

Learning Four ESL Skills: Boh Ramo Bokar Folktales

Dr. Nasi Koje

Assistant Professor

Dept. of English, DN College Itanagar
Arunachal Pradesh

Abstract

The rationale behind this study is an argument that learning a second language may result in developing learners' local cultural knowledge, creating a tribal classroom, concern towards nature and creatures. It is argued that Boh Ramo Bokar folktales in English translation could play an essential role as a teaching and learning medium through which ESL children can learn English and develop deeper understandings of their culture.

Besides, the researcher will attempt to analyze the characteristics of Boh Ramo Bokar folktales to enhance the four ESL skills.

There are four basic language skills, which every learner must master. These are (a) Listening, (b) Speaking (c) Reading and (d) Writing. These four basic language skills should receive due attention. No skill should be neglected (Sehrawat, Jha 62).

Using literature and folklore in language learning encourage the notion of bringing culture into the classroom. *"Literature can also be a spur to children's creativity. After hearing a story, poem or song, children can be encouraged to write something of their own. They can also be encouraged to integrate various forms of creative expression"* (NCF 38).

Stories, poems, songs and drama link children to their cultural heritage and also allow them to understand their own experiences and to develop sensitivity to others. Children may effortlessly abstract more grammar from such activities than through explicit and often dull grammar lessons.

Keywords: *Boh Ramo Bokar Community, Folktales, ESL Skills, Culture, Second Language,*

The idea to study the folktales of Boh Ramo Bokar Community in the context of ESL education came to the researcher while reading a book *Using Folktales as ESL Handbook* by Eric K. Taylor. The researcher discovered that Boh Ramo Bokar Community in general is rich in folk literature which requires great literary exploration. Few anthropological researches have been done, but literary research of the community's folk literature is still a need. Thus, the quest of this article will be to foreground, and analyze the characteristics of Boh Ramo Bokar folktales to enhance four ESL skills.

As presented, Boh Ramo Bokar folktales are associated with different creature, devil, discovery of salt, the origin of settlement, the idea of agriculture, rituals, festivals, marriage, culture, tradition, etc. Moreover, it is believed that Boh Ramo Bokar culture and tradition are inherited from **ABOTANI**. For example, 1. *Abotani and His Origin* 2. *Abotani's Discovery of Salt* 3. *Abotani and Abing Taki* 4. *Abotani's Tears Given by Ngudo-Gapo* 5. *Abotani and Abing Chenah* 6. *Abotani, Mouse and Rat* 7. *Abotani's Adventure* 8. *Abotani and Frog* 9. *Abotani's Marriage with Donyi Yayi* 10. *Donyi Yayi's Transformation into Sunrays* 11. *Tale of Kibo and Rambo*

Folktales are excellent for addressing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills- either separately or integration with each other. Because of the many different versions and the varieties of potential activities, they are especially suitable for use in the multilevel classroom. Because of their flexibility, folktales can also be easily integrated with a variety of approaches to language teaching (Taylor 4).

For example,

TALE OF KIBO AND RAMBO

Riki was the fourth brother of Abotani. Riki had two wicked son Kibo and Rambo. They are considered as evil spirits. Abotani used to have three eyes. The third eye help Abotani to see good and bad, just and unjust, desirable and undesirable. Abotani was very smart and more powerful than Kibo and Rambo. He defeated them in every battle.

Abotani got married to Kesing Yamming, sister of Kibo and Rambo. One day Kibo,

Rambo and Abotani were practicing rope climbing. A piece of rope was tied to a high mountain and the other piece was tied to the ground. Abotani climbed the rope against the will of his wife.

Kibo and Rambo cut the rope while Abotani was half way to the mountain top. But due to the supernatural power of his third eye Abotani did not fall. But he had not taken the third eye with him and he could not detect the evil intentions of Kibo and Rambo.

He was hanging on the rope and wanted to come down. But Kibo placed sharp objects on the ground. Abotani pleaded for the help. Kibo and Rambo asked his third eye in return to rescue his life.

Abotani informed them that he did not take the eye with him and kept it under the grass. While Abotani was still in the sky Kibo and Rambo searched his third eye and took it away. With the help of his wife, Abotani came down safely.

Kibo and Rambo stole his third eye. Since then, he lost his supernatural power. After the loss of the third eye Abotani became an ordinary man. Kibo and Rambo became the leaders of all evil spirits.

Moral: *The tale conveys the team of deception. It also reflects the supernatural beliefs and presents the leader of evil spirits.*

Through the given example, the researcher has discovered various characteristics of Boh Ramo Bokar folktales. The folktales have concrete ideas and immediate goals which can be managed easily and understood by the Boh Ramo Bokar children. Most of the words are associated with things that one can smell, touch, feel, taste and see, which help children to learn the English language quickly. They have simple and easy sentences, words, vocabulary, and grammar.

Boh Ramo Bokar folktales address issues and themes that are thoughtful and important for both children and adults. The reflection of various themes and ideas concerning human life contributes to the broader educational exploration. Folktales raise essential social questions like responsibility towards the elders, parents, relatives, siblings, poor and needy people. Above folktales, mirror many social problems and concerns. For example, the death

of a child, sudden bad luck, split between siblings, finding a wife, leaving home and finding one's way in the world, loneliness, disappointment etc.

Boh Ramo Bokar folktales share hopes and dreams, pains and sorrow that people experience in real life. They contain many psychologically essential themes. For instance, revenge, pride, jealousy, greed, kindness, forgiveness, disloyalty etc. are morally vital issues because they show what is wrong, what is right, and the results of both. Characters in folktales enhance children's imagination and creativity. The folktales provide a general idea of the story, characters, environment and enhances the vision of the students.

Gathering to tell and listen to stories is the evolutionary precursor to the modern classroom. Our brains and our cultures have coevolved with storytelling, the structure of narratives, and the tale of heroes. Always use stories when you teach, no matter the age of your students. Moreover, when you choose the stories, make sure that they focus on human relationships, integrity, and overcoming challenges. These stories and the messages they contain will infect the minds of the members of your tribe, bringing them closer together and enhancing their ability to learn (Cozolino 180).

For example,

ABOTANI'S DISCOVERY OF SALT

Once upon a time Abotani was chasing an unknown animal in the forest. On the way he met two Tibetan ladies who gave him a piece of rock salt. When he returned home, he found his younger brother Abotaro growing weaker every passing day. He gave him a piece of rock salt, which Abotaro chewed and after three days he became healthy.

Abotaro always questioned him about the origin of salt. But Abotani never revealed it to him. In this way many days passed. One day Abotaro was missing from the house. Abotani looked for him everywhere but he was nowhere to be found. Abotani then walked towards the forest where he met the two Tibetan ladies. Abotani was surprised to see Abotaro had already become the master of the house. Abotani asked him to return back home, but Abotaro refused. He settled there forever. From this very day Abotani began to pursue business with Tibet and salt was used for cooking purposes.

After some decades Abotani and Abotaro developed their own scripts. Abotaro's script was written on stones and became permanent. Abotani's scripts were written on animal skins and were eaten up by his own pet dog. And before teaching his children Abotani passed away. So, the children of Abotani could not have script of their own till today.

Moral: *The tale educates about the origin of salt and the initiation of trading with Tibet. It enlightens about the reason behind lack of Boh Ramo Bokar script.*

The above tale exemplifies that it is suitable for discussion, promote interaction, communication and reflection concerning general questions about identity and uniqueness. It is used as a way of looking at a culture and comparing it with other cultures. They are closer to real-life experiences. It helps to build connections between preserving one's roots and beliefs.

It benefits the learners to know about their cultural differences, presenting various aspects of social life, and traditions, and can contribute positivity in learning and teaching language. The outlooks characters' reveal greed and kindness, pride and humility, food and family, the birth of children, weddings and festivity, happiness and sadness, love and care as common aspects of humanity. These aspects hold a vital place in Boh Ramo Bokar folktales.

These attributes are common to humanity, and they are focused on folktales. They can provide cultural knowledge and cultural stories which are useful in teaching language. Teaching tales from the student's cultural point of view is likely to increase interest, motivation, and positive attitudes towards learning and teaching language. Encouraging students to share tales from their culture, either verbally or in writing will boost their learning language more easily.

In addition, folktales are especially useful for developing cognitive and academic skills. For example, academic tasks often require students to compare, contrast, and evaluate. One can require students to use these skills at nearly any language level by having them read or listen to different versions of folktales, identify how they are similar and different, and then consider how important the similarities and differences are amongst them. Folktales are similarly well suited for academic skills like analyzing, drawing inferences, synthesizing, summarizing, and noticing underlying text structures (Taylor 3).

For example,

MONKEYS AND THE LOST ART

In the ancient time the monkeys were considered to be more intelligent and superior than Abotani. Because the monkeys had bows, arrows, swords, machetes (locally known as daos) and knives. They were skilled at shooting, hitting, cutting, and jumping.

Abotani felt inferior before them. He was jealous with monkey's advancements. Abotani thought of an idea, day and night to destroy the pride of monkeys.

One day when the monkeys were swimming, keeping their weapons on the river bank; Abotani walk behind the monkeys, loosen the threads of the bows and tied them across each other. Later the monkeys started pushing, pulling and jerking each other because the threads were tied hard.

Gradually, the angry monkeys started to fight among themselves and threw the weapons. In this way the monkeys lost their skills of shooting.

Moral: *The folktale shows the relationship of human and animal. It pictured how nature has played an important role in shaping their lives. The humans have actually inculcated shooting, cutting, jumping and hitting skills from the monkeys.*

The above tale demonstrate that some skills and culture are influenced and learned from the Monkeys. For example, human beings inherited their ability to swimming, cutting, shooting, using bows, arrows, knives, and machete from the Monkeys. Thus, children learn to get positive attitudes towards the environment. The idea of nature and environment can shape children's environmental attitudes. Environmental elements help to meet their emotional, mental and social development.

Folktales have elements of cognitive and emotional arousal, which can make children sensitive to society. They can invoke the festive atmosphere and help in considerable cultural understanding like the children learn about the origin of life on earth, teaching and suggestion elements, wedding culture and tradition performed by the groom and bride's family. Children are presented to custom, culture and tradition associated with the festival, religion, lifestyle, origin and migration of nature and creatures etc. Moreover, it connects them to traditional God and Goddesses.

Four Key Aspects of Learning in a Tribal Classroom

1. Safe and trusting relationship between teachers and students. 2. Thinking and feeling. 3. Low to moderate states of anxiety and arousal. 4. The co-construction of narratives. The development of the human brain is linked with co-creation of stories and storytelling among members of a tribe. "Stories are wonderful because they always contain both these elements. They also support memory and emotional regulation, and serve as a guide for future behaviour" (Cozzolino 35).

For example,

ABOTANI AND HIS ORIGIN

In ancient times, Earth and Sky were husband and wife; Mother Earth was the wife of Father Sky. The union of Earth and Sky gave birth to the Sun and Moon. The Sun was the daughter, and the Moon was the son, the first children of Earth and Sky. Later, they gave birth to a creature called Abotani.

He is considered the second child and the first human on earth. Sun, Moon, and Abotani lived happily together. However, Sun and Moon later decided to stay with their Father Sky, while Abotani chose to stay with Mother Earth. In the course of time, the Sun and the Moon became Gods and looked after the world of Abotani. Abotani worshipped and prayed to both the Sun and the Moon as a gesture of gratitude. He often sought advice from them because they were his elders and considered them superior in the universe.

Gradually, Abotani made friendships with non-human creatures of the earth, and he started living with them. Abotani considered Tiger and Devil as his brothers.

Moral: *The tale illustrates the human being's association with nature.*

The stories contain elements of thoughts and feeling. They are transferred from brain to brain across the society and help to integrate the functioning of individuals, groups by teaching skills, transmitting values, creating perspective and goals. Teachers can connect with students through stories. Teachers can also ask the students to write their narratives which can help the students to reframe the past failure.

The cultural traits in Boh Ramo Bokar folktale give another reason for choosing it as a material for teaching and learning four ESL skills. It enlightens them about how they could

be a part of their tradition. Bringing Boh Ramo Bokar folktales into the classroom which are associated with children's cultural background, is like bringing the culture inside. It encourages the children to have their culture as well as their favourite tales.

The local Environment consists not only of the physical and natural world but also the socio-cultural world. All children have a voice at home, and the school needs to ensure that their voices continue to be heard in the classroom as well. Communities also have rich cultural resources: local stories, songs, jokes and riddles, and art, all of which can enrich language and knowledge in schools. They also have rich oral histories. By imposing silence, we stifle children (NCF 32).

For example,

ABOTANI'S TEARS GIVEN BY NGUDO-GAPO

Once upon a time, there were two beautiful pigeon birds called Ngudo and Gapo. These birds used to sing during sunrise and sunset. But one day, their babies were killed by the heat of the Sun. Ngudo and Gapo were very shocked.

They started crying kak-kak ssss koho-koho. Abotani heard that sound and said, "Oh! Your voice is melodious." This made Ngudo and Gapo feel very angry and insulted. They cursed Abotani. "We reward you with pain and sorrow." Their curse had its effect on him. It is believed that till today, humans experience sorrow. Human tears and the incidents of the death of babies are connected with the curse of pigeons. Due to sadness, the pigeons decided not to maintain and rebuild their nest again.

Therefore, the pigeons started laying eggs on branches. They don't use leaves and grass for their nest. Till today, Ngudo and Gapo sing during sunrise and sunset in the memories of their lost babies.

Moral: *The story teaches children not to laugh at other people without genuine reason. It is believed that the person may be poor and that those who make fun of others might be cursed with the same condition.*

Through the given folktale, the researcher discovered that the cultural identity of the society can be preserved and strengthen through the education curriculum. The stories, songs

etc. are associated with the cultural heritage, and the children can learn better. Folklore can be included in the language textbooks because it can motivate the children's imagination, creativity and enriched their cultural awareness. Language and knowledge in schools can deepen through local stories, songs, jokes and riddles. Teachers could help children through activities based on local traditions.

The researcher evaluated positive statement on teaching and learning through folktales can help to connect with the people, preservation of culture and tradition. It also enhances the development, integration, social cohesion and emotional regulation within the tribal society.

It can benefit teachers and community children in learning ESL skills because the folktales have the features of repetition, predictability, simple grammar, concrete vocabulary, illustrations, moral values and cultural elements. Boh Ramo Bokar folktales have the traits of repetition of themes, ideas, characters, and words. These folktales are predictable because of their repetitive nature, and one can easily predict what is coming next.

Therefore, the researcher has analyzed that teaching and learning four ESL skills using Boh Ramo Bokar folktales can enlighten the reader's attention in broader perspectives about second language in India. First, learning the English Language and four ESL skills in its place. Second, preserving and rooting the children with Boh Ramo Bokar culture and tradition. Third, language preserves culture, the latter influences the language. Fourth, it brings culture into the ESL classroom as an educational function. Fifth, it educates the Boh Ramo Bokar children about concern and responsibility towards the values of human's association with nature, creatures, culture and language.

References:

- Ahi Berat, Dilara Yaya, et.al. "The Concepts of Environment in Folktales from Different Cultures: Analysis of Content and Visuals". International Electronic Journal of Environmental Education, 2014, Print.
- Bobro, Marc, "Folktales and Philosophy for Children". *Analytic Teaching*, Vol. 25. No. 2.

- Cozolino, Louis. *Attachment-Based Teaching*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014. Print.
- Dhasmana, M.M. *The Ramos of Arunachal*. Concept Publishing Company, 1979. Print.
- NCERT. *The National Curriculum Framework*. New Delhi: NCERT, 2005. Print.
- Sehrawat, Meena and Subodh K. Jha. *English Language Teaching*. New Delhi: Lakshi Publishers and Distributors, 2016. Print.
- Taylor, Eric. *Using Folktales for Language Teacher*. Cambridge United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Print.
- Interview
- Field work:
 1. Koje, Maling. Field work 15th Jan 2017
 2. Koje, Pordung. Field work 17th Jan 2017
 3. Puchung, Tabi. Field work. 16th July 2018
 4. Pupor, Tame. Field work. 2nd August 2018