

# Literary Texts and the EFL/ESL Classrooms

**Khawlah Ahmed**

American University of Sharjah

## **Abstract**

*The importance of language has been a source for many discussions on the academic as well as political levels. Its different functions have caused scholars in the field to go beyond looking at it from the traditionally concentrated on linguistic oriented approaches. And though we realize that we remain very concerned with accurate representation in terms of the forms and structures used in a language, as Yule (1996) explains, we need to know what it is used for and its interpretations and intent. Language realizes discursive and ideological systems which are used as powerful tools to exercise power in modern democratic societies (Kress, 1990) and language in literary texts has been shown to have the power to socialize, acculturate, and influence perceptions and reality (Holmes, 2001). This paper examines literature as a 'discourse type' (Cook, 1994) whose language use must not just be interpreted on the linguistic level, but must be interpreted, as Duranti (2005) explains, as the use of the linguistic code(s) in the conduct of social life. If we consider a literary text as Holmes (2005; 2001) does, as a representation of a language which is social-semiotic and representative of a culture or society, in which all aspects of that society are deemed as a system of signs, where culture and conventions are culture bound, then literary texts are laden with cultural aspects which need to be considered in the literature classroom. And, any approach used to deal with such texts in literature courses, especially ESL/EFL contexts, should include the analysis of discourse.*

## **Introduction**

Due to the importance of language and the significant role its different functions play in society, scholars in the field have moved beyond looking at it from the traditional linguistic oriented approaches which deal with forms and structures to what language is being used for and its interpretations and intent (Yule, 1996). In studying language, as Yule explains, "some of the most interesting questions arise in connection with the way language is used, rather than what its components are" (p.139).

Language is not static (Saussure, 1966). Carter and Simpson's (1989) analysis of Bakhtin and Voshinov's work shows that

[L]anguage does not mediate 'reality' in any simple or 'common-sense' way. There is no easy one-to-one or uni-accentual correspondence between words and what they refer to 'objectively' in the world. Instead, users of language or 'subjects' are positioned at the intersection of various discourses which are inherently unequal and the site of struggle. (p.15)

Therefore language is associated with power (Wodak, 1989) which in turn may contribute to hegemony-hegemony of ideologies, values, beliefs, and traditions. It is a representation of a system of "linguistic terms" that realizes discursive and ideological systems, which are used as powerful tools to exercise power in modern democratic societies (Kress, 1990), which can be manipulated (Van Dijk, 1991).

The language in literary texts is no exception. Literary texts are discursively produced and are representative of a type of text which can perform the important functions of breaking down existing schemata, reorganize them, and build new ones (Cook, 1994). Language in literary texts can socialize, acculturate, and therefore have the power to influence perceptions and reality (Holmes, 2001). As Fowler (1981) says, even where the linguistic choices of language are concerned, language reflects and influences relations within a society, and literature, contrary to what the New Critics and the Formalists may say, has social determinants and social consequences.

Literature is a 'discourse type' that is considered to be the most important, if not the most powerful of discourse types (Cook, 1994). Its importance extends to pedagogical importance because it is part of both the curriculums of first and second language education (Cook, 1994; Beaugrande, 1993), and forms as McCarthy (1991) says the backdrop to second language learning and teaching. Beaugrande (1993) sees that literature is no longer seen as just being handed down by tradition, but it has been as he says, displaced by an examination of ways it is mediated and channeled by literary institutions, such as the universities and institutes as well as the non-academic ones, such as publishers, and editors. Literature is viewed as a discourse that is defined and controlled by the social institutions within which it is embedded (Fowler, 1981). And because literary discourse is complexly patterned invoking contextual properties which are not only linguistic, but non-linguistic ones as well (Carter and Simpson, 1981), its 'language use' must not just be interpreted on the linguistic level, but must be interpreted as *the use of the linguistic code(s) in the conduct of social life*, according to Duranti's (2005) discussion of the interests of ethnographers of speaking, which is concerned with

(1) establishing, challenging, and recreating social identities and social relationships, (2) explaining to others as well as to ourselves why the world is the way it is and what could or should be done to change it; (3) providing frames for events at the societal as well as the individual level; (4) breaking, or more often sustaining, physical, political and cultural barriers. (p.19)

A literary text is also a representation of a language which, as Holmes describes as 'social-semiotic', meaning that it is a representative of a culture or society, in which all aspects of that society are deemed as a 'system of signs', where culture and conventions are 'culture bound' (2005, 2001). Therefore these literary texts are laden with cultural aspects which need to be considered, especially in the literature classroom. Any approach used to deal with such texts in literature courses should include the analysis of 'discourse'. One such approach, that may be worth considering, and which might be productive, engendering integrated or holistic responses, is discourse analysis.

### **Discourse Analysis: A Brief Introduction**

From Zellig Harris's (1952 in McCarthy, 1991) definition and confinement of analytic methods to formal patterns within the text and discovering how discourse differs from random sequences, to Michael Stubbs (1983) approach of including extensive information from outside the text where the importance is not on whether one can distinguish random lists of sentences from coherent text, but on the principles which underlie this recognition of coherence, to modern day definitions and approaches to discourse analysis, this field of study has come a long way. With a beginning rooted in different disciplines in the 1960's and 70's it has become the 'topic of the day' when it comes to examining *language and texts*.

In addition to being described as 'wideranging' and 'heterogeneous' (McCarthy, 1991), it is seen as a very important area of study which has been rapidly growing and evolving with research flowing into it from numerous and quite different academic disciplines (Shiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2003). These include linguistics where, according to Shiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton, models of understanding and methods for analyzing first developed, and anthropology, philosophy, and disciplines which have applied

and many times extended such models and methods to problems within their own domains, such as communication, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and artificial intelligence.

The history of origination of both British and American discourse analysis is presented by McCarthy (1991) who states that the former has been shown to be influenced by M.A.K. Halliday's (1973) functional approach to language, which in turn had its connections to the Prague School of linguistics, and Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) of the University of Birmingham; and the latter has been dominated by works of ethnomethodological tradition, work done by Gumperz and Hymes (1972), the *conversational analysis*, Goffman (1976; 1979), Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Labov. McCarthy also mentions text grammarians, who were concerned with written language, such as Van Dijk (1972), de Beaugrande (1980), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and the Prague School of linguists.

Schiffrin (1994) identifies six different approaches to discourse analysis. They are speech act theory, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and variation analysis. A great deal of research on language shows that no one model of analysis can be drawn upon, but different approaches are needed to address the intricacies of 'language,' whether it is looked at in words and sentences or whole texts- written or spoken. Different disciplines have come to the realization and recognition of the importance of a heterogeneous approach to language such as that of discourse analysis.

And so we see discourse analysis being associated with fields which used to be 'purely' linguistic, and new associations being formed with disciplines such as text linguistics, and literary theory (Beaugrande, 1993) as well as literary and linguistic stylistics, who are arguing for a stylistic analysis of text to go beyond the words of the sentence to broader contextual properties which affect their description and interpretation (Carter & Simpson 1989). What is crucial about an approach such as discourse analysis, as Widdowson (2004) explains, is that it offers analysis an ability both to build transaction (from self to self/other and shared semiotic system) into one's theory allowing and accounting for them in one's practice, seeking the integration of what approaches such as speech act, interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, pragmatics, conversation analysis, and variation analysis can offer, both individually and together, to the analysis of utterances.

But no matter what the approaches or disciplines, they all have a common denominator, or a 'unity' as McCarthy (1991) calls it, in the "description of language above the sentence and an interest in the contexts and cultural influences which affect language in use" (p.7) and they attempt to answer the same questions: "How do we organize language into units that are larger than sentences? How do we use language to convey information about the world, ourselves, and our social relationships?" (Schiffrin, 1994, p. viii).

But with heterogeneity, different fields, and different approaches come differences, as Schiffrin (1994) states, with the meaning of 'discourse analysis'. For many linguists, 'discourse' deals with what is beyond the sentence, for others it deals with 'language use' and for critical theorists, the term becomes more than a count noun, referring to broader conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions which together construct power or racism, resulting in different 'discourses' such as the 'discourse of power', and so forth (Schiffrin, Tanen, & Hamilton, 2003).

Discourse analysis refers to both the analysis of 'spoken' as well as 'written text' where the aim of the analysis deals with the way 'text' works across the boundaries of single sentences or utterances to form whole stretches of language and where talking about written texts is focusing on the way they are constructed (Carter, Goddard, Snager, & Bowering, 2001). Discourse analysis deals with, as Cook (1994) says, how stretches of language take on meaning, purpose, and unity for their users.

The terms 'discourse' and 'text' need distinction and clarification because of the confusion that is sometimes encountered when referring to them. This distinction tends to be blurred because many linguists

do not differentiate between the two. According to Widdowson's (2004) analyses of research and writing done by scholars in the field, such as Stubbs (1996;1983), Harris (1952), Chafe (1992;2003), Hoey (1991) and Hymes (1968), to name a few, some scholars use both terms synonymously, others are "inconsistent in their use," while others are just "indifferent to the distinction" of these two terms. Linguistics does not consider this distinction essential and do not assume that discourse analysis deals exclusively with 'spoken' discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983; Stubbs, 1983). There is a distinction, as Widdowson explains, between what is referred to as 'written text' and 'spoken discourse' where 'discourse' implies length and a 'text' may be very short'.

Some definitions refer to discourse in terms of use of language seen as a form of social practice where discourse analysis is the analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practices (Fairclough, 1995). Other definitions emphasize terms such as 'contexts,' introduce terms such as 'effect' and 'pretext', and define discourse analyses by saying it has to do not with what texts mean, but with what might be meant by them, and what they are taken to mean, in which there is no 'understanding' of texts as a semantic process, separate from, and prior to, a pragmatic evaluation (Widdowson, 2004). Widdowson offers an inclusive definition which seems to incorporate the above by saying that 'discourse' is the pragmatic process of meaning negotiation and 'text' is its product.

Even 'the analysis of discourse context', according to Biber and Conrad (2003), can be approached from two perspectives where one, the focus can be on the textual environment (lexical, grammar, rhetorical features of text) or it can focus on the extratextual communicative situation where each of these extratextual analysis "can differ in terms of their generality", and the "varieties defined in terms of general situational parameters are known as registers" which is a "cover term for any variety associated with a particular configuration of situational characteristics and purposes"(p. 175).

But to some, no matter how we define it or what discipline or approach we associate it with, its emphasis falls squarely on the social and cognitive aspects of language (Beaugrande, 1993). To others it is a sociolinguistic analysis of natural language (Stubbs, 1983), and since its emphasis is on language in use, it cannot be restricted to describing linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs (Brown and Yule, 1983). The 'shared recognition,' according to Carter and Simpson (1989), is that "analysis at the level of discourse allows insights into the semantic structures of whole texts and how such structures produce textual meanings" which in particular, "includes dialogue between characters in novels, plays and poems as well as dialogic interaction between author, narrators, implied readers and actual readers (p.11.) But almost all agree that it is still considered as a 'branch of linguistics' which is most directly concerned with the ways in which texts create contexts, their organization at this suprasentential level, and their operation as part of a dynamic process between participants (Carter and Simpson, 1989). And though it is described as a popular, vast, and important field of study on its own, it remains a vague subfield of linguistics which is the least defined (Schiffrin (1994) and is in many respects still at a formative stage of development (Carter and Simpson, 1989).

### **Discourse Analysis and the Discourse of Literature**

The richness and variety of approaches to discourse analysis mirrors the complexity of language, and the difficulty one encounters when describing 'language in use'. Language is, as we have stated above, that non-static, ever changing (Saussure) form of communication that can change our representations of the world (Beaugrande, 1993). And there is no language which is more laden with information and complexity than that used in literature, a "communicative domain for creating and contemplating alternative world", as Beaugrande maintains, which, according to Cook (1994) can alter our schemata, because literary language is related to the mental representations of the world.

To Cook (1994), discourse analysis accounts for the ‘discourse of literature’ not only because it must be able to account for all types of discourse but because, as mentioned above, among discourse types, literature is widely if not universally considered to be one of the most important and the most powerful. As he explains, if discourse analysis focuses on “the social nature of communication, stressing contextual aspects of meaning which are interactive and negotiated, determined by the social relations and identities of the participants in communication” then, “literature too is primarily a mode of social interaction, reflecting and creating its own institutions and power relations” (p.2). The analysis of such discourse seeks to demonstrate the determining positions available within texts, and show how ‘meanings’ and ‘interpretation of meanings’ are always and inevitably discursively produced (Carter and Simpson, 1989), and where the literary voice is both the voice of power and the voice of an intimate (Cook, 1994).

Literature is viewed as “a discourse” (Fowler, 1981) whose language, according to Cook, “has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing our mental representations of the world,” which “may be universal and answer a universal need” and is not “to be found in a description of either literary form or the reader in isolation, but only in a description of the two together” where the value of such an “effect explains the value attached to the discourses which cause it” (p.3-4). And so discourse analysis needs to be concerned with the macro-context of larger social patterns and not simply with the micro-contexts of the effects of words across sentences or conversational turns (Carter and Simpson, 1989) which are major issues in literature and therefore literary discourse.

Discourse analysis in relation to literary texts, is the study of what it is that makes texts meaningful and coherent for their users and concerns the interaction of texts with knowledge of context to create discourse (Cook, 1994). According to Cook, they are not merely a category which needs to be included in an overall theory for the sake of completeness, but rather that they are different in kind, representative of type of text. Therefore, literary discourse analysis should seek to demonstrate the determining positions available within the texts, and show how ‘meaning’ and ‘interpretations of meaning’ are always and invariably discursively produced (Carter and Simpson, 1989).

### **Interpreting Literary Texts**

An important concern of discourse analysis is how we interpret the ‘discourse’ in literary texts. Interpretation deals with how we view language, and though language is ‘arbitrary’ (Yule, 1996), according to Birch (1989), linguistic structures are not. He explains that they can and are used to systematize, transform and often obscure analyses of reality, regulate the ideas and behavior of others, classify and rank people, events and objects in order to assert institutional or personal status, where language use is not an effect or reflex of social organization and processes, but a part of social process that constitutes social meanings and social practices (Fowler et al., 1979). To Birch (1989) the ‘construction and consequent articulation’ of our understanding of *how* and *why* we read cannot be done in a ‘non-committed, apolitical, neutral way’. Language, because it is conceived to be ‘social semiotic’, ‘language in use’ takes the form of texts, and are not just isolated words and sentences, and have two levels of analysis, as Halliday (1994) explains. The lower level of linguistic analysis shows how and why the text means what it does revealing in the process multiple meanings, alternatives, ambiguities, metaphors, etc. The higher level analysis is a contribution to the evaluation of the text, and though the linguistic analysis may enable one to say why the text is, or is not, higher level analysis is harder to attain because it requires an interpretation not only of the text itself but also of its context (context of situation, context of culture), and of the systematic relationship between context and text.

Therefore language is not merely letters and words where knowing the words automatically means one knows the meaning of the text. Many factors come into play, such as linguistic, contextual, '

pretextual'... etc.-factors that language is engrained in and can not be looked at in isolation of all these factors if a comprehensive understanding is to occur. Discourse analysis presents a method for analysis of the discourse that takes into consideration these aspects.

But in order to conduct such an analysis, certain requirements must be met. In viewing discourse analysis' fundamental and important views on language in use, its relevancy to literature, literary texts, and their interpretation, there seems to be an underlying assumption that is not being considered. In all this conversation of what discourse analysis can offer, there is a seemingly implicit assumption that we are talking about readers who are language users, who are not only capable of "recognizing correct versus incorrect form and structure", can "cope with fragments", can "recognize causal relations" which exist between phrases, make sense of notices, and can make texts "interpretable" because they rely on what they know about linguistic form and structure, but readers who have "more knowledge than that" (Yule,1996, p. 139-140). These readers have the knowledge of the culture in which those texts are placed in. They have been "socialized" and can, as Widdowson (2004) explains, "indexically" interact with a text.

This of course, does not apply to students who are only studying the language as a second or foreign language, and who have not been 'socialized' to the point of being able to 'indexically' interact with these texts. They do not meet these conditions. As a result, they may not be able to fully utilize, and carry out an analysis of the discourse that exceeds the linguistic level because of such limitations. Other factors may be involved which the student will face, even if the linguistic obstacle is overcome.

For one, we have already mentioned the fact that language' has been defined as a 'semiotic system' that is representative of a culture or society where cultural analysts have deemed all aspect of society as a 'system of signs,' where aspects of culture and conventions are 'culture bound,' and where different cultures have different semiotic systems (Carter et al., 2001). This means that literary texts contain sentences which contain 'iconic symbolic signs' that embody within them the signs and conventions of the cultures of the text where "grammar is only one level of linguistic analysis", and where "interpreting the use of grammar in the text is not the same as interpreting the text" (p.125).

There are, as Widdowson (2004) explains, instances of language which have all the appearance of complete texts, but which do not even consist of separate sentences but of isolated phrases and words, such as public notices which consist of parts of speech which are "in grammatical limbo", because they "have somehow declared independence from syntax and are on their own." The same is true of parts of words, such as "graphological" letters which have no "encoded meaning", except when they have become "established encodings with fixed denotation, symbolically secure" e.g. PTO, and those that "do not have the same fixity of meaning," e.g. P, where interpretation of the text depends on "something outside itself", the "context" the 'where' and the 'what' that is known about the text being analyzed. Therefore, a *text* is identified not by its "linguistic extent but by its social intent" where the relationship between '*text*' and '*discourse*' is, as "between the language people produce and which provides objective data for linguistic analysis, and the way this is processed by the parties themselves, which is a matter of interpretation" (pp.8-9).

For interpretation to be effective the person doing the reading requires the use of the background knowledge or schema, as mentioned above. In order to make meaning of these letters, words, or phrases...and so forth, both 'context' and 'interpretation' need to be considered and these are based on ones "knowledge of reality as shaped and sanctioned by the society" s/he lives in, i.e. the reader's "social knowledge" (p.7). Therefore "a linguistic symbol, a letter of the alphabet, an element of English graphology" is interpreted differently "when it figures as a text" and where it is read "not as a conventional element of the code but as an index whose function is to point away from itself to the context, and so

indicate where meaning is to be found elsewhere” (p.7). That is the meaning of the interpretation that the reader comes up with based on his/her schema.

A problem may also arise when text can mean one thing in one context, yet can be interpreted totally different in another context. When reading these texts, factors such as ‘effect’ come into play, which according to Widdowson (2004), effect is not a feature of the text but a function of the discourse, either as intentionally written into the text or interpretatively read into it. She explains that one makes assumptions about the intentions of writers, based on one’s conceptions of the world, one’s social and individual reality, one’s values, beliefs, and prejudices, which is a necessary consequence of discourse conceived as social action. She explains that it is “your discourse you read into my text” where “you can only interpret it by relating it to your reality, and “where your reality corresponds to mine, or where you are prepared to cooperate in seeing things my way, then there can be convergence between intention and interpretation”. But if not, then there “will be a disparity” in that “You will be taking me out of context —out of the context of my reality”. And “What for me is a statement of fact may for you be an assertion to be challenged (p.13).

Even linguistics often make distinctions between sentences and utterances, where two sentences or utterances may be exactly the same, yet as Peccei, (1999) explains, each can be a unique event, created at a particular point in time for a particular purpose. They may be the same underlying sentences “in their script” but have totally different interpretations, because this interpretation of the utterance or sentence, “involves a fair amount of intelligent guesswork for the hearer and considerably more knowledge than comes from simply knowing the meaning of individual words and how they combine to form sentences” (p. 5).

Widdowson asks: “How do I know all these things?” The answer is: “Obviously because I have been socialized into a particular reality and know how to use language to engage indexically with it” (p.8). That means, as Ochs and Kiesling (2005) explain, social meaning in language is viewed as ‘indexicality’, which is, as they say, the meaning process in which linguistic form is related to context. That is, linguistic forms become associated with aspect of the social world, so that the same ‘linguistic form indexes’, or ‘brings to mind’ that social aspect whenever it is used. And so if students are to work with literary texts, reading and interpreting the text to dig up the “powerful” information, and to ask those “interesting” questions, the discourse of such texts becomes a major issue, where a linguistic or first level analysis is not enough.

### **In Instances of Cultural Contact**

In contexts where two cultures are involved (that of the students and that of the literary texts they read) additional cultural specific/bound aspects may come into play. As seen from the research above, students from cultures outside the text may be incapable of creating meaningful connections which are not actually expressed by the words and sentences. This process, as Yule (1996) says, may not just be restricted to understanding ‘odd’ text, but it may be involved in our interpretation of all discourse (Yule, 1996).

As Holmes’ (2001) explains, many aspects of language are culturally determined where “different speech communities emphasize different functions, and express particular functions differently” (p. 258). She states that language may serve a variety of functions, in which there is a variety of ways in which the ‘same’ message may be expressed, and “where dialogue serves both an affective (or social) function, and a referential (or informative) function” (317). To illustrate, she explains that jokes also “encode culturally specific assumptions” where in the US, for example, the term “*blonde* typically refers to a woman, not a man, and that the categories ‘dumb blonde’ and ‘dumb blonde jokes’ are familiar to the addressee” (p. 317).

There are cultural specific ideas, as explained by Carter et al. (2001), in which each culture may have, for example, a different connotation for the same sign, symbol, animal...etc. used in literary texts as

forms of symbolism, which could be deceiving. The reader can be analyzing and interpreting them very differently from the way the writer intended. According to Carter et al (2001), the same applies to “picture images”, in which images are analyzed according to the words in the text. For example the way people are represented “can call up powerful connotations that work along side the verbal language in a text” which students may not be able to detect from a reading of the text, and if not brought up for discussion and clarification by the instructor, these connotations can be missed, or interpreted according to the students’ own perceptions or cultural connotations, and so “visual aspects,” images form an important part of the way we ‘read’ the world” (p.40). Even sounds can be either physically based or culturally constructed. Therefore assessing their interpretation, in this case in written texts, can be a form of confusion to the students who have not been ‘socialized’ into these specific contexts. Gumperz’s (2005) essential insight is that there are even language forms like intonation that tell us how talk is meant to be received by the listener—a cue for the context in which it should be taken, and can cause cultural misunderstandings.

### **Further Concerns**

As seen from the above information, language is more than just letters and words, and language carries too much within it to be looked at in simplistic or purely linguistic terms. Issues on discursive practices, the politics of production, linguistic imperialism, and ideological domination and hegemony, to name a few, and how they are firmly engrained in text, and the necessity for such issues to be dealt with when reading any text, let alone literary ones, are highly emphasized by researchers. Even in an “ahistorical, almost timeless vacuum” as Carter and Simpson(1989) states, where “the extra-textual world of social, political, psychological, or historical forces is often discounted as being beyond the analytical remit of stylistics” (p.7), scholars have realized that “It is naive to pretend that any application of linguistic knowledge...can result in an ‘objective’, value-free interpretation of data...[and that] language remains an interpretative act and thus cannot transcend the individual human subject who originates the interpretation” (p.7). In fields such as linguistic stylistics (which is the purest form of stylistics), practitioners are beginning to consider and “explore the role of interpretation of discourse in relation to social ideologies and the ideology of personal interpretation, and examine critically recent work in stylistics in relation to literary-theoretical accounts of the nature of discourse as a socio-political entity” (Carter and Simpson, 1989, p.11). Burton (1980) sees shortsightedness on any analysis which is anything other than ideologically committed (p.8).

Language is coined with ‘power’ and ‘ideology’ (Wodak, 1989). It has been argued that the awareness of language and discursive practices is a prerequisite for democratic citizenship and an urgent priority for language education (Fairclough (1995). Fairclough stresses that “discourse practice, orders of discourse, and intertextual analysis have a crucial mediating role in this framework; they mediate the relationship between texts on the one hand and (nontextual parts of) society and culture on the other” (p.10). Texts possess ideological significance and function, and any linguistic form which is looked at in isolation has no determinate meaning and possesses no ideological significance or function (Kress, 1990). Many believe that these ideologies are being manipulated (Van Dijk, 1991). Therefore, as Kress (1990) says, language is a representation of a system of linguistic terms which realize discursive and ideological systems where the concept of ideologies can and are being used as powerful tools to exercise power in the modern democratic societies.

Where the English language is concerned, Phillipson (1992) looks at “the language policies that Third World countries inherited from colonial times, and considers how well ‘aid’, in the form of support for educational development and English leaning in particular, has served the interests of the receiving countries and the donors, and assesses whether it has contributed to perpetuating North-South inequalities and

exploitation... specifically at the ideology transmitted with, in, and through the English language, and the role of language specialists in the cultural export of English” (p.1). He explores “why English has become the dominant international language and how language pedagogy has contributed to its hegemony” (p.4). Phillipson quotes Fishman (1987) who states that

The relative unrelatedness of English to ideological issues in much of the Third World today must not be viewed as a phenomenon that requires no further qualification. Westernization, modernization, the spread of international youth culture, popular technology, and consumerism are all ideologically encumbered and have ideological as well as behavioral and econo-technical consequences. (8)

Singh, Lele and Martohardjono (2005), suggest that discrimination even works with intercultural encounters, and say that people from different cultures rarely meet as equals, and this is due to power differences in the cultures they come from. Those with less power are expected to accommodate to the dominant culture. They say that most studies overtly accept the claims of the dominant ideas—ideology of the ruling classes—as true (subject to minor modifications at best) in their desire to ‘help’ the ethnics to cope with situations of dominance and even to help them become capable in sharing that dominance by becoming successful. They argue here that Gumperz’s (2005) study speaks in favor of “flexibility” but he does not realize that those with flexibility have a cultural identity, the crucial ingredients of which are ego-focality and domination that is historically developed and distinct, and that power structures must be looked at as an independent variable. Singh, Lele and Martohardjono also say that if we want to explicate the nature of communication in the industrialized world, we cannot ignore the distortions introduced by power and must systematically and empirically identify the linguistic and the political which cannot be achieved just by merely glossing over the latter.

Ocks, (2005) stresses that linguistic constructions at all levels of grammar and discourse are crucial indicators of social identity for members as they regularly interact with one another; complementarily, social identity is a crucial dimension of the social meaning of particular linguistic constructions. She says that no matter how crucial language is for understanding social identity and social identity for understanding the social meaning of language, social identity is rarely grammaticized or otherwise explicitly encoded across the world’s languages.

Duranti (2005), as quoted in the beginning of this paper, explains that for ethnographers of speaking, as well as other researchers in the social sciences, language use must be interpreted as the use of the linguistic code(s) in the conduct of social life, establishing, challenging, recreating social identities as well as social relationships, explaining why the world is the way it is and how we could or should change it, providing frames for events, breaking or sustaining the physical, political and cultural barriers. He ends by saying that even in its most phatic or seemingly redundant uses, talk is always constitutive of some portion of reality: it either makes something already existing present to(or for ) the participants or creates something anew.

Homes (2001) states that sociolinguists agree that language influences our perception of ‘reality’, and that there is psycholinguistic evidence that the existence of particular categories in a language may predispose speakers to classify ‘reality’ in one way rather than another. There is even “undisputed evidence that the physical and cultural environment in which language develops influences the vocabulary and the grammar of a language (p.337). For Holmes (2005), stories serve many functions, sometimes simultaneously. They may entertain and amuse, they may explore social issues such as the uses and abuses of power and ways of managing people, they may express personal feelings and moral dilemmas, or simply express an individual’s daily concerns and worries, they may also serve to bolster the narrator’s ego, allowing the construction of a heroic identity, they also permit self exploration and may reflect an

individual's awareness of growth and complexity. To Holmes, stories can socialize, acculturate and educate listeners.

To sum up, literary texts are laden with information that is beyond the linguistic analysis. Students who are not 'socialized' into such texts and who do not have the cultural background, the schema, will not be able to interact with the text 'indexically' and will not be able to unearth the information that is available in it—information that can alter, change identities, realities and worlds. This means that texts are too powerful to be dealt with only from a traditional perspective, as is the case in many literature classes. So where does that leave these student and the texts in such situations? Do we ignore such aspects of context, culture, ideologies, power relations and so forth and deal with the text from the traditional perspectives of analyzing it in terms of theme, characterization...etc., and view it as an 'artifact'? If so, then we are depriving students the skills to deal with such text as powerful instruments that contain information that can have so much effect and influence on their world.

### **Added Considerations**

The question here is how can students studying the English language as a foreign or second language and who have not been 'socialized', and encounter difficulty in interpreting the text from a second level analysis, utilize what approaches like discourse analysis has to offer? There is a need for students to understand how texts work and how texts are placed within contexts and therefore cultures, and culturally sensitive subjects. In addition to learning the linguistic aspects essential for the analysis of texts, students need to be provided with foundation skills for reading literary texts, especially those referred to as 'high status texts' found in literature, and unearthing that which is 'interesting' in them. But students who are presented with texts from cultures outside their own are naturally overwhelmed by the linguistic analysis to be able to further contemplate the higher level analysis which deal with 'socializing' and 'indexicality'. Should students be kept on the periphery of actual critical thinking and learning, be excluded and deprived of using such approaches as discourse analysis?

It is said that any description is only as good as the model or system of analysis used (Carter and Simpson, 1989), and that our conceptions of literature are bound to influence the ways in which we teach it (Cook, 1994, p.3-4). Fowler (1981) says that literature is a discourse that is defined and controlled by the social institutions it is embedded in. Therefore it is important not to ignore, as Carter and Simpson (1989) maintain, such factors which are not "amenable to linguistic description" and consider issues such as the "role of gender, class and ideological position in the interpretation of texts" and "and not to assume that somehow description of texts is neutral and value-free" and "examine the extent to which discourse analysts can accommodate work in the analysis of literature in which the notion of discourse is viewed with different theoretical assumptions, and different analytical perspectives" p.15). We need to consider aspects, such as those addressed by Beaugrande (1993), and ask the questions he poses that relate to the status quo, viewing texts in the sense of artifacts, the marginalization of foreign literature in comparison to the non-Anglo American literature, to name a few.

### **Suggestions: Culturally Relevant Texts**

When two cultures come together, as Spack (1998) explains, there are many complications that need to be addressed which come with the territory of reading texts from unfamiliar cultures. Some of these complications could be addressed through making decisions to present texts from the students own culture which they already have the schema for, which they have been 'socialized' into and can 'indexically' react with, and where they will be able to utilize higher level analysis and interpretation. It is the people (the students here) who "make sense of what they read and hear" and "try to arrive at an interpretation which is

in line with their experiences of the way the world is” Widdowson (2004, p. 141). The ability, as Widdowson explains, to make sense of what is read “is probably only a small part of that general ability we have to make sense of what we perceive or experience in the world” (p.141).

It has been emphasized that texts are powerful tools. Therefore *which* texts are presented, *how*, *why* and *whose* texts are presented need to be considered. And because two cultures are involved in EFL/ESL contexts, such issues need to be addressed. If languages and texts give validity, power, and prestige, then *what are we saying about the students culture that is not presented in the classroom?* Wouldn't 'incorporation' and 'validity' issues be addressed? Wouldn't we be enriching the 'English Curriculum' and preventing a rising frustration that is beginning to surface, even in the West, the exclusion of, or at most keeping in the periphery, or everything that is not 'English' in the sense of 'Ango-American'? In a world of globalization, supposedly calling for understanding of cultures, shouldn't the English curriculums portray this need? Isn't it time to bring in the other cultures of the world and give them just as much weight in the literature classrooms, not to exclude that which is there, but to complement and complete it? What better way than to begin with texts from the culture of the students who are being taught?

Presenting texts from the students' cultures can also be a factor for cultural understanding in which a comparison of these texts can lead to better understanding of cultures of not only in terms of how they function, their values and beliefs, but how they deal with similar themes and similar situations. These texts can be analyzed to dig up this valuable information embedded in them. Not providing students with the ability to deal with texts, in the manner discussed above, prevents them from exploring relations between texts and therefore cultures. It prevents them from gaining important analytical skills in dealing with texts that they will need in today's world where wars are no longer fought with weapons but with words. It prevents them from gaining this education in probably the only place they will ever be able to gain such an opportunity.

Theoretical approaches such as discourse analysis are meant to give the student an idea of the ways in which language and discourse is universal across cultures and how differences among cultures might be usefully compared, contrasted, re-interpreted, and even 'pretexted'.

### **In Conclusion:**

The most complicated and challenging 'texts' that students, whether in mainstream or in ESL/ESL contexts, have to deal with, is the texts found in literature classes, where students are faced with having to deal with, such as essays, short stories, novels, and poems. It is these texts that need to be taken into consideration when chosen and when being dealt with. And it is in these texts that the discourses of which need to be analyzed, where the goal for such analysis takes into consideration all the possible purposes they may have been written for. Students, mainstream as well as EFL/ESL, should be given the opportunity to use the skills of approaches such as discourse analysis, and be prepared to deal with texts from all aspects of analysis. What needs to be realized is that “only through an active cooperative effort, shared between reader and author, that the interplay of voices can be successfully created and recreated” without which “the letters of literature” will forever be dead” (Mey, 2003, p. 796).

**References**

- Biber, D., Conrad, S. (2003). Register variation: A corpus Approach. . In Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Hamilton, H. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. (pp.175-196). USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Beugrande, Robert de (1993). *Discourse analysis and literary theory: Closing the gap*. (JAC 13.2).
- Birch, D. (1989). "Working effects with words"-whose words? Stylistics and reader intertextuality. In Carter, R. and Simpson, P. (Eds.). *Language, discourse and literature: An introductory reader in discourse stylistics* (pp. 259-277). London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Brown, G. and Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burton, D. (1980). *Dialogue and discourse: A sociolinguistic approach to modern dialogue and naturally occurring conversation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Carter, R. Goddard, A. , Reah, D., Snager K., and Bowring, M. (2001). *Working with texts: A core introduction to language analysis*. NY: Routledge.
- Carter, R. and Simpson, P. (1989). *Language, discourse and literature: An introductory reader in discourse stylistics*. London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
- Cook, G. (1994). *Discourse and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clark, H. H. &Wege, Mija, M. Van Der (2003). *Imagination in discourse*. In Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Hamilton, H. (Eds.). *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp.772-786). USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Duranti, A. (2005). *Ethnography of speaking: Toward a linguistics of the praxis*. In Kiesling, S. and Paulston, C. B. (Eds.), *Intercultural Discussions and Communication: The Essential Readings* (pp. 17-32). MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. London: Longman Group Lt.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
- Fowler, R. (1981). *Literature as social discourse*. London: Batsford.
- Gumperz, J. J. (2005). *Interethnic communication*. In Kiesling, S., Paulston, C. B. (Eds). *Intercultural discourse and communication: The Essential Readings* (p.33-44). MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). London: Edward Arnold.
- Homes, J. (2001). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Holmes, J. (2005). *Why tell stories? Contrasting themes and identities in the narratives of Maori and Pakeha woman and men*. In Kiesling, S. and Paulston, C. B. (Eds.), *Intercultural Discussions and Communication: The Essential Readings* (pp. 110-134). MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Kiesling, S., Paulston, C. B. (Eds) (2005). *Intercultural discourse and communication: The Essential Readings*. MA: Blackwell Publishing.

- Kress, G. (1990). "Critical discourse analysis." In Robert Kaplan, (Ed.). Annual Review of Applied Linguistics II.
- McCarthy, M. (1991). Discourse analysis for language teachers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mey, J.L. (2003). Literary pragmatics. In Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., & Hamilton, H. (Eds.). The Handbook of Discourse Analysis (pp.787-797). USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Ochs, E. (2005). Constructing social identity: A language socialization perspective. In Kiesling, S. and Paulston, C. B. (Eds.), Intercultural Discussions and Communication: The Essential Readings (pp. 78-91). MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Peccei, J. S. (1999). Pragmatics. NY: Routledge.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). Linguistic imperialism. UK: Oxford University Press.
- Saussure, Ferdinand de.(1966). *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, in collaboration with Albert Riedlinger. Translated by Wade Baskin. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966.
- Schiffrin, D. (1994). Approaches to discourse. Cambridge Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Schiffrin, D, Tannen, D, and Hamilton, H. (2003). The handbook of discourse analysis. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Singh, R., and Lele, J., Martohordjono, G. (2005). Communication in a multilingual society: Some missed opportunities. In Kiesling, S. and Paulston, C. B. (Eds.), Intercultural Discussions and Communication: The Essential Readings (pp. 45-57). MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Spack, Ruth (1998). Guidelines: A cross-cultural reading/writing text. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Stubbs, M. (1983). Discourse analysis. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, Teun. (1991). Racism and the press. In Robert Mills (Ed.). Critical studies in racism and migration. New York: Rutledge.
- Widdowson, H.G. (2004). Text, context, pretext. MA, USA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Wodak, R. (ED). (1989). Language, power and ideology: Studies in political discourse. London: Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Yule, George. (1996). The study of language. UK: Cambridge University Press.