ADAPTATION OF DRAMA TO STORYTELLING FOR CLASSROOM TEACHING: THE MODERN TRAINING INSTITUTE, UYO EXPERIMENT

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Abstract

The need to reduce the complex plot of a drama into a simple, uncomplicated, and enjoyable form through the adaptation of a drama to a story for classroom teaching is the pivot of this work. In traditional African societies, our forefathers used storytelling to teach children the norms and values of society. At the night, during moonlight, the storytelling mode was used, as children gathered under trees to hear stories from elders. Storytelling in the classroom will not only entertain children by making the class work lively and attractive but will also enable the teacher to inculcate all the intended lessons in his set objectives as well as help to mould the child's character. This work is on the adaptation of Sons and Daughters (drama) by J C De-Graft to a story for classroom teaching. It is a qualitative study and is hinged on Dorothy Heathcote's postulation that the content of dramatic experience is far more important than literary assumptions. Heathcote views dramatic content as the pivot on which the child's learning experience revolves because, it will help the child to grow intuitively, and creatively and build confidence which enables him to take decisions. The study concludes that the techniques of adapting drama to story with emphasis on the thematic and dramatic contents as well as the dramatic methods used during the experiments: adaptations, storytelling, role-play, improvisation, reflection, and evaluation, helped the students in the textual interpretation and understanding of the lesson. The study recommends the adoption of participatory techniques to make classroom teaching an enjoyable experience for the teacher and the student.

Keywords: Classroom, Adaptation, Drama, Readers Theatre, Storytelling, Teaching.

Introduction

In traditional African societies, our forefathers used dramatic methods to teach children the norms and values of society. At the night, during moonlight, the play-way method was used as children gathered under trees to hear stories from elders. These stories were later joyfully and playfully dramatized; traditional games of assorted types were also performed. Many television stations in Nigeria use dramatization to teach and entertain children. For example, the Nigerian Television Authority devotes ample time in the evening during the children's belt where games, drama, stories, folktales, riddles, and other creative activities are aired.

"Teaching helps in the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner" (Emmanuel Iroh, np). Teaching techniques and methods adopted by the teacher in the classroom help in the crystallization of the lesson, leading to an easy understanding of the subject being taught by the teacher. Therefore, the method adopted by the teacher is of uppermost importance for the realization of his objectives as well as for the clarification of the subject matter to the understanding of the students. Hence,

Onwuka U. warns that the teaching method adopted by the teacher may promote or hinder learning" (168). Regrettably, Ekwueme, L. Ofoha, D; Uchegbu, C. Anyikwe, B; and Nkemdilim M; submit that the "focus and process of teaching in all secondary school in Nigeria is too mechanistic, frontal teaching is predominant using the lecture method which cannot develop entrepreneurial behavior. Encouragingly, Izuagba A.C and Ezenwa P.C.N advise that "unless the learner-centered approaches that incorporate active and collaborative learning strategies are used in teaching, the skills and competencies couched in the curriculum will not be achieved". It is in response to the above advice as well as to ameliorate these deficiencies that dramatic techniques of teaching which can arrest the attention of the student to realize set objectives are being advocated as a teaching technique in this study for our schools.

Martin Skutil, Klára Havlíčková, and Renata Matějíčková define teaching methods "as a structured system of teaching activities of a teacher and learning activities of a pupil, which aims to achieve educational goals" (www.researchgate.net, np). They copiously quoted Gotz., Lohrmann, Ganser & Haag, who defined teaching methods as "the general principles, pedagogy and management strategies used for classroom instruction". They admonish teachers that the "choice of teaching method depends on what fits you — your educational philosophy, classroom demographic, subject area(s) and school mission statement" (np).

Teaching methods are principally grouped under traditional/conventional and modern/ unconventional methods. Traditional/conventional methods are teacher-centered and do not

give room for student participation, while the modern/ unconventional methods are student-friendly and allow them to participate in the teaching-learning process to actualize their creative potential. According to Ismail Al-Rawi, traditional/conventional methods "focus on the teacher himself, ignoring the interaction of the student" (www.iiste.org, np). Thus, Iroh opines that the traditional method of teaching "is constantly failing to meet emerging problems in society as pupils are now confronted with complex problems that go beyond rote learning". He concludes that "creativity may be one of the only solutions to these problems" (http://www.ajol.info, np). Consequently, Al-Rawi, suggests that since students learning capability and capacity for assimilation of lessons differ, teachers "need to use different teaching methodology or to find the method that can reach all students effectively" (www.iiste.org, np). The above submission is in line with the aim of this study which is to free the students from the "know all teacher" who heaps his knowledge on the students without allowing them to participate teaching/learning process to a simple, uncomplicated, participant oriented and enjoyable form through adaptation of a drama to story for classroom teaching.

Nigeria policymakers understand the importance of a learner-centered, practical activity-based education for self-development, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization when it stated in Section 1, No 8 of the Nigerian National Policy on Education that:

- a. Educational activity shall be learner-centered for maximum self-development and self fulfilment
 - b. Teaching shall be practical, activity-based, and experimental...

- c. Education shall be related to the overall community needs
- d. All tiers of government shall promote the establishment and support of reading clubs in schools, community libraries, and other such resources that will enhance effective learning (3)

Thus, if the above objectives are to be attained, then the use of dramatic methods in teaching in the classroom will not only entertain children by making class work lively and attractive but also enable the teacher to inculcate all the intended lessons in his set objectives, thus making the moulding of the child's character inevitable. This is because, drama is multi-faceted, processcentered, participant-oriented, activity-based, and orderly. Hence, a child who goes through a drama lesson is unconsciously taking part in many other art subjects like literature, music, recitations mime, dancing, painting, and drawing which are components of drama. Since these activities are carefully planned and arranged in such a way that they do not conflict with each other (processcentered and orderly), the result is that the child appreciates arts which helps inculcate noble virtues such as self-control, peaceful co-existence with his colleagues and proper adjustment to the society resulting in self-development, self-fulfillment, and selfactualization.

Again, Nwachukwu-Agada J.O.J has called for the use of dramatic methods for social change. He is of the view that the themes explored in drama will convey a direct message to the end-users, thereby affecting them directly. This is because what they will see in drama is "a portrayal of their lives, the dramatic

imitation of their existential situation, their useful tradition, their progressive customs, their essential metaphysical beliefs, their linguistic and expressive repertoire" (8).

The author further avers that drama will educate, enlighten and inform the participants. This will invariably, help to organize their thoughts better, influence, and incite them into lifesaving and emancipatory roles. Concluding, he listed some countries where dramatic techniques have been successfully used for social change. They included the Island of Java which used folk puppetry opera (Ludruk), the comedy (neog), and the shadow puppet play (evayong golelc); Indonesia's Ministry of Information which enlisted "wayang paucasiaila" to communicate the ideology of their actions, while Brazil and Thailand used singing poets called "cantandores" and cowhide characters are known as "taloogn", respectively. Also, Tanzanias "njoera" and Bostwana's "Laedaz Batanani" were all used for social engineering aimed at stimulating awareness in the villages.

Paul Davies agrees that "drama bridges the gap between course-book dialogues and natural usage, and can also help to bridge a similar gap between the classroom and real-life situations by providing insights into how to handle tricky situations" (https://teslcanadajournal.ca np). Similarly while explaining the importance of drama and dramatic techniques in teaching English language, Saman Masoumi-Moghaddam posits that "drama is a specific action to make the learning process more active, exciting, communicative and contextual. Acting is a way of learning by experience. Drama techniques also refer to all those techniques which accompany a dramatic discourse to help a better

understanding and better performance of the text" (www.ijalel.aiac.org.au np.). He further asserts that "drama enables students to learn a new language and to understand new ideas by participating in different roles through which they use language to make sense of ideas." (www.ijalel.aiac.org.au np). Masoumi-Moghaddam concludes that:

Drama is an alternative strategy to improve students' competence in speaking. Drama and drama techniques can help students to learn and express themselves both through language spoken and language expression as well. Since the students are more active in verbal communication, drama is also a specific action to make the learning process more active, exciting, communicative, and contextual. (np).

In another research using dramatic techniques of role play and storytelling on the Effectiveness of Teaching English Subject on the Development of Students' Creative Thinking, Bashayer Raghian Albalawi submits that "Role play enhanced their fluency vocabulary communicative skills which necessitates enhancement. Without such an increment in vocabulary, their would have been slower. Storytelling progress participants to take time to reflect on their stories and to take full use of the vocabulary acquired earlier. In conclusion, he avers that "these techniques particularly assisted in making learners become independent learners, owning their language skills and, as a result, making them empowered" (np, www.iosrjournals.org).

Fessenden, J., Johnson. P., Larson, A., Good, S observe that "the reflection period is where the learning takes place" (204). This is because, during this period, a review of the activities is done. The authors advised that criticisms should be kept impersonal and that teachers should use the names of the characters and not the child's name to ensure that no child is hurt. This will further give them a sense of belonging and improve their self-concept. Fessenden et al, also agree that using dramatic methods to teach, enables the teacher to develop in the child, a positive attitude of resistance, "through sharing of responsibility with their pupils and thus challenging their initiatives and cooperative efforts" (163). , they contended that dramatic methods of teaching also take care of the heterogeneous composition of the class. What the above simply means is that dramatic methods provide a good atmosphere for rapport and cooperation which enables the child to manage and blend traits for group work.

Is to harness and harvest the benefits of dramatic methods to the student this work was carried out at the Modern Training Institute, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State with 30 students in senior secondary class two, to highlight the need to get the students involved in the teaching-learning process through the use of modern teaching methods fully available through dramatic techniques. The researcher adopted the drama text "Sons and Daughters" by J C De-Graft to Story for classroom teaching.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on Dorothy Heathcote's, (one of the pioneer exponents of the use of dramatic methods) postulation that the content of dramatic experience is far more important than literary assumptions. Heathcote views dramatic content as the pivot on which the child's learning experience revolves because it will help the child to grow intuitively, and creatively and build confidence which enables him to take decisions. For this to be accomplished, Heathcote advises that children should be made to follow (identify) a central theme/plot from where sub-themes can be developed. What this boils down to is the need for a careful thematic selection of their dramatic experience which the child can relate to when and after being involved in the drama process. This is also in line with the submission of Plato where he advocated for a careful selection of what is presented to the child and the need to involve the child in the learning process; practical participation not observation.

According to Wagner Betty, Heathcote believes that dramatic technique is the best for the classroom teacher because it aids in holding children's attention and also allows children to make decisions while working together which enables them to improve their self-concept. Moreso, drama arouses children's interest and when their interest is aroused and captured, "it acts like a paste that holds the drama together". This is because drama allows the student to make decisions supported and sharpened by the teacher. Wagner, who was Heathcote's student, reports that during drama lessons, Heathcote "allows students to make a decision, she supports that decision and then shows them some of the chinks in it. Some problems they may not have been aware of. Then they make another decision" (21).

Therefore, for a classroom teacher to effectively manage his class, an understanding of the nature of attention is necessary.

According to Hornby, et al attention simply means "the act of listening to...of directing one's thoughts" (80), thus keeping it from wandering. Also, Adeyemo defines it as "mental concentration. It is the direction of the mind to something and at the same time cutting out everything else" (42). Psychologists believe that attention comes in short spurts. It requires constant renewal because it is impossible for the student to fix his attention on a particular object, topic, or subject for a long period.

The Experiment: Adaptation of *Sons and Daughters* by J C De-Graft to Story for Classroom Teaching

Summary of the Drama

Sons and Daughters is a two-act play, written by J C De Graft, with act one flowing into act two. The drama has a simple and straight plot, language, and style. The actions take place in the house of Mr. James Ofosu. It deals with domestic matters that overlap with national issues. One of the major styles or techniques of the author is the use of irony. The irony is the expression of the direct opposite of something. That is saying one thing and meaning another. Here, Lawyer Bonu reminded Maanan that he is old enough to be his father yet he desired to sleep with her. Another style or technique of the author is the use of suspense. Hannah gradually reveals to her husband why she is in support of their daughter's decision not to go back to Lawyer Bonu's office. The suspense lingers until James finds out at the end of the play. The author also made use of symbolism to depict two generations - old and new. The old is symbolized by James, Bonu, Hannah, and Fasowa while George, Aaron, Awerre, and Maanan represent the new generation.

There was also the use of contrast where the characters and intentions of two friends are different. James Ofosu was sincere while Lawyer Bonu was insincere. On the other hand, Aaron wanted to study arts for art's sake (love), while Awerre wanted art because of its monetary attraction thus the characters and their intentions were all different from each other.

The Adaptation to Story

Way back in Ghana, in the pre-independence days, there lived a man called James Ofusu with his wife, Hannah, and their four children namely George, Kofi, Aaron, and Maanan. James was a rich man who was engaged in the haulage business with his trucks and lorries. He barely finished primary school before he went into business and became successful. He had a very trusted friend called Bonu, a lawyer, who helped him to secure foreign/overseas admissions for his sons, George and Kofi who agreed to study Medicine and Architecture respectively, two courses chosen by Mr. Ofosu, their father with the hope that they will bring money, fame, and recognition to them.

Having successfully chosen courses for his first two sons, George and Kofi, he moved to Aaron and Maanan his last two children, choosing engineering and law for them. But Aaron had an interest in painting (Visual Arts) while Maanan wanted to study dance. The choice of their father did not favour their ambitions of becoming a painter and dancers respectively. Their father did not see anything good in either painting or dancing and insisted that his children must study the courses he chose for them, insisting that dancing and painting are never done well in the society and therefore, demeaning to his children.

To ensure that Maanan studied law, her father arranged for Maanan to work in Lawyer Bonu's office to gain interest and exposure to the law profession. Lawyer Bonu was delighted and promised his friend that arrangements for her admission were almost completed. He then used the opportunity of her working in his office to make sexual advances on Manaan. At a point, when Lawyer Bonu realized that Maanan was not accepting his advances, he teased her that he will convince her father to let her study dancing if she accepts to sleep with him.

When Maanan was not accepting his amorous demands, he turned to blackmail by telling his friend, James Ofosu that Awerre and Maanan were dating, while he was the one trying to date and sleep with her. His disturbances and harassments became so unbearable for Maanan that she had to confide in her mother about Lawyer Bonu's advances. Hannah told her husband but he would not believe her story, insisting that it was a ploy to make him change his mind about his friend.

Meanwhile, George had graduated and started practicing as a medical doctor while Kofi was rounding up his studies. Aaron, despite his disagreements with his father over the choice of profession, continued to check their mails at the post office as well as the washing of his father's car and clean the carburetor. While Awerre his friend, continued to encourage him to dialogue with his father as he may see a reason to change his mind. He also continued to visit and support his friends (Aaron and Maanan) despite the blackmail of Lawyer Bonu. Hannah, their mother encouraged the friendship but Mr. Ofusu refused to see anything good in the boy. One day when he came home from work and saw

painting materials and flowers he angrily threw them away, blaming Awerre for encouraging his children to disobey his order.

Now Lawyer Bonu, having made all attempts to sleep with Maanan even in his office without success, visited Mr. Ofusu's house one evening. When he was told that their father went out, he opted to wait for him. Soon he started making love advances to Maanan in her father's house because he thought Maanan was the only one in the house. But Manaan refused to accede to his amorous demands. Feeling humiliated, he reminded Maanan that he was old enough to be her father and therefore should be respected. Manaan respectfully refused his request. This annoyed Lawyer Bonu who moved to force himself on Maanan. As they were struggling, the glass cup she was holding fell and broke into pieces. The noise attracted Mr. Ofosu who was listening from upstairs. He came down to see lawyer Bonu and Maanan in an uncomfortable position.

When he confronted Bonu, Lawyer Bonu shamelessly offered to buy the conscience of James Ofosu with money by asking him to name his price so that the incident would be forgotten. At this point, Fasowa, James Ofusu's aunt came to apologize to Bonu over Maanan's behavour, blaming Awerre for it but urged Bonu to go ahead with his plans to marry Maanan. Mr. James Ofosu was enraged. He warned Fasowa to leave his family alone and to steer clear of the matter. While these were going on, Mrs. Bonu who was eavesdropping from outside came into Mr. Ofosu's sitting room to warn them that her husband would not marry any other woman, let alone Maanan. Shamelessly, she dragged her husband away from Mr. Ofosu's house. As they leave, Mr. Ofusu,

felt disappointed and betrayed. In his helplessness, the news of Awerre's scholarship and price money for his painting was announced on the radio. After the announcement, Mr. Ofosu reluctantly agreed to allow his children, Aaron and Maanan to study painting and dancing, the courses they both had interests in.

Discussion/Analysis of Data

Approaches to Adaptation of Drama to Abridged Story.

The following steps were taken by the researcher in the adaptation of drama to an abridged story:

- i. The researcher read the drama as many times as possible before turning it into a story by writing down the story outline with a beginning, middle and an end, noting the important incidents that are interlocked through cause and effect.
- ii. As the researcher/leader was reading, he was writing down the themes and the lessons of the dramatist, that is, the gains/ lessons/messages expected to be derived after reading the drama. These themes were carefully extracted and embedded in the main text of the adaptation and used by the teacher/leader during the reflection and evaluation period. This is in line with the theoretical framework of this study which emphasizes the careful thematic selection of dramatic experiences that the students can relate to, hold their attention as well as allow them to make decisions while working together.
- iii. The use of simple language for the adapted work was adopted, taking into cognizance that one's effort is to decode and simplify the message to the student who is supposed to benefit from the adaptation. The use of ambiguous and high-sounding

words will tend to confuse the student the more. Therefore, simple and everyday language served the purpose.

Teaching /Presentation Mode

The researcher re-arranged the classroom to give it an informal setting. The students willingly divided themselves into three groups and each group elected a leader. This helped the students to relax, making classroom management easier. The students sat in a semicircular pattern. This made them feel that they are outside their classroom, while they were actually in the class.

Furniture and stage properties were minimized because choral reading restricts movement as the students sat in groups to read joyfully. The few stage directions, the movement included were those that aroused their interest and stimulated their imagination. Dramatic methods such as the Reader's Theatre which incorporates choral reading, role play, a mantle of the expert, and reflection were used by the researcher during the teaching/ presentation of the lesson. The students or participants read or recited interpretatively, seeking to explore the adapted script/text. Here, the emphasis is not on performance but participants reading meaningfully for the education and enjoyment of the class. This is because Reader's Theatre is primarily concerned with securing the involuntary attention of students through constantly engaging the students in useful practical activities through business and actions, thus renewing and sustaining their attention throughout the teaching period.

To actively involve all students in the teaching/learning process, the researcher introduced songs. This gave every member of the class a sense of belonging as well as helped them to identify with the lesson. Most importantly, the lyrics of the songs were embedded with meaningful words, advising the students to respect constituted authorities, obey their elders and parents, avoid bad gangs, and take their studies seriously. During reflection which is the discussion time, where evaluation and appraisal of all activities and experiences were reviewed and discussed to determine the level of absorption. Framed questions related to the themes in the drama were asked by the Leader/researcher to the class. For example, the following questions were framed from *Sons and Daughters*:

- i. Should parents choose professions for their children?
- ii. Is it right for some parents to rate some professions above others?
- iii. Why is it important for parents to allow their children to pursue professions of their choice and interest?
- Iv Is it right for a good friend to betray the trust of his friend?
- v. Why do some people say one thing and do the other?
- vii. Why is it important to be properly educated?

It was a deep-thinking session where the students freely discussed the story, themes, and characterization and reflected upon the consequences of some of their actions. This session was moderated by the researcher who gave them opportunities to air their views. The discussions were formal as they dealt with the characters and their actions. The framed questions were particularly helpful as they were freely answered without inhibitions.

Impact of Teaching Techniques on the Students

Adaptation is the major technique used in the experiment. It involved changing the drama into a story for classroom teaching. Putting it more succinctly, Alex Asigbo, sees adaptation "as a reworking of an original work to suit the conditions of a different social and cultural climate" (105) which must be culturally, politically, and socially relevant. The aim and objectives of the adaptation which was to make the lesson more interesting, practical, and participant-based were achieved. The class came alive during the presentation because every student participated in the teaching/ learning process.

The role Play technique was employed by the researcher in the experiment. After taking up roles and playing the characters, the students were able to weigh and judge matters objectively as people who have experienced them. For instance, after playing James Ofusu in *Sons and Daughters*, they no longer saw anything wrong in parents choosing carriers for their children as they agreed that some parents meant well for their children. According to Udeme Nsikak, one of the students who played the role of Mr. Ofusu in "Sons and Daughters" the experiment has:

The lesson has broadened my mind to think out of the box, respect and accommodate other opinions, and to reflect on the decision of others. I have also learnt that I cannot succeed with my neigbour. That is, we need each other. Therefore, we must cooperate to achieve greater result. It has

further improved and enhanced my resourcefulness, initiative and listening skills, as well as my sense of collaboration.

This further revealed that dramatic methods of teaching transcend the classroom to curb many societal ills. Through role-play and reflection, the adverse effects of societal problems and vices, such as cultism, gangsterism, sexual promiscuity, exam malpractices, indiscipline, and virtues like good behavior, citizenship, uprightness were discussed after playing out the roles during reflection.

Mantle of the Expert was another dramatic technique used by the researcher which provided the students with some kind of expertise thus building in them the ability to teach the teacher because the student is assumed to know better. This method, which is participant-centered enabled the class to communally explore and share ideas, thus helping to improve and upgrade their language and communication skills as well as inter-personal cooperation and relationship.

Okon Akpan observed that:

I was relaxed during the drama lessons. The teacher handed the class to us. This helped me to gain confidence. We were only guided by the teacher making us take full responsibility for the drama session. I developed a skill of thinking deeper and proper analysis of situations before taking final decision. Again, my role as a group leader helped in developing my organizational and leadership skill.

As noted above, reflection is the discussion time where evaluation and appraisal of all activities and experiences are reviewed to determine the level of absorption. The technique allowed the researcher to review and rethink what had taken place during the lesson to see the level or extent of absorption of the students. Here, roles that were played by students were discussed, evaluated, and properly digested. Reflection remains a very critical period in the use of the dramatic method because it is here that learning takes place as opinions are crystallized and decisions are taken. These were evident from the responses of the students as reported above.

The researcher observed that during reflection, the class was relaxed and some students who, hitherto, were shy and lacked communication skills at the beginning of the lesson were able to communicate freely through the contribution of ideas, thereby improving their self-expression and awareness. Eventually, they became fully integrated with their mates. This finding is in line with the findings of Pemberton-Billing (1977), McCasline (1987), and Slade (1980), who also got similar results from the use of dramatic methods to teach children.

Summary and Conclusion

The theoretical framework adopted for the study greatly assisted the researcher in realizing the set goals of the experiment as it guided the researcher during the adaptation stage to select themes, use simple and understandable sentences, and framing questions which were used during the discussion and evaluation periods and by getting the students to practically experience the lesson through readers theatre/choral reading, role play, improvisations, reflection and evaluation of the lesson. Again, the children were guided to follow (identify) a central theme/plot from which subthemes can be developed. The careful thematic selection of their dramatic experience enabled them to relate to and identify similar life experiences after being involved in the drama process.

In conclusion, the dramatic techniques used during the experiment helped the students in the textual interpretation of the drama and understanding of the lesson as well as developing their language and communicative skills. This conclusion is also in line with the submissions Davies who agrees that "drama is ultimately indispensable because it gives learners the chance to use their personalities. It draws upon students' natural abilities to imitate and express themselves." (np). The above is profoundly supported by Masoumi-Moghaddam when he agrees that "many students benefit when working in groups. Not only do they learn how to work with others as part of a team, they can also see the different roles that emerge when working together" (np). According to Iroh:

dramatic methods made for proper interaction, a sort of "give-and-take" situation as they willingly offered suggestions and solutions to the questions... This way, the students freely participated as they were able to reflect, think and communicate while answering their questions instead of being "seized" by the "know-all-teacher's questions. It was learning with fun instead of tears, a no-hold situation (19).

Finally, it has to be restated that if the much talked about educational advancement is to be attained, then, teachers in secondary schools will have to make the extra effort of going beyond the teacher-centered method of teaching to embrace the participant and activity methods of teaching which drama presents

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