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DEVELOPING A MASTERY IN SEEKING RATHER THAN KNOWING: AN APPROACH TO LITERATURE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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DEVELOPING A MASTERY IN SEEKING RATHER THAN KNOWING: AN APPROACH TO LITERATURE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

By

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A MASTERY IN SEEKING RATHER THAN KNOWING:
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This dissertation proposes that when we adopt a more dialogic and dialectic view of language and knowledge, the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature takes on a different nature: We see reading as necessarily involving asking questions, making predictions, bringing in potential answers, and finding/trying to find answers to the questions asked; we see reading literature as a dynamic happening occurring in social/political contexts; we see understanding as the basis (not the consequence) of comprehension; we see the process of understanding literature as recursive (not linear) and arises only out of participation; we see confusion, ambiguity, anxiety, and uncertainty as starting points that lead to questioning and exploration; we see learning as relating the new to the known; we see development as originated within social interactions, meaningful only to the individual going from being assisted towards becoming independent; and we see teaching and learning as always in communication, asking genuine questions, engaging in real dialogues, and attempting together with the learners to learn more than what one knows.

It thus only makes sense that in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature, we emphasize seeking rather than knowing. The common belief that foreign literature readers are in need of various background information when reading foreign literature because of their deficiency in linguistic skills/literary

tradition/cultural familiarity not only inhibits their pleasure of reading, but also impedes their growth as life-long readers. The notion that one needs to know a set of linguistic/literary/cultural features in order to understand a piece of literary works not only contradicts the natural process of language use and reading, but also limits readers' participation and learning. Instead, given the inevitability of encountering confusion in the process of reading, and the unattainability of a complete list of everything one needs to know about reading foreign literature, when readers encounter texts that challenge their understanding, they are more successful readers if they reject the assumption that they must possess a body of knowledge, embrace confusion as their opportunities for learning, and more readily see themselves as seekers of knowledge who ask their own questions, bring their own experiences to the process of reading/interpreting, and construct their own understandings. In short, seeking, rather than knowing, is what makes possible the reading of literature in a foreign language.

With love, respect, and appreciation,
I dedicate this dissertation to my dear parents,
Fong-mei Kang and Kuei-ming Hsu

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INTRODUCTION

...in fiction, as in autobiography and biography, it was the "moments of intensity" which counted and told all.
Hermione Lee in Virginia Woolf

Setting up the Stage

I came across the quote that I use here as the epigraph for this introductory chapter when I was reading a book on writing. (This was, of course, of a time when my whole life revolved solely around the writing of this dissertation. But that is a different story.) It was originally quoted for a different purpose in the book, but when my eyes met the words in that sentence, to my own surprise, images and emotions of those intense moments during the hours, days, and even months after my proposal defense meeting emerged. It was then that I thought the quote would go well with my plan to begin the dissertation at the time when I walked into my proposal defense meeting, and decided to include it as the starting point. I am fully aware it is not usual to write about the proposal or the proposal defense meeting in the introduction chapter of a doctoral thesis (and believe me, I have debated on this for longer than I should), yet for this particular one I am about to launch, I do expect that an explication of what was in the first proposal and what was added during and after the proposal defense meeting not only introduces such a dissertation in a very realistic way, depicting the passages undergone, but also provides a background in a more contextualized sense, including the forces involved. It sets forth a stage for the chapters to follow; and probably more fundamentally, it acknowledges the "historicity" (in Paulo Freire's sense) of me as the researcher, who has engaged

in an authentic inquiry, and has brought about some fortunate intellectual transformations. So here led by the epigraph, I enter upon the scenes of my "moments of intensity" which, as I believe, counted and told all.

Introducing the Subject

I had a whole first chapter of the dissertation written up when I walked into my proposal defense meeting, without realizing that in about two hours, all that I had thought of what my dissertation was going to look like would be modified in a quite drastic way—both methodologically, and, more importantly, epistemologically. I started my presentation telling the guidance committee that what I had in mind for my dissertation-to-be was a theoretical development of a reading model specifically for (but not limited to) the reading/learning/teaching of English literature in a context where English is used as a foreign language. I explained, as I wrote in my proposal, how being a non-native speaker of English learning and teaching English/American literature at undergraduate level in Taiwan had made me see such research as a burning issue worth of devoting my dissertation to. I then went on to quote theorists from fields such as education, psycholinguistics, reader response, and foreign language acquisition to support my thinking of what the problems were and what possible solutions there could be in the teaching of foreign literature. For part of the proposal/proposal defense meeting, in order to argue for a better approach, I drew on these theorists' arguments and suggestions to formulate what I called 'the seeking model of reading," along with some pedagogical principles regarding its application.

As I had conceptualized this project initially, at the heart of this "seeking model of reading" was the idea that the nature of knowledge is constructive and constitutive. Knowledge in the true sense is always "in-action" and never "out-of-context"; along the same line of thinking, literary knowledge that matters cannot be a pre-defined bulk of information ready to transfer, be it a historical fact or biographical background. Reading/reading literary texts, then, based on such a definition of knowledge/literary knowledge, is an experience, an event, a transaction, out of which meaning arises. And since knowledge/literary knowledge is not something to give or receive but can only emerge through taking part, what becomes essential in the reading process is the curiosity to seek, to ask, to partake, and what should be welcomed in the sense-making are confusions and mistakes. Thus in classroom practice, instead of being given so-called objective, definable messages about and of the literature, students should be encouraged to work as a community, making sense of the texts and claiming ownership of their own reading. Learning English/American literature should be looked at as an on-going process, connected to the texts read in the past and extended to ones to read in the future. Most essential of all, it should be recognized and affirmed that when encountering texts of greater linguistic/cultural challenges, rather than "knowing" in the sense of possessing certain linguistic/literary references, "seeking" is what makes possible the reading of literature, *especially* in a foreign language.

"Moments of Intensity"

Then came the moments of intensity: considering what I had come to understand as the major finding of my research up to this point was the recognition of knowledge as knowledge-in-context in foreign language education, it should not be hard for anyone to imagine how anxious, baffled, confused, distressed, embarrassed, frustrated I was (the list of adjectives here can go on and on to carry through the rest of the following twenty letters in the English alphabet!) when I was told at the end of the proposal defense meeting that I had to make methodological changes to the proposal *so as to contextualize my research*.

To be more specific, I was asked, first of all, to add my own experience of literature learning in the native language (i.e., my learning of Chinese literature) in order to compare and contrast with the one that I had briefly touched on (i.e., my learning/teaching experience of English/American literature in Taiwan) in the original proposal. On top of this addition in the personal sphere, I was requested to supply my argument with (real) data (as opposed to the theories) from Taiwan on the teaching and learning of English/American literature at undergraduate level in the English departments. To that end, I was instructed to (1) administer a survey to as many as 50 teachers of English/American literature in Taiwanese universities for the purpose of providing more evidence of current educational practice, and (2) hold focus group meetings of both teachers and students of English departments in Taiwan with an aim at receiving feedback on the proposed reading model.

So there I was, agonized by the fact (as it seemed to me then) that what I had to do to fulfill the requirement in the completion of my dissertation was not only something that I had not planned for, but also something I had *never* done before. I had no previous experience in designing any survey or questionnaire (at least not for such a formal and serious occasion); as for the focus group meetings, I had not even heard of the name, let alone how to conduct one of them. Worst of all, I kept struggling with the questions/emotions as I tried to continue the work: What does Chinese literature have to do with foreign language education? Why couldn't I focus solely on the development of a theory? Why wasn't my experience as a reader/learner/teacher coming from that context "contextualized enough"? And last but not least—what does it mean to "contextualize it more" when all that I had proposed in the proposal was about the contextualization of knowledge?

Very much feeling like this the whole time, I stumbled through the revising of the proposal, the writing of the UCRIHS application, the mailing out of the survey/questionnaire, the recruiting of the interviewees, and the actual interviewing of the teachers and students. As it turned out, I had to make adjustments for the research design, taking into consideration the culture not only just in Taiwan but also in the academic field of English literature in Taiwan. I ended up sending out 330 surveys/questionnaires to teachers of English/American literature throughout Taiwan, and instead of conducting focus group meetings, I interviewed four professors of English individually, and held a group interview of 5 English majors at the undergraduate level. (Each interview

had the same focuses though—one on the perceptions on the teaching/learning literature in English, and the other on the responses to the seeking model of reading.) Everything eventually fell in place, but still, many a time during this "data-collection process," I would catch myself staring at the computer monitor, doubting the possibilities of me ever finishing this doctoral degree. I felt discouraged, and all the fear and the guilt that came along with self-doubt wrapped around me.

Landscapes of Learning

I remember reading somewhere what Albert Einstein once said, that problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them. Looking back on my "moments of intensity" from my lived experience, I realize, indeed, my questions/emotions were my problems exactly because I was still at the level of awareness that had created them—that in spite of all that I had argued on paper about how real knowledge is dynamic and changing, and how live language is ideological and always embedded in the social and cultural purposes, in real life, I was still operating with an out-of-context kind of knowledge (in Arthur Applebee's sense) and an autonomous model of literacy (in Brian Street's sense). On the one hand I was advocating a reconceptualization of knowledge as "knowledge-in-action," emphasizing the need to recognize the virtues of confusion and ambiguity in the process of partaking; whereas on the other, I was frustrated by my attempt to control a unitary and noncontradictory type of learning, imputing most of the difficulties I encountered when facing the

revision to the fact that I did not possess the expertise to carry out the procedures. I was all into the criticism of the "out-of-context-ness" of the existing curriculum in the English departments in Taiwan; however, as I came to the point to make reference to pedagogical issues, I chose to rely on books while excluding voices from the real classrooms. Reading, as I theorized, was an on-going process, connected to the past and extended into the future; nevertheless, in theorizing my seeking model of reading, I singled out the reading of English/American literature, as if the learning of reading in the native language that comes before and goes after did not matter.

All along I thought I felt perplexed because I did not know what to do or how to do in terms of completing such research; but as I have come to learn through doing and making sense of this dissertation as a whole, I realize that what really went wrong in this picture of the scenes of my "moments of intensity" was neither my unfamiliarity with the designing of a survey, nor my lack of experience in the conducting of interviews. Rather, it was the wrong kind of knowledge along with a "single literacy with a big 'L' and a single 'y'" (Street 132) I had subscribed to (regardless of what I thought otherwise) that had left me no curiosity to seek, to ask, to partake in the process of knowledge construction. The desperation coming out from facing the proposal revision process has, in point of fact, grown into an indicator of my dependence on the certainty and authority of an "informed position" (in Reed Dasenbrock's sense). What my "moments of intensity" shows, clearly as it seems to me now, is that my "re"conceptualization of the definition of

knowledge, of the nature of reading, of the question of authority was (alas!) rather limited.

Maxine Greene's reminder in the preface of Landscapes of Learning thus is especially pertinent here for such Introduction:

> It is important to hold in mind, therefore, that each of us achieved contact with the world from a particular vantage point, in terms of a particular biography. All of this underlines our present perspectives and affects the way we look at things and talk about things and structure our realities. To be in touch with our landscapes is to be conscious of our evolving experiences, to be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world. (2)

On a small scale, what these scenes of "moments of intensity" told was my own struggle to get in touch with my landscapes in the writing of this dissertation. But there is more. On a large scale, what these "moments of intensity" also count is a concern of the need for each of us to be conscious of our evolving experiences, and be aware of the ways in which we encounter our world. As I have learned through engaging in the scenes of my "moments of intensity," it is not enough to simply acknowledge a concept like knowledge as knowledge-in-action (in Arthur Applebee's sense) or reading/learning/teaching as dialogic (in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense); what is also crucial is to bring forward a caution that points out how easy one can fall right back into the comfort of an "out-of-context" type of knowledge and resume a language that is monological. Learning to make sense of what is happening provides much less security (than, say, being told of what happened);

yet it is essential if we are to become independent and autonomous learners in the real world.

Inventing and Reinventing Knowledge

Now, I hope my insistance on the juxtaposing of my proposal/proposal meeting and the revision process in this Introduction chapter has proved to serve its purpose well—that it has shown how in the course of searching both the subject as this research and the subject as its researcher have been invented and reinvented. I think of what Paulo Freire says in Pedagogy of the Oppressed, that "[k]nowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (58). In many ways, what eventually gets to be presented in this dissertation remains similar to what I have summarized from my proposal/proposal meeting: it is still more of a narrating and theorizing account of my personal search for an approach to English/American literature in a context where English is used as a foreign language; it still emphasizes the importance to reconceptualize knowledge as knowledge-in-action and language as language-in-use. (In fact, the reading of the first few chapters might even seem a bit like a deja-vu, since I have just summed up the major points I am about to make.) What lies drastically different in terms of the whole project, though, is that now my inquiry (still restless and impatient but certainly more continuing and hopeful) is no longer sought out by just me in the world, but me *with the world and with each other*. It not only includes voices of teachers and students in the

real world, but also (as I do hope!) is of a higher level of awareness—of the contingencies, the possibilities, the landscapes.

The chapters are sketched out as follows: In Chapter One, "The Search for an Approach," I provide the rationale as well as the methodology of the present study to help readers understand why the questions I am raising are important ones—why I did what I did. It is meant to paint a broader picture of literature study in Taiwan, locating this search/research within the context of Taiwanese English/American literary education. In Chapter Two, "Theorizing the Search," I lay out the theoretical perspectives that the proposed seeking model of reading is based on. It serves as a bridge between my deeply-felt dilemma and my proposed approach, revealing what I now think to be the "problems" in the existing curriculum in the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan, and thereby assisting as a foundation to bring about resolutions to my quest for an approach to the literature in a foreign language. In Chapter Three, "Theorizing the Approach," I provide an overview of the proposed seeking model of reading. It explicates in more details what it means to read literature in a foreign language from the viewpoint of the seeking model of reading, and I further argue that when readers encounter texts that challenge their understanding, they are more successful readers if they reject the assumption that they must possess a body of knowledge, embrace confusion as their opportunities for learning, and more readily see themselves as seekers of knowledge who ask their own questions, bring their own experiences to the process of reading/interpreting, and construct their own understanding. Seeking,

rather than knowing, is what makes possible the reading of literature in a foreign language. In Chapter Four, drawing on data collected from the existing research on the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan, the 80 responding English/American literature teachers through Mailback survey, and the interview responses made by the participating teachers and students, I then extend the search/approach back to the Taiwanese context, and provide a further theorization of the proposed approach with a focus on the implementation of the seeking model of reading in real classroom settings. Finally, in the Chapter Five, "An Approach to (Re)search," I suggest the seeking model of reading concerns issues related to language and power. From reading the word to reading the world, the seeking model of reading thus also applies to providing a way of doing further search/future research for approaching literature in a foreign language.

CHAPTER I: THE SEARCH FOR AN APPROACH

> *Theory doesn't exist for its own sake, or shouldn't. However formidably abstract, it is a form of intelligibility that the theorist tries to give to personal dilemmas, deeply felt. Like all writing, theory is a way to make sense of life.*
>
> *Louise Phelps in Composition as a Human Science*

Introduction

This dissertation, or rather my whole doctoral study, began as a search for an approach to literature in a foreign language. Being a non-native speaker of English, learning and teaching English literature in an environment where English is used as a foreign language, I experienced at first hand the difficulties of reading literature in a foreign language. Decoding literary texts semantically and syntactically is not easy to begin with. Language is embedded in the society and culture in which it is used; in the same way, literary texts are situated in the historical and political contexts out of which they grow. For readers who are reading in a language other than their own, references and background knowledge are essential to apprehending not only what the stories are about, but, more importantly, their implications. To use the word "Wal-mart" as an example, explaining it as "the name of a discount retailer originated from the United States" is apparently not enough for English language learners when reading, say, Janice Daugharty's Dark of the Moon. For readers to engage with the characters in the novel, they need to know not only what most Wal-marts are like but also that what the word "Wal-mart" implies encompasses issues on economy, sociology, history, and politics. It is in this way that I found that what

makes foreign literature most interesting and fascinating is, however, what also makes the reading most challenging. Reading foreign literature requires both comprehending the texts linguistically and imagining the worlds culturally, and it demands a whole lot of assistance and guidance.

In this first chapter, I provide a broad background of such search for an approach to the reading/teaching/learning of English/American literature in Taiwan. I introduce the motivation by looking at, in a chronological fashion, my own contacts with literature, Chinese literature, and English/American literature. The section also describes the purpose, the research design, and the detailed research procedure of the present study. Finally, in order to further justify the rationale of such search/research, some data analysis on the current practices in the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan is also presented.

Encountering Literature

In order to better illustrate the motivation of such a personal search in this dissertation, in a less skillful but somewhat imitating fashion of Paulo Freire's rereading of his "essential moments" at the beginning of Literacy: Reading the Word and the World, I look through reminiscences about my own reading of literature—first in the native tongue (i.e. Chinese) and later in English as a foreign language.

I remember the summer days in which my parents made my brother and me memorize a poem a day from the Tang Shi San Bai Shou, a famous

collection of poetry from the Tang dynasty (618-907 A. D.) of ancient China. I was going on to fourth grade and my brother, second; and although we might not have had any clue as to what some of the poems were about, my parents made sure that we could pronounce all the words by writing the "the poem of the day" on a poster with phonetic symbols to indicate the correct pronunciations. Every day we would recite "the poem of the day" individually to either one of our parents, and for "reward," we would each get five dollars to feed our piggy banks (which would be like a nickel in U.S. dollars). It was not like we could choose NOT to do it and not get the money though, so I guess in my mind (now that I think of it!) I never made the connection of reciting poems with gaining economic profits. Being quite far from it, to me, the ability of knowing and reciting ancient poetry had always been a sign of culture and intelligence. It meant well-read (and in most cases well-educated), and the more poems one knows showed the more one knows about literature. Unfortunately (but boy! how fortunate my brother and I both felt then), for some reason, this "one poem a day" project did not last through the whole summer break. I still remember some of the poems that I memorized from then, and now whenever I hear people talk about "Tang shi" (poems from the Tang dynasty), I see in my head those posters my parents made for us sticking on the wall.

The reading of literature up till high school and the first year of college (as there were no more compulsory Chinese classes after freshmen year) was not too much different from the one I just described during that summer break—*memorize, memorize, memorize,* except what I had to memorize had grown

much more: word pronunciations, word/phrase meanings, background information, and authoritative interpretations; plus the recitation had become much longer now since most of the time it was not of classic Chinese poetry but of classic prose. As strange as it may sound, Chinese the language and Chinese the literature, to me, had almost no connection with each other—I use the language, but I certainly cannot rely on my knowledge of the language used to read/understand the literature in the books/textbooks. At school, we used Gu Wen Guan Zhi, a popular collection of prose dated from before 600 B.C. to the Ming daynasty (1644 A. D.), as one of the outside-class reading materials. (And if I may add, this book, though of many different editions, was used in almost every high school specifically for the preparation of college entrance exams, and sometimes it was even used by college graduates to prepare for graduate program entrance exams.) All the entries in this book were followed by sections of interpretations and comprehension questions; and the "reading" of it, as natural as it seemed to me then, involved not reading (in the sense that a reader would take an active role making sense of the text), but, again, memorizing. (Now, if I could digress from here for a moment, I would argue that the reading/learning/teaching of Chinese literature has not changed too much since the time I was back in high school. The most recent "Basic Proficiency Test" held by the College Entrance Examination Center for more than 160,000 students on Jan. 23, 2006, shows that in the Chinese test, as many as 20 out of 23 questions in the multiple choice section require some kind of memorization of certain word/phrase meanings.) In such a test-driven school like the one I had,

memorization/recitation guaranteed higher grades, thus proving better comprehension. But, not unlike the view I held on knowing/being able to recite poetry, I did not connect the "reading" of classic prose merely to academic strength. To me, the ability of knowing and reciting ancient prose continued to be a symbol of erudition and sophistication. It meant excellence in scholarship (no matter which field one is in), and the more classics one knows demonstrated the more one knows about literature.

Learning English/American Literature

In Taiwan, as in many other settings where English is used as a foreign language, English is taught as a subject at schools and the lessons are mostly focusing on grammar and vocabulary. The reading materials in such classes are predominately short texts that are non-fictional and/or informational; and accordingly, the whole point of reading is to prove understanding of the language in use. To take the most recent "Basic Proficiency Test" for example again, in the subject of English, there is a reading comprehension passage (first paragraph) that goes like this:

> Astronauts often work 16 hours a day on the space shuttle in order to compete all the projects set out for the mission. From space, astronauts study the geography, pollution, and weather patterns on Earth. They take many photographs to record their observations. Also, astronauts **conduct** experiments on the shuttle to learn how space conditions, such as microgravity, affect humans, animals,

plants, and insects. Besides working, regular exercise is essential to keep the astronauts healthy in microgravity.

And the first two questions that followed are:

(1) The passage is mainly about

(A) how astronauts fly the space shuttle.

(B) how a space mission is completed.

(C) how a space shuttle is constructed.

(D) how far astronauts travel in space.

(2) The underlined word **conduct** in the first paragraph is closest in meaning to

(A) behave. (B) instruct. (C) serve as. (D) carry out.

These TOEFL-type learning experiences in reading emphasize extracting correct answers, thereby proving sufficient competence in a foreign language. It leaves no room for any negotiation as far as the meaning goes, let alone personal affections or opinions of any sorts.

Pretty much like this is also how I learned to read in English back in high school, thus making the transition from studying English language as a high school student to learning English/American literature as a college English major extremely difficult. To begin with, in college, we were reading longer, more involved texts rather than short informational ones. And the genres were different, too. For example, for the obvious reason to provide us a foundation in the Western Literature tradition and prepare us as English majors to study English/American Literature, in just the first semester of the "Introduction to

Literature" class in Freshman year, we started from "Genesis," "Book of Job," to Homer's Iliad, Aeschylus's Agamemnon, Sophocles' Antigone, Euripides' Medea, Aristophanes' Lysistrata, Aristotle's "Poetics," Virgil's Aeneid, Augustine's Confessions, to The Song of Roland, Dante's The Divine Comedy, ending with Boccaccio's Decameron. Anthony Carlisle describes his EFL literature class in Taiwan as "novel in one hand and electronic dictionary in the other, students plough their way through the pages looking up the new vocabulary until they 'understand' the story" (13). Without doubts, I, too, was struggling with the linguistics of English that complicated the reading of such complex literary texts. (Imagine: we were at the same time taking English conversation class learning how to order food in a restaurant!) But in addition to tons of "looking-up-into-the-dictionary" work, I also found myself in desperate need of the already existing Chinese translations with annotations to get me through my reading, or rather (since I wouldn't call that "reading" now), the humongous translating jobs. Reading was no longer a question of only what new vocabulary meant; reading literature in English turned out to be something more than getting factual details (although character names/story plots were still essential when writing exams).

I came to believe (through this and other literature survey classes later) that knowing each and every word in a text was then only an initial step of being a good reader in English/American Literature. There were literary conventions to be familiar with, literary devices to discern, literary theories to apply, and literary history that often signals a sub-text, denoting its historical, political, and social implications. Literature to me, here in a foreign language, still (if not more) held a

prestigious status (as in Chinese literature), indicating enduring aesthetics and everlasting wisdom. What appeared to be different, though, was that, as opposed to the texts in Chinese literature, of which we could almost never gain any authority to interpret on our own, the texts in English/American literature seemed to present a transhistorical and transcultural nature of humanity that can be, if read by a good experienced reader, objectively demonstrated. In other words, it is (although very remotely but) not totally impossible that someday I would be able to read a story or a piece of English/American literature with no new vocabulary in it, detect all the symbols, metaphors, tones, and/or foreshadows along the reading, and further locate the author/text in a historical and cultural background that brings out the significance of the work; and then I could say that I was able to truly appreciate the beauty of that piece of masterpiece. There was a hope of knowing all the words as well as the literary merits, but before that happens, in the meanwhile as an EFL learner, what I believed I needed was to increase my word bank in English, improve my reading skills in English/American Literature, and most important of all, accumulate my knowledge in the Literary tradition. And all these could be done through listening to professors' interpretations, reading scholarly articles, and researching secondary literary sources.

Teaching English/American Literature

As I move on now to my experience of being an instructor in the English

Department in Taiwan, I see myself standing in the front of the classroom lecturing. It was my "Introduction to Fiction" class, and I had picked out X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia's compliment, An Introduction to Fiction, as the textbook for this course not only because it provides a wide range of stories, covering most major authors/classic stories, but also because it seemed to me very well organized—with sections focusing on literary techniques (e.g., point of view, tone, theme, symbol), major schools of criticism (e.g., formalism, psychoanalytic criticism, gender criticism, cultural studies), and most attractive of all, questions to ask/suggestions on writing at the end of each story/major chapter. This format fit perfectly into my thinking of how literature should be learned/taught: I wanted my students to be exposed to as many stories/authors as possible, I wanted them to be able to identify literary techniques such as symbol and theme so as to know how to truly appreciate English/American Literature, I wanted them to be able to write literary analysis like (or at least not too far off from) the ones in the "Critical Approaches to Literature" section, and most of all, I wanted them to be able to engage in serious literary discussions after reading a piece of literary work, just like answering those suggested questions at the end of each story/major chapter. To me then, being able to do all the above meant understanding the literary qualities, thereby knowing English/American Literature; and as an instructor in such introductory literature classes, I considered my responsibility to be showing them how to. I realized students were having tremendous linguistic difficulties as well as cultural ones (considering I assigned them one story/author per class period, one oral report of

a story from a specific literary tenet per semester, plus two term papers, all in English), but in the face of my "objectives," in class, I could not but only provide them (or rather, lecture on) the historical and biographical background information to make them "see" the greatness in all these masterpieces. I used movie clips from time to time, explained/translated what happened when they seemed totally lost, but then again, my main concern was always on the 'literariness." English the language is something that other "language classes" (such as Composition or Conversation class) would/should take care of, whereas in Literature classes, we dealt with English the Literature.

So in a way I taught the way I learned, except now when I became the "expert" in the class, I felt a lot less authoritative. With only a Master's degree in English under my belt (as opposed to most professors I had before had Ph. D. s), I did not feel like I had the "authority" to be commenting on the literary works we read in class. (I had not yet the concept that I would need "training" to be teaching English/American literature then! I just thought if I had been a better reader, I would not have had any problems being a good teacher to show students how to read well.) I was always unsure whether the ways I "appreciated" the works were the most "prevalent" ones, and inevitably I felt uncertain whether the "messages" I got from the works were the most "pertinent" ones. In order to sound like an "insider," I needed historical background of the text, I needed biographical background of the author, and I needed to know what other critics had said about this piece of work in order to make sure I was not "wrong." So the way I prepared for classes was to read as many secondary resources as I could

get my hands on (including the instructor's manual, especially when answering the suggested questions,) and talk about them "effortlessly," "naturally," as if I had known them long before I became the "professor." I was in constant doubt of my own "authority," and consequently, I needed an "authoritative reading" to match up with my "authoritative figure."

All these years I had thought of my unsettling teaching experience as a result of the incompetence on my own part at both the linguistic and the literary level, until I read the "anxiety (teaching) dreams" of other English teachers in Elaine Showalter's book, *Teaching Literature*. In a way, it was very comforting to me to know that I, among all these English teachers whom I would consider more than "competent" and who ARE native speakers of English, was not the only one who suffered from the anxiety of teaching: we all shared, due to lack of training, the awareness that we were "making it up as we go along" (4); we all underwent the worries of coverage, thinking "well, even if we don't have time to cover this [author, text, idea] in class today, I have at least assigned it and can therefore be satisfied that my students have been at least exposed to it" (12); we all faced the horror of "the reality of standing up in front of a group to teach" (13); and worse of all, we all met with what Jane Tompkins calls "the fear of failure—the failure of one's authority" as a teacher (1). It was surely reassuring in the sense that, upon reading statements like "Perhaps teaching Literature feels especially unsettling because, unlike physicists or economists, we are not confident of our authority" (3). I found allies within the circle of teaching English/American Literature—even in a setting where English is the native tongue, but at the same time, such

recognition of the question of authority also brought out the difficulties I faced as a teacher in the field of English/American Literature—now back in the setting where English is used as a foreign language. To some extent, my status of being an EFL learner myself had kept me further away from being the expert in the classroom—I was very conscious of my own use of "English the language," trying not to make any grammatical errors since that would indicate my insufficiency; and I never felt quite secure to talk about "English the literature" in any representative way, due to the fact that I was an "outsider" of the English/American culture. In other words, it was undoubtedly relieving for me to see that, to a certain degree, this (lack of) authority issue had more to do with many factors other than my own "incompetence," either at the linguistic or the literary level; but the question remained—I was still at a loss as to what I could actually do in the classroom to help resolve my anxiety of teaching.

Deeply-felt Personal Dilemmas

In the light of my lived experiences detailed in the previous sections, which provided the foundation for my interest to "search" for an approach, the purpose of this study is thus simply to respond to the difficulties I faced as an EFL learner reading/learning/teaching English/American literature. I use Louise Phelps's words in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter not only because I think it is at the same time so true and so beautifully written. It is quoted here also because it perfectly describes what the writing of this dissertation for me is all about. I never thought I would someday consider myself a "theorist," let alone

coming up with any "formidably abstract" theory; but when I look at what I have tried to accomplish here with this research, I see the attempt to develop a curricular theory with a focus on classroom applications in the field of foreign language and literature. I use "approach," instead of "theory" (to refer to a set of coherent ways to read/learn/teach English/American literature in a setting where English is used as a foreign language), but regardless, what this dissertation strived to put forward is, like the epigraph says, "a way to make sense of [my] life"—as a reader, a learner, and a teacher in the field of English/American Literature in Taiwan. In many ways, this is a genuine search for "a form of intelligibility" to give to my "personal dilemmas, deeply felt": As a reader, how do I balance between the reading and the getting of the "help" for the reading? More specifically as a foreign language learner, how do I build up a word bank sufficient enough to read literature while at the same time expand literary knowledge to the extent that qualifies one as "in the field"? How do I improve reading skills so as not to feel limited in reading while at the same time cultivate an aesthetic eye for appreciation? How do I enjoy the reading for its own sake while at the same time benefit from looking at it from different critical perspectives?

And with a more immediate urgency since teaching has consequences, as a foreign literature teacher, how do I integrate the help for the reading into the actual reading? How do I assist students cross the language barrier while at the same time encourage them to develop personal engagement with the texts? How do I promote responses while at the same time emphasizing the need to be

culturally/historically/socially/politically conscious? How do I advocate classroom discussions while at the same time avoid what Peter Rabinowitz calls a "straw-person argument" (15)? How do I present necessary information to break cultural locks on their vision while at the same time leave room for their imagination? How do I incite the envisioning without planting some historical/cultural pictures in students' heads? How do I supply crucial background knowledge without making students believe they are somehow dependent in reading foreign literature? Even more personally as well as pedagogically, being a non-native speaker of the target language myself, how do I select the best "help" in the sense that it offers an "insider's" view? How do I, as the sole information provider in the classroom, guard against my own subjective inferences? Given the fact that a teacher's professional responsibility is to teach and to lead, how do I guide students' reading while at the same time cultivate their autonomy so that they can explore their own literary journey along the way? How do I make the courses both educational and enjoyable enough that the students will become life-long readers in foreign literature?

Research Questions

With such aim to resolve my deeply-felt personal dilemmas, finding ways to make sense of all these seeming dichotomies in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature, this study is concerned with two major research questions:

(1) What is a better way to approach literature in a foreign language?

(2) What are the assistance and guidance needed in class based on such approach?

To further contextualize these two research questions for the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan, five other research questions are accordingly mapped out:

(3) What are the current teaching practices in the English departments in Taiwan?

(4) What are other English/American literature teachers' viewpoints on these teaching issues?

(5) What do other more experienced English/American literature teachers think of the proposed approach?

(6) What are current English majors' learning experiences?

(7) What do current English majors think of the proposed approach?

Research Design

As Deborah Britzman rightly argues, "The act of theorizing is not an imposition of abstract theories upon vacuous conditions. Theorizing is a form of engagement with and intervention in the world" (55). In order to generate data to facilitate my attempt in the theorizing and narrating of an approach to literature in a foreign language, I adopted a multimethod research design, combining quantitative survey, qualitative one-on-one interviews, and a modified version of focus group interviewing. Because I wanted to bring about more evidence on the current teaching practices in English departments in Taiwan, I chose to use

survey research for its advantage in producing data from a large number of respondents. (Patton 143) On the other hand, because I wanted to receive feedback on the proposed approach from both teachers and students in the English department in Taiwan, I also chose to use the interviewing method for its strength in providing participants' opinions and perceptions.

I started out designing the interview protocols using focus groups in the sense that I wanted to pretest my new "idea/product." I thought the use of focus groups would fit appropriately with my objectives—to gather responses, attitudes, and insights through questions and discussions on my proposed approach (Bell 124). Besides, as Morgan and Scannell suggest, the use of focus groups would help to create a friendly environment in which the participants could feel comfortable enough to discuss what they really think about my proposed approach. (18)

But as I continued to work on the research design, I decided to change the use of teachers' focus group to one-on-one interviews. I was aware that the data emerging from these teacher interviews would be fundamentally different from the data I would have obtained had I conducted focus groups, which would have provided a "group effect" in terms of "dynamic process based on interaction between multiple people" (Hesse-Biber and Leavy 198-9). But because I found from my experience that individual interviews would yield more relevant information in an environment where people are hesitant to talk about their own pedagogy (which is the case in most English departments in Taiwan), out of the concern with the quality/quantity of data I would get, I decided to interview the

teachers individually. One thing needs to be pointed out here though: these face-to-face interviews also differed from the traditional qualitative "in-depth" interview format because I was less interested in probing into these teachers' concepts than in attaining their comments regarding my proposed approach. My purpose in conducting these individual interviews was not too far from that of focus groups—I wanted to know what these teachers think of my proposed approach.

I also decided to modify the use of students' focus groups to (plain) group interviews owing to the difficulties in recruitment. Instead of having different sets of group/audience like a more common use of focus groups would, I chose to hold two interview sections with the same group of students. I was aware that, working within such modification, the number of the subjects recruited, thereby the data generated, would be to some extent limited; but it was not without other accompanying advantages: with the additional time allocated, I was able to invite the participants to talk about their current and past learning experiences before I asked them what they thought of my proposed approach. Their experiences would put their comments into perspective, and such data would be valuable when I try to put my proposed approach into context. As a whole, in addition to having more time to spend on more interview questions, this modified version of (focus) group interviewing still enjoys the major benefit of employing (a more regular type of) focus group discussions—the group interview protocol was designed in a way that it still enabled participants to "both query each other and explain themselves to each other" (Morgan 139) in the "give-and-take interactions" (Berg 115). It was kept to "encourage participants to talk to one

another, asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view" (Kitzinger and Barbour 4).

Research Procedures

To explicate the steps I took to carry out the above mentioned research design in Spring 2005 in more detail, each method utilized is discussed in the following sections:

Mailback Survey In order to obtain the type of data that would help me paint a broader picture of the teaching of English/American Literature in Taiwan, I sent out mailback surveys to 330 professors of English/American literature in 38 English/Foreign Languages and Literature/Applied English departments throughout Taiwan. The criteria for the inclusion of subjects were (1) teachers (including full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, lecturers), (2) with English/American literature education background, (3) in the English/Foreign Language and Literature/Applied English departments, and (4) at universities/university of education/universities of Technologies/university of Science and Technology in Taiwan. I identified the subjects from the faculty page of departments' websites, and for the purpose of ensuring/reassuring anonymity, I did not assign tracking codes on the surveys sent out. (See Appendix A for a list of the departments included in this part of the research.)

Although presented in a quantifiable format, the survey questions were designed to gather information on the issues of teaching English/American Literature in the English departments in Taiwan. And because I wanted to know

what it is like to be teaching and learning English/American literature in a more general sense, in the cover letter I asked the respondents to answer the survey questions based on their teaching experiences of *only* the undergraduate required literature survey classes. (See Appendix B for Mailback Survey.) There were ten questions in the survey questionnaire (each with 4 to 6 answers for the respondents to check off), and except for the first question on demographics, which was asked with an attempt to elicit data to provide evidence on the large number of students in most classes, the rest of the questions were directed more at how these responding teachers perceive the teaching of English/American Literature at undergraduate level in Taiwan to be: How do they define literature? What do they think reading literature means? Where do they assign most emphasis when it comes to the learning of literature? What role do they think they play as a teacher in the literature field? The survey also aimed at gathering information on the difficulties these responding teachers face in the current teaching situation. In analyzing such data, again, although shown in "number" form, I looked mostly at what these numbers mean in terms of the questions I posed.

One-on-one Interviews Among the four teachers who participated in the one-on-one interviews, I knew two, Cathy and Kevin, from my previous learning and teaching background. I had taken classes with both of them when I was in the undergraduate program, and they both later became my "colleagues" as I began teaching. For these two teachers whom I knew, it was I who made the initial contacts. I called to explain briefly what I was doing with my research

(along with why I needed their help and how they could help me), and they both agreed to set aside time to give me feedback on my proposed approach. As for the other two teachers whom I didn't know, Michael and David, the initial contacts were made through a friend. Upon their agreement, I then called to make appointments to talk to them about my proposed approach and to get feedback from them. All four teachers had more than ten years of experience in teaching required undergraduate literature classes in Taiwan (Michael and David had also taught in the United States and Hong Kong,) and as a plus, all except Kevin had been involved in administrative work such as chairing a graduate/undergraduate program or being curriculum consultants for the universities in Taiwan.

Except for the one with Michael, which was carried out in a restaurant, the other three interviews were done at the participants' offices. The duration ranged from one and a half hours to two and a half hours, and among the four interviews, the ones with Cathy and Kevin were done in Mandarin Chinese, the one with Michael was done mostly in English, and the one with David was done exclusively in English. All interviews were audio-taped, and all followed a similar beginning procedure in which the participants were asked to read and sign the consent form first, and then respond to the Mailback Survey. I had included the Mailback Survey here for two reasons: first and foremost, I thought by answering the survey questions, the interviewees would be better "prepared" for the interviews to come in the sense that they would be more familiarized with the kind of questions this present research was asking. Also, I thought by letting them know that I would be later sending out 330 surveys nationwide, they might

"spread the word" for me if they happened to be talking to other colleagues in the field of English/American literature in Taiwan, encouraging the people they knew to respond to my surveys.

The major questions to guide these one-on-one interviews were then of two focuses: (1) Teachers' approaches to teaching literature in English, and (2) teachers' responses to my proposed approach. (See Appendix C for Questions for Individual Interviews.) Of the first focus, the benefit of such inclusion was twofold: I was able to gather information in more detail on how/what/why these teachers teach; while at the same time, and maybe more importantly, such focus allowed me to take these teachers' approaches to teaching literature into consideration when I drew on their feedback to help theorize my proposed approach. The questions included corresponded to the ones in the Mailback Survey, only here they were all open-ended. Some of the questions asked were: Please describe a required literature class you have taught before. (e.g., average number of students, ways of instructions, kinds of assessments, etc..) Please tell me your experience teaching these kinds of classes. (e.g., students' responses, students' motivation/expectation/interests, difficulties, etc..) When teaching such classes, how do you select your teaching materials? What do you think "literature" means in these kinds of classes? What do you think is important in teaching these classes? How would you describe your philosophy of teaching literature in English?

Following the first focus, the questions of the second focus were then geared specifically towards my proposed approach. The main questions were:

1. What are some benefits/limits for the readers when reading from this "seeking" perspective?
2. If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what are some benefits to the students?
3. If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what are some drawbacks fro the students?
4. If this reading model is to be implemented in the teaching of literature in English, what do you think the challenges/difficulties/restrictions in class will be? How can they be resolved?
5. What are some socio-cultural-linguistic-political ramifications of recommending such a reading model in Taiwan?
6. What advice do you have for me on proposing such a reading model?

Although not strictly followed through, all four interviews were conducted more or less according to sequence of the questions asked. In analyzing such data, I looked for comments that were made directly at my proposed approach, as well as those on the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan. I only transcribed/translated sections that I would make specific reference to in the analysis.

(Focus) Group Interviews Because I had expected it would be hard to recruit subjects for group interviews (considering I could not provide any extra credits or any other incentives), I asked a friend who worked at the English department of this university I will call "School in Taiwan" to pass on flyers, inviting English majors to come for a discussion of learning/reading

English/American literature in Taiwan. I then made contacts with those who showed interest in taking part in the research, and five students actually came at the time of the meeting. All five—Jennifer, Gina, Heidi, Gail, Amanda—were female in their sophomore year. They had taken a number of classes together before, and as it appeared to me they knew each other quite well from both in and outside of class. I had asked these participating students prior to arranging meeting times whether they wanted to do the discussion(s) twice for about an hour or once for about two hours with a break in between, and they preferred the later format. Also they indicated that they could reserve a classroom at school as the meeting place. So in the end the group interview took place at the university. It lasted about two and an half hours, and was (audio)tape recorded from the beginning to the end, covering the break.

Throughout the meeting, except for explaining the purpose and the process of the research and having them sign the consent forms in the beginning, I, as the moderator, had limited involvement in the discussions. I explicitly encouraged these participating students to respond to one another, and even though at times their answers/comments would seem to be made directly towards me because I was the person who brought up the questions, the discussions were focused more on the comparing and/or contrasting of the different experiences/ideas/opinions they expressed. One unexpected thing I learned through conducting this group interview was, quite surprisingly though, how crucial (something as irrelevant as) "refreshments" can actually be. Indeed, as Jayanthi and Nelson suggest in Savvy Decision Making: An Administrator's

Guide to Using Focus Groups in Schools that, "Refreshments are essential for establishing a comfortable atmosphere before and during a focus group. Participants will be more inclined to relax and unwind as they wait for the focus group to begin and will again be refreshed during the break" (59-60). Although I brought coffee and cakes more as a gesture to show my appreciation, the friendly climate these refreshments created in fact helped to facilitate the group interaction tremendously.

The questions developed to guide both sections of the group meeting were designed in a sequence suggested by Richard Krueger in Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research. (44-46) The discussions thus went from responses to an opening question, an introductory question, a transition question, two key questions, and finally to that to an ending question. (See Appendix D for Questions for Group Interviews.) The questions asked in the first section were focused on students' perceptions of reading literature in English. They were:

1. Please tell us your name and what year you are in.
2. Please describe the required literature classes you had before. (e.g., average number of students, textbook types, ways of instructions, kinds of assessment)
3. Please describe your experience with these classes. For example: What do you find most difficult? What interests you the most? What influence do you think they have on you as an English major?
4. What do you think "literature" means in those classes?

5. (As opposed to/similar to the previous question) What does reading literature in English mean to you?
6. What do you think is important in the reading of English/American literature?

These discussions made possible a deeper understanding as to what/how/why these learners learn, and the data generated helped to gain more detailed information and insights about the learning of English/American literature in Taiwan.

In the second section of the group interview, in order to elicit more comments from the participants on my proposed approach, in addition to a brief explanation of the proposed reading model, I inserted a reading event between the introductory question and the transition question. I had planned to ask the subjects to read the provided material twice, once before the transition question and once before the key questions, but due to time restraint at the actually meeting, the second reading was skipped. The reading material chosen was an excerpt from Darryl Ponicsan's novel Andoshen, Pa.. I had selected it for several reasons: first, the linguistic features employed in the text were relatively less complex; second, it had a coming-of-age theme, which I thought the participating students could relate to more easily; third, the reading requires a certain amount of information on cultural background (e.g., mining community in the United States, urban setting such as New York City), which I thought would highlight the application of my proposed approach; and finally, I had taken this story from an ESL reading book (titled "Estella" and with "Glossary" at the end), which I thought

could provide an evident contrast between the use of my proposed approach and that of a more traditional one. And to better illustrate this comparison, I had also prepared handouts on possible questions the students might raise for the material read. The interview questions in the second section were:

1. Please describe how you usually read a story.
2. What do you think of your own reading process? What are some characteristics that make you a good reader? What are some adjustments you think you need in order for you to become a better reader?
3. Please describe your reading process (of the provided materials from the proposed approach perspective). How is it different from the way you used to read? How does the difference affect you as a reader?
4. Please describe your reading of literature in more general term from this proposed perspective.

   What are the benefits/limits you think readers get when reading from this perspective?
5. If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what do you think the challenges/difficulties/restrictions will be? How can they be resolved?

In analyzing such data, I looked for descriptions of subjects' experience in reading both before and after the proposed approach was introduced, as well as the feedback they gave regarding the application of the proposed approach in the

classroom. Again, I only transcribed/translated sections that I would make reference to in the analysis.

Re-Presenting the Search for an Approach

The data I was able to generate from carrying out this research assisted me in theorizing the proposed approach, contextualizing the issues *for* the reading/teaching/learning of English/American literature in Taiwan. (See more discussions in Chapter Four "Contextualizing the Search/Approach.") Also, what I was able to gather from such analysis presented a stronger cry for the search, situating the concerns *in* the reading/teaching/learning of English/American literature in Taiwan. David proclaimed in the beginning of the interview, "This is not a pedagogical conscious culture." Michael suggested, "Even at graduate level, students feel they are very much handicapped by the insufficiency of the language." To a large degree, the comments that these participating students made about how interesting it was for them to talk (for the first time!) about their reading process reconfirmed the urgency of the present study—that there really has not been much discussion as to how to approach English/American literature within the context of Taiwanese English/American literature education.

Specifically with the data from the Mailback survey (See Table 1), the responses brought home the current teaching practices that in a way presented a further validity for my search for an approach: of the 80 responses received, 40 indicated having more than 50 students in a class and 26 indicated having 40-50; 47 indicated teaching more than 15 works in one semester, which is usually less

than 17 weeks; as many as 77 selected examination as (one of) the method(s) of assessment; 50 think of themselves as either "lecturer" or "coach/guide" (or both) in terms of the role they play as a teacher in the literature field; and when asked about their criteria of choosing what to teach, "the importance of the works/authors in the literary field" was the most selected category (in 73 responses, to be exact, and with "relevance to students' lives" being the least checked item); as for the objectives in such classes, "gain English/American literary knowledge" was checked in 67 responses and "develop analytical and critical thinking" in 69, whereas "practice English language skills" was only checked (not by itself but always with other items) in 34 responses. What these number shows is that most classes have a large number of students and are working within the "speeding tour bus" (Lanier 200) type of coverage model. They are teacher-centered, examination-oriented, and what gets taught in these literature classes are the "important" works with a canonized type of status. Reading literature means gaining literary knowledge in the field, and when it comes to issues of learning, the emphasis is assigned primarily on the demonstration of the acquisition of literary knowledge.

Table 1 Mailback Survey Results

N=80
Average number of students:

under 30	30-40	40-50	50-60	over 60
9	10	26	23	17

Table 1 (cont'd).

Language used for instructional purposes:

English	Chinese
65	45

Numbers of works taught per semester:

under 10	10-15	15-20	over 20
15	17	25	22

Frequency of the use of an anthology:

always	almost always	often	sometimes	rarely
50	16	5	4	5

Criteria for choosing pieces of literature:

the importance in the literary field	73
the reading levels	30
the relevance to students' lives	25
anthology format	16
other	15

Assessment methods used:

examination	77
group presentation	42
term paper	35
individual presentation	33
other	30
research project	11
portfolio	7

Teaching/Learning Objectives:

develop analytical and critical thinking	69
gain English/American literary knowledge	67
foster interests in reading English/American literature	63
cultivate aesthetical appreciation of English/American literature	58
practice English language skills	34
Other	6

Reasons why some students have difficulties with reading literature:

Deficiency in linguistic skills	64
lack of interest	53
inadequacy of literary knowledge	51
lack of cultural familiarity	44
other	5

Table 1 (cont'd).

Techniques used for helping students understand the literature:

lecture	74
class discussion	57
writing assignment	43
small group discussion	37
other	23
translation/vocabulary list	21

Teacher roles that best describe the philosophy of teaching literature:

lecturer	coach/guide	discussion facilitator	fellow reader
41	60	23	10

The gap between the difficulties these teachers think the students have and the "help" most of these teachers provide, then, highlights the predicament both these teachers and students are in. On the one hand, with this large number of students in one class and the kind of definition of literature prescribed, "lecture," as checked in 74 responses, naturally becomes the first logical choice for teachers to help students understand the literature. The difficulties that the students have, however, remain somewhat consequently unresolved: "deficiency in linguistic skills" was checked in 64 responses; "lack of interest" was checked in 53; one respondent even left all other items unchecked and wrote "They don't like reading" in the "other" category. In the sense that these literature teachers' objectives are not on language acquisition and their criteria for material selection focuses much more on the literary qualities of the piece, it only follows that the most-found problems existing in the classrooms such as students' inadequate English skills and lack of interests be dealt with peripherally. It is in this sense that such representation of an average English/American literature class in Taiwan resonates with my deeply-felt dilemma—my struggles between language

and literature, between background knowledge and actual reading, between literariness and interest. The contention/dilemma arises from the limited time allocated to each foreign literature reading event as well as the complex process involved in every foreign literature reading experience. It is also from this perspective that such emergent need to search for an approach in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature be reiterated.

Conclusion

So I come to the end of this Chapter One, my attempt to provide a rationale as well as the methodology for the present study. I have pointed out why reading foreign literature needs an approach, how my learning experience in Chinese literature has affected on my learning experience in English/American literature, how my teaching experience in the English department in Taiwan has contributed to my need to search for such approach, and what I aim to resolve in this research. I have provided an overview of the research design to explain why I did what I did in order to accomplish the research goal, and to describe the steps I took in more details, I have also provided the research procedure of the three methods I utilized in this research, i.e., the mailback survey, the one-on-one interview, and a modified version of focus group. Finally, to further strengthen the argument for such search/research, I have presented (a part of the) data from the interviews and surveys to contextualize this need to search for an approach in the reading/teaching/learning of English/American literature in Taiwan. In the next chapter, "Theorizing the Search," I review related literature

that such research is based on. The purpose is to provide a theoretical background for both my search and my approach (to be proposed in the following chapters), and the discussions involve works on language, reading, reading literature, reading foreign literature, and knowledge.

CHAPTER II: THEORIZING THE SEARCH

> *Rather than submit to the work...the reader instead forces the work to submit to him. That is to say, he uses it, incorporating it into himself. He tests its perceptions against his own, not to bend to the vision it offers, but rather to take what he can from the vision in clarifying or enlarging his own. He approaches the text not as a disciple looking for answers, but as a thinker looking for possibilities. The individual work, then, is not an end in itself, but part of a longer process of building one's own picture of the world, a process that involves many books and many other experiences.*
>
> *Robert Probst in "Reader-Response Theory and the English Curriculum"*

Introduction

The reviewing process that I underwent as I searched through previous works done in the related fields to resolve my "deeply-felt personal dilemma" was, in fact, very much like the reading process that Robert Probst delineates in the epigraph of this chapter: *As a reader going through my search for an approach, rather than submitting myself to the literature reviewed, I forced the works to submit to me. I used the theories read, incorporating them into myself. I tested their perceptions against my own, and instead of bending the visions they offered, I took what I could from their visions to clarify and enlarge my own. Indeed, during the course, I was searching not so much as a disciple looking for "answers," but as a thinker looking for "possibilities." Each individual theory, then, is not an end in itself, but part of a longer process of building my own picture of the world, a process that involves many books and many other experiences.* Reading, as I have come to understand (and believe to be true) throughout the search/research, is NOT about decoding, nor is it about extracting messages from the page.

Language offers no one-to-one correspondence between words and the world; hence meaning does not reside either solely in the texts or arbitrarily on the readers but can only arise out of the context in which the language is used. In the same way, not unlike reading, reviewing involves not just the reviewer, the reviewed, but the whole context this literature review practice is set in.

It is, therefore, this definition of how reading/reviewing works that I wish to emphasize as I now continue on to the second chapter of this dissertation. Instead of providing a list of all the related theories as in an inventory of all the things one needs to know on this particular subject, in this what is commonly called the "Review of the literature" chapter, I have decided to portray my own understanding of all the relevant issues as in a report of all the things I have come to believe in emerging from the search/research. It is in this sense that I do not claim that I have accurately and objectively represented the theorists quoted; rather, what I have strived to accomplish is, via quoting the theorists, to present my own views on the reading/learning/teaching of literature in a foreign language. The purpose is to lay down theoretical works that have helped shape my thinking during the search, while at the same time, put forward my arguments for the proposed approach (to be introduced in the following chapters). With such an attempt, this chapter also serves as a bridge between my deeply-felt dilemma and my proposed approach. Built upon previous theories, it reveals what I now think to be the "problems" in the existing curriculum in the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan, and thereby assists as a foundation to bring about resolutions to my quest for an approach to literature in a foreign language.

As I have described in the previous chapter, reading foreign literature requires not only comprehending the texts linguistically, but also imagining the world culturally; and to put such subject matter (i.e., reading foreign literature) in a classroom context, what becomes even more essential is to attain a firm grip on the constituents of knowledge and learning dynamics. The chapter is thus divided into five sections: In On Language, I focus the discussion on the nature of language. I point out that the nature of language, foreign or not, is dialogic and ideological. Based on this definition of what language actually is, in On Reading, I then turn to how reading really works. I emphasize that reading should be looked at as an active, creative, selective, and constructive process, amid which confusion and ambiguity should be valued and welcomed. In On Reading Literature, I further extend the discussion to what reading literature should be: a transaction, an event, a coming-together of not only the person who reads and the text that is being read, but also the whole context in which the reading act is embedded. Continuing with the same take on what language/reading/reading literature is all about, the importance of taking-part is further carried over to On Reading Foreign Literature. In this section, I argue that when readers encounter texts that challenge their understanding, they are more successful readers if they reject the assumption that they must "possess" a body of knowledge, be it linguistic or literary. They should see themselves as seekers who ask their own questions, bring their own experiences to the process of reading/interpreting, and construct their own understanding. Finally, in On Learning, I maintain that the overarching concept that encompasses all these issues is that

knowledge/linguistic knowledge/literary knowledge, instead of being static and transmittable, is dynamic and arises only out of participation. It is a continuing development of understanding, and should be viewed as always in the making.

On Language

In the course of my search/research, the writings of M. M. Bakhtin have first and foremost helped to construct my understanding of the nature of language. As Bakhtin points out in The Dialogic Imagination, no living word relates to its object in a singular way. Rather, the word is shaped in an environment that is always dialogically agitated, tension-filled, and full of alien words, value judgments and accents. The word merges with some while it recoils from others during the encounter; thus in this dialogized process, there are always competing points of view on the world, verbal-ideological and social belief systems, and semantic and axiological contents, each with its own different sound (276-82). Also in this dialogization, the word anticipates the potential response of other voices. Its "responsive" nature, whether of resistance or support, thus makes understanding a "responsive" and "active" one. As Bakhtin illustrates, "[u]nderstanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (282). In other words, there are no neutral words or forms. Language is not an "abstract grammatical system of normative forms," (288) but rather a "concrete heteroglot conception of the world" (293). It is thus in itself stratified and heteroglot at any given moment of its historical existence. As a "living, social-ideological concrete thing" in actual social life and the process of

historical becoming, it is never unitary but always "lies on the borderline between oneself and the other" (294). Bakhtin further explains,

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own. (293-4)

Indeed, as I have come to understand, the nature of language is dialogical and ideological. Foreign or not, language offers no one-to-one correspondence between words and the world, and hence meaning arises only out of the contexts in which the language has lived its "socially charged life" (293). Bakhtin asserts, "[c]ontextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic) are inevitable in the word" (293). Understanding and meaning, therefore, can never be stable or fixed. It is an interaction, a dialogue, a struggle, a play, which is never fully completed, never finished, and never closed off (Birch 5-6).

This emphasis on the social heteroglossia and stratification in language resonates with Brian Street's ideological model of literacy. Like Bakhtin, Street contends, "[t]he words on the page do not carry independent meaning but depend upon their location in this power struggle for their active meaning" (175). Along

this same line of thinking that the nature of language is dialogical and ideological, Street advocates that language/literacy issues never exist as "neutral" and "objective" (16). Literacy practices are in fact specific to the "political and ideological context," and their consequences always vary "situationally" (24). An ideological model of literacy, thus, according to Street's explication,

> forces one to be more wary of grand generalizations and cherished assumptions about literacy "in itself"...[It] stresses the significance of the socialization process in the construction of the meaning of literacy for participants, and is therefore concerned with the general social institutions through which this process takes place and not just the specific "educational" ones. (29)

Street's point that has been most beneficial in developing my understanding of the nature of language/literacy is this recognition of not only the social/cultural nature of literacy but also the multiple characters of literacy practices embedded in/resulting from contending ideologies and power. As Street further explains, "I used the term 'ideological'...because it signals quite explicitly that literacy practices are aspects not only of 'culture' but also of power structures. The very emphasis on the 'neutrality' and 'autonomy' of literacy...is ideological in the sense of disguising this power dimension" (161). To put it another way, what I have also come to understand concerning language/literacy issues is that the "struggles over particular identities up against other identities" (135) entailed in the uses and meanings of language/literacy need to be attended to. This echoes Street's warning that, "[i]n the field of literacy neither theory nor practices can be divorced

from their ideological roots" (45). It is thus essential always to situate specific language/literacy theory and practices in the context of not only culture but the structure of power, in order for the users to stay as active participants in the "actual site of struggles over power" (Corson 15).

Apparently, this is not how language/literacy was viewed in my past learning/teaching experiences as I have described in the previous chapter. Language, as I have shown through my "essential moments," was seen as objective, ordered, regular, and non-conflicted. It was conceived to be a "neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intention" (Bakhtin 294) and was treated accordingly "as though it were something outside both the students and [teachers], as though it had autonomous, non-social qualities that imposed themselves upon its users" (Street 115). There was definitely a dictionary-like one-to-one correspondence between words and the world, and amid which there was always this preoccupation with fixed, determinate, universal, and unchanging meaning of words. There seemed no recognition of this "double-voiced" (337) phenomena of language that Bakhtin has theorized, nor was there such realization of the "multiplicity" (14) of literacy practices as Street has demonstrated. And interestingly yet ironically enough, contrarily to what Bakhtin explicates, it *was* rather "out of the dictionary that the speaker gets his words!" (293) in many of my own language learning and teaching experiences. Memorizing a dictionary from A to Z, for example, used to be a dream goal of mine (and many of my other fellow students'). It was commonly thought of as a huge accomplishment in language learning, and what it meant to

me at the time (and I am sure many language learners still think this way even nowadays) was that once one knows every word there is in the dictionary, one would then forever possess the ability to read everything written in that language with absolute certainty and assurance.

As it appears to me now, what I had subscribed to in terms of the nature and role of language/literacy is what Street calls "the notion of a single literacy with a big 'L' and a single 'y'" (134). Matching with some of the "means" that he describes as the "processes of pedagogization" to construct and internalize the autonomous model of literacy, I now realize in the past I had, for instance, "distanc[ed] the language from subjects" by treating language as a thing, imposing on both teacher and learner external rules as though language awareness were a matter of specific grammatical terminology; or employed "metalinguistic usages" through which to lexicalize the social process of reading and writing within a pedagogic voice as though they were independent and neutral competencies rather than laden with significance for power relations and ideology (113-5). And as Street comments, in contexts such as these, "it would seem, the final objective is to achieve mastery and authority over the text, whose meanings are not negotiable" (116). Through what I did, whether it was putting the words down in a vocabulary list (as a student) or up on the blackboard (as a teacher), language was then objectified, and thus reduced the role of the learners/users to passive recipients rather than active negotiators of meaning (117).

This monologic take on the nature of language/literacy also resulted in what Bakhtin calls "passive understanding," which equals (alas!) "no

understanding at all" (281). Bakhtin explains:

> Responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an *active* understanding...A passive understanding of linguistic meaning is no understanding at all...[it] remains purely passive, purely receptive, contributes nothing new to the word under consideration, only mirroring it, seeking...merely the full reproduction of that which is already given in the word...Therefore, insofar as the speaker operates with such a passive understanding, nothing new can be introduced into his discourse.... (281, emphasis in original)

Interestingly yet ironically enough, again, in his other book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin characterizes "the interaction between a teacher and a pupil" as the "monologic way of perceiving cognition and truth," and he calls it "a pedagogical dialogue," in which "someone who knows and possesses the truth instructs someone who is ignorant of it and in error" (81). Certainly this is not how I now perceive a *real* pedagogical dialogue to be in any sense; but looking back on my "essential moments," this surely was more or less what happened in many of the classrooms. And as Bakhtin suggests, "in an environment of philosophical monologism the genuine interaction of consciousness is impossible, and thus genuine dialogue is impossible as well" (81). Pondering upon my deeply-felt dilemma now, as "non-responsive" as the kind of nature of language/literacy I had subscribed to, along with this lack of recognition of the

dialogism in language, it is no wonder why genuine response in my past language learning/teaching experience was utterly impossible too.

On Reading

In line with this new understanding of the nature of language, my consideration of how reading really works has also undergone great transformation, mostly under the influence of having read Frank Smith's Understanding Reading and Ken Goodman's On Reading. Smith states, "[r]eading is a matter of making sense of written language rather than decoding print to sound" (2). Goodman likewise denotes, "reading isn't recognizing words, it's making sense of print" (5). As the countless examples show in both books, reading, instead of being passive and mechanical, is an active, creative, selective, and constructive process. It is dynamic, meaningful, purposeful, rational, and it is dependent on the prior knowledge and expectations of the readers engaged in the act. Smith sharply explains what I now perceive reading to be in his discussion at the beginning of the book of the "four distinctive and fundamental characteristics" of reading:

> It [reading] is purposeful, selective, anticipatory, and based on comprehension, all matters where the reader must clearly exercise control. The purposeful nature of reading is central, not simply because one normally reads for a reason...but because the understanding which a reader must bring to reading can only be manifested through the reader's own intention...Reading is selective

> because we normally only attend to what is relevant to our purposes. To read any kind of text without discrimination...is as pointless as reading every number in the telephone directory when we are looking for only one. Reading is anticipatory because although text is always ambiguous or incomplete, we are rarely surprised by what we read—our purpose defines our expectations. And reading is based on comprehension because despite the ever-present possibility of ambiguity, the act...rarely leaves us confused. Understanding is the basis not the consequence of reading. (3)

The focus on the context of the language-in-use brings out the importance of the person doing the reading, the reason for the act, the expectation from the activity, as well as the understanding the language user brings into the process.

Continuing on the premise that language is not fixed but always at work, it is essential to acknowledge again that meaning is "never *in* the language" (Goodman 42, emphasis added) and "cannot be captured in a net of words" (Smith 159). As Smith expounds, "[m]eaning does not reside in surface structure. The meaning that readers comprehend from text is always relative to what they already know and to what they want to know" (157). Goodman also painstakingly explicates, "[w]hen we construct meaning from reading, we must draw on what we know, what we believe, and what we value...The more we know about what we're reading, the easier it will be to read...[and] what a reader knows and believes will strongly influence the meaning he or she constructs" (106). In other words, reading is not about "the acquisition of information" (Smith 60). In order to read,

we must bring meaning to language so we can construct meaning from language. The text has a meaning potential but we change the text by what we bring to it, and in turn, change ourselves by adding to or changing what we know as we read (Goodman 107). What this constructive nature of reading further confirms, moreover, is the fact that not only "*no* two readers will ever produce the same meaning for a given text," but also "*no* reader's meaning will ever completely agree with the writer's meaning" (Goodman 2, emphasis added). Again, as Goodman says right at the beginning of the book, "[t]he sense you make of a text does not depend first of all on the marks on the paper. It depends first on the sense you bring to it" (1). Reading, as I have come to understand it now, no longer resembles the cognitivists' information-processing model or the "communication model," with "writers 'encoding' messages in texts which readers in their turn must then 'decode'" (Smith 61). It is a "thought-full" activity, and cannot be separated from thinking (Smith 20).

This recognition of the process of reading as contextualized has thus been especially valuable to the reconstruction of my viewpoints on comprehension, information, and issues of authenticity. First of all, as opposed to a more common view that comprehension is the elimination of uncertainty or the opposite of ignorance, based on the dynamic nature of language and reading, what comprehension means to me now, as Smith puts it, is "less a matter of being able to reproduce the facts in a text than of what one does or is able to do as a consequence of interacting with the structure of text" (41). It is "relating the new to the already known" (Smith 7), and its process involves asking questions, making

predictions, bringing in potential answers, thus reducing confusion and ambiguity presented in the text. Indeed, as Smith points out, "[y]ou do not prove that you have understood anything by repeating it" (41-2). Contrary to what most comprehension tests imply, (including the ones that I had/gave before in my past learning/teaching experience,) comprehension is in fact not measurable, and is therefore not "quantifiable as the accumulation of a number of facts or items of information" (Smith 53). Whether one has comprehended a text cannot be assessed on the accuracy of its recount. Rather, as Smith suggests, comprehension should be "more appropriately regarded as a *state*" (53, emphasis in original). He continues,

> ...comprehension is the possibility of relating whatever we are attending to in the world around us to the knowledge, intentions, and expectations we already have in our heads.
>
> We comprehend the situation that we are in if we are not confused by it...Absence of comprehension means not knowing what to do next...*not knowing the relevant questions to ask or not knowing how to find relevant answers*. When we cannot comprehend we cannot predict, we cannot ask questions...Without comprehension, there can be no reduction of uncertainty...[and conversely] when uncertainty reduction is taking place, there must be some comprehension. (53, emphasis in original)

Comprehension, looking from this viewpoint, then, does not guarantee mistake-free, nor does it entail, as I used to think, that all uncertainty is eliminated

(Smith 53-4). What has become clear to me now is that finding answers to questions, confusions, and ambiguity in the text is what drives us to read in the first place. We comprehend *not* when we are certain of/right on each and every semantic and syntactic detail in the text, but when we can relate potential answers to actual questions that we are asking of the text. What is equally important (if not more so to me), in addition, is that not only we *do not* need to have all our uncertainty reduced in order to comprehend, but also we generate new uncertainty as we find more questions to ask along this comprehending process.

In the same way that comprehension to me now is relative to the questions asked, my viewpoint on information has also adopted a more contextualized nature, which has made information a more relative term specifically to the person who is receiving the message. Following the argument that reading is making sense of text and comprehension means reduction of uncertainty, information, as Smith underscores, "exist only when it reduces uncertainty, which is relative to the knowledge and the purposes of the individual receiving it" (55). Like comprehension, which depends on what an individual already knows and needs or wants to know, the "informativeness" of facts also depends on the prior knowledge of the person receiving them. Smith gives a clear-sighted example in his explanation on the relativity of information:

> "Paris is the capital of France" is a fact, but it is not informative to Tom who knows it already, nor to Dick who does not understand what the word "capital" means. And although the statement is informative to Harry, who was not aware of the fact before, it is not

> possible to say how informative it is because Harry's uncertainty cannot be calculated. We do not know how many alternative cities Harry thought might be the capital of France or how many countries he thought Paris might be the capital of. We do not even know if he cares. Quite possibly, "Paris is the capital of France" is a fact with no information value to Harry when he learns it, although it may be useful to him on a number of occasions later in his life. On the other hand, information that serves only to clutter the mind is really noise. (55)

Exactly, as the example above plainly demonstrates, what is information for one individual may not be information for another, if it does not contribute to his/her comprehension (Smith 54). And as Smith further notes, "such negative information can have more than just a neutral, inconsequential effect. It can be positively disruptive" (54). As evident as this relativity of information may now seem (to anyone but especially to me), the notion that what is "background information" for me as a teacher might be (at best) merely "background noise" to other students in the classroom, however, never existed in my past experience. I was hung up on the absolute value of each piece of information—debating on *which* pieces of so-called background information to provide within limited class time, not to mention the ever-present vocabulary list that was thought so indispensable to students' understanding of the challenges brought forth by reading English/American literature.

Such unawareness (or rather, ignorance) of the contextualized nature of

language and reading had thus prevented me from gaining a more true to life view on issues of authenticity in language (including literature) learning/teaching. As a learner/teacher in the English department in Taiwan, "authentic material" to me meant materials that are made by and for native speakers within the context where the language is used, and that was all that "authenticity" could mean to me at the time. An advertisement/flyer from a (real) store was called "authentic," a recording clip of the movie show-time of a (real) cinema was called "authentic," and of course, any classic literary text in the English/American Literature canon was considered "authentic." Without realizing that language is authentic *only* in social-cultural contexts (Goodman 27), the so-called authentic materials in the classroom were in fact used with no heartfelt purposes other than the teaching and learning of the language, no true relevance to the experiences of the reader outside the classroom, no genuine expectations resulting from the listening/reading, and no prior knowledge based on which to generate new understanding. And as Goodman notes, "within an authentic literacy event, the language text that's created is also authentic. *But take it out of its proper event and it becomes inauthentic*" (5, emphasis added). In other words, due to the misconception that language is stable and reading is mechanical, what was thought of as "real" in terms of "context" was very much only limited to the context of the fixed texts, which, however, was fragmented, decontextualized, hence inauthentic.

When I was learning/teaching English/American literature, for example, it *was* generally considered important to read these authentic texts alongside their

historical/cultural background—to know, as Goodman suggests, "the context of the situation out of which the print arises: where and when it's occurring, who's involved and what their relationships are, why the language takes this mode" (27). The intention was of course to contextualize the text, putting text into context in order to highlight the text's significance as well as prevent reader's confusion; yet, as I have come to understand now, how this "background information" was dealt with was rather the opposite of the meaning of contextualization. As mentioned in the previous discussion on information, most of the time background information was treated as facts, as something of absolute information value, as items that are part of the inventory for understanding the text the "correct" way. What is more, what was authentic about these literary texts/background information was further lost during the reading process since neither the reader nor the act of reading itself was taken into consideration in any true sense. The reader was not expected to make predictions, and there was no concern with the situation the reading is set in. The materials for reading might be "authentic" in the sense that they were not artificial or reduced for a less challenging semantic/syntactic feature; the reading here, however, was not authentic at all. There was no relative-ness among the context of the text, the context of the reader, and the context of the reading; and to me now, this is not what "authenticity" is about. Goodman denotes, "[w]e can make sense of what we read if it has this authenticity. That means that, as readers, we have a function and a purpose for reading" (27). It is important to put text into its context, but the context of the reader as well as the context of the reading is also essential for a literacy event to be authentic, which, in the end, is, after all, so

vital for any comprehension and learning.

What this new view on (the more authentic) "authenticity" has also supplied me with is a new goal (as opposed to my "dream goal" described earlier) in foreign language learning/teaching—and now a more practical one. To repeat the above quote from Goodman, "[w]e can make sense of what we read if it has this authenticity. That means that, as readers, we have a function and a purpose for reading" (27). Following the argument that reading is a process that is purposeful, selective, anticipatory, and based on comprehension, what I *do not* have to worry about when reading now is preventing mistakes, avoiding confusion, or fending off new vocabulary. Indeed, as Smith also asserts, "[k]knowledge of grammar and vocabulary gives no one a mastery of language, either in producing or in understanding" (43). As I have come to realize, memorizing a whole dictionary is not going to help me, or anyone, in language learning. What I *do* need, whether to build vocabulary or to become a more proficient reader, instead, is to hold on to this "authenticity" that will make language use not only more effective, efficient, but also more meaningful. As Goodman denotes, "We build our vocabulary, in both oral and written language, through much experience with using it. There are no shortcuts that can give us the words we need before we need them. We encounter new words, or new uses of words, in our reading and listening, and then we begin to use the words ourselves." (123) Smith also elucidates, "[l]earning a language or learning to read involves learning a tremendous number of conventions. And these cannot be learned by rule or by rote. They must be learned, one at a time, in a sequence and context that is most meaningful for

every learner" (45). Differences do exist between first language acquisition and a foreign one, but as Goodman points out, "[i]n spite of diversity within, reading is a universal psycholinguistic process, a single way of making sense of written language" (9). And it is this new understanding of how reading really works that brings about my new goal: "If the texts we read are authentic and we want to make sense of them, we learn to read by reading" (Goodman 89).

The reading, then, within the framework of this new goal, no longer depends on "accuracy" as the indication of how well a text is understood. Reading is not about reproduction, and comprehension does not follow successive recognition of words. As Goodman rightly addresses, "[a]ccuracy doesn't mean the concept is fully understood and inaccuracy doesn't mean it isn't....Accuracy is a weak unreliable indication of comprehension" (52). In addition, based on the grounds that language is both social and personal and so is reading, within this new goal, there no longer exists the expectation of any "*total agreement* between reader and writer about the meaning of the text" (Goodman 52, emphasis added). Reader comprehension no longer means "getting the *precise* meanings the author intended" (Goodman 52, emphasis added), and meaning remains the answers the reader get to particular questions (despite the fact that both the reader and the writer strive to understand and be understood). What this also means, furthermore, is that within this new goal, there is recognition that, as Smith distinctively puts it,

> Reading always involves asking questions of a text...and comprehension ensues to the extent that such questions are

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> answered. I may not comprehend a particular text in the same way as you, but then I may not be asking the same questions. Arguments about how a novel, poem or any other text is most appropriately or "correctly" comprehended are usually arguments about the most relevant kind of questions to ask. A child who claims to have understood a story may not have understood it in the same way as the teacher, but the child was probably not asking the same questions as the teacher. The teacher's questions may be noise to the child. A large part of comprehending literature in any conventional manner is knowing the conventional questions to ask and how to find their answers. (55)

In order for "learning to read by reading" to happen, reading no longer entails fishing for the right answers with absolute certainty. Meaning becomes the focus that drives the whole reading process, and as optimistic as it may sound in foreign language learning/teaching, I now too believe that, as Margaret Meek points out in Goodman's book, "[o]ur search for meaning provides us with the need to and opportunities to develop the necessary strategies for making sense of texts—as we make sense of specific text, we develop efficiency and effectiveness in making sense of them" (89). The more we read, the more we know about how to read. What helps, as I have come to learn, is not a vocabulary list or a history/culture lesson but a genuine purpose within an authentic context.

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On Reading Literature

Given the focus in a socio-psycholinguistic perspective on the role of the reader in the construction of meaning as outlined in the above section, it has become apparent that, like reading, reading literature is not about decoding (or in reality, more like guessing) what the authors have intended to say, nor is it about extracting (or in practice, more like identifying) the messages of wisdom that has supposedly transcended through time and space. Once again, reading is a constructive and selective process over time in a particular context. The reading of literary texts, then, should not be thought of as an object, an ideal entity, but rather as "an active process lived through during the relationship between a reader and a text" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 21). Louise Rosenblatt's term "transaction," as it seems to me now, best describes what happens during the reading of a literary work. She explains:

> The reader, drawing on past linguistic and life experience, links the signs on the page with certain words, certain concepts, certain sensuous experiences, certain images of things, people, actions, scenes. The special meanings and, more particularly, the submerged associations that these words and images have for the individual reader will largely determine what the work communicates to him. The reader brings to the work personality traits, memories of past events, present needs and preoccupations, a particular mood of the moment, and a particular physical condition. These and many other elements in a never-to-be-duplicated combination determine

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Because of both the "openness" and the "constraints" offered by the text, the reader is at the same time allowed to draw on his/her resources to fill in the gaps, yet urged to pay close attention to the limitations set by the verbal cues during such intercourse with the text (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 88). The reciprocal relation between the reader and the signs on the page, thus, as Rosenblatt illustrates, "proceeds in a to-and-fro spiral, in which each is continually being affected by what the other has contributed" (Literature as Exploration 26). Rosenblatt also stresses, "The concept of transaction emphasizes the relationship with, and continuing awareness of, the text" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 29). In the same way that, as in reading, meaning does not reside solely on the reader or arbitrarily in the text, in the reading of literature, the "finding of meanings involves both the author's text and what the reader brings to it" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 14). It is "a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 12), and as I have come to realize, such an on-going process should always be looked at as "a situation, an event at a particular time and place in which each element conditions the other" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 16).

It is this emphasis on not only the personal nature but also the social aspect of the reading of literature that the Transactional Theory has contributed the most to my reconceptualization of what reading literature is really about. Bringing the reader out of the shadow and recognizing the importance of having a

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personal response during the evocation of a literary work, first of all, confirms the "individual meaningfulness" for each and every reader in the act of reading literature (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 157). As Rosenblatt points out, "[t]here is no such thing as a generic reader or a generic literary work" (Literature as Exploration 24). This not only bestows an active role on any individual reader, but also gives validity to any particular reading by a specific reader of a specific text in a specific context. What is equally important about this casting the spotlight on the reader and giving grounds to his/her responses, be it emotional or intellectual, moreover, is that when the process is taken as a whole (meaning when the "to-and fro" and "continuing" emphasis is actually put into practice), it not only underscores the "conditioned and conditioning" characteristic of language/reading/reading literature as social/cultural products, but also highlights the "multidimensional process" of the reading of literature as well as the "dynamic 'mode of existence' of the literary work of art" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem x). The reading of literature, as I have come to learn from this transactional point of view, is not about making sophisticated interpretation or accepted judgment, nor is it about creating "free fantasy." To use Rosenblatt's words, in the reading of literature, "[w]hat is lived through is felt constantly to be linked with the stimulus of the words" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 29). It needs to be an "active, self-ordering and self-corrective" process (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 11), in which the reader reflects on his/her response to the text, understands what in the text and in himself/herself produced that reaction, and then thoughtfully goes on to modify, reflect, or accept it (Literature as Exploration 72).

Following such a dialogic and dialectic perspective of the reading of literature, Kathleen McCormick's discussions on her model of the reading situation in The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English, moreover, conjointly sheds tremendous light on my understanding of what reading literature means. This model, too, recognizes readers not as "mere blank slates, but social beings who approach texts with rich and varied backgrounds," texts not as "static containers of meaning but rather as capable of being read differently depending on the reading context and the reader's background," and reading not as "simply a passive taking in of information" or "simply an abstract skill" but "a complex, active process" and "a social action which occurs in specific social circumstances" (3). As McCormick argues,

> Reading is never just an individual, subjective experience...it...always occurs in social contexts...A text is always a site of struggles: it may try to privilege a particular reading position as 'natural,' but because readers are subjects in their own histories, they may not produce that seemingly privileged reading. Yet readers do not possess absolute autonomy: like the texts they read, they too are sites of struggle, caught up in cultural determinants that they did not create and in which they strive to make meaning. (69)

Clearly, ideology is the central idea here; and what are stressed in such arguments entail not only that "both readers and text contribute to the reading process," but also, and probably more importantly, that "both text and readers are themselves ideologically situated" (69). To describe such interaction between the

reader and the text in the reading formation, McCormick terms a text's/reader's particular appropriation of ideology their "repertoire" (70). She further makes distinctions among 1) a "text's general repertoires," which includes aspects such as dominant moral ideas, values, religious beliefs, 2) a "text's literary repertoires," such as literary form, plot, characterization, metrical pattern, 3) a "reader's general repertoires," such as attitudes about gender and race, their religious beliefs, regional biases, and 4) a "reader's literary repertoires," such as assumptions and beliefs about literature, their previous literary experiences, their strategies of reading literary texts, and so forth (70-1). A reading situation, then, involves all these forces. The ways the readers respond to texts will depend on how their general and literary repertoires interact with those of the text, and reading arises when such matching of the repertoires happens (72-3).

This, of course, is not to say that there presupposes a one-on-one complete match of the repertoires of the reader with that of the text; in fact, as McCormick denotes, "[t]here is never a perfect fit in the matching of literary and general repertoires between readers and texts" (89). What makes the use of such terms as repertoire and ideology so essential to this model, and in turn makes such a model so important to my reconceptualization of the reading of literature, is exactly their indication of the "mutually imbricated" and "overdetermined" nature, which further acknowledges a continuing shift as the reading context changes (72). Readers, within this framework, are regarded as "inhabitants of particular socio-cultural formations, with particular literary and general ideologies, who appropriate from their society, both consciously and unconsciously, their own

particular repertoires" (71). The reader's repertoire, then, is "a complex network of discourses that have the potential to interact with each other as well as with the larger culture" (71). Similarly, texts do not exist "in-themselves" but are always "in-use" (70). The repertoire of a text, therefore, does not suggest an objective list of textual features that are static over time. Rather, it always has "the potential to shift depending on the conditions in which the text is read" (71). Putting it simply, in the same way that readers are interdiscursive subjects and their repertoire changes when they encounter new discourses, the text's repertoire changes when it is reproduced within different cultural formations (88). And what this model recognizes is exactly this "dialectic relationship that exists between the repertoires of the text, particularly as it develops over the text's history, and the repertoire of the reader" (90).

Viewing reading literature from such a dynamic perspective, thus, as I have come to learn from this model of the reading situation, gives unprecedented meaning to the act of reading/reading literature, both on a personal level and a social one. Granting both the repertoires of the reader and the repertoires of the text as forces in the reading formation not only pinpoints the complex subjectivity of the reader but also demystifies the seeming objectivity that texts appear to offer. It allows readers agency (but not autonomy) in the construction of the meaning of the texts, while at the same time takes into consideration the negotiations the readers makes in response to the historical/cultural/social constraints presented through the ideologies of both the reader and the text. The reading of literature, then, becomes meaningful precisely because it necessarily requires both the

reader and the text to be situated in larger historical/social/cultural contexts. Through reading/reading literature, readers learn to "locate the texts they read, as well as themselves as reading subjects, within larger social contexts" (7). They (learn to) become aware of both the historically/socially/culturally constructed nature of the texts and the historically/socially/culturally constructed nature of themselves as subjects. What follows, then, to extend beyond the reader and the text, is that through such historical/social/cultural analysis, readers learn to recognize that their readings of texts have larger social consequences (64). For readers to become aware of the "interconnectedness of social conditions and reading and writing practices of a culture" thus makes the reading of literature meaningful on a social level (49). As McCormick contends throughout the book, "readers can become critically literate, active readers *only* when they are able to analyze the ways in which their own and the texts' repertoires are embedded within the larger culture" (9, emphasis added). They (learn to) realize "they have a stake in the positions they adopt" (182).

Continuing on with the concerns of the ideologies brought into the act of reading/reading literature from both sides of the text and the reader, Peter Rabinowitz and Michael Smith's model of "authorial reading" from Authorizing Readers, furthermore, helps reconstruct my understanding of the reading of literature with a slightly different emphasis yet in a no less significant way. In order to engage in genuine transactions with literary texts, according to Rabinowitz and Smith, readers take up at the same time at least three roles as the audience: first, the role of the "authorial audience"—"a hypothetical construction of what the

author expects his or her reader to be like" (23); second, the role of the "narrative audience," which, on the other hand, is "an imaginative creation by the author—something he or she hopes to convince the readers to pretend to become" (23); and third, the role of the "actual audience," which, as apparent as the term indicates, refers to the actual self of the reader (4). According to this model, reading literature in a critical sense requires readers to first of all join the authorial audience, recognizing the codes, the conventions, as well as the interpretive practices that the authors used in creating the texts. It demands that readers take into account the beliefs and attitudes that the authors expected in their readers (14), and it calls for readers' prior understanding of not only the "historical background, generic experiences, and ethical sensitivity" of the texts (9), but also the various social/cultural/artistic constraints under which the authors were working (11). In addition, it insists that readers "*pretend* to be members of the narrative audience," taking what they read as "history" and treating the characters as "real" (21-22, emphasis in original). It summons "respect" for the characters, granting them "voices" and considering them as "active subjects" (34-5), and with that done, it further expects readers to listen in on the "polyphony" within the texts and "hear [characters'] talk that calls authors' privilege into question" (36). Finally, it asks readers not to forget themselves as the actual audience, bestowing them power and acknowledging themselves as "meaning makers" (xiv). It assumes that the role of readers is always active and engaged, and that "[e]ach reader comes to a book with a complex and often internally inconsistent set of beliefs, expectations, experiences, desires, and needs" (4).

Clearly, such framework is in line with my new understanding of the ideological and dynamic nature of language/reading/reading literature. The role of the narrative audience markedly highlights the dialogic nature of the formation of authorial reading (35), and the term "actual audience" specifically, and literally, pinpoints the complexity as well as the individuality of each reading event, and thereby underlines the competing forces as well as the resulted negotiations that are always at work (5). Central to this authorial reading, moreover, is the concept of the authorial audience. Its social nature "puts significant checks on the author's creative freedom" (8); and more importantly, its ideological constitution allows the reader to "engage in serious communication with a fictional text" (28). Critical reading involves questioning the values and the ideology proposed by the texts the readers read (13). And indeed, as Rabinowitz explains,

> Without prior understanding, there is nothing to disagree with, and debate and dispute are replaced with talking at cross purposes. The reader will simply be engaged in a straw-person argument...it is difficult to talk seriously about language in a text without considering the authorial audience. It is even more difficult to imagine such a detour in any study that involves confronting the ideology of what is represented in an imaginative text—for representation is necessarily representation of a particular point of view, and attitudes toward what is represented can only be analyzed when that point of view is taken into account. (15-17)

As Smith also denotes, "[o]ur students can only make a political commentary on a

literary text if they understand the codes and conventions that text invokes" (32). Reading authorially, thus, as I have learned from this reading model, is what makes "reading responsibly" possible (28).

What this framework of authorial reading further emphasizes (and this is where the "slightly different emphasis" that has been most influential to my reconceptualization of the reading of literature comes in) is the notion of respect emerged from recognizing all these different voices. Juxtaposing authorial audience and actual audience, first of all, not only grants voices to both authors/texts and readers but also highlights the gap that is always present between the background of the authors/texts and that of the readers. It at the same time establishes "the importance of seeing through a lens of another's making" (128), allowing distance for readers to respect texts as authors' artistic endeavor, and points to the consequences of knowing/not knowing "the constraints under which writers are working" (11), requesting efforts from readers to respect authors for their decisions in negotiating within the social conventions. What is more, through encouraging readers to distinguish their own personal experiences, beliefs, and standards of interpretation that they are applying while reading from the ones that they are called upon to employ while reading authorially (128), it not only acknowledges the validity of both the readers and the authors/texts as well as the "inevitability" of such gaps in between, but also calls for further respect towards both the readers and the authors/texts as well as the whole context that the act of reading/reading literature is embedded in. As Rabinowitz aptly puts it,

> Of course, there will always be a gap between the actual and the authorial audience. There will always be references we do not understand, expectations we do not meet, attitudes we do not share, experiences we have missed. Any reading will therefore, of necessity, be imperfect...[but] while the gap between actual audience and authorial audience can never be completely bridged, we owe it to the texts that we read...to try to reduce it as much as possible. Partiality is inevitable, and recognizing that inevitability frees us from the obligation to defer our responses and our judgments until we can claim to know a text completely. But that inevitability does not free us from the need to make a good-faith effort to respect the text's fundamental requests—nor from the obligation to change our responses and judgments in the face of greater knowledge. (6)

It is from this viewpoint that, to me now, the recognition of the conditioned and conditioning nature of reading/reading literature has an added-on meaning of respect. It seems only right, as I have come to realize, that in order for our transaction with literary texts to be genuine, we need to start from such a notion of respect. We need to, as I have come to believe, respect not only ourselves as readers and authors as writers (no matter how big of a gap there exists in between), but also our reading (however imperfect it might seem at first) as having transformational power that makes a difference in our lives in the real world.

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Requiring readers to balance between authorial audience and narrative audience, on the other hand, necessitates readers' respect for the characters in the text, which in turn further underscores the distinction between the reading of fiction and nonfiction. "Fiction," as Rabinowitz argues, "is different from nonfiction, not because it has a different relation to literal truth...but because it calls on different conventions of reading. Specifically, fiction calls on the reader to play the part both of authorial and of narrative audience" (24). It is, then, also in this sense that I find the notion of respect helpful as I reconceptualize what reading literature means. Too often, as Rabinowitz and Smith both contend in the book, literary texts are treated as a "semiotic construct without serious mimetic interaction with human lives," "making novels...seem concerned largely with issues of language or interpretation or rhetoric" (27). Such a "dehumanizing view" (27) not only takes away precisely what makes literature special, but also, and maybe more importantly, shuts off utterly what makes readers read literature. Indeed, as I have come to learn from this reading model, what makes it meaningful to be reading literature (rather than non-literary texts) lies exactly with (but not limited to) this taking on of the role of narrative audience. Similar to Samuel Coleridge's idea in Biographia Literaria of the "willing suspension of disbelief" that "constitutes poetic faith" (6), as it seems to me now, literature becomes genuine only when readers, to use Smith's words, "give characters...the same kind of respect [they] ought to give the real people who populate [their] lives" (34). (This, of course, is not to suggest that we should think of the characters as real the whole time, and that is why balancing between the roles is so important if we are to read intelligently.) In

other words, in order for readers to have genuine transaction with literary texts, they need to (at least temporarily) treat characters not as tools the authors use but as human beings about whom they ought to care and with whom they could dispute (110). Readers need to link with characters, pretending they are real (for the moment) and connecting with their pains and emotions. Just like what Rabinowitz and Smith advocate throughout their book, in the reading of literature, and especially in the midst of discussions like authors/texts' implications or terms such as "narratability," what readers need to be reminded of is this notion of respect. That, after all, is what drives readers to the reading of literature in the first place.

Looking back on my past learning/teaching experience of the reading of literature, I now realize how much of it had relied so heavily on the New Critical approach. As my "essential moments" in the previous chapter has expressly shown, reading literature to me then was rather about being able to identify literary conventions, resolve any tensions and/or ironies presented into the intended coherence and unity, and thereupon arrive at the enduring aesthetics and everlasting wisdom about the transhistorical and transcultural nature of humanity. Reader/author contribution was not recognized at all in the first place. And exactly as McCormick describes, I was very much hung up on the "three interrelated culturally-based assumptions" about the reading and writing of literature—"the desire for closure, a belief in objectivity, and a refusal to write about perceived contradictions" (101). Having everything falling into place and reaching a conclusion was recognized as desirable, and any sense of ambiguity

or confusion tended to be ignored or explained away (McCormick 111). Text, to me then, was "a self-contained pattern of words, an autonomous structure of literary device" (The Reader, the Text, the Poem 3), which could be "objectively analyzed" (*Literature as Exploration* 289). Close reading thus seemed an "'obvious' and 'natural'" approach to the reading of literature (Belsey 3 qtd. in McCormick 139), and so did the notion of "impersonality" that had run through the analysis of the techniques of the works, as well as the concerns with theme, tone, metaphor, and symbol (Literature as Exploration 29-30). Literature/Reading literature, in other words, was simply not seen as "occur[ring] in social contexts" (McCormick 69), and neither was literary techniques/analysis (Literature as Exploration 28).

As should be clear, this way of looking at literature/reading literature was pretty much just an extension of how I looked at language and reading at the time. Since language was rather static and non-responsive and reading was more about decoding and extracting messages, what I thought literature/reading literature to be was quite equally passive and monologic. In the same way that I thought a dictionary contains all the words there are to learn in the English language, I envisioned a body of knowledge on literature/reading literature, and was convinced that one day, after all the practicing and training, I would be able to possess that body of knowledge and became a proficient reader in the field of English/American Literature. Now to put this old view in the framework of my new understanding of what language/reading/reading literature really means, what seems to me to be really lacking in my "essential moments," aside from all related

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issues on how language/reading works that have been discussed in the previous sections, was the necessary recognition of the active participation of both the text/author and the reader, along with an indispensable acknowledgment of the value of personal experience. Reading literature, as I have come to learn now, is by its nature transactional and social/ideological. Literature offers "not merely information but experiences" (Literature as Exploration 236), yet understanding can only occur when a reader "encounters and self-consciously recognizes the way in which one's own historical consciousness differs from that of the [others]" (McCormick 71). To put it somewhat differently using Rabinowitz and Smith's concept of "respect," what was fundamentally neglected in my past experience of the reading of literature, to a large extent, was the needed respect for not only the author, the characters, the (actual) reader, the context, but the whole experience that both first initiates and later arises from such an act of reading.

What thus seems especially interesting to me now of my (old) conceptualization of the reading of literature, moreover, is the contradictory views that I held on both the role of the author and that of the reader. On the one hand, since the meaning of a text to me was utterly intrinsic, I was concerned with what new critics called "intentional fallacy." I did not want to turn my (or rather, any) reading into a psychological guessing game of the author's intention, and I too recognized the danger in paralleling the author's biographical history with the lives of the characters in the text. While on the other hand, because in actual reading I was very conscious of my own (plus most my students') lack of background knowledge of what I now know to be "authorial audience," I considered

information on the context out of which the text arises extremely beneficial, if not necessary, if we were to read literature professionally (meaning, like literary critics). I thought facts on authors, texts, cultures, history all useful for extracting the "right" kind of message that the text is sending, and I found it essential for readers to be familiar with the social/literary conventions in order to determine the "correct" implications of the text. Similarly (in the sense of being contradicting), for the role of the reader, on the one hand, due to the fact that I was ignorant of the dialogic and ideological nature of language/reading, I totally ignored the active participation of the readers in the reading process. I looked at readers more as "blank tape[s] registering a ready made message" (Rosenblatt, The Reader, the Text, the Poem 10), and I was also concerned with what new critics argue against, the "affective fallacy." I did not reckon reflections/experiences of the readers important. How readers "feel" was far from my concern in the reading/learning/teaching of literature; it was rather to "'see' what in the work of literature has made others deem it significant" (Rosenblatt, Literature as Exploration 56) that was my focus. Yet on the other hand, for obvious reasons that in actual reading both my students and I were using English as a foreign language, I was constantly reminded of the inadequacy of foreign language learners reading (foreign) literature. In a way, I allocated most responsibility of reading to the readers (without giving them agency). The gap between the authorial audience and the actual audience was not only *not* acknowledged but very much considered as a faulty consequence on the readers' part, and on top of that, I blamed readers' lack of interests/engagement mainly on their deficiency in

reading and reading literature.

Working with such decontextualized and inconsistent views towards both the author/text and the reader, it is no mystery to me now why I was having such a hard time engaging my students as well as myself with the "actual reading" (not the learning of the historical background or the analyzing of the literary devices) of English/American literature. To the extent that the role of the authorial audience was discounted, the role of the narrative audience disinterested, and the role of the actual audience outright disdained, it should come as no surprise that we were not only unable to validate our experiences, making genuine connections with the texts, but also powerless when it came to claim ownership, to become aware of the personal/social consequences of our own reading. The objective to develop critical thinking was thus even more farfetched. As Giroux rightly points out, "knowledge has to first of all be made meaningful to students before it can be made critical" (qtd. in McCormick 150). McCormick also comments, "it is only when readers become increasingly conscious of the historical and social conditions in which texts have been produced and reproduced, and of the conditions that are working to produce them as reading subjects, that they can take up informed positions of their own which they can actively defend in relation to texts" (88). As the dynamic nature of language/reading/reading literature has become more and more clear to me, I now realize that it was not so much because we were having language problems or lack of literary knowledge that we did not/could not engage with the texts being read. Rather, it was more because we were given neither the agency nor the discursive space for the engagement

that we had hoped for. With no room for personal responses and no place for social discussions, of course, active participation and critical understanding ended up so hard to come by.

Now, to connect back to my new goal "to learn to read by reading," for the reading of literature, what I find that remains essential for developing independent readers is the recognition of the "conventional demands on the readers" (Rosenblatt, The Reader, the Text, the Poem 27). As all these three reading models here also suggest, readers benefit from knowing the literary techniques and interpretive conventions. What this means, however, is not an endorsement for the decontextualtized way of "spoon-feeding" students background information like I did before. In line with my reconceptualization of the personal nature and the social aspect of language/reading/reading literature, instead, what such recognition of the importance of conventional literary knowledge suggests is more of an affirmation that "any reading act is the result of a complex social nexus. Language is a socially generated and socially generative phenomenon" (Rosenblatt, The Reader, the text, the poem 20). And as McCormick further argues,

> In dealing with texts that come to us from a distant historical conjunction, we make certain moves to bring into play or to expand our own repertoires, including using reference books, dictionaries or literary histories to provide clues about the characteristic patterns of belief and lifestyle in that time. But of course enlarging our repertoires in this way does not mean that somehow we can

> magically move back in time. After all...we read a text in our own time, not in the time in which it was written. So, necessarily, we read it with questions, anxieties and interests that come into existence because of our own particular places in history. (80)

As my understanding towards language/reading/reading literature has now become no longer (or at least a lot less) static, what I now believe reading literature to be is a transaction, an event, a coming-together of not only the person who reads and the text that is being read, but also the whole context in which the reading act is embedded. Providing a genuine purpose within an authentic context does help readers learn to read, but in a sense it is a prerequisite. To go from there, it is important that readers be given the agency to own their reading while at the same time become familiar with various literary techniques through different generic conventions. Taking part is what makes the reading of literature meaningful, and while it does to a certain degree require knowing the "agree-upon rules of conduct that make the activity possible" (Rabinowitz and Smith 63), it does not in any sense exclude questions, confusions, or anxieties along the way.

On Reading Foreign Literature

Moving beyond the reading of literary texts in general, I am now more than ever convinced of the importance of the role of agency in reading literature in a foreign language. As I have been arguing all along, the nature of language, foreign or not, is dialogic and ideological. Reading, as it follows, whether in a first or second language, is always active, constructive, and selective, and it

necessarily involves asking questions, making predictions, and finding/trying to find answers to the questions asked. The process of reading in a foreign language thus remains a sense-making process. The notion that one needs to possess a set of linguist/literary/cultural features in order to understand a piece of work not only contradicts the natural processes of language use and reading, but also limits learners' participation and learning. Not unlike reading literature from one's own culture, reading foreign literature is not about decoding (or rather, translating from the target language) what the authors have said/have intended to say, nor is it about extracting (or more realistically, being lectured on first and then demonstrating the ability to reproduce later) the messages of wisdom that have supposedly transcended through time and space. Instead, when readers encounter texts that challenge their understanding, they are more successful readers if they reject the assumption that they must "possess" a body of knowledge, be it linguistic or literary. They should see themselves as seekers who ask their own questions, bring their own experiences to the process of reading/interpreting, and construct their own understanding.

As I revisited Stephen Krashen's theories of the Input Hypothesis and the affective filter during the course of this research in the context of my new understanding of the dynamic nature of language and reading, I have come to see his concept of " "i+1" in a more metaphorical sense. As many critics have already pointed out, I too find Krashen's definitions for the distinction between subconscious (acquisition) and conscious (learning) processes "rather fuzzy" (Brown 188). As Gregg denotes, "Krashen plays fast and loose with his

definitions....If unconscious knowledge is capable of being brought to consciousness and if conscious knowledge is capable of becoming unconscious—and this seems to be a reasonable assumption—then there is no reason whatever to accept Krashen's claim, in the absence of evidence. And there is an absence of evidence" (82). I too disagree with such oversimplified structures in categorizing processes as complex as taking up a second/foreign language, and I too oppose the way "i+1" is presented as if we are in practice able to pinpoint the "i "and the "1" in the midst of such a complicated conception as "current competence." Nevertheless, at a more theoretical level and with its attempt to answer the crucial question of how we actually acquire a second and a foreign language, what I *do* perceive to be essential for issues related to the reading of literature in a foreign language in this "i+1" formula is its assumption that "we use meaning to help us acquire language" (The Natural Approach 32). As Krashen stresses in Principles and Practices in Second Language Acquisition, "'understand' means that the acquirer is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message" (21). He further explains,

> We acquire, in other words, only when we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where we are now. How is this possible? How can we understand language that contains structures that we have not yet acquired? The answer to this apparent paradox is that we use more than our linguistic competence to help us understand. We also use context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information to help us

understand language directed at us. (21, emphasis added)

In other words, what this viewpoint on language acquisition (although coming from a rather structured and static perspective in terms of its take on the nature of language) reaffirms is that, once again, meaning does not reside in language; and more importantly, what acquirers bring in is what makes acquiring possible.

Krashen's concept of affective filter, moreover, provides another angle to look at my reconceptualization of what it means to be reading/reading literature, in particular my new recognition of the virtue of confusions and ambiguity in the process of reading/reading literature. As Krashen explains, "having the right attitudes [i.e., with high motivation, good self-image/self-confidence, and low anxiety] may do two things for second language acquirers: it will encourage them to try to get more input, to interact with speakers of the target language with confidence, and also to be more receptive to the input they get" (The Natural Approach 38). To a large extent, what the affective filter hypothesis suggests complements what I find to be substantial in the learning and teaching of reading/reading literature: Motivation, first of all, necessarily comes from having a genuine purpose within an authentic context. In addition, in order to encourage self-confidence, validating one's own experience, reading, as well as the responses from the reading is no doubt a must. As for creating an environment where anxiety is low and defensiveness absent, it thus inevitably requires an acceptance of mistakes and uncertainty as part of the sense-making process. Indeed, as Krashen comments, "[o]ur problem in language education, as Frank Smith has pointed out, is that we have confused cause and effect. We have

assumed that we first master language 'skills' and then apply these skills to reading and writing. Rather, reading for meaning, reading about things that matter to us, is the cause of literate language development" (The Power of Reading 150). Once we realize what foreign language learners really need in learning reading is neither vocabulary/grammar lessons nor cloze tests practices, we have a more solid ground from which to provide what learners actually need—more what Krashen calls "Optimal input for Acquisition," inputs that are comprehensible, interesting/relevant, not grammatically sequenced, and in sufficient quantity (Principles and Practices in Second Language Acquisition 62-73), as well as an affirmation that "errors are inevitable" (Principles and Practices in Second Language Acquisition 74). We learn to read/read literature/read literature in a foreign language by reading. After all, as Krashen also concludes from numerous researches in the field of second language acquisition: "Reading itself promotes reading" (The Power of Reading 81).

Advocating for the centrality of literature and literature-based activity in foreign language education, Roger Sell in Literature Throughout Foreign Language Education proposes that literary texts are an invaluable source for foreign language acquisition because they not only focus the learning on the learner, provide target-language models, supply context-specific sociocultural knowledge, cultivate good language acquisition habits, and relate target language use to the real worlds, but they also raise and satisfy learners' thirst for knowledge and pleasure in the target language communities, which in turn promote personal growth and intercultural understanding. To a certain degree, Sell, as he himself

notes, agrees with proponents of the Natural Approach to language learning, that "learners need a lot of target language input, and that it helps if some of their language work can be 'without tears'" (5). But coming from a literary pragmatics' point of view, what he further emphasizes in learning a foreign language, as well as reading foreign literature, is the theoretical underpinning that "in the real world, language is never merely language but always language in use, and language use is always specific to a particular sociocultural environment, to specific communities" (14). In other words, not too different from what I have come to realize regarding the nature of language, what Sell uses to argue for the benefits arising from the use of literary texts and literature-based activities in foreign language education is the conception that language use is "an aspect of sociocultural environments" (9), "a cultural and social phenomenon" (12-3). "Teaching a language," as Sell puts it, "is a matter of constantly relating its use to the real worlds of nature and human beings" (15). What this means for foreign language learners, suggests Sell, is that acquiring new vocabulary means more like finding out how the worlds are perceived and arranged within the different cultures of the target language, and it necessarily follows that comprehension involves more than single words and expressions in isolation. He continues, "[i]f we are in the habit of reading grammar books, we will be all too familiar with the use of single sentences as examples 'in the abstract'. *If so, we need to defamiliarise this practice and remind ourselves of its extreme unnaturalness. Otherwise we shall never see how language really works, or what learners actually need to do in order to understand sentences in the target language*" (9,

emphasis added).

To digress from the argument for a bit, I want to acknowledge how excited I once was when I first came across this proposition/warning. From what I have been showing of my own experience in foreign language learning throughout the previous sections, it should come as rather expected that upon reading Sell, it was truly an "eye-opening" occasion for me to see the "extreme unnaturalness" of my own learning and teaching practices. This, however, does not mean that I do not see now in Sell's reasoning the problematic nature of "using" literary texts for "learning" languages. That being said, nonetheless, I still find what he proposes on a practical level beneficial to the reconstruction of my understanding of the reading/learning/teaching of literature in a foreign language. As Sell points out, (again, coming from a literary pragmatics' viewpoint) on the one hand, native speakers and writers of a language rely on listeners and readers "to be 'in the know'" about the sociocultural circumstances, and to supply the necessary presuppositions and work out an implication for themselves. Presuppositions and implications are strongly culture- and situation- specific, and anybody not sharing the necessary sociocultural knowledge will be at a loss to understand what is at issue (10-11). But on the other hand, as Sell also stresses, since language is never merely language but always language in use, no one, not even native speakers of a language, can ever master the entire range of its language use and know enough for every imaginable eventuality. In fact, patterns of language use are always changing, and the truth is that even native speakers sometimes fail to understand each other's implication and sociocultural presuppositions. (12-4) "So

for foreign language teachers," writes Sell, "the wisest thing is perhaps to conceptualize the problem, not *quantitatively* but *qualitatively*." (14, emphasis added) He explains,

> This way of seeing things will mean that there is no pre-defined bulk of sociocultural knowledge which has to be transferred into the learner's head. Any such bulk which the teacher managed to transfer would in any case be too small. Rather, the teacher's task is to give learners experience of language use within a reasonable variety of sociocultural environments. With a bit of luck, this will sensitize them to the problem and make them aware that, in order to operate successfully in their future lives, they may have to *go on* acquiring new sociocultural knowledge. The important thing is not the amount of what they know while they are still undergoing education, but the enthusiasm and constancy with which they continue to acquire new knowledge after their formal education has come to an end. In short, one of the main aims of foreign language education is the formation of good acquisition habits. (14, emphasis in original)

Precisely, for this need to be "in the know" in the reading of literature written in a foreign language, what we can (and should) do is neither to ignore it, nor to quantify it, but rather, conceptualize it qualitatively. It cannot be more true that any "transferable" amount of the sociocultural knowledge about the culture and society of a target language community would be in any way too small. What we

really need as foreign language readers, then, is the experience of language use (and a sensitivity towards the intercultural understanding that might come with the experience). And as Sell has helped me understand, in order for someone to become a life-long reader in a foreign language, what helps is not grammar books or some decontextualized sociocultural information. Instead, it is readers' "enthusiasm" and "constancy" that will help to keep the reading going.

Also focusing on the concern of cross-cultural learning (although more specifically in reading multicultural literature in English,) the reading/interpretation model that Reed Dasenbrock suggests in his article "Teaching Multicultural Literature" in Understanding Others, furthermore, has provided me yet another inspiring insight into issues of readers/interpreters' authority as well as learners' motivation in the reading/learning/teaching of literature in a foreign language. As he argues, when dealing with texts situated in another culture, we often feel that what is needed is someone knowledgeable about the cultural and historical contexts of the work. Teachers' comments like "I don't feel that I have control over the text" or "I don't know enough to teach this literature" may seem like a practical difficulty, and thus makes finding help in reference books a seeming reasonable solution; but really, in point of fact, it is rather a theoretical one, which presupposes that the "proper" interpreter is the already informed interpreter, the one with an expert knowledge, that the position of the authority is the author, and that the aim of the interpreter is only to try to approximate as much as possible the position of the author, to know what the authors knows (35-37). Putting it this way, such an argument pretty much straightforwardly explains my obsession with the

need to possess an "insider's point of view" in my previous learning and teaching practices. It not only brings out why I had always felt insecure with my own reading without checking with other critics first, but also clears up why even after consulting them, the sense of insecurity never ceased due to my vulnerable position of being an outsider of the English/American culture. Indeed as Dasenbrock rightly notes, "in proclaiming the local perspective the right one, [we] discourag[e] outside reading of any kind" (36). And as he continues to comment, "[l]earning, particularly the position of need to learn, is something literary theory has always, unfortunately, disvalued in relation to the position of being an expert" (39). I was excluded from this role of the "proper interpreter" for many reasons (as I have been arguing throughout this chapter), but one of them is definitely this (mis)conception that "the only proper place from which to apprehend a work of art is the position of possession, the position of an expert" (39). What Dasenbrock further recognizes, instead of claiming we understand only on our own terms, is that such a reconceptualization of "the unknown" neither endorses "ignorance," nor upholds "remaining unknowledgeable." As he illustrates,

> What we need is a model of reading, of interpretation, which redescribes the scene of reading not as a scene of possession, of the demonstration of knowledge already in place, or as a failure of possession, but as a scene of learning....the unknown can be powerful precisely because it is unknown. But this is not to defend ignorance, to defend remaining unknowledgeable. For one can see something for the first time only once; after that, the choice is to

become more knowledgeable, more expert, more informed, or to stay uninformed without the intense pleasure of initial acquaintance. (39)

Looking at reading/interpreting cross-cultural literary texts this way, as Dasenbrock adds, there is no real choice to make between the initial uninformed response and the later expert one because the experience of art ideally leads one from the first to the second. "Knowledge," as Dasenbrock puts it, "does not come first and control the experience of the work of art; the experience of the work comes first and leads the experiencer towards knowledge. Therefore it is not the expert reader who counts, but the reader willing to become expert..." (39-40). Now as my understanding towards reading foreign literature has expanded to include intercultural learning, it only seems natural that "the development of curiosity" (39) becomes one of the priorities of the learning and teaching practices. Dasenbrock uses an example that, as it seems to me, aptly describes this encounter of the unfamiliar: "As any tourist on a first trip abroad can testify, the cross-cultural communicative situation is a rich experience even—and perhaps especially—when it is most confusing" (44). No doubt, reading/reading literature/reading foreign literature is a process of making sense. The unknown as well as the confusion is what initiates the whole trip, amid which mistakes, changes, and adaptations are not only inevitable but also beneficial for any kind of learning to occur.

To push for a more critical standpoint for second/foreign language education, Alastair Pennycook, as the guest editor of the 1999 special issue of

TESOL quarterly on Critical Approaches to TESOL, explains in the introductory article what he sees as the three main themes that constitute critical approaches to TESOL: the critical domains, a transformative pedagogy, and a self-reflexive stance on critical theory. As Pennycook stresses, critical approaches to TESOL are fundamentally political (334). They involve an attempt to locate aspects of teaching English to speakers of other languages within a broader view of social and political relations; in addition, such a connection between TESOL and the world must focus on questions of power, inequality, discrimination, resistance, and struggle (332). What they mean for the contexts in which language learning takes place is more than "arranging the chairs in a circle and discussing social issues" (338). Taking up a critical approach to TESOL, as Pennycook explains, "does not entail introducing a 'critical element' into a classroom but rather involve an attitude, a way of thinking and teaching." Change in our students, as it follows, is not about "the predictable results of awareness or mastery but about the unpredictable effects of a changed relationship to our histories and desires" (340). Critical approaches to TESOL, furthermore, as Pennycook also suggests, demand forms of critical theory that can "help inform thinking about social structure, knowledge, politics, the individual, or language" (342). There exists/should exist "a constant skepticism, a constant questioning about the types of knowledge, theory, practice, or praxis they operate with" (345); and more importantly, instead of being seen as "simple recipes for implementing certain political agendas," they should be looked at as "complex clusters of social, cultural, political, and pedagogical concerns" (346). Critical approaches to TEOSL, according to Pennycook's proposition, in

other words, are not meant to be treated as a static body of knowledge or practices. Rather, they are seen as always being in flux, always questioning, restively problematizing the given, being aware of the limits of its own knowing, and bringing into being new schemas of politicization (346).

Putting my understanding of what reading/reading literature/reading foreign literature means in the perspectives of such a critical conceptualization of what TESOL should (and should not) entail, it becomes even more imperative in the learning and teaching of foreign literature that we not only recognize the ideological nature of language and language use, but also realize (in both sense of "understand clearly" and "make it real") the transactional efficacy of the act of reading. The focus is not on the introducing or the being aware of the need to politicize; rather, it is to seek broader understanding of how various discourses may be at play at the same time, and engage in bringing about educational possibilities and thereby social/political changes. We need always to question the given, the apparent of the ways we perceive the languages at issue to be; while at the same time (and maybe more importantly), we also need to know the limits of our own reading yet still have a faith in its transformative power. Not unlike reading/learning/teaching literature from one's own culture, reading/learning/teaching literature in a foreign language encompasses social, economic, political, cultural, and pedagogical concerns. It can never be seen as an autonomous activity that is independent of this complex network, nor can it be judged from any position as if objectivity and impartiality were its only criteria. Especially in EFL contexts (such as the one I was in), as Pennycook comments,

"[g]iven the global and local contexts and discourses with which English is bound up, all of us involved in TESOL might do well to consider our work not merely according to the reductive meanings often attached to labels such as teaching and English but rather as located at the very heart of some of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time" (346). Indeed, as I have come to understand now, notions such as "the inequalities in the relationship between the constructs of the *native speaker* and the *nonnative speaker*" (333, emphasis in original) in the reading/learning/teaching of English, or of any language for that matter, should never go unquestioned. Instead, as Pennycook puts it, we need to "engage with a more problematizing stance that always forces us to question the ethics and politics of what we do" (334).

On Knowledge

Now to put the subject matter (i.e. reading foreign literature) in a classroom context, as should be evident, the overarching concept that encompasses all these related issues is that knowledge is not static and can never be transmittable. It rejects (false) dichotomies such as the known and the unknown, or (seeming) categories like linguistic versus literary; and it signifies neither an end to uncertainty, nor a finishing line for the continuing development of understanding. Knowledge in its true sense, instead, is dynamic and arises only out of participation. It is a process that is always in the making, and so should the learning and teaching of it be. Both at a theoretical level and from a practical perspective, the construct of zone of proximal development that Lev Vygotsky

proposes in Mind in Society helps to explain the (re)conceptualization of knowledge that I have come to arrive at as a result of the research. Rejecting the assumption that only those things that children can do on their own are indicative of mental abilities, in order to better understand the internal course of children's mental development, Vygotsky introduces his concept of zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Mind in Society 86). Such a formation for delineating the state of children's development "take[s] account of not only the cycles and maturation processes that have already been completed but also those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop" (Mind in Society 87); in addition, it considers not only the independent activities of children but also their imitative ones as indicators for their level of mental development (Mind in Society 87-8). As Vygotsky goes on to suggest, "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (Mind in Society 88). In other words, learning, when its relation to development is looked at this way, "awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (Mind in Society 90). Learning "always has a previous history" (Mind in Society 84); and while it is directly related to the course of child development, the relations between developmental and learning processes are,

instead of being in "an unchanging hypothetical formulation," highly complex and dynamic (Mind in Society 91).

To me, as Seth Chaiklin sharply argues, Vygotsky's zone of proximal development is "not simply a way to refer to development through assistance by a more competent other" (57). The focus upon socially elaborated learning as presented in this concept readily recognizes that learning is a profoundly social process within historical and cultural conditions. It points to the use of dialogue as an essential basis for developing understanding, as well as the advantages that the transactions with knowledgeable adults or advanced peers can bring. Yet what makes this definition of development especially important to my understanding of the nature of knowledge is that this assistance, to use Chaiklin's words again, "is meaningful *only in relation to* the maturing function that is needed for transition to the next age period" (57, emphasis added). Development can never be set within a static time frame according to some universality such as age or grade. It is always at the same time in relation to the individual as well as the context, and as Vygotsky explains, it is always a "complex dialectic process" (Mind in Society 73). What is more, in suggesting play as a leading factor in development, Vygotsky further stresses the importance of the "motivation for" and the "circumstances of" the play that the child is involved in (Mind in Society 94). Such an emphasis on "situational constraints" (Mind in Society 96) as well as "purpose" (Mind in Society 103) highlights the role of not only the assistance provided but also, and probably more important for my argument here, the interdependency between the assistance provider and the child in hand. What this means for teaching and

learning, then, is that the very process of learning does not conclude the cycle of development. Teaching depends on "immature, but maturing processes"; besides, as Vygotsky explicates, "the process of teaching itself is always done in the form of the child's cooperation with the adults" (The Collected Works 204). In the same way that development needs to be conceptualized both retrospectively and prospectively at two levels—the actual development and the zone of proximal development, knowledge needs to be considered as always in the making, and the learning and teaching of it thus needs to go beyond giving and receiving. It is like what Vygotsky comments on the teaching of writing when he says, "children should be taught written language, not just the writing of letters" (The Collected Works 119). Knowledge is dynamic and dialectic, and so should the processes of learning and teaching it be.

This dialogic and dialectic nature of knowledge as well as the relation between learning and teaching is further underscored in Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed. To Freire, knowledge is not "a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those who they consider to know nothing" (58). It does not accept the mechanistic concept of "consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled" (66) and of human beings as "abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world" (69); nor does it project "an absolute ignorance onto others" (58), or validate any "hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity" that is disconnected from the totality that engendered words and gives them significance (57). Learning and teaching, accordingly, is not about narration based on assumptions that knowledge is teacher's "private property" (68) and that

education consists of transferal of information as in "an act of depositing" (58). It does not involve a teacher being the "narrating Subject," the "depositor," and students as the "patient, listening objects," the "depositories" (57-8); nor does it engage in discussions that are "completely alien to the existential experience of the students," or talks about reality "as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" (57). Authentic thinking, instead, as Freire argues, "does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (64); similarly, authentic education "is not carried on by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B,' but rather 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world" (82). Thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, and thus is dialogue an "existential necessity" (77) in knowledge and education as processes of inquiry. Rather than being called upon only to mechanically memorize the contents, receiving, filling, and storing the deposits, in order for true knowledge to arise and true education to occur, students need to be become "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (68). It is important for them to come to feel like masters of their thinking by discussing the views of the world explicitly or implicitly manifested in their own suggestions and those of their peers (118), and with such emphases on participation as well as partnership, the role of the teacher, correspondingly, is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which reflection and critical intervention in reality merge (68). Simply put, knowledge, like reality, is a "process, undergoing constant transformation" (61). It does not exist "'out there' somewhere" but is always "occurring" (98); and in the same way, what learning and teaching involves is a mutual process of not only co-intention but also

committed participation of both learners and teachers as "subjects," unveiling what is perceived to be knowledge, coming to know it critically, re-creating that knowledge, and discovering themselves as its "permanent re-creators" (56).

What is even more inspirational to my reconceptualization of the (true) meaning of learning and teaching in this problem-posing model proposed by Freire is that behind such a dialogic model of knowledge and education are the premises of not only the necessary awareness of human beings' "incompletion" (72) within "limit situations" (89), but also the "love" (77-9), the "faith" (79), and the "hope" (80) that such an unfinished yet ever-becoming process requires. As Freire's rhetorical questions fittingly suggest (although more from the perspectives of a teacher): "How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own?" "How can I dialogue if I am closed to—and even offended by—the contribution of others?" "How can I dialogue if I am afraid of being displaced, the mere possibility causing me torment and weakness?" (78-79). Love, as Freire then aptly puts it, "is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself" (77-8); dialogue "requires an intense faith in man...[and] hope is rooted in men's incompletion, from which they move out in constant search—a search which can be carried out only in communion with other men" (79). Indeed, as I have come to realize, for dialogues to be genuine, we need to see ourselves neither as "utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages" but only as beings who are "attempting, together, to learn more than we now know" (79). We need to believe in ours as well as our dialoguers' creative power "to make and remake, to create and re-create" (79); we need to ask genuine questions, which

presupposes an act of respect and in turn cultivates trust (80); and we need to recognize that this process is never without "anxieties, doubts, hopes, or hopelessness" (82). Especially when our "situationality" (100) here bears upon the complexity of reading literature in a foreign language, what all this further means is that we could neither dismiss whatever it is that we find difficult due to language and/or cultural differences when reading, nor should we look at these difficulties as in and of themselves "fated and unalterable" but rather, as Freire demands, "merely as limiting—and therefore challenging" (72-3). In other words, even (if not specially) in foreign language education, learning and teaching are authentic only when engaged in genuine inquiry and creative transformation. With genuine dialogues being the "encounter" that makes possible "saying the word" and "naming the world" (67), what is also indispensable for the learning and teaching of foreign literature is the act of love, of faith, of hope for *and* of the readers so as to sustain the act of reading to go beyond classrooms and into the real world.

In introducing curriculum as culturally significant domains for conversation, Arthur Applebee's pedagogy of knowledge-in-action in Curriculum as Conversation not only reaffirms my most valuable learning emerging from this search/research—that knowledge is never "out-of-context" but always "in-action"—but also provides me with guidelines for developing a curricular theory that focuses on knowledge-in-action rather than knowledge-out-of-context. As Applebee sharply points out in the "Acknowledgements" of the book, the reason why he thinks schools and colleges have passed virtually unchanged through wave after wave of education reform lies in the ways we have thought

about cultural traditions of knowing and doing, about what students should know, and about how to embed that knowledge in specific curricula (vii). He continues to make clear:

> Discussions on curriculum...have usually focused on what is most worth knowing: Should we stress the Great Books, the richness of multiculturalism, the basic literacy needed in the worlds of work and leisure? But these arguments have been based on false premises and reflect a fundamental misconception of the nature of knowing. They strip knowledge out of the contexts that give it meaning and vitality, and lead to an education that stresses knowledge-out-of-context rather than knowledge-in-action. In such a system, students are taught about the traditions of the past, and not how to enter into and participate in those of the present and future. (3)

In the context of foreign language education, this, too, cannot be more true. Within the limited time (along with the limited credit numbers to "require" students to learn about certain topics), what are usually argued about in curriculum planning, say, of an English program in an EFL setting, are whether and to what extent students need to study literature, whether they need to know about critical theory, whether they need to learn about linguistics, and how do all those fit in the more practical need of developing their four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. To top such a complexity involved in the learning of a foreign language, within the designing of a syllabus for a literature class, for example, there exist

constant debates on how many works should be included, who are the must-reads, whether literary history/conventions should be a part, and what to do with the more scholarly training of cultivating a literary critic. Indeed, as it seems to me now, all these what-is-most-worth-knowing concerns presuppose knowledge as static and teaching and learning as giving and receiving. Instead of a vital tradition of knowing and doing, what is taught/learned is considered as an entity, transmittable from the teacher to the students yet connected to neither. These inventories and analyses reveal an emphasis on "learning about, rather than participating in" (28) the traditions of literature and criticism, and without realizing that in any living tradition, "what is important is always in the process of being reassessed" (40), what we are left with, exactly like Applebee describes, are "fragments that make little sense to anyone involve" (30), leaving "students bored and teachers frustrated" (126).

What this notion of viewing curriculum as culturally significant domains for conversation further means for my search for an approach to the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature, is the need for us to recognize that "the curriculum we provide is always value-laden—the books we select, the questions we pose, the patterns/structures of activity we choose all reflect particular traditions of knowing and doing" (121). As Applebee demonstrates in the beginning of the book, what the academic disciplines do represent, instead of a system of objective and scientific principles, is in fact the "current state of an ongoing dialogue about significant aspects of human knowledge and experience" (10). Knowledge in its true sense is always knowledge-in-action and never

knowledge-out-of-context, and the starting point in curriculum planning, thus, rather than beginning with an exhaustive inventory of the structure of the subject matter, needs to be a consideration of the conversations that matter not only to the teacher, the students, but also the local community as well as the larger (including the academic) traditions. In other words, the kind of learning that matters cannot be disconnected from either the learners or the context that the learning takes place. Knowledge arises only out of participation in the real world, and it is in this sense that "taking part" is "the key in the relationships between individuals and the traditions of doing and knowing" (5). In order to enable and support students' entry into meaningful dialogue, then, the pedagogy is therefore "of necessity dialogic" (64). The teaching and learning thus needs to be orchestrated to facilitate students' genuine participation out of which true knowledge emerges (101), and accordingly, the assessment needs to place its emphasis on students' developing abilities to enter into such participation (118). We need to incorporate many different experiences for students to share, and many different voices, including those of the past as well as the present (38); while maybe even more importantly, we need to bring attention to the fact that, as Applebee also rightly suggests, any given tradition of knowing and doing may gain *or* lose significance as the dialogue among individuals, cultures, and traditions continues (10). Along the way, it helps if authentic questions and collaboration are available from both the teacher and other students; but the bottom line remains, as in Applebee's words: "The point here is a simple one: if we do not structure the curricular domains so that students can actively enter the discourse, the

knowledge they gain will remain decontextualized and unproductive" (57).

Conclusion

So this is how I view reading/learning/teaching literature in a foreign language now: as "foreign" as the language (and therefore the literature) may seem, the reading/learning/teaching is by nature dialogic and ideological and in fact grounded in the here and now. It is located within the real ongoing life of the individual who is doing the reading/learning/teaching, and while it does incorporate voices from the past and afar, it only works for the negotiated present, and is always oriented towards an ever-becoming future. The dialogic and ideological nature thus explains the inevitability of encountering confusion, ambiguity, anxiety, and uncertainty along the way; yet the process is not without hope but also of transformational power. It is an occurring development that is at the same time conditioning and being conditioned by the context set in, and what it presents is in reality an arena of constant change, allowing for negotiations, reconsiderations, reinterpretations, and reconstructions. Re-situating my old concerns within such a newly reconceptualized theoretical framework, then, has enabled me to integrate and inter-connect all those apparently dichotomous binaries as seen in my "deeply-felt dilemmas." It turns out: in the reading of foreign literature, there is not such need as to "balance" between "the reading" and "the getting of the 'help' for the reading." Information is not an entity that somehow exists outside of the act of reading, and neither are new vocabularies or literary conventions. Improving reading skills thus does not come as a counter

force to the cultivation of an aesthetic eye for appreciation, enjoying reading for its own sake does not come at the expense of reading critically, and in the same way, looking in reference books does not necessarily impede the development of readers' autonomy in exploring one's own literary journey.

As I mentioned earlier I have meant for this chapter to serve not only as theoretical underpinnings but also as a bridge to connect my "deeply-felt dilemmas" in the previous chapter to the proposed approach to be introduced in the following ones. I have, thus, in this chapter laid down theoretical works that have helped shape my thinking during the search, and I have explicated what I now think to be the "problems" in the existing curriculum in the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan. In the next chapter, "Theorizing the Approach," I present what I call the seeking model of reading as an approach to literature in a foreign language. The purpose is to provide in more details a framework for foreign literature classes that takes into account the dynamic nature of language as well as knowledge, and the discussions include how foreign literature is defined, what it means to be competent readers, and what to do for the learning and teaching based on the framework of such a reading model.

CHAPTER III: THEORIZING THE APPROACH

> *Whether or not they are conscious of it...teachers at all levels are always teaching their students how to read. The different ways students are asked to read imply particular values and beliefs about the nature of texts, the nature of readers as subjects of texts and as subjects in the world, and about meaning and language itself.*
>
> *Kathleen McCormick in*
> *The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English*

Introduction

Given what I have been theorizing about my take on language, reading, reading literature, reading foreign literature, and knowledge in Chapter II, here in Chapter III, I present what I call the seeking model of reading as a continuing effort to attempt to answer my two major research questions (as described in Chapter I): (1) What is a better way to approach literature in a foreign language? And (2) what are the assistance and guidance needed in class based on such an approach? Precisely as Kathleen McCormick suggests in the epigraph above, the proposal of such an approach as ways to read/learn/teach foreign literature necessarily implies my own *particular values and beliefs about the nature of texts, the nature of readers as subjects of texts and as subjects in the world, and about meaning and language itself*. This chapter thus starts with a fundamental theorizing of textuality and subjectivity that underlines the proposed approach at hand. It aims to articulate explicitly from the viewpoint of the seeking model of reading what it means to read literature in a foreign language, and what it takes to become a reader of literature in a foreign language. The discussions in the second half of the chapter then turn towards what all these values and beliefs

mean for the classroom. They raise curricular concerns such as setting learning/teaching goals, developing learner autonomy, creating learning communities, and the issues covered range from reading material selection to modes of instruction, as well as means of assessment.

What It Is That We Read in Foreign Literature

As I have argued throughout the previous chapter, a more satisfying approach to foreign literature reading necessarily entails a reconceptualization of the nature of language and knowledge in foreign language programs. Too often, the purpose of reading of foreign literature falls into two categories that seem to be at odds with each other. On the one hand, foreign literature is viewed as having intrinsic moral/humanistic/cultural value. The reading, therefore, regardless of the language, focuses mainly on the retrieving of the social messages/eternal truths/cultural artifact from the literary texts. Arguments such as the one provided by Ann Bugliani for the use of "literature-in-translation" in foreign language and literature departments, for (a somewhat extreme) example, clearly see "literature" as something that can be read about and then discussed with a minimum concern of the language that it was originally written in. (Although I do recognize there are other significant factors involved in this issue like student enrollment rate.) "The stimulation of literature-in-translation classes," as she contends, "is akin to that of a class composed of native speakers, with the difference that the literature being studied here is indeed "foreign" for the students. These classes are lively and engaging, *unencumbered by linguistic limitations*" (34, emphasis added). It is as if

once the language is taken care of, the learning of literature naturally flows.

What also underlies Bugliani's argument here, moreover, is the assumption that there is a continuum going from language learning to the study of literature, that only those who have already mastered the linguistic structure can begin to extract the "messages," which then serve as a "springboard for an exploration of the nature of literature in general" (Katz 37). In response at the same time to the contemporary talks of internationalization and the calls for globalization, and to a long tradition of looking at literary study as an elitist pursuit of an "awareness of the literary text as a vital and relevant part of the human condition" (Haper 403), "foreign literature" in this first category not only provides windows on other people's culture, but also contributes to a deepened understanding of the complexity of human experience.

A pragmatic/communicative approach to the reading of foreign literature, on the other hand, concerns the reading process with the aesthetic/authentic aspect of the target language that literary texts offer. Put it more simply, "literature" here in this second category is primarily perceived to be a resource (and good writing models, too) for language acquisition and appreciation—from vocabulary expansion, to the development of grammatical competence, and the training of critical thinking skills. This orientation towards practicality with a stress on linguistic structures can often be found in language improvement classroom activities such as reading poetry for pronunciation drills, showing drama for listening skills, or most commonly, using short story/novel as stimuli for discussing and writing in the target language. For upper-level classes, training in the

"stylistics" of the foreign language/literature at hand further assists in the development of language learners' linguistic (including socio-linguistic) proficiency, and their ability to function in a multicultural environment. "Communication," as Roberta Johnson suggests for foreign language and literature departments, "is our stock-in-trade" (27). The treatment of "foreign literature" thus helps to cultivate both "international and intercultural skills," which, as Iride Lamartina-Lens and Adelia Williams characterize from the perspectives of chairs of the department of languages and cultures, will be "required skills in the twenty-first century" (32).

Both these stances towards the reading of foreign literature, however, fall short of accounting for the dialectic nature of language and of the process of reading itself. I do not intend for my argument here to be against the use of literature-in-translation, or, as Brian Parkinson and Helen Reid Thomas call it, the "literature-as-topic/resource" approach in foreign language programs (1), but I do see them not only with different pedagogical purposes but also with a (mis)conceptualization of how language and reading works. As one of the most influential Vygotskian quotations clarifies, "[t]hought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (Thought and Language 218). The use of literature-in-translation processes thought as if it stays the same aside from the change of the words, whereas the literature-as-topic approach treats words as if they are not affected by thought. Both are faulty, subscribing to the seeming objectivity of the text; both see language and thought as separate, static entities. And to me, to a large extent, this is where the split of content versus form, or as Peter Pfeiffer calls it, "the divide between language folk and literature-culture folk"

(11) originates. The purpose therefore can only be *either* for the linguistics *or* for the literariness.

Yet in fact, the (real) process of reading literature, whether in a first language or a foreign one, remains transactional and social/political. Meanings, to use Maxine Greene's words, "are not simply given or unearthed but are to be variously achieved" (Releasing the Imagination 57). What I am suggesting here, is that reading literature in a foreign language is not about decoding/translating the text as if there are some trans-contextual messages encoded in the text, nor is it about accessing whatever information there is in the text for the purpose of utilizing/practicing the foreign language at hand as a stable tool. Or to put it more simply, when reading foreign literature, it is neither the foreign cultures, nor the more comprehensive human treasury of ideas and wisdom, nor the foreign language all by itself that we are reading *about*. Rather, there exists a dialogic and ideological relationship among us as the readers, the foreign literary texts, and the whole context that the act of reading is embedded in. As I have already argued at the end of the previous chapter, reading foreign literature is an occurring event that is at the same time conditioning and being conditioned by all forces involved. Naturally such forces include cultural/literary/linguistic constraints on the readers' part, but *that* does not change the dialogical nature of the text, or the transactional process of the reading itself. As "foreign" as the literature may seem, the reading is still located within the ongoing life of the individual who is doing the reading.

What Makes Us the "Readers of Literature" in a Foreign Language

What this take on textuality brings us in the reading of literature in a foreign language, then, is a more empowered role for readers within a more contextualized reading situation. From the same viewpoint that sees language as always in-use and reading as a constructive process, it follows that readers' knowledge, be it cultural, literary, or linguistic, is always in-action and can only be built upon through the act of reading itself. As Knoblauch and Brannon explicate, the knowledge that literature offers is not "cumulative. One does not 'know more' as each story is added to the others. But one knows 'better;' one's instinct and values, expectations and judgments mature. One's ability to read the world grows" (26). "Literature," as they continue to note, "enhances the *quality* of understanding," and such understanding is in fact "dialogical: stories beget stories; voices mingle and interanimate" (26, emphasis in original). Indeed, in the reading of foreign literature, there exists *no* prerequisite amount of (out-of-context) knowledge for readers to read, and in the same way, we need *not* be experts to be called "readers of literature." It is thus worth stressing here again, that as Reed Dasenbrock rightly points out, "[k]nowledge does not come first and control the experience of the work of art; the experience of the work comes first and leads the experiencer towards knowledge" (39). Simply put, we become "readers of literature" in a foreign language through reading foreign literature.

This of course does not mean that we as foreign literature readers are the sole players in this event of reading. In order for any true learning to occur, we need to take into consideration all forces involved in the transaction amid our

reading. This could mean adopting the stance of what Rabinowitz and Smith call "authorial reading," or recognizing both the general and literary repertoires of the text as well as the reader in Kathleen McCormick's socio-cultural model of reading. (Both are quoted and discussed in details in the previous chapter.) Yet in any case, the bottom line is: being foreign language learners reading literature written in the target language, alongside the acknowledgement that our reading is not a passive act of receiving someone else's meaning but is actively constructed based on our prior understanding, it remains essential that in the process of our reading, we perceive such a process not as in a vacuum with full autonomy but as in a historical and social condition of various constraints. The argument that we should not see "deficiency" in ourselves as if there is a whole complete amount of foreign literature knowledge that needs to be possessed first does not bestow any autonomy, nor any stability, on us as the readers. On the contrary, given the dialectic nature of our coming-together with foreign literary texts, what our active role in the construction of the reading highlights is exactly this complexity of readers as subjects of the text, and as subjects of the world.

What this dynamic and ideological view towards language and knowledge further means for the reading of foreign literature, then, is that the personal as well as social aspect of the reading process not only necessarily presents conventional demands on the readers, but also directly requires that the development of literary conventions/genre knowledge (and thereby sensitivity towards what is being read) be achieved only through the act of reading itself. (On a side note, genre here takes on a definition that concerns more with the whole

rhetorical situation that the discourse is set in rather than its language and text features. This is also where I tend to see "English for Specific Purpose/English for Academic Purpose" as having a more stable and static view towards text despite its attempt to contextualize.) In other words, indeed as Janet Allen suggests, "it takes more than definitional knowledge to know a word" (8); yet in the same way that vocabulary lists do not make too much sense in the sense-making process of reading literature, literary conventions/genre knowledge cannot be learned as an end but need to be looked at as means towards more responsible reading and therefore more responsive understanding. Carol Olson's reminder seems especially pertinent here for readers of foreign literature: "Inexperienced readers and writers are simply that—inexperienced, not *incapable*" (16, emphasis added). To me, this provides a better way to perceive ourselves as "readers of literature" in a foreign language—that we are not inherently deficient in our reading because of being language learners, but we do need more experiences of our reading as language users. And at the same time we need to recognize that we as foreign literature readers benefit from knowing specific literary techniques and interpretive conventions, we also need to realize that "that capability" can only be best attained through our own experiences in dealing with the literary texts. To be sure, in the reading of foreign literature, it is not the learning of literary conventions/genre knowledge that allows us to read better; rather, it is our experience encountering various literary conventions/genre that makes us more sensitive towards what we read and thus makes us better readers.

The Seeking Model of Reading

When we adopt a more dialogic and dialectic view of language and knowledge, the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature takes on a different nature: We see reading as necessarily involving asking questions, making predictions, bringing in potential answers, and finding/trying to find answers to the questions asked; we see reading literature as a dynamic happening occurring in social/political contexts; we see understanding as the basis (not the consequence) of comprehension; we see the process of understanding literature as recursive (not linear) and arises only out of participation; we see confusion, ambiguity, anxiety, and uncertainty as starting points that lead to questioning and exploration; we see learning as relating the new to the known; we see development as originated within social interactions, meaningful only to the individual going from being assisted towards becoming independent; and we see teaching and learning as always in communication, asking genuine questions, engaging in real dialogues, and attempting together with the learners to learn more than what one knows.

It thus only makes sense that in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature, we emphasize seeking rather than knowing. The common belief that foreign literature readers are in need of various background information when reading foreign literature because of their deficiency in linguistic skills/literary tradition/cultural familiarity not only inhibits their pleasure of reading, but also impedes their growth as life-long readers. The notion that one needs to know a set of linguistic/literary/cultural features in order to understand a piece of literary

works not only contradicts the natural process of language use and reading, but also limits readers' participation and learning. Instead, given the inevitability of encountering confusion in the process of reading, and the unattainability of a complete list of everything one needs to know about reading foreign literature, when readers encounter texts that challenge their understanding, they are more successful readers if they reject the assumption that they must possess a body of knowledge, embrace confusion as their opportunities for learning, and more readily see themselves as seekers of knowledge who ask their own questions, bring their own experiences to the process of reading/interpreting, and construct their own understandings. In short, seeking, rather than knowing, is what makes possible the reading of literature in a foreign language.

Setting Goals and Objectives

Before discussing the implementation of the seeking model of reading in the classroom domain, it seems appropriate that the purpose of reading foreign literature from the seeking model viewpoint be explicitly stated again—that it is not concerned with the development of readers' linguistic competence in the target language, nor does it pertain to increasing their literary knowledge or improving their critical thinking skills. This is not to say that readers do not gain such benefit from reading foreign literature the way that is proposed. And in fact they do. But we need to draw a line between using foreign literature to serve other purposes and using foreign literature as the main interest in and of itself. Following that, what also needs to be pointed out again, is that teaching and learning are now

understood as transactional rather than as transmission. As Neil Postman puts it, "knowledge is a quest, not a commodity" (170). What gets taught/learned from the viewpoint of the seeking model of reading in a foreign literature class, therefore, is not "topic-centered" but always starts from where the language learners are—not only as individuals with personal histories, but also as participants in socio-cultural situations, in which they inevitably relate to others (Arnold and Brown 8). It is, after all, not the foreign literary texts but the readers/language learners who really matter in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature.

Now, when seeking is what makes possible the reading of foreign literature, in response to Jeffrey Wilhelm's "bottom lines question"—what do you *absolutely* have to get done to feel you've been successful with a group of students?" (Strategic Reading xii, emphasis in original)—I see initiating students' interests and developing in them a sense of curiosity towards the actual reading of foreign literature as what we *absolutely* have to do as foreign literature teachers. On the surface, such "bottom lines of our teaching" (i.e., initiating students' interests and developing in them a sense of curiosity towards the reading of foreign literature) might seem abstract. (It may even have a bit of washed-down-version-of-reader-response-approach ring to it.) But a more careful look into the terms of both "students' interests" and "a sense of curiosity" makes clear why and how they are not only concrete but critical. First of all, in order to initiate any kind of interests for reading in students, we need to not only take their prior knowledge into account, but also make them understand, as Jeffery Wilhelm suggests, that they can, and should, bring their personal lived experience to

literature so they can, and should, bring literature back to life (You Gotta BE the Book 70). In other words, there needs to be real-life relevance for what the students read if we want to spark any interests in them, and in the same way, their interests can only be maintained when students learn to connect what they read back to their lived lives. "Interesting topics" may look interesting at first, but real interests can only be attained through meaningful reading, which, as I have been arguing all along, can only occur when reading emerges in the transactional sense.

Similarly, just as "initiating interests" means more than having something interesting to read/talk about in class, developing in students a sense of curiosity involves much training in the development of their sensitivity towards the relation between language and reality. Almost self-explanatorily, in order for students to have a sense of curiosity towards the reading of foreign literature, they need to be able to recognize something in their reading that is worth "being curious about." They need to (learn to) understand that they as "users of language...are positioned at the intersection of various discourses which are inherently unequal and the site of struggle" (Carter 117); that "the varieties of linguistic usage are both *products* of socio-economic forces and institutions...and *practices* which are instrumental in forming and legitimating these same social forces and institutions" (Fowler 21, emphasis in original); and that "interpretations depend very much on who the interpreter is, who he or she is addressing, what his or her purpose is in interpreting, at what historical moment the interpretation takes place" (Said 162). To put it another way, being able to form questions of their own on the complexity

of their own reading is in fact a large part of what keeps their sense of curiosity alive. They need to take up the socio-cultural stance towards the reading of foreign literature, and question the ideological/political nature of its practices.

Also indispensable to the sustaining of students' interests and their sense of curiosity in the process of reading foreign literary texts, is the need to make students understand that confusion and ambiguity are but a part (and a positively important one!) of the meaning construction and negotiating process. In a very simple way, it has to be until they can see unknown vocabularies and ambiguous syntax in their reading not as obstacles but as points of departure towards their seeking journey that their interests and curiosity can be kept alive. They need to recognize that instead of "getting it right the first time," comprehending literary works is (and should be) a recursive process; that as Sondra Perl puts it, "there is a forward moving action that exists by virtue of a backward moving action" (44). As Sheridan Blau also suggests, "one of the chief functions of a literature class is *not* to present literature to students (as conventional teaching guides are likely to advice) in ways that will anticipate and prevent their confusion, but to *welcome* and even *foster* among readers the experience of confusion" (21, emphasis added). In other words, to stay interested in and curious about what they read, students need to (learn to) see re-reading as part of the meaning-making process, and maybe even more importantly, they need to (learn to) realize that as they encounter confusion and ambiguity during the process, they actually hold "the most powerful resources" at their disposal—their own concentrated attention and capacity to think. They need to (learn to) remember the resource that they are to

each other, as well as how intellectually productive the process of discussing problems with peers can be (Blau 12).

What such "bottom lines" mean to the teaching and learning of foreign literature, furthermore, is that for material selection, it would definitely not be of a coverage model. "Instead of aiming for comprehensive coverage," as Elaine Showalter reminds us, "we have to think about what students need to read in order to establish a basis for further learning" (13). Clearly, questions about how much students need to know in order to gain real understanding of the complexities of any literary text or author or even a historical period can only lead to a list of works/topics that need to be covered. Such a list does not take into consideration whether or not the students can find connection between the reading and their lives, nor does it take into account the level of familiarity that the students are at with the reading material—be it linguistic, literary, or cultural. Simply put, it does not include students as a part of its setup; or to put it more bluntly, as far as the list is concerned, whether the reading is meaningful to the students or whether the students are learning (or even if they are actually reading) does not really make any difference at all.

Oftentimes, when it comes to selecting reading materials, most foreign literature teachers either rely on the canon, trying to fit in as many works as possible, or turn to classic children's literature, assuming that once the language problem is out of the way, the reading will automatically take care of itself. It is easier to see the downside of the former one in classroom practices—that since most works are too difficult to read, the students end up feeling bogged down by

the laborious job of looking up in the dictionary and translating every other word in the texts and *still not* getting the message. The exclusive use of classic children's literature, nevertheless, does not match up to the pursuit of the "bottom lines" here either. It is true that the less linguistically challenging texts as found in most children's literature do ease up the tension during the reading process, meaning students do not need to worry so much about encountering new words or complex sentence structures, and more than often they can read the texts all by themselves without making any dictionary/reference trip. But then, in fact, it is exactly the 'question-free/risk-free" quality that not only misrepresents reading as demonstrating the knowledge already in place, but also limits students' opportunities to learn to read.

Indeed, as Wilbert McKeachie comments, "the objective of a course is not to cover a set of topics, but rather to facilitate student learning and thinking" (10). What we as foreign literature teachers, to use Jerome Bruner's remark of one of his favorite teachers, need to be are "human event[s]" rather than "transmission device[s]" (126). We need to "find ways to engage students actively in responding interpretively to people, events, books, and ideas" (Olson 256), and we need to "motivate and prepare students to shape and articulate questions of their own" (Olson 259). In order to sustain students' interest and curiosity, the material selected must present a fair degree of relevance to students' lives as well as an appropriate level of familiarity—linguistically, literarily, and culturally; or to use Leila Christenbury's words, they must be something to which the students "can truly respond" (116). And as many experienced teachers have argued before (e.g.,

Carol Olson) we need to be explicit about why we are doing what we are doing. We need to make students see themselves as active participants in the reading, yet at the same time, respect, in the face of the complexity of the reading of foreign literature, all forces involved. Ultimately, the goal is for students to become life-long readers in foreign literature—and by that I mean they continue to read literature in the language at hand after they leave the classrooms, and when they read, they do responsible reading and from there achieve responsive understanding.

Developing Reader Autonomy

With that "end in mind" (qtd. in Burke 171), as Stephen Covey calls it, it follows that our ways of going about achieving the objectives in classroom settings necessarily involve helping students to develop into autonomous readers. This, at a more metaphorical level, would mean that we need to shift our role from what Tierney and Pearson call a "transmission device" to "senior member" of the classroom community (85); that we need to move our intention from being what Carol Olson calls "sage on the stage" to "guide on the side" (51); that we need to take on the tutorial task of showing the apprentices what Judith Langer and Arthur Applebee call "the tricks of the trade" (168); and that we need to "facilitate the admission" of students' automatic right into what Frank Smith calls "the club of all clubs" (11). All these point to the necessity of focusing on the students, making "students rather than teachers the responsible agents for learning in the classroom" (Blau 5); what is more, along the process of such a development,

there is also a need for teachers to provide assistance, making "visible for students what it is that experienced readers do when they read" (Olson 18).

But before any of these can be transformed into actual classroom practices, what I see paramount for any foreign literature teacher to realize first is, as Stephen Krashen and Jeff McQuillian contend in their research on late intervention, that there is *no critical period* for learning to read. The evidence they provide not only argues against the common belief that "once a poor reader, always a poor reader," but more importantly, it confirms that people "*can and do* become good readers later, by reading a lot about whatever interest them; the repeated act of reading itself makes them good readers" (409, emphasis added). This is where a reiteration of the consequence of a misconceptualization of language and knowledge seems appropriate: When functioning within a framework that sees eliminating all the unknowns as the first step to understand what one reads, it becomes virtually unimaginable, especially for struggling readers in a foreign language, to attempt any massive free voluntary reading, which, as the research shows, is what is most needed for becoming good readers. What this means, then, is that it would not be until we as foreign literature teachers see the relation between readers and reading from a more dynamic and dialectic perspective that we can help students develop their willingness in taking risks to seek whatever that baffles them when they read, be it biographical information of the authors or the historical background of a whole story, and eventually find personal satisfaction in the act of reading foreign literature itself. Only then would "reading a lot about whatever interests them" become feasible,

and the goal of becoming life-long readers possible.

It seems only right, then, that when the premise of such a goal remains that seeking is what makes possible the reading of foreign literature, whatever we do in teaching foreign literature needs to aim at enabling students to seek as they read. This, now in a more practical sense, would mean that we need to provide students a language with which they can talk about their reading/reading process (Olson 22); that we need to give them discursive space in which they can recognize the constructed nature of their meaning-making (McCormick 54); that we need to introduce them to the cognitive strategies that experienced readers use when they construct meaning from or with texts (Zemelman, Daniels, and Hyde 43); and that most importantly, we need to model all this knowing and learning in meaningful context so that students can first actually see and hopefully internalize later what Jeffery Wilhelm calls "the secret purposes and process of more expert practice" (Strategic Reading iii). All these bring out the importance of guiding students through the seeking process, demonstrating not just *what* to ask but *why* as well as *how*; in addition, during the modeling of this inquiry process, there also requires a contextualization of all the skills shown, giving whatever techniques we expect students to master for becoming life-long foreign literature readers a real purpose within a social situation.

In Rousing Minds of Life Roland Tharp and Ronald Gallimore argue that "[s]tudents cannot be left to learn on their own; teachers cannot be content to provide opportunities to learn and then assess outcomes; recitation must be deemphasized; responsive and assisting interactions must become commonplace

in the classroom" (21). Such an argument may seem too self-evident in the sense that teachers are obviously in the classroom for the sole purpose to help students to learn; yet with most foreign literature classrooms positioning the teachers as the only experts upfront lecturing on the texts, I do see that lack of student response and interaction worth addressing especially for the discussions on the teaching and learning in foreign literature. As could also be seen from the descriptions in the early chapters, my past experience in the learning and teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan was very much related to the "Pedagogical Awakening" that Sheridan Blau described in The Literature Workshop:

> If my job was to ensure that my students were learning as much as possible, then I had to find ways to switch roles with them, to have them take the kind of responsibility for such tasks as making sense of texts and figuring out textual and conceptual problems that I regularly undertook in my role as the teacher. I undertook these tasks in order to help my students learn the texts I was teaching them. But as long as I was engaged in the task of teaching them what my efforts to construct meaning had yielded for me...the experience of learning was mine, not theirs. They were to a very large extent merely witnesses to it. (2)

And as I too realize now that "the experience of being taught" when I was a student, "was merely an experience of witnessing and possibly recording the teacher's learning"; and "all I could do" when I later became a teacher, "was show

them what I had learned" (Blau 2-3).

Jane Tompkins made a similar confession in A Life in School. Her epiphany as a teacher came when she suddenly realized that whereas

> for my entire teaching life I had always thought that what I was doing was helping my students to understand the material we were studying—Melville or post-structuralism or whatever it happened to be—as a result of that moment I realized that what I had actually been concerned with was showing the students how smart I was, how knowledgeable I was, and how well prepared I was for class. I had been putting on a performance whose true goal was not to help students learn, as I had thought, but to perform before them in such a way that they would have a good opinion of me. I realized that my fear of being found wanting, of being shown up as a fraud, must be transmitted itself to them. Insofar as I was afraid to be exposed; they too would be afraid. (119)

Quite self-explanatory, such a comment on the teaching and learning (but especially on the teaching) of literature strikes home with my "deeply-felt dilemma"—I could easily recognize myself as the teacher who thought all the time that he or she was teaching but in fact was rather just trying to measure up to the (imaginary) role of "the expert" who not only knows everything there is to know about the subject at hand, but also is able to identify effortlessly every little literary technique of any literary text at first sight—be it a subtle foreshadowing or a symbolic object with a Shakespearean reference attached to it. I as the student

thought I was learning and I as the teacher considered what I did was helping students to learn, but as it turned out, I was quite left to learn to read on my own, and I was hardly ever really helping my students to learn to read in any meaningful ways.

What this means to me as I now argue for the necessity in foreign literature class to not only teach foreign language learners reading strategies and provide them discursive space for meaning making but also make visible and available what it takes to become life-long readers in foreign literature, is exactly that, without students actually engaging in the reading process and teachers consciously facilitating the learning process, it would be very unlikely that the ultimate goal here would be achieved. Although it is not precisely "recitation" that we emphasize when giving a lecture to the whole class on, say, the symbols found in the literary work at hand, as long as the students are passively jotting down which symbols to recognize and as long as they are not actively participating in the process of coming to recognize these symbols as symbols with their own meaning constructed, we are not teaching and they are not learning. For real responsiveness and interactions to become commonplace in foreign literature classrooms, we need to first of all respect where students are as learners in the reading of foreign literature (as opposed to where we want them to be). And we need to facilitate their learning process by providing not only reading opportunities but also authentic reading experiences within which various reading strategies can be repeatedly called forth, applied, and eventually internalized.

This, however, does not mean that these skills and techniques should be

taught as an end in the classroom. On the contrary, just as I did not use "forming the habits of mind" as a key concept in my argument for the development of learner autonomy, I am rather opposed to seeing either a "linear" approach towards or a "habitual" nature within the use of these reading strategies simply because their usages are just as dynamic and dialectic as any reading event is. I do find, for example, writing activities such as the "setting chart" (130) in Carol Olson's book useful in helping students to connect, analyze, and make inferences; reading strategies such as the symbolic story representation developed by Jeffery Wilhelm advantageous in assisting students to enter the world of texts and understand the complexity of their reading; or lists of reader-response questions such as the one provided by Robert Probst in "Dialogue with a Text" accessible for students to engage with literary texts that yields rich literary experiences. (I will discuss these strategies in more details in Chapter Four.) But what I do not intend to suggest for the use of these strategies in foreign literature classroom, is for these activities/strategies to be looked at as in an out-of-context inventory of reading skills. The term "habits" has a limiting connotation to it in the sense that it in the process becomes somewhat autonomous and therefore not self-reflective; and as much as I wish for the students to develop into autonomous learners, I do not want their reading/seeking process to be habitual and thus lose its critical edge.

What it also means, furthermore, is that, at the same time it is our responsibility to support students' seeking process via manageable practices to guide them through the text, helping them to visualize, make connections, form

preliminary interpretations, and revise meaning, I think we owe it to the students to also make known that reading literature in a foreign language is never simple—not only that we as experienced readers too make mistakes and need to constantly re-negotiate our meaning construction, but also that the reading experience itself is constantly changing due to the whole context the reading act is embedded in, and therefore can never be broken down into unchanging static steps to follow. In other words, for developing learner autonomy in foreign literature classrooms, we need to show foreign language learners how various strategies can be employed to sustain the seeking process as they read, and we need to structure our class to provide tasks that are clear to guide them through a specific reading in a way that enables them to apply the strategies in new contexts. But more importantly, we also need to make them aware that such a process of coming to understand any piece of literature is never static and therefore can never be the same. It involves language that is always at-work, knowledge that is always in-action, and texts that are always in-use. And that is why it is seeking, rather than knowing in the sense of possessing certain (out-of-context) knowledge, that is the key to become life-long readers of foreign literature.

Creating Communities of Readers in the Classroom

In order to support this seeking process in classroom settings, what we as foreign literature teachers additionally need to do is to create a sense of community that would enable students to feel not only safe but encouraged to ask questions that are meaningful to them as readers, and thereby search for answers

that give both personal as well as social significance to their meaning construction. Needless to say, to do so, we need first of all to recognize that all foreign language learners are "legitimate" members of this community of readers. This is not to pretend that teachers and students are "equal" in the classroom in the sense that all interpretations are of the same validity; and in fact, doing so would ignore not only the fact that teachers are more experienced and therefore should play the role of the "senior members" to guide and assist, but also the power structure in the classroom that is so vital to the construction of a (real) community. What it means, instead, is that we need to respect where the students are in the process of learning a foreign language, and give credit to what they know as readers of foreign literature. It requires us as teachers to distribute authority in the classroom by encouraging and valuing students' individual voices, acknowledge each and every one of the students as a source of knowledge and expertise, and at the same time expect *and* require all of them to be responsible for their own reading as well as for assisting others to read. A (true) sense of community, to put it another way, is built upon mutual respect and support, and only through that can we foster a shared sense of ownership of not only the reading but also the whole context the act of learning to read is set in.

The call for creating a community of readers to accommodate in the classroom the more dynamic and dialectic view towards reading as a seeking process further demands us as foreign literature teachers to use dialogue as a necessary mode of instruction, and see assessment in a more "here-and-now, in-progress, formative feedback" sense, focusing on how to improve to meet an

achievement target (Olson 347). As Lynn Holaday points out, students need coaches, not judges—"coaches are friendly; judges are aloof. Coaches want you to do well; judges don't care" (41). This would assuredly exclude the lecture/recitation process in which it is only the teachers' questions that are worth asking and therefore it is only the teachers' answers that count as knowing; what is more, rather than only at the end of term and usually being perceived to be punitive, means of assessment that are considered to be substantial in classrooms would also include other forms such as reading journals, non-verbal performances, and other on-going reading and writing activities. Yet as Dan Kirby also reminds us, reforming our teaching to nurture thinking involves more than "dreaming up new activities or offering students more freedom" (168). By saying that we need to use dialogue as a necessary mode of instruction, I do not mean that any type of explicit lessons needs to be excluded in the classroom. What I do mean, however, is that whatever we plan and do in our classes needs to be done in such a way that enables students to "construct their own versions of knowledge in new and personal ways" (Kirby 168), and provides students with "necessary constructive information and the impetus to improve in the future" (Olson 324).

As are often seen in arguments about "error correction" in foreign language learning, it seems obvious that we as foreign language teachers need to create a climate for learning in which it is okay to make mistakes. What I see as a mistake, nevertheless, is that more than often, such a learning process is never pushed further beyond the point where mistakes are made. Especially in most classes where literature is used to learn the language at hand and when reader response

theory is (mis)used as an approach to read, it is commonly believed that to learn to read in a foreign language, students *only* need to be encouraged to take risks and construct their own understandings. But the point of fact is—neither taking risks nor making mistakes equals learning. Of course we make mistakes in any learning process, but the mistakes need to be carefully thought through in order for learning to occur. In other words, it is the learning that comes after mistakes are realized and meaning is revised that counts as (real) learning; otherwise, mistakes remain mistakes. Students might feel more at ease knowing that it is okay to make mistakes or to focus solely on their personal responses, but in order for them to read responsibly and to learn in the true sense, they need to realize the consequence of the risk they take, and the difference their revised meaning can make. To put it more simply, in order to create a community of readers, in terms of giving instructions and making assessment, we need to find ways to value the *real* process of meaning construction.

Finally, research studies on affect in foreign language learning have long established, as Stephen Krashen notes, "that attitudinal factors are more important than aptitude" (Second Language acquisition and second language learning *78*). Such a spirit of community not only allows learner diversity, and upholds peer collaborations, but also provides safety and encouragement that would undoubtedly reduce the anxiety, enhance the self-esteem, and activate the motivation of the language learners to read foreign literature. What seems even more essential for us as foreign literature teachers to recognize regarding these affective dimensions in creating a community of readers in reading foreign

literature is that, as Phil Benson suggests, language learning practices and attitudes towards learning are unstable and change over time. In other words, difference and diversity exist not just between learners, but within learners at different stages of their language learning experience (20-1). In the same way that we see reading as at the same time conditioning and being conditioned by the context the act of reading is embedded in, we need to see learner diversity from a more dynamic and dialectic perspective that recognizes it as at the same time influencing and being influenced by the whole learning/learning to read foreign literature process.

Conclusion

One of the most complained about issues that I was aware of when I taught English/American literature in Taiwan (as I have briefly shown from the survey data in Chapter I and will continue to discuss in more details in the next chapter) is that not only do students lack linguistic, literary, and cultural knowledge, but they also demonstrate a considerable disparity regarding their reading proficiency. This remains, in my view, the same question that is deeply rooted in the theoretical understanding of how language works and what counts as knowledge. It shows not only that there is an ultimate understanding inherent in every text that can only be achieved through certain ways by the readers, but also that there is a fixed amount of linguistic/literary competency required for understanding a piece of literature for every reader. In this chapter, I have argued against looking at the reading of foreign literature as in a dichotomy of linguistics versus literariness

because it is simply not the way knowledge and language works. I have argued for a reconceptualization of the reading of foreign literature that allocates agency for the reader, redistributes authority among the author, the reader, and the text, and deals with questions of the role of literary conventions/genre knowledge. I have then proposed a reading model that emphasizes seeking rather than knowing, and suggested ways of implementation in the classroom domain. In the next chapter, "Contextualizing the Search/Approach," I extend the search, along with the proposed approach, back to the context where the research originated. By locating the search/approach specifically in the culture of the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan, the purpose is to further facilitate my attempt in the theorizing of the seeking model of reading as an approach to literature in a foreign language; the discussions thus include existing research on English/American literature teaching in Taiwan, data collected from the mailback survey, as well as interview responses made by the participating teachers and students who are engaged in the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan.

CHAPTER IV: CONTEXTUALIZING THE SEARCH/APPROACH

> *Enacted in every pedagogy are the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and the subjective. Traditionally expressed as dichotomies, these relationships are not nearly so neat or binary. Rather, such relationships are better expressed as dialogic in that they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know. Produced because of social interaction, subject to negotiation, consent, and circumstance, inscribed with power and desire, and always in the process of becoming, these dialogic relations determine the very texture of teaching and the possibilities it opens.*
>
> *Deborah Britzman in Practice Makes Practice*

Introduction

In order to facilitate the theorizing of the seeking model of reading as proposed in the previous chapter, in this chapter I locate the search/approach back to the Taiwanese context where English is used as a foreign language, and attempt to answer the rest of the research questions: (3) What are the current teaching practices in the English departments in Taiwan? (4) What are other English/American literature teachers' viewpoints on these teaching issues? (5) What do other more experienced English/American teachers think of the proposed approach? (6) What are current English majors' learning experiences? And (7) what do current English majors think of the proposed approach? As should be clear, the central argument of this proposed reading model is twofold: the need to reconceptualize the definition of knowledge, the nature of reading, the question of authority; and the need to reflect such a reconceptualization in actual classroom settings. The focus of the following analyses thus relates mainly to

such needs. From the viewpoint of the proposed seeking model of reading, I first argue that existing research on reading/reading literature in English as a foreign language in Taiwan is structured in a way that is static and does not allow dialogic understanding. I then discuss similar limitations presented in the current teaching and learning practices using data collected from the 80 responding English/American literature teachers in Taiwan. Drawing on interview responses made by the participating teachers and students, I further suggest that both the need to reconceptualize knowledge/reading/authority, as well as the need to reflect such a reconceptualization in classrooms, are in fact in constant negotiation with the various administrative/individual/social forces that exist in the context where teaching and learning takes place. In the same way that at the heart of the seeking model of reading is the recognition that reading foreign literature does not happen in a vacuum independent of its political network, when looking at the teaching and learning of foreign literature, there also demands a need to acknowledge the contextualized nature of any teaching and learning practices.

What the Existing Research Shows

Not too different from my past experience as described in the first chapter, the existing research studies, although they mostly rely on self-reported data and thus may not adequately represent classrooms in general, obviously see language learning and literature reading as two separate entities. When it concerns how to improve students' reading, it is strictly about reading English the

language, suggesting particular aspects of language learning to be emphasized in order to enhance students' linguistic competence; whereas when it aims at helping teachers to teach English/American literature, it focuses mostly on the literariness of the text, providing justification for why certain topics need to be included and how they contribute to the cultivation of students' literary competence. Overall, knowledge, of either linguistic features or literary merits, is treated as something to be transmitted, to be known, to be possessed. Even when researchers/theorists such as Goodman and Freire and terms such as transaction and critical awareness are mentioned, TEFOL-type comprehensive tests and essay-format written exams are used as the main means to assess students' linguistic/literary ability, and thereby serve as proof to support certain research results. Working within this out-of-context knowledge framework, questions of authority naturally favor the ones who possess the ability to reproduce and demonstrate such possession. Although theoretically it is recognized that errors/different interpretations are inevitable and therefore allowed, in practice, there is an imagined complete set of knowledges that need to be mastered for anyone to be called an English major.

For example, as Hsiu-chieh Chen states in his article "Evaluating the Tamkang Reading Program for English Majors," the main purpose of the reading project is to "help students learn to read, to become more effective and efficient readers and then ultimately arrive at a command of the English language that it may be used as a tool to learn other subjects" (25). Reading, within this framework, is obviously looked at as a decontextualized skill to be applied when

learning other content areas. Especially when functioning within this context where most of the "reading" that English majors do is related to reading literary texts written in English, the learning of a unit on "English literature, American literature, and General Psychology," among other units such as "Advertising and English Grammar" and "English News, Travelogues, Cultural Geography" (27), clearly shows that language and reading here are seen as autonomous and non-social. They are fixed and universal, and can be utilized across all fields in a neutral and unchanging way. With such a static view, it is easy to see why such a program aiming to adopt "innovative approaches to teaching reading" (26) amounts only to "using authentic materials, integrating the reading and language drill class, putting the reading materials on the web site with several articles recorded by an American teacher, increasing interaction and classroom activities such as role play, group discussion, group report, watching films and so on" (26); and why when it comes to evaluating the outcome of the implementation of such an approach, the research employed TOEFL-type tests, suggesting that the "TOEFL test is generally used to assess students' overall English proficiency on various aspects of the language" (33).

This same kind of static perspective on language and reading can be seen in Wang and Din's article "Teaching College Students English Reading Comprehension through Text and Discourse Analysis," which also uses TOFEL-type tests for its pre-test and post-test procedure in order to support positive research results. Interesting enough, this article starts from critiquing the prevalent traditional instruction of grammar-translation, citing from Goodman that

reading is a psychological guessing game (129). It continues to argue that readers detect clues from the text in order to understand what one reads, using both background knowledge and linguistic knowledge, and it follows that being able to identify different "text-forming devices" helps readers' reading comprehension in that they are able to "establish relationships across sentence or utterance boundaries...to tie the sentences in a text together" (128). To a certain degree, such a pedagogical move from requiring students to memorize word-for-word translations and sentence-by-sentence grammatical rules to giving instructions in class on how to identify different types of cohesion in text analysis does allow language learners more flexibility in making sense of texts. Nevertheless, the assumptions remain that texts are stable and non-conflicted, reading is about objectively extracting messages encoded in the texts, and accordingly, teaching English reading comprehension cannot mean but monologically transmitting systematic ways for identifying certain linguistic features in English texts. Since principally the relation between text and reading is taken to be ordered and regular, the notion of employing reading strategies is in the same way inactive and decontextualized.

Such is also the stance that underlies Ru-moh Chang's article "A Qualitative Inquiry: Strategy Use by EFL Students in Dealing with Text Difficulties," in which "text difficulties" for English majors is defined only in relation to semantic and syntactic aspects of English the language, and as a result, the two most-used "reading strategies," as the findings show, fall into categories of "using the dictionary, and giving up or using no strategy" (305). Undeniably, the fact that this

study investigates the use of strategies does demonstrate explicitly a shift of the focus towards the reader in the reading process. It recognizes that reading "is a hidden, active, and dynamic process" (296); and it acknowledges other factors involved in the reading process, such as readers' prior knowledge and text type (297). Nonetheless, the research as a whole, as what Chang herself also states in the beginning of the article, that the "goal of learning a language is to master the four language skills—reading, writing, listening, speaking," and that the "purpose of reading is to identify the meaning *in* the text, to gain comprehension" (295, emphasis added), acutely indicates a contradiction that can be readily attributed to its rather stagnant take on language use and on reading in general. As Chang further suggests in the conclusions, "vocabulary has been the major problem in foreign language reading" (305). When proficiency is directly connected to how many unknown words there are in the text being read, strategy use is looked at as out-of-context and reading cannot be as dynamic as the study claims it to be.

More similar examples of contradictory use of terms such as learner autonomy, teachers' role as facilitator, and creating a supportive learning community are also found in the existing research studies. For example, in "Exploratory Practice for Learners: A Good way of Promoting Learner Autonomy," Po-ying Chu adopts the idea of "Exploratory Practice" developed by Dick Allwright of Lancaster University and uses it with her English majors in Taiwan as a way to help them to reflect on their language learning experiences as well as their language learning styles in order to promote learner autonomy. Yet as she disagrees with the "learning strategies" that her students came up with in order to

improve English, her comment that "such ideas do not sound right to me, as an English teacher and an experienced language learner, but I realize that interference is not appropriate, as it would stop them from finding out in their own way what is helpful for them" (674), evidently shows that, however much she argues for teachers' role to be a "partner," "supporter," and "facilitator" (672-73), because learning is looked at as an individual process obtaining decontextualzied information, teachers can only choose between either telling the students what (not) to do or letting them learn on their own. The study does encourage students to express their personal feelings and reflect on their learning processes in their weekly study journals; in fact, as the research concludes, the students who use Exploratory Practice for understanding their learning "can have more responsibility for their own language learning, can make informed choices about how they will learn English and can become more actively involved in the learning process" (677). Notwithstanding, in terms of sharing classroom authority, it allows partnership for students only to the extent of going through different experiences while all these experiences are still aiming towards obtaining a complete set of knowledge called English the language, which only the teacher possesses. Giving students "the opportunity of expressing their personal feelings in English rather than worrying about making too many mistakes or losing their self-esteem by using a foreign language" does not mean granting learner agency, nor does it guarantee a result in "a high level of motivation, satisfaction and achievement for the students" (677). When learning is not seen as socially-oriented as the study claims it to be, the practice of teaching cannot be as dialogic as it is

conceptualized in theory.

It is exactly this kind of contradiction in the existing research studies that seems to me displays a demand for further (re)conceptualization of how language/reading/knowledge really works. For yet another example on language learning, the results in Yuh-show Cheng's article, "A Qualitative Inquiry of Second Language Anxiety: Interviews with Taiwanese EFL students" unveils that "low self-confidence, unrealistic expectations/perfectionism, concern over a good image/fear of negative evaluation, and competitiveness" are related to participating Taiwanese English majors' experience of second language anxiety. As she discovers, "these subjects expected that they, as English majors, would not make grammatical mistakes, could understand every word when listening to English, could speak and write English not only fluently but skillfully, and could know everything about the English language" (313). To help students overcome their anxiety problems, as Cheng continues to suggest, "we need to make it clear that they are not supposed to achieve native-like pronunciation, that mistakes may be educationally valuable, that they are not tested every time they are called on in class, and that not everyone else is smarter and more confident than they are" (318). Her conclusion comes down to setting up a low-anxiety learning context as important for language learning. Her suggestions, however, such as "to avoid ambiguity and ensure students sufficient understanding of the course content," in my view, cannot but *increase* students' anxiety of not reaching that perfect native-like total control of English the language. In other words, without a fundamental understanding that ambiguity and anxiety are part of the learning and

reading process, it would be most unlikely that a reading community could be sustained.

In a way, the existing research studies, especially on language learning, do make many of the points I make in this dissertation. Since research on language learning does focus a lot more on learners in classrooms than on literature reading, conclusions such as the one made by Chen, that "[i]t seems more effort is called for to focus on motivating students to love to learn English" (36); the one made by Chang, that "[i]t is expected that strategy awareness and flexible strategy use can improve [students'] comprehension and enable them to become better readers" (307); and the one made by Cheng, that "[w]e might need to examine consciously our teaching techniques, beliefs, and attitudes in order to rectify those that might induce anxiety in our students...to take on our new role as a facilitator in language classroom and as a partner of our students" (319); are all not too different from what I proposed in the seeking model of reading in the previous chapters. Yet as I have come to realize, the reason why I could not see from the existing research how to conceptualize my deeply-felt dilemma in a way that would be useful was exactly because it is structured in a way that is static and does not reflect the dialogic and dialectic nature of how knowledge and reading works in the teaching and learning of literature in a foreign language.

The same argument can also be applied to existing research on helping teachers to teach English/American literature in that even with "teaching" in their titles, most articles are about "what" to teach rather than "how" to teach, justifying why a certain piece/author/genre/topic should be included in order to contribute to

students' linguistic/literary competence as English majors. For example, in "Teaching James Joyce's 'Oxen of the Sun' to Advanced Non-native Majors of English," Chiu-lang Chi starts the article by stating that "Some representative but difficult works of literature, which are usually considered to be beyond the reach of non-native students of English, should still be included in a reading program for college upperclass or graduate English majors" (29). He then continues to argue throughout the rest of the article the reasons why "the episode is very worthy of reading" (32). In "Teaching Shakespeare in English/Foreign language Department," Yi-lu Teng first recognizes the difficulties the students have in reading Shakespeare, and further discusses the "assistances" needed (e.g., information on the linguistic and historical background, introduction of the development of Shakespearean theater, audio tapes of plays read by professional actors/actresses) to enable students to appreciate the masterpieces. From a slightly different angle, in "Teaching the Female Bildungsroman," Yiu-Nam Leung first explains that "The Bildungsroman appeals to students because its protagonist is a young person faced with the universal problems of growing up...Since most of [my students] are females, I select fiction depicting the development of female protagonists to illustrate my introductory lectures on the historical and theoretical background of the genre" (347). For such a class, as he notes, "I introduce the definition of the term found in various handbooks and dictionaries of literary terms. I then select some of the major scholarship devoted entirely to English Bildungsroman for background information" (348). "Follow[ing] this introduction of the ingredients of female Bildungsroman," Leung goes on to concentrate on the

course on "directed reading of a relevant text such as Kate Chopin's The awakening" (351).

Apparently, the literariness of literature is the focus of these literature classes, which in turns confirms the importance of providing students background information prior to their reading. Even with articles that attempt to integrate different "teaching approaches" (e.g. Direct Approach, Audiolingual Approach, Communicative Approach), as in Shuei-mu Chang's "Teaching Pre-romantic Period English Literature" (237), to question the "contemporaniety" (134) of the canonical literary texts as in Shao-ming Chen's "Culture in Popular Fiction and Literature Teaching: Teaching American Horror/Thriller Novels," or to emphasize the need to bring cultural studies to the center of literature reading as in Po Fang's "Culture in the Victorian Age: A Case of College 'Introduction to Western Literature'," the messages sent on literature learning remain that literary texts as well as literary knowledge are of a determinate and rather non-social autonomous model. The value is inherent and transcendental, and the texts are objectified and in need of a proper interpreter at an informed perspective. Whether it is to try to approximate as much as possible the position of the author, to know what the author knows, as in Jing-nan Lin's "Cultural Background and English Teaching: A Case of 'Shakespeare in Love'," or to promote, as in Li-chung Yang's "Chinese American Literature and English Teaching: Reading The Woman Warrior and The Joy Luck Club," a more critical view towards literary curriculum, quoting from Freire that reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world (418), the actual act of reading is

certainly absent in these existing research studies, and so is the dialogic and dialectic nature of language and reading, as well as a true recognition of the active participation of both the text/author and the reader embedded in the reading context.

"Language," within this framework, is considered inseparable from the "literature" but somehow inferior in the sense that literature is composed of language yet language alone can never achieve, as literature does, as a vital and relevant part of the human condition. One needs to read literature through language, and one can certainly learn language through literature, but if mastering the language is the goal, there is no other way than reaching it through the learning of literature. As Ching-chi Chen explicates in "Reading of English Classics and Teaching of English," "[r]eading of English Classics, in addition to bringing understanding of man and his society, provides the students opportunities to see language at its full play" (47). Kai-chong Cheung also comments in her article "How to and How not to teach Samuel Richardson's Clarissa" that "I belong to the school of thought which holds that reading literary works of merit is the best highway to an individual's competence in English usage" (489). As the argument usually goes, "[a]s true love of a language comes from love of its literature, linguistic competence can come only from literary competence. It is only through literature, which is a beautiful and powerful application of language, that students learn to linger over language" (Chi 30). It seems to me, as I have come to realize, that it is mostly because of this view that the act of reading literature is rarely discussed in the field of English/American

literature in Taiwan. It is not like these researchers/teachers do not recognize the linguistic difficulties students are having when reading literary texts in English, and in fact they do, as Anthony Carlisle observes of the English majors in his "English and American Cultural Reading" class, that "Class novel in one hand and electronic dictionary in the other, students plough their way through the pages looking up the new vocabulary until they 'understand' the story" (13). But because "language" is something that should be left for "language" classes to deal with, in literature classes, what needs to get taught simply has to go beyond language and into a higher thinking level. To put it another way what the word means in its literal sense is something that the students should learn in their English reading comprehension class, whereas what the word symbolizes or refers to for its literary values falls into the category of literature learning.

Such a decontexualized view towards reading literature in a foreign language thus makes what seem to be innovative activities (e.g., performance, video presentation) designed to help enhance students' interests or their interaction with the texts being read seem rather superficial in the sense that what is called acknowledging personal experience might only be allowing a time/place for students to express their personal opinions. For example, as seen in Anthony Carlisle's "Reading logs: an application of reader-response theory in ELT," the article from a "transactional" stance suggests that the purpose of using reading logs is to encourage students "to interact with the text, and to tap into their individual responses to the literature" (12). It argues that "the activity is particularly appropriate for L2 use, since it stimulates foreign language readers to go beyond

the first barrier of semantic understanding and to move towards critical appreciation" (12) What seems odd, however, is that as the article explains, the assessment for the course counts, aside from 50 per cent course work, 50 per cent written exams consist of formal essay questions. So even though, citing from students' enthusiastic responses in the reading logs, the article continues to comment that writing reading logs helps the students "develo[p] their own individual responses to the novels" and "get more out of the book" (18), its aim of moving students towards critical appreciation seems to me still far-fetched. Carlisle himself concludes that the students "particularly remarked on how they gained a clearer understanding of the ideas in the novels, and how they enjoyed being given the space to express their own feelings. Perhaps most importantly, they said their reading and writing skills had improved" (18). What such a conclusion indeed shows, however, is not that the students are attaining more critical views towards their own reading; on the contrary, it demonstrates that texts contain stable messages and language skills are thought of as very much decontextualized.

Simply put, when knowledge is seen as objective, when reading is seen as autonomous, and when readers are not given the actual agency, what claims to be transactional/critical cannot be realized in actual classroom. Shuei-may Chang's article "Teaching Gender Politics through Western Drama: The Case of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*" serves as another (rather extreme) example. For one, the article does not mention any actual "teaching" but only states in the beginning, that "[t]he gender issue has been an important aspect of education

worldwide in the recent years since the rise of the women's movement. One of the most effective ways to approach the issue is through the reading of literary works" (225). Chang further argues, "[t]hrough the analysis of Hedda's tragedy, the reader will receive a gender education and as a result be equipped with an increased sense of feminist consciousness" (225). Reading and learning are seen as represented through the writing of formal analysis. In the same way that for research studies on language reading, the use of TOEFL-type tests as a way of assessment shows that epistemologically English the language is seen as stable and fixed, here for existing research on literary learning, the expectation that students should perform as informed experts in the formal essay question type of exams also implies essentially that reading literature is about repeating an authoritative interpretation. The conflict between encouraging students to be active negotiators of meaning and objectifying language/literature, as I have been arguing all along, can only be resolved through a (re)conceptualization of the definition of knowledge, the nature of reading, and the question of authority. Eliminating the unknown can never be the first step towards understanding what one reads.

What the Survey Results Say

Before proceeding to discussion of the data collected from the 80 responding English/American literature teachers in Taiwan through Mailback Survey, it seems appropriate to restate, as I have explained in the Search Design section in Chapter One, that the purpose of this survey is to bring about more

evidence on the current teaching practices in the English departments in Taiwan in order to facilitate the theorizing of my proposed seeking model of reading. What it means, in other words, is that, rather than probing into individual responding teacher's teaching philosophy or attaining description of a particular classroom, the questions in the survey are directed more towards eliciting data on how these responding teachers *generally* teach required English/American literature classes at the undergraduate level in Taiwan. Since what teachers do, in a more practical sense, is usually different depending on the level of the students (say, whether they are Freshmen or Sophomores) as well as the classes they teach (as in "Approaches to Literature" versus "British Literature"), the survey is thus designed in a way that the respondents, rather than ranking their responses in a more specific manner, are only asked to check off as many answers as they think apply to their teaching in general for each question. It is thus also in this way that for questions such as the one on the number of literary works taught, the concern is not so much with how many pages are assigned but how much the teachers think they need to cover. I do recognize counting a novel or a poem as one literary work is quite different for both teaching and learning, yet the kind of information on such a discrepancy is not taken into account either in the design of the survey or in the discussions of the data. What is aimed at through conducting this survey, instead, is to obtain evidence to paint a broader picture of the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan.

I have briefly explicated in Chapter One that the data from the Mailback survey (See Table 1) not only resonate with my deeply-felt dilemma but also

highlight the predicament that these teachers and students are in—that the classes have a large number of students, that coverage is a concern for the limited class time allotted, that students are lacking both literary background knowledge and interests in reading literary texts, and probably most frustratingly, that teaching and learning in classrooms are significantly compromised by the "deficiency in linguistic skills" mostly on students' part. Now, as I further analyze the survey results from the viewpoint of the proposed seeking model of reading, a closer look at these numbers in the data makes it even more clear why these "problems/dilemmas" exist: Based on similar (mis)conceptions as the ones found in the existing research in the previous section, most of these literature teachers also tend to see literature learning as a separate component to language reading; they, too, tend to see literary/linguistic knowledge as something to be transmitted, to be known, to be possessed; and they, too, tend to see the essay-format exam/term paper, in which students are required to adopt the position of an informed expert, as one of the most reasonable ways to demonstrate knowledge in possession, and therefore one of the most valid means for assessment. This (mis)conceptualization of reading and knowledge further affects the pedagogical practices they employ in the classroom, as well as the messages they send to students about what it means to be reading English/American literature, and what that means for English majors in a setting where English is used as a foreign language.

For example, from the 80 responses received, among the 36 respondents who checked only English as the language for instructional purposes, 29 indicated

students' "deficiency in linguistic skills," and yet they still check "lecture" as one of the techniques to assist students to understand literature. Apparently, the difficulty in language that they see students have is recognized but not dealt with. Language learning is obviously not considered as part of the learning process of literature reading, and teaching thus is strictly monologic, in which even when the teachers know that the students are having problems with the language, out of necessity, what needs to be transferred for the teaching and learning of English/American literature stays unchanged. As for the 15 respondents who checked only Chinese as the language for instructional purposes, only 1 did *not* check "cultivate aesthetical appreciation of English/American literature" and/or "gain English/American literary knowledge" as the teaching objectives of their literature class; and as many as 9 out of the 15 checked *only* "the importance (of such works/authors) in the literary field" as their criteria for choosing reading/teaching materials. "Lecture" within this group of literature teachers remains the most selected technique to help students understand literature. Again, even more clearly, learning English/American literature does not include the learning, or the reading, of English the language. There is a body of knowledge called "English/American literature" that needs to be translated and explained in another language, and such a body of knowledge is then to be delivered and transmitted, without regarding too much of the language that the literature is originally written in.

This, of course, is not to say that these literature teachers are totally ignoring the difficulties both they and the students are having in the process of

teaching and learning of English/American literature. To be sure, these literature teachers *do* acknowledge, when selecting their teaching materials, the need to take into account concerns such as the relevance of the subjects to students' life, or the reading level of the texts. Nevertheless, since the study of English/American literature requires certain coverage of literary knowledge for students to know, "gaining English/American literary knowledge" persists to dominate their teaching objectives. To be specific, of all the respondents, only 7 did not check "the importance in the literary field" as a criterion in choosing materials; and although there are only 16 respondents who checked "anthology format" as a criterion for choosing materials, when answering whether they use an anthology in their literature class, as many as 55 who did not consider "anthology format" as a criterion in fact checked always/almost always/often use an anthology for their literature class. Within the 25 respondents who checked "the relevance to students' lives" as their criterion, only 2 left "gain English/American literary knowledge" as teaching objective unchecked; and among the 30 respondents who checked "the reading levels" as one criterion in choosing materials, only 2 did not at the same time check "gain English/American literary knowledge" as their teaching objective. Even with indications such as "I usually let them choose from a list, so they can read something they like better," "relativeness to the native context," "the subject matter is interesting in the first place," or "thematic coherence in the course," the criteria for choosing teaching materials *always* include "the importance in the literary field." And to combine these numbers with the fact that 17 respondents indicated teaching 10-15 works

and 47 respondents indicated teaching more than 15 works per semester, which is usually less than 17 weeks, what the data seems to say is that no matter what other considerations these literature teachers may have for students' learning when choosing materials, to know the things that would qualify someone to be an English major seems to stay at the core of their concerns.

Essentially, as I would argue, it is mostly this focus on the literariness in the teaching and learning of English/American literature that has in turn substantially compromised what the teachers do in dealing with what they perceive to be the reasons that some students have difficulties in reading English/American literature in real classrooms. As the survey results further illustrate, there were as many as 44 respondents who checked both "lack of interest" as the difficulty they think the students have *and* "foster interests in reading English/American literature" as one of their teaching objectives, and yet *only* 2 among them did not also check "cultivate aesthetical appreciation of English/American literature" and/or "gain English/American literary knowledge" as their other teaching objectives. Similarly, there are 23 respondents who checked both "deficiency in linguistic skills" as the difficulty they think the students have *and* "reading levels of the text" as a criterion for choosing teaching materials, but again, only 2 among them did not also check "the importance in the literary field" as their other criterion for material selection. Within the 51 respondents who checked "inadequacy of literary knowledge," 48 checked "the importance in the literary field" as their criterion for choosing materials; and within the 46 respondents who checked "lack of cultural familiarity" as the difficulty they think students have, "the importance in

the literary field" was checked in 44 of them. What I am suggesting here is not that these objectives/criteria are antithetical; in fact, as one respondent comments, that "one tries to achieve more than 1 objectives," I too believe these objectives/criteria all contribute to the teaching and learning of English/American literature. Yet if we again take the large number of works included in these classrooms into consideration, it should not be hard to see that the emphasis is still on the things needed to know. In other words, in the face of this comprehensive "must-know" knowledge in the literary field, these teachers are very much limited in terms of what to include, and how to resolve the problems they encounter for teaching and learning English/American literature.

Along the same line of this argument, it is not that these literature teachers do not recognize the need for these students to practice English language skills, to develop analytical and critical thinking, or to foster interests in reading English/American literature; nevertheless, due to the (mis)conception of knowledge and reading that their pedagogical practices are based on, to deliver that comprehensive set of knowledge called English/American literature continues to be what they in reality must do *first* for these English majors to be become qualified English majors in a setting where English is used as a foreign language. While acknowledging interest and critical thinking as important, they in actuality have to rely on teaching in a transmission mode in order to transfer to students the necessary knowledge of literature; and to further ensure such transfer, they have to depend on the kind of assessment that allows students to demonstrate the possession of such received knowledge. As the data discloses, none of the

respondents checked "foster interests in reading English/American literature" as their teaching objective by itself. The category was checked by as many as 63 respondents as one of their teaching objectives, and yet, within these 63 respondents, 57 also checked "the importance in the literary field" as their criterion for choosing teaching materials, 58 checked using "translation/vocabulary lists" and/or "lecture" as techniques to help students understand literature, and 41 at the same time indicated counting "examination" for over 50% of students' final grade.

Likewise, within the 69 respondents who checked "develop analytical and critical thinking" as their teaching objective, as many as 48 indicated counting "examination" for over 50% of the final grade, and *only* 3 did not check "translation/vocabulary lists" and/or "lecture" as techniques to help students understand literature. And within the 33 respondents who checked "practice English language skills" as one of their teaching objectives, 22 of them checked it along with *all other* teaching objectives. To use one respondent's comment on this teaching objective question, that while leaving "practice English language skills" unchecked, the respondent noted, "sort of 'fringe benefit' (not objective, though)." In a way, as it seems to me, checked or unchecked, when the primary goal of these literature teachers is to enable students to display received knowledge in a way that is already in place, it is unlikely for other objectives that are in nature conflictive to the conception of having a complete set of knowledge (say, "developing analytical and critical thinking") to be carried through. Or to put it another way, as long as these teachers are working within an out-of-context

framework of knowledge and reading, any objectives other than the ones which attend to the transmission of that body of decontextualized knowledge would be at best "sort of fringe benefit" and not (real) objectives.

In the same manner, it should not come as a surprise, then, that according to the 43 respondents who indicated using writing assignments as a technique to help student understand literature, the kinds of writing that are assigned include "summary," "weekly home assignments," "term papers," "research papers," "translations," "reviews," "take-home short essays," "textual short-answer questions," "answering questions form the textbook," and "short (paragraph) answer assignments." Again, reading means to retrieve messages from the texts, and the use of writing is not so much to provide a discursive space to help students to learn but to serve as a way for students to demonstrate the messages retrieved and further confirm that the messages retrieved are correct. Other less conventional types of writing are also mentioned, but when we look at the percentage of how much they are counted for students' final grade, it becomes evident that they amount to almost nothing if compared to "examination" and "term paper." To show in numbers, among the 9 respondents who use reading notes/response journals/weekly journal/portfolio reading journal as writing assignments, 8 do not include such writing in the assessment, while the only one that does count, counts "portfolio reading journal" for only 10% along with a 90% exam of students' final grade. Other techniques such as "film/audio-visual materials/audio-visual ads", "website/internet resources," "role play," and "readers theater/interpretative theatre," all seem rather innovative, and yet when it comes

to assessing students' learning, none of these respondents assign less than 50% of the total grade to "examination."

When answering what role best describes their philosophy of teaching literature, one respondent noted (leaving all unchecked), "My philosophy and my practice don't dovetail. I would facilitate discussion if they were willing to discuss. Instead, I do all the rest—though philosophically I oppose lecturing, this is what students are most comfortable with." In my view, such comment on the seeming conflicts between philosophy and practice on the teacher's part not only provides a quite accurate description of what the data say about the current practices in the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan, but more fundamentally, they further elucidate the reason for the problems/dilemma that do exist for most teachers. On one level, the comment illustrates what the teachers intend to do theoretically on the one hand, and yet due to certain limitations, mostly on the students' (as well as administrations') part, what they end up having to do in practice on the other. But what it also pinpoints, if we take into account this specific respondent's way of assessing students' learning, is that it may be true that students are more comfortable with being lectured, but it should not be hard to imagine why students only want to be lectured to and are reluctant to participate in class discussions when "examination" is counted for 70% of their final grade.

To a large extent, what these teachers do with assessment in the classroom sends out a far more explicit message to the students of what to do as well as what counts as learning. I am reminded here of Carol Olson's discerning

observation:

> The problem arises when teachers send students mixed messages, professing to read for aesthetic appreciation and then assignment tasks that cause a text to be viewed as a body of information to be dissected rather than meaningfully interacted with. If we want students to perceive literature as something that can be richly rewarding, both intellectually and emotionally, and not just a chore imposed by the teacher, we need to find ways to value the process of meaning construction. (150-2)

Obviously, "examination" is the dominant means of assessment here in the data results: Among the 77 respondents who checked "examination" as their method of assessment, 5 rely solely on it, 27 count it for over 70%, 26 count it for over 50%, and there are 11 respondents who checked only "examination" and/or "term paper" as their methods of assessment. As for other means, only 3 out of the 33 who checked "individual presentation" count it for over 25%, only 5 out of the 42 who checked "group presentation" count it for over 25%, research project generally counts for only 10%, and only one out of the seven who checked "portfolio" counts it for over 20% but it was also checked with "examination" that counts for 60% of students' final grade.

It is thus in this way that the survey results disclose *how* as well as *why* problems/dilemma linger—that "my philosophy and my practice don't dovetail": Within the 23 respondents who checked "discussion facilitator" as one of the teacher roles that best describes their teaching philosophy, 16 count "examination" for over 50% of the final grade; and even with the 10 respondents

who checked "fellow reader" as one of the teacher roles that best describes their teaching philosophy, only one did *not* check "examination" as a means of assessment, and only two indicated counting "examination" for less than 50% of students' final grade. Simply put, regardless of what these teachers think their roles are, their pedagogical practices are still largely influenced by how they define knowledge and what they count as learning to read foreign literature. As one respondent remarked (also on the question of the difficulties that they think students have in reading English/American literature), "When they start out, they have no sense that literature can be a resource, a tool, and a source of pleasure for themselves in their own lives. They see reading homework as a task to get done with no relevance to their own intellectual growth. Hopefully this changes during their university years." But if we look at this respondent's way of assessing students' learning, that it counts 55% exam, 30 % pop quizzes, and uses "lots of handouts, very specified discussion topics, each group reports their findings to the class each week, lots of writing on the board as lecture in English" as the technique to assist students to understand literature, chances are, that down the road, the students will still see reading as a task to get done and *not* a source of pleasure for themselves in their own lives. Again, as I have been arguing all along, we need to reflect on how we conceptualize knowledge/reading/authority in what we actually do in real classroom settings. When "examinations" and "quizzes" are what we validate as proofs of learning, *that* is what we are telling our students what reading English/American literature is all about.

What the Interview Responses Reveal

While the interview responses made by the participating teachers and students continue to provide evidence of similar practices as well as limitations that exist in the current teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan, through the more personal accounts of teachers' teaching justifications and students' learning experiences, what this data also reveal that has been markedly beneficial to my further theorization of the seeking model of reading is that, despite these teachers' and students' more monologic perspective on teaching and learning, most of the practices and limitations presented in the actual classroom are not just results from the (mis)conceptions of how these teachers and students view knowledge/reading/authority, but in a very real sense, they are also compromises made in response to the various administrative/individual/social forces that exist in the context where teaching and learning takes place. In the same way that there is no such thing as a generic reader, there is no such thing as a generic teacher, or a generic student, or for that matter, a generic classroom setting. And as the data uncover, whether or not the teachers and students are aware of the dialogic and dialectic nature of any classroom interaction (however limited), when the actual teaching and learning happen, teachers' practices and students' learning never work as in one-to-one correspondences. There necessarily involve other constraints that go beyond the control of any individuals in the classroom, and it is thus imperative that, in further theorizing the proposed approach, we need to not only recognize the complexity as well as the exigencies of the reading of literature in a foreign language, but also

acknowledge the always contextualized and therefore (although at various degrees) ambiguous nature of any real teaching and learning situations.

The use of a written examination as a major means of assessment, for example, is a compromise that Michael had to make "simply because the class is too large." For him, while recognizing that other ways such as holding an oral examination for each individual student in which he could learn more about what the students know from more genuine dialogues are definitely more preferable (and indeed he tried once), when teaching a class of as many as seventy students, he "had to give up" on what he thought better fit his conception of teaching and learning, and instead stick to assessing students' learning with more traditional written tests. The use of lecture, for another example, is a compromise that Cathy had to make because "students are not prepared before coming to class." As she noted, "students are not willing to read beforehand, and thus they don't have questions to ask. So all I can do is to lecture. And frustration comes in when I think of how much I prepare for them to learn and yet they are not willing to take all from me." She explained that she had tried using in-class time for students to do close reading/re-reading and it worked well, but she could not do that on a regular basis (and eventually she stopped trying all together) simply because of the limited time allocated for each literature course. And as she also added, "students' attitude towards literature is quite adverse—they think literature is hard, and it is irrelevant to their lives. So in response to that, I want them to know through my lectures that literature is interesting."

What these two examples point to, is that although a reconceptualization of

language and knowledge is both fundamental and desirable to a better approach to the teaching and learning of literature in a foreign language, in reality, a reconceptualization alone would not resolve the dilemma that these teachers feel concerning their teaching practices. As these two teachers' responses display, it is really *not* that the teachers do not recognize the value of question asking and dialogue making in the teaching and learning of foreign literature reading, and in fact, both Michael and Cathy do, and both quite explicitly too; yet problems with the practicality—in Michael's case the large number of students, and in Cathy's, students' lack of preparation, interest, along with the pressure of time—simply cannot be wished away with a reconceptualization of language and knowledge all by itself. But of course, when the examples from above are taken together, I am not suggesting, either, that the limitations presented through the use of examination and lecture found in the existing practices are solely "administrative" problems or merely a question of "teaching material selection." Cathy's frustration, to a large extent, still indicates a certain (mis)conception of what it means to read foreign literature and what counts as teaching and learning. As she mentioned, "the process of learning literature should be according to the development of literary theory—from ancient to modern. Breaking from such history/chronology, students will be confused. References to mythology and classics are very important for understanding later works." She further expressed when explicating her teaching methods, that "in teaching, I talk about historical background first—students need to know the development in literary history in order to appreciate or understand literary works." When answering the question on which

language she uses for instructional purpose, she said that "translating/using Chinese is important for learning literature, especially for Taiwanese students. It is better to use the language that students are more familiar with to understand not only the texts but also the background of the literary work—to know why authors came up with such messages, how they affected the people then, and how we are affected by them now."

Yet as Cathy's response also shows, her decisions in using translation/Chinese as well as in subscribing to the coverage model are not made without her students in mind; in fact, they are more likely responses to the difficulties that she perceived her students to have in classes such as Introduction to Western Literature. Indeed, as she indicated, "the materials are already very unfamiliar to the students." She saw "students' age, experience, and background" as among the important factors to the teaching and learning of English/American literature in Taiwan, and she considered "initiating interests in students the most important task since learning is a life-long process. If students are interested in reading literature, they will read after they graduate; if they are reading just to get by (the class), the learning/reading becomes meaningless." Kevin, another interviewee teacher who also uses Chinese, lecture, the coverage model, and examination in his large literature classes, made similar comments. He also recognized that "it is important to get students to be interested in reading literature...to make them understand that even after they graduate, they can still read English literature as a leisure activity—it is important that they develop the ability to read." He thus thought students need to learn certain literary terms as

well as historical background in order to develop ability to make interpretations of their own for their future reading, and he, too, recognized that the major problems for students' learning to read English/American literature are "still too much to learn within too little class time."

It is in this way that the data through making known *how* as well as *why* these teachers use pedagogical practices such as lecture and examination uncover the complexity as well as ambiguity of the nature of teaching and learning behind what is usually associated with the use of lecture or examination in classroom. Obviously, at least from Cathy's and Kevin's teaching experiences, using the language that the students have less problems with indeed makes students' learning easier, thus makes the reading more accessible, and thus makes the students more interested in reading. Lecture, although it still functions in a more out-of-context framework in which knowledge is transmitted from one end to another, also serves as a way to initiate students' interests in reading in the long run. It is used to build a base knowledge for students to build their further reading on, and it is used as a "bait," as Cathy called it, in a lesser stressful form, than, say, asking the students to find literary background all on their own, so as for students to "feel interested to go back to the texts." Similarly, Cathy's use of take-home examination and Kevin's in-class examination, although still concuring with certain traits of looking at knowledge as static and fixed, are with purposes rather different from simply requesting students to reproduce teachers' interpretation: Cathy expects students to do more research on their own and come up with different feedbacks for their answers; and Kevin explains that he

does not expect students to repeat his interpretations from class and does think of writing an exam as a way for students to develop interpretive ability.

That being said, however, from the students' responses there are still other teachers who *do* make clear the kind of questions to be on the exam and the kind of answers to be expected. As Heidi said, "teachers will tell you what to memorize—they'd say 'this will be on the test.' We know what the teachers want." And Amanda also explained, "it's like this work focuses on motive, then I know 'motive' is going to be on the exam—then I need to memorize how many motives and what they are." But then, again, this is not to say that students are viewing examinations as in a totally negative way. It might be passive rather than active in learning what to know, but as Heidi further added, "memorization has its advantages too. I have more recollection of who is in which work." Another interviewee student also confessed, that not only "it is simply NOT possible to read before class," but also she usually read all assigned reading just before exams. Other students' nodding and laughing in the group in a way signaled the commonality of this learning practice, and to a certain degree, I suspect most teachers are aware of it too. Looking at such an example of the use of examination within the real teaching and learning context, then, further gives away that exams are also used as a way to "make sure" students are actually doing the reading, or if we look at it from student learning's point of view, we can even see it in reality as an opportunity presented, although under pressure, for students to undergo the experience of reading and actually learn to read.

Students' responses on their teachers' use of lecture in class, in the same

way, let on additional benefits to the common assumption of lecture being passively jotting down information. As Gina admitted, she was not interested in reading literature when she first entered the program, but "the background knowledge teachers provide makes [her] feel interested in going back to the texts." In other words, although the act of listening to lectures remains passive, what happens in the dynamic interactions between what is taught and what is learned is not necessarily inactive. Gail also suggested when responding to what they are interested in learning English/American literature, that she is interested in learning "things that I'll feel guilty as an English major if I don't know. But it has to be relevant to life if we are talking about what interests me." Amanda further commented, "I like systematic learning better—I think we need to have foundation first, and then we can go other directions. Otherwise they all get mixed up." The coverage model, as these two responses disclose, is thus also connected with students' interests in learning, along with demands from the society outside. It is no longer just a decontextualized question of (mis)conception of language and knowledge, but rather, it becomes an issue that needs to be worked within the contextualized classroom setting, involving pressure of time, large number of students, and other requirements that impinge on the notion of what it means to be English majors in Taiwan.

What this means to my proposed reading approach, then, is that, once again, we *do* need to (re)conceptualize that language is always at work and texts are always in use. We *do* need to realize that any out-of-context kind of knowledge does not help generate knowledge in the real sense, and that teaching

and learning have to be set in authentic social interactions, in which personal learning process is validated, and confusion and ambiguity are valued. Knowledge does not come from listening to lectures or jotting down notes; instead, it requires active participation, and active participation requires genuine respect for all the participants involved. Looking at foreign language learners reading literature as lacking in linguistic/literary/cultural competency is discrediting the contribution readers make to the process of reading, yet arguments such as the one made by one respondent (when answering the difficulties that they think students have in reading English/American literature), that "Taiwanese students don't have any more or less difficulty with English/American literature that Canadian/Am./British students do," is also discounting not only students' learning experience but also the complexity of reading literature in a foreign language.

It also means, moreover, that we *do* need to reflect such a (re)conceptualization of the definition of knowledge, the nature of reading, and the question of authority in what we actually do in real classroom settings. We *do* need to keep in mind that the way we assess students' learning not only dominates our pedagogical practices in classrooms, but also affects the messages we send out to our students of what counts as reading foreign literature. It means that if we value the process of meaning construction in students' reading of foreign literature, it then becomes necessary that we emphasize such a process as we think of ways to hold students accountable for their learning to read. On one level, as I have already argued in the third chapter, this would mean that the assessment should come in forms not as end-of-term judgments but as

on-going evaluations. What I had not conceptualized before but have come to realize now through analyzing the group interview data, is that just as it is important that we encourage students to experience reading as a seeking process, we also need to allow them time and space to experience the seeking process as they read and further reflect on such experiences. The fact that the participating students all found the proposed approach "fun," "interesting," and "could help to enhance [their] interests in learning English/American literature," and yet all seemed somewhat in need of more guidance as to what questions to ask and how to seek when they were invited to talk about their reading experience (of the sample reading) indeed upheld my argument of the need for providing students the language, the discursive space, the cognitive strategies, as well as modeling all this knowing and learning in meaningful context in order to enable their seeking efforts. But what I have also come to realize from their responses is that, just as it is essential that we introduce to students the willingness as well as the means to seek whatever baffles them as they read, it is important that we recognize that the enactment of such cognition demands practice over time, and that just like reading experience itself is constantly changing due to the whole context the act of reading is embedded in, so is the experience from the seeking process.

What seems more important on another level, as Michael suggested in the interview, is that since it is the process that is the focus of the proposed seeking model of reading, what we need in practice is to make our goals as well as each step clear to both the administration and the students. As he noted,

> Through this reading process you discover something, then my

> questions would be: what do you expect or anticipate to discover? And more specifically, what does it lead to? The anticipation is that we'll have a different perspective of the reading of literature. But what the differences are? You need to explain to the students who have just been initiated to this experience. And you need to explain to the department—you need to convince them. Students in Taiwan concern better grade and have a wrong vision about the discipline. (Most students think they enter the program to learn English, not literature.) You need to convince the students.

Although emphasizing mostly the students, Kevin made a similar suggestion:

> The approach is good that it cultivates voluntary reading habits. The purpose is not for passing tests. The problem remains that students are not interested in reading literature. Also, Taiwanese students might find this approach places too much burden on them as learners. Education culture is different here in Taiwan. Students are not used to this kind of voluntary learning. But if they are really interested in the reading, they will think of ways to overcome difficulties. So the first task is to see if students are really interested.

When seen from such a context, providing students with manageable practices to guide them through the seeking process thus becomes exceedingly important for not only initiating and maintaining students' learning interests, but also supporting and sustaining teachers' teaching objectives.

I have briefly mentioned writing activities such as Carol Olson's "setting

chart," Jeffery Wilhelm's "symbolic story representation," and the response questions in Robert Probst's "dialogue with a text" helpful in teaching students reading strategies in Chapter III. To explicate these activities in more details here, the setting chart, first of all, can be very useful in providing a more structured way to help students to learn to connect with the characters as well as the setting "by turning students' attention to ways in which their own environment defines who they are" (129). Through looking at the inferences their classmates make about them from the personal items that they list out, the process of how we arrive at an assumption or form an interpretation of what we have just read is made more visible. The "symbolic story representation" that Jeffery Wilhelm developed, for another example, can also be extremely valuable in making students literally see the complexity of any actual reading. Preparing and presenting cutouts that symbolize students' reading provides not only a way for students to become more aware of their own reading strategies, but also a stage for them to share these strategies with others. It allows students a way, in Jeffery Wilhelm's words in You Gotta Be the Book, "to objectify the very hidden process of reading and get them out where they can talk about them, and try to understand and improve them" (46). Robert Probst's response questions, for yet another example, can further provide students the language with which to engage in the kind of dialogue with literary texts that will yield rich experiences rather than recitations of what they think the teachers want to hear. As Robert Probst notes in his article "Three Relationships in the Teaching of Literature," students are accustomed to questions that guide them, that tell them what and how to answer—they need gradually to depend on

their own resources, their instincts, and feelings (63). These questions in a more structured form can be especially beneficial in helping students to learn to reflect on their own reading, ask the kind of questions that focuses on their initial responses, and gradually move towards a consideration of the author, other readings, and other readers.

The general instructions for response-statement assignments that Kathleen McCormick gives to her students as described in The Culture of Reading and the Teaching of English, moreover, can further be extensively of assistance in helping students place their responses in broader cultural contexts, bring into their awareness "both the knowledge of and the need for more demanding kinds of information," and hence making them "stronger, more informed, and self-conscious readers of the various signifying practices of our society" (157). By thinking over questions such as "What is the predominant effect of the text on you?" and "Why do you think the text had that effect?" as they read, students are reminded that both they and the texts have been produced by the particular cultures of which they are a part. They are pushed to see not only the meaning-making process as a complex system of cultural interactions, but also that "[r]esponse," as Kathleen McCormick emphasizes in her response to Fred Waage and Geoffrey Marshall's comments in College English, "are ultimately the product of *ideology*, including assumptions about the family, religion, and morality, and they are derived not only from literature and the classroom, but from television, film, rock music, and a myriad of interconnected social practices" (94, emphasis in original). Especially for the reading of foreign literature, when given

guidelines like these, students are supplied with more structured steps to recognize the subjected nature of their responses, and thus can be more supported in the process of examining and becoming aware of the linguistic, historical, and cultural forces that influence their ability to interpret/read.

But most importantly, what I have come to understand through analyzing the data throughout this chapter as a whole but particularly from both teachers' and students' interview responses is that, as Alan Purves, Teresa Rogers, and Anna Soter remind us, we need to see school literature as different from literature outside of school, "simply because schools are their own social and cultural institutions with their own rules. Students have to do some things together, and they have to respond to certain demands." As they continues to argue,

> School is its own life and school literature is like literature outside of school in that people read and bring their knowledge to bear upon what they read and display their preferences about their reading. But in school, students have to do things more or less on demands, and they have to show their relationship to the group, the community of readers that is the class. They also have to do more writing and talking about their reading, and much of this is quite formal. They may have to engage in drama or filmmaking or other media work even when they are not quite in the mood to do so. (167)

Especially for a subject matter like reading foreign literature, when looking at the teaching and learning, we need to take into account teaching/learning constraints such as the pressure of time, the demands of the curriculum, the expectation for

English majors from the society outside, as well as students' lack of interests, their need for foreign language preparation, or simply their being "not quite in the mood." But that does not mean we should see these tensions as static "problems" that need to be *solved* or *avoided*. Rather, what we need is a fundamental understanding of the true dialogic and dialectic nature of all these forces involving in the teaching and learning situation, and thereby to find ways to *work with* these circumstances arising from the context.

While approving that "the theory is good in that the purpose is to inspire students instead of spoon feed," Cathy's comment on the propose model makes this point even more emergent: "Is it practical? Can you carry this out in the Taiwanese context? For Taiwanese students, this is premature—it is still a long way to go." As she also later pointed out, "within a class of 50 students, it is hard to give enough guidance to all fifty students. And when the interests involves too wide of a range of topics, they get out of control. Also if the interests involves something the teachers are not familiar with, the students don't get enough help. So how to keep it 'in-control' in terms of helping students to learn is a major problem." Focusing more from the administrative perspective, David also suggested, "there is very little cooperation among faculty. It is very hard for others to just listen, let alone to accept your theory. So what you have to do is of course you'll have to have the support from the chair, and a few dedicated teachers." Undeniably, from this picture of the current teaching and learning practices of English/American literature in Taiwan that the data have provided, what is proposed in the seeking model of reading does seem rather idealistic—it does

seem to grant students more responsibility than they appear to be able to take, and it does seem to overlook many practical aspects of teaching and learning constraints. Nevertheless, as I have come to realize now, just as the tensions between teaching and learning is in nature dialogic and dialectic, "being idealistic" and "being practical" is not an "either-or" question but should also be seen *not in dichotomy but as dialogic and dialectic*. I have argued in the previous chapters that real learning starts exactly from such pre-maturity, that it is from the dependency to independency that we consider learning and developing; and to further open up this proximity, I have come to believe that, as in reading, we need to relinquish the sense of certainty due to the dialogic and dialectic nature of language; for both teachers and students in the teaching and learning of foreign literature reading, we need to be opposed to the role of an expert so as to welcome confusion and ambiguity, and let the experience come first and lead us towards knowledge.

Conclusion

What Deborah Britzman suggests in the epigraph quoted at the beginning of this chapter thus seems especially pertinent to the central argument of the data analyses I have made in this chapter: that it will not be until we see in our pedagogy *the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and subjective* as in dialogic and dialectic relations *in that they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know* can we begin

to attain better descriptions of our own teaching and anticipate the possibilities to bring about. As Paulo Freire would say, knowing one's own reality is essential to knowing the world. In the concluding chapter, "An Approach to (Re)Search," I further suggest that the seeking model of reading also applies to providing a way for doing future research in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature. The concerns remain focused on the dialogic and dialectic nature of language and power, and the issues discussed continue to involve the necessity of keeping a wide-awake awareness, the inevitability of taking a personal stand, as well as the unattainability of having a secured ground in the world of approaching literature in a foreign language.

CHAPTER V: AN APPROACH TO (RE)SEARCH

> *Some of these readings are colored by the knowledge that the thing read was created for this specific purpose by other human beings—music notation or road signs, for instance—or by the gods—the tortoise shell, the sky at night. Others belong to chance.... And yet, in every case, it is the reader who reads the sense; it is the reader who grants or recognizes in an object, place, or event a certain possible readability; it is the reader who must attribute meaning to a system of signs, and then decipher it. We all read ourselves and the world around us in order to glimpse what and where we are. We read to understand, or to begin to understand.*
>
> *Alberto Manguel in A History of Reading*

Introduction

Having presented the proposed approach throughout Chapters II, III and IV, in this final chapter, I first revisit my "deeply-felt personal dilemmas" (as described in Chapter I) that urged me to launch this whole search/research, resituating my old concerns with the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan in the new framework that the proposed approach has provided. Originally when I started out, my initial quest was to discover what most people would categorize as "practical ways" to read/learn/teach English/American literature in Taiwan. I had expected to find out what to do and how to do specifically for the English/American literature classes in a context where English is used as a foreign language, and I had hoped that the "practices" I was able to generate could also be applied to foreign literature classrooms in general.

Now as a researcher who has gone through this journey of the search for an approach, I am more than ever convinced that what may seem like practical

questions in the beginning are indeed theoretical ones. While the approach I have come up with does include some to-dos, the focus remains on a fundamental (re)conceptualization of the definition of knowledge, the nature of reading, and the question of authority. Essentially, reading, foreign or not, and whether of the word or of the world, is a dynamic happening; we therefore would not (and should not) find any fixed, step-by-step universal recipes as we approach reading/learning/teaching. But this is not to say we do not need principles grounded in theories; and in fact, keeping a wide-awake awareness of those principles to me now is the number one priority for us whether as readers, learners, or teachers in the field of foreign literature. Exactly as Alberto Manguel so eloquently puts it in the epigraph above, readings are bound to be colored—by purpose or by chance. *And yet, in every case, it is we who read the sense; it is we who grant or recognize in an object, place, or event a certain possible readability; it is we who must attribute meaning to a system of signs, and then decipher it.*

It is, then, precisely in this sense that, as I come towards the end of this project, I further suggest that the seeking model of reading concerns language and power, and thus can also serve as an approach to future research in the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature. Given the inevitability of taking a subjective and individual stand, as well as the unattainability of having an already-known and secured ground, what we need for doing further search in foreign literature reading/learning/teaching is to readily see ourselves as seekers of knowledge who ask our own questions, bring our experiences to the process

of researching, and construct our own understandings. We need to initiate interests and keep our curiosity alive; we need to welcome confusion and ambiguity along the way; more importantly, we need to develop the sensitivity towards the underlying historical/social/cultural assumptions of how the world of foreign literary education works as we have come to experience it. Looking at this from such a viewpoint, it, hence, indeed, is seeking, rather than knowing, that is what makes possible foreign literature research. We do not understand first and then be aspired to read/learn/teach. After all, for approaching literature in a foreign language, just like the epigraph also says, *we all read ourselves and the world around us in order to glimpse what we are and where we are. We read to understand, or to begin to understand.*

Dilemmas Revisited

As I begin to reflect on this journey of finding ways to make sense of my life—as a reader, a learner, and a teacher in the field of English/American literature in Taiwan, I think of what Leila Christenbury says towards the end of her book Making the Journey, that "[w]ho we are when we begin the journey is not, of course, who we are when we end. The journey, of and by itself, shapes and forms us, and often we arrive at a destination a bit differently from the way we had anticipated. And that is the stuff of literature and, of course, of life" (299). I think of how in the beginning as a reader I used to see "reading" and "getting help for the reading" as two separate to-dos, how as a learner I always wrestled with building up a sufficient English word bank and expanding my literary

knowledge, and how as a teacher I had to choose between whether I should encourage students' personal responses or emphasize the critical perspectives. And I think of now as I come towards the end of this research, how I have come to realize that word learning comes only with reading and so does literary knowledge, that sensitivity towards language use comes only through reading experience and so does critical thinking, that we need to trust students as well as the transformative power reading has for them, and that I was never "the sole information provider" within any real classroom settings. I think of how this search has helped to shape me to be a better reader/learner/teacher for the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan, and I think of how the proposed approach has come to form me as a stronger researcher in foreign literary education. I think what I had anticipated when I first started the search were more like practical answers to pedagogical questions (although, as I have come to realize, they are rather of a theoretical nature), whereas now as I end, I see that the destination that my arrival offers is really a theoretical argument (but in a very practical sense).

Revisiting my "deeply-felt personal dilemmas," I remember from my meditation class what my Zen Master Jian-liao often says in the beginning of his lectures, that "all answers come from questions." This, in a more literal sense, is just like what I have come to learn as a result of this research about the individual nature of language/reading/knowledge. It cannot be more true—whether in life or in reading—that if we do not have our own questions, then no answers would be relevant enough to us to be (real) answers. An answer is meaningful only to that

person who poses the question, and in the same way, only through a personal engagement with the negotiation of meanings can learning effectively take place. Being a better reader/learner/teacher now, I cannot agree more with what Bruce Pirie suggests, that telling students how short stories are structured and then sending them on a mission to making their experience fit our structures "is not the same as making sense of things themselves—encountering the text and seeing what grows out of that transaction" (69). I bear in mind Dan Kirby's warning, that if we present the central tenets of the content as issues already settled—and in our case, this would be that language is fixed and so are the aesthetic standards to judge literature by—then students are going to feel "locked away" and they are not going to be inclined to interact with that content and raise questions of their own (169). And I have come to firmly believe that since we as teachers "cannot be the count and origin of all knowledge" (McRae 30), our ultimate aim should be "to motivate and prepare students to shape and articulate questions of their own" (Olson 259) and that "the first thing in inviting students to participate in literature would be to develop confidence in themselves, in their own responses, in their own ability to read" (Mullins, 219).

As if she was speaking directly to my (then) constant worries of "supplying crucial background knowledge" and "presenting necessary information to break cultural locks," what Louise Rosenblatt maintains in her book Literature as Exploration (now) strikes home:

> The teacher realistically concerned with helping his students develop a vital sense of literature cannot...keep his eyes focused

> only on the literary materials...He must be ready to face the fact that the students' reactions will inevitably be in terms of their own temperaments and backgrounds. Undoubtedly these may often lead the students to do injustice to the text. Nevertheless, the students' primary experience of the world will have had meaning for him in these personal terms *and no others*. No matter how imperfect or mistaken, this will constitute the present meaning of the work for him, rather than anything he docilely repeats about it." (50, emphasis added)

Looking back at my own tug-of-war between encouraging students' personal response and developing their aesthetics/critical eyes, I also think of Paulo Freire's comment in his conversations with Myles Horton, that "[o]ne of the important tasks we should have as teachers should be *not* to have the experience on behalf of the students. *We cannot do that. They have to have their experience*" (36-7, emphasis added). And I have come to see now that it would not be reading in any sense, nor would there be any learning at all, if the meaning is not personal and carried on by individuals.

But what seems even more important in this "all answers come from questions" to me now, also as a stronger research, is the dialogic and dialectic nature in the relation between questions and answers that, with a renewed mind upon finding the answers, further enables us to recognize from the questions asked the fundamental issues within the answers found. And this, as the journey has helped me to see, is exactly how resituating my "deeply-felt dilemmas" in the

theoretical framework that the proposed approach has provided brings closer to home what is really needed for doing future research in the reading/learning/teaching of English/American literature in Taiwan, and in foreign literary education. As I have argued in all the previous chapters, what I see now in both the classrooms and the existing research is a rather monologic and static view towards the use of language, the nature of reading, and the definition of knowledge. There exists a lack of recognition of the contextualized nature of reading, learning, and teaching, and thus what gets presented as knowing is to a large extent an out-of-context kind of knowledge. And it is through looking at such "lack" that I now think I realize even more what Frank Smith means when he says that "[r]eading cannot be understood without consideration of perceptual, cognitive, linguistic, and social factors, not just in reading but in thinking and learning in general" (xii). I now see why Brian Street suggests that "[t]eaching awareness of these conflicts and of the ways in which literacy practices are sites of ideological context, is itself already a challenge to the dominant autonomous model that disguises such processes" (137). And especially as a foreign language teacher, I have come to side with Sinfree Makoni and Alastair Pennycook's statement that, "[u]nless we actively engage with the history of invention of language, the processes by which these inventions are maintained, and the political imperative to work towards their disinvention, we will continue to do damage to speech communities and educational possibility (147).

I think of Henry Widdowson's contention in his book Explorations in applied linguistics 2, that "[y]ou cannot drill people into creativity, or the exercise

of critical intelligence. You cannot fix in advance the routes through the mazes of the mind" (211). I think of Kenneth Goodman's explanation in On Reading that "[l]anguage can't stay the same because we and the world we live in are always changing. We keep inventing new forms of language to do new things. And as we change the ways we see our world, we change the language we use to express our views" (21). And I think of how fortunate I am that I have also come to realize Ann Johns' realization described in her article "A Story of Experimentation and Evolving Awareness," that for teaching ESL/EFL students, as teachers

> we must provide the kind of instruction that encourages them to be confident and observant in the many contexts in which they read and write. Just as we cannot teach them the entire English language, we cannot teach them all they need to know about muses, processes, and genres. So we must encourage them to be crafty, analytical, and self-critical, but sufficiently confident to approach new [reading and] writing situations with a metalanguage with which to ask questions and study contexts. (118)

I now see from my old questions in my new answers the necessity to always fight against the "attempt to evade the complicated uncertainty that realizes learning in the first place" (Britzman 224). I see how practice, as Robert Scholes asserts, "is never natural or neutral; there is always a theory in place, so that the first job of any teacher...is to bring the assumptions that are in place out in the open for scrutiny" (x-xi). Going through this journey of searching for an approach, I as the researcher thus have also come to see that, just as a (re)conceptualization of the

nature of language/reading/knowledge is needed for finding better ways to read/learn/teach of literature in a foreign language, it is also called for in doing further search in the field of foreign literary education.

"Karate Lesson" and "A Forked-road Situation"

Two metaphors that I came cross during the search thus become even more significant in pointing towards the need for us to recognize in the process of doing research the value of mistake and revision, the virtue of confusion and ambiguity, and further see the inevitability of taking a subjective and individual stand, as well as the unattainability of having an already-known and secured ground. Jane Tompkins' "karate lesson," first of all, provides an unprecedented insight into the meaning of mistake-making. As she describes,

> There is no way to go wrong. When someone makes a mistake, it is called a good thing. That's how you learn. We do an exercise in which we *deliberately* do the step wrong in as many ways as possible. You find your stance by making it too wide, too narrow, too short, too long, Mistakes are good. The way to learn....The corrections don't matter; they are completely impersonal, part of the dance. We are praised together. Excellent. You're doing extremely well. (158, emphasis added)

As my argument is now extended to reading the world of research in foreign literary education, I think of how powerful such an appreciation of the empowering quality of mistakes and revisions can be for doing future research. It

is not only about the mistakes made, or even the revisions attempted; what it also involves are the consequences experienced. Knowledge can only take the form of a construction, as always in-action; and in the same way, it is only through experiencing different moves that we come to differentiate good ones from bad ones.

With an equally strong impact on the revising of my conceptions, John Dewey's illustration of thinking as at a "forked-road situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which proposes alternatives" (11), moreover, not only grants perplexity miraculous positive energy, but also highlights the individual nature as well as the groundlessness of any process of discovery. He illustrates:

> A man traveling in an unfamiliar region comes to a branching of the roads. Having no sure knowledge to fall back upon, he is brought to a standstill of hesitation and suspense. Which road is right?....Any attempt to decide the matter by thinking will involve inquiry into other facts, whether brought out by memory or by further observation, or by both. The perplexed wayfarer must carefully scrutinize what is before him and he must cudgel his memory. He looks for evidence that will support belief in favor of either of the roads—for evidence that will weight down one suggestion. He may climb a tree; he may go first in this direction, then in that, looking, in either case, for signs, clues, indications. (10-11)

From reading the word to reading the world, the concept of seeking in my

proposed approach is thus also embraced by the "essentials of thinking" (11). Just as in reading it is important that we develop in readers a sense of curiosity, as well as the reading strategies needed to sustain their interests, it is vital that in researching we "maintain a state of doubt" and "carry on systematic and protracted inquiry" (13). In the same way that it is always the reader who is doing the reading, we see, as the image of the forked-road situation shows, that at the center of any discovering experience is always the individual who is making the decision. We therefore need to "carefully scrutinize" what it is before us, drawing on what we knew, or what we are to observe, or both; and we need to always acknowledge the benefit that we gain from trying different perspectives, or to go back to the metaphor, climbing a tree, or giving the first road a try and then coming back to the second in order to decide which one to take and eventually map our way out.

And most importantly, this picture of a traveler standing before branching roads further puts forward the need for us to recognize in doing future research in foreign literary education that, as in reading, in the face of all these try-outs and decision-making, we really have "no sure knowledge to fall back upon." There is no pre-defined bulk of knowledge, be it linguistic, literary, or pedagogical, to assure smooth sails (which, as John Dewey also argues, would actually result in no reflections). Difficulties and confusions are what bring us to a pause, a hesitation, and yet from there, it is indeed exactly this sense of feeling perplexed, of having an ambiguity to be resolved that is what makes possible the undertaking of research inquiries. I think of Wendy Morgan's advice on teaching

critical literacy, that "[t]here is no possibility that as teachers we can lead students to some place of enlightenment beyond the struggle. Our job is rather to help our students become more motivated to continue that engagement" (55). And I think of what Michael Smith says when arguing for the importance to focus on the quality of the immediate experience that students are having, that "teachers can no longer justify their curriculum on the premise that they will be good for students in the future, what I've come to call the cod-liver-oil approach to teaching" (40). What both these suggestions also mean to me now for doing research in finding better ways to approach foreign literature, then, is that it really should be the experience of the here and now that is the heart of the matter. To a certain degree, with the subject at hand being partly using English as a foreign language, this would mean, as Defeng Li pleads for Korean educators, that "[r]ather than replying on expertise, methodology, and materials controlled and dispensed by Western ESL countries, EFL countries should strive to establish their own research contingents and encourage methods specialists and classroom teachers to develop language teaching methods that take into account the political, economical, social, and cultural factors and, most important of all, the EFL situations in the countries" (114). But in a more fundamental way, as it seems to me now, it all comes down to the contextualized nature of reading and researching. "Each class is different;" as Jane Tompkins puts it, "that's part of the point. Each class has its potentialities and its limitations. You do what you can within the situation; you are, collectively, what you are" (126).

A Stop Where It All Starts

Now as I come to the end, I think of what Pema Chodron writes in her book *When Things Fall Apart* (although on a rather completely different subject than reading and researching,) that "[i]f we're willing to give up hope that insecurity and pain can be exterminated, then we can have the courage to relax with the groundlessness of our situation. This is the first step on the path" (38). I think of how tightly I used to hold on to that hope of having a complete set of knowledge so that I would never have to question and/or be questioned, and how much *that* has limited not only my reading and learning and teaching, but also my looking at others' as well. I have now come to see how it is really like what Kenneth Goodman says, that "[l]ife is constantly requiring us to make informed decisions using incomplete and ambiguous information, whether reading, playing a game, or just walking down the street. In reading, we are constantly using what we already know to make inferences, anticipate, and predict what we don't know yet. Expectation of form, structure and—most of all—meaning is what reading is all about" (41). And as I have come to learn through the search, not too different from life in general, the life involved in the reading/teaching/learning of foreign literature is, too, constantly requiring us to make informed decisions using incomplete and ambiguous information. Whether we are aware of it or not, we as readers, learners, and teachers in the field are constantly using what we already know to make inferences, anticipate, and predict what we don't know yet. It is thus in this sense that it would not be until we let go of that hold of the expert position of the already-known that we can proceed with our first step on the path

to (re)search.

But just as important as expectation of form and structure is for reading in general, having fundamental principles as well as explicit instructions that are grounded in theories are thus also essential for the reading/learning/teaching of foreign literature; and in the same way that most of all, meaning is what reading is all about, making sense of the personal/social/ideological conditions that bring about various possible effects to our reading/learning/teaching situations is also what makes the efforts in the reading/learning/teaching of literature in a foreign language a worthwhile endeavor. I think of what Jose Melendez suggest, that "[l]et us accept again that the picture is very complex. Easy step-by-step recipe on how to teach literature and culture is the last thing we need" (94-95). And I think of what P. David Pearson and Diana Stephens remind us, that "[e]ach time we ask and answer, 'What work?' or 'What matters?', we are simultaneously asking, 'For/to whom?', 'When?', 'Under what conditions?', and 'To what end?'" Patricia Stock's observation, now as it seems to me, thus becomes even more inspiring. As she notes,

> If the practice of education were to be understood as beginning and ending with the ordinary language and experience of students and teachers working to make meaning at a particular time in a particular place, not as the enactment of curricula made by specialists beyond those classrooms, not as the transmission from teachers to students of a body of information, not as students' reproductions of information and procedures, this vision might lead

> to teacher and students having a greater sense of control over what they do and, therefore, to richer and more effective teaching and learning. (81)

Realizing (both in terms of understanding and making real) the contextualized nature of language/reading/knowing in doing research is not going to eliminate frustrations, struggles, and ups and downs. But that is exactly why it is even more important that we trust ourselves and each other, keep up the faith, and remember the love we have for the books as well as for our fellow readers. Allowing space for making mistakes yet at the same time encouraging efforts to learn from the mistakes made is what gives us more control over what we do, and therefore to richer and more effective teaching and learning; and so is recognizing reading and researching as social processes that by nature are always dialogic and dialectic. "Using, speaking, learning, teaching language," exactly as Alastair Pennycook asserts in Critical Applied Linguistics, "is a form of social and cultural action; it is about *producing*, not just *reflecting* realities" (53, emphasis added).

Now as "who I am when I end," I also think of the distinction that Frank Smith makes between "reading about a storm" and "being in a storm." He explains:

> What is experience? It cannot be measured and is not easily defined. Perhaps it does not need definition. Experience is synonymous with being, with creating, exploring and interacting with worlds—real, possible, and invented. It is engagement and

> participations, always involving the emotions and often including a deliberate quest for uncertainty. It is an essential condition for being human and alive....Reading about a storm is not the same thing as being in a storm, but both are experiences. We respond emotionally to both, and can learn from both. But the learning in each case is a byproduct of the experience. We do not live to acquire information, but information, like knowledge, wisdom, abilities, attitudes, and satisfactions, comes with the experience of living. (62)

Going through this journey has made me appreciate experience a lot more; it has made me realize that it is really through all these different experiences that we come to, dialogically and dialectically, know what we know and become able to do what we do. I think of what my favorite writer Henry James says in "The Figure in the Carpet," that "[h]e called it letters, he called it life—it was all one thing" (28). And I think how, indeed, it really is with each experience of our reading/learning/teaching as well as the reflections on such experiences that we come to know more about letters, more about life, and more about what it really means to be a life-long reader/learner/teacher in the field of foreign literary education. It is in this sense, then, that in terms of the limitation of this study, I see reading/writing about an approach is of course not the same as implementing it in a classroom, but *both* are experiences. And to the extent that I recognize that this search is limited in that the approach has not been tried out in real classrooms yet, I see it as part of the strands of thought, texts, and dialogues that are yet to come. I think of what Mike Rose says in Possible Lives, that the

occasion and energy for intellectual growth come from "engagement with others, often over a common problem" (416). And I thus see my effort here as part of this engagement with others in finding better ways to approach literature in a foreign language.

"Refined-Hypotheses"

Finally coming to this very last section of the dissertation, I borrow the term, "refined hypotheses" (62), from Stephen Tchudi and Diana Mitchell, to use as the subtitle here. For one, I like it because I, too, find it more fitting than words such as "*conclusion*" or even "*tentative conclusions*" because, as they suggest, it is rare that teacher research (or any kind of research for that matter) leads to broad and universally fixed conclusions. The research may just lead to the next level of questions, and "with new questions or problems, the cycle begins anew, and in this way we grow as teachers" (62). But I am also reminded of what Wolfgang Iser says in the introduction of The Act of Reading, that "[a]ny theory is bound to be in the nature of a construction" (x); and as Louise Rosenblatt reminds us in her report "The Transactional Theory," that "[a] 'good' product, whether a 'well-written' paper or a sound textual interpretation, should not be an end in itself, a terminus, but should be the result of a process that builds the strengths for further journeys, or, to change the metaphor, for further growth" (13). So while I do intend to come to a stop here, I do not want for the proposed approach to carry with it a conclusive tone—it is here to provide strengths for further journeys, and to use the other metaphor, for further growth. I think of the

"endless web," that Robert Scholes says we have from reading and writing and responding, "of growth, and change, and interaction, learning and forgetting, dialogue and dialectic" (21). And I see now in Roger Sell's statement that *this* is how "[s]o texts are for ever being recontextualized" (108).

So for one last time: it is seeking, rather than knowing, that is what makes possible the reading/learning/teaching of literature in a foreign language.

And yes, the search goes on.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

List of Departments Included for the Survey Research

- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Sun Yat-Sen University, Kaohsiung
- Department of English, National Central University, Taoyuan
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Chung-Cheng University, Chiayi
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Chung-Hsiung University, Taichung
- Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics, National Taipei University, Taipei
- Department of English, National Taitung University, Taitung
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, National Taiwan University, Taipei
- Department of English, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Chiao-Tung University, Hsinchu
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan
- Foreign Language Literature, National Ilan University, Ilan
- Department of English, Dong Hwa University, Hualien
- Department of English, National Chengchi University, Taipei
- Department of Western Languages and Literature, National University of Kaohsiung, Kaohsiung
- English Department, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Kaohsiung
- Department of Foreign Languages and literature, National Chi Nan University, Nantou
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, National Tsing Hua University, Hsinchu
- Department of Foreign Languages, National Chiayi University, Chiayi
- Department of English, National Changhua University of Education, Changhua
- Department of English Language, Da-Yeh University, Changhua

- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Chung Hua University, Hsinchu
- English Department, Chinese Culture University, Taipei
- Department of English, Shih Hsin University, Taipei
- Department of Foreign Languages, Hsuanchuang University, Hsinchu
- Department of English Language and Literature, Soochow University, Taipei
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Tunghai University, Taichung
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Nanhua University, Chiayi
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Aletheia University, Taipei
- Department of English, Tamkang University, Taipei
- Department of Foreign Languages and Literature, Feng Chia University, Taichung
- Foreign Languages Department, Huafan University, Taipei
- Department of English Language and Literature, Fu Jen Catholic University, Taipei
- Department of Applied English, Ming Chuan University, Taipei
- Department of English Language, Literature and Linguistics, Providence University, Taichung
- Department of English, National Taipei University of Technology, Taipei
- Department of Applied English, Southern Taiwan University of Technology, Tainan
- Department of Applied English, Kun Shan University of Technology, Tainan
- Department of Applied English, National Kaohsiung First University of Science and Technology, Kaohsiung

APPENDIX B

Mailback Survey

June 10, 2005
Dear Professors,

As part of the dissertation for a Ph. D. degree from Michigan State University, I am doing a research on the reading/teaching/learning of English/American literature in a setting where English is used as a foreign language. In order to provide more evidence of current educational practices, I am requesting your cooperation in completing the attached survey on the teaching of undergraduate required English/American literature classes (e.g., Introduction to Western Literature, Approaches to Literature, English Literature, American Literature). The survey data will help paint a broader picture of the English/American literary education in Taiwan.

Completing this survey should take approximately 10 minutes. There are 10 questions, each with 4 to 6 answers for you to check off. A stamped envelope is included for your use to return the survey to me. There is no tracking code on the survey so as to ensure the anonymity, and your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning the survey. If you have any particular questions, please feel free to email me at hsuchias@msu.edu. If you have any questions about this study, please contact my advisor, Marilyn Wilson, by phone: 1-517-355-3182, email: wilsonm@msu.edu, or regular mail: 201 Morril Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, U.S.A.. If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish—Peter Vasilenko Ph. D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subejcts (UCRIHS) by phone: 1-517-355-2180, fax: 1-517-432-4503, email: ucrihs@msu.edu, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824, U.S.A..

Thank you in advance for taking time to share your teaching experience.

Sincerely,

Chia-shu Hsu
Ph. D. Candidate
Michigan State Unvierstiy

In a required English/American literature class (e.g., Introduction to Western Literature, Approaches to Literature, English Literature, American Literature):

1. What is the average number of students?
   ____ under 30 ____30-40 ____40-50 ____50-60 ____over 60

2. What language do you use for instructional purposes?
   ____ English ____ Chinese

3. How many pieces of works in general do you teach per semester?
   ____ under 10 ____ 10-15 ____ 15-20 ____ over 20

4. Do you use an anthology?
   ____ always ____ almost always ____ often ____ sometimes ____ rarely

5. What are your criteria for choosing pieces of literature?
   ____ anthology format (e.g., three works from each section; one from each author)
   ____ the importance (of such works/authors) in the literary field
   ____ the relevance (of the subject matters) to students' lives
   ____ the reading levels (of the texts)
   ____ other (Please specify: _____)

6. What different methods of assessment do you use with your students? (Please indicate approximate percentage for each method checked.)
   ____ examination (%)
   ____ term paper (%)
   ____ individual presentation (%)
   ____ group presentation (%)
   ____ research project (%)
   ____ portfolio (%)
   ____ other (Please specify: %)

7. What are the objectives in such classes?
   ____ cultivate aesthetical appreciation of English/American literature

_____ gain English/American literary knowledge
_____ practice English language skills
_____ develop analytical and critical thinking
_____ foster interests in reading English/American literature
_____ other (please specify: _____)

8. What do you think the reasons are that some students have difficulties with reading English/American literature?
_____ lack of interests
_____ deficiency in linguistic skills
_____ inadequacy of literary knowledge
_____ lack of cultural familiarity
_____ other (please specify: _____)

9. Do you use any of the following techniques for helping students understand the literature?
_____ translation/vocabulary lists
_____ lecture
_____ class discussion
_____ small group discussion
_____ writing assignment (Please specify: _____)
_____ other (Please specify: _____)

10. Which of the following descriptions of teacher roles best describes your philosophy of teaching literature?
_____ lecturer _____ coach/guide _____ discussion facilitator _____fellow reader

APPENDIX C

Questions for Individual Interviews

* First interview's focus: Teachers' perceptions on teaching literature in English

1. How long have you been teaching in the English department?

2. Please describe a required literature class you have taught before. (e.g., average number of students, ways of instructions, kinds of assessment, etc..)

3. When teaching such classes, how do you select your teaching materials? For example, if you use an anthology, what are your criteria for choosing pieces of literature?

4. Please tell me your experience teaching this kind of classes.
- What are students' responses/attitudes?
- What do you know about their motivation/expectation/interests?
- How do they arrive at their understanding of the literature you assign?
- What do you think the reasons are that some of them have difficulties? How do you help?
- What are some aspects you find difficult in teaching this kind of required introductory literature classes? What do you think can be done to help?

5. What do you think "literature" means in this kind of classes? What do you think is important in teaching such classes?

6. How would you describe your philosophy of teaching literature in English—both in such classes and in general? How is it related to your learning experience in the English/American literature field?

* Second interview's focus: Teachers' responses to the seeking model of reading

1. What are some benefits/limits for the readers when reading from this

"seeking" perspective?

2. If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what are some benefits to the students?

3. If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what are some drawbacks for the students?

4. If this reading model is to be implemented in the teaching of literature in English, what do you think the challenges/difficulties/restrictions in class will be? How can they be resolved?

5. What are some socio-cultural-linguistic-political ramifications of recommending such reading model in Taiwan?

6. What advice do you have for me on proposing such reading model?

APPENDIX D

Questions for Group Interviews

* First interview's focus: Students' perceptions on reading literature in English

(*Opening question*)
Please tell us your name and what year you are in.

(*Introductory question*)
Please describe the required literature classes you had before. (e.g., average number of students, textbook types, ways of instructions, kinds of assessment)

(*Transitional question*)
Please describe your experience with these classes. For example: What do you find most difficult? What interests you the most? What influence do you think they have on you as an English major?

(*Key questions*)
What do you think "literature" means in those classes?

(As opposed to/similar to the previous question) What does reading literature in English mean to you?

(*Ending question*)
What do you think is important in the reading of English/American literature?

* Second interview's focus: Students' responses to the seeking model of reading

(*Opening question*)
Please describe how you usually read a story.

(*Introductory question*)
What do you think of your own reading process? What are some characteristics

that make you a good reader? What are some adjustments you think you need in order for you to become a better reader?

[The proposed reading model will be briefly introduced and a piece of literature will be brought in.]

(*Transitional questions*)
Please describe your reading process. What are some of the questions you have as you read? How do they affect your reading?

[Some questions will be answered and the participants will be asked to read the same story again.]

Please describe your second reading's reading process. How is it different from the first one? How does the difference affect you as a reader?

(*Key questions*)
Please describe your experience of reading literature from this "seeking" perspective.

What are the benefits/limits you think readers get when reading from this perspective?

(*Ending questions*)
If this reading model is to be implemented in a required literature class, what do you think the challenges/difficulties/restrictions will be? How can they be resolved?

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