

## RESEÑAS

ROLAND CARTER and MICHAEL N. LONG  
*The Web of Words:  
Exploring literature through language*  
Cambridge-New York-Melbourne:  
Cambridge University Press. 1987, 188 pages

and

JOANNE COLLIE and STEPHEN SLATER  
*Literature in the Language Classroom:  
A resource book of ideas and activities*  
Cambridge-New York-Melbourne:  
Cambridge University Press. 1987, 222 pages

These two course books, both published in 1987 by CUP, are among the first fruits destined for classroom consumption arising from the steadily-growing conviction of an increasing number of UK English language and English literature specialists that an integrated approach to the teaching of both these disciplines is the best one. Although their presentation and organization are quite different, their aims and intended public are, on the whole, similar. Each of the authors of *The Web of Words*, Ronald Carter and Michael N. Long, has had extensive experience in the field of language and literature teaching, materials preparation and teacher training. Ronald Carter is well-known for his work on stylistics and Michael N. Long is an ELT advisor in teacher training. They see as their main purpose behind *The Web of Words* that of helping students "to use response to language as a basis for reading and appreciating authentic literary sources" in the hope that such an integrated approach will perform two important tasks: that of stimulating students' language development and, at the same time, "enhance sensitivity to the use of language in literature."

Their textbook has been designed for both native and non-native students of upper intermediate and advanced levels. They maintain that an integrated approach is necessary even in mother-tongue English studies, despite the fact that some native speakers can rely on their linguistic intuition and wide reading as a basis for their understanding of literature. With the nonnative speaker, however, they stress, careful training is necessary. The authors, in setting out their guidelines for teachers, are also emphatic that the various "approaches" to be found in their book do not claim to produce literary competence. Rather, they say, they form a basis of preliminary and pre-literary techniques and procedures which they hope will give students increasing confidence in their own understanding and appreciation. More specifically, the kinds of students and courses which *The Web of Words* aims at are the following: upper intermediate or advanced level students with certain prerequisites. Students may have previously followed courses in literature and in such cases the book is designed as the core component of either (i) supplementary courses involving the intensive study of literary texts, or (ii) extension courses in literature where response to and awareness of language is an essential feature. The book can also be used, according to its authors who have piloted it in over a dozen countries, as an advanced language-based course book for students of literature whose primary course for study is language. Recognizing that there is more to literature than language, such as historical, cultural and biographical aspects, as well as literary traditions, which are necessary for "fuller reading and interpretation", they are careful to point out that the task of presenting background information for the understanding of a literary text is not included in their aims. To sum up, *The Web of Words* has been designed to form the core of an integrated language and literature programme and to be used by teachers of both language and literature.

The book is divided into ten chapters, each one based on a particular aspect of textual analysis and amply illustrated, often in more than one genre. Most of the eight main principles and purposes of the book summarized in the final section of the introduction and addressed to both the teacher and the student, are met quite admirably, for example, in the fifth chapter entitled, " 'On the inside': Writing and patterns of language". Students are led inductively, through a series of different techniques, such as summary, rewriting, or guided creative writing based on a given model, and carried out individually, in pairs, and sometimes in a group (Principle 1) to both understand how the way a text is written produces certain effects and then apply similar patterns in their own writing (Principle 3). Different kinds of patterns are presented in a variety of texts, including both poetry and prose. The first type of patterning, relating to the shape of the poem, and including other graphological elements such as total absence of punctuation, or based on an extremely simple lexical pattern, draws on the oft-quoted example of seventeenth-century English poet, George Herbert, "Easter Wings", but also includes the example of a contemporary British poet, Edwin Morgan, "Spacepoem 3: Off Course", and another, a 'poem without a title', written by a Japanese student of English. Other patterns studied in this chapter concern rhythm and rhyme, lexical patterns and the 'elastic sentences' of an extract from Virginia Woolf's novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. The exercises are interesting and help the students to explain their responses by direct reference to features of the text (Principle 3), and with a minimum of metalanguage (Principle 2). Texts, in this unit, are selected from different periods of English literature, including the seventeenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Principle 4) and help the students to discover, too, that even when considering one particular aspect of text, such as patterning, no one single approach can help to understand it (Principle 6), and they are given different ways of applying what they have learnt to new texts. As well as the Woolf passage, and the poems, a Dickens excerpt from *Bleak House* also gives the students a fairly wide range of stimuli to their thoughts and feelings (Principle 7). In general terms there are no vitally new elements in *The Web of Words*, but rather new *emphases* in exercises designed to show not only the *what* of language but the *how* or *to what effect* it is used, as is sometimes suggested by the following unit headings: 1. What's going on?: Summary and narrative prediction; 2. Scenario: Language, dialogue and setting; 3. Talking together: Ranking; 4. Read it aloud: Text and phonology; 5. 'On the inside': Writing and patterns of language; 6. Words and their impact: Structures of vocabulary; 7. Re-writing: Literary and non-literary discourse; 8. Under the microscope: Introduction to stylistic analysis; 9. 'The Moving Finger writes': Background, and 10. In the forum: Reading and discussing literature.

Because of the 'preliminary and pre-literary' nature of the exercises, *The Web of Words* and the accompanying cassette can be as easily used by the language as by the literature teacher and has some helpful features for both. For the language teacher, for example, the employment of 'authentic literary sources' is, surely, a stimulating change from some of the arid, specially-constructed texts employed in many language textbooks. The 'authentic literary texts' are also used as tools to motivate the four areas of language learning: reading, writing, listening and speaking. On the other hand, for the teacher of literature, the one chapter devoted to ideas as to how and when to introduce background information of different kinds (social, literary, historical and biographical) as presented in the ninth unit, provides helpful guidelines for avoiding overdoses of extratextual explanations. And despite the 'pre-literary' character of the book, in fact many warming-up exercises are included which hint at various categories of a literary and aesthetic nature, or cut across both linguistic and literary categories, such as in patterning. Others, by induction, lead the student to consider the relation between external and internal structure.

Among the book's weaknesses are its visual presentation, some of the photos and drawings being rather dull and the accumulative effect of them, even depressing. Another disappointing feature is the failure to fulfil the pretended emphasis on modern literature mentioned in the introduction. The large body of nineteenth century texts chosen for *The Web of Words* includes such hoary old examples as the Tennyson fragment, 'The Eagles', complete with a drawing in the manner of junior school texts of fifty years ago. Some American writers are to be found (Whitman, Hemingway, Updike) and one or two other contemporary writers (Pinter, Morgan, etc.) but the total absence of some of the most outstanding contemporary fiction writers and dramatists (who also happen to be Commonwealth writers)

such as Soyinka, White, Naipaul, Gordimer, Narayan, Lessing, to name but a few, as well as twentieth century and contemporary British poets, lends the book a slightly old-fashioned and parochial air.

*Literature in the Language Classroom*, which, as its subtitle states, is "a resource book of ideas and activities" is also meant to be student, rather than teacher-centred, and the aims of its authors, Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater, are almost a précis of those of *Web of Words*. In general, they have tried to complement traditional methods and diversify the repertoire of classroom procedures with those which aim at the following: 1. Maintaining interest and involvement by using a variety of student-centred activities; 2. Supplementing the printed page; 3. Tapping the resources of knowledge and experience of the group whether in group or pair work; 4. Helping students to explore their own responses to literature; 5. Using the target language and avoiding the metalanguage of critics; and 6. Integrating language and literature. The way they set out to achieve these aims, however, is through a very different form of organization and presentation, partly due to the fact, perhaps, that they are trying to serve a more adult group of students. Their age target is for adults and young adults from intermediate level on, that is to say their text is extended to include both secondary and tertiary levels.

The book is divided into three main sections: Part A: Aims and Objectives; Part B: Practical Activities in Outline; and Part C: Endings. The first section deals clearly and simply with the why, what and how of teaching literature in the language classroom and the aims that have been mentioned above, and then goes on to consider what should be the criteria of selection for texts to be used in the classroom, from the point of view of interest and practicality. An alternative to the daunting task of reading a whole novel in the classroom is suggested by the authors in the form of a selection of a series of key extracts which can provide the basis for pertinent activities. Reading a play or a novel thus becomes a combination of home and classroom reading. The extracts chosen should be interesting in themselves, close to the students' interests, an important part of the book's or play's overall pattern, and with a good potential for a variety of activities. The second section of the book, dedicated to 'Practical Activities in Outline', has separate chapters dealing with the basic issues of gaining the students' interest from the beginning ('First Encounters'), holding that interest ('Maintaining Momentum'), developing it ('Exploiting Highlights'), and rounding off the presentation ('Endings'), thus providing excellent motivational exercises for teachers to use with any level of students. Among the aids they draw on are 69 worksheets for home study, charts and visualized summaries, diagrams, etc. meant to 'supplement the printed page'. The third section, Part C, 'Working with a complete text', is divided generically to include a novel: *Lord of the Flies*, a play: *Romeo and Juliet*, short stories, and poems. Unlike *Web of Words*, *Language in the Classroom* implicitly aims at a certain literary as well as language competence because exercises including judgment values are present as well as others relating to students' responses which demand more than purely linguistic answers.

This reviewer tried out the section on drama with two groups of tertiary students and found both the worksheets and classroom exercises on *Romeo and Juliet* to be motivating and helpful, with the exception of the graphic analyses of puns and wordplay in *Romeo and Juliet*, which tended to confuse rather than clarify the very difficult triple and quadruple wordplays in the opening scene. But linguistic analyses of popular contemporary love songs, along with those of the Elizabethan sonnet and lyric, for example, were thoroughly enjoyed by the students and served to make some of the extravagances of Elizabethan conventions seem less remote to their feelings and forms of expression. Another type of exercise which served to motivate some teacher-provided background about characterization, plot and medieval fate plays, was one based on prioritising, where students were asked to put into order of importance their reasons for the play's tragic nature. The explicit aim was to provide students with oral language expression and to arrive at their own conclusions about the 'inevitability' of the tragic outcome, but the discussions proved so lively that it became necessary to provide the students with some background as well as send them to the library to discover more for themselves.

Among the book's other strengths are the explicit pieces of advice given to teachers at the beginning of the main sections and subsections as to how to both choose and present their material, the two excellent appendices, one giving some written examination tips, the other a good resource bank of

titles where fuller details of works mentioned in the main body of the work are given in schematic form and suggestions for further reading, supplied. The select bibliography of studies relevant to an integrated approach to the teaching of language and literature is varied, interesting and recent, the oldest sources being those of Moody, *Literary Appreciation* (1968), Doughty, *Linguistics and the Teaching of Literature* (1968) and Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (1969), and the latest writing listed coming from Maley and Moulding, *Poem into Poem* (1985), Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism* (1986), and Gower, 'Can stylistic analysis help the EFL learner to read literature?' *ELT Journal* (April, 1986). The texts for analysis have obviously been chosen for their likely appeal to students as well as for their intrinsic value, and the range of authors and works here, as in the suggested reading, is from wider sources, while at the same time opting more resolutely for modernity as one of the main criteria of selection as compared with *The Web of Words*. Both these texts provide useful aids that can be used by both language and literature teachers.

The extra boon offered by *Literature in the Language Classroom*, however, is the ready access to such a varied pool of student-centred worksheets for home use and classroom activities, designed to help in a precise way at different stages of negotiation with the literary text. On the whole, it is more sophisticated and probably more stimulating to students and teachers alike.

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