TEACH LITERATURE, TEACH CULTURE: A CULTURE-AWARE APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LITERATURE

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摘 要

本文從兩方面闡述外國文學教學與文化教學之間的關連：一是將外國文學教學置於外語教學的脈絡中，指出文化教學爲外語教學的重要課題，而文學則是達成文化教學目標的重要法門；二是指出外國文學教學中無法避免文化因素對於閱讀造成的影響。當一位本國讀者翻開一篇外國文學作品進行閱讀時，他的閱讀經驗本身即是一種跨文化接觸經驗。

由是，本文提倡一「具文化覺知性」的文學教學取向。在此，作者引用語言教學中的 communicative approach ，以及文學批評理論中的 reader-response theory ，建立其理論基礎，並參酌文化教學模式與外語教學法，建立其內容與方法。希望爲外國文學教學指出一條新方向，一方面增進學生對外國文學作品的理解---理性上的瞭解與情感上的融入，一方面也促使學生有自覺性地觀察與檢視自他文化不同的樣貌，促進其文化溝通能力。

I

It seems that any research about culture has to begin with a definition, which explains why there are so many definitions of culture telling almost the same thing in innumerable ways. I don't intend to add one more; but in order to give a picture of the reference of culture in the context of foreign-language-and-literature teaching, I quote three definitions from scholars whose major concern in defining is foreign language instruction.

When describing the sociocultural context of a foreign language and literature, Nostrand (1966:. 6-12) adopts the definition of culture proposed by Talcott Parsons. Culture, according to Parsons, consists of four areas. The first is value system, which includes avowed values and the purposes implicit in conscious and

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unconscious behavior. The second area is unverifiable assumptions made about the nature of man and the world. The third refers to empirical or verifiable sort of knowledge, such as science and history. And the last area is literature and the arts.

Valette (1986: 179), more recently, identifies two major components of culture when discussing the teaching of culture as part of the second-language course. One is anthropological or sociological culture: the attitudes, customs, and daily activities of a people, their ways of thinking, their values, and their frames of reference. The other component of culture is the history of civilization, which includes geography, history, and the achievements in the sciences, the social sciences, and the arts.

But perhaps the more frequently quoted definition of culture in foreign language instruction is the one by Hammerly (1982: 513-15). Hammerly divides culture into three types: informational (or factual) culture, behavioral culture, and achievement (or accomplishment) culture. The informational culture is what Parsons calls empirical or verifiable sort of knowledge; the behavioral culture refers to the sum of everyday life — actual behavior plus attitudes, values, etc.; and the achievement culture includes the achievements in letters, arts, and music.

No matter in which way do we classify culture, the classification cannot but synthesize the important function of language. Once the famous Sapir-Whorf hypothesis had stimulated a lot of investigations on the relationship between language and culture. But neither the argument that language determines thought pattern and world view nor the argument that it's cultural norms which influence the development of language could be satisfactorily accepted. However, in 1960 an American committee on language and culture had expressed the inseparability of language and culture in three statements: (1) Language is a part of culture; (2) Language conveys culture; (3) Language is itself subject to culturally conditioned attitudes and beliefs (Bishop 1960:29). And over the last two or three decades the consensus on this issue has become more ripened. First, language primarily reflects rather than creates sociocultural regularities in values and orientations. And second, language and culture coexist in fluid and dynamic interactions; the relationship between them is never rigid or mechanistic (Stern, 1983: 203-209; Bonvillain, 1993: 53-56).

For language pedagogy, these studies have been extremely important. The communicative approach of 1970s is founded on the conviction that the language learner should not only study the formal features of language but also become aware

of the interaction between language and its sociocultural context. The communicative approach to language teaching does not deny the importance of the grammatical structures, but it stresses the sociocultural implications of the utterance more. It does not focus on the correctness of the use of language, but on its appropriacy. Linguistic skills (for example, speaking and hearing) give place to communicative abilities (for example, saying, listening, talking) (Widdowson, 1978). In other words, the communicative approach aims to develop a second-language learner into a welcome foreigner.

With a view to cultivating the communicative competence, foreign language instruction has to move in two directions: one is to develop the learner's linguistic competence, and the other is to develop his cultural competence. The learner who has achieved the communicative competence has to be able to successfully relate the second language to the psycho-socio-cultural reality in which it functions (Hammerly, 1982: 513).

Linguistic competence and cultural competence can be and should be cultivated at the same time, given the close relationship between language and culture. Many studies point out that cultural patterns, customs, and ways of life are inherent in language structures, influencing the affect, the connotative as well as denotative values, and the attitudes conveyed by that language (Steffenson and Joag-Dev, 1984; Brown, 1986). For often the complete meaning of a sentence emerges only when it is put into its socio-cultural context. Therefore many scholars equate second language learning with second culture learning (Brown, 1986). They adopt cultural materials in the foreign language classroom to teach both language and culture. While students are learning culture, they at the same time learn the language in action (Archer, 1986).

Cultural materials and cultural activities help the learner become aware of his role as a culture-bearer, cultivating in him the abilities of observing, describing, analyzing, and interpreting cultural phenomena, and of comparing the target culture with his native culture. The learner simultaneously learns the language skills to describe, analyze, interpret, and compare — the skills for communication. Cultural learning can also evoke higher interest and higher learning motivation. In a society where the second culture is the prevailing culture, like English learning in the United States, it helps reduce the learner's culture shock, increase his understanding of the second culture, and facilitate his adaptation to the foreign environment. In a society where the student's native culture dominates, like English learning in Taiwan, cultural materials and activities help prepare the learner for real cross-cultural communication.

Some scholars, like Marquardt and Mead, consider literature an important means of teaching culture. Mead (1980: 537) thinks that through literary works in a foreign language the reader learns "the problems, goals, dreams and values of another people as expressed through time and in another language." Since literature enables the reader to experience how the foreign language speakers think and feel, Marquardt (1967) regards literature as the surest way to teach cross-cultural empathy for culturally different problems. Literary meaning are multi-leveled: there are surface meaning and deep meaning, intrinsic meaning and extensive meaning, manifested meaning and implied meaning, time- and area-specific meaning and universal meaning. These various meanings not only tell the beliefs, feelings, and attitudes of the writer and the characters in the work, but also reveal some ideological, historical, social, and cultural truths. There is no denying that the world of literature is a made one; however, nor can it be denied that the made one is a product of the culture and the society, that it is a part of the culture. Thus a reader of literature can find in the works vivid and authentic situations in which he may recognize and feel the breath and pulse of a real people.

There are some other scholars who object to using literature as a vehicle for teaching culture. Hammerly (1982: 532) notes that literature rarely presents the usual, everyday life of a society, that characters in much fiction tend to be stereotypes whose behavior is seldom representative of real patterns of behavior. Some descriptions in literary works can be quite misleading: for example, the American novel *Babbit* forms an image of an American businessman as a self-centered, greedy, and hypocritical person. A reader from another culture may hence derive the wrong impression that American businessmen are selfish and hypocritical. Child (1987: 105) places literary texts among the most advanced reading materials, because "they are relatively inaccessible either because they reflect unfamiliar cultural values or highly idiosyncratic language behavior or a combination of the two." Purcell (1988) even points out that certain literary texts are "acultural": sometimes the cultural facts are not truly reflected in the text, but they are exaggerated, distorted, and parodied to express the writer's criticism.

The arguments against using literature to teach culture do not make many teachers balk when they look in literary texts for cultural materials (Clark, 1980; Bjornson, 1983). These teachers recognize the attraction of the variety of literary works. What they really care about is not whether they should use literature or not, but how to set up the learning objectives, how to select teaching materials, and how to design and apply teaching methods. The general principle is that

contemporary literature and margin literature should be included to replace the out-of-date, much difficult classics or masterpieces, and short stories of various styles and themes replace intimidating novels. Students are encouraged to take part in the classroom conversation to express personal feelings and opinions. The teacher must teach students skills specific to the reading of literature, such as skills of analyzing the various discourse levels and rhetorical strategies. He must help students distinguish between general cultural reality and special narrative style belonging to the writer only. The teacher has also to help promote students' understanding of the relationship between discourse and culture. A research conducted by Abu-Ulbah (1983) shows that comprehension and cultural awareness are enhanced when the study of foreign language is coupled with the study of foreign literature.

The above discussion bears on the topic of this article in two ways. First, when placing foreign-literature teaching in the context of foreign-language teaching, it establishes the identity of "foreign-literature teaching" as different from "literature teaching." And second, the relationship among language, culture, and literature is made explicit so as to facilitate the following communication.

II

Literature reflects culture. Therefore a literary experience is also a cultural experience. When a reader opens a Lit2 (foreign literature, literature in the second language) text to perform a reading task, his experience will be more or less similar to that of a traveler to a foreign country, who is exposed to different cultural phenomena. This person in the foreign environment may psychologically and emotionally undergo several stages. At first it is excitement and euphoria: whatever he sees and hears are so fascinating. Then he begins to feel confused with the culturally-specific behavior patterns and values which are quite dissimilar or contrary to those instilled in his behavior and mind. He may feel depressed or even become furious at being disoriented — this is the stage of culture shock. The attitude of a person in this stage toward the foreign culture tends to be antagonistic, while on the other hand he tends to idealize and idolize his native culture. The third stage anomie consists in one's feeling himself not to be a member of either culture. He doubts the value orientations of both cultures, and for a while feels uncertain about himself and alienated from either culture (Hammerly, 1982; Brown, 1986).

A Lit2 reader who has had little or no contact with or knowledge about the culture of the text may experience similar psychological and emotional flux during the reading process. The first encounter may seem fresh and interesting, then confusion appears when he gets a little deeper, and the feelings of uncertainty and alienation arise when he compares what he observes with his experiences at home.

Culture shock may come from a small part of the text or a whole passage. Sometimes even one sentence may produce for the reader a minor bump. In "The Use of Force" of William Carlos Williams, the doctor is infuriated with the words of his patient's parents, who mean to help persuade their daughter to open her month for diagnosis. The mother says, "Such a nice main [referring to the doctor]. . . Look how kind he is to you." My students couldn't understand why the doctor feels so strongly against this "compliment," because it is completely acceptable in the Chinese society.[1] There are many other instances like this in Lit2 texts which may puzzle the Lit2 reader. But of course the impact they create is in proportion to the degree of participation that a reader allows himself to have in his dialogue with the text.

A reader who has had certain knowledge about the Lit2 culture before reading the text may have different problems. He may carry some preconceived biases or generalized impression into his reading (Hanvey, 1975). If his expectation or prediction is contradicted, he may elicit ungrounded criticism or draw out conclusions which satisfy his stubborn pride. An experienced Lit2 reader may also lock himself in a mentality of discrepancy which judges between good and bad, high and low, this and that. In his adoration for the foreign culture, he may suffer a scorn for his original culture (Valette, 1986). Some senior majors in a western language are at the risk of that.

But a wholesome cross-cultural learning experience is much more than that. It's all right that a learner will probably experience some of the stages mentioned above. But most importantly, he has to go through those confusing stages to arrive at a maturation where his cultural learning is completed with real cultural comprehension.

The experience of a foreign literature is the experience of a foreign culture. The cultural experience provided by a foreign literature is transmitted through language. Students' misreading and misunderstanding of (parts of) a Lit2 text may result from their problems with the vocabulary (for example, the "grass" in Alice

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[1] All the examples in this article come from my experience of teaching English literature in National Chengchi University, Taiwan.

Adams' "Gift of Grass" is marijuana, not the land-covering green grass), with idioms, with sentence structures (such as that of the famous sentence in Kate Chopin's "The Story of An Hour": There would be no powerful will bending her in that blinding persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature), or with the rhetoric (for example, the figurative expression in James Joyce's "Araby": her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood). Brumfit and Carter (1986) point out that to impart knowledge of even a single word is not easy. It may mean teaching a whole new concept because of the social and cultural associations it can convey (for instance, the term "Puritan").

The cultural references of a text have to be explained, its socio-cultural background and some other relevant information have to be made known, and literary genres and conventions no doubt have to be taught. But the Lit2 reading is not a combination of those knowledge. Literature is about the human. The reading of literature is valued for its humanistic characteristics. The traditional approach to the teaching of literature makes the teacher and the text the centre of learning. The teacher is responsible for all kinds of interpretative jobs: the biography of the writer, the text's historical background, literary conventions, the text's meaning, images, characterization, etc. The learner is asked to take down with no scruple whatever is passed down by the teacher, including the paraphrase and translation done by the teacher alone. The text becomes the teacher's patent product, manufactured by the teacher and then delivered to the students (Kramsch, 1985). There may occasionally be a discussion of questions posed by the teacher, but students often feel that they are somehow pushed toward the standard answer in the teacher's mind (Collie and Slater, 1987).

The traditional approach to the teaching of literature is justifiable in certain learning stages. Nonetheless if taken as the sole teaching approach, it will deprive students of the opportunity as well as courage to open themselves to the experience of the text. The literature teacher should never be allowed to block students' way of learning and growing. A reader of literature can participate, through the most subtle, suggestive, and effective language, in different levels of human experiences, in which he sharpens his perception, stretches his mind, and expands the dimensions of his own life. Literature can promote one's understanding, sensitize one to thoughts and emotional nuances in different expressions, inspire curiosity and interest in human problems, stimulate self-introspection, and lead to intellectual and affective maturity. In addition, the discussion of literature contributes to the development in students of critical thinking skills such as describing, classifying,

comparing and contrasting, inferring, generalizing, and conclusion-drawing. But this learning-growing experience is not the corollary of passive receptiveness. The learner has to take the initiative in getting involved with the text so that a meaningful communication can take place, and the learner can thus grow. The less active the learner is in learning, the wider the distance between him and the text becomes, and the less obvious the humanistic value of literature-reading appears. What the traditional approach overlooks is the fact that the learning experience cannot be vicarious, just as one's growth cannot be replaced.

To a Lit2 reader, the Lit2 experience is different from the Lit1 experience in that reading Lit2 means making contact with the behavior patterns, thinking patterns, sensitivity, and value system of another culture. Therefore it is both a literary experience and a cross-cultural learning experience.

The cross-cultural learning experience is defined by Bateson (1972: 211) as

> a set of situations or circumstances involving intercultural communication in which the individual, as a result of the experiences, becomes aware of his own growth, learning and change. As a result of the culture shock process, the individual has gained new perspective on himself, and has come to understand his own identity in terms significant to himself. The cross-cultural learning experience, additionally, takes place when the individual encounters a different culture and as a result (a) examines the degree to which he is influenced by his own culture, and (b) understands the culturally derived values, attitudes and outlooks of other people.

Of course the experience of another culture in literature is not the same as the experience of a different culture in reality. The real-life experience is more direct and severe: the learner's exposure to shock and frustration accompanied with tremendous pressure from every possible direction is less likely to be shunned. For some people, the cross-cultural learning experience is gained after long periods of painful lessons; while for other people, the cross-cultural experience becomes a stagnant one when they fail to achieve acculturation and thus linger in the stage of cultural pidginization and fossilization (Omaggio, 1986; Brown, 1986).[2] In

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[2] Here I borrow the terms pidginization and fossilization from the learning of foreign language to describe the rigid and handicapped adaptation to another culture.

the Lit2 classroom, however, students receive less shock. They have the advantage of observing, learning, and exploring under guidance without taking any practical risk. The Lit2 classroom offers more space for students to explore and greater degree of flexibility for students to test their exploration before they have the real-life encounter with another culture. Apart from that, the cross-cultural experience gained in the reading of Lit2 is comparable with that acquired in a foreign society: the reading act constructs what Bateson calls "a set of situations or circumstances involving intercultural communication."

Then we can infer from Bateson's definition that cross-cultural learning is not only the learning of the language, history, customs, value systems, and behavior patterns of another culture. They are the contents of the learning, but not the ultimate goal. The goal proposed by Bateson for cross-cultural learning reminds us of the goal of humanistic education: to know thyself and to understand the others (Archer, 1986: 172).

Acculturation is the result of self-comprehension and the comprehension of the others. That's why a Lit2 teacher has to encourage student participation in the first place. Only when human situations are met with human concern, can a meaningful personal learning experience arise. Students have to look into themselves, analyze their response, and find out what they are while they are trying to truly understand what the text conveys.

III

Thus I conclude that we have to take a culture-aware approach to the teaching of foreign literature. It is not that we had better dwell on the cultural aspects when teaching Lit2; but that reading Lit2 is inevitably an encounter with the culturally-derived attitudes, values, and outlooks of the texts. And the traditional approach to the teaching of foreign literature, however, cannot fulfil by itself the task of helping students successfully undertake a cross-cultural learning experience.

The culture-aware approach is built upon the ground where the communicative approach and the reader-response theory correlate to create a theoretical basis for the teaching of foreign literature. The communictive approach to language teaching emphasizes communicative competence in authentic language situations. Communication is a dynamic, not still, process, featuring the negotiation of meanings. The learner has to understand the different functions of language in different occasions

of communication (e.g. describing, requesting, suggesting, promising, appreciating, and apologizing), and he has to be able to perform these functions appropriately. The appropriacy is evaluated on the basis of the speakers' social status, their interpersonal relationship, the functions to be performed, and the contexts for the performance. For example, the learner has to know how to start and end a conversation, what subjects can be discussed in certain occasions and what topics should be avoided, and how to respond to different speech acts. Besides the appropriacy of function performance, the communicative approach also concerns itself with the coherence of thought or meaning and the use of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies (Omaggio, 1986).

When the communicative approach is adopted in reading, the teaching materials include authentic language use in culturally authentic situations; and the methodology (1) allows individualization of learning, (2) incorporates the multiple perspectives and experiences of students into the teaching/learning process, and (3) provides structured, sequenced activities that facilitate reading and comprehension and instruct students in various strategies involved in deciphering a text (Harper, 1988: 403).

Therefore the communicative approach is student-centred. When this approach is practiced in a literature class, the teaching/learning process should encourage the student-reader's active involvement in the culturally authentic situations of the text and engage his perspectives and previous experiences in his acts of observing, describing, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating.

The reader-response theory is also centred on students/readers. In spite of its various theoretical branches, some common criteria shared by those who consider themselves advocates of reader-response theory can be induced. The first criterion is the belief that literary experience is fundamentally an unmediated, private exchange between a text and a reader, and that literary history and scholarship are supplemental: they cannot substitute for that immediate experience (Bushman & Bushman, 1993: 32). Second, literature is about "human" in a "human" world. It must be met and interpreted with human experiences. A reader inevitably carries into his reading his own feelings, belief, values, knowledge of language and literary convention, and experiences of the world. This criterion is perhaps better elucidated by the schema theory of reading, which considers reading an interaction between the reader's previous knowledge (schema) and the text. The reading process relates personal experiences to words of the text and activates existent background knowledge to construct new schemata (Carrell, 1984). Whether the reader comprehends the text or not depends on whether he can successfully adjust his prior knowledge,

synthesize new information, and reach a consistent interpretation (Carrell, 1987). Therefore the reader's preexisting knowledge of the world and the totality of his experiences are of key importance to the deciphering of a text.

Third, literary knowledge is not something concealed in a text, waiting for the reader to find out. Before a reader starts the reading process, the text is only pages of black spots meaning nothing. Literary meaning is created in the act of reading, discussing, and writing about what has been read. In other words, it is the consequence of the interaction between the author's text and what the reader brings to it (Probst, 1989: 6). This criterion overthrows the hegemony of the text as well as the interpretative authority of the teacher or professional critics. Since meaning comes from interaction, there is no such thing as an objectively correct interpretation (Mailloux, 1990). Fourth, but interpretation is not a freewheeling display of the reader's imagination and creativity. The text presents limits or controls. The reader's response is evoked and guided by the explicit direction, clues, implications, and structure of the text. As Rosenblatt (1987: 146) puts it, the reader to some extent creates the text, while on the other hand he is also guided by it. Hence in his interaction/communication with the text, the reader is acting and responding, shaping and being shaped.

The interdependence of the reader and the text bears implications for the teaching of literature. The teacher must acknowledge, accept, and respect the uniqueness of the individual student. He should not regard students as passive recipients of knowledge. Students must be allowed to play their own part, to become the maker of their own knowledge. Instruction, consequently, must be planned to involve students in the act of making meaning. Students should not merely be presented with an accumulation of information about the writer and the text, nor should they be given as final judgment the opinions of the preeminent critics or scholars. Students must be invited to confront the text, to respond to it in their own way, and thus to experience the process of learning and growing (Probst, 1989: 8-9).

There are always problems when a theory comes to be practiced. Some compromise has to be made and some adjusting techniques or methods have to be applied to meet the requirements of the classroom situations. The practice of reader-response model in a reading class may lead to "centripetal reading": students combine only familiar elements into their interpretation, which results in "excessive closure or excessive containment of alternative meanings" (Salvotori, 1986: 10). The divergence of voices may turn the open space into a disconcerting pandemonium. Reading which is meant to be a species of self-discovery and self-comprehension may become a neurosis or hysteria (Freund, 1987: 14). It is even

worse with a Lit2 class, while various difficulties may arise from the fact that the Lit2 students are *not* the intended readers of the text (Kramsch, 1985: 357).

It would be helpful to observe how the response approach is applied in Lit1 class. Sharp (1989), for example, recommends a genuine combination of the best features of both the formal/traditional method and the response model. The formal method provides a framework or structure which bestows a sense of direction for the realization of various stages of the meaning-locating process; but the structure must be flexible so that the unexpected, brilliant response is appreciated, not rejected or ignored. The other formal feature of value is that it provides a proper basis of facts or information which is vital to refine response — but the teacher has to recognize that information should never be the sole target of literature learning. Sharp admits that the response model easily leads to chaos, so he agrees to the teacher's planned intervention with the framework of the formal method to restore a trim atmosphere and achieve coherence. Within such a flexible framework, attention shoud be given to encouraging personal insight, to enabling students to clarify their ideas and opinions in mutual- and self-exploration, and to bringing students to a realization of the connection between their responses to literature and their responses to life.

Milner (1989), on the other hand, proposes a four-phase developmental approach to literature instruction. His approach is based on the changing relation of the student with the text during the process from immersion in the text to a critical distance from it. In the first of the four phases, the student is reader: he is face to face with the text, he surrenders himself to the text, and he is carried into a direct, unmediated experience of the text. In the next phase, the student is student: he is encouraged to reflect on his reading, and ask himself: What happened? Who are these characters? What does this mean? These basic comprehension questions are addressed in preparation for the following more sophisticated critical reading. In the third phase, the student is critic: he is encouraged to step away from the text to explore the formal aspects of the text and reflect on the author's craft. In the final phase, the student is scholar: he is invited to consider the text with the eyes of a scholar from a particular school of literary criticism, be it historical, biographical, formalist, feminist, or Freudian. When the student's intellectual horizon is extended with the hermeneutic possibilities of the text, he at the same time rises above the text and the critics who interpret it.

Milner's developmental construct begins with the student's personal journey into the text and then moves to the formal approach and scholastic approach. The

reader-response model serves as a basic and inspiring point of departure.

Another great discrepancy between the reader-response theory and its practice lies in the teacher's role. The ideal is that any privilege or authority is eliminated in the class: Reader is equal. But in the classroom under the current educational institution, the presence of the teacher's *power* is an undeniable fact. The smell of the power is so strong that it fills the classroom and no theory can really kill it no matter how much freedom that theory claims to give the students. Dendinger (1990) calls on the teachers to handle this tension by first rejecting as untenable the proposition that they are "just another reader" among readers. The teacher is an experienced reader: he has read a lot of works that his students have not, and he does have his unique experiences and values. However, the teacher should resist the desire to indoctrinate; he should be glad to share his experiences with his students and freely express his values in a never-imposing way. Besides, he has to "teach" the students to find their own meanings and to help promote the effectiveness of the articulation of their views. The balance between freedom and authority would somehow be struck if the teacher performs his task of teaching and guidance with the awareness that he does carry his own reading into the classroom, that his reading reflects his intentions, value judgments, and biases.

Lit1 teaching deals with the practical problems of the reader-response model by either mixing it with a directive approach or making it a phase of the whole teaching process, thus reducing the degree of dependence on it as a classroom practice. Lit2 teaching appeals to fundamentally the same resolution. But in view of the fact that Lit2 students suffer more language obstacles in reading (as discussed above), the Lit2 teacher prefers to delay the stage of students' active involvement in the meaning-making of a text. Davis (1992), for instance, proposes four components (representing four stages) for the understanding of a literary text read in a foreign language. The first three components are decoding of the literal meaning of single words and words combined into sentences, awareness of historical-cultural referents and the spatiotemporal context in which a work was written, and knowledge of a set of conventions for reading literature. These stages are the teacher's responsibilities. And it's not until the last stage — that of the reader's unique re-creation or re-construing of the text — that students infuse their own feelings, images, and previous experiences into the words of the text. The interactive approach proposed by Kramsch (1985) and the communicative approach proposed by Harper (1988) also place the "negotiation of meanings" (Kramsch, 361) in the last stage of the teaching procedure, following the building of lingustic skills, the verifying of basic com-

prehension, and the establishment of a common background of essential information.

The reader-response theory and its practice in the Lit2 class is significant for a culture-aware approach to the teaching of foreign literature in that students' participation in and response to the text are indispensable for the realization of this approach. The Lit2 teacher, be he a native of the target culture or not, cannot simply assume that the students can comprehend and accept this and have problems with and difficulties over that. It's lazy to rely on pure conjecture for students' plane of experiences, outlooks, and values. Some Lit2 teachers might think that students will naturally draw out the features of a culture after they have accumulated some reading experiences. This attitude is responsible for students' wrong inference based on their mis-comprehension of certain words or sentences and irrelevant associations based on their individual propensity and aptitude. One of such examples was found when I was teaching James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" to education students. Students were disgusted with the way Mrs. Mitty ordered her husband around. They easily categorized her as a mother-tiger, a Chinese expression denominating a wife who is rude, nagging, and belligerent. When Mrs. Mitty says to Walter, "I wish you'd let Dr. Renshaw look you over," my students, blinded by their bias towards Mrs. Mitty, failed to recognize that what she says is an important fact in the story instead of a cursing ridicule. When we were reading John Updike's "A & P," almost all the class (and the friends and families they interviewed) were definitely sure that they wouldn't take after that boy who quits a job for something not his business. Students (and their interviewees) deemed that boy showy, stupid, brainless; if they were the boy's parents, he could be sure of a good discipline.

The students' mis-comprehension in the first case couldn't be discovered unless it is voiced by students themselves. And their reaction in the second case might be predicted by the teacher, but it's through open discussion in which students talk about themselves and with each other and with the teacher that they will take up the ice-breaking journey of trying to understand the boy's values, to become aware of the influence of their own values on their judgments, to adjust their old attitude, and to feel some empathy with the boy's choice.

A culture-aware approach doesn't attempt to underestimate the virtues of the traditional approach, nor does it attempt to undergrade the teacher's guiding status. It is calling attention to the cross-cultural learning experience that a Lit2 class can offer. The practice of a response model in the Lit2 class, whether it's in the last of Davis' four stages for understanding a text or in Kramsch and Harper's stage

of meaning negotiations, can be adjusted so that the focus is on the special relation between a Lit2 reader and the text and on the resultant learning opportunity for the student-reader to know himself and to understand the others.

During the interaction with the text and communication with their peers and the teacher, students also learn to develop skills of observing, describing, comparing, questioning, hypothesizing, analyzing, and synthesizing. When students are encouraged to apply these skills in identifying the culturally-derived behavior and values, they should be reminded that a positive cross-cultural learning attitude consists in neither eulogy of the target culture at the expense of the native culture, nor nationalistic chauvinism. They have to understand that culture is in an ever-changing state; therefore all the knowledge about a culture cannot but be temporary. Students should be warned against stereotypic perceptions and over-generalization. It's probable that a character or an author's belief cannot represent the other people. The aim of communication is enhancement of cultural awareness, improvement of mutual- and self-understanding, and promotion of empathy. It's not necessary to force a judgmental conclusion to any controversy: for sometimes a tolerance of ambiguity is more appropriate.

As for the teaching methodology, the reader-response model emphasizes talk: talk is regarded as a vital part of the learning process (Sharp, 1989). The teacher's task is to provide the environment for a "learning talk" and plan a series of varied experiences for students to participate in. Thus the teaching activities centred on a culture-aware approach may include the following:

1. Discussion: In a class of over 15 students, small-group discussion is perhaps the best means to increase peer talk. The subjects of the talk can be open-ended questions, generally of the *what* or *why* type such as "What would you have done if you had been . . ." to explore the range of alternatives and meanings for students under the circumstance similar to that of the text. They can also be student-generated statements which express a view or a judgment for students of the other groups to brainstorm responses. In these activities, students may observe and compare intracultural variations, identifying in their responses those which are personal, those which belong to a sub-culture, and those which characteristically feature their native culture. Students may experience the variety and complexity of the manifestations of a culture and thus learn to be more careful with stereotypic qualifications of or generalizations about a foreign culture.

Students can also be asked to comment on the opinions of some contemporary critics, to compare the perception of a Lit1 reader (the critics) and that of a Lit2 reader (the students), to discover the role the text assumes for its reader, and to

explore the contemporary perspectives and values. Students should be encouraged to feel free in criticizing the author's intentions and the critics' text and in creating their own. Nostrand (1966: 6) borrowed the term perspectivism from Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* to describe the new perspectives that another culture may bring, which this culture cannot have on itself. In a cross-cultural learning experience, the learner has to penetrate the foreign mentality, but he has also to be aware of the fact that, as an outsider, he can be more objective. Perspectivism also encourages students' self-confidence in independent thinking.

After the discussion, a written report has to be completed and handed in to the teacher. The purpose of the report is for students to clarify in words the ambiguity of some verbal expressions, and it also helps save time for the ensuing open-class discussion. The report may also contains questions raised during the group discussion. After perusing the reports, the teacher selects from them some views for the whole class to meaning-negotiate. Students express and share within an atmosphere of mutual respect. Different views are raised for discussion, not for correction, for what really counts in a cross-cultural learning experience is self-comprehension and self-adjustment. The teacher has to help students distinguish between professed and actual values, conscious and unconscious behavior, and what is usual (recurrent) and what is unusual cultural phenomena (Nostrand: 14).

2. Roleplay: Roleplay can animate the literary work, making students find out what it means to act like members of another culture in various situations. Students may play part of an episode by assuming the personae of the text characters to experience their feelings and conflicts. Or students may play the native way of handling a problem situation (McGroarty and Galvan, 1985: 88). Or they may play native reporters interviewing the main characters of the text, also played by the students (Harper: 406). While some students are roleplaying, some other students act as observer-commentators. The observer-commentators may observe in the first type of roleplay the talking manner and kinetics of the actors and comment on the way the performance produces an interpretation of the text. The observers of the second type of acting observe and report on the actors' realization of the native culture as well as their personal qualities while highlighting a cultural contrast to enhance cultural awareness. The observers may observe in the third type of roleplay the cross-cultural communiction between the interviewers and the interviewees. The observers' observation and commentary will be met with responses from the actors, the other students, and the teacher.

3. Interview: Students interview their friends (including the natives of the target culture) or family members on a controversial theme of the text and bring to the class the written or taped record of the interview. The interviewee's background information such as nationality, place of birth, age, profession, and the length of staying abroad or in this country has to be included. Interview presents views of an idea of people of different backgrounds, extending the cross-cultural experience outside the classroom. When the interviewee is a native of the target culture, he may blow to the class some contemporary cultural messages. Besides the oral or written report, the interview group can present to the class a panel discussion to discuss the hypothesis or assumption they established from the materials they have collected. There will be challenges from the teacher and the rest of the class.

4. Others: A comparison of the Lit2 text with a native text on the same topic may serve to illustrate the cultural and aesthetic choices made by the author. Filmed versions of the text are also very helpful in facilitating appreciation and understanding of the text: students can see with their own eyes the dress, food, furniture, street scenes, etc. of the foreign life, not to mention the facial expression, gesture, and movement of the characters. If the students have roleplayed these characters, they would take more careful notice of the nuances of difference. But of course the teacher has to inform students the special relation between a text and its filmed version. Besides films, pictures are also good teaching aids. When my students saw the picture of North Richmond Street after they read James Joyce's "Araby," they were surprised at the width of the street. And a few pictures of San Francisco Bridge, San Francisco Bay, and San Francisco park are quite useful in helping students visualize the scene of Cathy's self-therapy in "Gift of Grass."

Students will also benefit from pre-reading activities which promote self-understanding and understanding of the text. Before reading William Carlos Williams' "The Use of Force," my students tried to remember what had made them angry when they were a little boy or a little girl. They wrote the answers on the blackboard and voted for the most provoking causes, before they started to get into the story of a maddened little girl who fights violently with an also furious doctor in a war to protect her secret. Or students may brainstorm conceptual associations for a term like "industry" before they go on to appreciate the ironical handling of the maxim "Industry is rewarded and giddiness punished" by Somerset Maugham in his "The Ant and the Grasshopper." The famous practice of journal writing also contributes (Rentz, 1992).

In the class students may be asked to use the target language only or they

may be allowed to use a mixture of the target language and their native language to facilitate communication, depending on their language proficiency level and the language objectives of each individual class.

IV

Many Lit2 teachers don't like to teach culture. One of the reasons is that they fear that they don't know enough about it and that they cannot provide valid answers to some of students' questions. But the teacher's proper role, according to Seelye (1984), is not to impart cultural data or cultural facts, but to help students attain the skills that are necessary to make sense out of the facts they themselves discover in their communication with the target culture. Seelye points out that the objectives that are to be achieved for cross-cultural understanding involve processes rather than facts, because facts are in a constant state of flux: they may not hold true across time and location; besides, facts themselves are meaningless until interpreted.

The process skills suggested by Galloway (1984) in her framework for building cultural understanding include inferencing skills which aim to capture the cultural frame of reference at several levels of communication, interpretative skills which focus on processes such as withholding judgment and evaluation based on one's own standards, learning to question, and learning to observe, and comprehension skills which encompass analysis, hypothesis formation, testing, and tolerance of ambiguity. It's quite clear to a Lit2 teacher that these skills are skills of critical thinking which a literature class aims to develop in students. A Lit2 teacher does not have to be a culture expert or something of an anthropologist; he doesn't have to amass an abundance of cultural facts or historical data. For the more important is process. As for students' questions, sometimes the teacher can find causal explanations, sometimes the case in point is just an example of a regularity or habit, and sometimes we just don't know the answer. The teacher's admitting to not knowing surpasses any irresponsible conjecture or generalization. For a honest admitting to present ignorance leaves room for future enlightenment.

Generally speaking, a Lit2 teacher's self-improvement for the purpose of cultural instruction may stem from the following activities: participation in teaching conferences, reading news and magazines about or from the country of the target culture, watching TV and movies about or from that cultural area, travel to that country, correspondence with its people, etc. (Huang, 1993). Relevant materials

about Lit2 teaching and cultural teaching can be found in the library. The references at the end of this article can also help.

This article starts with culture and language and moves from foreign language teaching to foreign literature teaching. Advocating a culture-aware approach to the teaching of foreign literature, it has discussed the cross-cultural learning experience that the reading of foreign literature can offer and proposed the environment and ways to make such an experience accessible to Lit2 students, with the wish to benefit both Lit2 teachers and students in their teaching/learning a Lit2 text.

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