

Full Length Research

Drama and History: Tools for Communicative Competence in English Language Teaching and Learning

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History is all about the past and drama is to act, the reconstruction of that past that is told in action with a setting, characters and audience. The drama is a crafty presentation of the text. Every enacted action is an historical event or close to an event that took place somewhere sometime in history. Every drama that is enacted might have been studied and the characters imitating someone's attitude in spoken words. Characters on stage do not think of what to say or do, they are already familiar with what has been studied and are competent in what they have studied. So communication, speaking and acting as part of the drama flows easily. The paper is on drama in history of education: A vital tool for communicative competence in teaching and learning English language. The paper examined the concept of drama, the place of dramatists in the society, the playwright and the commitment, the concept of history, education, functions of drama in relationship to history, communication and the artist and concluded with some recommendations as follows: (1) Literature which drama is part of and history should be made compulsory subject at the secondary education level. (2) Students should be encouraged to read literature and history for it makes them have competence in English language. (3) Students use of English will be fluent and competence errors will be minimized.

Key words: Drama, History, Education, and Communicative Language Skills.

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INTRODUCTION

Like other cultural activities in Nigeria, organized drama is in its infancy. It may be argued that drama is part of the life of the people that social functions, religious ceremonies and traditional festivals lend themselves early to dramatic performances. But in the past these were not well organized; in the absence of written plays and national British theaters, not much be achieved. It is only about twenty years ago that we saw any attempt to

organize drama, (Oladele 1976). Nigerian novelists, like other play wrights have been influenced by their environment and by the circumstances in history which helped to make that environment what it is today. They write partly to explain the social dilemma of the group to which has survived to some extent and might have survived more fully if certain historical events had not so drastically affected the people and the attitude of Nigerians not only to people to other races but also to themselves.

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word “*dran*” meaning “to do” or “to act” which is derived from the verb meaning “to do” or “to act”. The enactment of drama in theatre, performed by actors on a stage before an audience, presupposes collaborative modes of production and a collective form of reception. The structure of dramatic texts, unlike other forms of literature, indirectly influences this collaborative production and collective reception, (Ibitola 2016). According to Martins (2016), drama is imitated human action and any imitated human action is a narrative in the past which is associated with events in history. There are three necessary elements of drama (a) a story (b) told in action (c) by actors who impersonate the character of the story. Drama is the only genre of literature that is associated with stage performance.

Concept of Drama

We watch dramatic events every day in our life. Sometimes, we do not regard them as dramatic events, but they are. Every event that is told in the present is an history, especially when it is enacted on stage it becomes a drama. Think of the appearance of the village masquerade, and the attendant helter-skelter that goes with it. Think of two people fighting in a place, and some others separating them, think of the village meetings where the elders sit round a keg of palm wine, drinking and deliberating on certain issues; think of the village dancing group-women, girls, boys, even men; think of husband and wife fighting, their children watching them and crying; think of a church wedding ceremony or the traditional wedding ceremony especially, where the woman is meant to kneel down before her kinsmen including other views and sips a cup of wine and gives to the person she has chosen as a husband; think of the market scene, where women buy and sell with other activities going on there; think of situation in the street where a boy is making some love advances to a girl and she is pretending not to be interested; think of the classroom situation where the teacher is teaching and some students are busy addressing their private affairs, reading love letters or even fighting in the presence of the teacher. Also think of two touts fighting openly in the motor station, where they load passengers and goods in the vehicles.

All these are millions of other examples in fact, daily activities we experience in real life. However, they cannot be regarded as real drama because they are not done in imitation. They are not imitation of actions. They are all real. In drama, we imitate what others do in real life, in other to pass on a message. For example we can imitate how a husband is beating his wife, representing his wicked face, stout hands and the heavy blows he doles

on the woman, including, how the woman is responding to the treatment, by either mere sobbing, wailing or retaliating or calling the neighbors to come and save her. Wedding ceremony, baptism of a child, celebrating all kinds and other events of their short could be represented, all by imitation. Therefore, we cannot talk of drama without talking of imitation, (Sylvanus, 1994).

From the above examples therefore, it is deduced that drama is an imaginative composition of events arranged in time sequence, meant to be acted. It is indeed a story of some length, written to be acted out on the stage, by actors. It is a play such as one sees in the British theater. Drama is meant to be acted in order to get the full joy of it. Also drama is an imitation of the real happenings in life- the world of reality. In essence drama is a history or story told in action, by actors. Like history an event must always take place and people must be involved and dialogue will occur. This dialogue in drama is the conversation between two or more people, it is through this way that the story or the issue in the play could be unfolded and passed across. This same thing is applicable to history, there must be an event that will lead to dialogue that will be unfolded and passed across. Drama is action-pack. It cannot take place without action. Action is the main ingredient of drama. This is the physical movement of the people who are imitating the real characters in life on the stage.

Concept of History

The word “history” in simpler terms, is the study of the past. The word history is derived from the Greek word “*historia*” which was grafted into English language which means hundred years ago, (Ward 2011). History as a discipline has many definitions. It could be viewed from traditional definitions of history, modern definitions, from layman point of view etc. Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of current English defines history as the orderly description of the past, Kingsley (2016). This definition seems to be inadequate; it is true that traditionally, history has change from mere narration to analysis of events. These events or stories when narrated on a stage, is drama. The medium of committed history on stage is epic theater. Modern historian would also disagree with the definition given above by dictionary because it is not possible for historian to give complete account of the past, neither can playwright give. In other words, historians select the materials from the pool of materials available. The layman can define history as the story of mankind or the activities of men and women in the past. Others can see it as the record of the life and works of people in the past, while some will relate the term to the study of man in his environment.

In essence, people see history as the record of lives of the societies of man, all the changes which the society

has gone through, all the materials and conditions which helped or hindered development and the conditions of the present as a guide for the future. There is no doubt, that the term, history means different things to different philosophers of history. History is not merely a list of chronological events but a truthful integrated account of the relationship between persons, events, things, and places which have been selected for analysis by historian. Therefore drama and history are in the process of learning and teaching which education. All the above definitions have something in common about what learning and teaching is not. For learning to take place there must be change in the learner. The change in the learner implies that the learner has left the learning situation as a different person from what he was before he went into it. It must be expected that such changes that occur during the learning must be permanent. Any story learnt and enacted is very difficult to forget, this is because a past event is learnt and enacted on stage which makes a change in the learner which is permanent. So drama and history cannot be separated completely which have the concept of education "teaching and learning" and that brings a permanent change.

Concept of Education

Education as a concept is very difficult to define. Attempted definitions given by experts in various fields only portray various aspects of education. Thus, there is the tendency to focus attention on such other concepts as schooling, training indoctrination and so on. Therefore, there is no definition of education that is so comprehensive enough to attract universal acceptability. Keziah and Lawrence (2013) argue that education does not lend easily to definitions because it changes with people, place and time. Education is a process of helping each individual to lead the fullest life he is capable of living. It is also defined as the leading out of the in-born power and potential of the individuals in the society and the acquisition of skills, aptitudes and competencies necessary for self-realization and coping with life problems. This definition of education connotes two things, the first is that individuals are born with certain innate qualities so that no one could be said to be completely, without any human or creative qualities. This individual, however, be or not be aware of these innate qualities and so has to be helped to their utmost realization in order to be effective within the society and be useful to himself. The second connotation is that there are skills and qualities which the individual needs but he does not have. These he has to learn. They could be in acting which is "drama", storytelling of past events which is "history" and eloquent in speaking which is "communication

Functions of Drama in relation to History

Drama is an agent of mass mobilization because it is an imaginative communication. It is itself a form of social consciousness, an important weapon in the ideological struggle of classes. The vivid images which drama evokes, affects the consciousness of the audience. Drama can go a long way in defending class oppression and could contribute to the socio-political education of the toiling masses provided that the drama is culturally relevant and should especially address and educate the masses. History as one of the oldest disciplines in the world. In fact, it is as old as man himself. It is the branch of knowledge which deals with the systematic study of past events concerning the political, social and economic development of a particular society, country, continent or the world at large, so in drama, a development of a particular society and setting. Every play enacted upon has a past to depict. To understand the present world, we need to understand the past. Thus, history is important. It will be quite devastating for a country to forget its past if it is interested in building and developing its future. History serves as a bridge connecting the past and drama also is connecting the past with the present and pointing the road to the future. Drama touches every aspect of our lives.

Drama mirrors the society, the past and the present. Drama points out the errors, mistakes and the solutions for the future. History records these errors and mistakes with specific time and place where the events occurred. Drama reminds us of the events for the present and the future. So drama and history cannot be separated. Any drama that is enacted on stage is a story told in action or an event that is recorded which is referred to as history. (Abdulahi & Sunday, 2014).

The Place of Dramatists in the Society

Drama is particular one of the most variable weapons for the critical, objective and result oriented analysis of a nation cry for re-birth. In the pre-literature Nigerian society, the smooth running of the society was of great concern to the rulers and the ruled. And apart from the ruling council, made of elders from every compound, the commoners also had their say. In every community, there was usually a time of general festivities, and this provided opportunities for the youths and adults, as the case may be, to compose songs and actions through which they commented on the happenings within the society. When a king does well, they sing in praise of him and when he fails in his duties, they mock and abuse him to the hearing of his people. We therefore see that one of the basic responsibilities of drama/dramatists is to comment on the issues in the past which is history. These artists, apart from dramatizing historical plays, equally use their

plays to comment on the political and social situations in the society. Every enacted story is history, (Yetunde, 1993).

The first generation of contemporary Nigerian dramatist among who are J.P. Clark Bekederemo and Wole Soyinka were motivated by the nationalist consciousness to reflect on the situation in the country. This made them to discuss in their plays problems peculiar to the post-independent Nigerian society. Today, we teach our student's Nigerian civil war on the society and on the individual, but before the teaching of history J.P. Clark and Wole Soyinka had enacted it as a drama and students understand it better because it was a Nigerian setting and language used was easy to understand e.g. a dance of the forests. Soyinka dramatized the plight of the new nation. In *Madmen* and specialist Soyinka dramatized the influence of the Nigeria civil war. The *Raft* reflects J.P. Clark's concern for the fate of the Nigerian nation as it drifts along the course of uncertainty. Drama and history's correlation and symbiotic relationship. History in the drama and drama portrays history both educate. The dramatist is the watchman in his society. He is the people's secret police. The dramatist is the same time an historian, telling, explaining and educating. It is his duty to shift out information and to bring the culprits' to the people's court. The court in this sense is the open theatre where the hidden, the concealed and the guarded are exposed not for the people's pleasure but for their information and if possible necessary change or action.

Drama is the science in the humanities that exposes, extols, and exemplifies the deepest manifestation of man's character and event. The historian analyzes the past while the dramatist needs the mind for a predictive analysis of the social system. Drama is the greatest source for the understanding of contemporary society. It can be criticized without molestation at least to some degree because literature artist have had to pay with their freedom when they are too ascertain in the exposure of the errors of the victims. It is the duty of the playwright to discuss through dramatization past political decisions and events that were inimical or advantageous to the development of the society. The theater should be the classroom, X-ray room or laboratory full of opportunities for educating, orienting and awakening the audience to the realities of the society. Many people think that "drama is a matter of laughter and up-roar jest were as it is a medium admirably suited for making deep, psychological problems into the consciousness of a community. In other words, the theater is an effective though informal medium of making a lasting impression on the audience.

The Playwright and Commitment

For the playwright to be effective in the society, for him

to be the people's teacher, and to produce works that are socially relevant, he has to portray and interpret the historical, sociological, political, economical and cultural issues of his time, (Yetunde in Agero 2014). His sense of responsibility and commitment will condition his presentation of the prevailing situation of the society and the class struggle within the class structure. Through his literature work he will betray his stance, especially, in the position he takes on how the society should be organized. The relevance of a dramatist is determined by the useful role he plays in the portrayal of the social reality of his time. The committed writer is the conscience of his society and it falls on him to make his people aware of the social, political and economical problems and the causes and the possible cure of such problems. Unlike the historian, the playwright narrates the psychological effects of causes of the event while the historian only narrates. History is also inimical examining the cause and effect, to improve and promote encouraging future. The relevant, responsible and committed artist cannot afford to close his eyes to the problems in his society neither can he afford to write about the Nigerian sunshine or the beauty of tropical flowers when there are more burning issues at stake.

When the historian narrates his or the society's ordeal with his pen and records it for posterity, the playwright narrates his story on a stage. As member of the society, the committed playwright belongs to a particular class in a class defined society. The class that he belongs to may not be important as the class he defends or fights for in his play. A playwright fights with his pen; his writing communicates ideas to the public. Drama is a story narrated on a stage.

Communication and the artist

Language is the vehicle that conveys communication among all the units within an organization. Charles-Zalakoro (2014) posits that language is the tool with which any form of collaborative activity is made possible. She further reports that language is necessary for an individual in a society to transmit the results of his creative thinking to others. Language therefore, gives direction to the growth of society and businesses. This invariably means that an artist who lacks appropriate language ability cannot succeed in managing human resources in acting. Communication however is complex process. As Agwu (2012) reports communication is not a one way turn-lacking process where one person sends ideas and the other person receives it and then the process is reversed. Rather, it involves making oneself understood by the person to whom the message is addressed. Drama is only understood by communication. Agwu (2012) adds that the job of the communication or dramatist is to inject his/her ideas into the hearer's brain.

This, therefore, suggests that there must be a reaction (feedback) to show that the message has been received for a communication process to be seen as complete. Charles-Zalakoro (2014:241) gives the basic elements of a communication process as: the sender (source), the message, the channel (medium) and the receiver (destination). The communication process is not embarked upon in a vacuum. Okotie in Charles-Zalakoro (2014:242) opines that the need for communication arises when there is a need to express something. Gaillikouard (2010:28) in addition, asserts that the ability to communicate, among other things, help in developing efficient management, organizational skills, and establishing a healthy work culture.

Communicative competence refers to a language user's grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology, phonology as well as social knowledge about how to use utterances appropriately, Mounkoro (2005). The learner is supposed to have a good mastery of English language for effective communication. Effective communication enables one to convey thoughts, feelings and ideas successfully. Lack of effective communication skills is an impediment to ones' personal development. Dramatis activities where the participants portray him/her in an imaginary situation providing an opportunity for the learner to listen, speak, read and write. Dramatis considered having a positive impact on participants "communicative competence. It provides an opportunity for participants to learn the language as an enjoyable experience. Mounkoro (2005) suggests that drama can be a very valuable tool to encourage participatory learning where effective communicative competence can be acquired. People often hold back from saying things, for fear of losing favour or looking spiteful after making mistakes. Drama gives an opportunity for actors to share message without having to worry about its implications. It helps people learn how to participate in open discussions without fear of tempers flaring. Drama can provide a situation where ordinary people can feel at ease in sharing their true feelings, laying a basis for understanding their motivation and concerns. It encourages children to use their imagination and creativity. In drama, opportunities arise for role-play, expression of own identity and how each individual views the self, team work and generation. Linguistically, there are opportunities for descriptive language, storytelling, verbal prediction, giving directions, verbal negotiation, expression of feelings and emotions, use of abstract concepts and auditory and visual memory (Patrick 2014). All these contribute towards the development of communication competence amongst learners.

Communicative Language Skills and the Artist

The artist who creates employment cannot effectively

manage human resources if he fails to acquire communicative language skills. In passing information to his employees the artist may encounter barriers if his communicative skill is not adequate. Agwu (2012) identifies linguistic barriers as one of the impediments to effective communication. Linguistic barriers, according to Agwu, refer to obstacles associated with the use of language. Linguistic barriers exist at three levels: semantics, grammar and phonology. To communicate clear message, the artist needs knowledge of meanings of words in different contexts (semantics), correct sentence structures (grammar) and knowledge of the speech habits of the language he is using (phonology). The success of an artist in acquiring the appropriate language skills depends on teachers. Adequate communicative language training must be given to schools to enable students to begin early to develop the right managerial skills.

CONCLUSION

Without history there is no past and the future is blink. Enacted actions, setting, characters and audience on the other hand is a recorded history. History and drama serves as a bridge connecting the past with the past and pointing the road to the future, for it touches almost every aspect of our lives. Hence, the saying "history is everything and everything is history", in fact, to Charles-Zalakoro, (2014) who asserts that one who does not know what happened before one is born is to remain forever a child. Those who understand history shapes the way we view the present, and therefore, dictates what answers we offer to existing problems and after going through exposed to facts and figures through drama, as a matter of facts, history is seen as a systematic study of human activities in a particular environment over a period of time; while drama is a story told in action by actors, audience setting and actors in a particular time. History is globally seen as one aspect of human existence that teaches man the lessons of survival and prepares him ahead of possible future disillusionment. History is people's experience and drama is the enacted history overtime-good or bad, resulting from happenings, events or situations around man. As a general dictum, "experience is the best teacher; that is people learn from what has happened to them in the past; and these experiences are made clearer when told in action on a stage, they pick lessons from that past in their present undertakings and to guide/prevent or encourage the future occurrence as the case may be. Abdulrahman. (2012:78) asserts that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". If the past was disappointing, lessons are also learnt to avert the reoccurrence and if it was good, learns are also to emulate the past for promising future. Therefore drama

shows every part of the ancient history. History is all about the past and drama practically helps in the reconstruction of that past to shape the society for good and prevent the bad.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made from the discussions

1. Since history is subject studied in secondary schools, drama should also be made a subject to be studied in both primary and secondary schools.
2. Students should be encouraged to read literature and history because the two subjects make communicative competence in English language.

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