Teaching Literature as Language. A critical examination of linguistic approaches to the teaching of literature to second and foreign language learners.

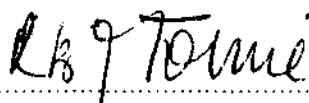by Regine Fourie.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

The author hereby declares that the contents of this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, are her own work and that the thesis has not been submitted simultaneously, or at any other time, for another degree.

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Abstract.

As its title suggests, this dissertation examines second/foreign language literature teaching (and learning) with an emphasis on linguistic approaches to the study of literature. The approaches referred to are those which theorise language use – this includes literary texts – as a communicative context, that is, functional grammar and critical discourse analysis.

The dissertation argues for the inclusion of literary texts in second/foreign language teaching and learning on the grounds that, at higher education level, the study of literature can develop in students important knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes which are necessary both for their (the students') functioning in a multi-cultural society, and for the development of a critical civil society, as outlined in current policy documents relating to the transformation of the South African higher education system.

The dissertation consists of two distinct parts: a theoretical section, followed by a practical application. In the theoretical section, a rationale is developed for the inclusion of second/foreign language literature. The following critical questions are asked:

1.   What place do second/foreign language literary studies have in the present higher education context? – This question is explored against the background of present higher education policy.

2.   What place could, or perhaps should, second/foreign language literary studies have, or rather, which knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes can be taught using them? – Here, theories of understanding (Gadamer and Habermas), as well as their bearing on language learning and the development of critical thought, are discussed.

3.   Which theories of language and discourse can be used to develop the critical understanding, interpretation and communication skills that are required in society? – The goal of this exploration is to gauge which theories best address the requirement of higher education to produce criticality.

To round the dissertation off, an attempt is then made to apply the considerations developed in 1 - 3 in a concrete classroom situation. For this purpose, a teaching and learning project that took place in the second semester of 2000, is described, and its results evaluated and discussed, against the background of what is presently required of higher education in terms of its contribution to society.

Contents

Introduction.

The questions and concerns that led to this research relate to higher education in general, and to the discipline in which I practise, German Studies, in particular. My immediate concern is the state in which the foreign language disciplines find themselves. They are under subscribed, some languages more than others, which does not augur well for their continued existence. This may be the reason for the development, at the same time, of more service and career oriented curricula, including courses that relate to, say, tourism and business. In the process foreign language literary studies seem to be assigned to second place, if not dropped altogether. In my own discipline, the teaching and learning of literature has been reduced substantially; where it once occupied pride of place, it is now one option among others.

There are many good grounds for this development, but one of the main reasons seems to be that, in the attempt to do justice to the context within which the discipline is taught, the discipline itself changed from *Germanistik* to German as a Foreign Language (GFL). *Germanistik* for example presupposes both mother-tongue language competencies, and a good grounding in German literature at the very least, and as such its orientation is not very different from that of *Germanistik* as taught at German universities, viz. as a rule, German philology, linguistics and the history of German literature. GFL on the other hand cannot rest on these assumptions. for obvious reasons. Here the tendency has been to teach the language as a tool for everyday communication; beginners for instance are taught what to say in various life situations. Therefore the emphasis is, at this stage, on what is considered to be useful, both in speech and in writing, and if literary texts feature, they do so in a supportive function for communicative language learning, in much the same way as does the grammar. Building upon this background, it is small wonder that students

struggle when they are introduced to the altogether different discourse of literary studies in the higher levels.

However, it is not my intention to outline the history of German Studies in South Africa, nor to describe what is done in foreign language classes. It is rather to examine the thinking that underlies the specific practices of the discipline, and the way these relate to the context in which the discipline is taught and learned, and, at the same time, how this context influences those practices.

In order to contextualise this study, then, I start in Chapter 1 with a discussion of the most important higher education policy document to have been published in recent years, the *White Paper on Higher Education Transformation* (1997). In my discussion I concentrate on those aspects of the *White Paper*'s vision which seem to me to have a particular impact on the Arts and Humanities, including the foreign language disciplines, viz. globalisation and development on the hand, and social responsibility on the other. That these aspects are contested and are seen to constitute a dichotomy, becomes clear when the *White Paper* is examined against the background both of the discussion papers emanating from it, and of subsequent policy documents building on it. Among the latter, I find the report *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (June 2000) – despite its controversial nature in some areas – to be the most explicit with regard to the responsibility of higher education to society, in that it spells out the role higher education can and should play in the development of democratic ideals. I find that it is in this area, that the foreign language and literature disciplines can contribute towards the realisation higher education's responsibility to society.

In Chapter 2, I take the contextualisation to another level. Here the focus is on the theories that seem to me to underlie the vision for a transformed higher education, as presented in the discussed policy documents. At the same time, the role of second and third/foreign language learning and teaching in the attainment of that vision is examined more closely, basing my argument on Gadamer's notion of dialogue and consensus, and on Habermas's critique of Gadamer. The point I try to make here, is that the openness to, and the toleration of difference are not sufficient to bring about a transformation towards the kind of critical civil society advocated by the *White Paper* and other policy documents; but that a critical theory of society, such as that developed by Habermas, is a necessary precondition for the transformation to proceed. My contention is that 'difference' as represented by a second or third language, along with its culture and traditions, can contribute in an important way to this process.

A critical theory of society needs a critical theory of language, because language plays a predominant role in the kind of interactions and transactions that make up society. This is the content of Chapter 3, where I examine the way language can be seen from a social-theoretical perspective, before reviewing theories of discourse, that is language-in-use by agents in specific socio-cultural and historical situations. I call this chapter a 'critical review' because firstly I hold theories of discourse against a broader social framework, and secondly because I attempt to tease out those aspects of the discourse theories which I think can be usefully applied in second and foreign language literary studies. That is, an attempt is made to gauge the reach and effectiveness of discourse theories (of literature) against the philosophical argument developed in the previous chapter.

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The classroom application follows in the last chapter, where I describe, evaluate and discuss a project undertaken with students of German literature. Here I find that theory and practice do not always coincide, for reasons that will become apparent. However, in the concluding reflections, where I revisit the thoughts that were developed in the body of this dissertation, I find that even a partially successful project can be interpreted positively in the light of larger concerns relating both to higher education and to the teaching and learning that took place in the classroom.

It is in the nature of the type of research undertaken here, that research results cannot be seen as generalisable or final. The paradigm that informs this research is that of critical hermeneutics, that is a process of (self-)reflection and evaluation within a framework of social values. More explicitly formulated, I hold my own experiences, thinking and values against what I find in the larger context of higher education as it is embedded in society, which generates new experiences, thoughts and values, and so forth: it is the process that is important, and it continues as the context changes. The process itself is dialogical, one of question and answer mainly between theories, but also between theory and practice.

The preponderance of theoretical concerns in this dissertation may be explained with reference to my own academic background, which is first and foremost *Germanistik*. As a discpline it may orient itself towards its home country, but because of that country's fraught history, critical reflection on the philosophies that inform its practices are an integral part of its teaching and learning. This critical reflection becomes all the more important in a 'foreign' context, where it becomes a critical dialogue between cultures and traditions. GFL has a similar agenda, but because of its more immediate concerns, that is, teaching learners to become conversant in the language, some of the critical momentum is usually lost. My hope is that by emphasising literature

as an integral part of the study of a language and its culture, some of that momentum may be regained.

A final consideration at this stage concerns the term 'literature'. I am aware that the term is used here as though it were an uncontested label for a body of texts with circumscribed, commonsense characteristics, whereas the only clarity about the term is that it is notoriously difficult to define. I do not attempt a definition as to the 'essence' of literature at any stage in this research, but I do take one of its characteristics to be that it is fictional. This in itself is an inadequate description (see Eagleton 1983: *Introduction: What is Literature?*, 1-16), and it does not begin to address the relationship that may or may not exist between the fictional and the factual, nor the relationship between literature and the context within it is produced and received. The tag 'fictional' is used simply to indicate that literature (usually) does not have an instrumental purpose. Be that as it may, the decision not to think about 'what is literature' could be seen to undermine the critical project that constitutes this research, since 'what it is' appears to rest on unreflected commonsense assumptions. But that is not the case here. If literature is treated as discourse, as I attempt to do, it becomes clear that the texts are constructed by and for agents in very specific contexts, and this opens up a space for critique. This applies to so-called canonical literature as much as to those texts which are not sanctioned by status, so to speak. Besides, I suspect that for students of foreign language literature, these texts probably appear as 'other', notwithstanding their canonical status. Of course this does not mean that any texts can be chosen for study; on the contrary, selections must be made with care, always bearing in mind the learners and their contexts. The literary texts that were discussed in the classroom project described in this dissertation, as well as the reasons for their choice, are outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 1.

The present context of higher education in South Africa.

Higher Education institutions in South Africa are currently engaged in the process of transforming from a system that was characterised by gross inequalities in funding and accessibility, to a more balanced system that has as its broad mission redress and equity. At the same time the transformation project is geared towards making South African higher education more competitive in a global sense, taking cognisance of new knowledge paradigms which in turn underline the necessity of extensive curricular reforms.

The Education White Paper 3: a Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997)[1] spells out what needs to be done in order to fulfil both the national imperatives of equity and redress, and the global one of competitiveness. In WP 1.1, which deals with the "policy challenges of transformation, reconstruction and development" it is stated that the "national agenda ["of South Africa's political, social, and economic transition"] is being pursued within a distinctive set of pressures and demands characteristic of the late twentieth century, often typified as globalisation". (WP: 1.7). It is further maintained, that "higher education must provide education and training to develop skills and innovations necessary for national development and successful participation in the global economy". (WP: 1.11)

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[1] Quoted henceforth as WP.

Research and discussion on the issues of globalisation and its possible effects on (higher) education seem divided[2]. Some scholars present the WP's dual goal of national reconstruction and redress, and meeting the demands of the global economy (development) as conflicting in the sense that globalisation is understood to pose a threat to reconstruction and redress; others argue strongly for globalisation, under the probable assumption that being part of the global economy will bring benefits for those previously disadvantaged, thus, ideally, being at the same time the motor of reconstruction and redress.

Two scholars who argue strongly for globalisation, though from different premises, are Carnoy (1998) and Pretorius (1998). Carnoy, whose paper was presented at a seminar hosted jointly by the Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), contends that globalisation was a fact of life, and that developing countries needed to take cognisance of this fact if they wanted to benefit from what he calls "innovation rents" (1). Since the "newly transformed world economy" depends heavily "on knowledge and information applied to production, and this knowledge is increasingly science-based" (2), nation states on a development track have embraced this science base and imported the relevant information-based technology in order to remain competitive. This has meant at the same time giving up "aggressive strategies of national competitiveness", which may be "ultimately self-defeating [...] in a new and qualitatively different world-economic context". (4) The "losers", as he calls them, are those countries "far behind in the change process"; in this category he mentions amongst others, Brazil. The countries most at risk however are "the low-income, predominantly agricultural economies of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, [which are] more outside the world

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2 See the CHET (1998) debates on higher education transformation (http://www.chet.org.za/debates/), to be discussed below.

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development process than in the past". (5) Taking the "Asian Tigers" as an example of global

economic success, Carnoy lists three elements that in his view have contributed to this success.

They are: 1) strict state control on labour, so that a "disciplined labour force" paid low wages by

international standards is readily available; 2) large investments in education, and mass education,

and 3) a focus on science and technology "throughout the economy" which has guaranteed co-

operation and encouraged funding from private industry. (7)

Pretorius (1998) on the other hand starts with the South African context, specifically with the

need to prepare teachers "for the democratic era". (Ibid.: 502) However, what Pretorius considers

even more important, is that teachers be brought in line with the demands of the modern (sc.

globalised) economy. The thinking, though not explicitly stated, is again that economic upliftment

will effect the necessary redress, equity and democracy. A "dynamic teacher corps" would include

teachers who "are informed regarding the roles of business and industry in the provision of

education [etc.]", who have a "strong science and technology", "management" and "international

orientation". (503-504) The latter includes "knowledge in a modern foreign language". (504)

Pretorius states explicitly that his "focus has been on the global context", even though he admits

that in addition to "keeping abreast of world trends", the establishment of a "just and equitable

[education] system" would be as important. (505) But the fact that he does not address the latter

in more detail (if at all), opens him up to possible criticism from the endogenists/Africanists and

those with a liberal democratic agenda.

The reactions to Carnoy's 1998 CHET paper show the direction criticisms of Science-

Engineering-Technology (SET-)based development and the concomitant ideal of a global

economy can take. I will start off, however, not with educationists' views, but with those of an

economist with inside knowledge of globalisation as well as its possible negative impact on those countries (mainly in Africa) which Carnoy (1998) describes as not benefitting from global economic trends. Christian Comeliau, who was once a lecturer in the former central African state of Zaire, starts off his 1997 paper with the important observation that globalisation does not merely imply global economic changes, but that a whole system of other developments follow from it:

> [...] the global system encourages the dissemination of what we might call *a developmental model*. This consists of: habits of consumption and forms of production; ways of life, institutions and criteria for social success; ideologies, cultural references and even forms of political organization. The power relations ensure the very real domination of the development model over all others and thus this 'globalized' world system tends to encourage the homogenization of society and civilization, even though it is clear that social groups and societies react in each case in their own particular way. (Comeliau 1997: 30; italics original.)

Thus, while globalisation might bring considerable benefits (see ibid.), Comeliau points out that "this process [of globalisation] also clearly has harmful results: growing inequality, marginalization, exclusion and even increasing poverty of hundreds of millions of people [...]." (ibid.: 31)

Those responding to Carnoy's (1998) paper echo Comeliau's concerns by implication. Badat (1998) for instance sees a tension between reconstruction and development as spelled out by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) on the one hand (see Badat 1998 for an outline), and the challenges of globalisation on the other[3], and doubts whether "human capital formation in the natural science, technology and engineering fields in higher education will have [the desired] transformation effects [...]". (Badat 1998, "Issues" point 4.) Badat's reasoning is that

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[3]Kraak (1998), in his summary of the discussions following Carnoy's presentation, formulates the tension as that between development and equity (see 2.2 of his paper).

the "appropriate economic conditions" for employing this "human capital" are absent. (see ibid.)

By the same token the question arose concerning the role of the social sciences, which, it was felt,

Carnoy had either ignored or not stressed enough. This applies to the present situation of the arts

and culture fields as well. According to some responses, "Carnoy's usage of the term 'science' [...]

appeared to privilege the natural sciences at the expense of the Social Sciences". (Kraak 1998:

3.1) However, whereas Carnoy pointed out in the discussion following his presentation that the

natural sciences were not privileged, and that innovations were to some extent based on processes

"driven by new work organisation and human behavioural theories", Kraak makes the point that

"globalisation discourse" was seriously lacking in "radical social critique" (Ibid.: 3.1), and Barnett

(1993) expresses similar concerns when he quotes Ben Aggar: "'the more we rely on canned

computer knowledge and culture, the less we can think, speak and write critically about social

totality'." (Ibid.: 14)

What then of arts and culture? The purported lack of "radical social critique" within theories of

social science used to drive the innovations necessary for competitiveness in the global economy

does address, though *e negativo*, the communicative skills listed in South African Qualifications

Authority's (SAQA) critical outcomes[4], but not particularly those pertaining to the arts and culture

field. One might, in Carnoy's terms, ask: what exactly constitutes "new knowledge" - indeed,

knowledge *per se*? Apart from knowledge having an instrumental function - it is *used* to attain

certain goals - the connection to arts and culture seems tenuous. How can fictional literature, to

take an example, be considered knowledge at all, given its *fictional* rather than factual nature?

The very absence of their mention in globalisation discourse makes one suspect that the

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[4] According to SAQA regulations, graduates have to have attained a set of generic learning outcomes which are to ensure their employability.

assumption underlying Carnoy's argument is indeed that science, engineering and technology are factual[5], and by extension natural, as opposed to cultural, and this in itself constitutes a privileging which needs to be theorised.

The drafters of the WP appear to have been well aware of the dichotomous demands made on higher education[6]. The paper itself proposes a dialectical interdependence between reconstruction and development, and meeting the demands of the globalised economy, stating that the "policy challenge is to ensure that we engage critically and creatively with global imperatives *as we determine our national and regional goals and priorities*". (WP 1997: 1.8. Italics added.) More specifically (if negatively) and in connection with higher education it states in its criticism of the "current state of higher education":

> There is a chronic mismatch between the output of higher education and the needs of a modernising economy. In particular, there is a shortage of highly trained graduates in fields such as science, engineering and technology (largely as a result of discriminatory practices that have limited the access of blacks and women students), and this has been detrimental to *social and economic* development. (Ibid., "Needs and Challenges" 1.4. Italics added.)

The argument - and that constitutes the challenge which higher education faces - is that a better match between "output" and "needs" would fulfil the demands of both reconstruction and development. The WP is clear on higher education's duty to both the individual and society, and their place in the larger global context: if social and economic needs are met nationally, the development towards global competitiveness, in all spheres, but particularly in the economic,

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[5] See also Barnett (1993: 14) who suggests that "higher education has been bewitched by a sense that real knowledge is scientific knowledge."

[6] See for instance Cloete's & Muller's (1998b) outline of its history, which is to be referred to in more detail below.

should follow. Translated into the transformation of higher education institutions, this by no means implies "a shift in emphasis in institutional plans towards SET" (DoE 1999: 5[7]) at the cost of the Human and Social Sciences and the Arts which are seen to "have a declining value as academic currency", even though "present imbalances" in SET provision need to be corrected. This would be a "literal and narrow" interpretation of the WP. (DoE 1999: ibid.)

However, it is easy to see how such narrow interpretations could have occurred. Not only is development towards global competitiveness linked to SET capacity (see for example Carnoy 1998 and Pretorius 1998), but the WP itself seems to stress skills development in those fields, so that the challenges of globalisation appear to be the main driving force behind transformation. For instance, whereas only one of the four purposes of higher education, as outlined in the WP, relates specifically to the provision of labour and the benefits of a "modern economy", – the others being concerned with individual development, societal needs, and the creation and sharing of knowledge (research) (WP: 1.3), the section on the "challenges of transformation, reconstruction and development" dwells almost exclusively on the impact of globalisation and its concomitant effect on the South African economy as "integrating itself into the competitive arena of international production and finance". (WP: 1.9) In short: "higher education has to be internally structured to face the challenge of globalisation". (WP: 1.11)

The requirements of higher education transformation as summarised in the WP bear this out. These are: "increased and broadened access", governance, and "responsiveness to societal needs". (WP: 1.13) It is the latter requirement that is most central to the restructuring of what is taught

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[7] The DoE was responding here to the three-year rolling plans (Phase I) submitted by higher education institutions.

at higher education institutions, and how it is taught, and it is not surprising that this is the most contested area of the transformation effort, since it deals with the curriculum. Two questions immediately arise from this requirement: 1) precisely what are these societal needs and interests, and 2) who decides what these needs and interests should be? The WP's answer to such problems bears the traces of contestation which can be described briefly as that between (development as a condition of) globalisation and Africanisation/endogenisation. Cloete & Muller(1998a :1) note that the "master binary code of post-colonial discourse" is the starkly polarised opposition between "'the traditional African environment' and 'the modern Western sector'". (Ibid.) Institutions of higher education belong to this "Western sector", and consequently it is "Africa's higher educational malaise" that "African universities, then, are said neither to serve nor to reflect their milieu" (ibid.: 1-2) because in a sense they are neither fish nor fowl, but "irredeemably 'other' to the colonial [Western] centre, sometimes 'behind', sometimes genetically 'different'". This also means that they are not part of the "global scene as one of increasing multilateral networks and interdependencies". (Ibid.: 1) It is the need both to "reflect" and to "serve" then, that informs the vision of the WP, but it is particularly the requirement that higher education should "serve" that may have been the root cause of the literal interpretations, in favour of SET, mentioned above.

A brief examination of the issues that informed the NCHE report of 1996, on which the Draft Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation, and the subsequent White Paper version of 1997 were based, can highlight the main areas of contestation. This is done by Cloete & Muller (1998b)[8] who summarise the tensions within the NCHE which existed from the outset, as those "between equity and development". (Cloete & Muller 1998b:1) The report itself, while, according

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[8] See particularly the section on "Globalised Policy Formation" for the procedures and methods used (Cloete & Muller 1998b).

to Cloete & Muller (1998d), acclaimed internationally "as one of the best tertiary education policy documents ever" (quoted ibid.: 1), met with resistence in South Africa for reasons such as its purported failure to address issues precisely of equity and redress (see ibid.). Cloete & Muller however describe the NCHE's transformation framework as follows:

> [...] it should be obvious that the new framework and associated proposals are eminently contemporary – a combination of international 'best practice'. It incorporates the latest features of European and Australian 'steering through planning and incentives within a framework of autonomy with accountability', a US approach to affirmative action, equity access and programme and student diversification, the latest European Union and US policies for expansion, with flexible, generic skills, recognition of prior learning and life-long learning as prominent curricular features. The proposed new outcomes based national higher education qualification system is similar to that of New Zealand, which is regarded as the most ambitious in the world. Going beyond existing models co-operative governance combines modern co-operative governance practices with experiences from South Africa and other parts of Africa to propose a novel synthesis. (Cloete & Muller 1998d: 2)

Still, one could argue that the 'best practice' described is in the final effect informed by Western concepts and principles: both the education systems and the experts mentioned are based largely in Western or westernised countries. Indeed, some of the local stakeholders criticised the little "consideration given to African, Latin American and Asian models of higher education" (see Cloete & Muller 1998d: 1), and that the NCHE "had based its thinking on Western values of self interest instead of African values of community". (Quoted ibid.: 2)

In response to these criticisms one could however respond, as do Cloete & Muller, that one of the cornerstones of the transformation process, viz. greater responsiveness to societal needs and interests, "would hopefully lead to the incorporation of perspectives and values of previously silenced groups into the educational and cognitive culture of institutions". (Cloete & Muller 1998c: 2) But it still begs the question as to how this is to be achieved, especially if development is aligned to globalisation.

The subsequent WP is not quite as insistent that the globalisation / development / SET option is the only way to bring about the necessary transformation in higher education, although clearly that option has an important place. An analysis of its "Vision and Principles" for instance reveals that redress and equity are of prime importance, and with these, the knowledge and skills, one could argue, other than those gained through SET (see below). The WP's vision of a transformed higher education system is informed by "government's broader view of a future where all South Africans can enjoy an improved and sustainable quality of life, participate in a growing economy and share a democratic culture." (WP: 1.15) In order to achieve this the higher education system is to have a fourfold function, viz. providing equity of access, responding to market needs, fostering ideals of tolerance and non-discrimination with regard to race and gender while at the same time developing creative and critical thinking skills, and "advancing all forms of knowledge and scholarship" within a national and a global context. (WP: 1.14) This represents a clear attempt at balancing the demands of equity / redress and development, with the recognition that development towards globalisation and all it entails can only take place when past imbalances and wrongs have been corrected. This becomes evident in the proposed goals for higher education transformation both on the national and institutional level, all of which focus on local *and* national needs and contexts (see WP: 1.26-1.28), thus requiring higher education both to serve *and* to reflect society.

But again the question concerning the position of the Arts and Humanities in the transforming higher education system needs to be raised. The WP of 1997 planned for mass education; but by 2000 the predicted expansion of the public higher education system had not materialised. Concern is being expressed both at the declining number of enrolments at public institutions, and at the unchecked growth of private and trans-national higher education institutions (see Asmal 1999, priority 8). As announced by the Minister of Education (see ibid.) a Size and Shape Task Team

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has reported to the Minister. In its discussion document[9] the Minister's (Asmal 1999) concerns are repeated with regard to "systemic dysfunction". Some of the "most notable characteristics of such dysfunction [...]" are amongst others the "very serious decline in the rate of enrolment of new entrants into higher education as a whole"; unsatisfactory through-put rates; the "largely unregulated growth of the provision of private higher education [which] has had profound effects on the public higher education system", and the "skewed racial and gender distribution of students in the various fields of study". (SSTT 2000:3)

It is evident that the desired and required transformation has not yet taken place, or taken place as was envisaged. However, the recommendations for further transformation, and consequently rationalisation of the higher education system do not suggest that the vision of the White Paper is obsolete; in the CHE discussion document particular reference is made to it, underlining this vision:

> The national system must respond to the requirements of a society emerging from a long history of structural inequality and underdevelopment. It must respond as best it can to the challenges of social, economic and cultural development and encompass development across a broad range of areas of knowledge. Higher education's primary role is to develop the thinking and intellectual capabilities of our society and through such development to address and resolve the range of economic [...], social, cultural, political and other challenges faced by society as a whole. (SSTT 2000: 3-4)

One area that is particularly affected by the current malaise of declining student numbers is that of culture and language, most specifically modern foreign languages. If the implication of the point quoted above is that the distribution of students is skewed *in favour* of the Humanities, then it certainly does not hold true of languages in general, with the exception perhaps of English, and certainly not for the foreign languages in particular. However the White Paper, with all its stress

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[9] quoted as SSTT (2000).

on marketable and competitive qualifications, does recognise the importance of languages, albeit more by implication than by direct statement.

What follows is an interpretation of the White Paper's vision with reference to the place it accords to Arts and the Humanities in higher education. They are mentioned none too often as disciplines (as opposed to science, engineering, technology and information technology), but they clearly play an important part in the higher education project. This is evident from the following general considerations: firstly, the Humanities and particularly the Arts have an obvious place in higher education if one of its roles is that of "promoting the language-based arts" (WP 2.79) and that of preparing language professionals such as teachers, interpreters and translators "to serve the needs of our multilingual society" and "for effective linguistic communication with the rest of Africa and the world in the fields of culture, diplomacy, science and business". (ibid.) But one may argue that language is here understood largely as an instrument: it is to *serve* society and to be *used* in various fields, and consequently that the language-based *arts* (i.e. literature) should take second place to such useful skills as for instance business and science communication (in English as the language both of business and of science). Secondly however, according to the White Paper higher education also has an obligation to "lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests", and to "strengthen the democratic ethos, the sense of common citizenship and commitment to a common good". (WP 1.4; see also 1.14) These particular "needs and challenges" could at first sight be seen to constitute an antithesis with respect to larger societal needs, that is, the commitment to a common good might fly in the face of the kind of critical activities – including those aimed at the state – that universities are expected to foster. But as part of the reconstruction and development programme for higher education, the White Paper proposes a balance in that the

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higher education institutions have the obligation to produce "knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills", who at the same time are "socially responsible and conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social agenda". (WP 1.12) It is in this education towards being able to function in a "critical civil society", towards engagement in "public debate", the "tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests" (1.4) that the study of languages, foreign and indigenous, and particularly their literatures have an important, if not crucial, role to play.

Two recent articles by colleagues at the University of Cape Town are concerned with this topic. Both ask the "untimely" and "difficult" questions, *What is and to What End Do We Study Literature at a University* (Horn 1999) and *Why European Culture is Studied in Democratic South Africa.* (Noyes 1999) Both articles express concern at the notion that knowledge should be marketable and quantifiable (Noyes 1999: 207; Horn 1999: 81, 83), and by implication become obsolete when its economic advantages are no longer obvious, since education and its institutions could easily be "transformed into a service industry subordinated to the dictates of the market". (Horn 1999: 85)[10] Horn puts it succinctly when he laments the reduction of knowledge and education "to a mere matter of information" (ibid. 83) as opposed to "knowledge about ourselves, about our ways of thinking and speaking, about our individual existence which is also always a social existence". (ibid. 81) But whereas Horn traces the utilitarian turn of universities back to the

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[10] See also Barnett (1993: 42) who expresses similar concerns when he writes: "[...] we use phrases like 'the information society' and 'the knowledge society'. We do not hear of 'the understanding society' or 'the wise society'. It is of the essence of modern society with its interest in data and information. Nor is this a matter of awkward terminology. Data and information, too, we may note, can be stored, bought and sold in the market economy. [...] Understanding and wisdom cannot so easily be traded. In a higher education system driven towards the market, universities come readily, if unwittingly, to adopt such an emasculated epistemology."

19th century[11] and even considers the possibility that just as happened to the natural sciences in Renaissance times, "the human sciences must [now] find a place outside the universities" (Horn 1999:87). Noyes (1999) situates the Humanities squarely in the present context of higher education. He refers particularly to the study of European culture – encompassing of course those disciplines which are at present under-subscribed in terms of student enrolment. The implication is that it would be a pity if these disciplines were to disappear from university curricula altogether since, even if they bear the stigma of colonial history, they also represent a critical tradition that can deal with precisely the colonial representations and colonising tendencies that seem to inhere in that culture. (Noyes 1999:209) Along with this self-reflexivity Noyes points out that contrary to expectation modern foreign languages – he uses the example of German – do indeed possess marketability in Africa (ibid.) and he lists three advantages that graduates of German, and of course the languages and literature in general, might have: 1) they are eminently employable because of their "flexibility and originality of thought, critical thinking and the ability to express [themselves] and communicate"; 2) there is a world-wide "literature and literature-related industry [...] estimated at over $80 billion per annum", and 3) they have the opportunity "to try out modes and forms of knowledge that are too risky for immediate translation into technology, but whose potential for technological realisation has been proven time and again"[12]. (Noyes 1999: 210)[13]

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[11] Horn's examples are the German philosophers Schopenhauer and Nietzsche who both have scathing things to say about the university 'industry' of their times. See Horn 1999.

[12] In a private communication, Noyes explains this as follows: "What I had in mind [...] was a[n] [...] idea about the avant-garde in art. [...] the idea is coloured by [Adorno's] claims that the avant-garde are exercising a mode of thought that is a real & viable alternative to instrumental reason. If it's true [...] then it should be possible to identify ways of looking at the world in basically any avant-garde [...] writing that do not fit in with what technology claims to do." (Quoted with the author's permission.)

[13] Barnett (1993: 113) finds that "critical thinking skills" such as those mentioned by Noyes (1999) are useful in the workplace, but has reservations concerning the term 'critical thinking skills' which he suggests is a contradiction in terms (see. ibid.: 114). He maintains in

Aside from the usefulness of these disciplines students who learn them can develop attitudes and values which reflect precisely those critical, civic and democratic skills mentioned by the White Paper. The following list is taken from a document by the Welsh Department of Education and Science, detailing the aims of learning a modern foreign language:

> to develop the ability to use language effectively for purposes of practical communication;
> to form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;
> to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken;
> to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
> to provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation;
> to encourage positive attitudes to foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;
> to promote learning of skills of more general application (eg. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences);
> to develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own culture. (Quoted in Martin & Miller 1999:67)

These items refer to secondary education but are applicable to higher education also, in that, as the White Paper expresses it, higher education has the obligation "to meet national and regional needs in social, cultural and economic development". (WP 1.27 no. 3) This general development again might seem to imply that English and the regional indigenous language should enjoy priority, for the obvious reasons of usefulness (English) and regional culture; it might seem enough to study them since they cover one of the most important goals of an equitable and transformed higher education system. However, if, as Noyes (1999) observes, "the South African universities, like society in general, are so deeply marked – some would say scarred – by European configurations of power and knowledge, that a meaningful transformation of the universities will only be possible through a critical encounter with these configurations" (Noyes

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addition that critical thought in the workplace has instrumental, operational and strategic function (see ibid.). Cf. also my discussion above, concerning the WP's implicit functional and instrumental approach to language.

1999:208), then ex-colonial foreign languages and their literatures will have to remain part of the equation.

In the follow-up to SSTT (2000), the Council for Higher Education (CHE) has produced a more comprehensive report, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the Equity, Quality and Social Imperatives of South Africa in the 21st Century* (June 2000).[14] The report reiterates its concerns about the present state of higher education in South Africa, expands them and ends with a series of concrete proposals that are intended to set the parameters for an overhauled higher education system[15].

What is most pertinent for my project is that notions implied, or at least mentioned rather briefly in the WP (so that have they the character of assumptions rather than fully reflected and developed thoughts), are now given a more comprehensive treatment. I am referring in particular to the second chapter of the report, titled "The Case for Higher Education: Democracy, Knowledge and Skills". (*New Landscape* 2000: 16-20) The introduction of this explicit thinking on the ideological (in the broadest sense) function of higher education in *society*, rather than on its bearing in the economy, as was the tendency of the WP, was deemed necessary since it was felt "that in the public domain the contribution of higher education is not self-evident". (Ibid.: 15)

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[14] Quoted in my text as *New Landscape* (2000).

[15] SSTT and *New Landscape* (2000) in turn were followed by the (final) *National Plan for Higher Education* (February 2001) which reiterates many of the concerns raised in both SSTT and *New Landscape* (2000), so that, as an example, the desired shift in enrolments between the larger discipline groups, from the current 49% (Humanities) : 26% (Business and Commerce) : 25% (S.E.T.) to "40%:30%:30% respectively" (*National Plan* 2001: 1) does not mean that "skills and competencies necessary to function in modern society", including "communication and analytical skill", should now be ignored. (Ibid.: 2) See also ibid.: 30-31 for a fuller discussion of enrolments and "cognitive skills".

This lack of public perception might explain, along with more immediate economic imperatives and financial constraints on the part of the general population, why higher education has seen diminishing enrolments over the past five or so years.

Be that as it may, it is now clearly stated that economic development and "democracy and social justice" are "complementary":

> The enhancement of democracy lays the basis for greater participation in economic and social life generally. Higher levels of employment and work contribute to political and social stability and the capacity of citizen[s] to exercise and enforce democratic rights and participate effectively in decision-making. (Ibid.: 16)

The contributions that higher education can make towards the development of a "critical citizenry" (ibid.), by implication a citizenry more inclined towards democratic ideals, lie in its fostering of "open and critical debate" and in "the possibility of participating in decision-making". (Ibid.) This critical citizenry is able to tolerate "differing viewpoints" (ibid.: 17), thus avoiding "excessively polarising society", as was the case in the past (ibid.), and the particular onus on higher education is the production of life-long learning that

> [...] can enable graduates in developing democracies to operate in diverse social settings and develop complex notions of identity and citizenship. [...] Overall, higher education contributes to social and economic development by increasing the level of cognitive skills throughout [...] society". (Ibid.: 18)

In order to achieve this, graduates need to be equipped with knowledge, understanding and skills that enable them "to develop higher levels of intellectual rigour, a high level of analytical capacity, self-motivation, independence of thought, basic research skills and a capacity and mental aptitude for innovation". (Ibid.: 19)

All these "intellectual capacities" (ibid.), along with the desired attitudes and values, require that students have learning experiences which foster precisely the open, unauthoritarian, in short: democratic, ideals proposed by *New Landscape* (2000). The characteristics of such learning experiences and the curricula which provide their framework will be discussed in more detail elsewhere.

Given South Africa's history of divisive social politics, the privileging of a racially defined minority over a racially defined majority, it is clear that the task of higher education can never again be seen as the establishment of elites, as was the case in the past. What is needed are intellectual capacities that can be made to work for the whole community and that can bridge and mediate between the social and cultural differences that are the legacy of the past. The WP stresses this in its call for both equity and redress. The society which higher education is to "reflect and serve", as Muller and Cloete (1998) put it, is (still) characterised by deep divisions and fragmentation. Barnett (1997) does not particularly have South Africa in mind when he describes the postmodern view of society as the eschewal of "large stories or general descriptions of the world" and as the "fear that particular pictures of the world will be paraded as if they were universal". (Barnett 1997: 24 and 25) But apartheid was just such a picture, and it is small wonder that those voices that were suppressed in apartheid discourse now demand to be heard. The problem is however that this could either result in a veritable Babel of voices, and with it continued divisions, or that one voice again becomes dominant, to the disadvantage of the others. Such possible developments could seriously undermine the democratic project as proposed for higher education by *New Landscape* (2000), which is one of the reasons why this document stresses higher education's duty to produce graduates who are "critical, culturally enriched and tolerant citizens". (*New Landscape* 2000: 9) It is with these ideals in mind that I turn in the next

chapter to a discussion of Habermas's theory of communicative action and its bearing on the development of democratic communicative skills through language and literature learning and teaching.

Chapter 2.

Second and foreign language learning and the development of critical thought.

In the previous chapter brief mention was made as to the place the Arts and language (should) have in the development towards what the WP calls a "critical civil society". Here I attempt to characterise such a society with particular reference to the function of higher education in the attainment of this goal, and how it is linked to the development of democracy and social justice. I also explore in more detail how learning a second or third language and engaging with its literature can help in achieving these ends which can collectively be realised in what Habermas calls communicative action.

Higher education's contribution to democracy and social justice would lie in its ability to foster the attitudes and values of Habermasian communicative action. But a direct transposition of Habermas's theory could be problematic, since 'attitudes' and 'values' are morally substantive and situated, whereas Habermas's communicative theory deals with universalities and principles, and is intended as a metacritical tool, not as a metatheory (see Giddens 1987: 227) Critics have pointed out that for instance his "conception of democracy remained unclear throughout the 1980s", when the *Theory of Communicative Action* was first published (White 1995: 11, see also ibid.: 9); that his work is overly complicated and presents little concrete evidence (Giddens 1987: 242); that there are difficulties in co-ordinating the rational self (as the basis for communicative action) with the affective body (which to a large degree is "non-linguistic") (Warren 1995: 194; see also Benhabib 1992: 396 on the "concrete other"), and that the theory is "rigorously

procedural". (Moon 1995: 143) These criticisms are not particularly directed at the theory itself, however, but mainly at its very high level of abstraction, all of which is borne out by constant scholarly attempts to show how the abstract can be made concrete. (See especially Dryzek 1995 and Chambers 1995 for examples.) Research in the field of Education in the final effect, also concerns itself with concrete persons rather than abstract principles, so that while Habermas's theory is persuasive[1], and in broad strokes may be understood to inform both the WP and New Landscape (2000), it will have to be demonstrated just how educational practice based on communicative action might be realised. To this purpose I introduced a project in one of my modules, the aim of which is to explore how the study of foreign language literature can lead to the kind of critical thought underlying the Habermasian communicative ideals. This project will be outlined and its results discussed in Chapter 4.

In this chapter the basic premises of Habermas's notion of communicative action are to be described and its bearing on democracy and social justice examined in more detail. Barnett (1997) provides a useful account of this with particular reference to higher education, and I will return to this later.

The larger historical context within which Habermas developed his theory is instructive for post-apartheid South Africa. I am referring particularly to the events in late 1989 which led to the removal of the Berlin Wall and subsequently to the so-called reunification of the two German

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[1] See also Barnett 1997: 34, where he expresses similar concerns: "The Habermassian perspective offers us the prospect of leaping out of our immediate critical frameworks, but it is unduly abstract, is overly rule-based and sees individuals only from the neck up. There is pain (amidst distorted dialogue) but not much passion in the Habermassian notions of critique. The critical spirit is spirited. Students are human beings and higher education has the responsibility of developing their humanness still further, and their criticality at the same time [...]."

states. Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* predates these event by a number of years, but still had a bearing on them, since what transpired in effect was a large scale cultural conflict between two very different nations. Pensky (1995: 81) points out that the West and the East, now thrown together as one nation, each "had different attitudes, motivations, and perceptions; they had different collective patterns and standards for the interpretation of experience, different communicative habits and expectations", and this stood in the way of a "simple or easy consensus concerning the meaning of unification for either side". (ibid.) While the details obviously differ for post-apartheid South Africa, the problems relating to nation-building are similar, as is underlined for instance by the current debates on racism: it could be termed a problem of communication, and it is no coincidence that the battle has raged mostly in, and concerning, the media.

I want to concentrate on two issues that are of concern here, viz. cultural values and (discursive) democracy. In the essay *Communicative rationality and cultural values* (Warnke 1995) Habermas's notion of communicative rationality is summarised as reconstructing "the question of how language has the ability to coordinate action in a consensual or cooperative way as opposed to a forced or manipulated one":

> In other words, how does the employment of language in contexts of interaction produce mutual agreement on a course of action, a fact in the world, an aesthetic evaluation, or an expression of intention, desire, need or the like? (Warnke 1995: 120)

Habermas's premise is that communication has the primary function of conversants coming to an agreement. This function is based on the ability of language

> to achieve mutual understanding and to coordinate actions in a consensual or cooperative way because its original communicative use involves raising validity claims and supporting them if challenged" (ibid.: 123).

This further means that rationality lies at the root of communicative action: making a validity claim alone is not enough since it could easily be intended and interpreted as an establishment of authority, and thus power, or become what Habermas labels as strategic[2], and thus undermining the discursive, consensual function of language. The validity claim must be supported, that is, reasons must be given for it to be agreed upon, for only in this way can the consensual thrust of language be maintained and approximate what Habermas calls the "ideal speech situation", that is unconstrained dialogue (leading to uncoerced agreement) as opposed to "systematically distorted communication". (Outhwaite 1994: 47-48; see also Moon 1995: 150 on the communicative function of language.) The only force in such discursive communication is the "force of the best [i.e. most rational] argument". (Chambers 1995: 243)

For the parties involved, the necessary conditions for such unconstrained dialogue to take place are the following:

> Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
> Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
> Everyone is allowed to introduce any assertion whatever into the discourse.
> Everyone is allowed to express his [sic] attitudes, desires, and needs.
> No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down [above].
> (Habermas quoted by Moon 1995: 149)

In turn, the utterances of the parties involved have to meet certain requirements (which Habermas developed from speech act theory, and are generalisations of, amongst others, Austin's felicity

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[2] According to Habermas strategic uses of language feed on the original communicative function. See Habermas 1982:175.

conditions, Searle's sincerity conditions and Grice's conversational principles.[3] Communicatively

active subjects, according to Habermas,

> *express* themselves comprehensibly,
> express *something* that is to be understood,
> make *themselves* understood in the process,
> and come to an understanding *with each other*.
> (Habermas 1976: 176, my translation. Italics original.)

The minimum requirement for utterances (as opposed to sentences) thus made, that is, resting on

"reciprocal recognition", are "four corresponding validity claims: comprehensibility, truth,

sincerity and rightness". (Ibid.: 176)[4] The goal of the type of communication described would not

only be mutual agreement, but also "intersubjective mutuality of understanding, shared

knowledge, [and] reciprocal trust". (Ibid., my translation.) Such consensual speech acts, as

Habermas calls them, would indeed constitute an '*ideal* speech situation', in which participants

are truly on the same level and desire truly to reach an understanding which has validity for all

parties. The real situation is somewhat different, as Habermas admits:

> If complete agreement, containing all four components [i.e. comprehensibility, truth, sincerity and rightness], were normal of communication, it would not be necessary to analyse the process of reaching agreement under the dynamic aspect of [actively] *bringing about* an understanding. What is typical [of everyday communication] are on the one hand conditions in the grey area between misunderstanding and incomprehension, intentional and involuntary dissimilation, and on the other, pre-notification and forced agreement. (Habermas 1976: 177, my translation.)

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[3] See Habermas 1976, *Was heisst Universalpragmatik?*, translated as *What is universal pragmatics?* (In Habermas (1975), *Communication and the Evolution of Society*. Heinemann). The translation was not available to me.

[4] The German word is *Richtigkeit* which can also mean 'justness' or 'fairness', or 'exactness', even 'appropriateness'. However the former two terms could be considered to refer to an outcome of discursively reached consensus rather than to a characteristic of utterances. Bernstein (1983: 184) also uses the term 'rightness' and equates it with 'normative validity'.

Especially 'pre-notification' and 'forced agreement' seem to be the case in situations where cultural values are at stake. These values, along with the beliefs and identities they give rise to, belong to and organise the life-world: they are what situate persons and give meaning to their lived experience, and always already determines their interpretations of what is just and good.

According to Warnke (1995) validity claims in the cultural aspect of the life-world have different conditions when compared to validity claims arising from disputes about truth and rightness. In the area of "expressive self-presentations or evaluations" which are culturally founded, a subject is expected to "show her sincerity only by acting in a manner consistent with her expressed intentions" (Warnke 1995: 127); in such cases it is not the force of the better argument that allows agreement to be reached, since "the cultural standards at issue do not include a claim to universality" (ibid.: 128), as in fact issues of truth and rightness do. Thus the validity (and rationality) of self-presentations and evaluations "rest on providing me with authentic motivation for action, in expressing my feelings in an undistorted way and in my being able to make myself at least intelligible to some others within the culture to which I belong". (Ibid.: 128-129)

But what then of the critical dimension, the dimension Habermas finds lacking in Gadamer's hermeneutics?[5] Or as Bernstein (1983) puts it, using the example of Zande witchcraft:

> We do not begin to understand Zande witchcraft unless we had the ability to discriminate what the Azande consider to be reasons for acting in one way or another. To do this requires a preunderstanding on our part of what it means to make a validity claim and to

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[5] For a good account of the Gadamer-Habermas Debate see Warnke (1987) chapter 4: *Hermeneutics and the critique of ideology*. In her discussion of Gadamer's notion of the "fusion of horizons" she notes: "[...] understanding involves a way to agree about *die Sache* [the issue] and hence ignoring the possible necessity of criticizing the text or text-analogue under study. It is this inattention to the role of critical reflection that disturbs Habermas [...]". (Warnke 1987: 108)

identify those situations in which one is made. [...] But it is a different (although related question) to evaluate whether the reasons given by the Azande are good or bad reasons [...]. Understanding the practice of Zande witchcraft requires us to be able to discriminate what the Azande themselves consider good or bad reasons [...]. This judgment can also be distinguished from a judgment as to whether (and in what sense) the type of reasons that the Azande give are adequate or inadequate. (Bernstein 1983: 182-183)

Warnke (1995: 130-133) discusses the issue of abortion in the U.S. and immigration in Germany

to make a similar point:

> There seem to be cases in which a consensus on normative principles such as liberty, equality, the sanctity of life, and of human rights in general threaten to split apart as soon as the principles applied to circumstances in which cultural values, religious beliefs, national identities and the like hold sway. (Warnke 1995: 130)

I have quoted at length because both Warnke and Bernstein highlight problems we in South Africa

encounter every day, one example among many being the acrimonious debate around virginity

testing. The problem is precisely the original hermeneutic premise that our pre-understandings

which are determined largely by our cultural positions always already exert an influence on the

judgements we make. As Warnke puts it,

> the principles which we apply when we judge are tied to a hermeneutic starting point from which forms of evaluative orientation cannot be eradicated. We must apply justified norms to concrete situations of action that we already interpret in the light of our cultural values but the influence of our cultural values seems to extend right through the way we understand principles of application and judgments of appropriateness themselves. (Warnke 1995: 131-132)

The application of principles, then, should not occur from the top down, that is, applying universal

principles to concrete life situations as it seems Habermas would have it (Warnke 1995: 133), but

"from bottom up, in terms of the question of how the meaning of such rationally justified

principles [...] must be molded to meet the requirements of forms of life, cultural values, and

traditions through which people find their lives meaningful." (Ibid.)

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However, this could be problematic since the question of cultural practices that may be considered abhorrent is not addressed. Called for in this instance are empathy and tolerance of difference, those virtues that Gadamer stresses in his philosophic hermeneutics. But the question is whether any and all cultural practice should be accorded the same tolerant and empathic treatment. What is needed, it seems to me, is a balance between universal principles of rationality and culturally based notions of justice and what constitutes a both ethically and aesthetically good life.

Warnke looks to Gadamer's concept of 'hermeneutic conversation' for possible solutions to this problem.[6] Empathy and tolerance are crucial when confronted with difference: one has to try to understand the values other cultures place on their practices, and that they find such practices valuable.[7] But so is reflecting on one's own culture in order to hold its values against the scrutiny of others, since the survival and development of cultures depend on such 'hermeneutic conversation': "Cultures and traditions survive and flourish not by enforcing an endless and exact reproduction but by developing and enriching themselves and by remaining relevant to new

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[6] See her discussion of 'Liberalism 2', (Warnke 1995: 139): "Liberalism 2 can encourage the survival of particular cultures by officially fostering their language, culture, history, literature, and mores while remaining neutral with regard to the language, history, literature, and mores of others. But it cannot try to eradicate these others. Rather, Liberalism 2 distinguishes fundamental rights that cannot be violated for the survival of cultures from other privileges and immunities that can be "revoked or restricted for reasons of public policy"." Bernstein (1983: 196) has a similar stance: "It is all to frequently assumed that if we cannot come up with universal, fixed criteria to evaluate the plausibility of competing interpretations, this means that we have no rational basis for distinguishing the better from the worse, the more plausible from the less plausible interpretations – whether these be the interpretations of texts, actions, or historical epochs. But Gadamer's analysis of understanding and the hermeneutic circle shows us that we can and do make comparative judgments in concrete cases and that we can support them with the appeal to reasons and argumentation."

[7] Warnke 1995: 137: "We must provisionally assume that other cultures have something important to say to us, Gadamer thinks, in order both to understand them and to test our prejudices about ourselves."

generations." (Warnke 1995: 140) Thus in Gadamerian parlance (to which both Warnke and Bernstein revert, as was shown), cultures and their traditions remain viable only by learning from other cultures and traditions, that is, by engaging in dialogue with them.

The question now is, how can getting to know another language, and especially involving oneself with its literature, help in the achievement of the necessary empathy, tolerance, critical awareness and the ability to engage in dialogue with another culture? At this stage I want to concentrate more on the philosophical (hermeneutic) aspects of learning, rather than on actual practice which is to be dealt with later, as I pointed out at the beginning of this chapter.

A good starting point for this discussion is Gadamer's explanation of the operations involved in the so-called hermeneutic circle[8]: when a subject tries to understand something, a text in our case, the nexus of culture and tradition in which s/he is embedded, as well as that of the object of understanding, the text, carry equal weight, since culture and traditions are the horizon against which understanding is possible in the first place. The implications for the interpretation of a text (or discourse) – that is, the process of reaching an understanding of what it says – are as follows:

– when I try to understand something, I already have an idea of its importance for me. This preconception arises out of my own temporally and locally bound experience. (That is, my own experiences form the horizon of my possible understanding.) This leads me to place the object that is to be understood in a preliminary context of meaning. (That is, I accept from the start that the object purports to be meaningful.)

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[8] For a discussion of Gadamer's version of the hermeneutic circle see Hauff et al. (1972: 18-25). I use this discussion here in the form of a quasi translated summary.

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- If my preconceptions about the object fit with what the object says, understanding is automatic (that is, confirms my common sense assumptions), and the process of interpretation ends for the time being. If however the object rejects the meaning I give it, the result is a negative experience which forces me to continue the process of interpretation. This process in turn leads me to revise my preconceived understanding (that is to reflect critically on my own assumptions). Having a negative experience such as this is productive since it leads in the final effect to a broadening of my horizon and a new understanding of the object.

- The process is continuous since my changing temporal and local situation brings about new experiences, conceptions and understandings and thus the need for further revisions.[9]

What is important in this process of learning from other cultures and traditions is the subject's predisposition both towards empathy and self-reflection, which together lead to tolerance, and the subject becoming thus disposed through negative experience. According to Gadamer, only persons who have painful experiences, such as being wrong about something, have enough openness and tolerance of different opinions to be sceptical about their own views.

What is problematic, however, with this question-and-answer, dialogic approach, is that whereas it accounts for empathy, tolerance and critical awareness, it seems to place all its emphasis on the subject, the individual person, in her quest for her own self-enlightenment. It is the problem, outlined earlier, of the lack of a larger, socially based perspective which helps to inform evaluations of what is socially good and just. In Barnett's words, what is needed is a *"social and personal epistemology"*, meaning that "[c]ritical thinking cannot adequately be construed just as

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[9] My thanks to Ms Kathy Luckett for pointing out that the hermeneutic operations outlined above can be linked to Piaget's concepts of assimilation and accommodation.

a form of individual action or mental state". (Barnett 1997: 5; italics original.) He adopts the idea of a "culture of critical discourse", in which all the "frameworks for knowing and becoming that are developed in the university would be candidates for critical examination" (ibid.: 45): a culture that would function as a metacritique. This culture, Barnett says, should be seen as distinct from but related to critical self-reflection. The latter "focuses on the implications for individuals" whereas the former stresses the larger context within which such self-reflection operates, namely "collective culture, the ways in which persons [...] understand their interrelationships and their mutual responsibilities." (Ibid.: 46) And the relation between the culture of critical discourse and critical self-reflection, as I see it, on the one hand lies in the fact that individuals *can* only function as social beings, and that on the other, society is made up of individuals. Thus, the "idea of a *culture* of critical discourse [...] is inadequate by itself. We have to supplement it with the personal dimension of criticality." (Ibid.)

I am of the opinion that language and especially literary studies can contribute significantly to the development of both. On Gadamer's terms a person, when learning a new language, is put into the position of someone who has a painful experience, since even the most everyday communication is difficult. Such a person has to interpret every single utterance in order to make sense of it. But she does this against the background of her own experiences and the language in which she expresses them. Warnke comments that for both Gadamer and Habermas translation entails not so much the exact reproduction of what is said in one language into another, but the understanding of the other from the perspectives of one's own language: one tries to express what the text in the other language says in the words of one's own. (Warnke 1987: 110-111) Conversely, when confronted with another language one is forced to reflect on one's own, including the assumptions one finds it natural to express in it. This arises out of the hermeneutic

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distance between the understanding subject and the object which is expressed in an 'alien' language. One can say, then, that the empathy necessary for understanding text/discourse in another language also produces (critical) self-reflection, which, since "one's own language forms the horizon of one's relation to other languages", is the result of "an openness to other worlds". (Warnke 1987: 111) These other worlds are expressed *par excellence* in those languages' literary products.

However, literary discourse presents a number of difficulties which are compounded when its recipient is new to the language in which it is written. Approaching literary reception from "cognitive and social psychological" angles, Halász (1987) outlines the empathic and identificatory processes initiated by reading particularly fictional narrative texts. These rest on the reader's recognition, against the background of her own knowledge, of the events, circumstances and characters depicted.[10]

The processes are much the same in everyday communication, according to Halász, except that literary discourse is much less contextualised, because it lacks concrete visual clues which would make understanding easier. (Halász 1987: 7) Seen in this way literary discourse develops both the emotional life of the reader (through the processes of empathy and identification) and the intellect (through the reconstruction of events and characters 'in the mind's eye', that is by filling in details of the missing context on the basis of own experience and knowledge). A problem arises however when identification is too complete. In this case there is some self-reflection as a reader compares her experiences with what is depicted in the text, but it can hardly be termed critical. Rather, such

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[10] Halász (1987) bases these processes where "the reader compares, draws a parallel, supplements [...]" on the protagonist of a fictional narrative text. See Halász (1987: 12)

a reader "sees anew in literary discourse what he already knows, thinks and is accustomed to" because he "does not easily give up looking for information [in the text] which is in perfect harmony [...] with his former knowledge". (Halász 1987: 15) This has the effect of "self-reinforcement" (ibid.; see also 22) and, one could add, this may extend to the affirmation of a larger social context, and existing social structures.

Halász connects this type of uncritical reception of literary discourse to two factors. One is that the reader is incompetent, since she "can be regarded as someone compensating the obstacles of processing with one-sidedness". (Ibid.: 22) The other, related, factor is what Halász perceives as the difficulty associated with literary discourse – that is of 'true' as opposed to "pseudo"-literature. (see ibid.: 23) He speaks of its "extraordinary complexity" (ibid.: 24; see also Eagleton 1983: 102) and of its "delicate nuances, richness and profusion of details" that "surpass every other kind of discourse". (Halász 1987: 25) It is clear that he bases his concept of literary discourse on a formalist notion of 'literariness' which does not recognise that there is a continuity between everyday (or practical) and poetic language (as opposed to, for example, pragmatist approaches; see Shusterman 1992: 12 and 13). While for Formalism literature has the function of defamiliarising everyday assumptions and perceptions[11] through estrangement which is achieved by focussing "attention on what the information says about itself (about how "it is written")" (Halász 1987: 15), – and while this theory bases its approach to literature on its linguistic and structural features, thus understanding itself as an analytical tool rather than an evaluative method

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[11] in that it is "a continual generating and violating of expectation, a complex interplay of the regular and the random, norms and deviations, routinized patterns and dramatic defamiliarizations" (Eagleton 1983: 103). See also Halász (1987: 27) who talks of literature effecting schema change, and Cook (1994), especially chapter 7, where he discusses schema refreshment.

(see Eagleton 1983: 96), it does assume that the reader is an expert, operating on the same level as an experienced literary critic. Clearly readers of texts in languages foreign to them would be considered especially incompetent, on this view at least; this is quite apart from its implicit elitism. If, in addition, literary reception is seen as "a fight between the author and the recipient" (Halász 1987: 22), as Halász phrases it [12], the hermeneutic notion of dialogue with the concomitant process of reaching consensus is replaced by an adversarial one in which the more powerful party (probably the author in this case) 'wins', or conversely, "the recipient impoverishes literary discourse". This approach then is not neutral, contrary to its professed intention of being strictly analytical; in fact it evaluates implicitly. (See Eagleton 1983: 124) As we saw earlier, evaluation as a part of communicative processes, including those regarding theories, is desirable since it takes into account the cultural and historical situation of those engaged in communication, and it is a necessary consequence of being a situated subject. However, if evaluation occurs implicitly only, this can also be an indication that little or no reflection is taking place on criteria of value; such evaluation could easily rest on untested assumptions and on what is regarded as common sense, something which higher education, if it is to foster criticality (as Barnett (1997) indicates it should) should undermine. Therefore, if we take up Halász's approach to literature as discourse (as do Cook (1994) and Hodge (1990)) – and there are good educational reasons for doing this, as will be discussed in the next chapter –, care will have to be taken to include the hermeneutic dimensions of understanding as well.

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[12] Halász, in a "remark of the editor", points out that the authors of the essays in the volume are not native speakers of English, and that "there may be some stylistic rough edges", which could account for the rather adversarial language used in cases such as this. (Halász 1987: 32)

Chapter 3.

Theories of Language and Discourse: a critical review.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Gadamer's hermeneutics and the cognitive and social approaches to literary discourse of Halász do not sufficiently account for the social aspect of individual participation in and reception of literary discourse because their social theories are either only implied or assumed, or both. That is, both approaches lack the final critical element that is theorised explicitly in Habermas's work, namely a critical theory of society which is, one may say, the foundation of Habermas's work. My intention at this stage, then, is to examine theories of language and discourse with particular reference to their placing the individual language user – and literary recipient – in a social context, starting with the broader social-theoretical account of Giddens and moving from there to more specific discourse theories (Pennycook, Gee, Fairclough and Kress) and looking finally at applications of discourse theory to literature (Hodge and Cook). My aim in this review is to tease out, as far a possible, the implications of these theories specifically for literature teaching and learning.

In his essay, *Structuralism, post-structuralism and the production of culture* Giddens (1987) examines the 'linguistic turn' in social theory that occurred in the wake of Structuralism. (Giddens 1987: 78) Tracing the history of Saussure's influence on linguistics with reference to the latter's dichotomies of *langue/parole*, syntagmatic/paradigmatic and signifier/signified (see ibid.) he makes the point that the 'linguistic turn' does not refer to "an extension of ideas taken from the study of language to other aspects of human activity, but rather [...] [to] the intersection between language and the constitution of social practices". (Ibid.) According to Giddens however,

structural linguistics itself has serious shortcomings since it isolates language ability (competence) from its social use (performance), attributing competence (Chomsky[1]) to "characteristics of human mind, not to conscious agents carrying on their day-to-day activities in the context of social institutions". (Ibid.) Giddens maintains instead that as agents, language users have knowledge not only of the correct linguistic forms (syntax) but also of "the circumstances in which particular types of sentences are appropriate". (Ibid.) This means that "to know a language is to acquire a range of methodological devices, involved both with the production of utterances themselves and with the constitution and reconstitution of social life in the daily contexts of social activity". (Ibid.: 79-80)

Giddens goes on to discuss the implications of post-structuralist notions regarding the 'de-centred subject' for language. Since according to Derrida (and Lacan) linguistic signs are quite radically relational, and further since there is nothing outside the text, the subject itself is only language, that is, a sign in a differential relation to other signs, and not an origin or an essence, or anything substantial that exists independently of language. This is because language and its signs, which according to these theorists only have meaning through their difference to other signs, does not refer to anything but itself. Accordingly, as Giddens points out, these theorists hold, along with Wittgenstein (and some discourse theorists such as Gee 1996, see below) that "language is necessarily an 'anonymous' production and thus in an important sense 'subject-less'". (Giddens 1987: 86) From such arguments it follows that

> [...] like any other term in a language, 'I' is only constituted as a sign in virtue of its difference from 'you', 'we', 'they', etc. Since the 'I' has sense only in virtue of being an

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[1] By implication this applies to Saussure's *langue* as well.

element in an 'anonymous' totality [i.e. language], there can be no question of according

it some distinctive philosophical privilege. (Giddens 1987: 87)

This thinking is of course also important where it concerns the authors of texts: it follows that

since all is text, authors exist only as a construct of text. As "flesh-and-blood agent" (ibid.: 88)

the author is irrelevant. Giddens here makes the observation that the 'autonomy' of the text, as he

calls it, is analogous to the autonomy accorded it by Gadamer: "In neither case is it believed that

the author has some kind of privileged relation to his or her text. Both textual analysis and literary

criticism therefore must break in a clear-cut fashion with 'intentionalist' perspectives". (Ibid.: 89)[2]

While such a break would open up the possibility of creative or resistant reading and could

perhaps have emancipatory potential – since it does away with the authority of the author – it

does not mean, in my view, that the study of authorial intentions should not be part of literary

studies, analysis and criticism. For one, these intentions can provide a valuable analytic heuristic,

and for another the agency of the person who has written the text situates her/him in a social

context. If texts, especially literary texts, are stripped of this context, what we have left, in the

final effect at least, is a notion of art for art's sake which obviates the necessity of critical

reflection since such an aesthetic object, taken on its own terms, would merely invite

contemplation of its beauty. This certainly would not do in an educational context such as ours,

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[2] See also Shusterman's (1992) interesting discussion on this point in his chapter *Pragmatism and Interpretation*. (Shusterman 1992: 84-114) In this chapter, Shusterman explores from a pragmatist perspective the possibilities that the notion of 'authorial intention' and its opposite, the 'death of the author', can have for the interpretation of texts, and makes the point concerning the former, that "the elusive notion of authorial intention paradoxically offers the security of objective truth and convergence in literary interpretation (something that academic criticism requires for its legitimation as a scientific enterprise), while at the same time providing the security that this objective truth or meaning cannot be conclusively demonstrated once and for all, thereby ensuring the continuing demand for interpretation". (Ibid. 84-85) Shusterman is critical of both the intentionalist and the 'death-of-the-author' positions.

which is professedly directed towards the world beyond the narrower academic and institutional context and which accentuates service to society. In my opinion therefore, Giddens is perhaps not quite fair to Gadamer in drawing this analogy. Gadamer, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, bases his hermeneutics on the effect of texts (in the form of traditions) on the understanding of a subject, and on its reworking and reappropriation, though reflection, on its (the subject's) own context, thus casting it (the subject) in the role of an agent. This is however the thrust of Giddens's own argument against the decentred subject and the 'death of the author' of structuralism and post-structuralism. Thus Giddens narrows down what he means by the 'autonomy of the text': this is to be found in the "multiplicity of readings texts can generate" (Giddens 1987: 94), and even though on a structuralist account it would seem "as though texts wrote themselves", this is unsatisfactory since it does not recognise the "process of writing", the author/writer, and of course the reader as well. (Ibid.) Giddens therefore concludes that a "theory of cultural production cannot be properly developed unless we possess an adequate account of the nature of human agents". (Ibid.: 98)

As far as writing is concerned – this is what concerns me most here since I am dealing with literature – the communicative activity is different from that of "talk", as Giddens (1987: 103) calls it. The latter depends for its success on what Giddens calls co-presence (ibid.), whereas "[in] the case of writing, it is usually irrelevant to any of the terms in which the 'success' of a text might be judged whether one individual or many were involved in its production". (Ibid.: 103-104) The point here is that because the product of writing, the text, is highly decontextualised, it requires a greater effort at interpretation and recontextualisation:

> Communication is no longer more or less taken for granted as a result of the
> methodological processes involved in sustaining conversations. More defined and explicit

tasks have to be undertaken in order to forge the communication link between the cultural object and its interpreter. (Giddens 1987: 102)

This applies all the more if the cultural object (the text) and the interpreter (the reader) belong to different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as is the case with the reading of second or foreign language literature. This has already been pointed out in the previous chapter, but it bears repetition here because we are moving towards educational applications both of critical hermeneutics and of Giddens's social theory as developed in his critique of structuralism and post-structuralism. The crucial concept of agency is what is relevant here, and the question needs to be asked as to how agency can be maintained in situations where learners are probably more or less at the mercy of a language not their own.

One way to consider agency in cases such as this would be to treat a second or foreign language text as a dialogue partner in a 'hermeneutic conversation' of whom the reader asks questions in order to achieve understanding – this is the general thrust of Gadamer's theory. On its own, however, this approach is not explicit enough, in the sense that it does not deal specifically and sufficiently with language difficulties learners may have, since Gadamer's hermeneutics has the aim of reappropriating one's own history and traditions and thus presupposes some degree of linguistic fluency. Another way to consider agency would be to treat the text as an instance of language only, approaching it as structure and stressing form and syntax. But besides diminishing the agency of language users (since such an approach bases on the notion that there is only 'correct' or 'incorrect' usage), this emphasis on formal linguistic aspects could easily lead to isolating the text from its context, resulting in a diminished understanding in the hermeneutic sense, since linguistic detail is not connected to and understood as part of the larger whole, as is required in the operations of the philological circle (the hermeneutic method of interpreting texts). Instead,

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the text itself must be seen in the larger context of language use[3], that is, it must be understood as discourse.

Discourse has been variously defined and its reach, particularly in linguistics, demonstrated with many practical examples. I want to start off with two discussions of discourse which see it as encompassing the whole gamut of human communicative practices. Gee (1990) for instance defines the term as follows:

> A *Discourse* is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'. (Gee 1990: 143)

Gee distinguishes 'Discourse' which is a "sort of 'identity kit'"[4] from the narrower linguistic term, "connected stretches of language that make sense". (Gee 1990: 142)[5] He refines his distinction in five points. They are briefly: 1) Discourses are ideological since they evaluate; 2) Discourses define what is acceptable criticism, but can be criticised by other Discourses (i.e. there is no possibility of metacriticism except through other Discourses, much in the way Rorty sees one 'vocabulary' as 'redescribing' another)[6]; 3) Discourses can be in conflict with one another; 4)

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[3] This is what Jauss (1982) does, as he combines formalist and hermeneutic approaches to literature in his programme of reception aesthetics. (See his essay, *Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory*, Jauss 1982: 3-45) But while his approach goes a long way towards embedding literary texts in real social contexts, that is, establishing them as discourse, he makes no mention as to how second and foreign language literature can be understood from his premises.

[4] This seems to be akin to Rorty's term 'vocabulary', as I understand it a world view expressed in language and deeds, and the way we make sense of our experiences. See Rorty (1982).

[5] Pennycook (1994) makes a similar distinction. See below.

[6] Because, as he says, "For the pragmatist, true sentences are not true because they correspond to reality, and so there is no need to worry what sort of reality, if any, a given sentence corresponds to — no need to worry about what "makes" it true". (Rorty 1982: xvi)

Discourses tend to be exclusive which means that they can marginalise other Discourses, and 5) Discourses are means of exerting control and wielding power. (Gee 1990: 144) From these points it follows that Gee can say that "it is not individuals who speak and act but rather that historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals". (Ibid.: 145) This leaves little scope for individual agency[7], but is understandable given his own context in which individualism is stressed to the detriment of more collective values. (See Gee 1990: 145) He does make the point though that individuals have a choice "to a certain extent", but there is little scope for that since in exercising such choice, the individual pays "a price". (Ibid.)

What is important – and useful for my teaching context – is Gee's differentiation between 'acquiring' and 'learning' a Discourse. As I understand it, acquisition refers to primary socialisation: a person 'acquires' a primary discourse – and a first language – (Gee 1990: 146), whereas learning occurs where there is conscious teaching in a formal context. This would be the case when a third language is acquired (or rather learnt, in Gee's terms, through education). The salient point here is that 'learning' is equated to "conscious reflection", and it "involves explanation and analysis", leading to "some degree of meta-knowledge about the matter". (Ibid.) But Gee maintains that "attaining" a second or third language in a classroom situation where grammar is taught does not equip learners to control language – they do not 'master' it – but they "usually beat acquirers at talking about it, that is, at explication, analysis and criticism". (Ibid.) He remarks as well that for agency, and empowerment too, one should add, some degree of mastery is necessary. (See ibid.: 147) For this to happen in second and/or third language learning I suspect that some sort of balance is necessary between immersion (which forces acquisition to some extent, but in our

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[7] See Thesen (1997: 504-505) for a criticism of Gee's notion of 'Discourse'.

situation is not always possible, especially not for the foreign languages), and overt learning/teaching. One way, however, to overcome the lack of immersion possibilities is to incorporate literature in the second and foreign language curricula because through their literatures a more complete context can be at least simulated. At the same time an understanding of these literatures can build up the requisite meta-knowledge which enables critical thinking (see Gee 1990: 147), and which also means "power, because it leads to the ability to manipulate, to analyse, to resist [...]". (Ibid.: 148) This, surely, is what the "critical business" of higher education (Barnett 1997) is about.

Pennycook (1994) tends towards a view of discourse that is similarly encompassing, but he subjects the concept itself to a meta-critique (that is he practices a discourse analysis on the term 'discourse'). He distinguishes between two positions regarding discourse. The first is the "predominant" view of "discourse analysis as the exploration of how language is used beyond the sentence level", and the second, that "'discourse is [...] the condition by which language as a structure or system exists'". (Pennycook 1994: 126; he quotes Luke, McHoul & Mey 1990.) Since according to Pennycook the first is to some extent[8] the position of critical discourse analysts like Fairclough, Kress and others who will be discussed below (see the section on CDA, ibid.: 121-126), I shall concentrate here on Pennycook's account of the second, Foucauldian, position, viz. "Discourse as power/knowledge". (Pennycook 1994: 126ff.) According to this position then, "discourses are 'ways of constituting knowledge'" (ibid.: 127; the quotation is from Weedon

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[8] Pennycook (1994: 121) recognizes that Fairclough and Kress locate discourses "within wider questions of social power", but criticises "their underlying visions of language, discourse, ideology, and society [...]" (ibid.: 123) since, with reference to Fairclough in particular, he points out that "this view [...] tends to posit a 'real' world that is obfuscated by ideology". (Ibid.: 125) See below for a fuller discussion of this problem.

1987); they are "always linked to power, embedded in social institutions, and produce ways of understanding". (Ibid.) What is relevant in the context of my own project is the importance attached to the way meanings are organised and realised in language (see Pennycook 1994: 128), and particularly the possibility that when we take up a subject position we also take up a position of power. This would certainly account for agency, but as an educational project it would also be important for both the teacher and the learner to reflect critically on such positions, including that of the native speaker. Pennycook refers to his own work on this topic (see ibid.: 130; also Pennycook 1994a), and Kramsch (1998) examines the assumptions connected with this notion. She discovers "three types of privilege that have traditionally been associated with the native speaker: entitlement by birth, right acquired through education, prerogative of membership in a social community". (Kramsch 1998: 19) What this means, in my view, is that belonging to a discursive community coupled with a national (or "heritage", see Kramsch 1998: 25) language might incline the native speaker to accept as given such contingent privileges, and this might easily hinder critical reflection. This may be remedied to some extent by learning a second or third language which, depending on how it is taught, could lead to an interrogation of the 'naturalised' cultural positions a native speaker takes up with regard to her own language.[9]

Pennycook outlines further "implications and applications" of a "Foucauldian notion of discourse" (Pennycook 1994: 130) with reference to language teaching. Central to such a project would be to examine not only "how discourses (texts) reflect social reality", but also (and especially) how they "construct our lives" (ibid.: 131), and questioning "how we come to understand ourselves as we do". (Ibid.: 132) According to Pennycook learning a second language should be linked "to

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[9] For an exhaustive discussion of such positions with regard to English, see Pennycook (1994a), especially the chapter entitled *The world in English*. (Pennycook 1994a: 1-36)

the lives of the students", by "exploring the specific relationships between particular discourses and the particular language being taught" (ibid.) – again a study of that language's literature can provide a suitable context for such learning. However, one should guard against teaching this context merely as a history of ideas, although that obviously has its place as background. But the historical, cultural and philosophical background must be linked, as pointed out earlier, both to the actual language used, and to the context in which it is being learned so that a truly hermeneutic dialogue can take place between the learner and the text.

This is the reason why I find Pennycook's Foucauldian approach to discourse not quite satisfactory for second and foreign language and literature teaching and learning. While it can be made to work well for the overarching discursive context, this is the end-point of the actual process which is, in the case of a second or third language, one of linguistic difficulties.[10] For the kind of analysis that Pennycook envisages a large amount of groundwork is presupposed, and this work would have to be done in class. I will discuss below what the practical implications arising from this might be.

I now turn to Fairclough and his work associated with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA and Critical Language Awareness (CLA), particularly in the field of education. His view of discourse is influenced heavily by Marxist (Althusserian and Gramscian) notions of ideology and hegemony. (See Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 260ff.) Thus for him discourse is a social practice which is ideological and tends to be hegemonic, much in Gee's sense, though the latter develops his views

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[10] See also Fairclough & Wodak (1997: 261) who have a similar problem with a Foucauldian approach: "Foucault's work has generated immense interest in discourse analysis amongst social scientists, but analysis of a rather abstract sort that is not anchored in close analysis of particular texts."

on the background of a different (American) tradition (see above). In Fairclough's view then discourse is a social practice like any other, but one that is "manifested in linguistic form", and one that is specifically discursive", meaning that it is made up of "processes of text production, distribution and consumption". (Fairclough 1992: 71). Since these processes cast discourse members as agents – they "produce", "distribute" and "consume" texts – they particularly constitute, as I understand it, the area where ideology resides and hegemonies are formed. However Fairclough rejects the idea that discourse as "social practice [is] something which people *actively* produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures" in favour of the argument "that in so producing their world, members' practices are shaped in ways of which they are usually *unaware* by social structures, relations of power, and the nature of the social practices they are engaged in whose stakes always go beyond producing meanings". (Ibid.:72; my italics.) It is this unawareness, based on commonsense notions of what is true and natural, that gives rise to political and ideological investment in discourse. (See ibid.)

I will not go into Fairclough's discussion of "Discourse as Text" (see ibid.: 73-78) and "Discursive Practice" (ibid.: 78-86) because they are dealt with more fully (and satisfactorily, in my view) by Kress and others (see below). Instead I now focus on his discussion of ideology and hegemony, as depending on how especially ideology is understood, the concepts of agency and change can be developed to suit an educational context. Fairclough relies on Althusser for his concept of ideology, as was mentioned above. While he does acknowledge criticisms of the Althusserian notion of ideology, particularly the way it is rather too 'total' and thus undermines, in the final effect, any possibility of agency and change, his description of discourse members as 'unaware' shows his debt to this theory. And although this lack of awareness and the concomitant notion of commonsense (which probably do exist to a significant extent) make the project of CDA and its

aim of CLA a matter of particular educational urgency, one could argue with Pennycook (1994: 125f.) that ideology as 'false consciousness' presupposes some sort of 'right' consciousness about a 'true' reality; and secondly that whoever has insight into the falseness of consciousness, also has insight into truth and knowledge, and thus has power *over* those who do not. I suspect that being in the latter position cannot be very empowering, but this is the very aim of CDA and CLA. There is no easy way to deal with this aporia, especially in a classroom where the teacher is traditionally imbued with authority and the power of 'knowing better', but one way would be to accept that truths are arrived at discursively in Habermas's sense, and this includes the hermeneutic project of recognising as discourse-bound what Fairclough calls "members' resources". (Fairclough 1992: 80) With this caveat one has to agree with his later argument, namely

> that language awareness programmes should be informed by critical views of language and discourse, as well as a conception of language learning which [integrates] the development of language awareness with learners' own prior experience and with the development of capacities for practice, including creative and innovative practice. (Fairclough 1995: 217)

CLA, Fairclough goes on, also equips "learners with a resource for intervention in and reshaping of discursive practices and the power relations that ground them, both in other domains and within education itself." (Ibid.) This is in line with what Barnett calls "critical being" (Barnett 1997: 74) and with *New Landscape*'s (2000) advocacy of higher education for democracy (see above, Chapter 1). As Fairclough puts it:

> [educational institutions] are aiming to equip [learners] with what has in [Fairclough's] view become, because of the enhanced social and cultural role of language and because of the technologization of discourse, an essential prerequisite for democratic citizenship: the capacity for critique of language. (Fairclough 1995: 220; see also 222.)

The development in learners of the capacity for critique requires that a number of issues be addressed in teaching. One is to undermine the notion, kept alive by traditional language programmes, that "a sociol-linguistic order [is] a given and common sense reality [...] rather than a naturalized domain". (Ibid.: 225) Another is that CLA should be built from the existing language

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capabilities and experience of the learner" (ibid.), an idea that Fairclough stresses (see above). This could be achieved, he maintains, by linking "language awareness and the language practice of the learner, which in turn means providing the learner with 'real' experience gained from authentic situations in which she or he can practise "purposefully". (See ibid.) As was mentioned before, this is not always practicable in the case of a foreign language because it would mean quite bluntly that learners had the resources for foreign travel. This is by no means to be counted out, but since literary discourse creates its own, albeit imaginary, context, and is through production and consumption already embedded in social practice, it might be employed fruitfully to serve as a passport (so to speak) to such virtually authentic situations. But this also means focusing on the role of the learner as reader, as recipient of literary texts rather than as writer or critic in the foreign language. At the same time literature, especially foreign language literature, can function to undermine precisely the sense of givenness and commonsense derived from the mother tongue, in which Fairclough finds the source of ideology and which to make conscious he advocates *critical* language awareness. But, as he says, "we need CLA work of a sensitive, non-dogmatic and non-directive sort". (Fairclough 1995: 231)

A demonstration of this kind of CLA work is provided by Janks & Ivanič (1992). Here I want to concentrate on what they say about reading, since reading in a certain way can lead to critical self-reflection and emancipation (which is what Janks & Ivanič focus on in particular), and I find their approach especially useful for the reading of literary texts. Their discussion revolves around the Gramscian notion of hegemony which, they say, is established through common sense (see Janks & Ivanič 1992: 306), and within texts through the positing of an ideal reader. This reader is constructed into texts, which all "work to 'anchor' some meanings in preference to others" (Ibid.: 307), thus 'interpellating' him or her. (See ibid.: 308) The point is to resist interpellation, not to

oppose it (see ibid.: 309), through the recognition that "speakers and writers have the balance of power in their favour". (Ibid.: 314) But according to Janks & Ivanić raised consciousness is not enough and must become action (see ibid.: 305)[11]:

> Turning awareness into action means practising critical and appositional reading, listening and viewing – of advertisements [and literary texts!] for instance. This means not accepting automatically the role of 'ideal reader' which is constructed in the text, but questioning and if necessary rejecting the view of the world represented there. (Janks & Ivanić 1992: 316)

Again this might be a difficult project in foreign language literature learning because learners are not naturally privy to its discourse. However this 'strangeness' can be turned to the advantage of these learners who may find it easier not to be interpellated by such texts, so that the powerlessness of those "who enrol for language classes" (ibid.: 316) can be turned into the power of distance[12], and with it of resistence.

I agree with Janks & Ivanić that "CLA should underlie all language teaching and learning", and that it "should regularly be foregrounded in other disciplines". (Janks & Ivanić 1992: 320) In my view literature classes are particularly suited to this, given the difficulty that practising "for real purposes" may pose. (Ibid.) They acknowledge "the reality that this is not always practical. Educators often have to resort to simulations, but these need to specify not only the content for

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[11] See also Barnett (1997) who understands criticality "as taking place in three *domains*: knowledge, the self and the world. Respectively three forms of critical being are possible: critical reason, critical self-reflection and critical action". (Barnett 1997: 7)

[12] See Kelly (1999: 400) on 'distanciation' and its application to texts: "What the text says now is not necessarily what the author meant it to say, and the meaning of an inscribed (written) event surpasses the meaning contextualised in a situated event. This 'excess' or 'surplus of meaning' is a crucial feature of the text. [...] The point is that when we view an experience [or a text] from a distance *we can say things about it that we could not say from within the situation.*" (My italics.)

communication but also the complexities of social relationships in which they are embedded".

(Ibid.: 321) As far as literary studies are concerned, an approach, which for instance emphasises

the constructedness of literary texts, can uncover the authorial choices made in preference to

others, and thus situate the production of these texts in a particular social context. This in turn

can open up spaces for the resistant reading that is so necessary for the development of criticality.

In my view such an approach can best be realised through the use of functional grammar and its

view of texts as being constructed with specific means, serving specific purposes, within specific

contexts. Kress's work in particular can be fruitfully applied to second and foreign language

literary texts since it pays close attention to linguistic details as being embedded in social

functions, while at the same time reflecting on educational practice. The latter is the focus of his

essay *Genre as Social Process* (Kress 1993); I will discuss it later. At this stage I am interested

in his earlier work, *Linguistic Processes in Sociocultural Practice* (Kress 1989) and will refer

especially to his thoughts on reading.

Kress's premise is that the agents involved in discourse, that is "the listener/reader, speaker/writer"

are "social agent[s], located in a network of social relations, in specific places in a social

structure". (Kress 1989: 5) The reader's place in this "network of social relations" is first and

foremost that of being positioned to accept what the text says as "unproblematic and 'natural'".

(Ibid.) In the genre of narrative texts, for example, the narrator (as structured by the discourse as

well) positions the potential reader by establishing his/her authority as the person who 'knows'

through having an overview of the events or a privileged insight into the agents as constituted in

the narration (this is the case usually in 19th century realist novels), or, lacking such authoritative

overview or insight, presents his/her bona fides by for instance being a reliable informant (the case

in more modern narratives). But whatever the case may be, the reader is expected to follow the rules of the particular discourse; as Kress puts it more generally:

> The constantly insistent demands of a discourse [...] to 'be' certain kinds of things, to act in certain ways, have short-term and long-term effects. In the short term a reading position is constructed by a discourse, which provides instructions about how to read a text or set of texts. That instruction is always also an instruction to act in certain ways, to take stances, to conform or adapt. In the long term these constantly reiterated demands construct certain 'subject positions', that is, sets of statements which describe and prescribe a range of actions, modes of thinking and being, for an individual, compatible with the demands of a discourse. (Kress 1989: 37; see also 39)

These considerations make a strong case for reading resistantly – and for teaching readers how this can be done, that is, how they can look for alternative positions from which they can regard critically what the text expects of them. Reading the literary texts of a second or foreign language, then, can have a dual function: firstly, because their readers cannot by a far stretch be ideal, accepting readers, they need from the outset not to accept the position inscribed for them by the texts, and secondly, going back to the basic hermeneutic premise, they can learn about the cultural presuppositions of a different discourse.

But that means a teaching and learning situation that supports both an emancipatory and a critical project. Kress (1993) examines how such a project, that is "the possibility of understanding language-in-culture and language-in-society, to allow for a focus on those factors which reveal matters of cultural and social significance, difference and relevance" (Kress 1993: 23) can be realised in educational terms. For this understanding Kress favours a genre approach to texts because here "the emphasis is [...] on an understanding of what language is doing and being made to do in specific situations in order to make particular meanings". (Ibid.) Genre is defined as those aspects of textual structure and function that are conventional, "with a particular way of expressing (coding) social relationships". (Ibid.) Because of the repetitive nature of generic

conventions, they appear to be natural and common sense, and it is this that a critical view of discourse tries to undermine, in order to "prepare", in Kress's words, "productive, innovative citizens capable of dealing with the problems of the coming decades". (Kress 1993: 29). This is reminiscent of the aims both the WP and *New Landscape* have for higher education in this country (see Chapter 1) and is clearly a matter of curriculum content and process, a curriculum which is contextualised in our own situation, viz. one "in which linguistic plurality, diversity, and difference are shown to be the inevitable conditions [...]". (Ibid.) Kress makes the point that this plurality, diversity and difference "constitute one of the most productive reservoirs and resources for cultural (and consequently social, political, economic) innovation". (Ibid.)

For a curriculum that recognises plurality, diversity and difference to be realised, Kress continues, four points need to be considered concerning language studies: firstly that oral language be seen as an important skill to be developed; secondly that "the whole set of connections of culture, society, and language, codings of value systems, structuring and realisations of systems of power, and [...] the possibilities of making meanings in language as such, and in the languages of a specific plurilingual society in particular" be the central focus of language studies; thirdly, that critiques, and with them the "possibilities of change" be developed, and fourthly, "the relation between a language curriculum, society, and social change in general" be debated. (Kress 1993: 29-30) My own concerns are not primarily literacy which is the thematic context within which Kress situates his argument – at least not the literacy that deals specifically with basic reading and writing skills. Consequently the first point that Kress makes (about oral and written language) does not feature large in my own reflections on curriculum, for reasons that will become apparent later. The points about culture, society and language, and about critique and change, on the other hand, I see as central to my teaching and students' learning. Kress points out that "literacy as

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such" includes "considerations around reading", and that if it is not given due attention, "then the producer-centred emphasis of mainstream linguistics [as well as some literary theories and regimes of literary criticism, one might add] will simply be reintroduced into genre work, with all its attendant problems", such as skewed power relations. (Ibid.: 30)

Kress then outlines two types of genre approach to text. The one "focuses most on the purposes of the participants who produced the text; on the task that they wished the text to perform". (Ibid.: 32) As Kress points out, in this approach texts are classified into a small number of textual types, much like the traditional literary genres, and "genre becomes that category which describes all there is to know and say about a text". (Ibid.: 33)[13] The danger in this kind of approach, as I see it – and my teaching practice seems to support this, see below – is that the text could too easily be divorced from its broader context, that is, the agents involved both in its production and its reception could easily be disregarded. Beside that, this is an approach which would probably produce significant results in the analysis of short texts (short stories, poems), rather than longer ones such as novels; its application in this case could be extremely time-consuming. I am therefore more inclined towards Kress's second, and favoured, approach which sees genre as only one aspect of textual structuring and functioning. Other aspects such as plot and character which are decisive in narrative texts are important as well as they can have "quite profound effects on linguistic realisations". (Ibid.: 34) The umbrella-term for Kress is therefore not genre but register, which does seem to be the broader term, that is the one that provides more analytic scope. Register, for Kress, "forms the complex which constitutes significantly different text types" and it includes, in addition to those categories mentioned already, dialect, mode, and discourse. (See

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[13] Butt & al., on which I based some of my own teaching, approach texts this way.

ibid.: 35, Figure 1.) This could be confusing especially in teaching; according to the theories

outlined above 'discourse' should be the first term in the hierarchy, and 'mode' is one of the

metafunctions in Halliday's functional grammar. But despite this Kress's point remains valid,

namely that whatever terms (or categories) one uses, they should be "theorised in terms of larger

social theories". (Ibid.) Besides, Kress's own approach that "tends towards a more historical/fluid

view of generic form, depending on the prior contingencies of social structuring; [and has] an

emphasis on the generative force of social categories" (ibid.), is very much in line with the

Gadamer/Habermas hermeneutic approach which I outlined above (see Chapter 2). Kress

maintains that the teaching that goes with this approach is less authoritarian, whereas by contrast

"authoritarian modes of transmission" and "an emphasis on matters of form"[14] seem to go hand

in hand. (Ibid.) This will of course have to be confirmed in practice.

The approaches to (genre and) discourse that Kress describes are in evidence in two works that

deal specifically with literature as/and discourse, viz. Hodge (1990) and Cook (1994).[15] Hodge's

approach is similar to both Fairclough's and Kress's with regard to notions of ideology and genre

respectively, but they are applied to mainly English literary studies. This means that there is an

attempt to define – perhaps one should rather say 'designate', since a definition of literature is

notoriously difficult[16] – the object of literary studies. (See Hodge 1990: 12) He makes the point

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[14] Kress stresses that such an emphasis is a matter of focus, so that while he does not "ignore the sequencing which gives [a] text one of its characteristic features" – which is what "[James] Martin and his colleagues" would stress – he himself "would prefer to begin with an attempt to describe the social relations between the participants in [a text] and the wider social structures which are exemplified [in it]". (Kress 1993: 34)

[15] The title of the book by Cook (Cook 1994) has the 'and'; the conjunction separates the terms, with certain consequences which are to be discussed below.

[16] For this see Eagleton's (1983: 1-16) *Introduction: What is Literature?*

that 'literary studies' as a "logonomic system"[17] defines 'literature' as a universal category of texts which is to be dealt with in a prescribed way, but that in a "social semiotic approach the discourses of 'criticism' [...] are intrinsic to the object of study, in many respects the most important dimension". (Ibid.: 18) With this I understand him to advocate that the metalinguistic and metacritical skills that learners are *assumed* to have mastered – that is, if the logonomic system of 'literary criticism' is taken as an unreflected norm for dealing with literature – are to be taught consciously, reflexively and critically. In practice this would mean including theory (of discourse, of literature, of genre, etc.) in the teaching and learning project in order to lay bare, in quasi Formalist parlance, the motives of literary criticism as a discipline. It would also mean that the literary canon (which arguably represents another instance of common sense) should be subverted by including, say, marginalised literary discourses[18], or reading canonical works resistantly.

Cook (1994) on the other hand concentrates on textual form and defines discourse in terms of (textual) coherence:

'Discourse', as opposed to text, is a stretch of language in use, taking on meaning in context for its users, and perceived by them as purposeful, meaningful, and connected. This quality of perceived purpose, meaning and connection is known as 'coherence'.

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[17] "'Logonomic' comes from two Greek words: *nomos* meaning a rule or system of regulations, and *logos* meaning both word or speech (as in 'dialogue') and ideas or body of thought [...]. This double meaning [...] is important because logonomic systems typically control both forms of thought and forms of language and discourse, indeed, control each through the other. Logonomic systems arise to maintain relations of power and cohesion within groups or institutions". (Hodge 1990: 12) I don't see how this is different from Gee's definition of 'Discourse'. One could make the point that labels themselves tend to establish authority – and power.

[18] This is what Shusterman does when he devotes a chapter of his book to the analysis and interpretation of Rap lyrics. See Shusterman (1992: 201-235; the chapter has the title *The Fine Art of Rap*.)

'Discourse analysis' is the study and the explanation of this quality of coherence. A discourse *is* a coherent stretch of language. (Cook 1994: 25)

Cook's aim is to show from a cognitive-psychological perspective how literature can effect what he calls 'schema change', and he bases his approach on Artificial Intelligence and Schema theory.[19] What is important for him is "a view of meaning as actively constructed by the mind through the interplay of the text with knowledge and reasoning". (Cook 1994: 36) This he calls a "post-semiotic paradigm" (ibid.) which, contrary to a linguistic focus "upon grammar and semantics [...] devotes a large proportion of its attention to the nature and organization of knowledge of the world" (ibid.), though not, it seems, to critique. This has consequences for the teaching of literature. His concept of literature is, in the final effect, a formalist and structuralist, not a social[20], one: formalist because he tries "to see how ["formal, structural, and stylistic"] choices may act to destabilize preconceptions of a more global nature" (ibid.: 25), and structuralist because of his accentuation of mind and mental processes. Pedagogically he advocates a focus on form rather than on meaning and function, or rather he advocates that the focus on linguistic detail should come before a 'top-down' approach which emphasises the whole (see ibid.: 253), because

> it is through manipulation of detail that the individual is able to move beyond ["the larger social structures created through discourse"] and gain freedom from the constraints they impose. Attention to the larger structures is a first step, and certainly an essential one to a student seeking to understand an unfamiliar culture, but a second step is to disrupt or refresh these structures. (Ibid.)

This also means understanding the function that literature has "especially for the inner mental world of the individual" (ibid.: 255), provided that its social functions are understood as well. But Cook eschews teaching literature as communication precisely because "literary discourse is not

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[19] Both have their foundation in Gestalt theory; see Cook (1994: 9-11).

[20] See Cook (1994: 2-4) for reasons why he finds a "social approach" (ibid.: 1) to literature "damaging [...] in the classroom". (Ibid.: 2)

just one more genre or social institution among others". (Ibid.) He separates it from "[social uses of language [which] demand rapid response and interaction" (ibid.), whereas "the literary experience is more typically effected when the individual withdraws from the world of social and practical necessity". (Ibid.) This may be so, but for an educational project that wants to foster criticality and democratic, collective values, the focus is too much on the individual subject. Schema disruption and refreshment should, I think, serve a larger purpose.

Chapter 4.

Foreign Language Literature Learning and Teaching in Action: a classroom project.

1.   Introduction.

The literature learning and teaching project that will now be discussed took place during regular teaching in the second semester of 2000. The participants were four students, one of whom was studying at second level and three at third level in the discipline of German, with me as the lecturer. We had approximately 25 periods of 45 minutes each in which to complete the course.

The reasons for combining the second and third levels in the course were as follows: firstly students on both levels have a choice between German Literature and Business German, with most opting for the latter. The second level student had however opted for literature and expressed the wish to be part of a group -- she would have been the only student if the levels had not been combined. The second reason is the very low number of students enrolling for the discipline; any additional voice, I felt, would add significantly to the classroom process. Thirdly, the student in question was very competent in the discipline; as it turned out, she produced the best result for the course.

With regard to experience in the reading and interpreting of German literature, all students had had at least one semester dealing with the subject. Of the third level students two had opted to

do Business German and one for 18th and 19th century German Literature. The course I taught on more recent (20th century) German literature, which is under consideration here, was obligatory. The optional course on older literature was taught by a colleague who had a different teaching style from the one I prefer. I mention this because the student who took that course had obvious difficulty with my teaching style. This she wrote in her journal as well as communicating it to me verbally. The reason for this may have been that she was a mature student and the only native (Swiss) German speaker in the group. The others were all competent third language German speakers and in the traditional age-group of students at a residential university. From what I could gauge, all involved are from middle-class white backgrounds (including myself). Finally, three of the students were enrolled for Humanities degrees while the fourth was in his final year of a Bachelor of Science.

The aims of the classroom project that we undertook were firstly for the students to become culturally aware, or rather, since there was evidence of cultural awareness already (probably because of their backgrounds), to deepen it. Secondly, coupled with the (deepened) cultural awareness, an aim was to foster critical reflection both with regard to the individual and to broader societal issues. Thirdly, and closely connected to the other two aims, a goal was to make students critically aware of language as discourse. Therefore the approach chosen was one of hermeneutic process, both in the classroom and in dealing with literary texts, combined with elements of functional grammar, the latter with the particular intention of the students gaining insight into the construction and workings of literary language and discourse.

2.   Description of the project.

Two shorter German novels were discussed in the teaching and learning project; about twelve periods were devoted to each. This coincided with the two quarters that made up the semester. The students had the holiday periods preceding each semester to read the novels.

The texts, Heinrich Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (in translation: *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*) and Bernhard Schlink's *Der Vorleser* (*The Reader*), were chosen firstly for their relative brevity and linguistic accessibility to third language speakers. As it turned out the first novel was found to be linguistically rather more difficult than I had expected, but this was balanced to some degree by the availability of many secondary titles and a video film with English sub-titles. The other work was available in English translation, but in the end this was hardly needed since the novel proved to be very accessible.

The novels were also chosen for thematic relevance not only with regard to the German situation, – both are very topical and their respective plots rely heavily on relatively recent events in German cultural and political history – but also for possible parallels to our own South African context. *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* has yellow journalism and systemic violence as its theme, while *The Reader* deals with illiteracy and coming to terms with the Nazi past. Thirdly, both are interesting examples of generic structure and function. Finally, the (possible) enjoyment factor was taken into account. Both novels are "good reads" in that they present a suitable mixture of love, lust and violence, have protagonists with whom one can easily empathise and identify (and in the case of *Katharina Blum* truly villainous antagonists), and they do not come up with easy solutions to the problems and issues represented.

Students were given a number of other, non-literary texts for further reading and discussion in the course of the semester. These included background material on the political situation in Germany during the 1970's, concerning the Baader-Meinhof gang and their victimization at the hand of the boulevard press once they were arrested, as presented by Böll who was the victim of slanderous accusations himself; excerpts from the principles of the German Press Council regarding journalistic ethics; a short piece written by an author who had uncovered unethical practices in a particular German newspaper; a few quotations concerning the concept of violence, and Böll's own views about the situation in the 1970's. In the case of *The Reader* the extra material comprised views on the effects of illiteracy on personal development and the social functioning of an individual, a piece dealing critically with Daniel Goldhagen's Holocaust book, and an article on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, which draws parallels to the German efforts of dealing with the Holocaust (such as the Nuremberg Trials). The purpose of this extra material was to situate the particular novels in a larger socio-political context and to aid the exploration of parallels to our own situation, as well as to encourage discussion.

A different set of materials was made up of notes I had prepared on functional grammar (Appendix A), based mainly on Butt & al. (1995) and on workshop materials provided by Polias (2000). The purpose of these was to serve as a general introduction to the grammar so that the students would be able to employ its metalinguistic terms both in textual analysis, and in the interpretive work needed to connect the analysis to the context of situation and culture. The terms used were, where possible, translated by me into German, but for greater clarity the English was made available as well, as students were allowed, should they wish, to carry on discussions and write their assignments in English.

Dealing more specifically with the classroom process, at the beginning of the semester the students were given two documents I had compiled on mainly theoretical and philosophical aspects of literature learning (and to a lesser extent, teaching) (Appendix B). One document deals with learner types, levels of knowledge and quality in learning and teaching, the purpose of which was to make the learners aware of their own learning processes[1], and the other dealt with the basic premises of critical hermeneutics pertaining both to the classroom processes and to the interpretation of literary texts. This document included a summary of a discussion we had had in class the previous week, on the reasons for, and functions of literary studies.

Finally, at the beginning of each quarter the students were given an outline of what was to take place in the sessions in order to facilitate preparation. Preparation was crucial for discussion (and not lecturing, although this also took place at certain stages) to take place freely. The outline showed how we were going to proceed as well. After an introduction to the project itself and the assumptions on which it was based, and to the basic concepts of functional grammar, the movement was bottom-up, that is from linguistic details of the text to broader thematic discussions. After the introductory session, then, we moved immediately to the analysis of the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions as expressed by the text. In the case of *Katharina Blum* we analysed the first (short) chapter in this way in order to arrive at a sense of how the theme of the novel is treated in the narrative. With *Der Vorleser* we analysed the beginning chapters of each of the three 'books' that make up the novel. This was to show how the

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[1] I had used this document for a previous evaluation project in a classroom situation. In that situation it was effective since the particular outcome I was aiming at was for the students to reflect specifically on their own learning. In this case, there was little follow-up from my side, which does not mean however that students' learning in the literature course was less reflected. It just means that they did not use the particular terms I had made available to them in the document.

autobiographical narrator developed from an adolescent to a middle-aged man. From these beginnings we tried to tie in the analyses with the larger context of the novels themselves. This was done by discussing the themes and sub-themes of each, moving towards the larger socio-political context that existed beyond the texts. The last periods in each case were spent in discussing and evaluating the novels against the background of non-literary texts dealing with similar problems, and in attempting to gauge their relevance with regard to our own context.

In the course of the semester the students were expected to complete five assignments which together with their journals formed their class mark. The assignments were varied according to specific outcomes. The first three were rather easier (or so I thought, see below) because the novel on which they were based, *Katharina Blum*, was the more difficult to read. For the first assignment students were expected to write a summary of the novel's plot, after having seen the video. The aim of this exercise was to gauge how well the plot had been understood, and the outcome was correspondingly for the students to demonstrate their ability to abstract relevant information. The second exercise was to analyse the second (short) chapter of the novel with the tools of functional grammar, and to interpret what this text meant in terms of the narrator's reflection on the process of narration. The aim here was to apply the analytic tools to a text and to start connecting the analysis to the larger context of the (complete) novel. The outcome in this case was the demonstration of application skills, since a similar analysis had been done in class already. In addition students were expected to show their grasp of what the text means in terms of the whole novel, that is, that they can, at least in a rudimentary fashion, interpret the text. The third exercise had the aim of situating the novel within the context of the author's body of work. Students were asked to gather biographical information and information regarding the other works of the author and to make thematic connections to the novel under discussion. They were

thus expected to show that they could abstract information and compare it with different but related data. The comparative simplicity of these exercises – in the sense that they did not require much 'hard-core' literary criticism – was intentional. Their overarching purpose was to motivate students to start reflecting on what is involved in the study of literature as discourse, on two levels, viz. the substantive and the theoretical. The first, substantive, level concerns the actual material, in the specific context, beginning with the 'surface' discourse (the plot), its linguistic realisation in the functional-grammatical detail of language use[2], and ending, in this case, in an examination of the author as a situated subject with an agenda, which explains some of the choices made in the particular text. The theoretical level, on the other hand, concerns the discipline of literary studies as a logonomic system, in Hodge's sense (Hodge 1990: 12; see my discussion of this in Chapter 3, especially Footnote 17), though without the expressed intention of critique. The latter was implied, however, in that these assignments were designed to begin a hermeneutic process (see Chapter 2, especially the section on Gadamer); the designated area for explicit critique were the learners' journals (see "Evaluation" below).

The last two assignments (on *Der Vorleser*) concentrated to a much larger extent on interpretation and criticism. For the first of these students were asked to do an Internet search for reader reviews on *Der Vorleser*, to pick three of them and to engage with them critically. They were also asked to find evidence in the novel itself for the views expressed in the reader reviews, and for their own views. The aim of this exercise was for the students to engage with other opinions and to provide a foundation for their own views, while trying to understand how those

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[2] In structuralist terms, 'surface discourse' applies to the linguistic realisation and not to plot; the latter would be labeled 'deep structure'. My own usage of the terms obviously does not accord with the vocabulary of Structuralism, but indicates rather a movement from less to more detailed examination of a text.

other views may have arisen. The intended outcome here was both empathy, critical reflection on own opinions, and the ability to express both the opinions and their criticism. The last exercise was a traditional critical essay, the topic of which, however, the students could choose themselves. The intention here was to allow the students the pursuit of their own interests and to do some independent research. The outcomes were a demonstration of independent, critical thought and the ability to articulate this. In addition they were required to show that they have information gathering and referencing skills. – It is clear, then, that these exercises focused on the more traditional tasks of literary studies, viz. the critical engagement with texts along with the use of secondary sources. However, because the students were given free choice of topic for their final assignment, the equally traditional power relations on which the discipline of literary studies rests – those of the teacher/lecturer deciding which topics are worth serious academic discussion, and which not, and thereby in effect already offering an implicitly authoritative interpretation – were defused, to an extent.

3.   Evaluation.

For purposes of evaluating the teaching and learning that took place all of us kept a journal dealing with what happened during the classroom sessions. Entries into the journal were made after each session. During the last session of the semester, the students were in addition asked to fill in a questionnaire I had devised (see Appendix C). As the students had never kept a learning and teaching journal before, I made suggestions as to what issues they could address, but did not require them to follow my suggestions to the letter; it was stressed that they were merely guidelines. In order to encourage them to keep up with their journal writing, the students were promised that the journals would count towards 15% of their class mark. In this evaluation I

concentrate on their concerns as expressed both in the journals and in the questionnaire, and will use my own journal for the discussion that is to follow this evaluation.

All students wrote freely in their journals, although one started off hers saying "I'm not sure what is the exact meaning of this Journal only that it is about understanding of [sic] what has been said in the lecture", and ending with: "Am after all this not really sure what I was supposed to write in the journal". (My translation.)[3] She was absent during the first sessions which may explain this insecurity. All students were given a document (see Appendix B) including suggestions about how to keep the journal, and generally they kept to the suggestions. These were (in translation, since they were handed out to the students in German):

- what have I learnt (that is new)?

- what did I understand/not understand?

- how did I arrive at this understanding/not understanding?

- how and in what other situations could I apply what I learnt?

- did I acquire any skills? Which ones?

- which questions could one ask with regard to the (prescribed) texts?

- which questions does the text answer and which not?

- how could the teaching have been arranged for me to learn better?

The purpose of keeping the journal was made clear as well, namely critical reflection on the course material, the teaching, and the learning process. The journals are titled A, B, C, and D.

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[3] The student started off writing in English but very soon turned to German. I suspect she was more comfortable using German since it is her mother tongue.

The students grappled mostly with the content of what was being taught during the classroom periods, initially, especially with the functional grammar. The students either found "this very difficult to understand – v[ery] new concepts. Saw no way of applying what we had learnt for my own interpretation of literature – v specific and clinical. Relevance?" (C), or considered "the degree of formality unnecessary". (A)[4] Once the terms had been applied in class to a text, however, some of the confusion dissipated: "I didn't understand or grasp [field, tenor and mode] until today. [...] No longer do I mind that concepts are dealt with in such depth, since it is quite interesting to learn how to do things and see things from another perspective". (B) Still, the "link between analysis + interpretation isn't quite clear". (C) One person found the "Functional Grammar approach beyond me. Whilst the approach is easy to apply in terms of breaking down the text grammatically, linking the results to some meaning myself is nigh on impossible" (A), but that "Field, Tenor and Mode make sense after working through a smaller example completely. [...] Making an interpretation now seems easier". (A) B found the discussion of new concepts "quite nerve-wracking" and D thought that "quite a few things" were "incomprehensible" (my translation[5]), but did not elaborate. On the whole D used the journal more to think about the novels themselves; she gets more and more involved with their events and characters as time passed. She empathises, for example, with the main character in *Katharina Blum* on the grounds of her own experience with reading a Swiss paper: "I can imagine quite well how one can be slandered by a newspaper because I have read [the paper in question]". She had trouble throughout with the concept of "genres, circumstances etc. because I know about the genres

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[4] I assume that 'formality' here applies to the concepts that were introduced and thus echoes A's 'clinical'; I do not think that the classroom process could be termed 'formal' because of the small number of persons involved.

[5] This applies every time I quote D from now on.

automatically what they mean." At times she found the German used in class difficult: "too complicated". She uses the example of *"ontologisch gedachtes Wertsystem"* ('ontologically assumed value system') which to be fair is complicated, but it was explained and applied in class and the other students had no problem with it. D was however absent from the class when I applied the concept to the value system as represented in *Katharina Blum* and which I used in the subsequent session for reinforcement. Her absence explains D's exasperation. She also recognised that her difficulties may stem from the fact that her mother tongue had not developed academically (this she wrote in her journal; she had maintained that German only should be used in class: "I feel that in third year only German should be used because otherwise you don't get into the events[?] properly". The other students, who were not mother tongue German speakers, either did not mention the use of English or were relieved that they were allowed to do so. B wrote, "I was very glad to hear that we were allowed to write in English, even though I believe that writing in German will build up my confidence in the language. However, I feel as though I am able to express my thoughts and experience much better when using English". (This was probably the general feeling.)

The students' perception of the strangeness, and in some cases incomprehensibility of functional grammar changed when we applied it to the second novel, with some reservations:

> As we revisited the techniques we used to analyse Katharina Blum, with Der Vorleser, many became clearer. I think insight learned kicked in here. Some things just suddenly made sense. (A)

> [...] we analysed and interpreted two sections of the book, by means of underlining the text with different colours to indicate the processes, participants and circumstances. I, particularly, don't like this exercise even though it is not very difficult, because it seems very grammatical. There must be a good reason for doing it though, maybe it emphasises the purpose of the story.

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[Entry for the next week:] I actually don't mind [analysing and interpreting the text grammatically] that much – it helps quite a bit to understand the genre and purpose of the story. (B)

Again, we did tenor, mode + field, → understand much better this time, possibly because of having repeatedly looked at it and the reinforcement of the Grammar lessons. (C. This student attended my second level language and translation classes.)
[Entry for the subsequent session:] Aaah, some relevance to funct. Grammatik [sic]! Today we decided how our conclusions from the small text analysed last week could be seen in terms of the whole Teil [section], which was interesting. (C)

Today it was yet again the day of genres, circumstances etc. Am still not completely in the clear about it. (D)

All in all, however, the reservations about using functional grammar in literary analysis and interpretation outweighed perceptions of its usefulness. C, for instance, wrote: "I still feel, however, the best way of interpreting a text is not to divide it into tiny parts + examine them closely." There seemed to be general relief, therefore, when we started discussing the texts from more encompassing perspectives. A wrote: "The discussion of intervention, and the idea that the text was written as one[6], coupled with the discussion of Vice vs. Virtue is easy to follow and makes sense. Analysing the text on a more holistic level is more comfortable for me". C noted her enjoyment of this more "holistic" approach, since "it gave a much broader view of the whole text + was much more interesting", and after the next class: "We examined the background to the novel, which really gave it relevance + focus for me". Similar views were expressed with regard to the second novel. Concerning the discussion of coming to terms with the past, B wrote: "Michael writes his book and reads to Hanna in prison, using cassettes, so that he comes to terms with any guilt or shame about his relationship with her in the past. Hanna also reconciles by learning how to read and write [...]. However, I still don't completely understand why she killed

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[6] I had suggested that the narrator of *Katharina Blum* wanted to put things in a proper perspective with regard to the protagonist, hence the idea of intervention.

herself. Maybe it's because Michael didn't reply to her letter?" The growing involvement with the story of the novel as expressed in B's entry is reflected almost throughout by the other students, the one exception being A who found the novel "boring and predictable".

As far as conscious learning was concerned, there were some interesting comments showing self-reflection. Some entries concentrated on enjoyment of the relevant classroom session, or frustration, as noted above. But then there were remarks such as C's: "Listening to everyone's opinions helped contribute to my understanding of Katharina." A commented on the use of secondary literature as restricting the development of "one's own opinion", saying that "All statements we make must be backed up, which is fair enough except in the case of opinion. Even so they must be backed up more often than not by someone else's viewpoints, meaning we are only rehashing old arguments". C reflected often on how she came to understand something: "This was something I could really relate to in the environment around me" (referring to the "responsibilities of the press"); "[the discussion on *Der Vorleser*'s plot] was good to clarify the story in my mind – reading in German means I sometimes unknowingly miss out vital facts"; [the discussion of communication between Michael and Hanna] I understood + enjoyed, mostly because through reading I had picked up many of the basic points myself, and so by organising them in a discussion made a lot more sense, + new concepts could build on the ones I had thought out myself". (If C did not understand something, it was mostly on the grounds of complicated language.)

B in particular constantly reflected on classroom interaction from her point of view. She seemed very conscious of authority structures, writing about what students were "allowed" to do ("we are allowed to work together in order to help each other" – I usually encourage students to work

together, should they so wish), about her work not being "correct": "I found it quite surprising that all the facts I had gathered [background information about the author Böll were somehow incorrect [...] It seems unfair that most of my comments are criticized just because I was the only person to admit not reading the entire book [*Katharina Blum*]. [...] I feel as though I am really suffering because I told the truth", and "I don't understand why my efforts to do well in class always have to backfire – perhaps I'm trying to [sic] hard". She also shows great pleasure at having been "right": "My answer to a question she [the lecturer] posed, which required in-depth interpretation, was very good" and frustration when she perceived, after further discussion, that "my answer was no longer good enough". All this points to a perception of knowledge as 'right' or 'wrong' facts and a sense of the authority vested in having such knowledge, as well as the intuitive recognition that things were not quite done in that way in class. This will be addressed in more general terms in the discussion that is to follow this section.

I now turn to a description of the responses to the questionnaire mentioned above. Its purpose was to gauge more specifically how successful or not the course was run with regard to the materials and the approach(es) used, and to the learning that had taken place (see Appendix C). The questions asked all required qualified responses.

All respondents found the first novel discussed more difficult than the second. This accords with the journal entries on the subject. It was generally found relevant to "how society operates and is influenced by the press", as one respondent wrote; another however maintained that it was not all that "relevant today because of tight press control", but rather in "other areas". Two preferred the other novel because it was "a very easy book to understand", and two found the first though more difficult, more interesting: "Michael in Hanna [of *Der Vorleser*] were nothing I could relate

to". Another respondent however empathised strongly with the characters. This novel was generally found relevant, particularly with regard to the TRC.

With regard to the additional material, all found it both useful and relevant, although in one instance "more so in the case of *Der Vorleser*. It was only after reading the extra material that I was able to start working on central aspects of the novel". For this particular respondent the background material for *Katharina Blum* "went mostly over my head, and I struggled to tie it concretely to what we were doing @ the time". This was repeated in another response that commented on the availability of secondary material in the library, which would have been more useful.

The students were also asked what they had expected to learn from the course and whether their expectations had been fulfilled. One had "no expectations to speak of" and therefore did not answer the second question; one did not respond directly to the question but rather wrote about enjoyment (this respondent had obvious difficulties with most of the questions and generally failed to elaborate on the answer when asked to). Two gave detailed responses to both questions and noted their expectations as "how to analyse text, as well as interpret it" (this respondent was also interested in understanding "the author's intentions"), and "a greater knowledge of German literature and culture". Both found that their expectations had been fulfilled. One was "prompted to think a lot on the issue of press control over individuals, + about how relevant the Nazi-time still is to Germany today", while the other found that "my concentration and attention-span was tested while reading K. Blum".

Asked about the relevance and usefulness of functional grammar in literary analysis and interpretation, the responses were largely negative with regard to its relevance: "far too clinical"; "its relevance is greatly decided by the importance laid [by the teacher?] on the approach", and "it's not part of the module, in my opinion". As for its usefulness, one was slightly more positive: "It's useful in trying to understand the style and intent of the text"; another "found it very usefull [sic] for the interpretation especially as I relearnt the grammatical terms". Most found that after initial difficulties they could apply the grammar to their satisfaction, but one wrote: "I found it difficult to extract any meaning from labeling the different words according to what part of functional grammar they were". This respondent was the only one who, when asked whether a different approach to literature would have been preferable, gave some useful suggestions (another also suggested a different approach but professed ignorance as to what this could be): "I prefer a broader approach, looking at character, themes, general style of writing etc. Going from the specific (the word) to the general (what it meant for the book as a whole) I found frustrating." All respondents had reservations concerning their understanding of the general aims of the course, that is, they were not sure what these were. One did however find the "outline at the beginning of each section [...] helpful". (See Appendix D for the course outlines.)

The assignments on the other hand were generally found to be manageable, useful and relevant. The one exception is the respondent who wrote to this question, "I was not always sure what was expected of me". One found the exercise on reader reviews (*Der Vorleser*) "pointless" while another thought just the opposite: "analysing other people's opinions [was] especially useful, as it provoked many new thought-directions". Yet another noted that "it [doing the assignments] helps with exam preparations". Two were not always sure what was expected in the assignments, and two were, but "failed to see the relevance or point of some. In most cases this became clear

only when discussing them in class". Another criticism concerned the functional grammar assignment, "but that might have been because of my general bias against it".

All in all the respondents thought that there was enough time for them to voice their own opinions, with one qualification: "or at least when someone wished to discuss something, time was always made". There was more reservation about general discussion time: "some topics should have been more completely discussed"; it "would have been nice to spend at least 5 minutes after each session discussing lesson"; in the case of *Der Vorleser* "much of the work took the form of a lecture. Possibly theme could have been presented to us solely for us to work through orally", and "Not always [was there enough time for discussion], but my opinions and thoughts I couldn't express in class, are included in my journal".

The last two questions of the questionnaire related to suggestions for the improvement of the overall learning and teaching experience, and to general comments. Suggestions concerning materials included "More availability of secondary literature" which should be "put [...] on short loan" (as another respondent suggested). In general there was agreement about the prescribed literary texts: "I think 20th century literature is very nice to read" and "I enjoyed both books". As regards the assignments, most respondents expressed their desire for shorter essays "on a particular theme", and one noted that "essays of the student's choice" were desirable since "One has to think about stuff even before writing the essay". Suggestions concerning the teaching were relatively uniform: most wanted more discussions that went into detail about certain themes or topics, but one wrote "I prefer the type of lecture where detailed notes are provided and not so much discussion expected". In the general comments, the following suggestions were made: "It would be useful to have a tutorial group once a week, where you can prepare for the following

lesson, or where one can discuss the previous lecture in a group with a lecturer" (as is done in the disciplines which have more students), and "Perhaps discussing an example of assignments before taking them home would help". One respondent commented about the course load being "a bit heavy, but not too difficult", while another found the double period we were forced to have because of timetable difficulties "very wearying".

4.   Discussion.

The questions that now need to be asked are firstly, what conclusions can be drawn from the journals and the questionnaire responses with regard to the learning and teaching processes that took place, and secondly, whether there is evidence that the approach(es) used in the literature classes did indeed bring about critical thought.

Before attempting to answer these questions however, some reflection on the research method undertaken in the project is necessary. It is quite clear that four respondents to a questionnaire cannot begin to represent a significant sample from which one could draw general conclusions with regard to a larger population. The questionnaire was designed to reflect this: all the questions are open-ended and are intended to invite individual reflection on what had taken place. This was also the purpose of the journal that the students were required to keep. As it is, the picture that emerges from both is one of four quite distinct personalities dealing in their individual ways with the situation. The research therefore can only be termed interpretive, for which Terre Blanche & Kelly (1999) give the following guidelines:

> A key principle of interpretive analysis is to stay close to the data, to interpret it from a position of empathic understanding. [...] the purpose of interpretive analysis is to provide 'thick description', by which is meant a thorough description of the characteristics,

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processes, transactions and contexts that constitute the phenomenon studied, couched in language not alien to the phenomenon, as well as an account of the researcher's role in constructing this description. Clearly this would be impossible if you kept the data at arm's length. (Terre Blanche & Kelly 1999: 139)

The previous section on evaluation evaluation fits this description of interpretive research to the extent that the student participants are allowed to speak for themselves with little commentary on my part, whilst the context in which the project took place is described in the introductory remarks to this chapter. It is my own role in the actual classroom processes that must now be examined on the premise of the first question posed at the beginning of this section, and in combination with an examination of the second question, a conclusion can then be drawn as to the success or failure of this particular project involving these particular individuals.

It is apparent that the classroom interaction was at times one-sided, or rather, that there was little interaction in some of the sessions. This was particularly the case when functional grammar was introduced as a theory of language and a method of discourse analysis, without prior application to specific textual material. I noted in my journal that I was speaking most of the time during these sessions, and that a better way of introducing new concepts and theories might be to ask questions that could relate these to the students' own experiences so that they themselves could start formulating concepts. Judging from what the students wrote in their journals about not understanding the ideas underlying functional grammar or not seeing its relevance for literary interpretation. that would indeed have been a better way to proceed. Or perhaps a more inductive approach would have yielded better results, that is, starting with an analysis using terms the students were familiar with, such as nouns and verbs, categorising them according to the kind of process they were describing and only then giving them the functional labels of for example processes, participants and circumstances. From there the broader ideational, interpersonal and

textual functions of language in use could have been introduced with more effect. Such a procedure may have demystified the bogeyman of functional grammar. Another alternative would have been for me to introduce the grammar to the students by providing them with a functional-grammatical text analysis on which interpretative questions are based. This would have to some extent facilitated the learning of a new discourse while simultaneously giving the students the opportunity to practise interpretation skills. This is the approach Luckett (1997) used in her work. (See Luckett 1997: 223, and 230-242 [assignments].)

However, I am not sure that a functional-grammatical approach was suitable for this particular group, leaving aside the unsuccessful deductive procedure I used. All in the group had a good command of the language and all could especially read with excellent comprehension. Since the focus of the literature course was precisely reading (and not so much writing), concentrating on the grammatical detail of the texts more often than not detracted from their overall message. It is small wonder then that with this particular group the real engagement with the two novels only arose once broader discussions on themes and the analysis of plot and character were under way. But this does not mean that a functional-grammatical approach should be jettisoned outright, depending of course on the students and on the method of introducing the concepts of the theory in the way outlined above (i.e. proceeding inductively rather than deductively). As things stood in this particular group, however, all seemed to have similar reservations to those expressed by Kress (1993), about an approach that stresses genre above what he terms 'register' (see above, Chapter 3; also my criticism of Cook's (1994) approach, ibid.). All students definitely preferred discussions on those aspects of text of which genre is only one, as Kress (1993: 34) points out, and I myself am much more inclined to such a broad approach.

Kress's suspicion that "authoritarian modes of transmission" go hand in hand with "an emphasis on matters of form" which I quoted above (see chapter 3) also seems to be confirmed by the experiences of the students taking part in the project. That some aspects of the teaching were indeed in the authoritarian transmission mode was never expressed explicitly, and was certainly not intended by me (which the students probably recognised), but a number of journal entries do suggest this. I interpret the students' expressions of frustration about the functional grammar, not so much as their failure to understand the substance of the theory, but more as their discomfort about the hermeneutic process – which was discussed in class by way of introduction to the project – not taking its due course, that is, their needs and experiences not being given the recognition they could fairly expect on the grounds of that process. This becomes especially clear in B's entries about success and failure, and about being right and wrong, but also in A's resigned comment that "now is as good a time as any" to learn about the theory. And when asked in the questionnaire to suggest improvements to the teaching, one students responded flatly: "please no more functional grammar"!

The general frustration that arose from the use of functional grammar can nonetheless be seen as an instance of a negative experience, which according to Gadamer is productive in the sense that it leads to learning (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of this). Clearly, in this case, the strangeness and difficulties of having a negative experience do not refer particularly to language, culture and traditions, but to the method used for literary analysis, a method the students had obviously not encountered before. Their generally negative response does indicate, paradoxically perhaps, that they have started to reflect on the way discourse and knowledge are constructed, and they now know that there are other, more rigorous, ways of approaching literary criticism, ways which do

not necessarily reflect their own, probably preconceived notions of how 'things are properly done'.[7]

At the same time, however, the students' responses could be seen to point to that aspect of the hermeneutic process that Habermas criticises in his examination of Gadamerian hermeneutics, viz. that it does not sufficiently address the positionality of subjects in a wider, societal context (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation). It manifests itself here in an expressed need by the individual learners to have their desires catered for, and to have their voices heard, apparently (in one or two cases) without further reflection on societal issues. I am not suggesting that this was intentional; after all, the students were expected to express just those needs in their journals. What I do suggest, is rather that such tendencies are written into the hermeneutic paradigm as such, in that it does, in the final effect, stress a *subject's* understanding, and a *subject's* learning and self-enhancement, so that as a consequence, the desired process of reaching consensual understanding may indeed end in an agreement to differ. In this sense, Gadamer's project may contain an element of "Liberalism I" which, according to Warnke (1995: 134), "is committed to individual rights and remains adamantly neutral with regard to cultural identities and projects [...]". Gadamer does, however, go beyond "Liberalism I"; the commitment to "individual rights" would only be the starting point of the hermeneutic process. He suggests, after all, that learning takes place in confrontation with difference, resulting in a "transformation", or a "fusion of horizons". (Warnke 1995: 137). This means that acquiring an unfamiliar discourse such as functional grammar, over and above the unfamiliar discourse of a second/third language's literature, constitutes an enhanced learning experience. This is desirable despite the hardships of estrangement, since, as Luckett

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[7] This is also the gist of Luckett's argument concerning the introduction of Systemic Functional Grammar to students of History. See Luckett (1997): 265.

points out, it invites learners to become "critically involved in the actual construction processes of knowledge, rather than simply manipulating its products at a surface level". (Luckett 1997: 266)

To round off this discussion I will now attempt to gauge whether this project has developed criticality, and to what extent a "culture of critical discourse" (Barnett 1997: 45) was fostered to facilitate it. The latter has already been answered in part: the approach stressing the functional-linguistic form of texts did little in this particular case, to give the students the opportunity of engaging critically with the literary texts. Conversely, it seems to me that a broader thematic approach could more easily give the students such an opportunity, provided that enough time is made available for discussions in which all concerned can participate freely. To reiterate: all the students expressed a strong desire for this type of discussion.

As far as the development of criticality is concerned, however, I have some reservations, though not in all cases. Barnett (1997) identifies "three conditions [...] which are necessary for the critical life" (as he calls it). These are 1) "*a framework* [...] of rules or values or theories" which can themselves be critiqued; 2) "*a critical space*" which allows for "empowerment" and which has "to be sustained collaboratively", and 3) "*a disposition on the part of the individual to be critical*" which calls for "brave acts". (Barnett 1997: 21-22; italics original.) As regards the critical framework, this was provided and discussed (and in this dissertation forms the substance of Chapters 2 and 3). Part of this framework however, the theory of functional grammar with its rules, did not seem to foster criticality. The reason for this is not so much the substance of the theory, although it is debatable whether the particular version I used in class is in effect a critical

theory of language.[8] Still, it provides a heuristic tool for the analysis of texts, which as such should facilitate interpretation. Be that as it may, the difficulty lay in the presentation rather than in the theory itself, as pointed out above. However, the values that form part of this framework, generally those of empathy, tolerance and democratic ideals, are in evidence in that the students at least thought about them. The second condition, namely that a "critical space' be made available, was also not fulfilled completely. I doubt that the students felt empowered by learning about functional grammar[9]; their struggles are reflected all too clearly in their assignments which in most cases could not connect the analysis to an interpretation of what the text possibly means. The collaborative sustainment of this critical space also did not always transpire, evidence of which is the students' intuitive perception of the power vested in the teacher (as having 'more' knowledge), as well as their expressed desire for more discussion, as pointed out above. Given this background it is hardly surprising that some of the students did not seem to develop critical dispositions either, as least with regard to dealing with the classroom materials. Whether the root of this failure is the students' adoption of a strategic approach to knowledge and learning, or basic insecurity with regard to academic procedures which led inevitably to the need for very specific rules and regulations, and the need to follow them to the letter, is unclear. But some did show a critical disposition and forged ahead, daringly, regardless, and had thoughts (and expressed them) that went beyond the substance of what was taught. And in addition, all the journals are themselves evidence of some fearless critique, at least with regard to the classroom activities –

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[8] Kress (1993) in effect denies that it is, maintaining that "the Martin/Rothery approach focuses most on the purpose of the participants *who produced the text*, on the task that they wished the text to perform." (32; italics added.) Butt et al. (1995) and Polias (2000) use this approach. The problem is that in the case of second/foreign language literary discourse we are dealing not with writing, but first and foremost with reading, i.e. the focus is on the recipient of a text rather than on its producer.

[9] Again, empowerment may well have been the result, had the functional grammar been used to develop writing (and not reading) skills.

in them the critical space was created, I think, which was perceived by some as lacking in the classroom. For this I thank the four students: for their forbearance and willingness to participate with such graciousness in what turned out to be, unfortunately, more my project than ours.

At the same time one should not forget that this was an *educational* project, which means, among other things, that a good deal of teaching had to take place in order for learning to be facilitated. This in general indicates that an educational situation always contains at least a vestige of power on the teacher's side, even if she or he "'lend[s] [her or his] own consciousness' to the learners to enable them to 'achieve understanding performances which they could not have achieved on their own'". (Luckett 1997: 224, quoting Tharp & Gillmore 1988.) Gee (1990) uses the term 'apprenticeship' in the same sense when he says:

> In an academic discipline like [for example] linguistics, you can overtly teach someone (the content knowledge of the discipline of) linguistics, which is a body of facts and theories; however, while knowledge of some significant part of these facts and theories is necessary to being a linguist, you cannot overtly teach anyone *to be* (*to behave* like) a linguist, which is a Discourse – you can just let them practise being a linguist (apprentice them) with people who are already in the Discourse. (Gee 1990: 147)

But the final 'product' of education should transcend discipline-bound knowledge and skills: on this the WP is clear, as are those discussions and proposals emanating from it (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation). If in this particular case the process has started towards the development of autonomous individuals with "capacities to engage in critical examination of self and others, engage in reasoning processes, and arrive at judgements they can defend in argument" (Warren 1995: 172), then this project has contributed, albeit in a small way, towards those goals, even if (or perhaps because) the way was fraught with difficulties and pitfalls.

Concluding reflections.

This study focussed on the teaching of literature to second and foreign language learners in higher education, with the intention of examining critically the contribution and suitability of certain linguistic approaches to literary studies. I have concentrated on those linguistic theories which in my view best address issues pertaining both to individual learners and to the larger context of the society in which higher learning is embedded. Since this larger context is one of transformation, as outlined with reference to the WP, and this aspect of transformation concerns both the individual learner and society at large, I chose to discuss theories of critical language awareness and critical discourse analysis at their centre, because on the one hand they raise awareness about the power of discourses in the constitution of knowledge, and on the other, because they provide the tools with which to uncover the often hidden assumptions and agendas that inform the constitution of knowledge. As such, critical theories of discourse put the individual and society in a dialectic relation to each other, so that they become reciprocally interdependent, in the sense that one cannot think about the one without the other. In my view, this dialectic obviates problems associated with the too strong accentuation of either the individual subject or society. The former would lead, politically speaking, to old style liberalism and the egocentricity that usually goes with it, and the latter would prioritise communal needs over those of an individual. Translated into general educational terms that are of relevance here, the dialectic suggests, in line with *New Landscape*'s vision of higher education for democracy, that a process of individual transformation towards democratic ideals (i.e. learning) would also benefit society (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation), but that society should be such that the unfolding of democratic ideals can actually take place.

These are large claims when held against the rather limited scope of the work undertaken here. But given the relative absence of ideal social conditions – which accounts for the need for transformation – a small start is as good as any. As Luckett suggests with regard to her own work:

> A study such as this, can therefore only make modest claims, and cannot claim generalisability for its findings. However, if it has been validated in a particular professional practice, then it can hope to be illuminating and to have significance for other practitioners, operating in similar fields and contexts. (Luckett 1997: 267)

In my own professional practice, including this research and the attempt at its practical application, all of which constitute this study, it has led to a reflection not only about the parameters within which a discipline such as foreign language and literature teaching an learning can fruitfully and effectively take place, but a reflection also about the issues that inform higher education at this time of transition to, one hopes, a just and fair society.

In attempting to make sense of the changes in higher education that have almost become the status quo (paradoxical as that may sound), I have tried to understand the context within which they have occurred, and continue to occur, from the aspect of their underlying theoretical assumptions, starting with current educational policy. Here I interpreted the general thrust of higher educational policy to be towards competitiveness in a globalised market, with the expectation that South African higher education approximate global standards of excellence, while at the same time preparing students to function effectively in that context. Although language, culture and tradition are mentioned in the WP, my concern was that the disciplines dealing with these would become marginalised in the wake of educational policy's stress on what appeared to me a career informed and instrumentalist orientation. This led me to an examination of the place second and foreign language literary studies could have in the development of capacities that are

required in higher education as well as in the general societal context. Here I found the capacities which are related to communicative and culture competence to be of particular interest and importance, because they are the ones that allow persons to function effectively, not only in a multicultural context such as ours, but beyond that, one hopes, in a global context as well.

That such capacities are more than just being able to communicate in a language, was what I tried to convey in the brief discussion of Habermas's notion of communicative action and the competence that presupposes it, and of Gadamer's hermeneutics. It is especially the idea that truths are arrived at discursively and rest on consensus, that I find particularly persuasive in a multicultural society, as well as in the embedded context of higher education, which in turn contains the actual learning and teaching that takes place in an academic classroom. It is a persuasive idea in that, on the one hand, it rests on the philosophical assumption that consensus is attainable rationally, given those conditions that enable agreement to be achieved without coercion, while on the other hand providing a method for understanding human communication, of which literary discourse is but one aspect.

But the understanding of literary discourse itself presupposes a theory of language that takes cognisance of the discursive construction of truths, along with the situatedness of the agents who attempt to arrive at these truths. This concerns literature especially, since it is fictional, that is amongst other things, removed from practical communication. This in itself makes its rigorously scientific treatment difficult if not impossible, but in turn this difficulty explains the attempts to find a purely descriptive language with which to treat literature. However, it is not a disadvantage; on the contrary, literary discourse has the particular advantage of making clear that discourses both construct contexts and are constructed by them. The problem is just that literature tends to

hide its debt to contexts on the outside of its own language, by involving readers in its own reality to such an extent, that they tend to 'forget themselves'. In this sense the novel is a particularly powerful and persuasive genre, one that counts on a reader's empathy, interpellating her or him as an 'ideal' recipient who understands exactly what is meant by the narration. This was discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 with reference to Kress' thoughts on reading (Kress 1989) and genre (Kress 1993), which emphasise the necessity of undermining and resisting the seeming naturalness of the discourse and its concomitant positioning of the reading subject.

In order to uncover the hidden assumptions of literary discourse in general, and the novel in particular, in my view an approach is indicated for my own practice, that focusses on the purposeful use of language by agents within social contexts. At the same time a grammar is needed that describes contextualised language-in-use, the purpose of which is to facilitate the understanding of the language at textual level, while allowing the reader/recipient to go beyond the text itself, to include an understanding of the context within which the text is produced and received. When I started this project, it seemed to me that Systemic Functional Grammar, as practised by Butt et al. (1995) and Polias (2000) would adequately address these concerns. My reasoning was as follows: firstly, this grammar directs the attention of the language user to the details of grammatical functioning, which is important where the level of initial syntactic and semantic understanding is relatively low. Secondly, it sees language as functioning in larger situational, and ultimately, cultural contexts. This is an important consideration since it establishes agency both on the writer's and the reader's side, and makes the examination of the relation between them possible. Thirdly, the grammar provides a relatively precise and clear meta-language with which to describe a text as language-in-use. A meta-language such as this is crucial to effect the distance that is needed for critical interventions in the reading of texts.

However, one can argue against all three points. Firstly, if too much emphasis is placed on textual grammar and functioning – an emphasis that may seem necessary for users of languages other than the language of the text –, the analysis can remain focussed on the producer of the text. Even if interpretation occurs, it will probably be the attempt to gauge what the author of the text actually meant. The questions, 'what is said?' and 'how is it said?' will be central in this case. The question as to why an author writes the way he does, will need to be added for more complete contextualisation, which brings me to the second point: even in this case one could argue that, if the context of culture is taken to be the final given of language-in-use, in the sense that a text can only be fully understood in that context of culture, then the understanding is coerced, in hermeneutic terms. One could of course contend that all cultures have something in common, so that understanding one culture would in effect mean understanding all others, along with their products. This would be the position of Wilhelm Dilthey, an early 20th century hermeneutic philosopher, a position which is, however, strongly criticised both by Gadamer and Habermas, since it glosses over difference. But if one holds with Kress (1993: 23), that "those factors which make languages different and specific to cultures" are more important and interesting than their similarities, reading a text against the context of another culture could produce the kind of critical reflections that are so necessary in a multicultural context. – Thirdly, the provision by SFG, of a clear and precise meta-language, is also arguable, since there exist well-developed critical discourses which deal specifically with literature, and which are probably more familiar to students of literature. Learning a new discourse might turn out to be disabling rather than enabling, if the familiar theories and their approaches are totally discarded in favour of an unfamiliar meta-language. What I would suggest here is that a degree of eclecticism be allowed, and that the new meta-language be used where it supports the familiar, and where it provides greater clarity. In my

view the only proviso is that the resulting hybrid lead to the kind of critical practice higher education is, or should be, in the business of advancing.

The arguments outlined above are not merely academic. They arise from actual classroom practice, as described in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. Since that description is relatively detailed, what remains here is to come to some conclusions regarding future learning and teaching. Learning could become much more effective, in my view, if learners are made aware and reminded at regular intervals, of learning styles and their impact on life-long learning. This would influence learners not only to reflect on their own learning, but also to go beyond the level of the material taught in class and to start reflecting on the assumptions of the discipline itself. The students whom I taught did reflect on their own learning, but because I had failed to emphasise learning styles, their reflections seldom went beyond the sphere of their own needs. But if reflection is to go beyond the material taught in class, the teaching will have to be such that it facilitates criticality. This could come about if it is shown that discourse does not operate only on the level of the textual material, but also on the level of cultures and traditions, including those pertaining to the discipline itself. This means that learners must be allowed to bring their own experiences to bear on the process of making meaning, but that these experiences cannot be accepted as unchanging givens, just as the text itself cannot be considered to have a fixed and unvarying meaning, and just as the teacher must be prepared to examine critically her own assumptions about teaching, learning and the discipline within which she practises. In this way, one hopes that learning and teaching for high levels of criticality can become process, and not product orientated.

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Appendices

NOTE: I have only translated from the German where I felt it was necessary for the understanding of the classroom process. The translations appear after the German text in brackets and in *italics*.

Funktionen und Bedeutungen

Aus Butt et al. (1995, 1998: 35):

"Functions of language

There are three broad functions of language which seem to be central to the way the grammar

works in the language system:

> 1   Language has a representational function: we use it to encode our experience of the
>   world, it conveys a picture of reality. So it allows us to encode meanings of experience
>   (EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS)
>
> 2. Language has an interpersonal function: we use it to encode interaction and show how
>   defensible we find our propositions. So it allows us to encode meanings of attitudes,
>   interaction and relationships (INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS).
>
> 3   Language has a textual function: we use it to organise our experiential and
>   interpersonal meanings into a linear and coherent whole. It allows us to encode
>   meanings of text development (TEXTUAL MEANINGS)

[...]."

Auf Deutsch:

EXPERIENTIAL MEANINGS:

(FIELD) Repräsentationsfunktion: Erfahrungsbedeutung
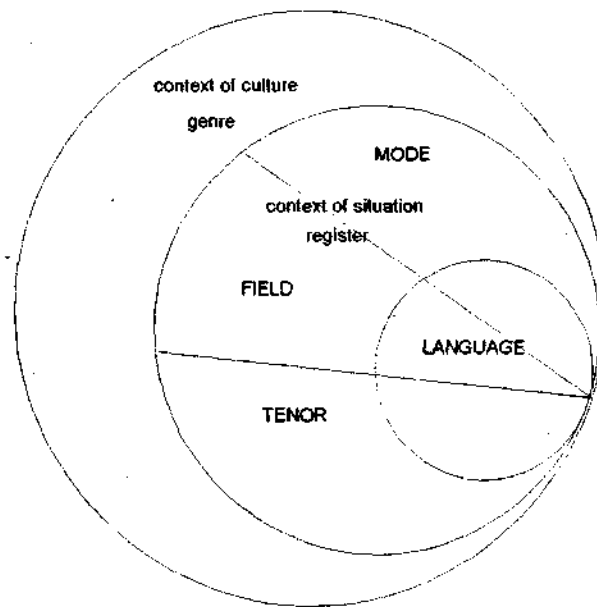
INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS:

(TENOR) Zwischenmenschliche Funktion: Verhältnis- /Verhaltensbedeutung

TEXTUAL MEANINGS:

(MODE) Textfunktion: Textbedeutung

context of culture
genre
MODE
context of situation
register
FIELD
LANGUAGE
TENOR

— **Der Kulturzusammenhang:** (*context of culture*)

die gesamten Bedeutungsmöglicheiten in einer bestimmten Kultur. Diese

Möglichkeiten äußern sich in verschiedenen Gattungen, die literarischen

eingeschlossen.

Gattungen: (*genres*)

Texte, die dasselbe Ziel verfolgen und sehr oft ähnliche Strukturelemente haben. So

haben erzählende Texte zum Beispiel das Ziel, aus Geschehnissen und Vorgängen Sinn

zu machen; Berichte geben demgegenüber faktische Information, und neigen zum

Klassifizieren und Ordnen.

Gattungen erscheinen auf einem Continuum zwischen einfach, bekannt, alltäglich,

gesprochen, und kompliziert, festgelegt, geschrieben:

einfach, bekannt, alltäglich, gesprochen   kompliziert, festgelegt, geschrieben

←--→
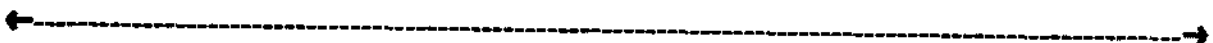
—   **Der Situationszusammenhang:** (*context of situation*)

hier sprechen wir schon von spezifischen Texten, die eine bestimmte

Mitteilungsfunktion haben (z.B. ein bestimmter Roman von einem bestimmten Autor).

Register:

Wenn Texte dieselbe Mitteilungsfunktion haben sprechen wir von Register, und

meinen damit die Bedeutungen, die Texte gemeinsam haben. Diese Gemeinsamkeiten

drücken sich in semantischen und syntaktischen Ähnlichkeiten aus, zum Beispiel im

Gespräch zwischen Arzt und Patient, oder Polizei und verhafteter Person.

Die spezifischen Einzelheiten des Registers (vielleicht könnte man im Zusammenhang

literarischer Texte auch von Stilebenen sprechen) sind in den Unterabteilungen FIELD,

TENOR und MODE zu finden.

2a.   FIELD (Feld/Thema/Handlung; "plot"):
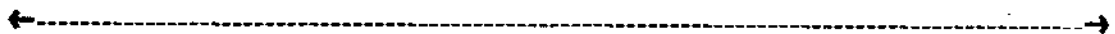
Alltagswissen/erfahrung   Spezialwissen/erfahrung

← - →
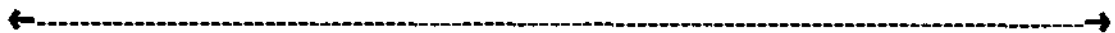
2b.   TENOR (Beschaffenheit/Interaktion):

Intimität/Informalität   Distanz/Formalität

← - →

2c.   MODE (Methode/Koherenz):

Dialog/physische Anwesenheit   Monolog/Reflexion

← - →

(All adapted from Polias (2000).)

Prozesstypen

material:

1. **tun**   **handeln**

    (doing)   **auftreten**

projecting:

2. **ahnen, fühlen**   **geistig**   **denken, mögen, mit den Sinnen**

                                          erfassen

    (sensing, saying)   **verbal**   **sagen, behaupten, erzählen, berichten**

relational:

3. **sein**   **relationell**   **identifizierend**

    (being)   **beschreibend**

                   existentiell

Fragen zum Textauszug:

Welche Prozesse (in der Form von Verben) treten am meisten hier auf?
Was bedeutet das wohl? (Das sollte auf den ganzen Text bezogen werden, spezifisch auf was
geschieht/was berichtet wird!)

(Questions relating to the texts to be analysed:
Which processes, in the form of verbs, appear most frequently? What does it mean for the
text as a whole?)

APPENDIX B

Hintergrund (*Background*): Projekt   **German Studies III, 2. Semester 2000.**

Hier sind einige Anregungen, die Ihnen helfen sollen, wenn Sie Überlegungen anstellen über das Lernen und den Unterricht.

1.   Vier Ebenen des Wissens (*levels of knowledge*)

-    Inhaltliches Wissen (*content knowledge*)
     Man weiss bestimmte Tatsachen und Konzepte.

-    Probleme und Aufgaben lösen (*problem-solving knowledge*)
     Man weiß, wie man vorschriftsmäßige Aufgaben und Probleme löst.

-    Erkenntniswissen (*epistemic knowledge*)
     Man weiß, was das Verstehen einer Disziplin beinhaltet, wie sie sich entwickelt hat
     (also historisches Wissen), und man kann sein eigenes Erkenntnisinteresse formulieren
     und rechtfertigen.

-    Forschendes Wissen (*inquiry knowledge*)
     Man kann die Annahmen und Resultate einer Disziplin kritisch hinterfragen, und man
     ist in der Lage, neues Wissen zu entwickeln.

Überlegung: welche dieser Ebenen werden in diesem Literaturkurs entwickelt, und welche nicht? Woran liegt das wohl? Was müßten Sie tun, und was müßte ich (als Lehrer) tun, um allen Ebenen Rechnung zu tragen?

2.   Einstellungen zum Lernen (*approaches to learning*)

-    Tiefe Einstellung (*deep approach*)
     Man motiviert sich selbst, man kann autonom lernen; man versucht, das Lernmaterial
     in größeren Zusammenhängen zu sehen und neues Wissen mit schon Bekanntem zu
     integrieren. Lernen ist Selbstwert.

-    Strategische Einstellung (*strategic approach*)
     Man ist motiviert, damit man Erfolg hat, zum Beispiel gute Noten bekommt; man lernt
     mit oder ohne Verständnis für größere Zusammenhänge. Lernen ist Mittel zum Zweck.

-    Oberflächliche Einstellung (*surface approach*)
     Man lernt, damit man nicht sitzenbleibt; man reproduziert unkritisch und manchmal
     ohne Verständnis, was einem gesagt wird; man lernt nur Fakten und vergißt sie auch
     bald wieder, und man hat kein Verständnis für den Zusammenhang oder für den Sinn
     der Sache.

Überlegung: seien Sie ehrlich mit sich selbst: welche Einstellung haben Sie zum Lernen? Woran liegt das wohl? Wie könnte sich das ändern? Was müßte ich (als Lehrer) tun, um Ihre Einstellung zu ändern? Was könnten Sie selber unternehmen?

3. Der lebenslange Lerner (*the life-long learner*)

-   ist neugierig, lernt gern, ist kritisch und kann seine eigene Lerntätigkeit bewerten;
-   hat einen Überblick und zugleich eine breite Grundlage und versteht Zusammenhänge;
-   weiß, wie und wo man neues Wissen sammelt, kann relevante Fragen stellen und Information kritisch verarbeiten;
-   ist motiviert, fähig und ist gut organisiert;
-   kennt seine eigenen Stärken und Schwächen.

Überlegung: glauben Sie, daß Sie ein solcher Lerner sind? Warum ist das wohl wichtig, lebenslänglich zu lernen? Was müßten Sie tun und was müßte ich (als Lehrer) tun, um solches Lernen zu erreichen?

4. Tips zum Journalschreiben (*These appear in translated form on p. 68 of this dissertation.*)

Der Zweck des Journalschreibens ist die kritische Reflexion über das Material, den Unterricht, Ihr eigenes Lernen. Versuchen Sie nach jeder Stunde folgende Fragen zu beantworten (oder stellen Sie andere, die für Sie Relevanz haben, und versuchen Sie ebenfalls, diese zu beantworten):

-   was habe ich (neues) gelernt?
-   was habe ich verstanden / nicht verstanden?
-   wie bin ich zu diesem (Nicht-)Verstehen gekommen?
-   wie und in welchen möglichen Situation könnte das Gelernte anwenden?
-   habe ich bestimmte Fertigkeiten gelernt? welche?
-   welche Fragen könnte man an den Text (das vorgeschriebene Werk) stellen?
-   welche Fragen beantwortet der Text und welche nicht?
-   wie könnte der Unterricht gestaltet werden, damit ich besser lernen kann?

(Discussion)
Was kann man aus dem Literaturstudium lernen?
(What can one learn from the study of literature?)

1. Zusammenfassung der Diskussion
(Summary of the discussion [held in class])

Folgende Punkte ergaben sich aus der Diskussion:
- Man lernt, wie andere Leute denken. Das ist interessant, und vielleicht kann das zur Toleranz führen. (*You learn how other people think. That is interesting and can perhaps lead to tolerance.*)
- Man kann das eigene Verständnis ändern. (*You can change your own understanding.*)
- Man bekommt historisches Wissen und versteht, wie die (historische) Zeit das Denken beeinflußt. (*You attain historical knowledge and understand, how the historical situation influences thought.*)
- Man lernt andere Kulturen und andere Menschen kennen. (*You get to know other cultures and other people.*)
- Man kann seinen Horizont erweitern. (*You can broaden your horizon.*)
- Das Literaturstudium ist wichtig, denn Literatur kann Möglichkeiten des Menschseins zeigen. (*It is important to study literature, because literature can demonstrate possibilities of being human.*)
- Es ermöglicht Distanz und kann zur Selbstreflexion führen. (*It enables distance and can lead to self-reflection.*)

Zur Kontrolle: folgende sind die Ziele des Fremdsprachenlernens in englischen Schulen:

to develop the ability to use language effectively for purposes of practical communication;
to from a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;
to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken;
to develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
to provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation;
to encourage positive attitudes to foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;
to promote learning of skills of more general application (eg. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences);
to develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own culture. (Zitiert in Martin & Miller 1999:67)

2. Wie kommt es zum Verstehen?
(How does one reach understanding?)

a) Der philologische Zirkel
(The philological circle.)

Das Verstehen ist kein linearer Prozess, sondern geht in dauernd sich erweiternden Kreisen vor. Man versteht das Ganze aus den Einzelheiten des Textes und die Einzelheiten aus dem ganzen Text. Der Prozess ist also einer, der sich dauernd überprüft. Texte wollen etwas bedeuten, machen also ein Interpretationsangebot. Man versucht im ersten Schritt, dieses Angebot durch Analyse aufzudencken. Man stellt sich die Fragen: *(one askes the following questions)*
- was will der Text sagen? *(What does the text say?)*
- wie weiss ich das? *(How do I know what it says?)*

b) Der hermeneutische Zirkel
(The hermeneutic circle.)

Es gibt immer zwei Pole im Verstehensprozess: das (historisch, psychologisch, sozial) bestimmte Subjekt, das sich mit dem Text befasst, und das Objekt, den Text, der verstanden werden will und der in bestimmten (historischen, psychologischen, sozialen) Umständen entstanden ist. Die Hermeneutik versucht, die Distanz zwischen diesen beiden Seiten zu verringern, und zwischen ihnen zu vermitteln; es findet also ein Dialog statt.
Die Tatsache, dass das Verstehen in unserem Fall erschwert ist (weil man in der Fremdsprache nicht alles auf Anhieb verstehen kann), kann produktiv werden, denn man muss, um verstehen zu können, viel mehr nachdenken. Dieses Nachdenken müßte dann zur (kritischen) Selbstreflexion führen -- man könnte sich folgende Fragen stellen: *(One could ask the following questions)*
- woran liegt es, dass ich nicht verstehe? Liegt es an der Schwierigkeit der Sprache selbst (Strukturen und Vokabeln etwa), oder daran, dass mir die Ansichten fremd sind, oder gar daran, dass ich mit den Ansichten gar nicht übereinstimmen kann? *(What reasons could there be for not understanding? Could it be the language itself, because of for example complicated structures and vocabulary, or could it be because the views expressed are strange to me? Or could it even be that I cannot agree with the views expressed in the text?)*
- was könnte ich tun, um besser zu verstehen, d.h. um dem Text etwas gerechter zu werden? *(What could I do to understand the text more fully?)*
- gibt es etwas, womit ich aus moralischen Gründen nicht einverstanden sein kann? Welche moralischen Gründe? Gibt es da wirklich keine Vermittlungsmöglichkeit zwischen den beiden Ansichten? *(Is there anything in the text that I cannot agree with on moral grounds? Which moral grounds? Is there no way at all of mediating between the two views?)*
- was könnte getan werden, um zu einer Übereinstimmung zu kommen? *(What could one do to reach an agreement?)*

c) Kritische Hermeneutik
(*Critical Hermeneutics.*)

Das Ziel des Verstehens ist, zu einer Übereinstimmung zu kommen. Diese Übereinstimmung beruht aber oft auf Zwang, weil einer der Gesprächspartner im Dialog mehr Macht hat als der andere und so in der Lage ist, seine Meinung als die einzig richtige zu erzwingen. In der Literatur könnte der Autor eines Textes eine solche Machtsposition haben (Autor hat mit Autorität zu tun!). Aber man braucht seinen Vorstellungen nicht unbedingt zuzustimmen, man kann also seine Autorität hinterfragen. Das einzige was zählt, ist die Macht des besseren Arguments. Habermas hat folgende Richtlinien aufgestellt für eine ideale, zwangsfreie Gesprächssituation:

> Every subject with the competence to speak and act is allowed to take part in a discourse.
> Everyone is allowed to question any assertion whatever.
> Everyone is allowed to express his attitudes, desires, and needs.
> No speaker may be prevented, by internal or external coercion, from exercising his rights as laid down [above]. (Zitiert in White (ed.) 1995: 149)

Eine Person, die im obigen Sinn "fähig" (competent) ist, ist eine rationale Person:

> [...] we call someone rational not only if he is able to put forward an assertion and, when criticized, to provide grounds for it by pointing to the appropriate evidence, but also if he is following an established norm and is able, when criticized, to justify his action by explicating the given situation in the light of egitimate expectations. We even call someone rational if he makes known a desire or an intention, expresses a feeling or a mood, shares a secret, confesses a deed etc., and is then able to reassure critics in regard to the revealed experience by drawing practical consequences from it and behaving consistently thereafter. (Zitiert ebd.: 125)

Zusammenfassend kann man sagen, dass das Verstehen nie perfekt sein kann, da der Prozess nie zu einem Ende kommt:

> [...] the image is one of a world where we continually renegotiate, in small and sometimes big ways, the normative backdrop to our actions. The decisive force in these renegotiations is communication: we reach partial understandings through [...] interaction in which we justify, convince, defend, criticize, explain, argue express our inner feelings and desires while interpreting those of others. (Ebd.: 242)

Das heisst, dass wir immer wieder versuchen müssen. Das Literaturstudium und das Verstehen von Literatur könnte da etwas Übung verschaffen.

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire: Literature (GS340 and GS220)   November 2000

1.   What did you think of the literary texts we discussed in terms of
-    difficulty?

-    relevance?

-    length?

2.   Did you have any preference? Please give reasons.

3.   Did you find the additional non-literary material
-    useful?

-    relevant?

4.   What did you expect to learn from the course?

5.   Were your expectations fulfilled? Please elaborate.

6.   Did you find the functional grammar approach in the context of literature
-     useful?

-     relevant?

7.   Were you able to apply the grammar to your satisfaction? Please elaborate.

8.   Would you have preferred a different approach? Please elaborate.

9.   Were the general aims of the course always clear to you? Please elaborate.

10.   Did you find the assignments (exercises, essays etc.)
-     difficult?

-     useful?

-     relevant?

11. Was what was expected of you in the assignments always clear to you? Please elaborate.

12. Was there enough time for you to voice your own views? Please elaborate.

13. Was there enough time for general discussion? Please elaborate.

14. Please list any suggestions you have for improving the course with regard to
    - materials (incl. prescribed works)

    - assignments

    - teaching

    - learning

15. General comments:

APPENDIX D

Programm: 2. Semester 2000 Literatur des 20. Jh. (GS3 und GS2)

Projekt: Wissen und Verstehen literarischer Texte. (*Understanding literary texts.*)
Wir haben in diesem Semester ca. 26 Unterrichtsstunden und behandeln zwei Werke:
1. Heinrich Böll, *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum* (1974)
2. Berhard Schlink, *Der Vorleser* (1995).

Es gibt einen Film zu Bölls *Katharina Blum* und eine englische Übersetzung von Schlinks *Vorleser* ('The Reader').

Teil I: *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum.*

Wir behandeln folgende Themen. Bitte beachten Sie die Aufgaben! In diesem Semester schreiben Sie mehrere kleinere Aufgaben statt eines grossen Aufsatzes. Jede Aufgabe zählt!! (Class mark 50%; examinations 50%).

1. Einführung in das Projekt: (*Introduction*)
    Hintergrund:
    Verstehen und Fertigkeiten
    Wissen und Reflexion
    Lernertypen
    Sprachstudium und Literaturstudium (Diskussion).

Aufgabe: Lernjournal (für das ganze Semester). (*Assignment: journal*)
Beachten Sie bitte: Sie werden für Ihr Journal nicht bewertet, sondern bekommen automatisch 15% des Semesterpunktes dafür. Das heisst aber, dass das Journal geführt werden muss. Ich werde am Ende des Semesters eine Zusammenfassung verlangen.

2. Film: *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum.*

Aufgabe: Zusammenfassung der Handlung. (*Assigment: Summary of the plot*)

3. Einführung in die Funktionsgrammatik: (*Introduction to functional grammar*)
    Modell
    Gattungen und Gattungsmerkmale
    Erzählung und Bericht.

4. Analyse der ersten zwei Abschnitte der *Katharina Blum*:
    Feld/Thema ("Field) (Erfahrungsfunktion: Prozesse, Teilnehmer, Umstände)
    Beschaffenheit ("Tenor") (Interaktionsfunktion: Information geben und erfragen)
    Methode ("Mode") (Textfunktion: Koherenz, Gegebenes - Neues)
    Unterscheidung: Bericht und Erzählung
    Diskussion: Unterscheidung zwischen Erzählung und Film.

Aufgabe: Hintergrundinformation zu Heinrich Böll sammeln und aufschreiben.
(Assignment: Collect and write up background information to Heinrich Böll)

5. Übergreifende Analyse des Themas: *(Thematic analysis)*
Wer tut/erleidet was wem/von wem unter welchen Umständen?
(Who does suffers what to/from whom under which circumstances?)
Konzentration auf Teilnehmer ("wer" - Charakterbeschreibungen)
(Concentration on participants – "who", description of characters)
Sprachliches Verfahren: Erzähler vs. ZEITUNG
(Linguistic procedure: the narrator vs. ZEITUNG)

6. Einordnen in den größeren Zusammenhang: *(The larger context)*
Deutschland in den 70er Jahren
(Germany in the 70's)
Gewalt
(Violence)
BILDzeitung
(BILD newspaper)

7. Wertung: *(Evaluation)*
Kritische Stimmen
(Critical voices)
Diskussion.
(Discussion)

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German Studies 340, German Studies 220 Oktober-November 2000.

Literatur

Wir haben sechs Doppelstunden und besprechen folgendes:

Bernhard Schlink, *Der Vorleser.*

1. **Vorinformation: Über Bernhard Schlink** (*About Bernhard Schlink*)
   Biographische Angaben
   (*Biographical details*)
   Andere Werke
   (*Other works*)
   Hauptthemen.
   (*Main themes*)

2. **Besprechung der Handlung (*plot*)** (*Discussion of the plot*)
   Was geschieht überhaupt im Roman?
   (*What happens generally in the novel?*)
   Wem geschieht was?
   (*What happens to whom specifically?*)
   Wer tut was?
   (*Who does what?*)
   Wann geschieht was?
   (*When does it happen?*)
   Wo geschieht was?
   (*Where ...?*)
   Warum geschieht was?
   (*Why ...?*)

3. **Analyse des ersten Abschnitts von Teil I (S. 5), Teil II (S. 83) und Teil III (S. 159)**
   nach Prozessen,
   nach Teilnehmern,
   nach Umständen.
   (*Analysis of the first paragraphs of parts 1, 2 and 3 according to processes,
   participants and circumstances*)
   Zusammenhang mit dem ganzen Roman.
   (*Connection with the rest of the novel*)
   Welche Gattung? (Gattungsmerkmale: Entwicklungs-/Bildungsroman)
   (*Which genre? Characteristics of the Bildungsroman*)

   Bitte die Textanalysen vorbereiten! (*Please prepare the textual analyses!*)

4. **Themenanalyse** (*Thematic analysis*)
   Hauptthemen: (*Main themes*)
   Lesen und Vorlesen. (*Reading*)

Analphabetismus, (*Illiteracy*)
Vergangenheitsbewältigung. (*Dealing with the past*)

5. Interpretation

Wie wird im Werk der Zusammenhang zwischen den drei Hauptteilen und den Themen hergestellt? Welche Fragen wirft der Roman auf und wie werden sie beantwortet (wenn überhaupt)?
(*How do the three parts of the novel create a thematic web? Which questions does the novel raise and how are they answered?*)

6. Auswertung (*Evaluation*)

Die Schuldfrage,
Frage nach der Relevanz des Werks.
(*The question of guilt; the question of relevance*)

AUFGABEN: (*Assignments*)

Sie müssen zwei schriftliche Aufgaben machen; Sie bekommen die Einzelheiten rechtzeitig.
1. Untersuc¹ ºg von Leserrezensionen;
2. Ein kürzerer Aufsatz über ein von Ihnen gewähltes Thema (nach Absprache!)

(*You are required to do two written assignments:*
1. Critical examination of readers' reviews;
2. An essay on a topic of your choice (after consultation).)