C.J. Brumfit and R.A. Carter:
Literature and Language Teaching
Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987, (Ist. imp., 1986), 288 pages

The issue of if and how literature and language study can be mutually helpful is given impetus by this book, not because it contains many radically new ideas, but because of its mere existence and what it is trying to do: provide a basis for further debate.

Consisting of 20 papers published during the last 10-15 years by 17 well-known authors, the anthology draws on their theory and practices gained from teaching in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America in both native and nonnative or second-language situations. Its editors are full of caution. In their Preface and Introduction they warn us of the delicate nature of the undertaking. The book is not meant to offer a comprehensive or synoptic account of the relationship between literature and language. Literature is not regularly discussed as a coherent branch of the curriculum in either mother-tongue or foreign language teaching. They would be unwilling to make excessive claims for the discussion here... and so on.

Their wariness is not without some justification. The book is NOT easy to read. Its various levels of abstraction *do* pose a problem. One is constantly changing mental gear, now looking at the concept of literariness, then at a down-to-earth examination paper, now applying a linguistic narrative model to a Maugham short story, then finding an ontological basis for that previously prosaic reading speed experiment. Sometimes the changes of level occur in the same paper.

But to a certain extent the book's weaknesses are also its strength. If the wide range of perspectives are occasionally confusing, they are also stimulating, and provide either healthy contrast or reinforcing overlap to one another. Some distinct patterns of interest begin to emerge, patterns that are not always announced by the titles of the articles, nor the sections in which they appear, but that tend to permeate the whole anthology. Some of these areas include the importance of the selection and grading of texts when dealing with literature, the usefulness of stylistics as a bridge between language and literary analysis, the nature of the reading experience, reading habits and skills, etc., how to handle background in literary studies, the ideological implications of literary syllabuses and the essential nature of literature (the latter receives less attention), the steadily growing interest in Commonwealth literature, the importance of the enjoyment element in any educative process, and others.

Concerned, basically, with the interaction between language, literature and education, the book is divided into four parts: the main Introduction which provides the theoretical framework in which to see the various contributions; Part One: Literature and Language; Part Two: Literature in Education; and Part Three: Fluent Reading Versus Accurate Reading. Parts One, Two and Three, are each preceded by a brief Introduction containing a critical synopsis of the papers and helpful cross-references to other articles in the book that deal with the same theme.

In the first main Introduction about English Literature and English Language, a number of fundamental issues such as the relationship between *practical criticism* and *stylistic analysis*, the nature of *literary language*, literature as a particular type of *discourse*, and the *kinds* of literary *competence* involved in reading texts, are discussed.

The editors pronounce clearly about *literary language. There is no such thing*, they say, only a difference in the way language is used. Literature is not a language variety, and writers will exclude no language from a literary function. Two central points are made here: Firstly, linguistics as a *descriptive science* can reveal some interesting aspects of language use in what are 'conventionally' literary or non-literary texts as a starting point for a re-examination of students' presuppositions about literary language and the nature of literature itself; secondly, linguistics as a *descriptive science* can show us *how*

texts are constructed, but it is not able to comment on, evaluate, or otherwise account for the *significance* of certain instances of language such as a line of poetry or a newspaper headline. For the 'appreciation' of a text, other non-linguistic criteria are more important.

They are equally clear about the two basic assumptions that *practical criticism* shares with the *stylistic analysis* of a literary text: both make their primary focus on patterns of language, and practical criticism or 'close reading', in its opposition to "aesthetic waffle" about literary texts, tries to locate intuitive responses to the meanings and effects released by the text in the structure of the language used by concentrating on *how* things are being said and *how* meanings are being made. While claiming that intuitive responses to a text are vital to the process of reading and re-reading literature, they admit that it is not so clear what exactly is primary in our response to a text.

Advocates of stylistics (including most of the contributors to Part One of this book) consider that stylistic-analytical procedures provide a principled method by which reading and interpretative skills can be developed. They recognize that some students have to learn how to analyse language before they can respond subjectively to a text. The precise form that language analysis should take depends on several things: the aims of the course, the level of language competence, whether the literary text is studied in a language or literature class, and so on. For this reason some papers in Part One advocate *language-based approaches* prior to linguistic-stylistic analysis. Articles by Long, Carter and Nash, illustrate such procedures and discuss some of the problems involved. The *familiarity* of such procedures to students of English as a foreign language is not normally a difficulty, they maintain. While acknowledging that there are potential limitations in focusing analytically on language, such as its becoming a mechanical process, or that it excludes the admission of a wider social, historical, and political 'context' in the teaching of literature, the presentation of this debate concludes with the following statement made by Roman Jakobson:

> A linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unconversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms. (Jakobson 1960: 377)

Building on the concept that it is preferable to talk about *literariness* in language where some uses of language are more 'literary' than others, the question of the desirability of language and literature study being more closely integrated is raised, along with some of the problems that this generates. One such problem is the dangers inherent to the current practice of concentrating for convenience on short texts, single lines of poetry and extracts; another is that the matter of 'literariness' leads us to question the nature of literary discourse.

The authors take up Widdowson's claim (1983) that because "with literary discourse the actual *procedures for making sense* are much more in evidence..." the study of literature can encourage in students an ability to infer meanings by *interacting* with the text. They add that a focus on literature as discourse can also help students to understand better the nature of literature as literature. Some of Littlewood's thinking about the whole question of literary versus 'informational' text is incorporated into their argument in favour of a re-definition or re-orientation in the use of literature in both the foreign-language and mother-tongue classrooms. According to Littlewood (1976), "literary texts have a different relation to external reality". The reader's relationship to a literary text "differs in important respects from that of a reader of an informational text. The reader's creative (or rather 'co-creative') role... encourages a dynamic interaction between reader, text and external world... The possible static and unquestionable reality of the informational text is replaced by a fluid, dynamic reality, in which there is no final arbiter between truth and falsehood. The possibility exists for a meaningful dialogue with the text or, at group level, about the text". The authors feel that if students could face a literary text with such an open, inquiring spirit, it could help them to learn more about the object itself as a communication. They could work out why they like reading and it would enable them to extend their language into the more abstract domains associated with more advanced language competence.

The final section of the first part of the Introduction is dedicated to literary competence and reading literature and is organized around the statement that no discussion or definition of literature can be value-free. Two pedagogical implications arising from this are mentioned. Firstly, the selection of material especially in English as a Foreign Language and Literature situations, is a complex matter because different cultures value different things. For students from other cultures, teachers need to

choose material that is representative of different traditions, discourse types, writers, etc., in English literature, but which will also be 'valued' appropriately by the particular group of students to whom it is taught. The second point, equally important to classroom teaching, is that the students must be helped to acquire literary competence, to be sensitive to the kinds of styles, forms, conventions, symbolization, etc., used in a Western European English-medium literary tradition.

Summarizing their arguments for a greater integration of language and literary studies, the editors stress the need for teachers to contextualize this 'integration' by (a) recognizing the importance of both linguistic and non-linguistic criteria in text selection; (b) using 'language-based approaches' as prior to stylistic analysis where necessary; (c) recognizing that some areas of language organization can create more problems than others, especially for foreign students; and (d) where appropriate, giving a due contextualization to social, historical, political and biographical background to text study, while at the same time being aware of the methodological problems that this can produce, in that stylistics is basically a heuristic, investigative learner-centred activity, whereas background studies involve transmissive teacher-centred exposition.

The second part of the Introduction, Literature and Education, after declaring that there is "far less clear thinking about the teaching of literature than almost any other recognized subject", looks again, firstly, at the 'caught' v. 'taught' issue and the need for grading activities in the teaching of literature as has been done in language teaching; secondly, at the three major aims underlying literature syllabuses in second and foreign-language teaching (development of language competence, to teach 'culture', and the study of literature in its own right); thirdly, a more detailed consideration of syllabuses for literature in its own right, stressing the need for texts to which students can react without any mediation from the teacher; and fourthly, reference to 'high' literature, literature and reading where the relationship between colonial literatures and independence literature in Third World countries is considered, although ultimately the aim is that readers should be willing and able to read the literature of many traditions. Most of the concepts are to be found, *per se*, in Harrison's review (1986) of Section Four of Brumfit's, *Language and Literature Teaching. From Practice to Principle* (1985).

This, then is the theoretical basis to the contributors' work that follows, a very full introduction which almost forms a document in its own right. Meant to orientate, its length and density of content may have the effect of detracting from the impact of the individual papers for some readers.

Part One about Literature and Language comprises eight papers on linguistics, literature and the implications of the interaction between the two for education.

The opening article, Michael Long's solution for the total lack of any sort of methodology in the teaching of literature to non-native speakers (save that of the lecture procedure which he calls 'the extended teacher-controlled presentation') is centred around his concern for both learner/learner and teacher/learner relationships. Instead of this uni-directional process, the author suggests a multi-directional mode of presentation which includes three input channels from teacher to learners, (1) activity preparation, (2) linguistic investigation and (3) background, and three learner channels of responses which overlap and integrate with the teacher-input channels, but *do not have a one-to-one correspondence* with them. The first, 'verbal response', is when the learner makes an answer to a direct text-related question from the teacher, or asks a question. The second, 'activity response', concerns the learner's involvement in the task which may be verbal, creative, or both. The third area, the individual response to the text in which the learner begins to make value judgments about a text or texts, is quite separate.

Of the numerous points to recommend the teaching of literature, it is the creative-response channel that provides the strongest justifications, says Long, for it is here that opportunities for language use occur most naturally and in the most varied forms, and the results effectively combine the behavioural goals of both literature and language teaching.

Graham Trengrove's paper, 'What is Robert Graves Playing at?', pretends to illustrate the thesis that awareness of language variety can be an important prerequisite for responding sensitively to literary language use. However, his giving letter form, beginning with 'Dear Maria' and ending with 'Yours sincerely, Graham Trengrove' to his paper as a means of rousing the reader's curiosity by the inconsistencies between this and other chapters of the book, falls a bit flat, as must his distinguishing of

Robert Graves from the persona of the poem 'The Persian Version' for most teachers of literature well-accustomed to this strategy.

In his discussion of language-based activities which can lead to fruitful appreciation of literary uses of language and run parallel or antecedent to close linguistic-stylistic analysis, Walter Nash is one of several authors in this book who focus on the technique of 'summary' or 'paraphrase'. Two styles of paraphrase are suggested: the *explanatory*, which summarizes or re-words, and the *mimetic*, which echoes or parodies. The value of both styles lies in their crass ability, through inadequacy or absurdity, to focus attention on details of grammatical structure, semantic patterning, and general qualities of 'literariness' in poetic and other texts. Explanatory paraphrase should fall within the competence of the student, representing his or her attempt to 'engage' with the text and account for its language. Mimetic paraphrase, unless there are student volunteers, should be the province of the teacher. Nash admits that it really demands "native competence, some gift for parody and burlesque, and a sensitivity to the humorous nuances in language: specifically, an awareness of the difference between the ordinary and the banal, the original and the bizarre". A tall order even for a lot of teachers!

In contrast to the pragmatic philosophy of Michael H. Short and Christopher N. Candlin (in which the similarities between language and literature are emphasized in their detailed description of a course developed at the University of Lancaster specifically for the training of teachers of English as a foreign language and literature), Ron Carter, in *his* concern for greater integration of literature and language study, chooses an approach that preserves the distinctiveness of the two modes. In his analysis of a Somerset Maugham short story, as well as a number of language-based strategies, he uses a linguistic model for narrative structure by William Labov and his associates (Labov 1972) developed from narratives collected in Black communities. The model is divided into six stages: Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Resolution and Coda. The marking of structural properties in terms of defined language forms has considerable advantages for integrated language and literary study, but there should not be too much dependence on models, he says.

A short paper by H.G. Widdowson, 'The Untrodden Ways', which takes its title from one of Wordsworth's so-called 'Lucy' poems ('She dwelt among th'untrodden ways'), addresses itself to the problem of studying relatively 'contentless' lyrical poetry in the classroom, and where the first reading may produce a 'So what?' response. By a close stylistic analysis he shows how the essential static effect of a lyric poem is achieved. This involves coming to grips with the inherently metaphorical nature of lyric poems, instead of recognising significance in terms of 'sequence in narrative and consequence in argument'. Widdowson's paraphrase version of the Wordsworth poem enables the reader to focus on the particular linguistic features of the original and their possible implications, thus the apparently simple context becomes complex. The author classifies the conflicts and contradictions that emerge in this third dimension of association as being analogous, on a different plane of significance, to the relations which are realized through events and characters in sequential narrative. Such an approach, however, as the editors suggest, demands considerable responsibility of the teacher.

Braj B. Kachru's moderate plea for the inclusion in the syllabus of a body of English literature written by *non-native* users of English is based on the supposition that contextually appropriate and linguistically graded literary texts have an important role in the language classroom. (A non-native user he defines as 'one who has acquired an institutionalized variety of English as a second language.') Careful to point out that his is not an either/or approach, Kachru's paper about 'Non-native Literatures in English as a Resource for Language Teaching", in both tone and argument, provides an interesting comparison with that of Ngugi in Part Two, as well as helping to clarify what is meant by the literature, language and learning contexts in English. His caution is firstly ideological, to avoid extremism; and secondly pragmatic, because be recognizes that while attitudes have gone through various stages, there are still many non-native users of English who, like their earlier English teachers, are prejudiced against their own, or other non-native literature in English. However, "the sheer persistence and the range and quality of their writing (has) gained slow but well-deserved recognition" among both native and non-native users of English.

The last paper in this section of the book, by Guy Cook, is concerned with a much used (and abused) practice in the teaching of literature in a foreign language —the study of extracts— which he

considers in the paper, 'Texts, Extracts, and Stylistic Textures'. In his analysis of an extract from 'The Dead' (James Joyce), he makes a useful distinction between 'text' and 'extract'. The notion of text is semantic rather than grammatical and the essential kind of meaning relation for the creation of texture is that one element is interpreted by reference to another (Halliday and Hasan 1976). *Text*, "with the exception of single-sentence texts, is a number of sentences bound together by cohesive ties, and giving meaning to each other". *Extract* is "part of a text, artificially separated for purposes of quotation or study from the other sentences, with which, to a greater or lesser extent, it coheres". A literary extract may gain, in isolation, *false texture*, because of the readers' natural tendency to treat it as a text. Extracts may be defined as *introductory, continuing*, or *conclusive* types. By choosing a conclusive extract from 'The Dead' (which is simultaneously conclusive to the collection of 15 stories in *Dubliners*, as well as to the story of this name), Cook demonstrates that the extract contains an unusual density of connection in various ways with the text that precedes it, and that such a passage is not suitable for teaching purposes. From each section of his analysis, however, he finds the positive criteria to be used in the selection of extracts and finishes the paper with an 8 point list of very useful suggestions about how to use extracts.

S.J. Burke's and C.J. Brumfit's paper in Part Two, 'Is Literature Language? or Is Language Literature?', outlines the main aims usually given for teaching English as a mother tongue, and relates the teaching of literature as an autonomous activity within this set of aims. Their summary, gleaned from various teaching manuals, is divided into three broad groups. 1. *The promotion of skills*, including literacy and oracy, critical and analytical ability, social skills, poise and the use of the imagination; 2. *Encouragement of attitudes and affective states*, including generally liberal, ethical and humanitarian attitudes, respect for the imagination and the intellect and respect for literary and cultural traditions; 3. *Provision of information*, embracing knowledge about literature as an English literary or western literary and human activity and knowledge about language, as the English language and a human phenomenon.

The authors express their doubts about some of these aims which are either untestable in practice (e.g. 'respect for tradition', etc.), or seem to involve judgments about the students' characters as much as about their learning capacity ('well-adjusted social behaviour', etc.). They also warn against the dangers of the English teacher whose aims include "better values and the creation of a better society" as being rather messianic and to the exclusion of the value of the teaching of other subjects such as maths, physics, etc. They suggest that some of the more extravagant claims for the teaching of English are simply a form of evasion of the specific problems associated with the task of providing students with linguistic tools for self-realization on the one hand, and with skills for responding to literature on the other. Their view is that if we want to efficiently pass on the pleasure of reading literature to others, it must be treated as a separate subject.

William T. Littlewood in his paper on 'Literature in the School Foreign-Language Course' gives new names to old strategies in his five perspectives of literature and suggests that these perspectives can also serve as criteria for the selection of texts.

The third paper in this part of the book, 'Reading Skills and the Study of Literature in a Foreign Language' by Brumfit, was also included in the review mentioned earlier, so that further comment will not be made here except to mention that in this present publication it is useful to compare Brumfit's criteria for reading of any kind with those discussed by Littlewood. The linguistic level (and not simply in lexical and syntactical terms), the cultural level, the length, the pedagogical role, genre representation and classical status are Brumfit's guidelines for the grading of literature teaching texts and strategies. He maintains that literary texts, if used in relation to a serious view of extending literary competence, will provide a particularly suitable base from which motivated language activity can develop.

Arguing from Widdowson (1978:3) and his distinction between language *usage* and *use*, Sandra McKay points out that as literature presents language in a discourse in which the parameters of the setting and relationships are defined, it is an ideal medium for improving language use, and not simply language usage which has been the more common purpose for literary texts.

McKay is another author who feels that the key to success in the use of literature in ESL classes lies

in the selection of texts that are neither linguistically nor culturally too difficult. Objecting to simplified texts on the grounds of dilution of information and possible reduction in cohesion and readability, she suggests two alternatives: texts with easy readability counts (which do not, however, account for literary categories such as plot and character, nor for cultural difficulties), or texts from literature written for young adults with themes that the reader can identify with.

Having selected the texts, the author favours an aesthetic rather than an efferent reading (Rosenblatt 1978: 24), which means being more concerned with what happens during the actual reading, than with what the reader will carry away from it.

Some authors, J.P. Boyle, for example, in their new-found enthusiasm to 'justify', firstly the remembrance of the existence of literature, and secondly, to integrate it with language, come up with some rather unusual and dubious reasons. Boyle, for example, in his paper 'Testing Language With Students of Literature in ESL Situations', introduces a range of tests based on literary texts by taking his "main justification for keeping language teaching —and therefore testing... in touch with literature..." from Ezra Pound's evaluation of literature (1928). Literature, says Boyle, being language at its most vigorous and clearest, keeps language 'clean and healthy', so let's use it by all means!

Monica Vincent and Ron Carter address themselves to general and specific aspects respectively in their shared article on texts. Vincent, in a pungent examination of the worth or otherwise of simplified texts, explains the pitfalls of reduction involved and gives a wide range of viable solutions, including new sources of texts (such as Commonwealth writing) and a widened definition of literature to include non-fiction. Carter gives a very useful inventory of difficulties to be considered in text selection, including the categories of linguistic structural criteria which help explain the peculiar difficulties of writers such as Dylan Thomas, modernist texts, such as T.S. Eliot's early poems, and Faulkner and the plays of Pinter.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, writing as a consumer of literature and as Kenya's leading novelist, makes a scathing criticism of Eurocentric studies and 'cultural imperialism', and as well as suggesting that only literature of the African people and literature of those who have suffered similar struggles against all kinds of exploitation should be taught in Kenyan schools, divides literature into "the aesthetic of oppression and the aesthetic of human struggle for total liberation". His article raises an important general issue associated with the teaching of literature, the ideological implications, whether accidental or intended, by all course designers. His specific complaint that Kenyan, along with other Third World countries, are frequently immersed by both literature and the film world in alien cultures and perspectives, cannot be disputed. The conflictive part of his argument is his classification of aesthetics in terms of social, rather than literary categories. And in how many ways can 'total liberation' be interpreted?

Part Three deals with Fluent Reading Versus Accurate Reading and produces some far-reaching observations to demonstrate that the issue is not simply a quality versus quantity one.

All five papers in this section derive from specific classroom experience, the first two by Brumfit and R.D. Pettit being based on the needs of East African students from the perspectives of expatriates working in Tanzania and Kenya respectively. Brumfit's paper, 'Literature Teaching in Tanzania', (1970), in its efforts to gear itself to the general educational demands of a socialist government, sets out to show how literature can contribute to the general betterment of society and how the syllabus can serve this purpose. Central to his thesis is that literature is a *skills* rather than a *content* subject, and that these skills, springing from sociological rather than aesthetic aims for HSC courses, can at least provide a community awareness.

Pettit, in his article, 'Literature in East Africa: Reform of the Advanced Level Syllabus', while approving of some of Brumfit's suggested reforms of literary studies, including co-operative learning, rejects, nevertheless, the latter's either/or approach to aesthetic and sociological perspectives. Literary studies should retain their own nature in any social situation, he argues. He finds Brumfit's view of literature "radically incomplete" because he limits its concerns to the social and psychological, thus overlooking the metaphysical dimension which is an essential part of the deepest literature. His criticism of the thematic approach to teaching literature is that "it tends to confuse our ends and melt down our fine particularities".

The book ends on a convincing note, with G.D. Pickett's paper on 'Reading Speed and Teaching Speed' producing an effective plea for teachers of literature to have clearer aims and a "less Olympic view of what is teachable...", a two-stream syllabus Intensive/Analytic, catering for specialism, and Extensive/Cumulative, for generalism approaches and a model bounded by life, on the one hand, and language, on the other, whereby the two syllabuses with their opposite processes meet in the field of, *theoretical semics* (Eaton 1972). He also makes a sound claim, on ontological grounds, for the importance of the study of the way a person *really* reads as a contribution to poetics.

The guiding principle of the editors was to select contributors who, despite their differences, "recognize and argue reasonably the varied ways in which literature and language are related and can be integrated". If the book suffers from a certain unevenness, it certainly achieves its goal in supplying stimuli for future discussion and should be read by teachers of language and teachers of literature alike.

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REFERENCES

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