

# Harmonizing Symbolic Representations and Teaching Methods with the Child's Ability: A Discourse Analysis Approach



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## Abstract

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### Keywords:

Symbolic representations, methods, Meaning-Text analysis, learning goals

Symbolic representations and the methods a teacher adopts to teach pupils, especially at the lower levels are very germane to the actualization of a child's learning goals and objectives. Nowadays, many parents, teachers, school owners, and other educational stakeholders are interested in ensuring that a child graduates from one class to another at a rapid rate; whether or not the child understands what he/she learns is not the concern of many educational stakeholders today. This study investigates the graphic symbols and the methods that teachers use to teach pupils, especially at the lower levels. This is qualitative research that adopts Meaning-Text-Theory as its theoretical framework for data analysis. Data were randomly selected from English Alphabetic and phonic textbooks. Participant and non-participant observations of teachers' teachings in pre-primary schools in Ogun and Lagos States, Nigeria, were adopted as instruments for data collection. One of the major findings reveals that the drilling and recitations methods that most teachers use in teaching their pupils yield little or no results as the pupils they teach find it difficult to neither identify nor understand what they are being taught. The paper, therefore, recommends that pupils should first be tested to know their capabilities before teachers apply learners' friendly practical method because failure to do so may result in non-achievement of the learning goals and objectives.

## هماهنگ سازی بازنمایی های نمادین و روش های آموزشی با توانایی کودک: رویکرد تحلیل گفتمان

بازنمایی های نمادین و روش هایی که معلم برای آموزش به دانش آموزان به کار می گیرد، به ویژه در سطوح پایین تر، برای تحقق اهداف و مقاصد یادگیری کودک بسیار مؤثر است. امروزه، بسیاری از والدین، معلمان، صاحبان مدارس و سایر ذینفعان آموزشی علاقه مند هستند تا اطمینان حاصل کنند که کودک از کلاسی به کلاس دیگر با سرعت بالایی فارغ التحصیل می شود. اینکه کودک آنچه را که می آموزد می فهمد یا نه، دغدغه بسیاری از ذینفعان آموزشی امروز نیست. این پژوهش به بررسی نمادهای گرافیکی و روش هایی می پردازد که معلمان برای آموزش به دانش آموزان به ویژه در سطوح پایین تر به کار می برند. این تحقیق کیفی است که نظریه معنا-متن را به عنوان چارچوب نظری خود برای تجزیه و تحلیل داده ها اتخاذ می کند. داده ها به طور تصادفی از کتاب های درسی الفبای انگلیسی و آوایی انتخاب شدند. مشاهدات مشارکت کننده و غیرمشارکت کننده از آموزه های معلمان در مدارس پیش دبستانی در ایالات اوگان و لاگوس، نیجریه، به عنوان ابزاری برای جمع آوری داده ها استفاده شد. یکی از یافته های اصلی نشان می دهد که روش های حفاری و تلاوت که اغلب معلمان در آموزش به دانش آموزان خود استفاده می کنند، نتیجه کمی یا بدون نتیجه می دهد، زیرا دانش آموزانی که آموزش می دهند، نه شناسایی و نه درک آنچه به آنها آموزش داده می شود، دشوار است. بنابراین، این مقاله توصیه می کند که دانش آموزان ابتدا باید برای شناخت توانایی های خود، قبل از اینکه معلمان روش عملی دوستانه یادگیرنده را به کار گیرند، آزمایش شوند، زیرا عدم انجام این کار ممکن است منجر به عدم دستیابی به اهداف و مقاصد یادگیری شود.

واژگان کلیدی: بازنمایی های نمادین، روش ها، تحلیل معنا-متن، اهداف یادگیری

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## Introduction

Symbolic representations (Wikipedia) and teaching methods are very important in the teaching of pupils, especially at the lower levels. Before these representations and methods are considered, the abilities of a child should be tested. Li et.al (2018) observe that symbolic representations are foundations for advanced Mathematics abilities while Stokke and Seloe (2020) maintain that they are keys to political representation and deserve critical attention. Symbolic Representations (SRs) are not only foundations for a child's learning but concrete foundations for all abilities, especially in preschool children. Li et.al (2018) observe that symbolic representations are foundations for advanced mathematics abilities. To better this, they are concrete foundations for all abilities, especially in preschool children. The symbols and methods that teachers adopt (among other factors such as children's early exposures to the language of the environment and other languages, the learning environment, language attitude, etc.) to help young children to develop their domains of learning easily are SRs. Bidaradi et al (2016) posits that "a good teaching method helps the students to question their preconceptions and motivates them to learn." Again, the characteristics of the learners influence the suitability, efficiency, and appropriateness of a method adopted by the teachers because, if the symbols used in the texts and the methods adopted by the teachers are not well interpreted and applied (after due testing of the child's abilities), there could be confusion, lack of understanding and a complete waste of time by the teachers, the pupils, their parents, and other education stakeholders.

Symbolic representations should be well presented and interpreted before the teachers consciously study them, and understand pupils' characteristics and abilities before they (i.e., the teachers) apply suitable techniques of teaching. Bialystok (1993) asserts that children's early mental representations must change to support the cognitive skills they serve and that some pieces of evidence from children's understanding of written language and written numbers show that early conceptions are inadequate for engaging in symbolic thoughts. To ensure that children's early cognitive abilities are sharpened, there is an urgent need for teachers to align SRs with teaching methods used at the pre-school levels.

A lot of scholars have done several pieces of research on different traditional and modern teaching methods available for teachers to explore. Teaching methods are said to "enable education to fulfill its aims" (Hirsh, et al 2020). Traditional and contemporary methods of teaching are still applied by teachers especially in Ogun and Lagos State, Nigeria. Namitha (2018) identifies

traditional and multimedia teaching/innovative methods such as the mnemonic words-words-words approach, role-playing, scenario analysis-based teaching, and the mind-map method. In the schools, we randomly selected, only the traditional methods of teaching were applied probably due to the poverty level of the school owners or lack of digital knowledge. The problem is not in the availability of teaching methods but in the application of these methods by the teacher to help learners to comprehend what they are being taught. What then are teaching methods?

Although some researchers (such as Al-Banna & Aziz, 2014, and MacDonald (2021,)) have differentiated teaching methods from teaching strategies, here, teaching methods are synonymous with teaching principles, strategies, patterns, and styles. They can be teacher-centered, lecturing (Gopinath 2015) or student-focused (co-creation of knowledge” (Gregory 2002 as cited in Gopinath, 2015); teacher-centered if the teacher dominates the teaching and student-centered if the teacher constructs the teaching with the pupils. ( i.e. if the teacher only controls them but allows them to think-out ideas and practice them. Many of these teaching methods are not rightfully applied and as such there may be futuristic problems in early childhood care and education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, there seem to be insufficient materials for early childhood care and education both in many public and private schools despite the government’s formulation of various education policies (such as UBEC, 2004, FMR, 2009 and NERDC 2013) for the betterment of its citizens at all levels. Gbadegesin (2018) avers that the commitment of public sectors to early childhood care and education has been inadequate and “left to the hands of private investors without proper monitoring and control” (21). Many financially buoyant parents send their children and wards to schools that charge exorbitant tuition and sometimes their children and wards are not still taught well because the necessary resources are not available anywhere. Training and retraining of teachers on how to teach effectively in many schools in Nigeria are just based on the uttering stage; the actual actions on these are not always done.

It is worth noting that although there is a global interest in early childhood education, it is very sad that many education stakeholders in Nigeria are no longer interested in what the child learns but in how he or she is promoted from one class to another. King et al (2016) even observe that although automatic promotion policy states that the lenient promotion of students with poor performance does not hamper their abilities, promoting students into grades that they do not prepare for may backfire, and lead to early dropout. To prevent this and many other hydra-headed

problems in early childhood care and education, there should be an agreement between the symbolic representations, the child's ability, and the teacher's choice of methods.

To ensure that symbolic representations correspond with the child's ability and the teaching methods used by the teachers, especially at lower levels, there must be a holistic interest in children's education and total re-visitation and/or complete overhauling of the present methods of recitations and drillings used by teachers in private schools in Lagos and Ogun States, SRs and pupil's ability. To align with Gbadegesin's (2018) observation, there should be a correction of the mismatch between theory and practice in pre-school institutions and by extension between the SRs in textbooks and teachers' teaching methods. The unfortunate situation which normally arises where teachers are confused about how to teach, what to teach, and the child's ability should equally be revisited and addressed immediately.

It seems that many teachers (especially in private schools) do not understand the teaching methods that are suitable for pupils in lower classes and as such, they use uniform teaching methods that yield little or no results. If they can differentiate the one suitable for individuals, small groups or large groups, half of the problems of teaching may be minimized. The inability to choose the right teaching methods that match the pupils' texts is a serious problem that should be addressed on time. Going through the schools, we discovered that all the teachers use the same methods of recitations, drilling, and demonstrations to teach pupils. How about the thousand and one methods of teaching? These have been relegated to the background. Some teachers, in the course of their inability to choose a suitable method, even combine up to five levels and teach alone. In this unhealthy and confusing situation, can there be any appropriate strategy for the teacher? We observe that where this occurs, a lot of these pupils neither understood what they were taught nor did tests and examinations successfully on their own.

The major objective of this research, therefore, is to investigate how letter symbols in English and Phonic Textbooks of preschool pupils can be presented to coincide with the teaching methods adopted by the preschool teachers so that their pupils can comprehend what they are being taught. Also, to suggest a teaching method that may be used to help the pupils easily understand symbolic representatives and to identify how the pupils' abilities can be tested. We observe that many preschool teachers were unable to discover suitable teaching strategies that they can apply in teaching preschool children; this research, therefore, attempts to suggest ways that this can be done successfully so that pupils can start their educational foundation properly.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Symbolic Representations**

Symbolic representation is ambiguous and multidisciplinary in nature. Bialystok (1992) observes that it is the specialized form of knowledge necessary for literacy and numeracy skills and that this takes a gradual development but is evident when a child is 6. It is a representation of something “through a symbol” to evoke the “particular meanings or emotions “(Pitkin 1967 as cited in Lombardo and Meier (2018). Corbit and Callaghand (2015) posit that it is a communicative behavior that differentiates humans from other species and binds them together. Symbolic representations denote any interpretative symbols used by pupils and for pupils (at all levels) especially in lower classes such as the letter symbols and number symbols. This study focuses on written letters of alphabets, words, the objects they stand for, and the methods that the teacher uses in teaching these symbols so that pupils can easily understand their lessons. For this research, the English alphabets/ letters for Nursery 1 and 2, the phonic symbols for crèche and KG classes (used by pupils below two years in crèche) and Nursery 2, (for pupils between 2 and 3 years) are selected as data.

### **Teaching Methods**

Teaching methods are the principles, patterns, and strategies used by teachers to help pupils learn. These methods are partly determined by the subject matter and the learners. Besides these, the symbols used in texts, the teacher’s knowledge, and the environment of learning can also influence the choice of teaching methods. Tungoe (2016) observes that teachers should “understand that every student learns differently “so that they can employ “the best methods and practices” in their daily activities. In other to understand the pupils, their cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and intuitive abilities have to be tested by teachers to know when to start, where to start, how to start; and how to continue teaching the pupils for effectiveness. Teachers have to painstakingly select teaching methods that are student-focused and easy for them to comprehend the subject matter.

Some teaching methods are visual, audio, case study, demonstration, lecture, question-and-answer, etc. Lathan, (nd) identifies A-Z teaching methods (such as audio tutorials, bulletin boards, classroom discussion, debates, exhibits and display, flashcards, genius hour, hands-on-activities, interviewing, lecturing, making posters, oral reports, panel discussions, recitations, scrapbooks, team-building exercises, use of community resources, video lessons, web quest. etc). Many other

scholars such as Reece & Walker (2009, Gill 2013, MacDonald, (2021, Al-Banna & Aziz, 2014) avert that lecture, demonstration, team teaching discussion, debate, question and answer, and video. seminar, laboratory, workshop, gaming/quiz, ice breaker, buzz group, field trip, role play, project/assignment, tutorial, open/distance learning, and one-on-one as some teaching methods available for teachers to adopt. Reece & Walker (2009 further group these teaching methods into individual teaching strategies, large group strategies, and small group strategies. Project/assignment and tutorial are individual strategies, lecture, demonstration, team teaching, discussion, debate, question and answer, and video as large group strategies while the rest are categorized into small group strategies. Many other scholars have given different traditional and contemporary examples of teaching methods.

Having considered several teaching methods, Woolf (2009) pinpoints that human teachers do not have complete truth about which teaching strategies are effective or how alternate teaching strategies affect students learning; so, he suggests (among other methods) the use of intelligent interactive tutors such as facial animation, machine learning, classic intelligent tutors, supervised and non-supervised learning methods and computational advisor), Woolf's observation can only be possible in a digital classroom but the reverse is the case in the schools we randomly selected in Ogun and Lagos States. Nigeria seems to be working anticlockwise in terms of educational technology; in this 21st century when the world is embracing digital learning, the majority of our schools are still using chalks and blackboards or markers and whiteboards. Many teachers do not even know what an interactive board looks like, let alone use it.

Whether digital or traditional, the teaching methods that we think may be necessary for teaching young children in their formative ages should incorporate the maxims of education (such as starting from the known to the unknown, simple to complex, analysis to synthesis, particular to general, empirical to rational, induction to deduction, psychological to logical, actual to a representative, near too far, concrete to abstract, whole to part, definite to indefinite (Vallikat 2021, Kaushal, 2017) and should be the learners' friendly practical model

### **Learners' Friendly Practical Method**

We suggest that the Learners' Friendly Practical Method (LefriPram) should be used by teachers nowadays in today's teaching, possibly due to the new normal caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. A situation where both teachers and their pupils have to mask up before they can interact needs to

be handled with complete physical and emotional inputs so that learning outputs can be achieved and LefriPram may achieve this goal.

LefriPram entails that the teacher (as a matter of necessity) first and foremost understands the learner's abilities and disabilities, likes, and dislikes; dos and don'ts, and these peculiarities. These could be studied in the first two weeks of resumption (to have a peripheral knowledge of the child). Having done this, the teacher deliberately becomes very friendly (but firm) to the child. After these steps, he/she through the learning period of the child, may identify their uniqueness based on their abilities and thereafter group them into learning clusters. As young as they are, the teacher should be able to know who is a leader among them and who can be led. He/she, therefore, use the play-way method coupled with digital learners (audio and video current software) to teach the pupils (what is suitable to their levels). It, therefore, means that the teacher will select the SRs that align with the child's ability and administer them individually to each child according to their abilities.

### **Child's Ability**

A child's ability is all-encompassing; it includes the child's cognition, affection, psychomotor and intuitive skills. It means the child's enablement to learn and solve problems (cognitive ability); ability to be engaged in social interactions and emotional regulation; the child's speech, language, and useability (which are displayed through the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing) and a child's physical skills such as a fine motor (finger skills) and gross motor (whole body) skills and sensory awareness (Kidsense, 2017).

It is unfortunate that in choosing teaching methods, many teachers in Ogun and Lagos did not consider the affective, intuitive, or psychomotor levels of a child; all they were interested in and concentrated on was the cognitive domain. Again, many did not care to differentiate a child that has a high level of intelligence quotient (IQ) from one that has a low IQ to know how to teach and what method to adopt while teaching. They seemed to have been very busy with their uniform method from the inception of their teaching to the end of it. These facts were gathered through our participant observations during classroom discourses, where the teachers delivered lessons.

### **Textual Analysis**

Textual analysis (TA) is a polymorphous word that comprises all sorts of analyses that are either written or spoken; it is a broad term for various research methods used to describe, interpret and

understand texts (Gaulfield 2019). Simply put, it is a critique, an evaluation, or an assessment of any written or spoken language in any field of human endeavor. It is an aspect of the study of discourse that centers on an individual's understanding of the language, symbols, objects, pictures, etc. used in the text. The term textual is derived from the Latin word *textuales*; its adjective form is *textus* (text) (Fregal 2014). According to Brockert (2008 as cited in Goncalves 2018), a text is a verbal production that carries a linguistically organized message and tends to produce in a receiver, an effect of coherence. It is a linguistic sign (Fregal 2014). So, in this work, text and textual are used interchangeably to mean the same thing (i.e. SRs in forms of words, objects, symbols, etc). To buttress this, Gonclaves (2018) submits that text relates to several points of view.

Many other scholars such as Crombie (1985) maintain that the study of discourse must involve the study of every aspect of language. Many researchers have given various definitions of what exactly a text is. Some equate a text to discourse; and some, text as discourse. A text is any object whose meaning and significance can be interpreted in depth; a film, an image, an artifact, or a place (Gaulfield 2019). It is “a: semantic unit” (Omonazin 2014); a “production that provokes a reaction in the receptor” (De Beaugrande & Dressler 1986 as cited in Omonazin, 2014). De Beaugrande & Dressler explain that it “is a communicative event” that comprises seven textuality principles namely: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situational, and intertextuality. These principles are said to be divided into two major categories namely, the text-internal (this comprises the first three principles and text-external which are context-related principles, i.e., the last four principles). Fourclough (1995) opines that TA is organized into vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure.

Nordquist (2019) considers text linguistics as a branch of linguistics that is concerned with the description and analysis of extended written and spoken texts in communication contexts. He observes that cohesion, coherence, principles, and informativeness are elements of textuality. Mechkunova (2019) maintains that texts should be parsed to extract machine-readable facts from them; hence the need for textual analysis. Several approaches are available for textual analysis of in all fields of human endeavor.

The various approaches and methods that researchers adopt in analyzing texts must be suitable to the type or nature of the texts in question. Wetheral (2001) observes that a text can be analyzed using four approaches and these are, the study of the language system (pattern), the use of language as activity (interactional elements), the focus on ideologies biases (implicit assumptions), and



mediated discourse analysis. Again, Frey et al (1999) also identify rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis, and performance studies as four approaches to text analysis. Each of these approaches has numerous theoretical frameworks (within them). For example, rhetorical criticism has classical rhetoric, contemporary rhetoric, historical criticism, biographical studies, and many other theories under it. The same applies to other major approaches.

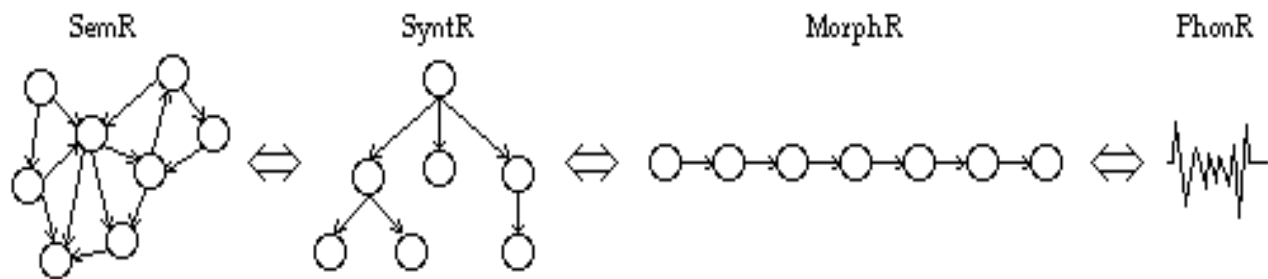
This study, therefore, focuses on the framework of interaction analysis and specifically adopted Aleksandr Zolovskij and Igo Mel 'cuk's Meaning-Text-Theory. The major aspect of the analysis is the application of semantic representations to selected texts.

### **Meaning Text-Theory**

Meaning Text-Theory (MTT) was propounded by Aleksandr Zolovskij and Igo Mel 'cuk in the 1960s (Wikipedia; Kahane, 2019). It is a very complex and polymorphous theory that centers on linguistic descriptions of texts; it also accommodates computer applications such as machine translation, phraseology, and lexicography due to its formal characters (en.m.wikipedia.org). This theory deals with the semantics of an utterance to its phonetics, syntactic and morphological levels. Representations of different levels are mapped in a sequence of networks known as semantic representation (=SemR) through syntactic representation (=SyntR) to morphological representation (=MorphR) and Phonetic representation (=PhonR).

The (=SemR) comprises semantic structures (=SemS), a network of predications represented as nodes (lexical and grammatical meanings) to arguments. The time is made up of semantic structure, semantic-communicative structure, rhetorical structure, and structure (hence SemR=<SemS, Sem-CommS, RhetS, RefS (Milicevic, 2006). The synth uses dependency trees (SyntS) especially, the syntactic communicative structures and anaphoric structures; the deep syntactic representation (DSyntR) and the surface syntactic representation (SSyntR) are realized here. In other words, four structures are realised at the DSyntR namely, deep-syntactic structure, deep-syntactic-communicative structure, deep-syntactic-prosodic structure and Deep-syntactic – Anaphoric structure, hence the formula: [DSyntR= < DSyntS, Dsynt-CommS, DSynt-ProS, DSynt-AnaphS>]. Morphy is realized in a fixed linearised order that shows the ordering of elements in the actual utterances. There are two levels of Morphy namely, the deep (DMorphR) and surface (SMorphR) morphological representations. The surface morphological component (a subset of morphemic rule) finally maps (= SMorphR) onto PhonR (Wikipedia).

The diagram below shows the MTT's four levels of representations of meaning as explained above.



(Wikipedia)

The time is a web-like structure, SyntR applies dependency trees, (this constitutes the syntactic structures (SyntS); the Morphy are shown as strings of morphemes shown in linear order while the PhonR is presented in wave-like strings.

This paper cannot accommodate the vastness of MTT levels of representations. So, the only aspect of where major analysis is done is the time. It is worth noting that the relationships of these linguistics levels are said to be mappings (translations) and not transformational; their mappings are said to be mediated by sets of rules known as components. (Wikipedia). This entails that there are sufficient language-specific transitions between these representation levels.

### The Study Area: Nigeria

Nigeria is often regarded as the giant of Africa possibly because of its achievements or as a result of its large population. Olukoju (2004) observes that it is located in West Africa with the Republic of Benin in the Western part; Cameroon and Chad in the Eastern part; Niger in the Northern part and Guinea in the Southern part. It has a population of over 150 million and has just celebrated its 61<sup>st</sup> Independence from the British colonization on October, 1st, 2021. It is now bedecked with unprecedented insecurity of lives and property, and, hopefully, this will soon be a thing of the past. Nigeria is made up of 6 geopolitical zones namely, the South-South, the South-East, the South-West, the North-East, the North-West, and the North-Central. The study region is the South-West which comprises, Ondo, Ekiti, Osun, Oyo, Ogun; and Lagos, and the sample population (i.e. the locations of this study) are Lagos and Ogun; these were purposively selected.

## Methodology

This study is explanatory research that adopts a qualitative approach, its design is an ex post facto type; data are not manipulated. Data were randomly gathered from many private schools, in Lagos and Ogun State. Participants and non-participant observations were done by the researcher and her assistants. The researcher used research assistants who were teachers in crèches, KG classes, and nursery classes to gather data. Video clips and audio tapes from the live teachings were sent to the researcher's phones; the researcher watched and listened to the messages sent to her phone, and randomly selected a few data for this study. The nature of this research and the mode of analysis adopted in this work informed the selection of a few data.

The researcher visited some schools (after obtaining permission from necessary authorities) and sat at the back of the class with a recorder and a note to jot down the necessary information she needed. At the same time, she employed research assistants who helped her record some teachings and sent them to her via her phone. Again, letter symbols were randomly selected from the *Right Approach to English for Nursery schools Volume 1 and 2* by Modupe, A Yisa et al (2021) and used as data. Data were first presented (as Pre- 1, Pre-2, etc.) before their analysis using the discourse approach of text analysis and specifically the semantic representations of Aleksandr Zolovskij and Igor Mel'cut's Meaning-Text-Theory. The aspects of analysis that were mainly applicable were the functional meanings, the interconnectivity between the lexical functions, and the communicative imports to data randomly selected for the study here; emphasis is placed on language functions and not on structures.

Having engaged in participant and non-participant observations, and listened to both the video and audio clips sent to the researcher by the research assistants, the researcher observed that the teaching methods that the teachers used at the lower levels in Ogun and Lagos were predominantly recitations, demonstrations, drilling, play-way and textbook methods. There were no multimedia methods or individualized digital methods in all the schools selected for this study. Possibly, the poverty levels of the school owners might have been responsible for it.

## Results

Symbolic representations and their interpretations from Alphabetic and Phonic textbooks are presented first before their analyses are shown as follows:

**Data Presentation and Analysis (From Nursery 1 & 2)***Pre- 1*

- (a) This is a letter a
- (b) Trace a
- (c) Sound and color a
- (d) a



Trace a



*Note: The first box contains the expected task from the pupils; boxes 2 to 4 contain one of the pupil's responses to box 1 (the expected task).*

**Analysis of Pre-1**

There is a mapping from the [= SemR] of “*this is a letter a*” through the [=SyntR] to the [=Morph R] to the [=PhonR]. At the [=SyntR], this is declarative, which is only easily interpreted by the teacher but not the pupils. In other words, although this (symbol) is accessible to the teachers and the pupils, the pupils (as a result of their inability to interpret the symbol and their age (below two years) find it hard to understand any of the *many-to-many* correspondence available for them. The propositional, i.e., the [=situational] or the paraphrases of ‘*this is a letter a*’ are the [= Es] “*see letter a*”, “*look at letter a*”, “*this is how to letter a is written*” and another [=E] as in “*write a letter a*. The outcome of the first [= E] in 1 (a) is capable of confusing the pupils since they are unfamiliar to them (children in crèche are expected to be sung for).

The semantemes [=lexical meaning of a language [=l] of (b) is non-elementary to the teachers but elementary i.e. [=sem, semantic primitive) to the pupils. The [=l] of the five small boxes (on the right-hand side of the text) conveys the [= Sem-CommS] and [= RhetS] (i.e., the communicative and the stylistic meaning. The intention of the text composer and the teachers (of this) is to convey the [=SemS] into a specific interpretation by showing where the text should be packaged (i.e., in the box). The [=SemS] of the five boxes only maps out the aesthetic intents of the message but not the meanings to the pupils.

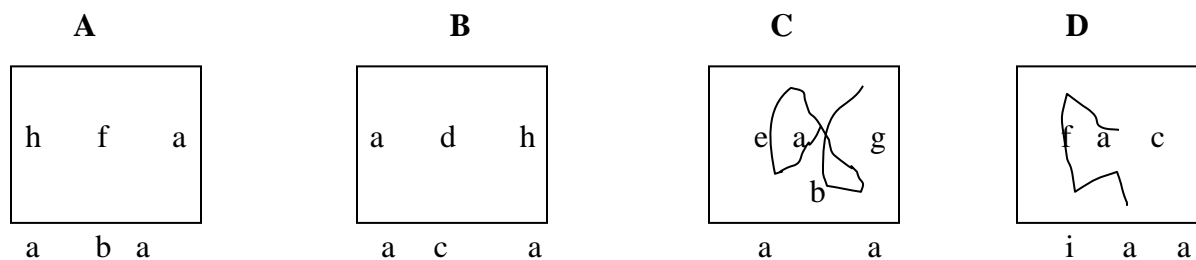
Again, 1 (a), (b), (c) and (d) all display their [= Sem-CommS] as the “*letter a*” (i.e., the theme, T) and other [= Es] are the rhemes (Rs). The [=RhetS] is official here. To further explain the Theme (T) ~Rheme (R) communication in (b) we have. [ this] **T** [ is letter a] **R**.

The teaching method adopted to teach the students 1 (a) to (d) were repetition and drilling methods. The name of the object in (d) was not written and the pupils of less than 2 were expected to write “apple” by themselves. The [= SemS] of the object in (d) and the name given to the letter “a” should have been subjected to paraphrases but the reverse was the case as the teachers only assumes that the pupils are capable of doing the task expected of them.

It should also be noted that the symbols, their interpretations, and the meanings attached to them are unfamiliar to the children because apart from the fact that all of them are under 2 years of age, they do not understand the objects since many of the objects are not found in the environments that these children grow. Again, at this stage, a child has not to been taught colors; but suddenly, he/she is expected to use colors to color the objects written out in the texts. It indicates the teachers have not tested the ability of these children to know what they can do and what they cannot do. From our observation, these children were still learning how to handle pencils. Also, the activities given to these them were very many for their cognitive accommodation, therefore, making it herculean for them to understand what they were expected and how they were supposed to do them. In fact, in the course of helping one of them to do the work, he exclaimed that the work was too much for him to do.

## Pre-2

*Circle letter a*



*Note: Box A & B contain the child's expected tasks; Box C & D contains the finished tasks by one of the pupils*

### Analysis of Pre-2

The semantemes of the [=situational] meaning of Pre 2, *Circle letter a* are both non-elementary and elementary. The teacher can map out various meanings from it but the pupils cannot due to their levels of exposure, understanding, and methods that the teacher used for them. The [=RhetS] intention of the teacher by giving the pupils a set of different boxes to carry out the same assignment could have been intentional; a desire to express its repetition method to ensure that the pupils grasp what is being taught. The [= RhetS] is suitable, official, aesthetic, universally accepted, and satisfactory at this level but the pupils at this level are unable to do the tasks because they (the class activities) are beyond their levels.

Again, the complexity of [=RhetS] vis-à-vis the age bracket of the pupils (below two years) and the repetition and recitation methods applied here only make the [= PhonR] non-elementary to the pupils as they were able to recite the *letter an* as expected of them but they were alien to the semantic interpretations of the symbols in their expected tasks. Having violated the emphasis on the central aspect of meaning and concentrated on the peripherals; the pupils were unable to perform the activities expected from them as shown in the selected Boxes C and D by one of the pupils.

### Pre-3

A: Excerpt from Audio clip	B: Excerpt from the Phonic Book
Teacher (T) 1 : Oya, let's go	ba    ma    sa    ya
T2: We want to do	
T3: We want to play	ha    na    ja    ka
T4: We want to play	
T5: : Irregular two letter words	fa    la    la    WA
T6: We want to	
T7: Bo an ga	ca    qa    wa    ya
Pupils(P 8): bo a ga	
T9: Go a ga	sa    da    ha    ra
P10: Go a ga	
T11: Go a a	pa    xa    ma    fa
P12: Go an a	

T13: she an o

*This box contains excerpts A (teachers' method) and B: symbolic representations*

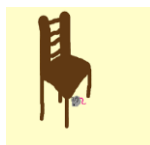
Pre-3 contains *excerpt A* which is made up of 13 utterances in which 10 were predominated uttered by the teacher and only 3 slots unavoidably “imposed” on the pupils. The paraphrastic power of T1 i.e. the propositional meanings could have been quite ambiguous if the preceding SemRs were not verbalized immediately by the teacher. Again, the repetitive method of delivery and the recitation as shown in *excerpt A* is in disharmony with the lettered symbolic representations in *Excerpt B*.

The intensification, assertiveness, verbalization, and positionality of the teacher's utterances can only be said to add color to the teaching. In other words, the pupils can only recite them rather than having any idea of what their meanings are. Their [=Sems] is non-elementary to the teacher but not the pupils.

#### Pre-4

*Recite the poem and color the pictures*

1. Pussy cat, pussy cat
2. Where have you been?
3. I've been to London
4. To see the Queen.
5. Pussy cay, pussy cat,
6. What did you do there?
7. I scared a little mouse



8. Under the chair







#### Analysis of Pre-4

The paraphrastic power of the [= SemR] and [=PhonR] of Pre-4 with the age bracket of the pupil and the method of recitation applied by the teacher only resulted in the disharmony of all of these. The propositional meanings in terms of the lexical unit of the above are both elementary and non-elementary. The [=Sem-commS] verbalized assertively was intentionally meant for the pupils to

recite this for recitation purposes only. Many of these pupils do not even know the lexical items used in the poem nor do they understand the connectivity/ interrelationships between them. The [=RhetR] intended for communicative purposes is defeated as the pupils were unable to decipher any meaning they were reciting. The text producer and the teacher need to work in tandem to ensure that there is unity between the graphic symbols, the abilities of the child, and the methods of presentation and teaching given to the pupils.

### Pre-5

*Write the sound of each object.*

- |       |   |            |
|-------|---|------------|
| (i)   |    | ---ncle.   |
| (ii)  |    | ---ase     |
| (iii) |  | ---ell     |
| (iv)  |  | --ylophone |
| (v)   |  | ---am      |
| (vi)  |  | --- ero    |

*Note: the objects above are: (i.) a man (ii) a vase, (iii) a well, (iv) a xylophone, (iv) a yam and (vi) a zero*



### Analysis of Pre-5

The text presenters of the above seem not to understand the level of the readership of those expected to read these symbolic representations, and as such the propositional meanings of (i) to (vi) appear to be beyond the users of these texts. The high level of the paraphrases of (iii) for instance, which may be “tell, fell, sell, bell, cell, dell, hell, jell”, etc. is beyond a child’s (at this level’s) comprehension. However, although the [=RhetS] of (i) to (vi) are pleasant to behold, the communicative intents of the symbols are elementary and difficult for the pupils to understand. The central structure of meaning and its lexical functions (i.e. the SemS and its LF) are strange to the pupils. This results in disharmony between the symbolic representation, the child’s ability, the SemS, and the teaching methods. The outcome of this (dis)agreement is a lack of understanding by the pupils. In other words, although the [- Sem-commS] and the [= RhetS] were intended to communicate understanding, the reverse was the case, as the pupils in questions gave wrong answers, especially to (i), (iv), and (vi).

### Discussion

This study analyzed the randomly selected data from an English alphabet book and a phonic book of pupils in crèches, kindergarten, nursery 1, and nursery 2 respectively. And having analyzed Aleksandr Zolovskij and Igo Mel'cut's Meaning-Text-Theory, the following findings were made

- Teachers predominantly applied propositional meanings to lettered symbolic representations at the expense of these pupils’ abilities
- Situational lexical meanings tend to confuse the pupils since their interpretative symbols are not domiciled in the learning environments of the pupils in question
- The [-Sem-CommS + Rhett + RefS] intentionally presented to enable the pupils to communicate effectively do not measure up to the expectations of the presenters and text composers.
- The stylistics and referential meanings are quite aesthetic, and communicative and many are non-elementary to the pupils.
- Also, the lettered symbolic representations and the communicative intentions of the teachers were beautifully presented, but they did not lead to the actualization of the intended goals and objectives of teaching in these lower classes.

## Conclusions

This paper, from a discourse analysis text linguistic point of view, proposes a harmonization of lettered symbolic representations, their interpretations, and the methods that teachers should adopt to teach pupils. The researcher observes that the pupils at these lower levels (crèche, KG, Nursery 1 and 2, being the foundation levels) should be taught right. A situation whereby the text producer presents texts without due consideration of the child's abilities (cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and intuitive) is unhealthy for the child's academic future. Again, the adoption of repetition and the recitation of teaching methods can only help the pupils to improve their [= PhonR] i.e. the articulatory level while the [= SemR] level is relegated to the background.

Simplified, easy-to-understand symbolic representations available in the academic environments of a child and a harmonized functional, pupil-oriented interactional method of teaching should be adopted by a teacher in teaching pupils in lower classes. The researcher suggests that LefriPram should be adopted by the teachers after due selections or choice of suitable symbolic representations by concerned education stakeholders might have been done. Again, there is a need for pupils' abilities to be tested orally to ascertain whether or not they understand the objects they are to be taught before the application of the suggested method.

To further ensure that the symbolic representations tally with the teachers' choice of methods for effective teaching, this research recommends the following:

- Teachers should recommend and use symbolic representations that are in harmony with the child's ability (cognitive, affective, psychomotor, and intuitive abilities)
- The text makers should produce texts after due consideration of a child's complex abilities.
- The text producers and the teachers should ensure that their presentations are understood by the majority of pupils in the class; in other words, the text producers should not be interested only in what they produce but the intended audience (who will use the texts).
- Individual teachers should be assigned to handle one class and not a mixture of all classes; possibly due to poverty or lack of knowledge of how a class should be taught.
- Intelligent pupils who are identified through their complete participation and ability to give the right answers should be attended to first and thereafter, the teacher should give easy-to-do group class-works while he/she attends to those with low IQ within the speculated time.

- Education stakeholders in Lagos and Ogun should be interested in digital classrooms to further advancement in education.
- Education stakeholders should devote quality time to overseeing everything that takes place in the classroom between the teachers and the pupils.
- Government at all levels should be interested in training and retraining teachers for effectiveness constantly
- Government at all levels should also support private school owners financially to help in building their academic structures.

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