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*Literature and Language Teaching* by Christopher J. Brumfit and Ron A. Carter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 290 pp.

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Literature and language learning have shared a long history. The academic teaching of language has long assumed the reading of literature as its goal. Perhaps this derived from universities being seen as seats for the study of the classic languages. No one approached Latin or Greek as a means of conversation; they were satisfactorily dead. When modern languages were introduced into the curriculum (one tends to forget how comparatively recent this phenomenon was in the face of tradition; American literature as a subject began in living memory at least of the more elderly), their teaching was patterned on the classical procedures -- translation and analysis. One need look no further than the most distinguished departments of modern languages to see this continuance. To the extent that German, Russian or French is taught, it is assumed that for those committed to the subject, acquisition is merely the necessary pre-requisite of literary study in the original language. That was the pattern for English teaching internationally, and one has observed pathetic students struggling to comprehend the subtleties of Wordsworthian vocabulary with the usable speech of a six year-old.

As usual it was American pragmatism that changed this situation. Confronted with a new political global role, American linguists, with the useful innocence that marks a Henry James character, observed the emperor was naked. With surprise it was perceived that distinguished international degrees in English did not advance the useful practice of verbal negotiation in the language. At that moment TESL, as opposed to teaching English abroad, truly

began! It was true that the British had spent centuries working abroad, but quite simply they had not tried to do the same (i.e., the most useful) thing: make the nonnative speakers talk!

From this more practical approach came the rejection of literature in ESL work in favor of more banal, but more useful, occupations, such as pattern practice. Cheerfully, in the famous idiom, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Since literature was effete and elitist, its language verbose and baroque, it had no place in useful language work. This decision was sustained by two sources extreme in all else but their opposition to the inclusion of literature. The linguists delved ever more deeply into the fundamentals of language not daring to approach the complexities of poetics. The literary critics dismissed utility and denied access to the holy grail of the great tradition to all except the dedicated specialists. So it went on for several decades. Then questions were raised. Students were not parrots and communication was set up as a goal beyond repetition. But what would students communicate and where would they learn to do this? Suddenly literature was recognized as a means by which native speakers extended their vocabulary and understanding. Might it not work for a nonnative speaker who often, unlike their teachers with bitter memories of high school, actually enjoyed literature? The idea that literature can and should play an important even exciting part in ESL classes is thus just, after some years of professional persuasion, being considered. It is this too lengthy background that brings us to the book under review.

Although published four years ago, this work is an admirable collection of essays that brings together observations from the most valiant and experienced teachers in the profession dedicated to working amongst the area of "interaction between language, literature and education." *Teachers* is a crucial word since the intention is to survey the entire field, the individual articles ranging from the somewhat abstruse theorizing of Guy Cook's "Texts, Extracts, and Stylistic Texture" to the most practical suggestions of Boyle's "Testing Language with Students of Literature in ESL Situations." The overall concept is presented in the introductory chapters. It owes a good deal, as do we all, to I.A. Richards, the great doyen of our trade. He devised a mode of criticism, which in America was called "The New Criticism," which made a close reading of a work a more significant exercise than the application of biographical or bibliographical information. Strictly speaking, the

ideas in his book *practical Criticism* did much to improve those dismal classes that proffer literature to native speakers, but it is obvious how naturally Richards' methodology meets the needs of the ESL student, and it is his principles which are developed and applied by the editors of this valuable collection. A close and attentive reading for meaning can teach many skills, above all the ability to disentangle ideas from prose and to express them in appropriate language. The underlying problem, too seldom recognized, is that literature is not only something other than ordinary writing, it does not readily lend itself to simplistic exercises. As Brumfit puts it, "we are not using literature simply as a servant of language." To use but not to use, that is the question for teachers, and they gain explicit support and guidance from these essays. At the level of generalization, S.J. Burke somewhat pedantically but usefully lists all the tasks that literature might perform, and the list is valuable for its extent, ranging from literacy to "humanitarian attitudes." It sounds grandiose but one would not wish to contradict. Literature can be "all things to all men" and perform a multitude of linguistic services in the classroom. Sandra McKay chooses to be more specific, and perhaps more openly practical, when, in a more pedagogic mode, she distinguishes between level of usage and level of use and suggests that both may be advanced by the reading of literature.

In addition, several essays deal with teaching in Africa. It is obvious that this geographical interest derives from the editors' particular personal experience on that continent, yet, although the conditions there are unique, they offer the kind of valuable generalizations that can only come from actual classrooms. In a related vein, Braj Kachru touches on an increasingly important issue: the development of new literatures in English as a second language (of which Africa and India are the most productive) and suggests the role that ESL literature should play in the ESL curriculum. This is an area that has barely been considered internationally, though such writing is increasingly incorporated in teaching within the countries of the various authors.

To me this is not a challenging book because it says all the things I have tried to preach for years, but it sustains my opinions with intelligent, specific reference and often ardent prose. It is hard to know whether this book would convince the die-hard who dismiss literature as an element marginal to language teaching. It does most certainly provide ammunition to the convinced and partly

convinced that would justify their often tentative experiments by reference to the judgment of people as distinguished as Michael Long, Christopher Candlin and H.G. Widdowson. With those on one's side, who is to fear? The book certainly ought to be read by everyone in the profession. From it teachers will acquire not only the assurance of a sustaining philosophy that justifies their decisions to incorporate literature in their program but also most specific guidance about how to do it efficiently. The book is written by people who know and respect literature so that not even the most arrogant critical specialist can condemn them as being superficial in their perception or deficient in their judgments. At the same time, it does accept that, in the ESL context, literature must be made useful, and it explains how that can be accomplished. If it reaches only into the hands of those already tempted to explore, it will even then constitute the beginnings of a very necessary revolution in the classroom, and how grateful learners would be for this.

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*Contemporary Linguistics: An Introduction* by William O'Grady, Michael Dobrovolsky and Mark Aronoff. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989. 490 pp. Adapted from *Contemporary Linguistic Analysis*, published in Canada by Copp Clark Pitman, Ltd.

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*Contemporary Linguistics* surely deserves its title for a number of reasons. First, it is based not only on theoretical expertise but also on the experience of authors who have taught