

**CRITICAL DRAMA PEDAGOGY FOR
INTERCULTURAL LANGUAGE COMPETENCE:
REWORKING FREIREAN AND BOALIAN
PRAXIS**

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Abstract

This study argues that critical drama pedagogy, understood as the fusion of Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal, offers Nigerian and African higher education a distinctive route to intercultural competence, but only under specific conditions. Anchoring on a conceptual synthesis of published Nigerian and African scholarship, the study pursues three objectives: to establish how critical drama converts intercultural knowledge from inert content into embodied, socially witnessed action, extending Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence beyond cognition into performance; to examine, through a documented Nigerian case, the conditions under which this conversion fails and instead surfaces ethnocentrism, illustrated by role refusal among theatre arts students at the University of Benin; and to integrate Ubuntu and its pedagogical form, ubuntu pedagogy, as a corrective to Byram's individualist assumptions, reframing intercultural competence as a communally negotiated achievement rather than a private cognitive trait. Read together, Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu form one integrated framework rather than four separate theories. Each supplying what the others lack. The study closes with a proposed framework for Nigerian higher education and implications for curriculum design, teacher preparation, and assessment, arguing that critical drama pedagogy requires deliberate institutional investment, not incidental classroom enthusiasm, if it is to deliver genuine intercultural learning.

Keywords: Critical pedagogy, Drama-in-education, Intercultural communicative competence, Ubuntu, Translanguaging, Nigerian higher education.

Introduction

Nigerian classrooms are already intercultural before any lesson names them so. Students bring dozens of ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds into the same room, and instruction can flatten this plurality into a false uniformity or use it as material for learning. Drama is often proposed as the pedagogy best suited to the second option, because it requires learners to inhabit voices and bodies other than their own rather than simply read about them (Akinsola, 2025). Yet drama is not automatically critical, and it does not automatically build intercultural competence. Much classroom drama in Nigerian and African institutions remains recitational. Students perform scripted roles, are graded on delivery, and leave with their assumptions about self and other unchanged. This article distinguishes critical drama pedagogy; drama organized around Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal, from this recitational default, and asks what such pedagogy can realistically do for intercultural competence in Nigerian higher education.

Incidentally, the discussion is conceptual, built from published Nigerian and African scholarship rather than new fieldwork, and proceeds through an integrated theoretical framework, a focused literature review, a methodological statement, a critical analysis organized around the article's central claims, a proposed framework

for Nigerian institutions, and implications for curriculum, teacher preparation, and assessment. Throughout, the article treats a single documented Nigerian classroom episode as illustration rather than proof, a distinction that matters because a conceptual argument about what critical drama pedagogy can achieve should not rest its evidentiary weight on one case being representative of Nigerian higher education as a whole. The purpose is to show how four bodies of theory, brought into deliberate relation to one another, can guide practice more precisely than any one of them applied alone.

Problem Statement and Gap

Two literatures currently run in parallel without meeting. Nigerian and African scholarship on theatre in education documents drama's contribution to socio-cultural learning in broad terms, reporting that theatre deepens learners' acceptance of difference and their socio-cultural knowledge (Akinsola, 2025; Akam et al., 2026), but rarely engages Byram's (1997, 2021) model of intercultural communicative competence by name or specifies which of its component skills a given classroom practice actually builds. Meanwhile, applications of Byram's framework in language education were developed for European learners preparing to study or work abroad, and they assume an individual learner free to question inherited belief without communal consequence, an assumption that does not travel intact into Nigerian classrooms where a student's willingness to perform a role is often bound up

with family and community judgment (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide & Usadolo, 2022).

The problem this creates is practical as much as theoretical. Departments that adopt drama for its presumed intercultural value, have no framework that both names what should be learned, in Byram's precise vocabulary, and accounts for the communal pressures under which Nigerian students actually learn it. Existing accounts also lean heavily on single-institution case material, most visibly one documented instance of role refusal at the University of Benin (Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide & Usadolo, 2022), without a broader theoretical apparatus for interpreting what such refusal means or how a curriculum should respond to it. This article addresses that gap by integrating Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu into a single framework capable of naming outcomes, explaining resistance, and guiding institutional practice at once.

Objectives

Three objectives organize the discussion that follows;

1. To establish, conceptually, how Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal convert intercultural knowledge from inert content into embodied, correctable action that gives practical shape to Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence.
2. To examine, through a documented Nigerian case, the conditions under which critical drama pedagogy fails to

build intercultural competence and instead surfaces ethnocentrism or role refusal.

3. To integrate Ubuntu and ubuntuogy into this framework as a corrective to Byram's individualist assumptions, and to translate the resulting integrated framework into concrete recommendations for curriculum, casting, language use, and assessment in Nigerian higher education.

Research Questions

1. By what mechanism does critical drama pedagogy convert cultural knowledge into the embodied competencies Byram's model describes?

2. What does documented Nigerian classroom evidence reveal about the limits of this mechanism, particularly around ethnocentrism and role refusal?

3. How can Ubuntu and ubuntuogy be integrated with Freire, Boal, and Byram to produce a framework, and associated institutional practices, suited to Nigerian higher education?

Literature Review

Recent African scholarship agrees that drama can build intercultural or socio-cultural competence, while disagreeing on how reliably it does so. Akam et al. (2026) argue that pedagogical drama helps translate internally held cultural competence into observable intercultural behavior, a translation that conventional instruction often fails to achieve. In Nigeria, Akinsola's

(2025) review of studies published between 2004 and 2024 concludes that theatre-in-education deepens learners' socio-cultural knowledge and their acceptance of difference, framing this as central to decolonizing Nigerian curricula.

Classroom-level research complicates this optimism. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) document theatre arts students at the University of Benin refusing roles perceived as incongruent with their ethnic or religious identity, one participant citing anticipated family disapproval. This finding shows that drama can surface ethnocentrism as readily as dissolve it, and it is the case this article treats as an illustration below, not as evidence that Nigerian drama classrooms are typically resistant to intercultural work.

A related strand situates drama within participatory rather than intercultural-competence traditions specifically. Abuku (2021), writing from direct experience at Benue State University, describes Boal-influenced collaborations between Nigerian university theatre students and metropolitan schoolchildren as vehicles for developing critical thinking through engagement with schools beyond the campus. Obukoadata et al. (2024) report drama's value for civic education in a Cross River State primary school, suggesting the pedagogy's reach extends below tertiary level. Omodan and Diko (2021) argue separately that ubuntu pedagogy corrects the residual individualism of imported critical pedagogies, including Freire's own, when applied without adjustment in African settings, a

claim this article extends specifically to drama pedagogy.

This literature reveals two further gaps this article addresses. Firstly, studies of drama and socio-cultural competence in Nigeria (Akinsola, 2025; Akam et al., 2026) rarely engage Byram's model by name, describing intercultural gains in general terms rather than through his specific *savoirs*, while applications of Byram's framework in language education rarely engages African critical or communal pedagogies like ubuntu pedagogy. Secondly, none of this literature considers language choice within drama pedagogy through the lens of translanguaging, the deliberate deployment of a learner's full linguistic repertoire rather than a single target language (García & Wei, 2014), despite Nigerian classrooms being multilingual by default. Three propositions from this literature structure the analysis that follows: drama can build intercultural competence when practiced dialogically; this outcome is not guaranteed and may instead expose entrenched ethnocentrism; and African frameworks like Ubuntu can correct the individualism of imported models without discarding their analytic value.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The argument advanced in this article rests on four bodies of theory, read not as parallel resources but as a single cumulative chain in which each stage answers a limitation in the one before it.

Freirean Critical Pedagogy: Freire's (1996) starting point is a distinction between banking education, where teachers deposit knowledge into passive students, and problem-posing education, where teacher and learner investigate reality together through dialogue. His concept of conscientização, or critical consciousness, describes learners coming to see cultural hierarchies as constructed, and therefore changeable, rather than natural. Applied to intercultural learning, this means cultural difference should be interrogated as a set of relationships, not memorized as fixed content. A banking-model lesson on, for instance, Nigeria's religious diversity might list beliefs and practices for students to record and reproduce; a problem-posing lesson would instead ask why those beliefs are held, by whom, and with what consequences for the people sitting in the room. Freire supplies the goal of the framework proposed here: learners who see cultural hierarchy as constructed and changeable. He does not, however, supply a classroom method for reaching that goal, which is where Boal becomes necessary rather than merely complementary.

Boalian Theatre of the Oppressed: Boal (1979) supplies that method. His Theatre of the Oppressed operationalizes Freirean dialogue through techniques such as Forum Theatre, in which spectators become spect-actors who may stop a scene and physically replace a character to try an alternative response. Boal's description of theatre as an instrument the audience itself can wield reframes classroom drama as rehearsal for real encounters rather than performance for its own sake

(Boal, 1979, as cited in Support Centre for Elites, n.d.). For intercultural competence, this structure matters because it lets learners attempt an intercultural encounter, fail, stop, and try again, turning a cultural misstep into a repeatable exercise rather than a single costly event. Boal therefore supplies the method the Freirean goal requires: rehearsal that makes intercultural missteps visible, correctable, and non-final. What Boal's method does not supply, on its own, is a vocabulary precise enough to say what a student has actually learned once a scene has been rehearsed and revised, which is the function Byram's model performs next.

Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence:

Byram (1997, 2021) names what such rehearsal should produce. His model identifies five interrelated *savoirs*: attitudes of curiosity and openness (*savoir être*), knowledge of one's own and other cultures (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness, the capacity to evaluate cultural practices, including one's own, against explicit criteria (*savoir s'engager*). Where Freire supplies the goal and Boal the method, Byram supplies the vocabulary for naming what has actually been learned, which matters for curriculum design because a pedagogy that cannot name its outcomes cannot be assessed, defended, or improved in any systematic way. His later extension of this model toward intercultural citizenship, emphasizing political engagement and social action as outcomes of intercultural learning rather than private attitude change

alone, sits comfortably with Boal's spect-actor, since both frameworks require the learner to act rather than only reflect. Byram's model was, however, built for European learners preparing to study or work abroad, and it assumes an individual learner free to question inherited belief without communal consequence, an assumption that does not travel intact into Nigerian classrooms.

Ubuntu and Ubuntugogy: Ubuntu and its pedagogical elaboration as ubuntugogy, closes this gap. Ubuntugogy treats teaching and learning as processes validated by community, not by individual achievement alone, captured in the maxim that a person is a person through other persons (Omodan & Diko, 2021). It does not replace Byram's *savoirs*; it governs how they should be pursued in African classrooms, reframing openness and critical awareness as communal virtues the group models together, not only private dispositions graded in isolation. Omodan and Diko (2021) present ubuntugogy explicitly as a decolonial pedagogy, positioned against curricula that remain, in form if not in stated content, structured around Eurocentric assumptions about the autonomous individual learner. This positioning, matters for critical drama pedagogy specifically because Boal's own techniques travelled to Africa through Brazilian and European theatre traditions, and can themselves be practiced in ways that quietly retain those assumptions unless deliberately re-grounded in African communal norms. Ubuntu supplies what none of the first three elements can: an account of the communal

accountability a Nigerian student's classroom choices remain answerable to outside the classroom itself.

Proposed Integrated Framework: This article proposes that these four elements be treated formally as an integrated framework, which the analysis below labels the Freire-Boal-Byram-Ubuntu (FBBU) model. In this model, Freirean dialogue sets the pedagogical orientation of a course; Boalian technique, principally Forum Theatre, supplies its recurring classroom method; Byram's *savoirs* supply the outcomes against which a course is designed and assessed; and Ubuntu supplies the governing ethic that determines how casting, language use, and assessment are negotiated in practice. Each stage answers a question the previous stage leaves open, which is why the framework should be read as integrated rather than stacked, and why removing any one element, as the critical analysis below demonstrates, leaves a specific and identifiable gap in the other three.

Methodology

This study is conceptual rather than empirical. It adopts what Jaakkola (2020) terms a theory-synthesis approach. It draws together separate bodies of theory, Freirean critical pedagogy, Boalian applied theatre, Byram's intercultural communicative competence, and Ubuntu/ubuntugogy, that have rarely been read together in African drama-education scholarship, and integrates them into a single explanatory framework. No new fieldwork, interviews, or classroom observation was conducted for this article; the analysis proceeds instead through a structured reading of published Nigerian and

African scholarship on drama pedagogy, intercultural competence, and decolonial education theory.

Sources were selected purposively rather than through a systematic database review, prioritizing peer-reviewed Nigerian and African studies published between 2021 and 2026 that address drama, theatre in education, or applied theatre in African higher or basic education, supplemented by the foundational theoretical texts (Freire, 1996; Boal, 1979; Byram, 1997, 2021) each Nigerian study implicitly or explicitly draws upon. This selection strategy suits a conceptual, theory-synthesis design, whose aim is to demonstrate the coherence and utility of an integrated framework rather than to establish the prevalence of any classroom phenomenon across a defined population (Jaakkola, 2020).

The single documented case discussed at length below, Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo's (2022) account of role refusal at the University of Benin, is used as an illustrative case rather than as data subjected to independent analysis; the study did not re-interview participants or re-examine primary transcripts, and it does not claim the case is representative. This limitation is a deliberate feature of the conceptual method chosen, not an oversight. The case functions to test whether the proposed FBBU framework can coherently interpret a documented classroom event, not to generalize from it. Because the study involved no primary human participants and relied exclusively on published secondary sources, no institutional ethical clearance was required; ordinary conventions of accurate attribution

and non-fabrication of sources were nonetheless followed throughout.

Critical Analysis

The FBBU framework proposed above is now tested against six practical dimensions of Nigerian classroom drama: it's embodied mechanism, its documented limits, Ubuntu's corrective role, language choice, casting, and assessment.

Drama as Embodied Intercultural Rehearsal

Critical drama pedagogy works by making cultural misunderstanding visible. In a conventional lecture on, say, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, or Fulani custom, a student's misunderstanding stays invisible and can be repeated on an examination script without correction. In a Forum Theatre exercise, the same misunderstanding becomes visible the moment it is performed, because classmates who embody or study that culture can intervene, replace the actor, and demonstrate an alternative. Boal'sspect-actor is therefore doing intercultural work as much as political work: it converts one-way transmission of cultural information into a negotiation among students who often already embody the very differences the syllabus is trying to teach.

This visibility changes the classroom's incentive structure. A lecture rewards a student for reproducing the correct answer about another culture on demand; a Forum Theatre scene rewards a student for responding well to an unscripted challenge from a peer, closer to the

improvisational demands of a genuine intercultural encounter outside the classroom. Byram's *savoir apprendre*, the skill of acquiring new cultural knowledge in real time through interaction, is difficult to teach through content delivery alone precisely because content delivery removes the improvisational pressure that gives the skill its point; drama restores that pressure inside a setting where the consequences of a poor response are pedagogical rather than social or reputational.

What critical drama adds to Byram's largely cognitive account is risk and affect. A student who physically takes on a role from an unfamiliar ethnic or religious background experiences decentering somatically, through voice, gesture, and audience judgment, not only intellectually. Akam et al.'s (2026) claim that pedagogical drama helps translate latent competence into observable behavior is best explained by this quality: knowledge that exists only privately is not yet intercultural competence in Byram's behavioral sense, and drama is one of the few pedagogies that forces knowledge into public, correctable action, a conclusion Akinsola's (2025) review reaches independently by arguing that theatre-in-education deepens sociocultural knowledge precisely because it combines cognitive and affective engagement rather than delivering information alone.

Limits, Resistance, Ethnocentrism and Role Refusal

The mechanism described above is not self-executing, and one documented case shows why. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) report a theatre arts student

at the University of Benin refusing a role set among the Itsekiri-speaking part of Nigeria, citing likely family disapproval and asking instead for a role closer to their own lived reality. The researchers read this refusal as ethnocentrism that made intercultural work difficult in that classroom. The case is used here as a single illustration of a structural risk in drama pedagogy, not as evidence about Nigerian students generally, since one classroom episode cannot establish how common such refusals are across Nigeria's many institutions.

Read through Freire, the refusal is not a failure to be corrected by instruction but raw material for further dialogue. Compelling the student into the role would repeat the banking model's authoritarianism in reverse; treating the refusal itself as a Forum Theatre moment, performable and discussable by the class, keeps the pedagogy dialogic rather than coercive.

Read through Byram, the case exposes a specific limit rather than a general flaw. *Savoir s'engager* presumes a learner positioned to evaluate cultural practices against explicit criteria, typically within an educational culture where questioning inherited belief carries little social cost. The Benin student's refusal was a rational response to anticipated communal consequence, a factor Byram's model, built for a different context, does not foreground. Reading the refusal as a simple failure of critical awareness, as the original study's framing risks doing, imports an assumption from European language education that does not straightforwardly hold in a Nigerian classroom.

A note on scope is warranted, since the case carries real argumentative weight here. Agbonkonkon-Ogbeide and Usadolo (2022) report a single documented refusal within one production at one Nigerian university; neither they nor this article claim such refusals are frequent or typical across Nigerian theatre classrooms. The case is useful because it is concrete and well documented, not because it is representative; its argumentative role is to demonstrate that the mechanism in the preceding section can surface resistance as well as openness, a possibility any theory of critical drama pedagogy must accommodate.

Ubuntu as Communal Corrective

Ubuntugogy reframes what counts as success in a case like the one above. An ubuntugological reading does not ask only whether the individual student became more open in Byram's sense; it asks whether the classroom, as a communal unit, developed shared norms for handling the conflict between artistic role-play and communal identity (Omodan& Diko, 2021). Success becomes the group's capacity to negotiate which roles are performable, under what conditions, and with what consent, rather than one student's willingness to perform any role assigned.

This communal framing extends rather than contradicts Freire and Boal. Freire treats dialogue as a relationship between equals, not a technique for individual attitude change; Ubuntu simply names the collective this dialogue is answerable to in an African classroom. Boal's Forum Theatre already distributes agency across the

group each time a spect-actor intervenes; Ubuntu explains why that distribution matters culturally, not only dramaturgically. And where Byram's *savoir être* treats curiosity and openness as an individual disposition to be assessed, ubuntu pedagogy reframes them as virtues the group models together, restoring the communal ties a student's refusal is protecting rather than treating that refusal as a deficit alone.

This corrective is conceptual, not a general finding about Nigerian students' attitudes. It describes how the framework should be applied, not what most Nigerian classrooms actually do. What the theoretical argument establishes is narrower and more defensible. A framework combining Freire, Boal, and Byram without Ubuntu has no principled way to distinguish a student's ethnocentrism from a student's legitimate communal accountability, and will tend to read both as the same deficit.

Language and Translanguaging

Instruction in Nigerian higher education typically runs in English, a colonial inheritance, even as decolonial pedagogy urges the reclamation of indigenous languages as vehicles of thought, not only communication (Omodan & Diko, 2021; Ngugiwa Thiong'o, 1986). Drama conducted only in English privileges students already confident in English performance, reproducing the hierarchy critical pedagogy aims to dismantle.

Translanguaging theory offers the FBBU framework a precise account of what a genuinely multilingual

alternative looks like. García and Wei (2014) describe translanguageing as the deliberate deployment of a bilingual or multilingual speaker's full linguistic repertoire as one integrated system, rather than as switching between separate, bounded languages; on this view, a Nigerian student moving fluidly between English, an indigenous language, and Pidgin within a single Forum Theatre scene is not code-switching between discrete systems but drawing on one repertoire treated as legitimate throughout. Genuinely critical drama pedagogy needs to be translanguageing by design, treating Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa, Pidgin, and code-switched performance as legitimate resources rather than deviations from an English-medium norm.

A Forum Theatre scene performed partly in a student's first language, with peers translating or responding in kind, does more intercultural work than the same scene performed uniformly in English, because it makes linguistic difference itself, not only ethnic or religious content, and an object of negotiation inside the exercise. Read through Byram, translanguageed performance exercises *savoir comprendre* directly, since interpreting a peer's meaning across languages is itself an act of intercultural interpretation; read through Ubuntu, it also affirms that a student's home language belongs in the classroom's shared communal space rather than being confined to informal, unofficial use outside it.

Casting and Cultural Identity

Role assignment in Nigerian classrooms is rarely culturally neutral: ethnicity, gender, and religion together

shape which roles a student can perform without communal cost, as the Benin case illustrates for ethnicity alone. A female student may face different constraints than a male student in performing certain roles, and students from strongly Christian or Muslim backgrounds may object to portraying characters associated with traditional ritual or spirit possession, independent of any ethnic dimension. Because Forum Theatre allows any spect-actor to stop a scene and propose an alternative, it does not require one student to carry the full weight of an uncomfortable role for an entire production; discomfort can be distributed and renegotiated across the group instead of concentrated on a single performer.

Teacher preparation should treat casting as an intercultural negotiation to be opened before rehearsal begins, not an administrative decision made in advance and revisited only when a student objects. Under the FBBU framework, casting becomes the point at which Boal's method and Ubuntu's ethic meet most directly: the spect-actor mechanism supplies the technical means for redistributing an uncomfortable role, while Ubuntu supplies the reason such redistribution should be treated as ordinary classroom practice rather than a disruption to a fixed production plan.

Assessment

Conventional drama assessment in Nigerian institutions rewards diction, memorization, and stagecraft, criteria largely unrelated to Byram'ssavoirs. If critical drama pedagogy is to count as intercultural pedagogy rather than occasional enrichment, assessment must capture

reflection directly: portfolios analyzing a student's own decentering during rehearsal, peer assessment of how respectfully a group negotiated a contested casting decision, or structured post-performance dialogue scored for critical cultural awareness rather than polish.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that coloniality in African institutions persists less through overt content than through inherited structures, including assessment regimes modeled on colonial education; a rubric that credits multilingual, negotiated performance is therefore decolonial work, not merely pedagogical preference. Lecturers have little incentive to invest the extra time dialogic, negotiated drama requires relative to scripted performance unless assessment recognizes that time, so rubric reform is not a peripheral administrative step but a condition for the rest of the FBBU framework to function in practice.

None of the three practical constraints identified above, language, casting, and assessment, is insurmountable, and evidence from adjacent fields suggests deliberate investment pays off. Obukoadata et al. (2024) report that drama deployed with clear pedagogical intent achieved measurable civic-education engagement gains even in an under-resourced Cross River State primary school, without special funding beyond teacher commitment and lesson redesign. This suggests the three constraints are chiefly matters of institutional will and curriculum time, not unavoidable features of Nigerian higher education, though this remains to be tested directly at tertiary level rather than assumed.

Proposed Framework for Nigerian Education

Bringing the preceding analysis together, this article proposes a four-stage FBBU implementation model for Nigerian departments seeking to adopt critical drama pedagogy deliberately rather than incidentally.

Stage One, Naming: Departments state, in Byram's vocabulary, which savours a given course or module intends to build, so that intercultural aims are explicit rather than assumed as a by-product of theatre training.

Stage Two, Rehearsing: Boalian technique, principally Forum Theatre, functions as the recurring classroom method through which those named outcomes are pursued, beginning with low-stakes scenes drawn from everyday campus life before introducing scenes that deliberately foreground ethnic, religious, or linguistic difference, and conducted translanguaging by design rather than in English alone (García& Wei, 2014).

Stage Three, Governing: Casting, language use, and role refusal are treated as matters for communal negotiation under Ubuntu's ethic rather than administrative decisions imposed in advance, with facilitators trained specifically to treat a student's refusal as a Freirean dialogic opening rather than a disciplinary problem.

Stage Four, Assessing: Rubric reform scores reflection, negotiation, and critical cultural awareness directly, following Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) argument that

assessment structures, not only syllabus content, carry coloniality forward if left unexamined.

The four stages are cyclical rather than linear in practice: a casting negotiation conducted under Stage Three becomes assessable material under Stage Four, and what a rubric rewards in Stage Four shapes which scenes are rehearsed under Stage Two in the following term. Departments implementing this model should expect it to require a full semester to establish, since Stage Three in particular depends on students trusting that a refusal will be treated as an opening rather than a deficiency, a trust that develops only after facilitators have visibly honored it more than once. The model does not require additional funding beyond what Obukoadata et al. (2024) identify as sufficient for drama-based civic education at primary level, teacher commitment and lesson redesign, though it does require institutional endorsement, since individual lecturers redesigning assessment unilaterally risk conflicting with departmental grading conventions.

Implications for Practice and Research

Nigerian departments of English, theatre arts, and education should treat critical drama as a distinct pedagogy requiring its own preparation, not an occasional supplement to dramatic literature. Courses should pair Boalian technique with explicit learning outcomes framed in Byram's *savoirs*, so intercultural gains can be named and assessed rather than assumed.

Teacher education programs should train facilitators to treat role refusal as a pedagogical opening consistent

with Freirean dialogue and ubuntu pedagogy, not a disciplinary problem to be overridden. This requires specific facilitation skills current Nigerian teacher-training curricula rarely name explicitly: how to pause a rehearsal without shaming the student who has raised an objection, how to open the objection to class discussion, and how to co-design an alternative scene or role with the group. Departments should also audit the linguistic design of drama exercises, ensuring indigenous languages function as legitimate performance media under a translanguaging approach (García& Wei, 2014) rather than informal departures from English-medium instruction.

For researchers, the Benin case points to a gap rather than a conclusion. Nigerian and African scholarship needs longitudinal studies tracking intercultural outcomes of critical drama pedagogy across a semester or degree program, not only single-production case studies. Comparative work is also needed to examine how communal accountability structures, ethnicity, religion, and gender together shape students' willingness to engage in intercultural role-play across federal, state, and faith-based institutions, since the Benin case cannot indicate whether other institutional types would show a different pattern. Finally, studies pairing drama-based intervention with pre- and post-assessment using Byram-derived instruments would help establish, with more confidence than a single case allows, how much of the intercultural gain claimed in this literature is attributable to drama specifically.

Conclusion

This article has pursued three objectives. It has shown how critical drama pedagogy turns cultural knowledge into embodied, witnessed, and revisable action, giving Byram's cognitive model a practical mechanism through Freirean dialogue and Boalian rehearsal. It has shown, through one documented Benin classroom episode treated as illustration rather than proof, that this conversion is conditional, not automatic: drama can surface ethnocentrism as readily as dissolve it. And it has integrated Ubuntu and ubuntu-gogy as the correction the first two claims require, treating intercultural competence as a communally negotiated achievement rather than a private, gradable trait.

Together, Freire, Boal, Byram, and Ubuntu form the FBBU framework proposed here: name the goal, rehearse the method, measure the outcome, and govern the process communally. Freire and Boal without Byram give a critical method with no vocabulary for what has been learned; Byram without Freire and Boal gives a vocabulary with no classroom method for reaching it; and any combination of the three without Ubuntu risks reading Nigerian students' legitimate communal accountability as a deficit to be corrected rather than a condition to be respected. Nigerian universities that invest in this integrated model, through curriculum redesign, facilitator training, and assessment reform, stand to gain a more realistic and more genuinely decolonial route to intercultural competence than either uncritical enthusiasm for theatre-in-education or the unreflective import of European frameworks alone.

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