

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is aimed at reviewing the works and ideas of different people on speech training, accent training, voice training, and body and mind training for actors. This chapter provides an in depth understanding of the voice and the qualities of a good voice; it also gives an insight on speech and the organs responsible for the production of speech. This chapter goes further to explain accent and how it is accent is acquired by an actor, as well as the importance of accent training for better characterization by actors. Lastly, this chapter talks about body and mind training for the richness, flexibility and dynamism of the performance and for the actor to rid himself of any form of tension that might cause his or her performances to be clichéd.

2.1 THE VOICE

The voice is the sound produced in a person's larynx and uttered through the mouth of living creatures, especially as speech or song. (<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/.../what-is-voice>)

Voice (or vocalization) is the sound produced by humans and other vertebrate using the lungs and the vocal folds in the larynx, or voice box. Voice is not always produced as speech, however. Infants babble and coo; animals bark, moo, whinny, growl, meow; and adult humans laugh, sing, cry. Voice is generated by airflow from the lungs as the vocal folds are brought close together. When air is pushed past the vocal folds with sufficient pressure, the vocal folds vibrate. If the vocal folds in the larynx did not vibrate normally, speech could only be as a whisper. (<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/.../what-is-voice>)

Berry explains that:

The voice is the means by which, in everyday life, you communicate with other people, and though of course, how you present yourself- your posture, movement, dress and involuntary gesture- gives an impression of your personality, it is through

the speaking voice that you convey your precise thoughts and feelings (Berry, 1973: 7).

Berry's definition of the voice explains that a person's voice is unique to him/ her and beyond dressing and physical comportment; the voice reveals who a person really is. There is uniqueness and individuality to one's voice, as one's voice defines one's mood, health and generally, one's personality. For instance, if self-esteem is low, it may be reflected by nervousness and hesitancy in the voice, a shy person may have a quiet voice, even close to a whisper but someone who is confident of himself will more likely have a command of his voice, and clarity of speech.

Breath is voice; it is the foundation to a good voice and it is also the "foundation on which all voice work must be based; breathing correctly is the most fundamental foundation technique for any actor or performer" (Gates, 2000: 6). It is important to learn how to breathe properly as actors. According to Turner (1993: 8), breathing has two basic functions, which are: breathing to keep us alive and breathing to keep other activities running in life. Turner says that it is also called "vegetative breathing and breathing for rendition". He adds that in doing any of these, it must be done naturally without the exertion of force or pressure. Gate (2000: 6) says that "proper breathing gives extra richness to the tone of the voice". Turner (1993: 8) explains that in breathing for survival, the amount of time for inhalation and exhalation are almost the same, while in breathing for rendition, inhalation is short and quick while exhalation is lengthened, depending on what is being expressed. Boston & cook (2009: 13) explain that "We breathe approximately eighteen times an hour and twenty thousand nine hundred and twenty times a day." It would then be easy not to pay attention to such a process that comes so naturally, but being aware of it can cause a radical change to an actor's ability to express him or herself.

According to Tommaso Salvini, the famed 19th century Italian tragedian, "acting is voice, voice, and more voice". This signifies that the actor and his voice cannot be separated. The actor's voice has received the greatest attention through history, and actors are sometimes awarded prizes for the distinctive use of their voice. From the soft sensual whisper of romance, to the harsh thunderous outburst of anger, to the loyal and playful communication of friendship, the actor's voice goes a long way in character expression. The voice is a very important tool to an actor and an actor's voice must be true to him. An actor's voice has to resonate and must carry or convey his emotions. An actor must be dynamic with his voice and speech pattern. He also must

be able to project and must continually strive for physical elocution. Stanislavski (1986: 3) says “the actor no less than a soldier must be subject to iron discipline”. This means that an actor must be much disciplined in training his or herself in the use of her “weapons for battle”. According to Stanislavski (1986: 15), the three basic tools of an actor are his body, his voice and his mind.

An actor’s voice must be dynamic and flexible; he must own his voice, and he must be able to control it. The total control of an actor over his voice gives him a total control over his roles and his character portrayals, helping him reach the height of acting. Cohen puts it that:

A voice that can rivet attention, that can explain, that can convey the subtlest nuance that can dazzle, thunder with rage, and flow with compassion. This, when used in the service of dramatic impersonation, can hold an audience spell bound for as long as its owner cares to recite (1997: 66).

An actor’s first rendition will either make the audience anticipate your next appearance on stage or will make them lose interest in the character. Voice gives distinction to an actor, and a full understanding of dynamics of the voice helps him with his character. Turner (1993) adds that “a voice powerful enough to be heard at the back of theatre and a clear delivery that is subtle enough to appear natural- these are the skills sought by the actor”. Every actor wants to be and sound as natural as possible; every actor wants to have a perfect hold of his character and a deep understanding of his lines and this can only be achievable by a vast training in voice.

A major error in training an actor is separating her voice from her speech. Gates (2000: 1) expresses this by saying “in some institutions voice is even separated from speech, as though the words of the language have no connection to the vocal instrument that produced them”. You cannot separate an actor’s voice from her speech, her voice is the medium of her speech, and her speech is as a result of her voice. Voice and speech training in performances is of great importance to actor’s and to the overall success of any performance.

There are certain qualities a good voice must possess, and the good voice in turn, makes the good actor. According to Gates (2000: 7), these qualities are:

Audibility / volume: According to Brown (1962:72), “audibility is the first requirement of the actor and depends on the control of the breath stream”. Audibility is not shouting, as some actors

think to do. If your voice is raised too much, it loses its tonal quality. Instead of raising one's voice, one is expected to project out- that is to support the voice with a lot of breath, as the further you want to project the voice, the more breath you need.

Clarity: Some people tend to talk with clenched teeth and with little movement of the lips. It is this inability to make speech sounds with precision that is the root cause of inaudibility. Although sometimes it could be caused by some speech defects such as lisp etc. to have a good articulation, it is important to always talk with an unclenched jaw and an opened mouth to give full pronunciations of the sounds made.

Variety: A good actor must be flexible with his voice, that is, his voice must have variety. He must not be monotonous in rendering lines. He must, through consistent training build variety and flexibility in his voice.

Fluency: An actor must be fluent in speaking. His manner of speaking must come with a smooth flow of words. He must be vocally sound, and should not pick or say her words on after the other, except in cases of characterization.

Pronunciation: A good actor must be very good at pronouncing words. He must have a vast knowledge of pronunciations, and must be conversant with his dictionary, and other means of acquiring an arsenal of vocabularies.

Oral interpretation: The art of communicating to an audience a work of literal arts in its intellectual, emotional and its aesthetic entirety. This shows the perfect understanding and communication of the intension of the character to the audience.

2.2 SPEECH

According to the advanced English dictionary, the word 'speech' originated from the Middle English 'speac'; akin to old English 'sprecan' to speak. Speech is the communication or expression of thoughts in spoken words. "Humans express thoughts, feelings, and ideas orally to one another through a series of complex movements that alter and mold the basic tone created by voice to specific, decodable sounds. Speech is produced by precisely coordinated muscle actions in the head, neck, chest, and abdomen". (<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/.../what-is-voice>) Speech is a gradual process that requires years of practice.

Like every theatrical art, speech is also a major aspect of a play production that should be regarded and respected in the arts. Benson (2010: 171) views that:

Speech is an art of the theatre which demands proper and conscious attention for effective communication. Just as a choreographer will exercise and train his body for flexibility in preparation for a musical concert, so is the actor expected to train his voice and diction for vocal performance and conservational speeches.

Benson explains further and opines that, for actors, speech training is the most imperative aspect of the actor's training because it aids voice characterisation in a totally different light compared to everyday interaction or conversation because "speech makes the actor; speech is the actor". (Benson 2010: 159).

Vocal qualities for an effective speech

"Speech production involves a sequence of complex coordinated articulator movements, airflow from the respiratory system, and timing of the vocal system physiology". (Hansen, 2007: 108)
Vocal qualities of speech help to analyze the speech delivery of an actor or a speaker for an effective speech.

RELAXATION

Relaxation of the actor is a very important aspect of an actor training in any play production. Speech relaxation can either be positive or negative. The positive aspects of speech relaxation include rhythmic, relaxed and fluent speeches. The negative aspect of speech relaxation includes a tensed, non- rhythmic or jerky speech. An actor is always advised to be conscious of being on the positive side of the speech relaxation in order to communicate effectively.

BREATH CONTROL

Breath control has to do with inhalations during speech delivery. It deals with how breathing is balanced, timed, duly worked upon, sensibly managed and effectively able to help the speaker deliver without too much stress to avoid breathing unnecessarily fast after speech is delivered. Carey, (2009:185) "how clearer your thinking is, the more deeply you breathe". For an actor to

effectively achieve these roles, he must live with the consciousness that before he can assume any role, he must take time to breathe well; exhale and inhale deeply while in any character of his choice. Breathing deeply in the right manner contributes to intelligence and creative thinking and the appropriate use of the mind. Yip, (2007: 8) says that:

Speech breathing refers to the respiratory mechanism involved during speech production, from increase of the air pressure in the lungs through inhalation before speech production to the change of air pressure throughout the speech production process.

The way an actor inhales and exhales air before a performance is quite different from the way the same actor breathes during a performance. There is pressure and tension in the breathing some minutes to the performance because nervousness sets in but it is recommended that an actor should be in his or her actor's neutral and constructive rest position before the performance begins. According to Gates (2000: 30), there are four basic methods of breathing;

Diaphragmatic Breathing: this is the most commonly known method of breathing for human communicators. In this type of breathing, there is downward movement of the diaphragm which is accompanied by an expansion of the lower ribs, and this has a great advantage to controlling exhalation, this is believed to help in relaxation and easing tension.

Clavicular or Chest Breathing: this breathing process is what Brown (1962: 73) refers to as an "incorrect mode of breathing". Clavicular breathing is when an actor raises his shoulder or collar bone while inhaling. It is a very exhausting process. This adds tension to the laryngeal area and causes a harsh and high-pitched voice. It sometimes also causes tiredness in the chest area. However, clavicular breathing does not bring about the desired result, as sufficient air never really taken in.

The Rib Reserve Breathing: this is a vocal method for sustaining breath for a longer period of time, you breathe in first through the nose, filling the back with air, and then through the mouth to fill the chest. Then you continue speaking through the air in the chest. When you run out of air and need a 'reserve', you can then make use of the air stored up in the back.

Composite Breathing: Gate (2000) says is the “most efficient method of breathing”. It is the combination of diaphragmatic and rib breathing. It expands the ribs, at the same time giving enough room for the lungs to expand and sustain breath. There are sometimes cases where an actor has to render long lines without having to stop for air, having control over his breath, gives him an edge in such situations.

RESONANCE

Resonance deals with the elongating and rising of sounds produced by spreading vibrations. An actor should feel resonance within his body while rendering his lines as he would feel the sounds vibrating within him while speaking.

PITCH

“Pitch means notes or tones which give that accent its characteristic music. Intonations mean the pattern of pitch changes in connected speech”. Blumenfeld (2012: 4). The highness or lowness of the tone or a note of a speaker is the pitch pattern of such speaker. The pitch can either be free-ranging or it may have meaningful inflections just as it can neither be monotonous, patterned, end- dropped, too high or too low.

RATE

The rate of speech is how speedy or unhurriedly an actor says his words. Every actor has different rates at which they talk and these rates depends on the situation and circumstances on ground; depending on his or her culture, age, location, how he or she feels etc. in order for an actor to communicate effectively, the actor must speak at a rate of speech that his or her listeners can understand. These guidelines are very useful to perfect the rate at which an actor speaks;

Listen to people around you, consider your listener’s knowledge of the topic, relax, and use pauses when you speak, pay attention to your listener, practice speaking at different rates of speech, and don’t expect your rate of speech to change overnight. Kjesbo, (2012: 1-2).

STRESS

The stress of a speech delivery can either be meaningful, too light or too heavy. Considering the stress of speeches, the stress makers are determinants. The strongest accent is called primary stress; the next most prominent stress is called secondary stress. In some languages, Tertiary and weaker stresses are also recognized. In many dictionaries however, the accents are indicated by such symbols as ‘for the primary stress and “for the secondary stress.

ARTICULATION

Articulation means expressing in coherent verbal form. A sharp or brilliant articulation of a word or phrase tells us that the speaker knows what he is doing and he is producing his sounds from the right place of articulation and that he is conscious of producing sounds using the appropriate manner of articulation. An articulation that is slurred is incoherent thereby not exactly communicating. There are two main streams of articulation; ‘manner of articulation’ and ‘place of articulation’.

Manner of articulation describes the degree of narrowing in the oral tract.

However, manner labels also specify the escape channel, the initiating source of airflow involved, and certain acoustic or perceptual characteristics.

(Dicaino, 2010: 19)

The manner of articulation includes; plosives, affricates, fricatives, lateral, approximants, and nasals.

PRONUNCIATION

According to Encarta dictionaries, pronunciation is “the way in which a sound, word or language is articulated especially in conforming to an accepted standard”. Simply put, pronunciation is the way in which words are being uttered. According to Blumenfeld (2002: 9) the apparatuses used are the nasal cavity, mouth- hard palate, the soft palate, And the tongue, the blade of the tongue, the uvula, the epiglottis, the vocal cords, the trachea and the oesophagus. These are likened to machines or instruments that enhance production of sounds in any accent or dialect. Without these apparatuses, there is no way in which sounds can be produced to communicate with any listener in any situation.

2.3 ACCENT

Wells (1982:1) describes “accent as the way of pronunciation that a speaker uses for whom English is the native language or more, generally, by the community or social grouping to which he or she belongs”. Accent is the mode or way of pronunciation in which a speaker expresses himself in his own native language or dialect in order to communicate with his listener or others. He or she speaks using the vowel or consonant sounds that are attributed to the native language of his or her listener. The shape, posture and position of his mouth and tongue are determined by the vowel sounds of his dialect. Wells added that: “accent has to do with the use of particular vowel or consonant sounds and particular rhythmic and other prosodic features”.

Douglas (2003: 106) describes accent “as a term used to refer to the pronunciation of any variety of speech, with grammar and vocabulary”. This means that no matter the accent the play script requires actor to play with, it is the actor’s responsibility to work on the accent and perform as though the accent was born with her; in other words the actor must try to speak as naturally as possible.

Blumenfeld (2002:3) describes accent as “the way in which a language is pronounced”. It is the specific systematic mode of pronouncing a sound and producing in this context is concerned with the mode of pronunciation, articulation, stress, and rate, the timing of the breath control, pitch and intonation of the particular sound. Through a speaker’s accent, it could be detected where the speaker is from and the social status of such speaker. The accent helps to place the speaker’s identity merely listening to him/ her.

Wells (1982: 111) argues that an adolescent or adult, that is, someone past the critical age of first language learning, wishes to alter his accent. For instance a typical Calabar girl, who has lived in her hometown all her life, finally moves to the city to get a job. She meets other ladies her age who speak standard Nigerian language; she therefore decides to speak like them thereby altering her original dialect.

The locality of one particular syllable in a word determines the accent. Hulst, (1999: 4) buttresses that:

Accent is a local property of one particular syllable in the word. If this were so,
a proper and simple representation of accent would
be to assign some sort of mark to the syllable in question (or its vowel),

much as in done in dictionaries
'accent mark'.

or transcription where accent is marked by an

It has been noted by Blumenfeld (2002: 5) that “every language has regional accents and dialects and this influence the way English is spoken”. A speaker that has English as his or her second language rather than first but speaks English very fluently and effortlessly, will surely have an accent of her native region no matter how fluent or intelligent she is but there might just be only a thin line between differentiating her native accent from English as her native language might not be so distinct and detectable in her speech unlike a speaker that was born and bred and still resides in his native town. Yule (1985: 181) buttresses this point and says: “whether or not you speak Standard English, you will certainly speak with an accent. It is a myth that speakers have accents while others do not”.

Benson (2010: 169) writes that “accent training has a lot to do with actor training because of the need for accurate characterisation in the theatre”. For instance, stage play like ‘The marriage of Anansewa’; a Ghanaian play would require the typical Nigerian actors to speak their lines using the Ghanaian accent, the Nigerian actors needn’t travel to Ghana in order to learn how to speak like them. All they have to do is to get a speech/ accent coach to train them on the accent. To arrive at an accurate characterisation, immense training and tutoring is advised. Benson adds that “speech training makes an actor multi-talented”. Once an actor acquires an accent and he or she is sure of it, he or she can always go back to it, play on it, explore, sustain, feel and compare it with the previous one(s). Douglas (2003: 107) buttresses this view when he says: “accent work is like riding a bicycle. Once the accent is there, it does not take much of a refresher to re-access it even after a long hiatus”. This means that no matter how long it takes an actor to make use of a particular accent, as long as he or she have acquired it and it has stuck, then it is always retrievable as soon as the actor begins to practice and reminds himself.

2.4 BODY AND MIND

The training of an actor starts with various exercises for each of the actor’s tool i.e. body, voice, and mind through relaxation, concentration, imagination and observation. Chekhov opines that “the actor’s body must be moulded and re-created from inside” (Chekhov, 1953:1-2). This means that for an actor to reach the pinnacle of his performance, his body must have undergone some form of training. He adds that for an audience to enjoy the richness of any performance, the

actor is required to have “sensitivity of the body to the psychological creative impulses”. He says, most actors do not allow their body to feel the impulses created by the mind as a result their acting becomes mechanistic and puppet- like. There is some sort of disconnection between their body and their mind resulting into clichéd performances. Moreover, it is do ironical that the actor strives to bring life as it is on stage despite their mechanistic and shallow acting and by so doing become ordinary photographers rather than artists. Chekhov buttresses this view by saying that:

The actor’s body can be of optimum value to him only when motivated by an unceasing flow of artistic impulses; only then can it be more refined, flexible and, most vital of all sensitive and responsive to the subtleties which constitute the creative artist’s inner life. (Chekhov, 1953:3)

An actor’s body and performances becomes flexible when he rids his body of any blocks that might prevent the free flow of feeling and reaction to impulses as generated by his mind. This cannot be achieved by strictly physical exercises but “the psychology itself must take part in such a development”. (Chekhov, 1953:3)

The second requirement an actor must have includes “the richness of the psychology itself”. A sensitive body and a rich mind would create a very good actor. In order to make a mind rich, Chekov inclines an actor toward reading a variety of literature and trying to understand the reason why each character act the way they do especially within the period of the play or the circumstances surrounding them:

...endeavor to penetrate the psychology of persons around you toward whom you feel unsympathetic. Try to find in them some good, positive qualities which you perhaps failed to notice before. Make an attempt to experience what they experience; ask yourself why they feel or act the way they do. Remain objective and you will enlarge your psychology immensely (Chekhov, 1953: 4-5).

The last requirement is “complete obedience of both body and psychology to the actor”. In everyday life, we do not make sufficient and proper use of our bodies thereby making a lot of our muscles inactive, rigid and weak. Because of this, an actor should have full command of his body and mine to do that which he wants it to do. It is for this reason that he gains “self-confidence, freedom and harmony for his creative activity”. (Chekhov, 1953: 5)

Chekhov believes that an actor's performance should not be led by his mind alone because "the actor who judges through his intellect divorces his experiences from his body" (Hurt, 2014: 10). An actor who is led by his own intellect becomes cliché because he already has in his archives already planned gestural movements for certain situations; all he does is facial morguing which has no inner justification. A true artist should not give way for his performance or the relationship with his character to be led by his intellect because:

We want to be led into our own work by our imaginations and not our intellect. We are normally led into everything by the intellect. It is used to being in charge of our lives... it protects and guides us in many things but does not help us in the creative state. So we try to subdue its influence by engaging the imagination (Petit, 2010: 41-42).

Chekhov buttresses this point by adding that:

Of course, your mind can and will be very helpful to you in evaluating, correcting, verifying, making additions and offering suggestions, but it should not do all these before your creative intuition has asserted itself and spoken fully (Chekhov, 1953: 66).

Chekhov also suggests ways on approaching roles given to actors through the use of imagination. He says that when they use of their imaginations, they would begin to realize that it aids their work and also it removes blocks or tension from the body which limits their work. This tension could create a personal psychological inhibition of the actor which can limit the actor's work. This tension comes from underdeveloped body or self-consciousness, lack of confidence and fear of making a wrong impression (Chekhov, 1953: 66).