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Literacy and Bilingualism by James D. Williams and Grace Capizzi Snipper. New York: Longman, 1990. 162 pp.

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From amid the milieu of academics, teacher trainers and practitioners come Williams & Snipper with a well-written and highly readable report on the theoretical state of linguistic minority education in the United States, accompanied by their attempt to operationalize the findings for teachers of non-native English speakers. The organization of the book allows for each of the nine chapters to explore a research issue, such as defining literacy, explaining language acquisition or describing bilingualism, with the dual purpose (as stated in the preface) of providing the reader with an appropriate theoretical framework for meeting the needs of linguistic minority students as well as dispelling many of the misconceptions which surround literacy and bilingualism. It is not clear until the sixth chapter, however, that the authors' agenda also includes the presentation of a new teaching methodology, a goal intended to serve their final aim of having theory inform practice by providing concrete examples of how to develop students' literacy skills. The goals of the earlier chapters are served more effectively than those of the later chapters, however, as will be demonstrated below.

The book's most outstanding contribution to the field is its comprehensive review of the theories that have developed to explain aspects of bilingualism and biliteracy. Any reader versed in the literature on language learning cannot help but be impressed at the authors' strategically organized and critical review of many current researchers. In each chapter, Williams & Snipper not only delineate the many aspects of an issue, they also discover patterns or inconsistencies and demonstrate how a certain position can be argued to its logical conclusion, to the latest findings, or both. In Chapter 5, for example, they attack several misperceptions about illiteracy through an analysis of the relationship between language

and cognition. The authors introduce the topic by describing the position taken by Piaget (1974) that cognition precedes linguistic ability. They then follow other studies regarding language development which lead to Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) assertion that sociolinguistic environment influences thought, and they show how Olson (1977) adopted this argument to support the widespread notion that literacy is somehow necessary for abstract thought. The debate on this issue is brought to a close with Scribner & Cole's (1981) fairly conclusive finding that since literates have no cognitive superiority over illiterates, language may not influence cognition; there is also a final revelation, of which few are aware, that Olson (1987) has recently shifted his position toward the authors' own conclusions (pp. 68-75). Other similarly rigorous analyses succinctly synthesize the work of some of the "greats" who have investigated aspects of literacy (Heath), second language acquisition (Cummins, Krashen), bilingualism (Hakuta, Hymes) and sociolinguistics (Apple, Ogbu, Suarez-Orozco). Indeed, this thorough overview of the literature in the first half of the book is an excellent reference source for academics and classroom teachers alike.

That the book is understandable and useful to non-theorists should not go unnoticed. The language is not needlessly technical, and numerous definitions and explanations are provided. For example, *bilingualism* is concisely defined as "a person's ability to process two languages" (p. 33), after which all aspects of that processing -- acquisition/learning, proficiency, interdependence, and more -- are defined and analyzed until the reader gains an enlarged view of bilingualism as cognitively, contextually and socially constructed. The progression of the analysis is such that the reader readily acquires (vs. learns) a more complex perspective on each concept discussed.

The coherent review and evaluation of complex issues requires taking a stance, and these authors do so without equivocation. Their priorities are invariably humane and are best reflected in their position favoring the provision of bilingual education to linguistic minorities in the U.S.:

> In a participatory democracy like ours, we take it for granted that education is not only a fundamental right of all people but a necessity for the country's survival. Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the nation is obligated to provide the best

education possible to its nonnative English-speaking children. (p. 48)

While multiple views are presented as the authors trace the course of particular debates, eloquent statements, such as the one above, remind the reader that the author's obligation is to the often powerless minority people whose opportunities may depend on their recommendations. Williams & Snipper thus offer persuasive cognitive and social reasons for providing native language (L1) literacy instruction whenever and wherever possible and for re-examining transition to the second language (L2) as a goal of most American bilingual programs (pp. 50-56).

It is understandable that a work which encompasses multiple perspectives from linguistics, education, psychology, anthropology, sociology and politics might contain several inaccuracies. One of the authors' most frequent faults is to oversimplify. Luckily, however, the generalizations are relatively innocuous, such as their assertion that the State of California "has established high-level [educational] guidelines for every subject and insists they be applied to all students" (p. 49); I doubt most public school teachers in California are aware of such state-sponsored insistence! Another problem in the book, which may be attributable to reasonable limitations in the authors' professional backgrounds (they are a psycholinguist and a sociolinguist, respectively), is the occasional misunderstanding of cross-national research. America's apparent goal of monolingualism in the dominant language, for instance, is contrasted with the "bilingual" (read: egalitarian) goals of Canada and Sweden (p. 46) without regard for the unequal status of French in the former (see Safty, 1988) or the lack of tolerance for Polish or Turkish in the latter (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1986). Another example is the authors' claim that Modiano's (1968) work in Mexico demonstrates the negative effects of immersion on majority students; in fact, Modiano's data are based on students from indigenous language groups in Spanish-language classrooms. Unfortunately these and other misunderstandings detract from the credibility of several of the book's arguments.

The turning point of *Literacy and Bilingualism* occurs at Chapter 6 in which the discussion moves to and remains on teaching methodology. Williams & Snipper's decision to follow up the critical reviews of the early chapters with practical suggestions for instructors in the last four chapters results in a disjointed

presentation of their proposed new strategy, the "comprehensive approach" (p. 99), which utilizes grammar-translation and American fairy tales (or Hemingway and Steinbeck texts for older learners, p. 104) to strengthen minority students' biliteracy. Considering the authors' earlier criticisms of the grammar-translation method as tedious and dependent upon mere memorization (p. 91) as well as their charge that American curricula have failed to significantly broaden their base by incorporating minority and women's perspectives (p. 10), the "comprehensive approach" ultimately merits a highly critical reading.

As a synthesis of the most important issues in linguistics and education today, *Literacy and Bilingualism* is an exemplary and highly commendable work. Perhaps its less successful attempts to connect theory with practice raise the most essential question that readers must address: How can we best practice what we so effectively preach?

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Literature and Language Teaching by Christopher J. Brumfit and Ron A. Carter. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 290 pp.

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Literature and language learning have shared a long history. The academic teaching of language has long assumed the reading of literature as its goal. Perhaps this derived from universities being seen as seats for the study of the classic languages. No one approached Latin or Greek as a means of conversation; they were satisfactorily dead. When modern languages were introduced into the curriculum (one tends to forget how comparatively recent this phenomenom was in the face of tradition; American literature as a subject began in living memory at least of the more elderly), their teaching was patterned on the classical procedures -- translation and analysis. One need look no further than the most distinguished departments of modern languages to see this continuance. To the extent that German, Russian or French is taught, it is assumed that for those committed to the subject, acquisition is merely the necessary pre-requisite of literary study in the original language. That was the pattern for English teaching internationally, and one has observed pathetic students struggling to comprehend the subtleties of Wordsworthian vocabulary with the usable speech of a six year-old.

As usual it was American pragmatism that changed this situation. Confronted with a new political global role, American linguists, with the useful innocence that marks a Henry James character, observed the emperor was naked. With surprise it was perceived that distinguished international degrees in English did not advance the useful practice of verbal negotiation in the language. At that moment TESL, as opposed to teaching English abroad, truly

began! It was true that the British had spent centuries working abroad, but quite simply they had not tried to do the same (i.e., the most useful) thing: make the nonnative speakers talk!

From this more practical approach came the rejection of literature in ESL work in favor of more banal, but more useful, occupations, such as pattern practice. Cheerfully, in the famous idiom, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Since literature was effete and elitist, its language verbose and baroque, it had no place in useful language work. This decision was sustained by two sources extreme in all else but their opposition to the inclusion of literature. The linguists delved ever more deeply into the fundamentals of language not daring to approach the complexities of poetics. The literary critics dismissed utility and denied access to the holy grail of the great tradition to all except the dedicated specialists. So it went on for several decades. Then questions were raised. Students were not parrots and communication was set up as a goal beyond repetition. But what would students communicate and where would they learn to do this? Suddenly literature was recognized as a means by which native speakers extended their vocabulary and understanding. Might it not work for a nonnative speaker who often, unlike their teachers with bitter memories of high school, actually enjoyed literature? The idea that literature can and should play an important even exciting part in ESL classes is thus just, after some years of professional persuasion, being considered. It is this too lengthy background that brings us to the book under review.

Although published four years ago, this work is an admirable collection of essays that brings together observations from the most valiant and experienced teachers in the profession dedicated to working amongst the area of "interaction between language, literature and education." *Teachers* is a crucial word since the intention is to survey the entire field, the individual articles ranging from the somewhat abstruse theorizing of Guy Cook's "Texts, Extracts, and Stylistic Texture" to the most practical suggestions of Boyle's "Testing Language with Students of Literature in ESL Situations." The overall concept is presented in the introductory chapters. It owes a good deal, as do we all, to I.A. Richards, the great doyen of our trade. He devised a mode of criticism, which in America was called "The New Criticism," which made a close reading of a work a more significant exercise than the application of biographical or bibliographical information. Strictly speaking, the