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Reviewed work:

Literature and Language Learning in the EFL Classroom.
(2015). Masayuki Teranishi, Yoshifumi Saito, & Katie Wales
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Even with literary texts back in vogue in English language education, there are still questions about how they could be most effectively employed in the EFL classroom. Should such classes, for example, focus on reading for detailed textual interpretation, broader historical and sociological concerns, or the language of the text (Zyngier & Fialho, 2010)? Or when does a class stop being about language learning and start being about literature—and is such a distinction even valid? Far from revealing an apparent lack of pedagogical clarity, these kinds of questions could in fact be seen to indicate that educators who include literature in their language teaching increase rather than limit pedagogical opportunities in the classroom. This view is shared by the editors of and contributors to *Literature and Language Learning in the EFL Classroom*. Among the various approaches presented in this volume are “the use of extensive and close reading, narrative enquiry, translation and pedagogical stylistics” (p. 1) which, taken together, put forth a cogent argument for working with literature to enhance English language education. It is worth noting that the book started out as a research project in Japan geared to the local context and, as such, the articles are drawn largely from Japanese authors—they contribute fourteen of the nineteen chapters. However, an increasing awareness of the project’s wider relevance prompted a revision of its original purview, including a broader range of authors, related disciplines, and emerging issues in an effort to meet both “local and global needs” (p. xiv).

The book consists of two major sections. Entitled ‘Current Issues and Suggestions for New Approaches’, Part 1 comprises six chapters, which discuss both nascent and burgeoning pedagogical trends in the field. In the opening chapter, Geoff Hall provides a concise but insightful survey of key recent developments globally, and prefaces issues developed in later chapters. These include the expanding diaspora of English literatures; the growth in classrooms of appreciative reading leading to creative writing; technological advancements promoting multimodal access to literary texts; and the increasing popularity of EFL reading circles, among others. In Chapter 2 Kazuko Takahashi addresses the marginalization of literary works in English education curricula in Japan since the 1980s. Inadvertently evoking Cherryholmes’ (1988) notion of ‘vulgar pragmatism’, she argues persuasively against the current preference in Japan for supposedly ‘authentic’ language materials, which underpin the development of communicative competence and functional skills. Typical favoured materials, such as newspapers, magazines, receipts from shops, restaurant menu cards, and recipes, “meet immediate utilitarian needs” (p. 34), are deemed authentic, and thus applicable in the real world. Takahashi takes issue with how this authenticity is conceptualized, justified, and ultimately realized in the classroom, and makes a compelling case for literature too to be recognized as authentic text in Japanese L2 language lessons. This critical focus is sustained in the following chapter, with Aiko Saito evaluating good practice in using literature in L1 Japanese education (including teaching, materials development, and assessment) and considering how L2 education can learn from this.

Stylistics is introduced in Chapter 4, where Yoshifumi Saito suggests extending the traditional reading-oriented pedagogical approach to incorporate a ‘creative stylistics’ methodology, guiding students from appreciative reading to creative writing. The following paper continues the stylistics theme, with Michael Burke using conceptual metaphor theory and cognitive stylistics analysis to “stimulate a deeper level of thinking and comprehension” (p. 75) in EFL learners. In Chapter 6, Gillian Lazar deviates from the book’s general focus on canonical literature to explore the rich linguistic, cultural, and interpretive opportunities offered by postmodernist picture books to teenage and adult learners of English, as well as suggesting several useful activities for using such resources in the classroom.

Part 2 is entitled ‘Empirical and Case Studies’ and consists of thirteen chapters which explore several practical applications of empirical research, including variations on a few of the approaches suggested in Part 1. In Chapter 7 Takayuki Nishihara presents a study which may engage readers interested in assessment, suggesting ways of constructing achievement tests for literary reading in general EFL courses. Also potentially appealing—though now for teachers of reading—is Soichiro Oku’s paper, which reveals the different strategies learners use when reading traditional printed texts versus digital texts accessed through newer media such as e-book readers, smartphones, and laptops. He also considers the implications of these strategic choices for language learning. Continuing with literary reading in Chapter 9, Tomohide Ishihara and Akira Ono compare the effects of text type (short story versus newspaper article) and task type (translation versus comprehension) on sentence recognition. Tetsuko Nakamura follows this by evaluating speech and thought presentation when teaching English fiction. The focus of the next three chapters is on specific literary genres. In Chapter 11 Masayuki Teranishi discusses the teaching of English novels, concentrating on the linguistic and technical values he deems ‘exclusive’ to literature. This is followed by Kyoko Kuze’s assessment of the benefits of short

stories in university composition classes, while in Chapter 13 Kiyo Sakamoto examines the potential of L1 poetry to raise learners' awareness of L2 through translation.

Chapters 14 and 16 offer different ways of employing literary reading groups in the classroom which, as Geoff Hall indicates in his overview, are gaining popularity as a means of both practitioner research and SLA. The first intervention, by Yuka Kusanagi, examines reading in groups for general comprehension, while Hiroko Sugimura experiments with individual and collaborative literary analysis to develop critical thinking skills. Bookended by these two studies is Masako Nako's chapter, which is a series of oral histories assessing whether extensive reading of unabridged original literary texts by advanced learners in the target language improves proficiency. Extensive reading is explored further in Chapter 17, with Motoko Fukaya examining not only the process of textual comprehension but also the effects of literary evaluation. The idea is to gauge whether reading in this way—with more than one active focus—could shorten the odds of L2 learners encountering an 'unforgettable book'; if this happened, reading motivation would increase, thus resulting in improved reading fluency. Similarly, building confidence and motivation using graded readers is the focus of the penultimate paper. Mark Sheehan argues here that a combination of graded reader assignments, word count scorecards, sustained silent reading sessions, and classroom activities can increase learner motivation, "deepen knowledge of specialized content and refine discussion skills among higher-level learners" (p. 280). In the final study, Marina Lambrou presents postgraduate student teachers with strategies for teaching language through pedagogical stylistics, using a range of literary texts. Ron Carter closes the volume with an epilogue, providing a succinct synoptic sweep of past, current, and future issues and challenges involved in the unfolding narrative of literature in English language education.

In seeking to address the widest range of concerns potentially arising from the use of literary texts in the EFL classroom, this collection sets itself a daunting task. In large measure, though, it succeeds. If I do have a quibble, it is about the disproportionate focus on canonical literature, the boldest exception being Lazar's exploration of postmodernist picture books. Offering fertile ground for language learning, the postmodernist tendency to playfully—if knowingly—expose contradictions, subvert conventions, confound expectations, and generally blur epistemological and ontological boundaries can generate a cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or disequilibrium (Piaget, 1977) in the reader. Lazar appears tacitly to support such an argument, as she refers repeatedly to opportunities for multiple interpretations and creative analysis when reading postmodernist picture books.

This segues neatly into a related concern, critical thinking, the development of which is not a feature of most of these case studies—which seems curious to me, given that most of the interventions are conducted in university settings, where critical thinking skills are highly valued. Teranishi does list "critical ability" (p. 171) as one of the literary skills students should acquire through reading, though seems to believe it "can be improved 'incidentally'" (p. 171). Similarly, while Kuze acknowledges the argument that employing literature in L2 composition teaching is "an effective means of promoting analytical thinking skills" (p. 184) she is cautious about "the special complications" (p. 183) involved in such an enterprise. Lima (2016) however, is doing exactly this kind of thing, successfully using Shakespeare to develop critical thinking skills in English for Academic Purposes. Significantly, it is through the 'newer' teaching approaches (Sugimura's book club and Sheehan's reading circle) that critical thinking is directly addressed

in this book. All that said, the priority pervading the entire collection is the desire to get literature back into Japanese classrooms and, to this end, a convincing case is made throughout.

Overall, then, this volume more than fulfils its aims, providing valuable insights into and confirming the merits of using literature in EFL contexts. As such, it is an important and relevant contribution to a thriving discipline and thus well worth reading.

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