A Discourse Analysis of Educational Theatre in Tertiary Education

By

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Abstract
Drama is life; life is drama, in the sense that in everyday life we observe theatrical experiences, and literarily speaking, situational ironies of life are drama in themselves, all of which teach and call for some stocktaking. Drama touches on all spheres of life and pursuits. The discipline, partly, is a linguistic phenomenon, and partly, performance, a performing art. Drama or a play, in a way, is "hatched" and executed in theatre. In the light of the above, this paper conducts a discourse analysis of the pedagogic relevance of Educational Theatre in tertiary education. It will ascertain what the Educational Theatre offers, in terms of utilitarian values, to students (of Theatre and Film Studies), the cast and crew as well as their audience or percipients. This essay will also find out the goals of Educational Theatre, generally, in the overall development of the learners' personality (attributes) and individuality. The knowledge of all of this will enable the classroom teacher of English and Drama to formulate his instructional objectives to fully reflect the three taxonomies of educational objectives, in such a way and manner that his learners will learn maximally. Learning is highly important, because the main goal of establishing Educational Theatre is to enable theatre students to learn something worthwhile about this social institution; after all, learning is construed, by way of exposition, as a relatively permanent change in behavior, acquired by practice or experience and not by drug habituation or imprinting. In view of this, theatre participants, especially students of theatre, must demonstrate evidence of having learned something relevant about theory and practice of theatre education, which they showcase in the necessary skills and competencies that have been inculcated in them.

Introduction

The education system is sequentially and systematically structured, horizontally and vertically, by way of curricula formulation. In each of the segments, Drama, as a literary course and genre, is taught partly or wholly. This paper will focus attention on the relevance of Educational Theatre in tertiary education. However, the various levels of the education system are not in free variation or mutually exclusive. They are in complementary distribution, since they do not dichotomize. While one level feeds the other, as it were, one absorbs the product of the other. In a way, the relationship that exists among them can be summed up in the Igbo proverb which says: *Nkwu gbajuoro onye no n'elu, o rutere onye no n'ala!* (When palm wine fills for the man on top, it gets filled for man down yonder)! This implies that the relationship is symbiotic; it is neither parasitic nor commensalistic.

Educational Theatre remains the powerhouse which sustains drama or play as performance; it is the figurative oven for baking this unique bread we call drama. It is also a unique forum which

brings the percipients and those in stage business - cast and crew - together for a theatrical show and which absorbs the attention of percipients Nwabueze's (2005:19] neologism or synonym for the theatre term, audience) in *willing suspension of disbelief.* It is at this point that drama goes beyond linguistic action or phenomenon (that is, a literary experience or play text), to what we may refer to as *performance,* when we apply available theatrical possibilities in the Educational Theatre.

It is on this scaffold that our discourse analysis of the pedagogic relevance of Educational Theatre in tertiary education is built.

Educational Theatre provides the individual and group opportunity for the development of language skills.

When plays are produced on stage, actors and actresses develop their language skills of *listening* and *speaking (oracy).* On the part of the percipients, they also develop their language skills of listening. They pay rapt attention and train their ears in sound discrimination in order to understand what is said on stage. Our reference to actors and actresses as well as stage hands pertain to students, and not mere reference to theatre as an open institution, where "anyone is at liberty to enter... and participate as a member of the audience in the performance of a play" (Brown, 1971:144).

Listening comprehension goes with concentration and concentration implies ability to suppress internal distractions within and outside the individuals (learners) who have come to watch a dramatic enactment on stage. In effect, both those in stage business and percipients train themselves in sound discrimination in order to fully appreciate dramatic performance on stage. Thus, in the Educational Theatre, drama provides an experience for the learners; it trains them to imbibe self-discipline both for the individual learners and a group in theatrical experience. The quality of self-discipline is essential, because drama is a group experience. Drama as group experience is an attribute we also find in the other performing arts, (Music and Dance), as well as such communal events as religious sermons, sports and celebrations Wilson (1991).

There is no doubt therefore that Educational Theatre provides a learning experience to students to inculcate self-discipline, concentration, including developing their language skills of speaking, listening (in sound discrimination) and reading. Indeed, since we live in a digital age, we do not rule out the literacies arising from the sweeping influence of the I. C. T. and globalization!

Educational Theatre avails Student Participants an opportunity to learn a lesson in social development.

Social adjustment is an aspect of social development, which the Educational Theatre avails an individual the opportunity. The process begins from home, the primary agent of socialization. Man as a social and gregarious animal has social interests. These interests include attending parties, getting involved in celebrations and participating in conversation Chauhan (2002).

In a formal education set up, at the tertiary level, the traditional discipline of psychology provides core learning experiences required in social adjustment and development. The specialist of this discipline studies social development in order to understand the nature of the learner's role expectations regarding his status in society. Besides, he examines social development so that

he may understand the genesis and development of a complicated social context, which confronts a learner in the classroom situation Akinboye (1985).

But Drama encompasses all features of this traditional discipline. Thus, in Educational Theatre, student participants learn a great deal about socialdevelopment and adjustment through plays produced on the stage. Regular attendance to and participation in the Educational Theatre could afford inestimable opportunities to theatre students to attain the pyramid of needs satisfaction. Of course, we are aware of the hierarchy needs, as enunciated by Abraham Maslow; those of physiological needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, self-esteem needs and self-actualization (quoted in Chauhan 2002:213, 214). Makinde (1987: 54), from the point of view of Guidance and Counseling, reconstructs the pyramid of needs satisfaction, in order of hierarchy as follows: psychological and biological needs, (needs for being) physically healthy, (need for being) mentally alert person nurtured, a good behaviour expected and becoming a whole personality. These psychological aspirations, as just hinted, are met in the discipline of applied psychology we refer to as Guidance and Counseling.

In addition to the attainment of these needs and satisfaction, Educational Theatre enables an individual to discover himself, i.e. *self-discovery.* This can be possible through a type of learning we refer to as *heuristic* (discovery) *learning.* Yes, it is possible while trying to address a challenge or to solve a particular task in a class work, a learner finds solution to another problem or challenge that has been plaguing him, when he least expects it. That is discovery or heuristic learning.

Drama produced in the Educational Theatre can be an outlet for counseling.
Plays that can fit into this picture are those Nwabueze (2005:20-23) calls "psychodrama" and "theatre therapy". He says that psychodrama is a term used to describe such activities as clinical role-playing, action analysis, drama therapy, behavioural rehearsal, improvisatory theatre and spontaneous happening. Nwabueze explains that psychodrama involves a kind of psychotherapy, and it is largely a method of healing through the use of action methods, among others. For clients in counselling sessions, who have maladjustment problems, psychodrama may be used successfully to remove symptoms, achieve behaviour modification and promote social adjustments. The process of theatre therapy may involve allowing a counselee or client to cry out his or her emotions in tragic situations in order to exorcize him. It may be any other strategy, (say, through community theatre), which enables the counselee to discover his or her strengths and weaknesses, and the knowledge will enable him or her to solve his or her own problems; in this way, he or she carries his or her own destiny.

However, Nwabueze explains that Theatre therapy utilizes techniques that are similar to both. The salient techniques of these involve affective, cognitive and psychomotor situations, realized through improvisation and role-playing. Using relevant plays in the Educational Theatre will enable teachers of English and Drama as well as Film Studies to explain to their learners how best to use them to achieve the desired objectives expected in counselling sessions.

Education Theatre develops intellectuality.
One of the cardinal goals of formal education is the development of intellectual abilities of learners, as enshrined in the *National Policy on Education.* (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004: 14, 18, 25, 26). Educational Theatre is among the structures in place in tertiary education as an

arm of the Theatre and Film Studies. In a way, this learning facility is a unique laboratory, where learners' intellectual abilities are challenged, trained and nurtured to cope with life's complexities in the deep things of their discipline as well as the social complexities of the twenty-first century information superhighway society of our global village. Plays produced in the Educational Theatre equip students of Theatre Studies to "develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments". In addition, it affords them a unique opportunity to "acquire both physical and intellectual skills, which will enable them to be self-reliant and useful members of the society" (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2004: 36).

By memorizing large and small selections of play texts, students of Theatre and Film Studies develop both their minds and intellect. It is not only by memorizing that they develop their intellectuality; they as well embark on reflective thinking. Thus, intellectuality is a cognitive experience acquired through reading of scripts to be acted on stage. The outcome of what is read from the scripts could elicit a reaction which can be affective or psychomotor. Also as a cognitive experience, reading of scripts and understanding such selections involve all the six levels of the cognitive domain. Such reactions that can be elicited could be at the levels of *knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis* and *evaluation* (Anyachonkeya 2004:329). These six levels encompass the lower and higher levels of the cognitive domain.

Educational Theatre inculcates desirable social habits in the learners.
These desirable social habits enhance "face-to-face group"relations, a group in which members meet at a given time and place, where percipients, cast and crew belong (Chauhan 2002:523). Such desirable social habits when inculcated and nurtured through the Educational Theatre inhibit the emission of undesirable learner behaviour and unwholesome social habits. We observe that those desirable social habits may also be construed as positive human qualities of personality attributes. These qualities could be engendered by Theatre discipline or influenced by the stage director and Theatre teacher.

When it comes to the play director, he is expected to be a symbol of discipline; he mixes his leadership traits and styles with dignity, and dignity goes with authority. In effect, the Theatre Director should not lose sight of the fact that it is maturity of character that draws respect; this wins for him the respect of his cast and crew. In other words, he should be a person of integrity; he should be humane and flexible in leadership styles, and above all, Godly. Indeed, "goodwill and respect come from achievement, not propaganda!" (Anyachonkeya 2006:6).

The desirable or wholesome qualities which the Educational Theatre inculcates in the learners are those of physical energy, perseverance, responsibility, initiative, self-control, decisiveness, sincerity, humour, loyalty, and leadership (Farrant 1976: 208-211). Others include sharing, cooperation, team spirit, dignity of labour, tolerance, give-and-take, endurance, patience, etc.
Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya (2008: 64) are convinced that Educational Theatre exposes the participant and non-participant observers to the opportunities and possibilities that abound in the Theatre. They say that for the participant observers -- cast and crew — theatre practice inculcates in them certain desirable social habits such as character moulding in social interaction, sharing and giving as well as team spirit. Educational Theatre helps the non-participant observers ~ the audience or percipients — to unconsciously develop interest in the Theatre, while those in the Theatre discipline, as Majors, are fully exposed to the practical complexities which cannot be

acquired by mere theoretical classroom work and also brought close to all the emotional involvement with a play script which only the Educational Theatre arouses and sustains.

With this avalanche of desirable social habits or qualities, as laid bare by Farrant as well as Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya, we will be able to meet the demands of Theatre practice, which Ola Rotimi (2004: x) prefaces thus: "(I)n theatre work, my bargain is that of the devil himself: You volunteer your person, I insist on your soul till the production is over...,"

Since play production is a group experience, play directors, the cast and crew as well as percipients have special roles to play to actualize anyproduction. Besides, Educational Theatre brings the cast and crew as well as the percipients, all Theatre students, into direct contact. Thus, the director should radiate social qualities expected of a leader, while those in the Theatre business should bring theirs to bear to produce a unified experience characterized by friendliness and trust Anyachonkeya and Anyachonkeya (2011).

Education Theatre is an instrument for propaganda.
According to *The Chambers Dictionary,* "propaganda is (a)n organized spreading of doctrine, true or false information, opinions, etc, especially to bring about change or reform." Anyachonkeya (2007:165) says that propaganda is an instrument of politics, and exerts power of social control, etc. He explains that the function of propaganda is not essentially to convert; rather its function is to attract followers and to keep them in line.

Theatricians, (another neologism of Nwabueze [2005:18] for playwrights) have written numerous plays, which, basically, are instruments of propaganda or social commentary, the intent of which is to spread an opinion or doctrine. The overall goal of a propagandist is to spread a doctrine, to bring about change or reform. At times, the plays of a propagandist and playwright are sponsored by government or (NGOs) nongovernmental organizations, as an outlet for power control. Since propaganda may be beneficial, selfish or negative, the dramatic poet achieves his whim or objective using plays. Plays whose subject matter is on war or warfare are primarily propaganda. "The Biafran Armed Forces Theater experience" typifies what and how Theater could be used as agent of propaganda. So "the nature and aim of both theatre and propaganda are interrelated: to use knowledge to direct or instruct people to behave in predetermined or expected ways" (Emeana, 2005: 478)."

Some African playwrights such as Soyinka, de Graft and Rotimi have produced propaganda plays to teach students what propaganda plays are and their content. Normally propaganda plays violate or bend the rules of logic and ignore logical principles in a bid to persuade the percipients to adopt the point of view of the propagandists who cause such plays to be written and produced on stage. Propaganda encourages short circuit rational thought and it encourages this by agitating the emotions, by exploiting insecurities, by capitalizing on the ambiguity of language and by bending the rules of logic (Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania 2000). As observed above, propaganda plays are meant to bring about change through awareness creation, the intent of which could be positive, selfish or negative.

Educational Theatre is a unique clinic for therapeutic treatment.
Creative drama helps to resuscitate and revive tired and bored minds (Nwabueze , 2005). Life's vagaries are inexhaustible. Life is like a jig-saw puzzle with most of its pieces missing. Tensions of social life continue to mount. People gasp for breath. The boiling pot simmers; its vapours clamour in indignation, looking for an exit for escape to join the universal nature.

The whole picture just painted above well describes the realities of our contemporary life. Percipients visit the Educational Theatre in search of solution to myriads of social problems that assail them through didacticism. They go there in search of solace and succour. And they find therapeutic answers to ease off tension. For the percipients, who watch on stage, plays teach and regale them on the benefits of adversity. From what they see and hear on stage, they certainly will agree with Ngoka (1986: 150), who has drawn our attention to Thomson, who says: "The human race is son of sorrow born; and each must have his portion: vulgar minds refuse or crouch beneath their load: the brave bear theirs without ripening." Ngoka further draws our attention to yet another pensive thought by Hall: "Trials of every kind may await you, sterner and darker than any yet experienced; do not anticipate them but do not forget their possibilities" (1986:150).

The Educational Theatre thus manifests itself as a unique clinic, where percipients get some relief to problems that plague them. In the process, they tend to forget their problems and worries for a while. After all, Duruaku regales us that if problems do not exist, we soon forget the existence of God; and that if the head stops moving, birds will perch on it (quoted in Agwu and Anyachonkeya 2008).

Educational Theatre encourages play as a healthy social habit and as a linguistic heritage.
Play is an activity embarked upon by children and sometimes by adults, which involves creative occupation of some sort and which absorbs the attention of the participant and helps the individual deal with the world. In children, play could be solitary, parallel, co-operative or shifting-group play. These forms of play are healthy; they enliven the drama for the Educational Theatre.

As asserted above, play and also games are linguistic heritage of a people, which are handed on to the succeeding generations of human society. Lowenfeld (1971:19) concurs and puts it this way:

> Children (and adults as well) have played since the dawn of civilization, and descriptions of their games are to be found throughout the literature of mankind. Every civilization has handed on to its children, from one generation to another, traditional types of games....

Play, as well, is a linguistic experience, as hinted earlier. It can be used in plays to foreground some points. Leech (1983: 57, 67) says that:

> Deliberate linguistic foregrounding is not confined to poetry, but is found, for example, in joking speech and in children's games.

> Literature is distinguished... by the consistency and systematic character of foregrounding....

When plays and games are repeatedly structured they become parallelistic. Thus, linguistic foregrounding, says Leech, cited above, is very often connected with rhetorical emphasis and memorability. While we agree that play is a social activity as against the academic activity in the Educational Theatre; nevertheless, we do not rule out this social activity in certain episodes and scenes of some plays, woven in, either as flashback or whatever technique. For instance, Zulu Sofola has amply used play in her *Memories in the Moonlight,* also *Onukwube* and *Ojaadili* of Odunke Artists. In these play texts, the playwrights document this social heritage of Africa that exists in oral literature that is fast going into extinction, owing to the eroding influence of western civilization. On this note, the social activity we call play has a strong connection with the academic activity of Theatre plays. Therefore, play as social activity in Theatre play reminds us of the way we lived, a social document, in dramatic milieu, of our cultural heritage.

Educational Theatre is a learning facility that develops the communicative abilities of learners.

Learners amply use the language skills of listening, speaking, as well as paralinguistic features, which enable them to communicate effectively. Educational Theatre widens their holistic vocabulary (listening, spoken, reading and written) and by means of which they communicate to their audience. When learners act plays on stage, they learn their lines, which they memorize and speak on stage. Thus, this educational facility inculcates in them the rudiments of communication skills. Interpersonal communication is a facet of communication, which the Education Theatre sharpens in the learners.

Educational Theatre engenders cultural participation and cultural preservation through Community Theatre.

In Community Theatre learners appreciate the need for cultural participation. Thus, through this innovative theatre, also, which is produced in the Educational Theatre, learners learn vital lessons in social mobilization and rural development (Nwamuo, 1996). Nwamuo elaborates the utilitarian values of Community Theatre. According to him:

> Community theatre is theatre organized by and/or for the members of the community with the prime moving force of enacting values upheld by the society. It is theatre which has social, educational and humanistic motivations, for apart from finding solutions to a community's problem, such theatre instructs individuals through participation, to develop self-reliant skills and creative energies needed in ensuring community growth and development. Such theatre exists to raise the level of awareness and consciousness among the people and awaken in them a positive community action, the desire for change and development (1).

To corroborate Nwamuo's exposition and explanation of community theatre, Colin Chambers (2002: 171), states: "Lying outside, and usually in opposition to, mainstream theatre, it responds to the concerns and serves the needs of the community in which it is performed." In effect, Community Theatre makes strong impact on the theatre students.

Community Theatre provides an opportunity for the rural populace to project their plight; it makes them aware of their plight and also makes them aware of their potentials so that they may improve their lot. Duruaku (1996) is of the opinion that Community Theatre is 'popular' and people oriented, in the sense that all those involved in the process of development are in fact prepared to take their destiny in their own hands to improve their lives.

As a learning facility, the Educational Theatre preserves the past and present cultural experiences of the people. This theatre has strong impact on the students as they are part and parcel of their society. Moreover, literary writers get the raw material for their works from the society, in which they write as fiction, an imaginative reconstruction of social reality. Theatre students must be introduced to this innovative theatre, so that on graduation they fit into the society which they are bona fide members. They cannot be societal misfits, or else we have failed as both curriculum planners and curriculum implementers in the field. Mackey and Cooper (2000: 103) have made important statement on this issue. They assert: "To understand a play, therefore, you have to address the culture that created that play and playwright and the society in which the audience lived." We do not have any reason to disagree with Mackey and Cooper.

There are lots of cultural experiences of the people, which exemplify cultural participation, and which are incorporated into plays. Such experiences abound in virtually all cultures and subcultures. For instance, in the Igbo speech community, we find *Mmonwu* masquerade, which is a dramatic experience found in practically all parts of Igbo land. Ugonna (1984) has documented this cultural experience, which encourages cultural participation in his work entitled *Mmonwu: A Dramatic Tradition of the Igbo.*

We equally find "Mbom Uzo" and "Mwam Akwa" celebrations in Mbano district, "Ikwe Ezi", in Mgbidi, in Oru West Local Government Area, all in Imo State and many other examples that are not drama in themselves but contain certain dramatic imprints and features which justify their documentation by dramatic poets for social document and preservation for posterity.

Educational Theatre is a learning facility in tertiary education that moulds learners as versatile scholars.

Since drama is life and life is drama, drama thrives in all aspects of human life. Thus, learners as actors and stage hands are exposed as well to the registers of all professions and disciplines from what they learn or do on stage. That is why we have to agree with Nwabueze (2005:19, 20) who asserts that: Through playwriting, the theatre artist becomes a philosopher, psychologist, and creative artist; through acting, he demonstrates his penchant for creativity and role playing; through technical set- design, he becomes a teacher and educator and through technical set-design, he becomes an architect, an engineer, a fine artist, a draughtsman; and through Theatre Administration and Management, he becomes a beauty expert in both physical and metaphysical dimensions.

In apparent display of erudition and versatility in learning and scholarship, the Educational Theatre affords the student-actor "a chance" to, (if we may adapt the declaration of Esedebe (2003:2) to Theatre), speak *ex-cathedra,* (and) "to say practically anything he likes to speak without being questioned or challenged". It is not only a chance to speak "ex-cathedra", but by extension, to yet evoke Nwabueze's (2005:2) declaration to Theatre, the EducationalTheatre as

well gives the student-actor "the opportunity of discussing his discipline before a multifaceted audience -- percipients -- without running into the danger of obscurity."

The Education Theatre essentially is pedagogic.
It is a learning facility put in place to teach both the percipients and all those in the stage business. It is a type of laboratory, where learners are exposed, in practical terms, to the theoretical complexities of drama as a script, and drama as performance. In the Educational Theatre, the synonymous and antonymous relations that exist between drama as a script and drama as performance emerge for the blind to see and the deaf to hear.

The Educational Theatre inculcates in the students theatre ethics and shapes their professional career. It also teaches them to fish. In addition to these, the Educational Theatre trains learners to climb the good tree and it regales them at their mother's hearths to speak in proverbs. Anyachonkeya Anyachonkeya (2006: 65, 66) succinctly put the pedagogic training and gains of the Educational Theatre thus:

...(L)etus learn
that the black night nurses the
golden stars,
that until the rotten tooth is
pulled out, the mouth must
chew with caution,
that a wise person is spoken
to in proverbs, not in prose,
that if you run away from God,
you are still under him,
that if you notice a growing
stalk that can pierce your eye,
you uproot it, you don't
sharpen it,
that marriage is not palm wine
to be tasted,
that a chick that stands by its
mother, gets the thigh of the
grasshopper,
that if you get hold of the head
of a snake, the rest of it is
mere rope,
that he who craw-craw itches
in both mouth and buttocks
at the same time, does not
know when he has eaten excreta,
that you first find an escape
route before taunting the cobra,
that the cobra killed by a woman, is indeed dead,
that the cockroach is never
innocent among the committee of fowls,
that if trouble is nowhere to be

found, we lose sight of God,
that in the presence of the tongue,
the teeth do not litigate,
that the wife, who insists on
enquiring after her husband's
history, is only courting trouble,
that if you buy a wrapper for a
woman, she forgets her odd moments,
that if you carry a big heart to
marry a wife, if she does not
give birth to a dumb she
gives birth to a mad person,
that what a person does not know
is older than him ....
You wait, he who has a journey has
a coming back. Don't be in a hurry
to lick your fingers, since you are
not going to put them on the rafters.
When the hunting day comes, we
shall hunt in the backyard of grass-cutter ....

A good number of graduates of Educational Theatre in tertiary education teach Drama in our post-primary schools. In this way, they impart what they have learned to their learners. Those in the broadcast and print media as well as performing troupes and those in the film industry entertain their varied percipients. Here lies the symbiotic relationship that exists between Drama and among the various segments of our education in the country as well as the larger society! The Igbo proverb evoked above *–Nkwu gbajuoro onye no n'elu, o rutere onye no n'ala* - has application here.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted conducting a discourse analysis of the pedagogic relevance or gains of Educational Theatre in tertiary education. It is not only students in tertiary education that benefit from the Educational Theatre, the percipients, who also, come to watch plays equally benefit. The graduates of Theatre and Film studies, who were initiated in the Educational Theatre, on graduation, teach Drama in the primary and post-primary levels of our education. They in turn teach these students from the repertoire of what they have learned.

Those employed in the electronic and print media entertain, inform and educate their listening and reading audience. The same also is applicable to all others in the employ of cognate institutions.

Since education is the transmission of what is worthwhile to an individual, everybody benefits generally from the utilitarian gains of Educational Theatre in tertiary education.

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