

## INTRODUCTION

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For a number of years I have noticed an increased interest in the subject of teaching/learning literature in the context of foreign languages (FL), more specifically English (although I am quite aware of the fact that this preoccupation goes beyond English). Some of the SENAPULLI meetings have devoted sections to the discussion of the problem as associated with ongoing researches that deal with the teaching/learning of literature and foreign languages.<sup>1</sup>

In 1996, I attended the I Encontro Nacional sobre Políticas de Ensino de Línguas Estrangeiras, an event organised by ALAB<sup>2</sup>, and held in Florianópolis. I presented a poster named "Literature, Why Not?", where I briefly discussed the need to bring literature into the context of English language teaching, and proposed a work based on poetry, usually a discarded genre due to its "complex" and "difficult" nature. My suggestions were based on my own teaching experience at the Department of Foreign Languages at UFAL, where I am responsible for a course called "The Use of Literature in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language" which is taught at a Post Graduate Course in the Teaching/Learning of FLs.<sup>3</sup>

During the ALAB event I gladly learned that there were other people working along the lines I was (and still am) working for a number

<b>Ilha do Desterro</b>	<b>Florianópolis</b>	<b>nº 37</b>	<b>p.007-012</b>	<b>jul./dez. 1999</b>
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of reasons, many of which are explained in the article I have written for this issue. Names such as Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Souza, Sonia Zyngier and Josalba Ramalho Vieira (and later Clarissa Jordão and Vera Wielewicki) were some of the researchers I came across at that moment. I also met José Roberto O'Shea, the then Head of the Post Graduate Programme in English and Corresponding Literatures at UFSC, who told me that *Ilha do Desterro* was open for an issue discussing the literature/language problem, provided that a proposition was sent to the Journal's editorial board, through Anelise Corseuil, the general editor, for evaluation. What you see now is the result of that proposition.

In some way or other, all the articles in this issue deal with the possibility of a dialogue between literature and foreign language teaching and learning. Although the majority revolves around English language and literature, at least two of them refer to Portuguese language (mother language) and to literatures other than English, what indicates that the integration of both subjects is a matter of continuing interest and research in this country as well as abroad (as Helen Reid Thomas's article attests).

Most of the articles you will find here are related to researches carried out in Brazil and elsewhere, as well as teaching experiences proven successful. These articles do not propose any easy solution for a difficult problem such as is the attempt to change a whole set of values as associated with the teaching of language and literature. Rather than that, they open a door to a dialogue.

My own article, "A Few Reflections on the Subject of Literature, English Language and the Teaching/Learning Process", discusses the problem of integrating literature and foreign language. I report on an experience I had while in England for my doctoral research<sup>4</sup> when I joined a teacher's training group (both British and Foreign students were involved), working towards a certificate of teaching English (both literature and language). Among the points discussed in the article is the problem of power as associated with the roles enacted by both teachers and students. Rather than suggesting miracle solutions for the

problem, I point towards the need for a change of attitude from both teachers and students.

Lynn Mario T. Menezes de Souza's article, "On Awe and Awareness—the Literary Text in the Classroom" reports on a research project carried out in São Paulo with teachers of both mother language and foreign language literatures at different levels. Student and teacher's roles are discussed and a very interesting, but sad and real, picture comes out: the literature teacher plays the role of an impostor: the literature teacher, says de Souza, "seeks the security of the skeptron to present himself as an authorised interpreter". This is an "authoritarian [and] monological posture". As for the students, lack of discipline and lack of motivation are among the problems discussed. This calls for a change, and that is what the article posits.

"Picking up the Fragments: Literary Theory and the Teaching of Literature in English in a 'Letras' Course", by Vera Helena Gomes Wielewicki, is also about a research carried out in a Brazilian University. The objective of the research was to check the status of teaching English literature, and the results show that the problem is not located only in that particular university (kept unknown for the sake of protecting those involved in the research). Vera Wielewicki conducted interviews which show the lack of dialogue, of interaction among colleagues who teach akin literature courses, be it in our own literature or in foreign ones. It would be interesting to see this research replicated throughout the country so that we could reach a result that, although we anticipate as likely to be similar, could help in diagnosing a way out of this terrible dead end, which is the lack of dialogue.

Clarissa Menezes Jordão's article, "The Don't 'Do-It-Yourself' of Education: Teaching and Learning Literature as a Production of Collective Knowledge" discusses the need for more research in the literature classroom. One of the points she makes in this challenging article refers to the need of a change in attitude rather than the need of learning more techniques and methodology for teaching literature. Jordão's perspective is a postmodernist one and she discusses concepts

as “socially determined ... and meanings [as]... always in the process of” construction.

Sonia Zyngier’s “Radical Stylistics: Yet another Epithet?” proposes a discussion of the concept of stylistics. Her elegant text is quite helpful to convince suspicious readers (and I include myself here) of the real importance of the role of stylistics, which, for her, is “a discipline which promotes a colloquy between language and literature”. Moreover, her perspective is deeply critical and strong in proposing that a good enough definition cannot separate text and context, for both have to be seen together.

“Language and Literature: Some Dialogic Trodden Ways”, by Josalba Ramalho Vieira, uses an extraordinary image to indicate the real possibility of integrating literature and foreign language teaching: an imaginary bridge built up in faith and a lot of work, especially interdisciplinary work. Vieira reports on a successful experience held in Colégio de Aplicação at UFSC, where different FL teachers and a History teacher dealt with a Shakespearean play. She also points towards the need for a “belief in dialogue”. Bridging the gap between literature and language can be possible via an interdisciplinary approach.

Rita M. D. Zozoli, Márcia R. O. de Albuquerque e Lúcia de Fátima Santos discuss the need for more independence and respect for the student reader in “The Search for Autonomy: a Challenge for the Student Reader”. Autonomy is a role not always allowed to the students by the authoritarian practice of teachers. The authors of the article discuss results of a research carried out for a number of years at UFAL with students of different backgrounds. They propose quite an interesting and daring step in the use of literary texts outside the context of Letras. They also defend an interactionist view of teaching and learning and call on teachers to adjust their experiences to the classroom events, “instead of suggesting a ready-made and imposed intervention”.

“Heteroglossia in *Greenvoe*: Teaching a Scottish Novel in the Context of British Cultural Studies”, an article by Helen Reid Thomas,

reports on a teaching experience for secondary and university teachers from Bulgaria who took the course called “Advanced Certificate in the Teaching of British Cultural Studies”, hosted by Strathclyde University and held both in Scotland and Bulgaria. She discusses the Bakhtinian concept of heteroglossia as an important tool for the analysis of different voices in George Mackay Brown’s novel *Greenvoe*. Subsidiary to the discussion of the novel in this teaching experience, and which interests us in a particular way, is Thomas’ critical view of the distinction between British Studies and British Cultural Studies, where one relates to history and tradition, and the other to the variety of cultural forms. For her, language may bridge the two forms of cultural study “especially in the non-anglophone context”. Hers is a sociolinguistic perspective. This perspective will help in the “liberation from the stereotyped view of [a particular] culture”.

The three reviews presented at the end of this issue take on the discussion of themes that have appeared in a considerable number of articles here. The first is a review of *The Bakhtin Reader*, by Pam Morris, published in 1994, and was written by Helen Reid Thomas. Concepts such as dialogism, heteroglossia and many others related to Bakhtin’s theory are discussed. The review points towards the importance of this Reader because it successfully explores the “rather intimidating mass and complexity of Bakhtin’s thought” in a comprehensive way, attracting neophyte readers (or the ones already acquainted with Bakhtin). For Thomas, the book is a “significant testament to Bakhtin’s extraordinary and continuing influence”.

*Literature with a Small “l”*, a book by John McRae (1991) is reviewed by Vera Drews Guimarães. From its title this book brings into the fore the existence of at least two kinds of literature: one with a capital “L” and the other with a small “l”. This alone gives a political dimension to the book. This is also a discussion which crops up every now and then in the teaching of literature. According to Guimarães, McRae’s book contributes to an interdisciplinary discussion of literature, for it helps “break the barrier between, if not literature and history, arts

and science, literature and language and literature and second language teaching”.

The final review, by Vera Helena Gomes Wielewicki, is about Robin Usher and Richard Edward's *Postmodernism and Education*, published in 1994. Among the many interesting notes made by Wielewicki is that the book will attract readers interested in discussing education from a “kaleidoscopic view ... always moving and never grasped”. Such an image helps us looking at the whole process of education as something open and therefore not to be put into a straight jacket, or, to be more philosophical, into a Procrustean bed, be it a theoretical one or any other. This review urges us to read the book and meditate upon what it says considering our own practice as teachers.

Last (but not least...) a bibliography is provided for those of you interested in this well-timed crossing that is literature and (foreign) language teaching and learning. I hope that those who read this issue find here challenging ideas to be, if not put into practice, at least debated among colleagues, both those who are convinced of the need to bridge the gap, and those who are not yet persuaded of it. It is the dialogue arising from this debate that will certainly help build up the bridge between literature and foreign language teaching.

### Notes

- 1 As a matter of fact, this is a subject also discussed in ENPULIS and other events related to Foreign Languages in Brazil and elsewhere.
- 2 ALAB is an association which congregates researchers in applied linguistics in Brazil.
- 3 This Post Graduate Course (lato sensu ) has started in 1993 and is now in its fourth group. The main objective of the course I teach is bridging and integrating literature and language (English).
- 4 The research for my Ph.D. was not in teaching. The theme of my work was a feminist Jungian reading of D. H. Lawrence's women in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* (Cf. Funck: 1994, for an article discussing the theme of my thesis).