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Literature, Spoken Language and Speaking Skills in Second Language Learning

The use of literature in second language teaching has been advocated for a number of years, yet despite this there have only been a limited number of studies which have sought to investigate its effects. Fewer still have focused on its potential as a model of spoken language or as a vehicle to develop speaking skills. Drawing upon multiple research studies, this volume fills that gap by exploring how literature is used to develop speaking skills in second language learners. The volume is divided into two parts: literature and spoken language and literature and speaking skills. Part I focuses on studies exploring the use of literature to raise awareness of spoken language features, while Part II investigates its potential as a vehicle to develop speaking skills. Each part contains studies with different research designs and in various contexts including China, Japan and the UK. The research designs used mean that the chapters contain clear implications for classroom pedagogy and research in different contexts.

CHRISTIAN JONES is a Senior Lecturer in TESOL and Applied Linguistics at the University of Liverpool. His main research interests are connected to spoken language, and he has published work on spoken corpora, lexis, lexico-grammar and instructed second language acquisition. He is editor of *Practice in Second Language Learning* (Cambridge, 2018).

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Foreword

Paul Simpson

Writing in the second half of the twentieth century, the Prague School structuralist Roman Jakobson declared that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar unacquainted with linguistic methods were equally flagrant anachronisms. The second part of Jakobson's aphoristic parallel might seem the more readily demonstrable by today's criteria; after all, a scholar of literature declaring themselves uninterested in language and linguistic methods is like an academic chemist affirming that they have no interest in atoms, elements or molecules. The other side of Jakobson's formula raises a different question, of course. The assumption here is that the study of linguistics cannot be complete without some understanding of the linguistic patterns that comprise literature, or of how language functions 'poetically' in genres of discourse outside literature or even of how the striking compositional features of literary texts invite ways of reading and understanding that transcend the familiar or the routine. In another famous contribution from the second half of the twentieth century, Chomsky invokes the sequence 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously' as a grammatically well formed, but semantically anomalous sentence. Chomsky clearly did not have literature in mind here, simply because such 'anomalous' language is often the very mainstay of creativity in literary writing. For example, the structurally very similar sequence 'Whispering lunar incantations dissolve the floors of memory' (from T. S. Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night') presents a clear challenge for interpretation and understanding if it is not to be dismissed as simply anomalous language. Indeed, readers are tasked with working out not only what semantically complex language like this means, but also *how* it means. And as the insightful contributions in this volume make clear, literary discourse asks very important questions about language and about the learning of language.

In the decades since Jakobson and Chomsky made their observations, the rationale for the scholarly integration of language and literary study has been widely accepted, and literary-linguistics programmes are well established around the world on many university syllabuses in language, literature and linguistics. That said, these programmes are orientated in the main towards

native speakers. As Christian Jones observes in his introduction to this book, whereas the theoretical significance of literary-linguistic pedagogies for second language (L2) speakers is reasonably well understood, there remains a paucity of empirical research that investigates the effectiveness of using literary texts in the second language classroom. In this respect, this collection is timely because its overarching focus is precisely on the role literature can play in non-native speakers' learning of language and in their experiences of thinking and talking about literary texts. Another ground-breaking feature of this book is its sustained focus on the ways in which the use of literary texts can enhance the awareness and development of spoken language and of speaking skills. Commendably, the chapters that comprise this collection incorporate the full gamut of literary composition, covering poetry, drama and fiction, as well screen and television adaptations thereof. The book moves from the compositional minutiae of the seventeen-syllable haiku poem, through the dramatised exchanges in the plays of Harold Pinter, to the corpus-assisted analysis of dialogue in a very large body of prose fiction. This material is supplemented elsewhere in the book by the productive use of screenplays, such as the television dramatisations and film adaptations of, respectively, the writing of Arthur Conan Doyle and of J. K. Rowling. The volume illustrates convincingly not only how a balanced literary-linguistic pedagogy can capture well the nuances of textual composition in literary texts, but also how such tools can help teachers to make informed choices about best practice pedagogically. And as the chapters in his book demonstrate consistently throughout, using literary texts in the second language classroom can improve learners' oral proficiency, communicative competence, linguistic-pragmatic awareness and spoken language skills.

Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to the late Ron Carter, who helped and inspired so many people in the field of applied linguistics and English language teaching. We hope that the work here is in some small way a tribute to his legacy.

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