

THE DYNAMIC ARTS OF THE THEATRE

Essays In Commemoration of 10th Anniversary
of the Department of Theatre Arts,
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta



EDITED BY
BASIL WIKINA
CHRIS OMOTOSHO

Bunmi Adedina

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Basil Wikina & Chris Omotosho
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DEDICATION

To

Those who have passed through our tutelage, both in theory
And practice: our Students-past and present. Choboi!!!

Briefs on Editors and Contributors

Basil L. Wikina, foundation head of the Department of Theatre Arts and current Dean, Student Affairs, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta. His areas of interest include Drama and Theatre in Education and Dramatic Literature.

Chris Omotosho, Ph.D. obtained his degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. He teaches Dramatic Literature, Criticism and Playwriting at the Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education Abeokuta where he currently occupies the seat of headship.

Femi Adedina, Ph.D. has been teaching for over two decades in higher institutions of learning. Foundation head of the Department of Theatre Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education; where he has been opportuned to be the head for five times he is in his sixth time presently. He is an adjunct Reader at the Department of Performing Arts and Culture, Lead City University Ibadan.

Tomori Oluwunmi, obtained his degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. He teaches Media Arts in the Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education Abeokuta.

Victor Taiwo, is of the Department of Mass Communication Southwestern University, Okun-Owa Ijebu Ode, Ogun State.

Edward T. Arueyingo, is a trained Theatre Critic and currently works with the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

Olusegun Ashade, Ph.D. obtained his degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. He teaches Media Arts in the School of Communication and Information Technology, Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta.

Olubunmi N. Adedina, a graduate of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan. A drama teacher at the Department of Theatre Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos, she has taught and carried out researches on children education and development. She is a creative writer, director and actor. Her areas of interest include drama in education, performance studies and Theatre Administration.

Olufemi Olaleye, Ph.D. is on the staff list of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan where he teaches Music.

Abimbola Adeniyi, teaches Media Arts at the Department of Theatre Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos. An

alumnus of OAU, Ife, UNIBADAN and UNILAG, he is currently a Ph.D. research student in Media and Communication Studies at De Monfort University, Leicester, United Kingdom.

Sunday Agholor, is a Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta, Nigeria. He is currently pursuing PhD studies in Computer Security at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. His research areas include Computer Security, Human Computer Interaction and e-Learning. He is a Member of NCS, TRCN and CPN.

Adekunle Adeniyi, obtained his degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. He teaches Theatre Management in the Department of Theatre Arts, Federal College of Education Abeokuta.

Olayinka Arogunmasa, obtained her degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. She is on the staff list of the Federal College of Education (SP), Oyo where she teaches at the Department of Theatre Arts. Her areas of interest include Dramatic Literature and Drama in Education.

Oluwaseun A. Fabusuyi, a Performing Arts graduate from University of Ilorin, obtained his Master's degree from the University of Lagos. He teaches Dance and Music at the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.

Ezekiel Bolaji, is a Linguist. He specialized in Phonology, Syntax and Sociolinguistic. He teaches speech related courses and Playwriting at the Department of Theatre Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos.

Jamal Apena, obtained his degrees in Theatre Arts from the University of Ibadan. He teaches Drama/Theatre Arts at the Creative Arts Department of Michael Otedola College of Primary Education, Noforija, Epe, Lagos. He has bias for Community Theatre/Theatre for Development and Language in Performance (with a comparative study of English and Yoruba languages' performances).

Oluwagbemiga Windapo, a versatile actor. He teaches at the Department of Theatre Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos.

Olumide Akinuli, has interest in Technical Theatre. He teaches at the Department of Creative and Cultural Arts, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos.

Preface

The hallmark of educational enterprise is assemblage of thoughts, ideas and research findings in a collection not just for public consumption but much more as contribution(s) to knowledge. The idea behind this book was borne out of this. As a department, we thought of no other way to celebrate the 10th landmark of our existence than to bring to the fore some of what we have been feeding our students with over the years. The book, one can say, is a chronicle of teachings and exhibition of the contents of curriculum of Theatre Arts studies not only in Colleges of Education but also in other institutions where Theatre Arts is being studied.

Our intention is to provide, through this book, a platform for the harmonization of different arms of Theatre in a collection-exemplifying the collaborative nature of Theatre. And to keep the reader or whoever may come across the book better informed about the beauty of Theatre Arts studies. Thus, the essays in the collection are carefully selected from the myriad of others to extend the frontiers of knowledge in Theatre Arts studies and deepen what is already known of the enigmatic study and profession of Theatre. They are attempts to appreciate the nature of Theatre Arts, its interrelationship with other disciplines and to expose its intrinsic value and relevance to the development of society.

It is a thing of joy for us that we are able to put this together, within the first ten years of our existence as a department. Our joy stemmed from the fact that not a few thought the department will not be able to survive this long. But the then "mustard seed" has grown to be a big oak, before our eyes, in the number of well groomed students we have produced over the years, the number of quality performances we have produced and the impacts made within the college and its environs.

It will not be out of place to appreciate those who have laboured, encouraged and are still assisting the Department to be where it is today. Dr. Kunle Filani, Dr. Lateef Adeniji, Dr. Ayodele Ajayi, Dr. Mrs. Bola Adeniji, Late Professor Dapo Adelugba, Professor Lanrele Bamidele, Late Mr. Dejo Kehinde (Moposo), Mrs. Matilda Alalade, Princes Ronke Shyllon, Mr. Yinka Ola-Williams, Mr. Edward Arueyingho, every member of staff in the department, our students- past and present, organizations like ANA, NANTAP, MCODER, not forgetting our regular audience for their patronage, over the years, and others who have contributed in one way or the other to our success story. Equally appreciated are the contributors who allowed their research works, thoughts and ideas to be published here. They have no doubt contributed, through this medium, to knowledge on the nature, beauty and dynamism of Theatre Arts. We say, Choboi!!! Above it all, to God be the greatest glory.

Editors

Foreword

Let me say from the onset that the title of this collection of essays is patronising, in one way or the other. Anyone who is familiar with Brian Hansen's book: *Theatre: The Dynamics of the Art* will be fascinated with this and would want to read it to see the perspective from which the title is adopted. On the other hand, as a book of readings, it provides materials for students to whom Theatre Arts studies is beyond the "fun" of acting and dancing. Those who conceived the idea of this publication must have been jolted by the last point. It is therefore a worthwhile effort to prove wrong the disparaging view of a snobbish academic environment that sees Theatre Arts Department as a fun-making course rather than a serious intellectual enterprise. The establishment of a Theatre Arts Department at the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta went through a lot of challenges to prove to its immediate environment that it is not a "show shop" but an intellectual workshop.

The essays in this book give a good picture of the nature of curriculum and what is taught in a Department of Theatre Arts not only in its breath but also in the depth of its content for scholarship. There are essays on Directing, Theatre Management, Dramatic Literature, Principles of Criticism of the Arts, Media Theory and Practice, Theatre for Development, Dance, Drama in Education, Technical Theatre, Music and Performance Studies. A strong point of the book however, is in the style of presentation of the essays to meet the readership demand of students. It is in a classroom teaching style. It could not be otherwise in a book coming from a Teachers' College; it is simple and well illustrated and does not indulge itself in tedious argument. It therefore solves, in content and style, the problems Hugh Hunt noticed in providing "a gown for Cinderella" in a University or College setting, where how and what to teach in Theatre Arts stares them in the face.

In stressing further the teaching of Theatre Arts in an age of Science and Technology, the chapter on ICT in Creative Arts adequately caters for design and production courses for Stage and Media. The chapter provides students from other disciplines who may want to enjoy the benefits of a liberal education setting which Theatre Arts studies do provide.

This publication is recommended to all students because it will provide materials for them in their study and it will widen the horizon of others who think that Theatre studies are a course they fear to handle. I congratulate the Editors for this lofty effort. After ten years of the Department's existence at FCE Abeokuta and weathering the storm, the publication has justified that the tree which people think will not survive, now stands tall amongst other trees at the Federal College of Education, Abeokuta.

Lanrele Bamidele,
Professor of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan.

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Introduction

Communication is a very vital aspect of human existence. It is the most complex form of human behaviour, communication sharply distinguishes us from other members of animal kingdom. It allows for the sharing of ideas and feelings which in actual fact is the basis of all human contact. The act of communication involves sending and receiving of messages through well developed skills. These skills are nurtured right from infancy to adulthood. This, being the basis for this paper, shall examine the role of creative arts in communicating with early learners. The need to communicate is paramount to all including children even when their speech is yet incoherent and hardly understood or difficult to understand. Since it is a necessary trait for humans, it is therefore important to address communication from early age. At this stage, the early learner is open to expressive arts through games, play, exercises, mime, dance, dramatised reading and design arts. Therefore, communication with the early learner especially during teaching and learning goes beyond the skill of speaking. Communication here should provide opportunities for relaxed learning and group experiences while creative arts produce better persons for a better society.

What is Communication?

The English word 'communication' is derived from a Latin noun and verb, 'communis' and 'communicare' respectively, which implies 'to make common'. Communication is a major feature of humans which encompasses a variety of experiences, actions, events, happenings and meanings. Just as it is with many other concepts, it is difficult to pin communication down to a single definition. But going by the many definitions preferred by various scholars we have arrived at the conclusion that, communication is basically the transmission of information from one person to another. Communication occurs when

our intentional or unintentional behavior becomes a message to which someone else attaches a meaning.

Communication is not just an act, but a process which includes transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills and knowledge. These are achieved by the use of symbols, spoken words, pictures, figures or illustrations. Communication starts with a sender who initiates a coded message, to a receiver who conceives its meaning based on his or her understanding. It is worthy to note that the process of communication is much complex than simply stated above. The interpretation of the actual message is basically the function and prerogative of the receiver. This is determined by a lot of factors such as language, symbols, signs, context etc. Therefore, communication occurs only when a person starts a process and the other completes it. This means that for communication to effectively take place, at least two people are needed.

Early Learning

Early learning can be equated with Early Childhood Education. Early learning is a period before a child's concrete learning takes place. It can be likened to the laying of a foundation for the building of a house. The manner in which the foundation is laid determines to a great extent the level to which the building is made. The implication is that a good and sound early childhood foundation is the backdrop to producing a well educated adult. Early learning is a structural element of educational reform. The standards set during early learning shape the content of instructional curriculum, set the goals of professional development, and establish the focus of outcomes assessment. This is also the stage where the child experiences psychomotor developments as he learns to run smoothly, climb, squat, jump, draw, fold etc. During these years, children experience rapid learning, growth and development.

The early learning stage covers between ages 3 to 12, which are the formative years. This developmental stage is made up of two periods namely, pre-school (early childhood stage) and middle childhood. The pre-school age is from age 3 to 5 when personality traits are formed. This stage comes before the enrolment of the child into the school system. However, in recent times children are now enrolled in schools

almost as soon as they are given birth to. They start from crèche or day care to play group, pre-nursery and then nursery. Most parents now see this as an avenue to be rid of their children's incessant disturbances for a period of time during the day. It has simply become a means of pushing their responsibilities to caregivers and teachers who are also not always trained in the art of child care.

The middle school stage starts from the enrolment of the child, that is, primary school from ages 5-12. At this stage the child develops communication skills and becomes proficient in the use of language as his vocabulary increases. Children at this stage are curious, inquisitive and highly expressive. It is a period of self discovery, integration into the society and personality development. The child develops increased memory, intellectual ability, experiences and logical reasoning. A further breakdown of the stages of child development by Bolarin (1995) is given as:

- i. Sensory- motor intelligence (0-2years)
- ii. Pre-conceptual thought (2-4years)
- iii. Intuitive thought (4-7years)
- iv. Concrete operations (7years)
- v. Formal operations (7years and above)

These stages serve as preparatory grounds for grooming the child to meet personal and group demands. Early learning can be quite an interesting and result oriented stage. All that is essential is to adopt the right methodology that will suit the age brackets involved

Creative Arts

While the process of communication remains unchanged with the early learner, the manner of communication defers from that of adults. This explains why some adults see children educators or care givers as being childish during teaching and learning process. The simple truth is that a child educator must necessarily device means of transmitting information to the child in the easiest form to aid understanding. It is important to note that teaching and learning involves communication. One of many ways that children educators have adopted for effective communication is Creative Arts

Creative Arts is an integral aspect of the school curriculum which might not necessarily stand on its own as a subject rather it is embedded in all other teaching subjects in form of drama, music and dance. It provides the teacher with the contents and techniques of teaching the Early Learner. Creative Arts embraces the liberating potential of a general fundamental education as distinct from a professional training in early childhood education in particular. Music, drama and dance are introduced to the child in subjects like Social Studies, Physical Education and Health Education as well as in other Cultural and Creative Arts which is now recognised as the mother umbrella. The starting point for Creative Arts in the school system is the "play group". Here, Creative Arts provides opportunities for learning and group experience in a relaxed atmosphere where the child is open to expressive arts.

Having highlighted the three major concepts of the paper, the next phase shall address three major questions:

- How can Creative Arts communicate?
- How appropriate is Creative Arts as a communication tool?
- How applicable is Creative Arts to communication?

The answers to these questions will be rolled into one as we examine the various approaches of Creative Arts communication. The emphasis will certainly be on the Early Learner who is to benefit from this process. Although this paper may not dwell mainly on the Creative Arts of drama, music and dance, but it shall expatiate on their characteristics and how applicable they are to young learners during teaching and learning sessions.

Approaches to Communication through Creative Arts

The aspects of drama, music and dance as Creative Arts to be discussed are:

- Play
- Role playing
- Play making
- Word games
- Exercise
- Dance

- Language learning
- Story telling
- Songs

Play

The concept of play is relevant to both formal and informal education. Play is very fundamental to the growth and development of the child. It is the child's way to 'doing', such as thinking, relating, working, daring, proving, creating, absorbing etc. It is therefore not just an activity of idleness. Children's play start from imitation of adult actions and the use of objects as symbols. Through play, a child exemplifies his ability to observe and reproduce facts. This is vital to encoding and decoding of information either as sender or receiver. It is from this word 'play' that the concept of playing and learning emanated. Here, children do not just play for playing sake rather play is channeled towards acquisition of skills and knowledge in a pre planned manner that accords the child full participation and involvement in the process.

Role Play

This is an approach devised during children dramatized comprehension passages. Drama aids intellectual development through role playing of scripted or unscripted plays. Here, young learners are given roles based on the play to be performed. It is better appreciated during improvisational skits and sketches. The individual resources of the child are enhanced, such as sensory perception, concentration, and emotional control, physical and verbal skills. The child is equipped with the ability to express himself or herself and communicates the intended message of his actions to his peers who serve as audience. Whenever success is achieved in making a point, the audience will react appropriately to establish the fact that communication has taken place.

Play Making

The objective of play making to the early learner is to explore creative potentials through self expression and communication. Improvisation as an important component of children drama provides

pleasure during teaching and learning process. Play making is the evolving of a dramatic piece through the creative process from improvisation. The 'polished piece' as the end product of improvisation goes through a process of gradual and systematic development which tasks the learner's verbal and non-verbal skills of communication. During play making process the child taps into his residual knowledge of his environment to represent a new experience, which he can only express in writing or verbally.

Word Games

This is another means of enhancing the treasure of words to improve children's vocabulary. This is achieved by the use of synonymous, antonyms, homophones, homonyms and so on. All these can be used in a game to enhance language facility. Some indigenous Nigerian languages are richly endowed with puns and tongue twisters just as it is with English language. The children take turns reciting such words as many times as possible at a rather fast pace to determine the winner. This exercise is useful in preventing stammering and stuttering in children. It also aids proper pronunciation of consonants and sound making especially for children who might have mother tongue interference in speech. Apart from the fact that children engage in learning, word games enhance word information which will result in good speech.

Dance

The art of dance is a major tool for children exercise. This is usually adopted for physical education where physical fitness is a priority. In primitive society, dance existed as a way of life and arts form. It possessed many functions and purposes such as educational, communicative and religious functions. Dance during physical exercises, develops children's sensibility. This is aside the fact that it helps the control of body movement and above all develops their psycho-motor skills. Great emphasis is laid on physical fitness in Nigerian School Curriculum. Hence, schools have a day set aside for sports. Early learners are not left out. They engage in wriggling and twisting activities in dance form.

Exercises

Exercises are physical activities that involve movement of different parts of the body. It is devised as a means to keep the body fit and in proper shape. Children are full of energy that needs to be expended. The psychomotor development of a child is prominent during exercises. It is during exercises that they learn to turn, twist, jump, run, bend, crawl, hop, skip and so on. This is also good for mental alertness, concentration and rapid learning.

Language Learning

Language goes beyond communication with one another. It is the avenue for introducing people to the order of the physical and social environment. Above all, languages enable us to have contact with other human beings. Given the multilingual stance of the Nigerian society and the inability to adopt one national language, early learners are exposed to the language of their locality in specific geographical settlements. However, it is possible for children to learn a number of languages simultaneously; this accounts for the inclusion of the three major Nigerian languages, Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa, in the school curriculum, right from early childhood stage. One way of encouraging and achieving language acquisition is through dramatization on stage. Interactions on stage and during performances enhance the learner's creative use of language. Language is dynamic and utterances are rich in value in terms of aesthetics, pragmatics and social contexts of language used.

Story Telling

Although, story telling is regarded as a narrative art, Drama is in itself also a narrative art (Nicholson, 2005). It is a good avenue to explore and represent narratives of selfhood, culture and community. Story telling is one of the oldest art forms. Story tellers engage their listeners through words and body expression. A good child educator is a good story teller. He captures their attention and task imaginations. Children enjoy lessons spiced with stories especially if such narrations are closely related to the subject in discussion. Apart from developing listening skills, story telling makes it possible for early learners to reproduce such stories to friends and at times parents. They develop well

organized thought patterns and spoken ability when allowed to imitate stories for dramatic performances. They decide on the message, encode the meaning, transmit it to a listener who receives and interprets it.

Songs

This approach automatically falls under music. Songs here might not necessarily require instrumentation. Songs are often adopted (especially in early learning) to communicate ideas and ideals. In most cases, these songs are short and easily understood by the learners who also sing along. Songs are used to inculcate values and constantly serve as a reminder to the child. Particularly, learners develop a sense of rhythm. They can also relate their movement effectively to accompanying music and sound as it is the practice during such sessions. For the early learners in pre-school age, rhymes are composed in musical form and they are taught the lyrics, which they sing regularly. Although, at this stage they cannot conceive the meaning of these songs, they however come to associate the lyrics with the accompanying music and sound.

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