

APPLIED THEATRE RESEARCH: DISCOURSES IN THE FIELD

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Abstract

In this article, the author explores how discourses appear through the global field of ‘Applied Theatre Research’. The study includes a discourse analysis of books on ‘Applied Theatre’ worldwide and articles, mainly published in *Applied Theatre Researcher* and *Research in Drama Education*, since the year 2000. The discourse study is also based on 23 interviews. The study shows us that Applied Theatre Research is a discursive global field build up by the following six main discourses: The legitimization discourse, the ethics discourse, the effect discourse, the outsider-visitor discourse, the global economy discourse and the aesthetic discourse.

Keywords: “Applied theatre research”, discourse

The study’s background and research motivation

Applied Drama and Theatre is a relatively new field within theatre studies around the world. The term drew attention among theatre practitioners, facilitators and academics, all of whom looked beyond traditional theatre expressions in the late 1990s.¹³ In 1999- 2000, the term Applied Theatre (AT) began to arise as an established term through the opening two research centres; Centre for Applied Theatre Research at The University of Manchester in the UK, and at Griffith University in Brisbane, Australia. Twelve years have passed since then. It is now interesting to look back and analyse the research field itself through a meta-study, in order to perhaps manage to clarify things and offer new ways of thinking about applied theatre as, an established field. What this article will explore, however, is how the diverse discourses appear through the first twelve years in the field of Applied Theatre Research (ATR). I must emphasize thought that the discourses I will briefly present is just a small part of a huge and highly diverse field, but my aim with this presentation is to give an overview of some of the central debates and discussions in the field of Applied Theater Research. The field is a conglomerate of educational-, political and aesthetical discussions, arguments and viewpoints. Discourse analysis therefor seems like a good methodological approach to this project. The study includes research from the US, Canada, Australia, Africa, Asia and Europe. Fifteen books on Applied Theatre worldwide, as well as 52 articles primarily published in *Applied Theatre Researcher* and *Research in Drama Education* since 2000 are used in this study together with research interviews of 23 researchers in 2010-2012.

Through this discourse study I have discovered six discourses in applied theatre research. The discourses seem to interconnect between many authors and projects in the ATR-field. After defining the sixth discourse all new articles I then read or interviews I did, could be categorized within this six discourses. The discourse journey then came to an end. The six discourses I will present in this article are:

¹³ According to interviews with Nicholson, Thompson and Jackson, the term “Applied Theatre” somehow came into use during 1996-1999 at a conference during this period, though no one seemed to remember exactly when and by whom.

Discourses in ATR:**Gürgens Gjærum, 2012**

- 1. The legitimization discourse**
- 2. The ethics discourse**
- 3. The effect discourse**
- 4. The outsider-visitor discourse**
- 5. The global economy discourse**
- 6. The aesthetic discourse**

These discourses can be understood as a constructed overview of the ATR from the late 90is until today. A similar overview of AT was made by Prendergast and Saxton in 2009. They attempted to define motifs in applied theatre art work, when summing up their text book *Applied Theatre: International case studies and challenges for practice*. By motifs they meant “/.../ distinctive ideas that recur as forms or shapes in the art form” (Prendergast, Saxton, 2009: 198). The four motifs they found central to all kind of applied theatre work was:

Motifs in AT:**Prendergast, Saxton, 2009: 187**

- 1. Participation**
- 2. Aesthetics**
- 3. Ethics**
- 4. Assessment**

Prendergast and Saxton claim about their four selected motifs that:

/.../ most agree that these four areas are significant, there is often disagreement about who or what they represent in applied theatre and how to go about structuring the work in ways that address these issues (Prendegast, Saxton, 2009:187).

These significant four motifs in *applied theatre practise* are connected to the six discourses I have discovered in *applied theatre research*, the way I see it. In the two models above we see that the ‘discourses’ exceed the so-called ‘motifs’ by two more issues (economy and legitimization), the rest of the categories are approximately the same.

While the Prendergast and Saxton’s *motifs* are related to the art work itself, the *discourses* I have discovered merely arise from verbal discussions which are kind of disconnected to the actual art work, but rather directly connected to the reflection- and research processes before or after the actual art event. We will now, after the methodology section, follow six discourses and look into main disagreements and some significant arguments in the central discussions of ATR.

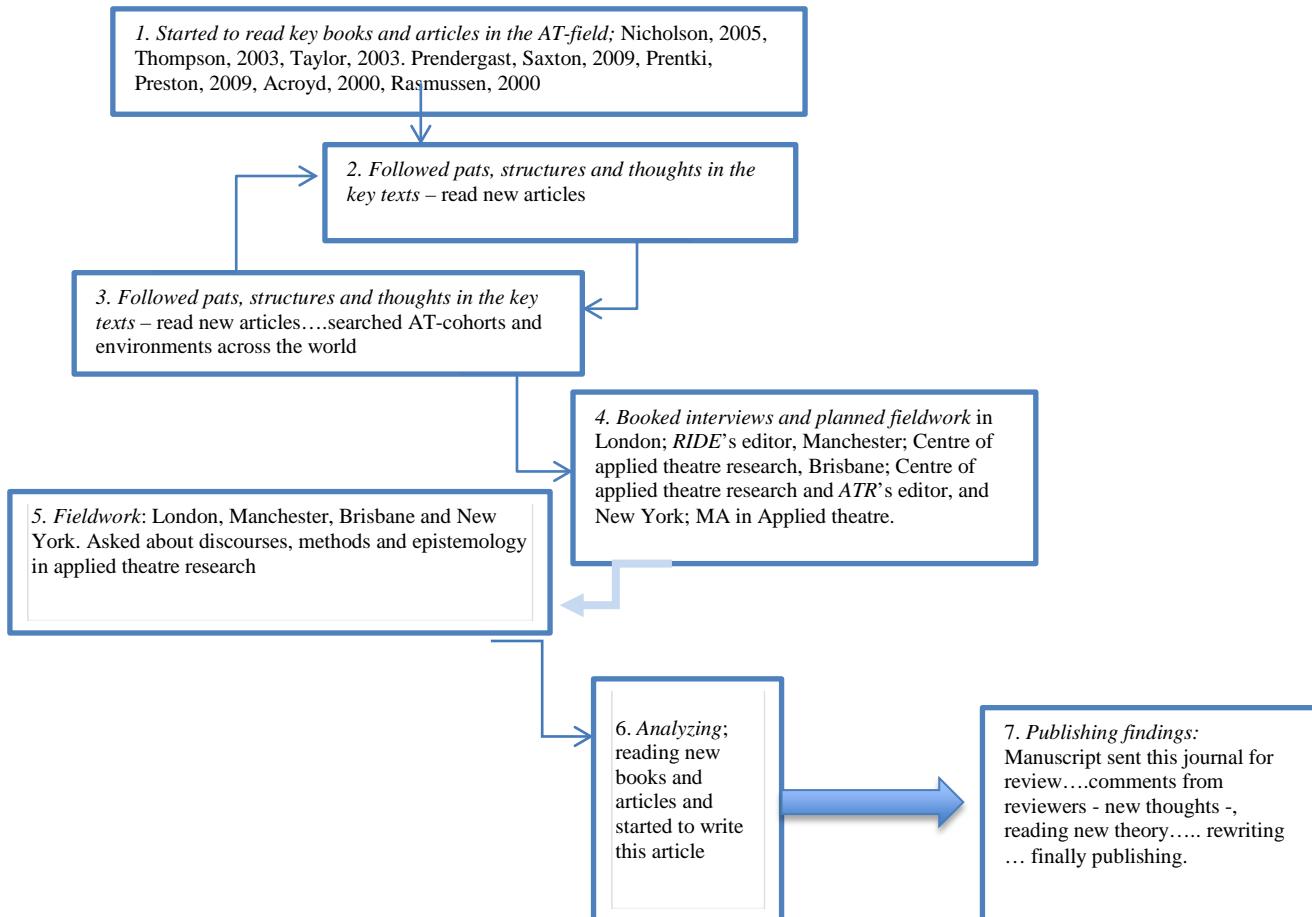
Discourse analysis – a research journey

I started this research project by searching for articles and text books, but also post-graduate Applied Theatre programmes and research centres. I searched theory through Academic Search Premier, BISYS and ABI/Inform, and ATR-cohorts and environments through Google. My aim was to find interesting informants and texts in order to discover the main discourses in the field. I need to emphasise that I have not particularly searched for certain themes, keywords or subjects apart from ‘Applied Theatre’ in the searching process.

So this discourse journey across our field developed by following paths, structures and thoughts from one text to another, from one informant to another. I started out reading key books and key articles in the AT-field; Nicholson, 2005, Thompson, 2003, Taylor, 2003, Prendergast, Saxton, 2009, Prentki, Preston, 2009, Acroyd, 2000, Rasmussen, 2000 etc. I then followed the researchers’ tracks and checked the authors’ reference lists, and then went on reading new articles or new books. In the end after two years, no new discourses seemed to occur anymore.¹⁴ The model below visualizes this research process:

¹⁴ I decided to visit a selection of Universities in: London, Manchester, Brisbane and New York because of their well known research activity and/or Applied Theatre post-graduate programs. Booking field work is never easy,

Discourse analytic journey:



I understand discourse within a Foucaultian perspective, and have used Michel Foucault's (1970) genealogical method to study ATR in order to analyse discourses that appear in texts and interviews within the field. Foucault's discourse analytic universe can be used to understand where and why meaning occurs (Winther, Jørgensen, and Phillips, 1999). The discourse term is used for arguments, meanings and discussions that all arise from one formation (Foucault 1969).

According to my chosen research platform, meaning is created in a socially constructed room in which coincidences and intentions live side by side. No man is an island - we all live in a community and are strongly affected by others' thoughts and behaviour (Andersen 1999). Some ways of thinking find its possibilities and opportunities in certain époques, periods and contexts (Foucault 1969). Hence, knowledge will be transformed in the melting pot where tradition, future, ideology and people all meet. This article is based on a research process influenced by this way of Foucaultian thinking.

In the process of writing this article, I have mixed various types of data in order to be able to discover aspects, structures and ideas in a genealogical way in today's Applied Theatre Research that is still constructed by components from the past (Andersen 1999; Beronius 1991; Hede 1992). Professor Emeritus in educational theatre, Anthony Jackson, emphasises that there may be lessons we can learn from the past in today's theatre field, and quotes Foucault by writing:

[1] /.../ genealogy looks for “emergence” rather than evolution /.../ for discontinuities, divergences and “marginal elements” in events and for the unstable assemblage of faults, fissures and heterogeneous layers/.../. (Jackson 2007, 10)

some colleges politely invite you and other colleges are difficult or impossible to get in contact with. I ended up interviewing 5 through SKYPE and e-mail and the rest of the informants face to face.

Foucault himself encourages the use of a combination of data production to reveal fractures and power struggles in otherwise apparently coherent and homogenised discursive systems (Foucault 1980). Thus I have tried to read all kinds of texts about applied theatre, such as; curriculum literature, research articles, web-pages, education programmes etc.

The field and purpose of Applied Theatre

The recent academic interest in the field of Applied Theatre (AT) has emerged as a result of textbooks, articles, papers and reports that describe the philosophical basis, the aesthetics, the diverse challenges and the huge amount of working methods, as well as the implications of practice-based and art-based research methodology. Also international collaboration between researchers in associations as IDERI and IDEA and sharing ideas at conferences all over the world develops the field, according to Australian dr. Julie Dunn.¹⁵ Researchers and practitioners also move between countries and share theoretical perspectives, teaching methods and research methodology. At Griffith University, Australian dr. Madonna Stinson told about her fruitful and professional challenging experience with moving between Applied Theatre environments in London and Singapore, Melbourne and Brisbane. Stinson, Dunn and several other informants emphasize an inspiring motivation for exchanging experience with researchers and practitioners from other countries and cultures. Doing fieldwork both in the US, Great Britain and Australia made me realize that most of the informants actually know each other, so it seems that applied theatre researchers and practitioners are quite tightly connected in professional or/and personal networks although the distance between them is far.

We can divide the field of AT into two practical arenas, namely that of educational contexts and community settings (Nicholson 2005, 2). Applied Theatre Practice (ATP) and Applied Theatre Research (ATR) are tightly connected and must therefore be analysed in relation to each other in a discourse study. According to Thompson, the academic discipline of AT has emerged from state-sponsored universities and outwards to practice, and not the other way around (2011 interview). There seems to be a “.../consensus around key features of its practises, functions and political association’ (Neelands 2007, 306). In ATR, terms such as “social change” (Ackroyd 2000), “efficiency-entertainment” (Neeland 2007), “vulnerable points” and “marginal groups” (Nicholson 2005) are frequently used. Applied Theatre is often recognised as:

/.../ performance practices that have the potential to disrupt fixed polarities between art and instrumentalism, education and entertainment, popularism and elitism, process and product, activity and passivity, participation and spectatorship (Nicholson 2009, 80).

Applied Theatre is analysed by most theatre researchers as a type of theatre with quite different intentions, and predominantly with a focus on the participants (Nicholson 2005). According to the Australian researcher Phillip Taylor, the intentions can primarily be categorised into five different intentions: 1. doing activism/politics, 2. posing alternatives, 3. working with healing, 4. challenging contemporary discourses, and 5. presenting voices from the viewpoints of the silent and marginal (Taylor 2003).

In the field of ATR, the Canadian researchers, Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton (2009, 11), have contributed with nine characteristics of ATP in order to include every small and large ensemble in an overview of the field: *theatre in education, popular theatre, theatre of the oppressed, theatre in health education, theatre for development, prison theatre, museum theatre, reminiscence theatre and community-based theatre*.

In a research interview in September 2011 at Manchester University, British professor James Thompson emphasized that the term applied theatre was useful when it came into being in the 1990s, and that he especially appreciated the term *theatre* instead of *drama*, since it

¹⁵ Interview, April 2012, Griffith University.

gave the field more status within the institutional power play that it certainly deserved and needed in order to obtain focus, power and funding. But the reason for Thompson to start using the term in the first place, and then writing a book about it in a 2003, was because it brought some quite different environments into the dialogue. He had previously also claimed that the term:

[2] /.../ supported a sharing of knowledge drawn from the fields of theatre in education, drama in education, and theatre for social change /.../ are brought into dialogue with each other/.../ the term that joins different categories of a socially engaged theatre without denying their separate histories or dictating what can be placed within their own boundaries (Thompson 2003, 14).

[3]

Even so, it is important to mention that some researchers in the field who actually conduct research on Applied Theatre almost refuse to use the term themselves.

Several of my informants (interview in 2011; Sally Bailey, Nils Braanaas and Stig Erikson) categorise their own work, in terms of artistic, pedagogic and scientific work, to be a part of AT as an umbrella term, though they somehow do not like the sound of it and therefore uses other terms about their work such as drama, drama therapy, theatre and performance, etc. One example could be the American disability theatre researcher, Sally Bailey from Kansas State University, who argues that:

I don't think it is a particularly useful term. It doesn't sound "fun" or "interesting" or "mainstream". It sounds like an "add on" or "extra" instead of being valid or important in its own right (Bailey interview, 2011).

Consequently, we see that the field of AT is a heterogeneous group of practitioners and researchers who do not always agree on the terms they use. Taylor (2003) describes Applied Theatre as a field mainly with a focus on raising questions and exploring opportunities, rather than on finding solutions, while Thompson (2003) says that AT is growing to be both a collective and a collecting theatre, one that is created by people who would not normally create theatre in such a context. It is a theatre that values debate and "/.../ that somehow balances the pragmatism involved in making itself relevant in difficult environments with the idealism of a belief in transformation' (Thompson 2003, 13). Taylor (2003) also believes that AT is a transformative practice, and views the field as empowering and with structural tools that can "/.../ facilitate wide-awakeners in participants" (Taylor 2003, 8) "/.../ for the purpose of transforming or changing human behaviour' (Taylor 2003, 2). Nicholson (2005) disagrees with Thompson and Taylor's use of the term "transformation". She finds it more suitable to use Schechner's term "transportation" in relation to Applied Theatre's dazzling imaginative contingency as an aesthetic communication media and a possible escape – as a fantasy away from everyday life (Nicholson 2005, 2011, 198). She writes that:

[4] Although I recognise the power of theatre-making to touch people's lives, I remain rather uneasy about using the term "transformation" to describe the process of change afforded by practising drama. This is partly because I feel uncomfortable about making such grand claims for the effects and effectiveness of my own work as a practitioner, but also because it raises bigger political questions/.../ is this something which is done *to* the participants, *with* them, or *by* them? (Nicholson 2005, 12).

[5]

Nicholson uses the term "transportation" instead of "transformation" in the sense of "going into another world and coming back with gifts" (Etchells 1999, 59 in Nicholson 2005, 13).

In Norwegian, the term "gift" means "poison", while it in English means "present", and it is precisely the dichotomy within the etymology of the term that Nicholson actually wants us to pick up when we read her book (Mauss 1924 in Nicholson 2005, 160). She believes that facilitators and researchers in Applied Theatre must acknowledge the uneasiness

at the core of the field, and she “/.../ indicate[s] the state of uncertainty associated with the gift, which might be experienced as either pleasure or displeasure” (Nicholson 2005, 160). In 2011, Nicholson elaborated on this issue by pointing to the messiness and unpredictability of theatre making, which brings to mind a quote by Walter Benjamin, “/.../ there is always an inescapability of imperfection inherent in all human endeavour” (Nicholson 2011, 15). Several other researchers share this argument with Nicholson, such as Jennifer Hartley: “Transformation is not necessarily what someone is seeking and it might not be productive in their lives” (Hartley 2012:147).

I map out this specific debate, which started in Applied Theatre’s early years, not only to demonstrate different viewpoints, but also because it gives us an example of *how discourses emerge*, how texts are written, how the language is used and how the researcher’s background, experience, cultural belonging and gender exert an influence on the discourse development itself.¹⁶ Nicholson’s texts (2005, 2009, 2011) have a touch of “thoughtful polite scepticism” about them.¹⁷ She indicates more than simply bombastically concluding about the possibilities of Educational- and Applied Theatre, or even the right to go into the life of the participants with the aim of “empowering” or “transforming”. In contrast, Taylor (2003) and Thompson (2003) in 2002-2003 seemed more certain and confident about Applied Theatre’s impact, efficiency and power on participants and societies, though Thompson changed his attitude after working on the “In Place of War” project at the Centre of Applied Theatre Research in Manchester (Thompson, 2009, Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour 2009). So perhaps more modestly and quietly, he argues in 2009 that the parameters for a “theatre for social change” are particularly porous (Thompson 2009, 4).

Hence, experience with real life on the edge, in crisis, with marginal voices and with human endeavour seem to perhaps change you as a practitioner, as a researcher - and as a whole human being - in all different kinds of ways (Jenny Hughes interview, 09.21.2011). So the positions of all authors seem to shift over time.

Established definitions

First and foremost, there seems to be a collective global understanding that Applied Theatre is theatre outside conventional mainstream theatre houses that is applied in various (site-specific) arenas in different communities and everyday life settings worldwide (Prendergast and Saxton 2009; Prentki and Preston 2009; Taylor 2003; Thompson 2003; Ackroyd 2007; Nicholson 2005). Nevertheless, since the late 1990s two of the characteristics of Applied Theatre Research actually seem to be “diversity” and “tensions”.

Philip Taylor actually suggests that Applied Theatre (AT) has its foundation in the three P’s: Platform, People and Passion (Taylor 2003). Taylor also claims that AT is powered by a need for change, and that AT is able to open up a dialogue in everyday settings through the art of theatre (Taylor 2003, xx, xxix, xxviii). Throughout my discourse analysis, it seems that most Applied Theatre researchers, artists and facilitators agree on the following five baseline ‘concepts’ to define Applied Theatre as a whole: *Change, Dialogue, Platform, People and Passion* (Taylor, 2002). Yet, Norwegian researcher Bjørn Rasmussen argues that we in AT are looking at a wide range of practises and research projects which have a few things in common, apart from the fact that they are all applications *to* cultural contexts, rather than applications *from* theatre (Rasmussen 2000). Rasmussen claims that this way of understanding the term “applied” could result in that: “/.../ we would not see one or three

¹⁶ This discussion is elaborated on together with students at the MA theatre course at Royal Holloway at the University of London on Sept. 26, 2011. Their opinion is a kind of “people knowledge” from a Foucaultian perspective.

¹⁷ A term that the 13 students at the MA theatre course at Royal Holloway at the University of London used when they described the differences between Taylor, Thompson and Nicholson’s first applied theatre books on Sept. 26, 2011.

Methods, but hundreds of distinctive approaches emerging from a number of sets of complex contexts" (Rasmussen 2000, 2).

First discourse: Legitimating discourse

Anthony Jackson argues that the field of Applied Theatre has partially grown from what he defines as "educational theatre", which has always felt the need to argue for its existence (Jackson 2007). Jackson exemplifies the legitimating rhetoric in both applied theatre and in educational theatre by referring to arguments written in the early 1920's from British theatre director Harley Granville Barker:

[6] Barker's idea [of an 'exemplary theatre', one which could and should educate – for clarity]/.../ that the theatre was a necessary part of a healthy, liberal society and needed to be recognized, and financially supported, by the state /.../ (Jackson 2007, 264).

[7] Applied Theatre Research seems to develop as a field were the researchers are all bitten by the same legitimating focus that the practitioners have been for a while according to Neelands 2007; Ehterton and Prentki 2006. Applied Theatre researchers often feel a need to legitimate their work by defending themselves against egalitarian attracts from the universities and the founders' in the same way as the practitioners needs "/.../ some evaluation of the "impact" of the project" (Neelands 2007, 314). The legitimating rhetoric is occurring in a lot of texts (Mienczakowski 1997; Taylor 2003; Neelands 2009, O'Toole, 2009), as well in interviews, at conferences and of course in our own teaching at universities. Manchester University's website informs us in what we can choose to analyse as a legitimating way that, "Applied Theatre projects have made positive contributions to the everyday life of individuals and communities in a variety of contexts".¹⁸ We can somehow smell the legitimating rhetoric in the background of this text, which we can also do on the City University of New York's (CUNY) website when they explain the focus of their programmes and courses by writing that the Applied Theatre course is:

/.../ an ensemble-based program offering theoretical and practical instruction key elements of theatre and interactive drama strategies that can be 'applied' in a wide variety of settings to achieve defined educational and social outcomes.¹⁹

This brings us to the first discourse discovered in the study, namely "*the legitimating discourse*". In connection to this legitimating discourse I have found it a bit harder in my study to actually discover researchers who use negative terms such as failure, weak or bad in their research on Applied Theatre projects, than those who use positive terms:

I noted the overwhelmingly positive descriptions of the work on the web and in conference papers, and I called for vigilance, since a powerful medium can be used for dubious as well as humanitarian ends (Ackroyd 2007, 1).

So it seems that positive words such as superlatives perhaps are more frequently used in ATR, as for example: "a gift" (Nicholson 2005, 160), "fruitful inquiry" (Taylor 2003: xxvii), "new possibilities for humankind" (Taylor 2003: xxx), and "/.../participants on the journey towards enlightenment" (Mienczakowskki 1997: 170). Canadian researcher Kathleen Gallagher and her colleagues comment on this phenomenon, as they claim that it is often used with a very celebratory tone in this kind of research because AT fascinates, challenges and makes us enthusiastic (Gallagher et al. 2010). We can however discover a growing maturity in the field when we read some researchers who actually discuss the negative consequences for Applied Theatre, using negative terms such as bad, dangerous, damaging, oppressive, poison, disappointment and propaganda (Jackson 2007; Ackroyd 2007; Neelands 2007; Nicholson 2005; Sæbø 2009; Thompson 2006; Gallagher 2010, Jackson in Schonmann, 2011).

¹⁸ <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/catr/about/index.htm>, 12.07.2010

¹⁹ <http://www.sps.cuny.edu/programs/spscourses/subjectdescription.aspx?sid=APTH>

Second discourse: The effect discourse

Researchers dealing with questions on Applied Theatre's impact on society and participants tend to circle around "the function" of ATP, in addition to "the effect" and "the affect" that Applied Theatre can have on people through the terms "evaluate", "assess" and "measure". The basic lines in these effect rhetoric seem to be the questions of *why* measure Applied Theatre's processes/products, *for whom* are we measuring and *how* do we measure ATP at all (Dalrymple, 2006; Vuyk et al., 2010). We can split the effect discussions in two main arguments:

We find the "positive strand", which claims that effect measuring is important and worthwhile to pursue (represented here by Etherton and Prentki, 2006),²⁰ and we find the "negative strand", which claims that effect measuring can be a quite suspicious act that appears as porous (represented here by Thompson, 2009 and Jackson, 2001). Thompson argues from the "negative strand" that effect measuring is:

/.../ limited if it concentrates solely on effects' identifiable social outcomes, messages or impacts and forgets the radical potential of the freedom to enjoy beautiful radiant things (Thompson, 2009, 6).

This brings us to the study's second discourse, "the effect discourse", which is huge. It relates to issues such as ecology, philosophy, health, economics, politics and aesthetics.²¹

Thompson contributes with an important issue to the effect discourse that he defines as "the end of effect", and emphasises a distinctive focus on the performance affect (Thompson, 2009). While effect is defined as a result of a process or a particular influence, affect is often understood as an emotional description in terms of touching the feelings of someone, or to cause them to change.²² Anthony Jackson suggested as early as in 2001, to difference between affect and effect, by focusing on what "/.../lie at the heart of any theatrical experience", by the use of "/.../ heartening measures of the "effectiveness"/.../ (Jackson, 2001: 169, 176). So Jackson and Thompson, among others, criticises researchers, facilitators, politicians, NGO's²³ and practitioners who fail to recognise affect in AT because:

[8] /.../ bodily responses, sensations and aesthetic pleasure – much of the power of performance can be missed/.../ is limited if it concentrates solely on effects – identifiable social outcomes, massages or impacts (Thompson, 2009, 7- 6).

Etherton and Prentki (2006) wanted to debate effect discussions that in a themed issue of *RIDE*²⁴ I 2006. They then raised critical questions that got the reader to think more about the 'effect-study-need' in our field in order to explore both the intended and non-intended outcomes of AT. Etherton and Prentki summed up their themed edition of *RIDE* by sharing with us that it is:

[9] /.../ still not proven that applied theatre can today work towards those more substantial changes that many of its practitioners seek to make (Etherton and Prentki (2006, 154).

Some of course may argue against this viewpoint, thus there have been published both qualitative- and quantitative empiric studies that claim to prove the effect of Applied Theatre in schools, at workplaces and in the community as such (e.g. Sæbø 2009; Gjærum and Ramsdal 2008).

Through the "positive strand" in the effect discourse, Etherton and Prentki underscore the need for a more global collaboration among ATP workers through thoroughness of analysis, participatory methodologies and creativeness (Etherton and Prentki 2006). Essential

²⁰ I choose to pick just a few researchers in this discourse in order discuss them against each other, hence defining the discourse in a clearer manner.

²¹ Ackroyd 2000; Jackson, 2001, McDonald 2005; Etherton and Prentki 2006; Dalrymple 2006; Balfour 2009; Fryer 2010; Jackson 2007; Vuyk et al. 2010; Nicholson 2011; Bottoms 2011; Mackey 2011; Thompson 2009.

²² Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2006, 21. http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/affect_1?

²³ NGO: Non-Governmental Organization.

²⁴ RIDE: 2006/11:2.

issues in the positive strand of the effect discourse are the relationship between method, outcome and context, particularly in the meaning of including studies of ATP from among the poorest or most oppressed people, and from among materially comfortable people (Etherton and Prentki 2006, 139). The British researcher Judith Ackroyd also admits that “/.../ there is a crying need for evaluation of applied theatre” (Ackroyd, 2000, 2). Etherton and Prentki claim that there is a difference, between “impact measuring’ the Applied Theatre-projects to fit the requirements of the funders and the “project evaluation”, which is made for the practitioners themselves and understood as: “/.../proving what was claimed to be done was actually done’ (Etherton and Prentki 2006, 154). Several researchers point out the necessity for this kind of evaluation in for example classroom drama, the theatre for development or in community theatre that does not deal with the classical notion of effect (Winston 1998; Fryer 2010; Jeffers interview 2011; Chinyowa 2011). The South African researcher Kennedy Chinyowa reports from a recent Applied Theatre study that the few available monitoring and evaluation reports, “/.../display a clear lack of focus on the process of applied drama and theatre as an embodied performance practice /.../” (Chinyowa 2011, 352). He suggests a new form of evaluation that manages to combine different types of evaluation methods in order to pick up on nuances, cultural differences and the embodied learning process that include the notion of affect (Chinyowa, 2011, 352).

In my opinion, Chinyowa’s input to the effect discourse merges the notions of “effect” and “affect”, albeit with a strong focus on the participants’ own consideration for how Applied Theatre acts have changed their feelings or minds, briefly touched their imagination or given them some kind of new knowledge or aesthetic experiences in any way (Edminstone 2000, 68). British researcher Nic Fryer (2010) suggests shifting the focus in evaluation and assessment from critical and reproductive towards: “/.../seeing it as a quest for new possibilities, as creative engagement with moving both artistic and social practice forward” (Fryer 2010, 560).

As I have analysed the “positive- and the negative strands’ of the effect discourse, researchers on both sides actually seem to agree about a concern for the survival of Applied Theatre due to funding and integrity. Balfour actually links the two strands to some extent when he concludes that it is difficult to measure, evaluate and assess AT, thus “/.../ what applied does is not always linear, rational and conclusive in its outcomes, but often more messy, incomplete, complex and tentative” (Balfour 2009, 357). So, the dilemma in the effect discourse can be summed up through Balfour when he emphasises that, “Practice does need to be funded, but not at any price’ (Balfour, 2009, 357).

Third discourse: The ethics discourse

This lead us to the third discourse in the study, “the ethics discourse”, which contains difficult dilemmas, simple questions and more theoretical and philosophical views on Applied Theatre. At the core of the ethics discourse, we find theoretical analysis of the AT workers’ “role’. There seems to be an agreement in the ethics discourse that the AT workers “/.../suddenly and without prior indication, /.../ are in the middle of an ethical minefield” (Cohen and Manion 1994, 348 in Thompson 2003, 173). No one claims to have a solution for the moral and ethical questions in AT, although James Thompson (2003) manages to build an ethical discourse universe that several other researchers seem to pick up on and further develop (e.g. Nicholson 2005; Stuart-Fischer 2005; Dalrymple 2006; Neelands 2007).

The so-called, “approved and powered voices” in the ATR environment, including those in student handbooks, journals and research conferences, speak with almost the same voice in the ethics discourse the way that I perceive them. The ethics discourse seems to grow its path through numerous *dichotomies*, for example:

- Between “necessary clarity” and “creative confusion”
- Between “integrity of the practitioner” and “demands from the economic funders”

- Between “equality” and the “difference” (Thompson 2003; Etherton and Prentki 2006; Neelands 2007; Mullen 2011).

British Amanda Stuart Fisher (2005) emphasize the agreement within the ATR-field about that ethical values are relative and that site-specific performances and processes are ethically supposed to develop in a dialogic relationship between the facilitates and the other participants, though this is not easy. Stuart-Fisher’s analysis of the AT workers’ ethics practice, as “/.../responsive and responsible to each of the different contexts” that they visit (Stuart-Fisher 2005, 247). This brings us further into the discursive universe to another discourse which I have chosen to call “the outsider-visitor discourse”, which is this study’s next discourse.

Fourth discourse: The outsider- visitor discourse

The role of the Applied Theatre worker as an actor, a facilitator, a director, a pedagogue or a therapist has been heavily discussed throughout the history of Applied Theatre field-research (Jackson 2007; Thompson and Schechner 2004). Apart from these terms, the role of the “visitor” seems prominent in a critical discourse, which I name “the outsider-visitor discourse”.²⁵ In 2003, Thompson phrased the main dilemma in “the outsider-visitor discourse” in this way:

[10] We will always be external to these changing and historically specific debates. Applied theatre comes to psychology, development and prison education /.../ but cannot speak for or speak from those fields. We are only ever visitors within the disciplines into which we apply our theatre (Thompson, 2003, 20).

So the first strand in this discourse is the one which claim that AT-workers always will stay in the role as the guest or visitor within a field.

Neelands (2007) argues against Thompson’s (2003) analysis of the visitor role when he claims that there is actually *no outside* because we in the globalised community are both informed and can possibly travel anywhere if we actually want to become involved in a conflict, a theme or a subject. So Neelands represent the other strand in this discourse. According to Neelands (2007), there is no outside because everyone lives within a social dialogue:

The AT practitioner rightfully and unavoidably enters into a social dialogue with a group’s constructed account of itself, and through this process both the “visitor” and the group begin to shift and develop their intersubjective understandings (Neelands 2007, 309-310).

Neelands’ thoughts from 2007 sound theoretical, though perhaps a bit idealistic, when compared with Kennedy Chinyowa, who articulates quite clearly that the outsider discourse is very much alive in Africa, even in 2011: “Instead of acting as change agents /.../ [they] have failed to liberate themselves from their class conditioning as the thinkers and experts (Chinyowa 2011, 353). So even if Neelands (2007) may be right about his assumption that theoretically there “is no outside”, the outsider visitor discourse is still very much present and relevant in today’s Applied Theatre in Africa.

Fifth discourse: The global economy discourse

The field of Applied Theatre and Research may be regarded as global, if we see globalisation as the “/.../ intensification of worldwide social relations in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Rebellato 2009, 4). There exist enormously different practices of Applied Theatre all over the world, as well as a wide range of research within the field that is globally connected through different

²⁵ Many researchers write within this outsider-visitor discourse (e.g. Stuart-Fisher, Nicholson, Taylor), although I just chose two representatives for the two strands in the discourse in this section in order to keep the discussion tighter.

communication channels.²⁶ It seems as if many researchers and practitioners actually travel all over the world in an attempt to try and save it.²⁷

Several Applied Theatre researchers analyse the relation between the international funding agencies, the researchers and the applied theatre facilitators, by linking “international politics”, “the social change agenda” and the “aesthetic demands”, which can be analysed as a growing new discourse (Dalrymple 2006; Neelands 2007; Ackroyd 2007, Chinyowa 2006; Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour 2009; Prendergast and Saxton 2009; Chinyowa 2011).

Among other official organisations nowadays, the Development Education Association (DEA) in the UK actually underlines the important role of the arts such as Applied Theatre, “.../as means of educating young people in the processes of “building a better tomorrow” (Etherton and Prentki 2006, 143). Nonetheless, these art-based targets in the UK and other European countries are often ignored by politicians because they need to play a political power game through what they call an “ethical foreign policy” in order to make decisions which would not:

[11] .../ contradict the wishes of its most powerful ally, the USA .../ This context is summed up in the term globalisation, meaning here macroeconomics .../, global communications .../ and inequitable power relations (Etherton and Prentki 2006, 143).

This dilemma is a complicated one and the unbalanced relationship within international politics strongly influences some Applied Theatre workers, whereas others are structured more locally and are less dependent on such issues as conjunctures, conflicts and wars (Reeves 2002). A Dutch PhD student at the University of Manchester, Kirsten Broekman, discussed problems with good interventions in relation to the global economics of Applied Theatre at “Theatre and Performance Research Association” (TaPRA) in September 2011 in the UK. Broekman’s new research emphasised the problems that occur with different sets of values attached to the competing aesthetic criteria of the practitioners, the non-governmental organizations (NGO), the spectators and the local government. Broekman, in addition to several other researchers such as Baz Kershaw, Helen Nicholson and Sally Mackey, further discussed on TaPRA, 2011, the dilemmas and conflict between power, money and art. Also Molly Mullen, a PhD student from New Zealand, presented her ATR-research at TaPRA which seeks to understand the different economies of applied theatre.

Mullen claims that theatre practices are usually subsidized through public grants, or respond to local, national and/or international policy to attract other sources of funding. Previous studies have suggested that economic factors and conditions have significant implications for the pedagogies, aesthetics, politics and ethics of applied theatre practices. It is suggested that their financial dependency make them, and the values that inform them, vulnerable to the agendas of funders and other stakeholders.²⁸

These discussions on TaPRA and the two new PhD-research projects tells us that there is a growing interest for the economy of applied theatre, thus it brings us into to the study’s fifth discourse, which can be analysed as “the global economy discourse”. This discourse is developing as conglomerate of critical discussions about the role of the international funding agencies and the cooperation between facilitators and the local community in projects which aim for social change through art (Dalrymple 2006; Neelands 2007; Ackroyd 2007, Chinyowa 2006; Thompson, Hughes, and Balfour 2009; Prendergast and Saxton 2009; Chinyowa 2011). The main themes in this research are: “international politics”, “the social change agenda” and the “aesthetic demands”.

²⁶ Such as: conferences, study trips, the web, TV, newspapers, blogs, books, articles, pictures, DVDs, etc.

²⁷ According to an interview with Helen Nicholson in 2011.

²⁸ <http://auckland.academia.edu/MollyMullen/Talks>, downloaded 07.12.12. This abstract is similar to the abstract at Tapra, 2011, which is unfortunately not online.

Fifth discourse: The aesthetic discourse

In November 2010, RIDE published a themed edition on “aesthetics”. The theme editors, Brad Haseman and Joe Winston, argued that the field of AT has, not surprisingly, concerned itself more “/.../readily with issues of social utility” and less with the notion of aesthetics (Haseman and Winston 2010, 465). The editors and researchers in the themed issue felt that we needed a “/.../ reminder of the importance of aesthetics in the field of applied theatre” (Haseman and Winston 2010, 474). Anthony Jackson is also highly concerned with the lack of focus on aesthetics, and wrote in 2007 that we have “/.../to embrace the artistic core of what we do” (Jackson 2007, 272). He repeats his argument in 2011, in an interview by saying that without aesthetics Applied Theatre is nothing. In 2009 Prendergast and Saxton also questioned the problems with “/.../poor production value” and “/.../ the lack of aesthetic sensibility” in Applied Theatre (Prendergast, Saxton 2009:187). They discussed the importance of epistemological focusing on the aesthetic dimensions within Applied Theatre in order to develop a theatre that motivates the spectators: “/.../ to imagine things as if they could be otherwise” and use their feelings as the “glue” that makes things stick in the memory (Greene 1988:3 in Prendergast, Saxton 2009:188). Some researchers though are sceptical about the co-called “aesthetic turn”, according to Haseman and Winston (2010), because these researchers tend to claim that the aesthetic focus can represent a kind of a disrespect of the drama performed in schools.

We can clearly see that there is developing an aesthetic focus in Applied Theatre Research, and this leads us to the study’s sixth discourse, “the aesthetic discourse”, which seems to be a growing one (Prendergast, Saxton, 2009, Thompson 2006; Bundy 2010; Winston 2006; Jackson 2007; Rasmussen 2008; Boal, 2008, Jennings 2010; Rea 2008; Gallagher et al. 2010; Nicholson 2011). The discourse mainly contains discussions between the aesthetic focus and the more political or educational viewpoints, as well as more philosophical thoughts and debates around theatre and performance.²⁹

Summing up: Swampy lowland and hard highland

Before I started on this research journey I wanted to perhaps manage to clarify things and offer new ways of thinking about applied theatre as an established field. This discourse study shows us though, that Applied Theatre Research is a discursive global field build up by six main discourses. The following six discourses can be understood as a constructed overview of the Applied Theatre Research from the late 90is until today: The legitimization discourse, the ethics discourse, the effect discourse, the outsider-visitor discourse, the global economy discourse and the aesthetic discourse.

Lynn Dalrymple (2006) claims that the goal of Applied Theatre and Applied Theatre Research is to “/.../ provide a unique experience or another way of knowing and understanding the world that cannot be measured using tools drawn from the social or physical sciences” (Dalrymple 2006, 201). According to both Dalrymple the complex field of Applied Theatre as a special form of knowledge structure, can never fully be described by verbal language (Dalrymple 2006, McNiff 2009).

Therefor through this article I can only grasp the surface of our discursive field by showing pieces of central discussions, and reveal fractures and a bit of some ‘power struggles’ in a heterogeneous discursive system (Foucault 1980). James Thompson (2003) argues for a connection between knowledge types as a basis for ATR when he claims that “/.../ a shift away from direct theorising must be attempted” (Thompson 2003, 176). He shares this view on knowledge with postmodernist ethnographers (Taylor 1986; Saldaña 1998), all of which support ethnographic research seen as: “evocation”, “a performative break” and

²⁹ RIDE changed its name from *Research in Drama Education* (founded in 1996) in 2009 to *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*; from a discourse analytic perspective, this act can be understood as part of the “aesthetic turn”.

“ethics”, rather than research *only* as “explanation” (Thompson 2003, 176). Jennifer Harley (2012) also points out the need of a connection between knowledge types as a basis for AT and ATR, when she writes in her brand new textbook, *Applied theatre in action: a journey*, that

/.../ we need to see the connecting paths and move between them constantly, finding a way around the obstacles/.../ It is crucial to remember that everything connects” (Harley, 2012:148).

The researchers Hughes, Kidd and McNamara emphasise Applied Theatre and Applied Theatre Research *inter-connects* and that we in our field balance between the “/.../ swampy lowland where situations are confusing ‘messes’ incapable of technical solution” and the “/.../ high, hard ground where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and technique” (Hughes, Kidd, and McNamara 2011, 186). So perhaps both practitioners and researchers in the heterogeneous discursive field of Applied Theatre, all try to balance on the wire between “the swampy lowland” and the “high, hard ground” as a tightrope walker without falling down? Applied Theatre contributes to our lives with a circus balance show that is aesthetically risky and which reminds us of the shadows when the lights go off and the makeup fades.

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