

Between and betwixt: theatrical space and reality

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Our theoretical background for the implementation and the evaluation of Ariadne project comes from the scientific fields of social anthropology and critical pedagogy, since we believe that a 'dialogue' between the humanities, has a result in the exchange of ideas and methods, where the centerpiece is human. We try to approach the relationship between individuals and theatre from an anthropological standpoint, trying to concentrate on the individuals and their action. Theatre is under study as it affects a group of people. This presumption gives us information about the participants, about their relationship with theatre and its impact on everyday life as well as the meaning it has for them. That means that theories should be built on the data, so to ensure their properness and their workability. According to "multi-sited" ethnography, the subjects cannot be studied ethnographically by conducting intensive fieldwork in a single location. The "mobile" ethnography follows non-predefined routes, and often unexpected, and requires watching processes in motion (Marcus 1998:79-80).

Theatre serves both as a means for the educational process and as a methodological tool in the research. It is an art-based research method, which enriches the qualitative paradigm, broadening the notion of research design. It is related to all phases of the research endeavor: data collection, analysis and interpretation. Moreover, theatre-based practices have allowed us to posit new research questions

and to ask perennial questions in new ways. This holistic, participatory and embodied research aims to link theory with practice.

This article is divided in three parts: initially, information is given about Theatre of the Oppressed and its techniques, which is the predominant artistic and educational tool that has been used in the pilot workshops that took place in Athens (Greece) by Osmosis and the University of Peloponnese. Then follows a text for the pedagogy of empowerment, intercultural education and intercultural competence, the theoretical background of our educational projects. Finally there is a focus on the analytical tools we used for the evaluation of the project, based on Beeman's separation of the theatrical species: the content of theatrical performance, the public's role-participation or viewing, the performer's role (Beeman 1993:381). Bearing in mind that in theatrical performance a person is involved emotionally and bodily, we make reference to the corresponding theory for emotion and body.

A. Our artistic tools

Theatre of the Oppressed

Our team selected Theatre of the Oppressed as the main method where to draw techniques from for the implementation of Ariadne project in Greece. Techniques were drawn also from other methods of social theatre such as Theatre for Development (Pammenter & Mavrokordatos, 2004). Theatre of the Oppressed is an umbrella term coined by its founder Augusto Boal for a variety of theatre techniques, inspired by political theatre and by student-centred and participatory pedagogy (Cohen-Cruz, 2006). The underlying principle of this theatrical method is that theatre can provide a space where strategies for empowerment, fight against oppression and dialogue can be rehearsed, in order to be applied eventually in real life (Boal, 2000).

With Theatre of the Oppressed (*Teatro do Oprimido*) one can refer to and cope with various problems that arise in a community or in a formal and non-formal educational setting, such as conflicts, oppressions, power relationships, emotional difficulties and lack of communication. Indeed, Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.) is

nowadays applied worldwide in a large range of social, political, educational and therapeutic actions¹ and often with excluded and vulnerable populations (e.g. urban youth, immigrants, minorities, drug-addicts). Some examples of applications of the Theatre of the Oppressed are found in intercultural education, community work, cultural activism, conflict resolution, youth work, adult education, in-service teacher further education, to name but a few (Alkistis, 2008). It can also be a great method for citizen's sensitization to social issues such as consumerism, environmental destruction, gender issues, generation gap problems, racism and war.

T.O. is a theatrical method that was born in the 70's in Brazil. It was theorized by the Brazilian director Augusto Boal as a reaction to Latin American rise of dictatorships and as a proposal for the empowerment of oppressed landless people and of the inhabitants of the poor favelas (Babbage, 2004). After the T.O.'s spread in Latin America, at the end of the 70's this method reached Europe. Since then it has been increasingly used by the Applied Theatre operators (e.g. in Community Theatre, Popular Theatre, Theatre for Development), by activists, by educators and social workers in various contexts.

The techniques of T.O.

During the workshops held by the Greek team there was a combination of the following techniques:

Various warming-up and 'de-mechnization' games

The activity starts with some simple, warming-up group games that aim at creating a pleasant atmosphere. We proceed then to the second category of games, the "sensorial" games. These aim at creating trust, at activating the "de-mechanization", i.e. the activation of hidden and unexplored skills of participants and at the awakening of the 5 senses.²

¹ See the official site for T.O. www.thetheatreoftheoppressed.org.

² Boal refers to 5 categories of activities: 1. feel what we touch, 2. listen what we hear 3. dynamizing several senses, 4. see what we look at, 5. the memory of the senses (Boal, 1992: 62 and on).

Games for active listening and empathy

These are games such as the blind series or the mirror (Boal, 1992), that can be used so that the participants gradually develop an empathic understanding of the other's fears, limits, rhythms, emotions, images, ideals, but furthermore an ability to relax, communicate and find a harmony with a different human being. An important element is the training of non-verbal communication skills and the stimulus of emotional intelligence.

Games for empowerment

These activities are designed to help the participant tell her/his story (Pammenter & Mavrokordatos, 2004), reconcile her/himself with what she/he *is* in order to imagine what *could be*; Activities that give strength to everybody's voice; Activities such as the "onion of my identity", the "caricature of myself", the "story of my name" "life maps" and realistic or poetical dramatisations starting from personal stories, fears and dreams.

Social mask games

In social mask games (Boal, 1992: 138-148, Bernardi, 2004: 52) participants take on various "masks", i.e. stereotyped social roles (the teacher, the doctor, the clerk, the immigrant), that are characterized by a special movement, body expression and behaviour, which are analysed and put into categories. "Social masks" meet with each other and communicate, creating theatrical situations, in which we can discover the difference of their social positions and behaviour. Then we can move on to exercises that reveal our own social mask and to status games.

Image theatre

Image theatre (Boal, 1992) is a technique of T.O. that uses body images, *tableaux vivant*, to express feelings, concepts and points of view and allow a non-verbal debate, regarding conflicts and oppressions that trouble the participants. Images can be 'dynamized': compared, interpreted, can come to life and be enriched with gestures, objects and sounds. As in Forum Theatre (see below), "spect-actors" can substitute a character of the image; or as "sculptors" they can change people's

positions, changing thus the situations presented. This is a very effective method, because it concentrates on body language, on power relationships and how these are translated in positions of the body in the space. It can be used in multi-language groups, e.g. groups of immigrants.

Techniques of identification and construction of scenes

These techniques are about improvisations and games used for helping “actors” enter into their role, live the feelings, contradictions and contrasts of their role. At the same time participants learn techniques in order to keep the necessary emotional distance which enables actors to get in and out of role as they wish. We use a combination of Stanislavski’s method with elements of other methods, such as psychodrama, Brechtian theatre, Theatre-in Education.

Forum Theatre

This is a technique (Boal, 1992) based on a short theatrical scene (“model”) that represents a non resolved conflict or oppression, i.e. a scene that ends badly. To construct these scenes pupils are inspired by personal experiences. The audience watches the scene once. Then the scene is repeated and the audience can change the course of the story. How? By saying ‘stop’ and substituting a character of the story with whom she/he identifies. She/he becomes a “spect-actor” and does and says what she/he would do and say in an analogous situation, in the given conditions. The Joker (Forum Theatre’s facilitator / animator) coordinates the game and the substitution of characters, trying to deepen the discussion with questions and avoiding leading, interpreting or supporting opinions.

Techniques of emotional closure, de-roling and reflection

These activities are useful for closing each session of the workshop, especially when this is particularly “warm” and emotionally intense. Techniques of relaxation and massages are used as well as “farewell” games.

It is very important according to our pedagogical principles to integrate each group of activities or each session with reflection activities, which permit participants to elaborate on their experiences and promote their critical thinking, the conscious knowledge of specific subjects and the exploration of the potential actions. This is

actually when the performative action becomes a transformative action (Baron-Cohen, 2006).

Theatre in context

Since our main goal is to seek how art facilitates intercultural adaptation of immigrants, theatre is approached as a social act, inseparable from socio-political contexts. Any theatrical activity cannot be understood independently of the broader historical context. It should be considered within an historical context of specific economic, social and political formations and transformations.

Theatre Forum is based on real stories, referring to an intense moment of oppression and injustice individuals have lived. That means that their experiences derive directly from socio-political reality. It is important to have in mind the historical circumstances through in which art action of participants is developed. The purpose of historical analysis is to show how participants' actions and choices are formed by social order, how the historical reality is experienced by participants, and how theatre can enhance the process of adaptation.

B. Pedagogical aspects

Adult Education

We consider the process of intercultural adaptation as an educational process. The implementation of Ariadne by Osmosis and University of Peloponnese was based on the principles of adult education and it belongs to the traditions of the critical paradigm of intercultural education and the pedagogy of empowerment. Adult Education is defined as the "organized training programs which are tailored to the needs of people outside the formal educational system, usually over 15 years old. Adult training is designed to impart a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding, valuable assets_in all life activities." The characteristics of the adult learners are:

- They come to the training with specific objectives

- They have wider and different range of experiences
- They have preferred learning styles
- They have a tendency for active participation
- They face several barriers during the learning procedure (lack of time, lack of confidence, lack of motivation, scheduling problems)

Adult education is founded on the following aspects of the theory of learning:

- Learning is a basic human need
- Access to learning is facilitated by practice, implementation, acquisition and development of ones' experiences
- Learning brings changes to human behavior (the way we think and act, adoption of new beliefs)
- Each individual learns in their own special way (depending on age, personality, one's history)
- Learners should have an interest, a need, a desire for the subject of learning in order to commit to it (learning becomes more effective when responding to real problems)
- Learning becomes more effective if learners are actively involved in it

And on the following principles:

- Thought is associated with action
- Educational process is focused on the learner
- Knowledge through heuristic process
- Critical thinking
- Interacting relation between trainer and learner

Intercultural Education

Our project is based on the practice of the education for enhancing intercultural competence. There are many different definitions of Intercultural Competence. Intercultural Competence is a term that can be applied by many different people for many different reasons. As a result, the definitions change depending on the angle at which people are looking at it from, or from the context. One of the definitions that

appeared useful to us is the following: "Intercultural Competence is the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment. *There are 3 perspectives:*

- **Affective or Intercultural sensitivity** – to acknowledge and respect cultural differences
- **Cognitive or intercultural awareness** – self-awareness of one's own personal cultural identity and understanding how cultures vary
- **Behavioral or intercultural adroitness** – message skills, knowledge of appropriate self-disclosure, behavioral flexibility, interaction management and social skills" (Guo-Ming and William J. Starosta, 1996).

Pedagogy of empowerment

Intercultural Education is inextricably intertwined with social discourse for power and with the action for empowerment of the oppressed due to class, race, gender (Sleeter, 1991). Empowerment is not a strategy for the discharge of anger resulting from discrimination. The concept of empowerment means strengthening the capacity of self-determination of the cultural identity of people and increases the confidence of members of a minority group (McLaren, 1989). Pedagogy of empowerment treats people as able to take action to solve their own problems, without "illumination" and "charity" by the ruling classes. According to the critical paradigm (McLaren 1989, Sleeter 1991, Cummins 2005), empowerment is not seen only in individual psychological terms, it doesn't mean only self-determination, self-realization or only emancipation. Alongside the individual empowerment collective empowerment is sought in order to achieve the critical view of the world, the analysis of power structures, the collective action and social change.

The invigorated individuals accept their cultural background identity, but also have the ability to be critically placed both against their background and against the dominant culture, and so to negotiate their identity. The pedagogy of empowerment takes consciously account of the past, i.e. where the individuals come from, and of

the future, i.e. where do they head for (Cummins 2005: 60). In order to make this process possible, a framework of respect, trust and active listening (50) is needed and this is where theatre makes its most.

C. Research issues

Observation and Analysis: the descriptive dimensions of Theatre of the Oppressed

The study of the arts is a great field of social life. Especially the performative arts of a society are important aspects of the broader cultural system. Theatre is approached as a social act, separate from everyday life and yet inseparable from the prevailing perceptions and socio-political reality. According to this approach, it gives pleasure, relief, release, but it also states claim, intervention, protest. Theatre is under study as it affects a group of people, specifically the mixed group of African and Greek women. The analysis of the effects of theatre on the participants is based on Beeman's distinction of the theatrical species. There are three descriptive dimensions: a. content, b. public's role, c. performer's role (Beeman 1993:381).

a. The content of theatrical performance

Groups and participants deal with social issues that concern a neighbourhood, a city, a social group: immigration, racism, health care, unemployment, poverty, bureaucracy, human exploitation, physical violence. T.O. operates as a place where empowerment strategies and shaking-off oppression are rehearsed, so to be used potentially in reality. Oppression, according to Boal's ideology, is defined as a monologue and as a ban on freedom of expression (Boal 2000).

Through the practice of theatre, people engage in actions to enforce the change in social status. We can consider T.O. as a social drama, as used by the anthropologist Victor Turner to analyze and describe intense and confrontational social situations. In the view of Turner, the social process is performative and theatre is the best tool for presentations of social drama. The T.O. is analyzed as social drama, following four

phases: a) the phase of **breach**, as people react to the laws, hierarchy, oppression, expressing their views through dramatic action – the participants of T.O. are all oppressed, marginalized and stigmatized socially· b) the phase of **crisis**, as people are divided, challenging the established political and cultural order · c) the phase of **adjustive and redressive mechanisms**, where the state changes social policy, taking into account positions that emerged from the dramatic action· d) the phase of **reintegration**, which includes the offending team or the perpetuation of the rupture (Turner 1982: 7-27, 61-88).

In the phase of crisis the participant is somehow outside of the society, having an ambiguous status. Turner's term "liminality" shows one's status that is in a marginal position (Turner 1977:95). The limen is the boundary between 'inside' and 'outside'. Individuals participating in this process are led to a situation called 'communitas'. They eliminate their social determinations; they are «between and betwixt». This phase is called by Turner '**anti-structure**', which is not a reversal of the current system, but reconstruction, where new meanings are created (131-132). Boal calls this phase 'metaxis', explaining that this phenomenon corresponds to 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different worlds' (Boal,1995: 43), the social world, i.e. the oppressive reality lived by the oppressed, and the aesthetic world, i.d. the artistic reconstruction of the oppressive reality by the oppressed – artist (42-44).

What occurs during a theatrical performance³ is directly related to the experiences of participants, but it is not something finished and complete and it depends on how the participants will handle the social situation after the theatrical experience (Turner 1986:33). What emerges after every theatrical performance may be the subject of social action. The changes that occur during the theatrical performance lead to a questioning of the rules and to a re-elaboration of the structure of local communities. This is a move to reorganize relations within the community. According to Turner's terms, theatrical performance is considered successful only if there is a gradual transition from structure to 'anti-structure'. The fact that a theatrical performance takes place publically demonstrates the social character and

³ I prefer to use the term 'theatrical performance' rather than 'performance, indicating not an everyday performative action, such as a those performed by every member of a cultural community in the workplace, in the family, in the sports, ecc., but rather an organized and conscious artistic action performed on stage, with the broad sense of place. I include in this term both the theatrical workshop, as a performative event in progress, as well as the forum theatre show in front of an audience.

the need to recognize this transition. The intent is a new ideology, a new way of living, the shaping of new social conditions.

b. Public's role: the spect-actor

In some of the techniques (such as Forum Theatre) the actors can be replaced by the spectators, so the latter become spect-actors. Spect-actors can try and make a rehearsal for social change (Boal 2001:309-310). No idea is imposed and spect-actors have the opportunity to try out all the solutions they have in their minds and to verify them with the help of theatrical practice. Boal's methodology is based on the interaction between actors and spect-actors.

Spectators do not necessarily know each other, they aren't friends or acquaintances. They have been found for some reason in a particular place. They share a common time and a public space. One is involved in the biography of another, they interact directly (Geertz 2003:355-356). Through interaction is created a set of responses among individuals who do not know each other, but are located in a specific place, at a specific time, expressing their cultural positions on a social issue.

People expose their own socio-political positions in direct correlation with other people's positions. Everyone relies on the reactions of the other. This interaction created is «a field of interpersonal tensions, conflicts, divisions and disarray» (Goffman 1996:39). T.O. is a theatre that can be played anywhere by anyone, to resolve conflicts through a dialogue involving the view of everyone. This is based on the theatricality that governs social life. Participants act as spectators without anyone telling them what to do and how to do it. This interaction isn't independent of social conditions and influences. However, through theatrical performance people are active participants in shaping social conditions, influenced and influencing.

c. Performer's role

The performers create a role and upon which they have the opportunity to reflect their social acts. This role includes the ways in which 'the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself..., the ways in which guides and controls the impression

formed of him, and everything that may or may not can do during the theatrical performance» (Goffman 2006:55). Individual behavior is approached as 'performance' (18). To perform means to present the socially constructed self in front of others, in a sense to 'argue' for the self (not only with words but also in convincing ways) and thus to persuade others and to make them recognize one's position and the satisfactory performance of his/her role. In other words it is a creative effort. (Dubisch 2000:257-258). Schechner describes the performance as 'transportation', during which someone who acts is 'transported', so to return to himself and his everyday life (Schechner 1985:125-127).

The theatrical performance creates the need for a public performance of a self as a worker, as an immigrant, as a man or woman, as an unemployed, so to react socially. According to Boal, citizen isn't someone who lives in a society, but someone who transforms the society (Boal 1995:13). Also 'performane' transforms (Seremetakis 1999:2). The performer is an agent of social reality which is experiencing. He doesn't transform himself into another, he doesn't play a different social role, but he plays himself discovering his possible extensions. His actions doesn't differ from that present in everyday life, beyond the fact that their action is defined as theatrical. Through 'performance' the performer makes statements and provides resistance in the context of everyday life.

Expression of emotion

According to the theoretical framework of social-cultural constructivist, emotions are constructions, ideas, set up differently in different cultural contexts, and therefore are culturally specific (Papataxiarchis 1994: 5-6). A central theoretical concept which occurs in this kind of approach is the culturally shaped form of self. The ideas about emotions arise as a language of self: a code of intentions, actions and social relations (Lutz & White 1986:417). The emotions are integrated through the habitus, influencing the thinking of the individual (Bourdieu 2006:88). Habitus is "an infinite capacity to completely free (controlled free) production (thoughts, attitudes, expressions, actions) that have as boundaries the historically and socially specific conditions of production» (92). Cultural management of emotion directly reflects beliefs about what a self does and what should do in relation to other selves.

The body as an agent of action

The body acquires 'hexis' (habits) which reproduce themselves through the action. A central aspect of Bourdieu's habitus is its embodiment: Habitus does not only, or even primarily, function at the level of explicit, discursive consciousness. The internal structures become embodied and work in a deeper, practical and often pre-reflexive way. According to Hastrup, theatre of self is the body which performs. "One does not have a body, one is the body. There is no manifestation of the body outside the body" (Hastrup 1985:90). The ways we present our bodies are neither arbitrary nor biologically defined but culturally formed (Csordas 1993: 140).

The participant's bodies carry their own cultural and social dimension of the body. They reflect both their culture and a culture that come to integrate. Through the use of T.O. we aimed at highlighting the body of each culture and integrating it into the local community, and not at changing it. There is no way to hide the encultured body from one's actions. The body is the locus, the rationale, and the manifestation of the act. There is no pre-text for action outside the motivated body inhabiting the ethnographic present (Hastrup 1985:98).

Epilogue

The 'theatre of self' has no front or back stage. It is a unified space, with no boundaries. It only has one centre: the performing self (Hastrup 1985:91). People are considered as active facilitators and not as passive receivers who reproduce culture. People change the circumstances through their actions. And theatre is a medium, a 'key' which helps people to act.

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