the European folktales commonly use the number three, in the African tales the

number two is the most common. It is preferred because in the African tradition, “the universe has only two contradictions—good and evil” (p. 72). The number two helps the narrator to organize the narrative and remind him/herself that there are two experiences to narrate. At the same time, the number two helps the audience to comprehend the contrasted images. The teacher had presented the character Ayiko as having all basic needs and heading for success and Candia as poor and with no basic needs and heading for failure. In Becky’s story the two characters made it possible for the students to compare and contrast the two sides of action, behavior, and characters and make their choice of a character’s course of action. The two characters facilitated the debate during the discussion session. Through the debate between the teacher and the learners, the students vigorously contested the teacher’s idea that Candia was bound to fail in class just because he came from a poor family background and did not have the basic needs. The students were so engaged in a heated debate because the story appealed to their own experiences with poverty in this local context. Not only were many of the children in Becky’s class actually called Candia and Ayiko, these children also have the experience of poverty and misery and live with it everyday.

It was not surprising that when the teacher was moving round to check the students’ work she came across a girl who had no pen and was not doing the exercise and the teacher told her, “You see what I was saying?” (Field notes, July 15, 2010). By this statement she was referring to her point of the necessity of having basic needs. But this girl was just one of many of the “Candias” in real life in that class. So while they identified with Candia in the story, because they were in his state too, the students would not want to remain in that same state. They were invested in attending the literacy class

because they want to live a better life in future. That is why they engaged in a serious discussion with the teacher about the characters in the story. The students had come to own the lesson. They were simply using the opportunity of their interaction in the class to give every reason to explain that “Candia” was bound to succeed. Norton (1997) argued that when language learners speak, they are simply not exchanging information with their interlocutors but actually they continually keep organizing and reorganizing their identity, a sense of who they are. In this class the learners were not just talking about the Candia in the story but saw the Candia in themselves, thus as they talked they were expressing to the teacher their desire to gain a better future for themselves after school. While the teacher thought that coming from a poor family background and not having the basic necessities was an impediment for good performance in class, to the children she was preaching a message of doom and painting an identity and a future that they did not want to share or imagine. They are all carrying with them hopes for a better imagined future. This story gave them an opportunity to express that hope. They thus used the teaching and learning process to redesign the content so as to reconstruct and renegotiate their own identities (The New London Group, 2000) as people capable of achieving in class to gain a better future despite their present states of abject poverty. It was interesting to note that the use of a story as a pedagogical tool created the space for children to not only challenge the teachers’ notion of what it takes to succeed but it also made it possible for them to render an even more powerful interpretation. From the children’s perspective, while provisions like books, pens, pencils, school uniforms are necessary, they are not enough to determine ones ability to succeed in education. They

believe that one's investment (Norton, 2000) is more crucial in determining how far a person goes with education.

The Primary 1 students in Simon's riddle class also assumed ownership of the lesson in their own way. Traditionally riddles are children's games. The children were aware of this and by the time the teacher told them they were going to tell riddles, they were ready to take it up and own it. But as the children recited the riddles the teacher at first was commenting on and explaining each and every riddle that the children told. The teacher seemed to have believed in his role as the holder of knowledge at first, but there was a resistance from the students for this kind of teacher-fronted knowledge. They managed to resist and challenge him by rushing to the front to tell their riddles instead of listening to his long explanations. It was apparent that the students already understood the riddles and the explanations the teacher was giving about each riddle were unnecessary and in fact defeated the logic of telling riddles. Besides, in the home setting, unless the audience demands one, explanations for riddles are never given. By the time the riddler provides the answer the children would have thought critically and his or her answer generally understood at once, therefore making explanations unnecessary. The children knew what they wanted. They wanted to be given more opportunity to be producers of knowledge; they did not want to be mere recipients of knowledge, especially local knowledge. They wanted to be active participants owning the learning process, and not mere passive participants. By the middle of the lesson, the teacher realized the students did not want to listen to him. The teacher learnt to be a participant observer, a listener and a learner while students became their own teachers, educating each other about the various diseases in the community through their riddles, explaining

to the teacher instead the riddle that he did not understand. In my field notes for example, I noted: “they told (informed) the teacher that, the treatment (for *Amurua*) is that you have to blow into a pot while shouting loudly “*amurua, amurua...*” They laughed loudly as they imitated this. The teacher also laughed saying, ‘I did not know that the treatment for *amurua* was like this’ (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

Like a teacher the students were the ones choosing the pupils to tell the answers to the riddles, choosing those who wanted to come in front to tell riddles, and even directing the rewarding/prizing process. There came a clear change of roles. The students’ agency led to less teacher-fronted pedagogy and more learner involvement, engagement and empowerment, and ownership of the learning process. The teacher became more silent, an observer and a learner, while learners became their own teachers.

The norms during the sessions for performing these cultural resources bring yet another interesting angle for discussion. One of the norms of riddles observed in the classroom is discussed here. It is a known norm that when a speaker is on stage performing no one should distract him/her with unkind words even if that person is not doing things right. The idea behind this norm is to appreciate everyone’s efforts. This kind of attitude creates an environment that builds confidence in every learner to try his/her best to participate. Apart from Ronny’s Primary 2 class in Aramua Primary School, in the use of cultural resources in the other three classes, none of the children were belittled when their riddles were answered or when they told an illogical riddle. No one was shamed or criticized if they did not display the correct dancing skills in Karen’s songs. Not refuting people’s answers is what gives everyone the confidence to try because they will not be looked at as failures. Everyone gets the assurance and

confidence that they have an audience that is ready to listen to whatever they have to say. This makes them feel accepted in their community of learners. This confidence could be seen in the way the learners performed the riddles. None of them showed a sign of cowardice or shyness. Through the riddles the children were able to face the class as they stood in front of the rest of the students to tell their riddles. The fact that the riddle teller is the one who points/chooses people from the audience to tell answers makes the children take the position and identity of a teacher in a position of power and authority at that moment. This is what builds the learners' confidence more. The fact that just by saying the opening formula like "*koyi koyi*" (puzzle, puzzle), a child gets automatic attention from the rest makes every child feel that he/she will be listened to and so can manage to stand in front of the class and perform. This is why when telling the riddles every child wanted to be given a chance. This is unlike the schooled literacy that labels some learners as failures and dull, shy and unable. With the use of cultural resources that 'travel' to the classroom with most of their elements from the point of origin every child feels able.

The transformation that came in the learners with the introduction of the instruments and the dance was evident in Karen's lesson using song. The norm allowed the learners to adopt identities of being able. Mushengyezi (2003) correctly observes that the physical factor of dancing and drumming hugely increases the emotive impact of people's psyche. In Karen's Primary 2 class, none of the dancers could be considered as shy or fearful. The children danced confidently and bravely in front of their peers, teachers and the elder. They freely expressed their excitement, each wanting to show their best in whatever they were doing. The drummers took up the drums, and the

dancers, the clappers, and the singers altogether played their different parts forming one beautiful performance. They felt free and liberated to dance and express themselves as they wished. They could wear the horn, drum as loudly as they could, wave the flywhisk, ululate, shout, and laugh without restriction. This is something that had not been happening in previous classes/lessons. The elder coming to class became a catalyst for this classroom transformation, enhanced by the use of the original traditional folk song, the traditional instruments and costumes used at the point of origin.

### **5.5 Creativity and Innovation**

With traditional Lugbara riddles just like Awedoba (2000) asserts, “Creative thinking is the corner stone of riddling” (p. 47). The sole purpose of riddles is to develop critical thinking. This creative/critical thinking was achieved through the children’s use of linguistic features and poetic/stylistic devices like metaphors, personification, and irony in the composition of their riddles in the classroom. These features not only make the riddles more interesting but were used to create what Awedoba calls an ambivalence and ambiguity, misdirection/indirection in the riddling. It is such ambivalence that forced the listeners to think deeply, quickly, critically, creatively, and logically before supplying possible answers (Ajayi, 1990). Riddles engage the mind in such a way that one has to be conscious and pay attention to the clues, to put their interpretation in proper perspective, to know the right knot to the hidden logic in order to uncover the correct answer.

In the situation where they were restricted in the classroom to tell riddles in a particular theme and could not readily find existing riddles from the cultural community to discuss the theme ‘Common Diseases in our Community’, the children in Simon’s Primary 1 class at Aramua were able to compose/ create their own riddles using the

cultural logic of constructing riddles. In The New London Group's (2000) term, they redesigned by incorporating the cultural structure of a riddle and the school content in the curriculum and formed new hybrid riddles. Thus the use of riddles in class, with many of its elements from the home context gave the children an opportunity to draw on their lived experience and cultural background as linguistic resources to enhance their learning experience. One of the riddles showing the students' critical thinking, creativity, and innovation was:

Riddle teller (boy): "*Ama aa pipi ra, amu arojoa le. Arojoa le ba ga mani aro fe ko si. Te ma amvi vule doa ayiko ayiko. Ma aduni?*" (My stomach got swollen so big. Then I went to the hospital. In the hospital the nurses refused to give me medicine/treatment. But I came back home very happy. What am I?).

Pupils' answers: None

Riddle teller's answer: "*Oku ka ki mva osu bo, ipi a ki aca amboo 'dipi (obi dri si). Iki mu arojoa le ra, 'ba fe ipini aro ku. Te iki amvi vule 'doa ayiko ayiko, mbati atru dria imi a'dini.* (When women are pregnant, their stomachs become so big like this (He demonstrates a protruding stomach with his hands). They go to the hospital and are not given medicines, but they come back home happily with a baby like you people") [He points at the children whom he refers to as babies].

(Field notes, July 2, 2010)

The children all burst into laughter because the boy's explanation made perfect sense to them. The competitive nature and the prizing part of riddles acted as a motivating factor for the learners to think critically and creatively. It made the children search for the toughest riddles so as to challenge their friends in the competitions and get the



prize/reward. The child in this riddle uses the hyperbole “swollen stomach” to misdirect the learners to think about a disease. And he uses the irony that “the patient came back happy after being denied treatment” to create a scenario that was unimaginable for the audience. The children surrendered without giving a single guess to his riddle and all agreed to give the child his prize or reward of “going to Kampala.” Like most of the students who got prizes, this boy walked back to his seat with his arms ajar. He felt a sense of pride after offering a solution. He had proved himself before the rest as very intelligent and creative. It was clear that as long as the competitive nature of riddles is retained from home to school in this situation, like Barton (2001) and Ssekamwa (1997) agree, these local literacies, can be relied on as a source of creativity, invention, originality, imagination, thinking, literature, composition—the art of public speaking and analytical skills that Awadewa (2000) claims are “in some respects are not too different from that language education seeks to provide to students and pupils in schools and universities” (p. 45).

In a post lesson interview, Simon, the teacher of this class, who was both impressed and surprised at the learners’ ability and creativity to compose their own riddles in line with the themes in the curriculum exclaimed, “I thought, I was worried; I thought they were not going to make riddles about the diseases. So it was so nice, I realize... You see, these riddles... especially now that we limit them in that area—the theme, they will now think critically. A child will ask himself, ‘what can I do?’” this makes them think on their own!” (Post lesson interview, July 2, 2010).

From the teacher’s statement it can be seen that the children are now viewed by the teacher as intelligent, and capable of thinking on their own and therefore as having

something to offer. The fact that in a whole thirty minute lesson, the teacher only gave one example of a riddle and the children composed their own riddles in the rest of the lesson shows that children are knowledgeable and are capable of making a contribution in their own learning process. Through the riddles the students drew from their life experiences with the diseases and were able to discuss the signs and symptoms, effects and treatments of so many diseases that would have taken the teacher many days to teach. This is where I concur with Gonzales et al. (2005) who stress, “people are competent; they have knowledge and their life experiences have given them that knowledge” (p. ix). Thus the teacher was only a guide, a designer who helped children compose materials that were their own, composed by themselves, materials that were self generating and not imposed externally and therefore more meaningful to the learners (Agnihotri, 1997; Barton 2001).

## **5.6 Multimodality**

In the African indigenous teaching, children were taught through the use of cultural resources like plays, games, songs, rhymes, proverbs, idioms, riddles and storytelling (Ssekamwa, 1997; Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2006; Kendrick & Mutonyi, 2007). These cultural resources were particularly preferred because they are “artistic in essence” and have the potential to appeal and give “free rein to [our] imagination” (Kwesi, 1992, p.18) and enhance memory.

Human beings are multimodal and enjoy various modes of meaning making and representation (Kress, 2000). With the use of cultural resources in the classrooms, it was observed that working across modes has improved. While teaching the riddle for example, the teacher’s demonstration and gesturing of his riddle by scratching his body

was so amusing for the learners and it helped them make correct guesses at the answer to his riddle. Children enjoy demonstrations and gestures communicate a lot more. When it was their turn to compose/perform their own riddles they also made gestures, body movements, and their tone and demonstrations appealed to senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing, taste. One example was:

Riddle teller (boy): “*Ma fi imi mifia. Imi mifi ra yiru.* (Pointing at his yellow shirt) *Ma imi mifi oja Aramua yunifomu adi ni. Ma adu ni?*” (I enter your eyes; turn them watery and yellow like Aramua Uniform)

Pupils’ answers: tears, trachoma, yellow fever.

The uniform shirt of this school Aramua Primary is yellow. By pointing at the uniform the child was giving a clue to his answer, which the third child was correctly able to answer. The whole lesson was characterized by fun and laughter because the riddle tellers kept making demonstrations that amused the class. They were also amused by the demonstration of the big stomach of a pregnant woman in the riddle discussed previously.

For their exercise the teacher asked the students to draw people with some of the diseases they had made riddles about and write the name of the disease. This was more relevant exercise for the learners. They were able to draw with ease. One of the most common diseases they drew was a person with signs and symptoms of HIV/AIDS because the children in Uganda, and even in this particular village, have in one way or another been affected by the disease. It is a reality in their lives. Thus in one of the drawings a child drew a thin man with skin rashes all over his body, as suffering from HIV/AIDS.

The stories, riddles and songs observed made use of body language, gestures, use of tone and rhythm. All these stylistic devices aid memory as they appeal to the audiences' senses of sight, touch, smell, taste and hearing. So as the children touched and used the musical instruments like drums, flutes and trumpets, when they moved the body in dancing, singing and riddling. All these appealed to the different senses and thus the message conveyed through the performance of a song gets entrenched into the memory of the performers through the manner of the performance. In a post lesson interview with the children after the learning of the song I asked the children why they enjoyed the song and dance, and from their responses the point of memory was evident. For example, some of them said, "*Idi fe ba ojo driori ki iga!*" (It makes us remember the past!"). "*I'di fe ama avi nga ani omu 'di pi ojo ku.*" ("It makes us not to forget these visitors."). "*I'di muke idi ama omi nzi.*" ("It is good, it opens our brain."). "*Ba avi ani afa bani emba 'bani azini afa bani laari ku.*" ("What has been taught and read will not be easily forgotten."). Thus, Hill (2000) advocates the use of these cultural resources saying while being simple in nature, the cultural resources pass messages in powerful ways that children live to remember. The manner in which the cultural resources were performed in class in a similar way to how they are performed at their point of origin made them not only entertaining but at the same time, they breathed life into the curriculum content being taught. Thus when used as pedagogical tools, they have the potential to significantly transform classroom practice.

An interesting incident occurred when the elder began to teach the song. He had written the song in Lugbara language on the blackboard. He read through, emphasizing the punctuation marks like the full stops, commas and question marks in the song he was

reading. He then introduced the tune of the song and asked children to sing while reading from the blackboard. The children could not learn the song easily. They sang as if they were reading, stopping wherever there was a full stop or comma. The elder kept asking them not to sing in a 'straight' or 'linear' form but in a 'round' form. The children failed to understand him because the elder's attempt to write the song so that it could be read before it was sung was contrary to the cultural way of learning songs in this community, which is predominantly oral. Songs have always been learnt orally.

The teacher then intervened and asked the elder to consider first teaching the song orally. When he did this within a short time the children were able to sing well. Later Karen asked the elder to lead the singing as she led the pointing and reading of words on the chalkboard. From this moment on, I saw the song introducing the concept of co-teaching/team-teaching between the elder and the teacher. This aspect of cooperative teaching and teamwork between the resource person and the teacher where they combined efforts to handle a potentially problematic situation made the lesson more lively. In this case, the success of the lesson was dependent on the resource person and the teacher working together. The more they asked the children to sing, the better the children were able to read. Songs in this context may not be taught the same way written material is taught. Emphasizing structures of print seemed to become an obstacle to orality and the learning of songs, possibly because the children have mostly used Lugbara orally. On the contrary, orality seemed to facilitate the development of print literacy. The children in this context are used to singing songs orally and so the use of that prior knowledge before making them read is an important recognition of their accumulated knowledge that can facilitate the teaching and learning of literacy.

Hill (2000) asserts that stories from oral culture can play an important role in language learning. In the fourth lesson example the teacher Ronny composed a story related to the theme, “Things we make” to teach his literacy lesson. Contrary to Hill’s claim, instead of aiding language learning, the story in this lesson led to a distracted class. This was because of the way the story was constructed. It was not culturally embedded with the elements at the situation of origin that make a story have life. Hill explains that the cultural stories “have a particular property that makes them uniquely sustainable for this task. These stories are typically built around formulaic material that plays a crucial role in both plot and character development” (2000, p.106).

Glasgow (2007) also believes that as stories are told there is need to reflect the culture through the plot, characters, moral of the story, use of magic or songs, conflict, climax, and resolution. In other words the story needs to come to the classroom with these situated components and structures that make a story. The setting, the participants, the end, the key/tone and manner, the instrumentalities, the norms and genre need to somehow travel in great numbers for the story to have impact. It is only when a story conforms to these formulaic materials, cultural norms and formulas that the values that accompany storytelling like active listening move along from home to school, otherwise as Kembo-Sure (2002) asserts, “Speakers can ignore these elements during a communicative encounter at their own peril...” (p. 25). All these elements seemed to have been missing in Ronny’s ‘story’ leading to inattention and disengagement, which are discussed in the next section.

## 5.7 Inattention and Disengagement

Ronny's story could not attract the students' attention even for a minute. They distracted him throughout his narration and lesson. He could barely make a full statement before shutting down noisemakers. The way the story was started alone was very unusual to the learners and so it could not capture their attention as stories usually do. For example after announcing that he was going to tell them a story, the students were expectant of the story's opening formula, but the teacher instead started the story by asking a question, "Who created you?" Aardema (1994) agrees with Hill (2000) about formulas saying that there is a formula even for starting the telling of tales. The storyteller may begin by saying to the listeners, "Let me tell you a story about..." and end with "I have told my story or it is finished". According to Dyson and Genishi (1990) children already have these "familiar and well-known sets of systematically organized relationships of sequence, ordering, and signification which carry the social values of their culture" (p. 128). These formulas and ordering were missing right from the start of the story in Ronny's lesson. Among the Lugbara and more so among the students in this school a storyteller always starts a story by saying, "*Adio ndi!*" (A true story!), and the audience is expected to respond by saying, "*Ndi taya!*" (True, indeed). He continues saying, "My story is about..." These opening statements are supposed to alert the audience and prepare them for the coming story. However, because in this lesson the teacher did not have these opening, the children did not even know that he was already telling his story. They therefore simply treated his narration as ordinary talk to which they paid no attention. They expected the teacher to have started the story in the sequence they were already familiar with.

Secondly, the teacher could not say the second opening phrase of, “My story is about...” because the story had neither the animal nor the human characters to talk about. Thus they continued talking even as the teacher narrated his “story” for them. That is why he kept stopping his narration to shut down students who kept making noise: “God created everything on earth. Among these things he gave us wisdom. (*Now look at that boy who is busy doing his own things! Stop it.*) (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

It was very unusual in the children’s context for a story to begin with a question mark, let alone with the name of God. Thus they treated his narration with disrespect right from the start. As Gilbert (1990) rightly observes:

Stories can be changed but they can be changed only within certain cultural and historical parameters of acceptability if they are to be authorized and legitimated. The narrative ‘logic’ that will allow storytelling and readings to be made, so that sequences of events can be read as connected and credible is a cultural and historically specific ‘logic.’ We learn this logic as part of learning the story worlds of our culture (p. 129).

The teacher’s story could not appeal to the learners because it lacked all the cultural logic and elements from the point of origin that the students were already familiar with, thus the learners could not listen to his story. There was total disorder in the class that was characterized by noise. This is what Prinsloo (2005) means when he argued that resources do not have an intrinsic resourcefulness. Their impact depends on the way it is placed in a particular context. As they ‘travel’ and are being re-contextualised (Pahl & Rowsell, 2005) to school, not much of the way the resource functions at home should be lost



## 5.8 Poor Relationships

The potential of cultural resources to improve relations in a school/class too is not intrinsic. A lot depends on the way the cultural resource travels to the class. Because the students were not engaged /absorbed in listening to Ronny's story, he lost control of his class as students kept making noise. This angered the teacher who also lost control and kept screaming at the top of his voice to bring some order, so both teacher and learners ended up screaming and making noise. The lesson was more of a fight than a learning session as the teacher struggled to bring back order in his class. He moved up and down the rows to stop those noisemakers. He used his voice to show his authority, and used all sorts of threats including giving of a test. In the middle of his narration, for example, he continued: 'With that wisdom we make mats for sitting. (*Ojaku is doing his own things. When I start asking questions, you will see. You better watch out*). With the wisdom we make pots...' (Field notes, July 2, 2010). He used such threats to silence and deprive the learners of the power to speak up, to share divergent ideas. The learners were being encultured into school discipline and silence in class. However, despite such threats the students kept talking and occupying themselves with things that were more meaningful to them. The students would rather have the teacher's punishment than listen to an unfamiliar narration. This is what Hill (2000) means when he said with the use of stories in oral culture, "not only humans but even stories die when formulaic material is not repeated with sufficient exactitude" (p. 109). In other words if the cultural resources 'travel' to classroom as weak, with many elements of their point of origin lost, then its potential to transform is also lost. In this lesson there was evidently a dying relationship between the teacher and the learners because the life in the teacher's story was definitely

not seen. The condition under which the children learnt was more unfriendly. When there was disorder in the class the teacher even threatened the learners with written exercises, charging, *“I said you must listen. Remember I am going to ask questions here after”* (Field notes, July 2, 2010). He was using the concept of written exercises to ‘discipline’ because print has always been used in school system in Uganda to eliminate children from school. Those who find it hard usually drop out of school. Ronny thought this would serve his students well for their misbehavior and lack of discipline in the class. He therefore used print as a threat to kill the learners’ esteem so that they would stop talking. How he engaged them in questions and writing is discussed below:

### **5.9 Literacy from an Autonomous (Skill-Based) Perspective**

Ronny seemed to have been driven only by a print-based linear model of literacy. He was more interested in engaging the learners in reading letters than encouraging them to enjoy the experience of reading through their own performances in other modes apart from reading and writing. He rushed to ask the children oral questions about “the things we make’ that he mentioned in the story without minding whether they had listened to and/or understood the story he narrated. The teacher used most of his time for the lesson engaging students in printing words on the chalkboard. He gave the learners so many words to spell on the chalkboard like *“kobi, atuluku, jiki, birisi, amvu, ndri baka, uluke, mbeguba.”* He made them write syllables and letter patterns, ascenders, descenders and normal letters in the air; then on the chalkboard, he gave them spelling exercises to be written in their books as he moved round marking. Interestingly the students did well in this work, except for the last word. The teacher seemed to have achieved his objective of making the children write words. However, such ‘robotic’ technological/skill

taxonomy/pedagogy (Luke, 2005) that does not draw on children's rich experiences of home literacy should not even be the emphasis of literacy in an era where literacy is now looked at beyond mechanical printing, as multimodal (Kress, 2000). Such emphasis is even more inappropriate especially when it comes to indigenous storytelling where meaning is more important (Blaeser, 1993). I agree with Hill (2000) that mere repetition of structural patterns of language like the one Ronny used with virtually no attention to meaning is not in order. It makes learning abstract and reduced to a recall of facts and as Hough et al. (2009) express it, only serves to "dumb down" language learning. Hill urges teaching not to suppress meaning and creativity otherwise teachers will end up deadening not only the texts but even the students themselves.

#### **5.10 Traditional Teacher-Fronted Pedagogy**

Ronny's lesson became highly controlled and fronted by the teacher unlike the previous lessons discussed because of his interest in print and his inappropriate use of the cultural resources. Right at the start of the lesson the teacher introduced a song for the learners to sing. He was fully in charge of choosing the songs and determining how long it was supposed to be sung. The learners who were very much interested in the singing sang at the top of their voices while clapping. After singing the song only in two rounds the teacher stopped the singing. I heard a child shout, "Let's sing again." The teacher gave him a long gaze and told him, "You will listen to what the teacher has to say" (Field notes, July 2, 2010).

Ronny was not ready to listen to students' ideas. He saw himself as the source of knowledge and authority. He dominated the class either with his voice or through body language and gave all the students the impression that he was in charge, and that all

authority rested with he who was delivering knowledge. Unfortunately when he did this, the students were no longer interested in his lesson. He rarely gave the children any opportunity to speak. They were only engaged in writing words on the chalkboard and not contributing or expressing their own ideas. The only moment students were involved was when they were asked a few oral questions and when they were given words to write on the chalkboard.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

On the basis of the data presented in Chapter 4 and the discussion of the evidence in Chapter 5, it is reasonable to conclude that the cultural resources (i.e., stories, riddles, songs and dances) do not to have an intrinsic resourcefulness (Prinsloo, 2005) or potential for language learning. What the resource does in one context may not be achievable in another context. Their resourcefulness seems to depend a lot on the how they ‘travel’ or are re-sourced (Stein, 2000) from the community sites to the classrooms. When the cultural resources ‘travel’ with a greater number of their cultural elements from their point of origin (i.e., home/community), they are said to be strong and so have a great pedagogical potential to transform classrooms and social relations, increase children’s attention, engagement/participation, creativity, identity, agency and ownership of their learning in the classroom. But when the cultural resources undergo many changes and lose their key elements from their point of origin in the process of their ‘travel,’ they are said to travel as weak and therefore their transformative potential for language learning is limited. They make the classroom atmosphere more tense and learning and teaching remains teacher fronted and social relations between teachers and students do not improve, instead they may worsen. Thus the popular African proverb

puts it well; “*the pumpkin in the old homestead should not be uprooted*” (Mushengyezi, 2003). The cultural resources are important for language and literacy teaching and learning. Secondly for their greater transformative potential to be realized they should not be uprooted but need to ‘travel’ with minimal changes to their point of origin in the community.

## **5.12 Lessons/Emerging Understandings, Implications, Recommendations**

From the way the cultural resources ‘travelled’ to the new classroom context, the way the teachers used them and the way the students responded to the use, this study has important understandings, lessons and implications for language and literacy teaching in the classroom and for the new thematic curriculum that emphasizes the use of these cultural resources.

### **5.12.1 Emerging Insights**

Teachers who were trained in English in the whole of their educational cycle and even in their six day thematic curriculum trainings have made a positive move to teach in the mother tongue in the face of community ambivalence. They are willing to implement the Thematic Curriculum, including the use of cultural resources. Regarding their use of cultural resources it is observed that strong cultural resources (those that ‘travel’ or are relocated to a new site, the classroom, with a great number of key cultural elements from their point of origin) bring about an anticipated movement in pedagogical practices and have greater transformative pedagogical potential to improve teaching and learning. With their use, classrooms and social relations are transformed. The use of these strong cultural resources help children play an active role in their own learning instead of being simply recipients of knowledge as teachers begin to recognize and look at children as

having something to offer. Children take up new identities of being producers of knowledge as they tell stories and compose riddles. They end up owning the learning process thus, leading to less teacher-fronted pedagogy. Again the use of these strong cultural resources increases working across modes other than print-based literacy and brings about high levels of learner engagement and involvement.

The need to relocate the cultural resources as strong in some instances, as was the case with the use of the traditional folk song, brings about more collaborative work and transformative power-shifts between communities and schools as teachers liaise with local community members who become teachers in classrooms. Such improved relationships between stakeholders is empowering for the teachers, students and parents/communities (Hensley, 2005), thus improving the learning atmosphere for children.

The teachers are facing challenges of various natures in the implementation of the thematic curriculum and the use of the cultural resources, especially the lack of written materials. The cultural resources that the curriculum recommends teachers to use are not documented. Looking across, each teacher seems to be using the cultural resources in the way they each best understand. From the 15 lessons observed the teachers consistently only made use of six cultural resources: stories, riddles, rhymes, tongue twisters, songs and dances. These were the ones they could easily compose or collect and were more confident in using. Many cultural resources recommended by the curriculum such as proverbs, sayings, lullabies, metaphors, similes, idioms, poems, and traditional games are not being used by the teachers.

In the face of this unavailability of written materials the teachers have become more reflective as they began to take up the resources available around them to use in class. They have become ethnographers (Gonzalez et al, 2005) and it needs to be appreciated that they collected cultural resources from their communities for classroom use. They identified themes in the curriculum and composed their own materials using the genre/structure of the traditional cultural resources to be able to teach the curriculum themes. This gives them materials that are not imposed from higher authorities (Agnihotri, 1997). Teachers are thus capable of harvesting their own materials, which are more relevant to their local contexts and curriculum themes.

However, while some of the teachers have the potential to compose strong cultural resources, others are struggling to do it. As noted previously, the transformative potential of cultural resources depends a lot on the way they ‘travel’ from the community sites into the classrooms. With some of the teachers’ compositions and performances the cultural resources are weak; they do not retain a good number of their key elements from their point of origin, and so they lose their transformative value and potential for language learning and teaching.

### **5.12.2 Recommendations**

Since the resourcefulness and transformative potential of cultural resources for language teaching and learning largely depends on whether they ‘travel’ to the new context (school/classroom) as strong, with their key elements from their point of origin, the teachers need a lot of professional support and development to help them understand how the cultural resources function in relation to their local context and situation of origin. This implies that teachers would need to be trained on how to ensure cultural

resources travel to classroom as strong. It is not enough to prescribe what the teachers should do with the new curriculum. If teachers who had been teaching using a structured curriculum are set free to go and 'collect' cultural resources from the communities for their classroom teaching without teacher professional development the curriculum can collapse. The teachers need scaffolding for their level of professionalism to develop.

This scaffolding should take the form of professional conversations and a move from the usual workshops where teachers are simply verbally told what to do to a loose form of participatory action research where the teachers are collaboratively engaged in the process of identifying their own peculiar challenges and solutions regarding the implementation of the curriculum and use of cultural resources. It is useful for researchers to work collaboratively with teachers to interrogate how these cultural resources are used. It makes the teachers share their experiences and as they work together with researchers, it better enhances the understanding of the issues. It makes teachers become researchers and more reflective of their professional practice. It empowers them to perform better as they become more inquisitive and confident. This would subsequently improve teaching and learning.

Teachers in one school could collaboratively engage in such an action research and be guided by among others a trained resource teacher who could act as a contact person in each school and engage in frequent professional conversations with the teacher researchers about their research project and classroom practice. Such a resource teacher would fill the gap of support supervisors like center coordinating tutors (CCTs) whose catchment areas too often are too large to allow them to provide quality, consistent, one-on-one, professional support to each teacher in each school.



The use of the cultural resources necessitates some changes to be done in school. First, teachers need to be trained and supported to change their mindset and understanding of the class to mean solely the four walled classrooms. They need to understand that the four walled classrooms restrict the way the cultural resources ‘travel’ and so there is need for flexibility to relocate classroom activities to open spaces such as under tree shades to allow for free expression as in community and home contexts. At policy level, there is also need to provide space for the performance of these cultural resources when establishing new structures in schools. Facilities like halls need to be established in schools so as not to restrict key elements of the cultural resources from travelling to class.

The same professional support and action research should therefore aim at increasing teacher capability of taping and harvesting/documenting community cultural resources and to address problems of lack of materials in schools. Part of the professional support should be in such areas of material composition so that the teachers can compose strong cultural resources that retain their key elements of their situation of origin other than weak ones which are culturally stripped of their key elements. It demands that teachers be encouraged to be creative and innovative to adopt the resources through hybridization (Mushengyezi, 2003).

In view of such concerns about shortage of reading materials in local languages (Keshubi, 2000; Sanyu, 2000; Tembe & Norton, 2008), which has remained a major challenge in curriculum implementation in Uganda, there is therefore need to explore the possibility and the potential that modern technology and digital resources technology like digital recorders, cameras and videos have in tapping, harvesting and transporting the

traditional cultural resources from community sites to schools/classroom for pedagogical purposes and to achieve curriculum goals.

Since the use of the cultural resources increases interest and collaboration of local community members in school, policy makers need to build on this positive trend, articulate policy to involve community members and elders in teaching in schools clearly. Attaching a parent/community member to a school as a resource would be a good idea too so that the teachers find it easy to consult with parents.

The recommendation of the thematic curriculum to use cultural resources and local languages as enshrined in the local language policy (The Republic of Uganda, 1992) is a good one but the implementation of the policy and the new curriculum is not being consistently researched. Policy makers need to articulate a clear research agenda to investigate what happens in class and how the policy translates into practice in the classroom through multiple case studies on the use of local languages as media of instruction and cultural resources as pedagogical tools. This will enable what is good to be consolidated and what is not good to be rectified in good time other than wasting resources without knowing what is going on. In addition to that, the necessary resources should be provided to carryout the necessary research.

In this research the teachers made use of only six cultural resources (i.e., the stories, riddles, songs, dances, rhymes and tongue twisters) in two rural primary schools. Further research is required to investigate the potential of the cultural resources with a broader range of the resources, contexts and other curricular areas. A study of how the cultural resources ‘travel’ from school to home and the impact this has in the home setting should also be undertaken.

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