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# East meets west : literature for crosscultural understanding.

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EAST MEETS WEST:

LITERATURE FOR CROSSCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

A Dissertation Presented

by

HUA R. LAN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

FEBRUARY 1990

School of Education

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LITERATURE FOR CROSSCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

A Dissertation Presented

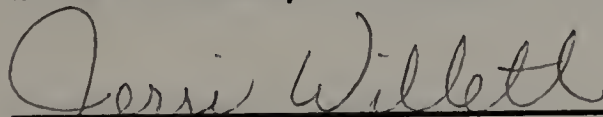
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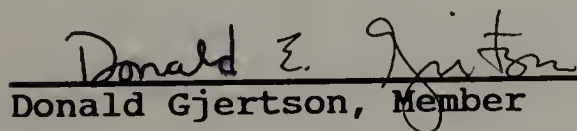
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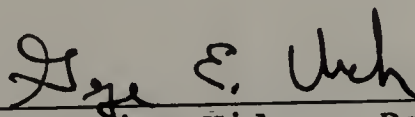
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## PREFACE

For as one comes to understand people who live by institutions and values different from one's own, at the same time one comes to see that these people are, nevertheless, at bottom quite like one's own people. The alien culture at first appears to us as a mask, enigmatic or repugnant. On closer acquaintance we see it as a garment for the spirit; we understand its harmonies and appreciate them. Finally, as acquaintance goes deeper still, we do not see, or for a time forget, the culture, but look only to the common humanity of the men and women beneath.

--R. Redfield, 1947--

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At the end of the last century, R. Kipling said: "Oh, East is East, West is West; and never the twain shall meet." But since then, the twentieth century has witnessed tremendous change in the relationship between the "twain". Modern technology has not only resulted in an unprecedentedly close communication between the East and the West, but also has, delightfully, brought them together in many ways. The rapid development of the new field of crosscultural understanding in the past few decades, both in theory and in practice, is indisputable evidence of the inevitability of the historical trend: The East and the West shall meet!

Qian Mu, the eminent Chinese scholar, once wrote that "My whole life has been plagued by the problem of Chinese or Western culture, which is right and which is

best? ... All my doubts and all my certainties have been encompassed by this problem, and all my efforts have been applied to this problem" (Dennerline 1989, p. 67). As a Chinese living in America, I, too, have been continuously baffled by this same problem. However, instead of looking for a which-is-better answer, I have endeavored to compare and contrast Chinese and American cultures, which to a great extent represent the cultures of the East and the West. Many crosscultural encounters have inspired me and kindled my interest in crosscultural understanding and its relationship with language teaching.

One commonly recognized phenomenon is the fact that lexically similar terms in two languages, due to different cultural perceptions, may have different social, emotional, aesthetic meanings and intensity. A typical example might be the word "intellectual". Whereas "an intellectual" in English is a "person given to learning, thinking and judging ideas" (American Heritage Dictionary) or "one with intellectual interests or tastes" (Webster New Dictionary), the Chinese "equivalent" (zhishi fenzi) is often used loosely in contemporary Chinese society to mean anybody who has had a college education, regardless of the person's intelligence or profession. Povey (1967) once cited a popular Australian folksong: "Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong, under the shade of a coolibah tree." But he continued to comment:



"We know that language. We can obtain the meaning for the unknown words (by using a dictionary), but does the resulting perception give us any true images if we do not share the social experience of a nation which includes wandering swagmen in its history?" Obviously, cultural differences in language use, living habits, beliefs, customs and value patterns often cause confusion and misunderstanding in our communication--people simply cannot communicate effectively without the proper knowledge of the target culture.

Fully realizing the importance of the reinforcement of crosscultural understanding in foreign language teaching, I have explored and examined the interrelationship between culture, language and literature, adopting a literal-cultural approach to language learning. This dissertation, is still a preliminary study of the relationship between literature and crosscultural understanding in second language acquisition; and it is more than a normal disclaimer to say that this study may have been too ambitious in scope to reach the satisfactory depth. However, this topic, although important both in theory and in practice, is either untreated or underpresented. As an educator in language and literature, I feel that it is time for someone to take the "untrodden way"!

ABSTRACT

EAST MEETS WEST:

LITERATURE FOR CROSSCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

FEBRUARY 1990

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For almost two decades, literature, which had played an essential role in foreign language teaching in many countries for many years, has been excluded in language classrooms. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest among scholars and educators, in both China and the West, in reviving literature as a means of acquiring language proficiency. But, this revival has been rather slanted towards the linguistic and literary elements of literature, while the inherent socio-cultural value of literature has been little discussed or explored. This dissertation seeks to analyze the relationship between culture and literature in second language acquisition and to provide, through illustrations of literary texts, a theoretical framework for teaching literature with the aim of acquiring crosscultural understanding.

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CHAPTER I  
THE FALL AND RISE OF LITERATURE

1. Background

From ancient times till recent decades, literature had been esteemed as the supreme scholarly discipline and as the capstone of the foreign language learning experience. As the late Professor Marckwardt (1978) stated, "This was true, at least, of the Western world. The student of German climaxed his studies with a course in Faust, his Spanish counterpart with the reading of Cervantes and the works of the Siglo del Orol. When English was studied as a foreign language, all roads led to Shakespeare." (p. 3).

Nevertheless, H. G. Widdowson (1985) said, "As far as English language teaching is concerned, literature has over recent years been generally purged from the programme, together with other undesirable elements like grammar and translation, on the grounds that it makes no contribution to the purpose or the process of learning the language for practical use." Widdowson's statement is by and large factual and quite to the point. But, one wants to ask, what has caused the fall of literature in the language classroom?

Paradoxically, the decline of literature in foreign language teaching started when "a few highly promising

and practical solutions to the language teaching problems were at long last in sight... around 1960" (Stern, 1983). In the late fifties, along with the rapid growth of linguistics as an independent discipline and some other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, many new and resolute attempts were made to improve language teaching, which included: a) the use of new technology, b) new organizational patterns, c) methodological innovations, d) teacher training schemes, e) a new emphasis on research. "By about 1960, many of these developments had coalesced.... The 'revolution' in language teaching caught the imagination of many teachers and the general public.... There was a great eagerness to experiment with new ways of language teaching."

The fundamental reason for this new trend in language teaching is mainly the change of pedagogical aims and objectives. Professor Peter Strevens (1974) sums up:

In our profession, up till twenty years ago, there really was only one educational framework, one set of pedagogical aims and these were considered sufficient to justify the entire profession in which we worked and that was the aims of teaching English--and this applies to all other languages as well--teaching language as a part of a general education --indeed a general humanities education. The teaching of English was automatically assumed to be part of a general education on the humanities, the arts side, with the tacit assumption that the very best students would go forward and study English literature. And this was taken for granted, this was how we operated.... (p. 3)

The situation described in the above statement prevailed until about three decades ago, at which time a new demand for language teaching, English in particular, developed. This demand was considered unrelated to literary studies and outside the framework of a general humanities education. Namely, it was a demand for English as a practical communication skill or set of skills, including English for Special Purposes.

In an editorial in the journal "English Language Teaching", W. R. Lee (1970) begins by asking the by-now familiar question:

To what extent need learners of a foreign language study the literature? Often the answer given is "Not at all." But what is missed, and how is the language learning affected, if the literature is ignored? Much of the world's business is conducted in English, an international means of everyday communication. Much of science and technology is accessible in English but not in the student's own tongue. Thus the exclusion of literature from courses in English is easy to justify on vocational grounds: We need only a medium in which to conduct trade. (p. 2)

Consequently, with the new emphasis on language learning as "a skill or set of skills for communication" rather than as pure scholastic training, scholars began to shift their attention from "linguistic competence" to "communicative competence". Literature was under attack because of its inaccessibility and incapability of solving the contradiction between "linguistic competence" and "communicative competence". Representatively, an

emphatic negative reaction is to be found in the conclusion given by Professor C. Blatchford in an article entitled: "ESOL and Literature: A Negative View" (1972): "The study of English literature is a luxury that cannot be indulged during the limited amount of time allocated to English." According to Marckwardt, Blatchford's conclusion is based upon three considerations: a) the objectives of teaching a foreign language, b) the inadequate preparation of teachers for the task of dealing with literature in a language classroom, and c) the current trend in language teaching toward understanding the place of language in society and its relation to the culture of a people. But obviously Blatchford's chief concern is that "as far as the Asian nations are concerned, their primary interest is in the attainment of a functional command of the language to the point that the student will be able to handle simple English language situation involving the four skills. He went on to argue: "With such objectives..., it follows that the classroom emphasis should be on a functional use of the language, not on literature." Blatchford's view was quite representative of the general opinion toward using literature in a language classroom at the beginning of the seventies. Ever since then, literature has been disfavoured.



## 2. The Chinese situation

If the aforementioned analysis is true of the situation in the West, it also fits the Chinese situation, except there is another important factor--ideology--which played a key role in excluding literature from the language programs in China.

H. H. Stern says (1983) that: "... language teaching is primarily an art which through the ages has pursued three major objectives:

- language as a form of communication,
- language as a linguistic analysis (grammar),
- language as a vehicle for artistic creation and appreciation."

Apparently, Stern has overlooked the socio-political dimension of the issue: language taught as racial and cultural domination, which was common in many colonized countries and areas since the last century. But on the whole, the three broad aims suggested by Stern are the major objectives of language teaching and have in different periods in history been emphasized to varying degrees. With regard to these three general teaching purposes, language teaching in China before the 1949 Revolution also went through different periods and different emphases.

For thousands of years, China, ruled by the dominant Confucian ethos and feudal imperial emperors, had remained a "Changeless Kingdom". It was not until the

second half of the nineteenth century that the rulers of the last dynasty, Qing, began to realize the necessity for change. Humiliated by the defeats in the wars against foreign invasions and inspired by the successful Meiji Restoration in Japan, the Qing government adopted, with great reluctance, a new open policy towards the West and its civilization. Large numbers of students were sent to study abroad; and as a result, Western thoughts and technology were introduced into China and began to exercise great influence on all spheres of Chinese life (Dawson, 1964; Grieder, 1981; Rozman, 1981). By the turn of the century, Western style schools began to appear in China and along with them came the teaching of foreign languages in the regular school curriculum. Throughout the twenties, the thirties and up to the end of the forties, English continued to be the lingua franca among the fast-growing foreign community and a status symbol in the "semi-feudal, semi-colonial" Chinese society. Despite its colonial colour and influence, the teaching of English as a foreign language flourished in the pre-revolutionary China.

As we can see, foreign language teaching in the West was first treated as scholarly training and much later taught as a form of communication. Almost contrary to the situation in the West, almost all the foreign languages were taught in China, at the end of the last

century, solely as tools of practical daily communication in those "Translation Houses" (fanyi guan) to the diplomats and students going abroad. It was only later, at the turn of the century, that many returned students from England, France, the United States and other European countries brought back the Western concept of grammar and popularized the idea of "Language Law" (wen fa) among the teachers and students of foreign languages. (The first Chinese grammar book Ma Shi Wen Tong was written by Ma Chien-chung, a French-trained linguist, who was the first person, in fact, to use the Chinese word gelangma for grammar.) But, the emphasis soon shifted to language learning as a scholarly discipline, simply because the Chinese culture had a long, elitist tradition of treating all kinds of learning as scholarly disciplines. As in Western tradition, literature has always been greatly esteemed in China as a supreme artistic form and scholarly discipline. Naturally, language teaching as a scholarly discipline should embrace literature as an ultimate goal.

In the early days of the twentieth century, the famous Chinese scholar Lin Shu translated an enormous amount of Western literature into Chinese. His great output included not only writers like Dickens and Dumas but also Conan Doyle and Harriet Stowe (Dawson, 1971). Although he did not know any foreign languages himself,

Lin Shu, with the assistance of some returned students, rendered all the translations into elegant classical Chinese, which were enthusiastically received by the general readership and students of foreign languages. Consequently, like their Western counterparts in those days, Chinese language courses in the middle years of the century, in large measures involved a concentration on literature, especially on Western classical literature. "The most popular readers used in high schools before 1949 included such books as The Golden River, Treasure Island, Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, David Copperfield, and The Vicar of Wakefield." (Wang Kun, 1981) What is worth noticing is the fact that by studying Western literature, the Chinese learners of foreign languages in those days were not only in search of linguistic skills but also in conscious pursuit of Western culture. The 1919 May Fourth Movement, as a bugle call of the Chinese Renaissance, awakened many Chinese intellectuals from the Sino-centrism of their past glories and forced them to face the backwardness of their own country in the wake of foreign invasion and to look towards the West for "national salvation". Following the May Fourth Movement, there were many big debates in the Chinese literary forum about the relation between the Eastern and Western cultures. During this period, many Chinese scholars such as Cai Yuanpei, Liang Qichao,

Chen Duxiu, and Li Dazhao advocated "the creation of a new society and civilization through the re-evaluation of all Chinese traditions" (Zhou, 1960); and they prescribed "Mr. De" (Democracy) and "Mr. Sai" (Science) from the West as the remedies for China. On the other side of the debate were traditionalists like Liang Shumin who advocated the safeguarding and glorifying of Chinese cultural tradition. It was a period of "unbridled thinking and rigorous soul-searching" and a period of "transformation of all values." (Lan, 1988; Alkitto, 1986; Grieder, 1981) (Ironically and sadly, the recent prodemocratic student movement in Beijing was to a great extent repeating the history!)

The situation in China remained basically the same in the early years of the 1949 Revolution. Completely occupied in establishing the new political and economic systems, the government of the P. R. China could not afford any efforts to change the status quo of the existing educational system. Although there was a reorganization and restructuring of the colleges and universities in the early fifties, it was implemented more administratively than academically. While the old educational system was largely left intact, the Soviet influence, however, set in on an unprecedented scale. In foreign language teaching, there was a drastic shift from English to Russian. But in the few higher learning institutions where English

programs were offered, the familiar literature approach was still practiced; students of English were still studying English older classics in good faith.

Moving to the beginning of the sixties, we find the craving for Russian on a sharp decline because of political reasons. Instead, the learning of English was again in full swing. Interestingly enough, however, the traditional literature approach was now out of favour; and there are perhaps three reasons to explain this phenomenon:

In the first place, it was influenced by the rise of new trends in linguistic theories and new teaching methods in the West. By 1960, China had already openly and almost completely severed its relationship with the "socialist camp" headed by the Soviet Union and again began to look toward the West. One of the post-war phenomena in the West was "an increasing intellectual awareness of and an interest in the scientific study of linguistics". And against this background, many new attempts were made to improve second language learning. They included teaching methods, such as the audiolingual method and the audiovisual method, and new organizational patterns like adult education and bilingual education, and the use of technology such as tape recorder, language lab and television (Stern, 1983). Facing these new attempts and challenges, language teachers in China, like

their Western colleagues, began to re-examine the traditional grammar-translation method. At the same time they showed great eagerness to experiment with new materials and methods in language teaching. Consequently, they found the traditional teaching material both limited and limiting. New teaching methods inevitably lead to the dismissal of old teaching material, in this case, the "old favourites" of Western classical literature.

Secondly, new linguistic theories and new teaching methods from the West broadened the vision of the Chinese teachers and enabled them to see many of the problems in teaching, the biggest of which was the contradiction between "linguistic competence and communicative competence". For many years, English major students were crammed with the classics of English literature, such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Keats. Literary texts of such high calibre were difficult and in many ways inaccessible to them. Even after four years of "sweating and toiling" in college, most of the English majors still had enormous difficulty in comprehending or conversing with native speakers. They found themselves competent in terms of grammar and literary history; but the majority of them were "deaf and mute" performers. This fact alarmed both the teachers and the leaders in the Ministry of Education. In the early sixties, a nationwide "campaign" against the "literature path" (wenxue

daolu) was launched in all the language departments of major colleges and universities in China.

The third ground on which the traditional literature approach was rejected was ideological. After the open conflict with the Soviet Union in the late fifties, there was an excessive concern among the Chinese leadership about upholding the "purity of Communist ideology". Almost all the works from foreign countries were labelled as "reactionary". Literature approach in foreign language teaching had now come under severe attack for its impracticality linguistically and for its bourgeois influence ideologically. In his Talks at the Yanan Forum on Art and Literature, Mao said (1942): "In the world today all culture, all literature and art belong to definite classes and are geared to definite political line."; and that "Our purpose is to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part."; and "If the content of a literary work is reactionary, the more artistic it is, the more poisonous it is." Although these remarks were made back in 1942, they were reiterated over the past three decades as the "supreme instruction" throughout the sixties and seventies. Therefore, all the classics as well as modern works in Western literature were labelled as "poisonous weeds" and disappeared from Chinese textbooks. Replacing them, translated versions of works by Marx, Lenin, and



Mao and other politicized texts such as Lenin in London, A Lesson in Class Struggle (Cowan et al, 1979 ) were exclusively taught in English classrooms. Looking back at those years, a Chinese teacher lamented:

Compiling English teaching material was a tough job for the teachers at that time. They had to be very careful about the content and vocabulary they chose. For anything politically suspect (such as disco, bar, stock, and love affairs) could never be allowed in textbooks. Thus, the only words which might appear in a text would be the words like 'sickle, hammer, tractor' or simply revolutionary slogans. Therefore, the more you taught this kind of English, the less you felt that you were actually teaching English. (Zhu, 1982)

After Mao's death, in 1976, China witnessed another big political change. The new leadership adopted a new open policy and once again opened the door to the outside world, which greatly enhanced the demand for English. And with this new vogue for English, there has been a renewed interest of using literature in EFL classrooms. There also seems to be three explanations to this phenomenon:

First and foremost, the revival of literature in the foreign language classroom in China can be regarded as a kind of backlash against the ultra-leftist absurdity of "the cultural revolution", during which period everything "old and traditional" was criticized and banned. But now everything "old and traditional" was treated as a triumphant comeback. Literature which had always been considered the pinnacle of scholarly pursuit reappeared in the language curriculum in Chinese colleges and universities.

The second reason may be of a more fundamental nature --the reassessment of all the fascinating linguistic theories and new teaching methods from the West. Again like their colleagues in the West in the seventies, Chinese language teachers began to have doubts about the role of linguistics in foreign language teaching. Two viewpoints emerged. One was to say that linguistic theories, such as structuralism and transformation-generative grammar, were misapplied and their importance in foreign language teaching was overrated. The other point of view was that language teaching should be by no means bound to abide consistently by one theory or one method. By the end of the seventies, the idea "the newer, the better" was no longer common among the foreign language teachers in China. While some of them are still experimenting and groping for new methodology and pedagogy, many others simply returned to the old methods, literature being one of the comfortable and popular approaches.

Thirdly, although using literature as an approach to EFL had been excluded for many years, EFL teachers in China and in the West as well have never really stopped using it in their daily practice. Poems, stories, plays have appeared quite frequently in textbooks. This phenomenon is easily comprehensible: Literature contains far too many intrinsic values, which no language teacher

can deny, or resist--all these intrinsic values are richly embodied in literature, linguistically, aesthetically and culturally.

### 3. The problem

At present, literature as one of the approaches is popular in Chinese foreign language teaching, especially for advanced students of the upper levels. Once again students are chewing upon the great authors of Western classics with great relish; and the teachers are back on the comfortable vehicle of literature. In the West, literature is also revived in many language programs; but educators and scholars in both China and the West are facing the problem of reevaluating the role of literature in language classrooms, particularly with regard to the issue of acquiring the cultural insights to the target language.

Nowadays, there is a general acknowledgement among educators and scholars that without face-to-face interaction with native speakers in a natural environment, students of foreign languages generally fail to develop the necessary cultural presupposition to fully acquire communicative competence. Given its intrinsic cultural value, literature can be exploited as an effective way of providing the experience.

However, current approaches in the recent revival of literature have neglected this inherent cultural value, emphasizing, instead, a) teaching literature for the sole purpose of linguistic command, b) teaching literature as art for the purpose of literary appreciation. The divorce between language and culture in teaching literature is a problem, which exists in the West, but perhaps more seriously in China, mainly due to political, ideological concerns. Besides, although scholars and educators in the West have endeavoured to rekindle the interest in using literature in language classrooms, their approaches have usually slanted towards the linguistic and aesthetic aspects of literature. Even though some scholars have begun to consider the cultural value of literature, the treatment has been superficial and intuitive, lacking a theoretical ground.

#### 4. Purposes

In view of the problem described above, the following five chapters of this dissertation will address three main issues:

- 1) to build a theoretical framework for teaching literature for the purpose of obtaining crosscultural understanding as a necessary part of second language acquisition;

2) to provide, through concrete examples, a sample of how to exploit literary texts for acquiring cross-cultural understanding--comparing and contrasting the "deep structures" of the cultural value patterns of the Chinese and American peoples, with a focus on the concept of individualism;

3) to offer some pedagogical suggestions, concerning issues such as working theories of teaching and learning, selection of texts, and some necessary precautions.

CHAPTER II  
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to achieve crosscultural understanding through literature in second language acquisition, it is important to bring together the three areas of culture, language and literature. But a review of the "scholarly" literature in these areas shows that such a synthesis has not occurred. This chapter will explain the following three aspects:

First, the relation between culture/crosscultural understanding and language learning has received some attention, particularly in a multi-cultural country like the United States.

Second, the relation between literature and language learning has also been considered by scholars/educators in the West, especially in a traditionally-oriented country like Britain.

Third, yet, by and large, the link between literature teaching and crosscultural understanding in second language acquisition is still missing.

1. Language acquisition and crosscultural understanding

During the past decade, an exciting development has occurred in language classrooms: educators are now paying

attention to combining language learning with culture learning.

Here in the United States, scholars and educators seem to be more interested in teaching culture in foreign language teaching, perhaps due to the fact that the United States is a truly multi-cultural country. Back in 1971 Ned Seelye masterminded for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages the first workshop on the teaching of culture. His book Teaching Culture (1974, 1987) has been generally considered a trail-blazer. The book supplies not only the rationale for the development of intercultural skills, but also provides concrete suggestions for attaining them. As one student once wrote in critiquing the book: "Mr. Seelye's book helps us know more than the facts of culture; it helps us see what to do and feel how to do it.". In the very first paragraph of his introduction to the book, Seelye says: "Intercultural communication requires skills. When communication is between people from different cultural backgrounds, special skills are required if the messages received are to resemble the messages sent." Throughout the book, Seelye stresses the importance of acquiring seven skills which he also lists in Chapter Three as the goals of cultural instruction. He names them as "cultural goals" (1984):

Cultural Goal 1-- The sense, or functionality, of culturally conditioned behavior: The student

should demonstrate an understanding that people act the way they do because they are using options the society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs.

Cultural Goal 2-- Interaction of language and social variables: The student should demonstrate an understanding that such social variables as age, sex, social class, and place of residence affect the way people speak and behave.

Cultural Goal 3-- Conventional behavior in common situations: The student should indicate an understanding of the role convention plays in shaping behavior by demonstrating how people act in common mundane and crisis situation in the target culture.

Cultural Goal 4-- The cultural connotations of words and phrases: The student should indicate an awareness that culturally conditioned images are associated with even the most common target words and phrases.

Cultural Goal 5-- Evaluating statements about a culture: The student should demonstrate the ability to evaluate the relative strength of a generality concerning the target culture in terms of the amount of evidence substantiating the statement.

Cultural Goal 6-- Researching another culture: The student should show that s/he has developed the skills needed to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, the mass media, people, and personal observation.

Cultural Goal 7-- Attitudes towards other societies: The student should demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the target culture and empathy toward its people.

These seven skills are essential for language students from different cultural backgrounds; and they are persuasively outlined and illustrated in Seelye's book. Nevertheless, as its subtitle Strategies for



Intercultural Communication suggests, Seelye's book is a practice-oriented textbook, which offers techniques and strategies. For example, talking about his goal-relating "trivial" topics, Seelye suggests (p. 58) some activities: 1) Choose an ordinary everyday occurrence within the target society which is rare in ours, and show how it helps satisfy a basic need, What other options does that society provide to enable its people to satisfy the same need? 2) Choose a word or phrase from another language and show how age, sex, social class and place of residence affect its usage. 3) Choose a common situation with conventional behavioral patterns and discuss how social variables affect responses to it.... Generally speaking, Seelye's Teaching Culture, although not entirely without theorizing, has only provided us with a variety of useful strategies for teaching culture rather than a clearly-defined theoretical framework. As to the relationship between teaching culture and teaching literature, Seelye's attitude is cautious and ambiguous. But by devoting merely two pages to the issue, he has raised some stimulating questions. Under the general topical question: "Can culture be taught through literature?", Seelye tries to remind us, quoting some arguments, that "the quarrel (the debates on using literature in a language classroom for cultural comprehension) is not with the value of literature or arts as a

means to illustrate how the foreign people live, but rather with the restrictive inroad fiction offers as the major source of information." and that "the study of culture and that of literature, which must be clearly separated, are neither irreconcilable nor antagonistic." (p.18)

Together with the publication of the revised edition of Seelye's Teaching Culture, there are three recent books published in the field. They are: Culture Bound-- Bridging the cultural gap in language teaching (Valdes, ed. 1987), Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension in the Language Classroom (Damen, 1987), and Crosscultural Understanding (Robinson, 1985).

The book Culture Bound edited by J. M. Valdes (1987), aims to bring together practical and theoretical material written by a variety of scholars and teachers in the field. The anthology is in three parts: "Language, thought, and culture", "cultural difference and similarities", and "Classroom applications". Part One of the book contains "articles ranging across the broad (theoretical) spectrum of language, thought, and culture" and presents some basic issues, such as: the relation between language and thought (F. Boas), culture and written language (Kaplan), acculturation and the mind (Acton and Felix). Noteworthily, these articles share some important arguments, such as: second language

learning is often second culture learning; language students are encouraged to understand the new culture without necessarily embracing it. Yet basically, this anthology is a practice-oriented textbook, with its focuses on "the presentation of some cultural phrases of particular groups", such as "Cultural clues to the Middle Eastern student" and "Xanadu-- the teaching of English in China", and the introduction of "a number of approaches to presenting culture to students in the classroom", such as "Culture in the classroom", "Newspapers: vehicles for teaching ESOL". On the whole, Culture Bound is a useful textbook, which has to a large degree achieved its goal in "bridging the cultural gap in language teaching"; however, this book, like most anthologies of this kind, lacks an explicit theoretical backing.

Compared with Culture Bound, Culture Learning by Damen is a more comprehensive book with almost equal emphases on theory and practice, in which the author "uses culture-general and culture-specific approaches in the development of crosscultural awareness and intercultural communicative skills." The book "represents syntheses of salient findings, theories, conclusions, and practice that shed light upon the relationship of language and culture". In Chapter Three of her book: "Queries and Theories in Intercultural Communication", Damen tries to familiarize her reader with the current

theoretical development in the field of intercultural communication, by synthesizing and introducing some recent paradigms and models, for example, the Porter and Samovar Model (1982) and the Gydykunst and Kim Model (1984). (The former is concerned with the dysfunction of symbolic communication; the latter focuses upon the act of communication, bringing the communicative act to the individual level.) In Chapter Seven, through her analytical summary of the genesis, the debates over and the development of the well-known Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis, Damen reaches certain conclusions which are useful to the shaping of the framework of the current study. Some of her conclusions are:

--Language is more than speech; it is a rallying symbol, a means of identification, a tool, a lens through which reality is seen.

--Language responds to and at the same time influences the observations of its speakers and mediates their experiences.

-- Language provides easy and familiar ways to classify the world of its speakers.

-- Language contains categories that reflect cultural interests, preoccupations and conventions.

-- Language impinges upon and in turn is affected by the world in which it is used. It

is only one form of communication, but a major one. As such it defines, gives forms to, supports, limits and sometimes obscures shared cultural patterns.

Damen strongly advocates, therefore, that "...all these special attributes of language led to the application of methods of linguistic analysis to cultural elements. These also ensure that the language teacher cannot provide instruction in language without dealing with culture, nor can the students learn a language without learning about its cultural aspects and connections."

These discussions on the development of the field of intercultural communication and basic definitions of major concepts of communication and culture provide the reader with a clear picture of the theoretical background. In addition, the book Culture Learning is concerned with the practical aspects of the issue--the processes, ways and means of language and culture learning in general, as well as the major variables affecting these processes, including nonverbal behaviour, values and beliefs, and cultural themes and patterns. True, this textbook is "appropriate for language teachers, teacher trainers... and (those) concerned with multicultural issues". Unfortunately, however,

throughout the 400-page book, the function of literature in culture learning is completely left out.

Robinson's book Crosscultural understanding (1985) sums up four main current concerns in the current practice of teaching culture and crosscultural understanding:

1) Instead of the simple, old notion to learn to understand other people, crosscultural understanding should be a synthesis between the student's home culture, the target cultural input and the student as an individual. It is an ongoing, dynamic process in which the students continually synthesize, compare and contrast the target culture with their own experience in the home culture. It should be a two way street--a synthesized process of both acculturation and enculturation--a cross-cultural understanding.

2) Cultural transmission should be done through multi-modal messages within an integrated context. Cultural messages, as Robinson (1985) suggests, can be transmitted verbally and non-verbally "through language, sound or rhythm itself, space, time, body movement, touch, taste, smell, sight and even telepathy". Ideally, these modes should be synthesized in one integrated process.

3) In comparing and contrasting the home culture and the target culture, one should try to see the

dissimilarities and the similarities as well and to develop a positive attitude towards the dissimilarities. .

4) It is very important for us to be aware that cultural patterns change. As societies grow, social values change; people change; and their ways of life change. What was valued yesterday may not be valued today; what is precious today may be discarded tomorrow. Learners and teachers of culture must try to constantly adapt their minds to the ever-changing situation.

## 2. Literature and language teaching

Literature lost its favoured status about two decades ago because of its so-called incapability of solving the contradiction between "linguistic competence and communicative competence" To put it plainly, literature was purged from foreign language teaching, on the grounds that it makes no contribution to the purpose of learning practical skills, such as speaking, listening and writing. In his article "The Teaching, Learning and Studying of Literature" (TLSL,1985), Widdowson says:

With regard to the process of learning, literature would appear to be disqualified on two counts. First, its obscurity introduces undesirable difficulty, which disrupts the gradual cumulative process of language learning and undermines motivation by the imposition of pointless complexity. Secondly, this obscurity is frequently associated with eccentric uses of language which learners are required to accept in their reception of language but to reject as models for their own productive performance. Thus they are obliged to be creative in their

reception of language but conformist in their production." (p.180)

In recent years, scholars and educators have attempted to revive literature in language classrooms; but a good many of them, some British scholars in particular, are still interested in literature from either a linguistic or an aesthetic standpoint. The difference now is that instead of stressing the pure aesthetic "literariness" of literature, these scholars /educators are also concerned with issues that were neglected before, such as: how to select the most linguistically suitable texts, how to improve teaching literature pedagogically, and how to get the "language feel" through literature. Yet still, the importance of cultural understanding through literature is neglected or put in a minor position.

H. G. Widdowson, an authoritative advocate for teaching literature in language programs, declared in his widely accepted book Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (1975): "Its (the book's) principal aim can be stated quite briefly: to present a discussion of an approach to the study of literature and a demonstration of its possible relevance to the teaching of literature. The approach with which I shall be concerned draws a good deal from linguistics and this discipline will provide the general perspective adopted in the discussion." In a



talk he gave in 1983 (published under the title: "H.G. Widdowson on Literature and ELT"), he stressed the "constant search for meaning in the discourse" by "taking the learner through certain structures and certain vocabulary items which occur in the piece of literature". While some scholars held the view that literature should be "protected from the tampering of language study and kept for aesthetic contemplation", Widdowson disagreed (1985) with them by emphasizing the role of literature in acquiring language use and language usage and presenting linguistic analyses of some literary works to support his argument, such as the short story "The Unconquered" by Somerset Maugham". Widdowson critiqued a review (Grower 1984) of a pamphlet by Brian Lee entitled Poetry and the System. He cited the reviewer: "The spirit of literature is alien and inimical to the systems and methods of science .... and linguistics and stylistics are of no use to us at all " and commented that "The review has little or nothing to commend it.... The review reveals the resistance to the language study that I referred to earlier and condemns any application of linguistics to literary study on the grounds that it must of necessity be damaging to the essential power of literature to evoke feelings and disclose the truth of life." (TLSL, p.182)

Widdowson claims in his article (ibid, p. 194): "The task for literature teaching is to develop in students

the ability of studying literature as readers, to interpret it as a use of language, as a precondition of studying it." Furthermore, he concludes the article by announcing: "As far as English literature teaching overseas is concerned, therefore, it can, in my view, only have meaning and purpose if it is integrated with the teaching of English language." Apparently, Widdowson has failed to consider the important cultural aspect of literature, which, as an alternative interpretive schema, might affect the reader's response. As L. Fernando, one of the two commentators on the article says, this representative article by Widdowson is a study which "summarizes the view of a sympathetic linguist, with strong literary interests, on the relation between language and literature".

In the Great Britain, there are some other scholars/educators who have been trying to enhance the role of literature in language teaching. Among them are Brumfit and Carter. In the book they edited: Literature and Language Teaching (1986), they have covered a broad range of the issue: "Literature and language", "Literature in education" and "Fluent reading versus accurate reading". Their chief concerns are, as written in the introduction, with: a) English literature and English language, b) literature and education. The former is basically about arguments on the relation between "stylistics and the

study of literature", "What is literary language?" and "Literature, language, and discourse". The latter focuses on "The nature of literature syllabuses", "Syllabuses for literature in its own right" and "High literature, literature and reading". In other words, the former dwells on the linguistic aspects of literature and the latter deals with the pedagogical concerns in teaching literature. Although the cultural issue is talked about in McKay's article "Literature in the ESL classroom", it is treated too briefly in a single paragraph; and the question is brought forth only in defence of the position of culture. McKay says (1986): "Finally, critics of the use of literature maintain that to the extent that literary texts reflect a particular cultural perspective, they may be difficult for ESL students to read. Undoubtedly, this can be a problem. The question is whether or not any benefits can arise from examining the cultural assumptions of a piece of literature". Her conclusion is given in the same paragraph: "Thus, literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student."

In the United States, Povey, the UCLA Professor, has also been for many years a warm advocate of teaching literature in language learning. However, unlike Widdowson, Povey stresses the importance of combining teaching literature with teaching culture. In his

article "Literature in the ESL Programs: the problems of language and culture", Povey writes (1972):

... we have focused our attention too exclusively upon the language problem. ...we have overlooked--or, at least, underrated--the discovery, that a far greater measure of non-comprehension of imagi-native writing derives from a misunderstanding or ignorance of the whole cultural context out of which literature develops. The literature of a country IS that country. There is no more revealing evidence of a nation's individuality, its sense of itself, and its world than the literature its writers have created.

In this well-accepted article, Povey raised the very important issue about culture and literature in language learning and also gave some anecdotes to illustrate his point. However, he did not provide us with a theoretical framework; nor has he given us a theoretical rationale for his textbook Literature for Discussion, which was published in 1984.

In Literature for Discussion, Povey writes:

"Literature has another advantage. It dramatically expresses national culture.... Literature, by focusing on human experience and encouraging self-expression, develops the students' communication skills while providing a better understanding of the American culture." Literature for Discussion is a textbook for advanced students of ESL, which consists of twelve modern American short stories arranged under six topics. While he offers useful teaching material and pedagogical

help, Professor Povey fails to provide us with a theoretically-based and thus more convincing curriculum. Moreover, the six themes he has chosen-- "The Nature of Youth", "The Impress of Class", "The Experience of Marriage", "Parents and Children", "Alternatives to Family Life" and "The Future of the Nation"-- seem to be too general for students to understand the differences between their own culture and the target culture at a deeper level. Themes such as the American Dream and American individualism, in my view, should be included, because they are prevalent both in the real life of American society and in literary works and because they are often misrepresented and misunderstood outside America.

### 3. Literature and crosscultural understanding

Having reviewed the literature in the above discussed areas, we can come to two conclusions:

- 1) Although research has been done with regard to the relation between language acquisition and crosscultural understanding and the relation between language acquisition and literature teaching, the interrelationship between culture and literature in language acquisition has not been adequately studied.
- 2) Due to the lack of research and theoretical base, the role of literature in language programs is far from secure and its cultural value far from being taken seriously. As Brumfit and Carter point out in their book, "Literature teaching is by no means

secure in many educational systems, and its role as an ally of language is not infrequently disputed."

It is, on the other hand, important to point out that despite the fact that the role of literature in language classrooms, second language programs in particular, and its cultural value are still under-emphasized, we have noticed, to our delight, that since the 80's, thanks to the enhanced awareness of cultural pluralism in society and the academic world, literary critics and scholars have been interested in the relationship between literature and cultural learning. The use of literature for learning about cultures has become one of the important new directions taken by literary studies. Guy Amirthanayagam, a scholar at the Culture Learning Institute of the East-West Center in Honolulu, writes in his article "Literature and Cultural Knowledge" (1982):

More and more people are turning to literature to seek the values whose life-support was once provided by religion and philosophy. Critics and scholars nowadays increasingly tend to busy themselves with the cultural situation in which literature finds itself, and with the insistent demands being made upon literature to provide an education in moral sensibility and critical intelligence. They tend to approach literature with the expectation that the principle which should direct and inform educational effort is to be found primarily in literary study. Since literature expresses the lived actualities of the time, it is seen as an authentic source not only of the realities of society..., but of life-giving values and value-judgments. (p.9)

There has also been other happy tidings in recent years. In the summer of 1987, a large group of educators of literature gathered at the University of Massachusetts to discuss the theory and teaching of world literature. In her "Report on World Literature" (1988, ACLA), Sarah Lawall, the director, writes:

As teachers of world literature, we start from a simple fact: the world is immensely large, and populated by many diverse culture. There are texts available from all parts of the globe, and a tremendous richness of types, forms, and genres to represent different societies and their ways of thought. Moreover, there are many ways of reading these texts, and recognizing how meaning is produced on the basis of elements like culture, gender, race and class.

We cannot truly read the tantalizing diversity of works from different cultures while repeating the same familiar sets of assumptions. Students reading texts from around the globe are already engaged in becoming better readers since they are constantly obliged to match their own expectations against the different worlds and systems of value embedded in unfamiliar works. Asked to examine their own assumptions as part of reading a text, they come to a better understanding of the very process of reading, and of their own personal and cultural identity.

One significance of the meeting and the report lies in the fact that recognizing the inherent cultural value of literary works, literary scholars in the West have gone out of the Euro-centric world into the real world of diverse cultures and have come to realize that "Any narrower view will only hinder their understanding of

their own and others' cultures, and render them less able to act in a world whose diversity they do not expect."

Encouraged and inspired by this recent development in the literary field, this dissertation will seek to combine the teaching of literature with the teaching of enhancing crosscultural understanding; and, at the same time, put this combination in a theoretical framework. The following chapter will explore the particular methods which will be used in the pursuit of the project.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

The general approach in this study is qualitative rather than quantitative. The reason is: The subject matter discussed in this study is about the relationship between literature and culture, which can hardly ever rely upon "the use of instruments that provide a standardized framework in order to limit data collection to certain predetermined response or analysis categories to which numerical values are attached" (Patton 1980, p.22). Information/data used in my study needs depth and detail, relies entirely upon the human variables, and will be collected and analyzed mainly through the following methods:

#### 1. Historical research

As in the West, literature has for many years also been excluded in Chinese language programs. Among all the reasons, one stands out in the Chinese situation, that is: the government's over-concern about the influence of Western culture/ideology. A major part of the first chapter of my dissertation is in a way a mini-historical research project on the Chinese experience during the past three decades. It reflects and centers on the question: What caused the fall and revival of

literature in language classrooms in China? This study has been carried out by a historical research method, which involves a search for documents and other sources that contain facts relating to the subject matter. Additionally, in Chapter Four, a certain historical approach is also employed when I analyze the socio-historical reasons for the lack of literature dealing with themes such as death.

According to Borg and Gall (1983:801), historical research in education differs from other types of educational research in that the historical researcher discovers data through a search of historical sources such as diaries, official documents, etc.. In other types of educational research, the researcher creates data by making observations and administering tests in order to describe present events and present performance."

The distinction made by Borg and Gall here is, without doubt, a traditional view; scholars today may well disagree, since text is, as commonly considered nowadays, mediated by time, context and a concept of intertextuality. Historical researchers can certainly both discover and create interpretations of historical text. Nonetheless, in approaching historical sources, I have in the main tried to find supporting evidence for my analysis of language teaching in China.

The documents used in the first chapter are composed mainly of journals published in China and the West. These journals carry not only research papers by both Chinese and Western scholars and educators but also official or semi-official documents and reports on policy and planning of language teaching and learning in P. R. China, from which I have found the data I need for my interpretative analysis.

Currently, there are four major official journals in China, which specialize in research, theory and practice of foreign language teaching. They are Foreign Language Teaching and Research (Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu, a quarterly by Beijing Foreign Studies University Press), Contemporary Foreign Languages (Xiandai Waiyu, a quarterly by Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages), Foreign languages (Waiguo yu, a bimonthly by Shanghai Institute of Foreign Languages), Foreign Language World (Waiyu jie, a quarterly by Shanghai Institute of Foreign Languages). In these journals, there are a considerable number of articles and reports which have provided good sources for helping me to shape ideas and analysis, even though they are not used directly.

For example, an article entitled: "The Earliest Foreign Language School in China--the Siyi House in Ming Dynasty" (Ge Zhilun, 1987:2) has very interesting historical information: the first foreign language

school in China was founded in the fourth year of Yongle (1407); eight divisions were set up at the beginning and then expanded to ten in the sixth year of Wanli (1578); to start with only one course: translation was offered and in 1542 two more courses: conversation and writing were added; in the year of 1903, the Capital (Jingdu) University was established, specializing in teaching English, French, German, Russian, Japanese and some other languages.... Data concerning the remote antiquity of foreign language teaching in China are indeed fascinating and most valuable; unfortunately, they are not easily available as "primary sources" and, more often than not, we must rely on "secondary sources".

With regard to the recent development of foreign language teaching in China, we have much more accessibility to the "primary sources". Official and semi-official articles and reports are regularly carried in the journals mentioned earlier, such as: "Foreign Language Teaching and Research in the New Era" (Wei Yu: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu, 1978:1), "Reports on the National Conference of Foreign Language Education" (Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu, 1978:2 ) "China's Modernization and its English Language Needs" (Xu Guozhang, Xiandai waiyu 1985:4) and "The International Symposium on the Teaching of English in the Chinese Context" (ISTEC) by Huang Guo-wen (4:49, ibid 1985), "Reports on the Second

Plenary Session of the Symposium of Foreign Language Teaching" (Yang Huizhong, 1987:1). These documents, as good primary sources, enable me to command first-hand historical data to analyze the official policy of language teaching, its implementation and impact.

Apart from consulting journals published in China, I have also consulted journals, books published in the States and in Britain. In a book entitled: Language and Linguistics in P.R. China (Lehmann, 1975), some valuable historical records are kept. The author went to China in the heyday of the cultural revolution to explore language teaching and linguistics research in China. Interviewing many teachers and students and journalized his findings, which were later published as a book. The original historical data contained in this book by a foreign observer are particularly valuable, because during those frantic "revolutionary days" very little truth was revealed in any official publications in China.

Borg and Gall also write in Educational Research (1983: 823), "an essential task of historical research consists of investigating the causes of past events.". In my study, I have investigated the causes of the vacillation in the role of literature in post-revolutionary China. By consulting historical books, I have also tried to trace the causes for the different views on death and individualism in Chinese and American cultures.

As far as individualism is concerned, the main cause, in my view, is the ideological concern of the government leadership--in such a highly centralized and politicalized state as China, nothing can be separated from politics/ideology. As to the attitude toward death, I find that the differences were ostensibly derived from the different traditions of religious beliefs. These two points will be illustrated in Chapter Four.

## 2. Theorizing through critical reading

Critical reading is a method every researcher will use. But in order to do a thorough review of the literature, a researcher must first identify and understand the research that has already been done in the field of interest and then try to advance the scientific knowledge by collecting, analyzing and theorizing the data in the related fields, usually of an interdisciplinary nature. In this dissertation, I have, accordingly, followed these two steps.

For preliminary exploration, I started by reviewing the areas of "culture teaching" and "literature teaching" in general and then narrowed them down to "teaching culture and teaching literature in second language acquisition". My specific purposes at this stage are: a) to discover whether literature teaching has been linked

with culture learning in the field of second language acquisition, b) to discover how much has been done in this direction.

Having decided on the "key words", I checked preliminary sources, consulting education index, journal abstracts and resources provided by Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). After exploring and reviewing the literature in the areas of "culture teaching" and "literature teaching", I find that although literature has been revived in language programs and has also been linked with culture learning, yet a great deal more needs to be accomplished in the field. During this process, I began the data analysis, as Goetz and LeCompte suggest (1984), by "comparing, contrasting, ordering, and establishing linkages and relationships...".

Following the first stage, I started a new task of "theorizing"--to set up a theoretical framework for my hypothesis: Literature is a good source for promoting crosscultural understanding. To achieve this purpose, I began what might be called a "theoretical sampling"-- "a careful search for the theory that best matches the existing data" (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984)--reviewing the literatures in different disciplines, such as anthropology, sociolinguistics, language acquisition and literary criticism. At the same time, I also examined some concrete "negative" examples for the pedagogical concerns

that we need to consider. As a result, I have discovered a number of supporting theories and have tried to synthesize them into a theoretical framework for my hypothesis.

The results of this kind of theorizing through critical reading will be presented as a theoretical framework in the first part of Chapter Four and also as pedagogical thoughts in Chapter Five.

### 3. Comparative cultural critique

To illustrate and amplify the cultural differences and similarities between China and the United States, I have compared and contrasted the cultural patterns, assumptions, values, and perceptions of the two nations. It is one of the contemporary techniques of cultural critique: "defamiliarization by crosscultural juxtaposition", as summed up by Marcus and Fischer in their book Anthropology as Cultural Critique (1986).

Marcus and Fischer, two American anthropologists, begin their book (1986) with an interesting statement:

Twentieth-century social and cultural anthropology has promised its still largely Western readership enlightenment on two fronts. The one has been the salvaging of distinct cultural forms of life from a process of apparent global Westernization. With both its romantic appeal and its scientific intentions, anthropology has stood for the refusal to accept this conventional perception of homogenization toward a dominant Western model. The other promise of anthropology, one less fully distinguished and attended to than the first, has been to serve as a form of cultural critique for ourselves. In using portraits of



other cultural patterns to reflect self-critically on our own ways, anthropology disrupts common sense and makes us reexamine our taken-for-granted assumptions. (p.1)

Although the authors' concern here is about the Western situation, the significance of their discussion is by all means applicable to situations in the East as well. In return, nations in the East can also re-examine the "dominant Western model" and, secondly, use portraits of Western patterns to reflect on their own ways and examine their own "taken-for-granted" assumptions". In fact, having survived the "cultural revolution", China is at present going through the process of re-evaluating the Western model and self-criticism and self-examination. That has given rise to a major drive in China in recent years to compare and appraise crossculturally the Western and Chinese civilizations. The recent student movement in Beijing, which debated the concepts of freedom and democracy, is a big and loud indication.

Marcus and Fischer have introduced in their book two contemporary techniques of cultural critique in anthropology: "Both techniques--epistemological critique and crosscultural juxtaposition--are variants on the basic critical strategy of defamiliarization. Disruption of common sense, doing the unexpected, placing familiar subjects in unfamiliar, or even shocking, contexts are the aims of this strategy to make the reader conscious

of difference." (ibid, p.137) Quite significantly, this strategy of defamiliarization has many uses beyond anthropology. It has become a basic method of artistic expression, including literary criticism. For instance, according to Victor Shklovsky, the Russian Formalist, "a novel point of view... can make a reader perceive by making the familiar seem strange", and "the chief technique for promoting such perception is 'defamiliarization'." (Lemon et al, 1965:5)

The two techniques of cultural critique in anthropology have been both proved to be effective and widely used by many an anthropologist. "Defamiliarization by epistemological critique arises from the very nature of traditional anthropological work: going out to the periphery of the Euro-centric world where conditions are supposed to be most alien and profoundly revising the way we normally think about things in order to come to grips with what in European terms are exotica."

"Defamiliarization by crosscultural juxtaposition... offers a more dramatic and up-front kind of cultural critique. The idea is to use substantive facts about another culture as a probe into the specific facts about a subject of criticism at home." (ibid p.137-p.168)

While both techniques are useful and commonly used in cultural anthropology, the technique "defamiliarization by crosscultural juxtaposition" seems to be more

serviceable for my study. First, to defamiliarize by epistemological critique is unfeasible for most foreign learners-- we are unable to suggest that all learners of a foreign language should be immersed in the culture of the native language. Second, the technique "defamiliarization by crosscultural juxtaposition" accentuates, as the name suggests, the importance of crosscultural juxtaposition, thus objectively putting the two cultures concerned on an equal footing. It is a "a matching of ethnography abroad with ethnography at home", which works at a more explicitly empirical level, thus rendering more practical value.

With "defamiliarization by crosscultural juxtaposition" as a technique in my comparative critique of Chinese and American cultures, I have set out to implement the task in the following steps:

First, I have based my comparison and contrast on the research done by Chinese and American scholars. Important works such as American Cultural Patterns--a crosscultural perspective (E. Stewart, 1977), Americans and Chinese (Hsu, 1981), Culture and Self--Asian and Western perspective (Marsella, Devos, Hsu 1985) and Habits of the Heart--individualism and commitment in American life (Bellah et al, 1985) are valuable to my investigation. In comparison, I have focused my

"juxtaposition" on the concept of individualism, which I will elaborate on in Chapter Five.

Second, yet perhaps equally significant, is the fact that I have, for many years, been consciously comparing and contrasting American and Chinese cultures--doing projects of an ethnographic nature, such as the teacher-student relation on Chinese and American campuses. The large amount of empirical experience and first-hand knowledge I have accumulated is in due form interwoven and manifested in the following chapters. In this sense, my study has also resorted to an ethnographic method. Of course, in the meanwhile, to use my own past Chinese experience to examine an alien (in this case, American) culture may well be ethnocentric and epistemological in nature, yet my emphasis here is definitely on comparison and juxtaposition of the two cultures; and I have consciously tried to compare and contrast them without any "taken-for-granted assumptions", in other words, putting them on equal footing in my appraisal.

Thirdly, I have exploited "the substantive cultural facts" contained in English literary works and used them as a probe into Chinese culture--to generate a crosscultural understanding. For most language students, it is hard to have the opportunity to study abroad and obtain first-hand, ethnographic knowledge of the target culture. Through literature students can live

vicariously the cultural experience they need for mastering the command of the target language.

#### 4. Marxian approach to literature

Owing to the literary nature of my study, I have inevitably adopted a certain approach or approaches of literary criticism. Professor Leitch writes aptly in the preface to his book American Literary Criticism (1988):

American literary criticism between the 1930's and 1980's exhibited continuous struggles between various "formalistic" schools of criticism devoted to linguistic, ontological, and epistemological habits of mind and certain "cultural" movements committed to sociological, psychological, and political modes of thinking. On one side of this divide stood New Criticism, the Chicago School, phenomenological criticism, hermeneutics, structuralism, and deconstruction. On the other side were Marxist criticism, the New York Intellectuals, myth criticism, existential criticism, reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and the Black Aesthetic movement.... One conceived of the literary work as a miraculous, semi-autonomous aesthetic artifact and the other conceptualized literature as a valuable cultural production grounded in anthropological, economic, social, and political history. (p. xii)

Almost automatically, my study object: Literature for crosscultural understanding "takes the side" of viewing "literature as a valuable cultural production", because of its predilection for cultural inquiries. Moreover, among all the culturally-oriented movements and "isms", the Marxian approach seems to be the most

concerned with culture and society and hence the most useful to my hypothesis.

Since its inception, Marxist literary criticism has been constantly under attack; yet it has survived most forcefully and prompted a plurality of Marxisms throughout the past decades. The vigour and vitality of Marxist criticism are not merely shown in the concrete results of Marxist literary analysis and interpretation. Rather, Marxist literary criticism is regarded most powerful as a method which inspires "an awareness of an increasing complex task to assess all the things and circumstances that contribute to the form and content of human creation...." (Corredor in Tracing Literature, 1987 p.122)

In his famous essay "What Is an Author?", Foucault states:

Furthermore, in the course of the nineteenth century, there appeared in Europe another, more uncommon, kind of author, whom one should confuse with neither the "great" literary authors, nor the authors of religious text, nor the founders of science. In a somewhat arbitrary way we shall call those who belong in this last group "founders of discursivity." They are unique in that they are not just authors of their own words. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts. In this sense, they are very different, for example, from a novelist, who is, in fact, nothing more than the author of his own text. Freud is not just the author of The Interpretation of Dreams or Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious; Marx is not just the author of the Communist Manifesto or Das Kapital: they both have established an endless possibility of

discourse. (Foucault Reader, Rabinow, ed. 1984, p. 114)

True, Marx, as Foucault describes, is one of "the figures who provide a paradigmatic set of terms, images, and concepts which organize thinking and experience about the past, present, and future of society, doing so in a way which enigmatically surpasses the specific claims they put forth. (ibid p. 25) Therefore, Marxism today is no longer simply a theory advocated by Marx; it is, at the same time, "a paradigmatic set of terms, images, and concepts", which can be exploited as an effective discursive method. It is necessary to mention that Marxist criticism is treated as a method in this chapter; however, it will be employed as a theory in the next chapter.

To apply Marxist literary criticism to literary works, I have examined Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman and Robert Frost's poems through, to borrow Wellek and Warren's terms (1949), "the extrinsic approach", rather than through "the intrinsic approach". However, my "extrinsic approach" is not an "over-emphasis on the conditioning circumstances rather on the works themselves". In other words, I have not concerned myself with the setting, the environment, and the external causes of the works; instead, I have approached these works from the social, cultural, and historical perspectives, rather than from a pure literary point of

view. I have focused on the content rather than the form of these works, aiming at finding the cultural meaning in the works rather than their stylistic form and mode. Viewing literature as "reflection of reality" and juxtaposing "the extrinsic" with "the intrinsic" and "content" with "form", I have adopted a "traditional" Marxian approach. However, in the meantime, I am critically aware of the fact that over the decades Marxist literary criticism has undergone many modifications, through its self-critique and the critiques from others. In spite of their shared belief that literature is part of superstructure and part of the culture of a society, different schools of Marxist literary criticism exist in this present world. Corredor (1987) says pertinently: "By continuously challenging itself and other existing discourses, it has contributed to the modification and 'correction' of extreme structuralism, modernism, deconstruction, and reader-response theories." Consequently, Marxian literary theory, with its implicit interest in society and culture, is an important component of the methodology in my dissertation--a discursive method of self-critique and critique of others. For instance, just as some Marxist critics recognize the "autonomy" of literature--its form and "literariness", I shall also give, while stressing the socio-cultural value of literature, full



consideration and due recognition for the linguistic and aesthetic value of literature.

Finally, in this chapter I have explained the four basic methods I have employed in carrying out my project, which is essentially a combination of both educational research and literary criticism. Naturally, my methodology is, in accordance with the nature of the study, a blend of effective methods commonly used in both fields.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHY LITERATURE AND HOW IT WORKS

Having expounded earlier the fall and rise of literature in foreign language teaching in both China and the West, and having diagnosed the problem in the recent rehabilitation of literature, I find that although there is currently no shortage of interest in using literature in language classrooms, there is a noticeable absence of "theorizing" in the field, especially in terms of cross-cultural understanding.

In this chapter, I am going to present a theoretical framework, that is based on some of the existing theories in the fields of cultural anthropology, literary criticism and second language acquisition. This framework, interdisciplinary in nature, is meant to serve as a guideline and rationale for my hypothesis: teaching literature for crosscultural understanding; and it consists of three components, namely: definitions of culture, the Marxian view of literature, and the reader-response theory.

#### 1. Definitions of culture

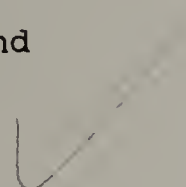
Coming from the German word KULTUR, the term "culture" has acquired many different meanings and

definitions in the past one hundred years, which reflect changing interests and ideas--particularly in the field of cultural anthropology. "Culture" used to refer only to the "refined artistic taste or achievement of a civilization ", or what Allan Bloom (1987) calls "something high, profound, respectable--a thing before which we bow". In recent years, it has been redefined as "communication" (Hall, 1959), the "unique life style of a particular group of people... communicable knowledge, learned behavioral traits that are shared by participants in a social group and manifested in their institutions and artifacts (Harris and Moran 1979), or "a set of shared symbolic ideas associated with societal patterns of cultural ordering" (Gudykunst and Kim, 1984). It is no longer an abstract concept, but a "set of ideas, behaviors, and even products", which is shared and can be observed (Robinson 1985).

As Damen says (1987): "Each change (of the definition of culture) has been in a sense an addition rather than a replacement and each reflects the increasing realization on the part of the definers that there are no simple ways to describe mankind's primary adaptive and evolutionary mechanism: culture. Its power lies in its diversity and resistance to definition. It never allows reductionism; it constantly challenges." Nevertheless, in his famous article "Theories of

Culture", R. Keesing (1974) correctly points out another important issue: "The challenge in recent years has been to narrow the concept of 'culture' so that it includes less and reveals more." And we should, as C. Geertz suggests (1973), "cut the culture concept down to size (into) a narrowed, specialized and ...theoretically more powerful concept".

In order to sort out the various conceptualizations of culture, perhaps we need to start with familiarizing ourselves with the terms or concepts Keesing has summarized in his article. First, he sums up three broad assumptions of what he calls "cultural adaptationists" who consider "cultures as adaptive systems." These assumptions are, according to him, a) Cultures are systems of socially transmitted behaviour patterns that serve to relate human communities to their ecological settings; b) Culture change is primarily a process of adaptation and what amounts to natural selections; c) Technology, subsistence economy, and elements of social organization directly tied to production are the most adaptively central realms of culture. Then, under the title of "ideational theories of culture", Keesing introduces three rather different ways of approaching cultures as systems of ideas. They are "cultures as cognitive systems", "cultures as structural systems", and "cultures as symbolic systems".



Some of the basic ideas Keesing summed up in Theories of Culture are shared by Robinson in her book Crosscultural understanding (1985). What Keesing defines as "cultures as adaptive systems" roughly coincides with what Robinson calls: "behaviorist and functionalist definitions". The basic view of the two definitions is the notion that "culture is something which is shared and can be observed." As G. Robinson cites Spradley (1972), "The behavioral definition focuses upon observable patterns of behaviour within some social group." The functionalist approach to culture is, Robinson asserts, an attempt at making sense out of social behavior. It stresses the reasons and rules for the behavior and yet it again views culture as a social phenomenon and depends on observations of the behavior.

At the same time, what Keesing calls "ideational theories of culture" can perhaps be matched with what Robinson names: "the category of ideas"--"the cognitive definition" and "the symbolic definition". To put it simply, the notion behind these two ideational concepts is that "culture is not an observable material phenomenon; it is something internal and yet can be explicitly described."

Given so many various definitions of culture, which reflect different theoretical concepts, we might need to select a most appropriate definition or definitions--as a

rationale/methodology for our study subject: the relation between culture and literature. Behaviorist and functionalist approaches help us to recognize and anticipate culture behavior and to become aware of why people act the way they do. But as Robinson warns us, these approaches are insufficient, because they assume that cultural behaviors and their functions can be directly observed or inferred from observations. A significant part of the non-observable internal process of culture--a way of perceiving, interpreting and creating meaning--is overlooked. To deal with the internal mapping and meaning creation leads us to "cognitive" and "symbolic" definitions.

Robinson aptly comments in conclusion: "Classroom practices in second language and bilingual education tend to reflect behaviorist and functionalist perspectives. Less applied areas are cognitive and symbolic concepts of culture which are non-observable and internal to the cultural actor or learner." (ibid, p. 12)

Generally speaking, the cognitive definition looks at culture as "knowledge" (versus behavior), which is defined in terms of the internal program or system of organizing--"it is the forms of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough, 1964)". A recent and representative development of this cognitive

approach to culture is Holland and Quinn's "theory of cultural models" (1987). They believe that "A very large proportion of what we know and believe we derive from these shared models that specify what is in the world and how it works." Their theory is built up on "a new (anthropological) view of culture as shared knowledge--- not a people's customs and artifacts and oral traditions, but what they must know in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do." (p.4) In a word, the cognitive approach emphasizes that "culture is an internal mechanism for organizing and interpreting inputs."

On the other hand, the symbolic approach views culture as a system of symbols and meanings. And more importantly, "symbolic anthropology is concerned with the dynamic inter-relationship between meaning, experience and reality" --an ongoing, dialectic process which creates meaning." It "focuses neither on external events (behavior) nor the internal mechanisms for organizing per se, but rather on the meaning which results from the dialectic process between the two." This dialectic notion of culture can certainly be applied to teaching culture in second language acquisition, because it suggests, as Robinson writes, that cultural understanding is an ongoing, dynamic process in which learners continually synthesize cultural inputs with their own past and

present experience in order to create meaning--a synthesis between the learner's home culture, the target culture input and the learner as an individual." (ibid, p.11-p.12)

As we can see, the four different cultural definitions, address different aspects of culture; and in practice they are often used in a synthesized fashion. But the behaviorist approach stresses the observable actions and events in a society, such as customs, habits, gestures. The functionalist approach focuses "on the underlying structure or rules which govern and explain these observable events." These two approaches, as Robinson points out, are more reflected in language classrooms, because the educators tend to conceive of culture in categories of observable behaviors or products and more tangible ideas. This current study, however, is more interested in exploring "the non-observable deep structure", rather than "the observable surface structure", of culture, the two ideational cognitive and symbolic approaches may well serve as the theoretical starting point of our study here.

Meanwhile, the meaning-oriented symbolic approach seem to hold a special appeal, in the sense that "meaning is not independent of experience, but rather in the dynamic interaction with it." Robinson quotes Dolgin et al. (1977):



Symbolic structures and particular utterances stand in a genuinely dialectical relationship, in which both elements take on their actual character only as a product of their inter-relation.... It is in this dialectic--mediated at times by necessity, and always by an entire complex of social relations and historical processes--that meaning is continually taking shape.... (p.12)

This dynamic, dialectical notion is a Marxian view, that regards culture or life as an ever-changing socio-historical process in which the new product (meaning) is the result of a synthesis between the old and the new. To generate crosscultural understanding, one certainly needs to hold this viewpoint, after all, as Robinson says, "learning to understand someone from another culture hinges on the internal development of new or synthesized meaning for each other."

To be more concrete, as we mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, instead of the simple, old notion to learn to understand other people, crosscultural understanding should be a synthesis between the student's home culture, the target cultural input and the student as an individual. It is an ongoing, dynamic process in which the students continually synthesize, compare and contrast the target culture with their own experience in the home culture. It is a two way street--a synthesized process of both acculturation and enculturation--a crosscultural understanding.

Talking of internalizing and synthesizing cultural experiences, I would like to repeat one more emphasis, namely: cultural transmission should be done through multi-modal messages--language, space, time, people, activities--within an integrated context. In my opinion, any literary work, be it a novel, a short story or a play, will provide us the indispensable integrated context.

## 2. A Marxian view of literature

Not unrelated to the Marxian view of culture, one essential aspect of the Marxian definition of literature is that literature, as part of culture/superstructure, is also a dynamic and dialectical socio-historical phenomenon.

In their fragmentary writings on art and literature, Marx and Engles give us three somewhat conflicting views: a) art depends on a particular social formation; b) art is (and should be) an instrument of political action; c) art is relatively autonomous. In early twentieth century, the first view of Marxism was rather systematically expounded by Plekhanov, who pointed out that "social being determines artistic consciousness and production" and that "art reflects life"; the second view was developed by Lenin in the early days of the October Revolution in Russia and institutionalized later by

Zhadanov in the name of "Socialist Realism": art must seek to further the socialist revolution; the third view was supported by early Trotsky, who allowed art to unfold in a sphere of its own.

In the United States, Marxist literary criticism started and thrived, along with the development of socialism and communism, in the 1930s when the "Great Depression" hit the whole American economy. From the very beginning, American Marxists firmly believed that literature is rooted in the soil of society. In the preface to his book The Liberation of American Literature (1932), V. Calverton, an American Marxist, wrote: "This book is as much a study of American culture as it is of American literature, for its aim is to interpret American literature in terms of American culture." (Leitch, 1988 p.8)

Following the popularity of Marxist aesthetic theory in the thirties in the West is its sharp decline, which started in the forties and lasted till the seventies. During that period, there emerged many schools of Non-Marxian literary criticisms: New Criticism, the Chicago School, phenomenological criticism, hermeneutics, structuralism, and deconstruction, all of which belong to the "formalistic" schools "devoted to linguistic, ontological, and epistemological habits of mind" and share the common disinterest in the socio-cultural

aspects of literature. However, the early seventies witnessed a rekindled interest in Marxist criticism, which led to the appearance of the various kinds of Neo-Marxisms in the seventies and the eighties. Among the most representative Marxist critics are Raymond Williams in Britain, Fredric Jameson in the United States, and Herbert Marcuse in France. For some literary critics, the mixing of literature and society is still viewed as reductionistic or non-literary; yet "for others, such as Fredric Jameson, Marxism, which operates within an all-encompassing cultural framework, is the ultimate horizon of all literary inquiry." (Corredor, 1987)

Therefore, the problem is how to evaluate and determine among the various kinds of twentieth century Marxisms. Beginning at the thirties or earlier, Marxism as literary criticism has indeed come a long way.

In his "Political Criticism", Michael Ryan (1989) writes:

Marxist criticism is both broader in scope and more focused than other schools of literary critics. It is broader because it seeks to combine textual analyses with the study of social and historical contexts. Many Marxist critics aim for an ideal of 'totality', which means that such criticism tries to give an account of everything that a literary text means in its given, determinate social situation. The ideal of totality also implies that Marxist criticism should be able to include all other forms of criticism in its general project. It does this primarily by adding a social meaning to what other schools of criticism would confine to literary meaning.... (p.200)

Marxist criticism is more focused than other approaches because it has a very definite aim, which excludes many varieties of literary criticism in their pure form. That aim is political: the purpose of Marxist criticism is to enable an understanding of the social and cultural world that will contribute to its transformation. Marxists study literature as part of a larger political project, but in consequence they sacrifice a purely "literary" study of literature. Their focus on a political understanding of culture necessarily excludes a broader investigation into nonpolitical or aesthetic phenomena. (p.200-p.201)

True, over the past two decades, Marxist theory has gone through a historical shift. It has been expanding and has now a much stronger political/cultural focus. It is concerned with not only social history or economic reality but also "their role in the replication of social power through culture". Nowadays, it is difficult to speak of Marxist criticism as "a category apart from a broader critical undertaking that includes work being done by non-Marxists"; and it might be, as Ryan suggests, called "political criticism" or "cultural criticism".

According to Ryan, this new Marxian notion is "cultural", because it covers not only standard works of literature--the traditional canon, but also "such arenas of culture as film, television, popular literature and the symbolic elements of everyday life". And "it is 'political' because it leaves behind the traditional neutral or objective stance of criticism and is directed explicitly toward an intervention into current political debate, rather than toward a distant future social trans-

formation." More importantly, as Ryan says, "traditional Marxist criticism has been combined with newer critical developments, such as feminism and poststructuralism, giving rise to hybrids that escape traditional categorization. What used to be called Marxist criticism--the description of the historical and social referents of texts--is no longer recognizable as such in the new critical forms. In its place has developed a rather sophisticated mixture of structural psychoanalysis, which are harnessed to the service of Marxist criticism but which force it beyond its traditional boundaries." (ibid, p.201)

Quite obviously, there has been a marked determination to situate aesthetic phenomena and artifacts in relation to both social foundations and other cultural works. Leitch (1988) points out: "This project required of literary critics not only textual analysis, but also investigations into the economic, political, social, institutional, and historical grounds of cultural production, distribution, and consumption."

Accordingly, American Marxian critics and scholars have increasingly advocated "totalizing modes of examination and wide-ranging programs of cultural studies." In 1985, Cultural Critique was established at the University of Minnesota and intended to "occupy the broad terrain of cultural interpretation that is cur-

rently defined by the conjuncture of literary, philosophical, anthropological, and sociological studies, of Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytical, and post-structuralist methods." (Leitch, p.400-p.403)

Despite the different early and subsequent views of Marxist aesthetic theory, the classic Marxian supposition, generally accepted by both traditional Marxist and Neo-Marxist critics, is that "art, literature included, is part of the superstructure, the ideological framework and of social existence." And the fact that Marxist criticism has expanded its study objects and stresses the role of literature as part of culture and through culture is a forceful theoretical support for my argument in this dissertation: Literature as part of the totality of society and culture should be combined with crosscultural understanding in our language programs.

### 3. Reader-response theory

Literature not only embodies and reflects social reality; it also provides an interactive context between reader and text. Reader-response theory, which was fully developed in the past decade, regards the reading process as an interaction between text and reader. Readers with different cultural backgrounds have different interpretations of and reactions to the text. However, while the reader brings his/her psychological, social, and cultural

environment into any reading of a given text, the text will also exert its own force on the reader and usually "emerges as a stronger partner". During the dynamic "face-to-face" interaction of the reading process, literary texts can foster empathy and facilitate acculturation. (Ingarden 1973, Iser 1978, Rosenblatt, 1978) In this sense, therefore, literary texts can and should be used in language teaching to enhance the student's crosscultural awareness.

Terry Eagleton writes in Literary Theory: an Introduction (1983 p.74), "One might very roughly periodize the history of modern literary theory in three stages: a pre-occupation with the author (Romanticism and the nineteenth century); an exclusive concern with the text (New Criticism); and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years." Eagleton's observation is rather "rough" and yet correct. Reader-response theory, one of the modern approaches of literary criticism, can actually be traced back to I.A. Richards who first diagnosed reading as a problem in the twenties. In his famous book Practical Criticism (1952), Richards explains his program for improving reading experience. First, he asks his students to write down their free response to poems he gives them, without revealing the names of the authors. The result displays a variety of contradictory responses. The fact that students from very similar



background and with similar interests can produce such divergent readings is fascinating. But Richards sees divergence as a problem and complains, even in the book, that his readers come to the poems with too many contexts and presuppositions and at the same time lack enough contexts, that would allow them to read certain poems properly. Richards sees and fails to see at once that "readings are not found but made--made by the contexts the reader brings to bear on the text." (Berg, 1987, p. 251). (Of course, "not found" here should read "not just found"-- it would be another extreme to say all readings are made.)

Interestingly enough, what Richards saw as a problem over three decades ago has already developed into a full-fledged literary theory. "In sharp contrast to the period when New Criticism provided the dominant model for American critical practice, it is now hard to find serious literary theorists who do not, in one way or another, feel the need to account for the activities of the reader." (Rabinowitz, 1989, p.81)

Unlike the New Critics who believed that: "a literary text is an autonomous object that can and should be analyzed without regard to its context", more and more critics have begun to turn their attention from the "text itself" to the contexts in which it is embedded-- both the contexts of its production and the contexts of its

reception. Unlike the New Critics who wanted to establish literary criticism as an independent discipline, neither a supplement to nor even significantly supplemented by history, sociology, anthropology, psychology, or other fields, the boundary lines of the discipline, in the new field of reader-response theory, have begun to dissolve. Often one may find it hard to tell where literary criticism ends and where the other disciplines begin.

Reader-response theory, alias audience-oriented criticism, emphasizes the role of the reader in the literary transaction and reading process as an interaction between text and reader. According to the phenomenological view, the text is seen as a highly organized arrangement of cues which evoke a range of cognitive operations resulting in the formulation of the literary work. The literary work is thus concretized or realized during the reading process by a reader seeking to make coherent sense out of the text (Ingarden, 1973). It is during the process of a dynamic interaction between text and reader that the reader, on some level, "construe" and "construct" meaning and that the realization of the literary work is achieved. This can also be related to the symbolic definition of culture we discussed earlier: readings/meanings are made "in a dialectical relationship, in which both elements take on

their actual character only as a product of their interrelation... It is in this dialectic... that meaning is continually taking shape."

In his The Implied Reader (1974), W. Iser stresses the reader's faculty for establishing connections-- filling the gaps between the explicit and the implicit in the text. He writes:

And yet literary texts are full of unexpected twists and turns, and frustration of expectations. Even in the simplest story there is bound to be some kind of blockage, if only because no tale can ever be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story gains its dynamism. ... These gaps have a different effect on the process of anticipation and retrospection, and thus on the gestalt of the virtual dimension, for they may be filled in different ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled.

Here Iser has raised an important issue, that is: different readers will have different ways to read the text-- "to fill the gaps in the text." In this sense, a crosscultural and often interlingual reader is bound to read the text from a crosscultural perspective. However, Iser (1978) also noticed, both text and reader contribute equally in the construction of the literary work. Although the reader will bring his/her social, and cultural environment into the reading (gap-filling), the text will inevitably exert its own force on the reader.

This theory has properly provided us with the rationale for teaching literature for the purpose of acquiring crosscultural understanding, for literature, through the dynamic interacting reading process, fosters empathy, facilitates acculturation and offers the student/reader the opportunity to enhance his/her crosscultural awareness.

Reader-response theory opens up ways to discuss the crosscultural interpretations of the text and the cross-cultural impact on the reader. It is worth mentioning that in applying the reader-response theory to literature teaching, Louise Rosenblatt can be regarded as one of the pioneers. Her book Literature as Exploration first appeared in 1938 and was republished in 1968 and 1976. The author emphasizes the interaction between reader and text in the reading process and presents literature as a vehicle for shared cultural values. In the preface to the third edition of her book (1976), Rosenblatt writes: "Literature is thus for him (the reader) a medium of exploration. Through books, the reader may explore his own nature, become aware of potentialities for thought and feeling within himself.... (and) he may explore the outer world, other personalities, other ways of life." According to Rosenblatt (1938, 1976), we as readers "seek to participate in another vision--to reap knowledge of the world, to fathom the resources of the human spirit,

to gain insights that will make his own life more comprehensible." Berg (1987) points out, "Rosenblatt designed Literature as Exploration as a guide for teachers of literature. Just as the reader must be responsible to the text, the teacher must be responsible to the student. For Rosenblatt, the aesthetic and the social are not divorced from one another; they are in fact, the same. The aesthetic experience is a social experience. Furthermore, it is an educational experience."

In her second book The Reader, the Text, the Poem (1978), Rosenblatt emphasizes and develops her view that the "poem" is an event and reading is an aesthetic transactional experience between the reader and the text. Reader and text interact, condition each other. The whole process is to create the "poem" as a vital, organic, synthesizing activity: "First, the text is a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience with literature and with life. Second, the text serves as a blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forth; the text regulates what shall be held in the forefront of the reader's attention". (RTP, p.11) It is certain that Rosenblatt's theory on teaching literature as educational, cultural exploration, together with other ideas of

reader-response theory, reinforce strongly the theoretical base of my study here.

The above three theories all contribute to the theoretical framework of my dissertation. These theories belong to different disciplines and yet they can be organically integrated and applied to teaching literature in language learning. We started with the definitions of culture, expounding the differences between various concepts--culture as observable behaviors, products and non-observable ideas, and at the same time stressing culture as a system of symbols and meanings, as the product of the dynamic, dialectical inter-relationship between meaning, experience and reality. Then, recognizing that literature, as part of culture, is also an ever-changing socio-historical phenomenon, we arrive at the Marxian advocacy for cultural-literary criticism--the definition of literature and its relation with culture, and furthermore, with crosscultural understanding. Thirdly, we believe that different readers will bring different meanings into their reading, and particularly, readers with diverse cultural backgrounds will inevitably "fill the gaps in the text" with different cultural interpretations--the reader-response theory certainly fits in. The fact that a single issue can be addressed from diverse and integrated theoretical perspectives reflects in many ways a strength that is, more often than

not, missing in today's academic world of fragmented disciplines.

Having set up a theoretical framework for the study, the paper will now continue to illustrate how literary works can help the student in acquiring linguistic competence, aesthetic appreciation, and, above all, crosscultural understanding.

#### 4. Literature: art and stylistics

Conventionally, literature and drama are considered to hang ambiguously between arts and humanities. Therefore, although there have been arguments on its locality, literature has in practice been taught both as a humanity--a scholarly discipline, and as an art--for its aesthetic value. And largely, this has been true with teaching literature in language programs.

Aesthetically, literature with its beauty of language and the power of dramatization, plot, character, theme, and climax has always enchanted many a student and teacher as well. Many scholars and educators hold the view that literature should be taught as art. Northrop Frye says in his essay On Teaching Literature (1972): "The first principle of literary structure is that all literary works are so presented that they move in time, like music, and yet, because they are structures, they can also be studied all in one piece, like paintings."

Bruce Miller says even more clearly in his book Teaching the Art of Literature (1980): "Literature is one of the arts, and reading literature is an artistic, or aesthetic, experience that has something in common with such other aesthetic experiences as listening to music, watching dance, or looking at paintings." (p.3)

Cummings and Simons put it nicely in their book The Language of Literature (1983):

What happens to us when we read literature? We take flight into another existence, into a secondary world of the imagination. We see and hear through language and respond to its stimuli rather than seeing and hearing our actual surroundings or responding to them. It is as though we are hypnotized, released from our own limited bodies and given the freedom to become anything, see anything and feel anything. (p.1)

The effectiveness of literature with its empathic aesthetic power can stimulate students' interest in learning the language. Of course, we should by no means neglect this unique function of literature.

Apart from the often favoured practice of teaching literature as art, there is also the linguistic approach to literature in language classrooms--sometimes referred to as stylistics. The general course philosophy is that students, as readers of literature, are involved first and foremost in a response to language, literary study should be combined with language. It is commonly believed that literature is an example of language in use



and is a context for language use. Studying the language of literary text as language per se can therefore enhance our appreciation of aspects of the different systems of language organization; it provides interesting language problems to solve and can teach the students much that is of real value in understanding the language system. But for many years English literature study occupied an uncomfortable place in the pedagogy of teaching English as a foreign or second language, mainly due to the fact that English literature were taught as the need for exposing the student to the "best" English. From the linguistic point of view, the argument is often that literary language is so remote from everyday usage that the student can derive little of practical value from contact with literary texts. After all, learning chunks of Shakespeare, Milton, even more modern writers like Dickens, can hardly enhance the students' communicative abilities.

In recent years, the issue has been reactivated. In this respect, H. G. Widdowson has made a considerable contribution. The publication of his Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature (1975) stresses the importance of teaching literature as an extension to the acquisition of communicative skills. His contribution, as believed, lies in his extending the general principles underlying language teaching and curriculum design. In his book, H.

Widdowson begins by distinguishing the notion discipline from the pedagogic subject and then he goes on to explain distinctions between the linguist's text and the critic's messages by introducing the concept of discourse. This new definition of discourse is conducive to the understanding the communicative value of passages of language. And this emphasis on communicative value is of great importance to the development of teaching materials for language learning. C. Candin commented in his preface to Widdowson's book:

For too long materials have remained at the surface patterns of linguistic text, and have not drawn learners towards an understanding of the layers of meaning which can be peeled off from utterances: learners have seen sentences as only as illustrations of grammatical patterns and have not asked pragmatic and socio-linguistic questions of what communicative value they have in given settings. (p. vii)

As Widdowson suggests, "an interpretation of a literary work as a piece of discourse involves correlating the meaning of a linguistic item as an element in the language code with the meaning. This correlating procedure is necessary for the production and reception of any discourse, however, so that the ability to use and comprehend language as communication in general provides the basis for the understanding of literature in particular." (STL, p.33)

Significantly, Widdowson furthers his theory of acquiring the ability to use and comprehend language as communication by showing how his ideas can be applied to link the teaching of comprehension with that of literary appreciation. Believing that "the interpretation of literary discourse can be seen as an extension of this ability", he makes a number of practical exercises as "illustrations of some of the ways the principles he has proposed can be realized". His exercises, although tentative as he admits, are quite instructive and useful.

#### 5. Dust of Snow

In order to illustrate his idea of literature as a discourse, Widdowson cites the following simple poem by Robert Frost:

##### Dust of Snow

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

He goes on to say:

This poem consists of a single sentence which a grammar of English would have little problem in generating. Although there is no deviation, however, the lexical items do take on a unique value in association with each other and with their signification in the code. The word "crow", for example, signifies a bird of the genus *Corvus*, a black bird of carrion. In this

context it is associated with "dust" and "hemlock tree" and these words select, as it were, those features of "crow" which they share. A hemlock tree is the common name given to *Abies Canadensis*, which is a kind of North American pine or spruce. What links the item crow with the item hemlock tree in the context of the poem, however, is not the information that the former belongs to genus *Corvus* and the latter to the genus *Abies Canadensis*, nor that the former is a bird and the latter a tree but the crow is black and feeds on corpses and the hemlock tree is, or is thought to be because of its name, poisonous. And these features are all associated with death. The value of the item dust now becomes clear as the one which it has in the phrase in the burial service: 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' and in the passage from Genesis: "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

The association of these lexical items in this context has the effect of activating those semantic features in their signification which have a common point of reference. Thus the value of each of these lexical items lies in its composite character which represents a reconciling of code and context relations. The crow is at one and the same time a familiar black-feathered bird disturbing the snow on the branches of a tree and, in relation to dust and hemlock in the poem, a symbol of death. Once this basic value is recognised, one can then go on to impose a more specific interpretation on the poem and suggest that the crow represents a black-frosted priest scattering dust on a coffin. Since poetic meanings are of their very nature unspecific and ambiguous it is always possible for the reader to translate them into precise terms and so adapt them to his own personal vision: there is no such thing as a definitive interpretation. What is important, however, (particularly from the teaching point of view) is that the individual interpretation should be based on an understanding of how linguistic items take on particular values in discourse. (STL p.38-p.39)

Here Widdowson has raised an interesting issue, that is: how linguistic elements take on particular values as

they occur mutually conditioned in context. Referring to Robert Frost's poem once again in the chapter of "Exercises in literary understanding", Widdowson writes: "What we want to do is to get the learner to recognise the association between crow, dust, snow and hemlock tree. One might begin with a question like this...."

Widdowson then goes on to ask three questions which he thinks will enable the students to discover the possible semantic links between the lexical items. (See appendix.) Instead of a simplistic grammatical analysis of the poem's structure, Widdowson has indeed gone a step further to examine the unifying patterns in the expression of the poem that represent the unifying pattern of the experience of the poet. His well exemplified analysis of Frost's poem has demonstrated that his stylistic/linguistic approach to literary texts can help the students to increase the capacity of their response to "language use"-- "language usage" at a higher level in its communicative context, according to Widdowson. In the last chapter of his book, Widdowson writes: "It has been stressed through this book that the approach that has been outlined is meant to serve an essential pedagogic purpose: to develop in learners an awareness of how literature functions as discourse and so to give them some access to the means of interpretation. ... The value of stylistic analysis is that it can

provide the means whereby the learner can relate a piece of literary writing with his own experience of language and so extend that experience."

However, one may ask: Can a foreign learner, through stylistic analysis, relate to a literary text with his own experience of language? And without sufficient cultural knowledge, can he extend the experience and gain access to "the means of interpretation"? For instance, what does the unifying pattern of the experience of the poet--Robert Frost--mean to a Chinese student?

In his lengthy analysis of the poem "Dust of Snow", Widdowson has succeeded, step by step, in describing the semantic links between crow, dust, snow, and hemlock tree and how these items are associated with death and what it suggests to Robert Frost, the American poet. Here we can go further to ask: what does death suggest to a Chinese learner and what does it mean in American and Chinese cultures?

To make a crosscultural comparison concerning the meaning of death is hard because it is an extremely complex subject. But undoubtedly, it is worthwhile, for it will help the students to reach the "deep structure" of both the target and home cultures and languages. Traditionally, Westerners/Americans and Chinese have adopted different attitudes toward death. To start with the linguistic aspect, death is seldom directly

mentioned in traditional Chinese culture. Instead, an elaborate vocabulary of euphemisms have been developed to circumvent the subject. (For example: bengjia, xianshi, guitian, shishi, qule, qushi, laole, zoule, changmie, buzaile, likaile.) Another strong indication is that while in traditional Chinese literature it is almost a taboo, death has been one of the eternal themes in Western literature.

To address this issue, we perhaps need to discuss it both historically and culturally. Although it is claimed the ancient Greeks and Hebrews were different in their beliefs, especially in their attitude towards death and man's destiny after death, the Western tradition as generally recognized today in the world can be traced back to the Christian intellectual heritage, that is an offspring of the marriage of two ancient traditions: "the Greek tradition as it had descended to Hellenistic culture and the Hebraic tradition mediated by the primitive Christian". (Gatch, 1969, p.20)

In 399 B.C., the Greek philosopher Socrates was condemned to death by the Athenians for corrupting the youth of the city by his teaching and for atheism. In his last conversation with his disciples, recorded by Plato, Socrates said:

Of course, (Socrates remarks) you know that when a person dies, although it is natural for the visible and physical part of him, which lies here in the visible world and which we

call his corpse, to decay and fall to pieces and be dissipated, none of this happens to it immediately. It remains as it was for quite a long time, even if death takes place when the body is well nourished and in the warm season. Indeed, when the body is dried and embalmed, as in Egypt, it remains almost intact for an incredible time, and even if the rest of the body decays, some parts of it --the bones and sinews, and anything else like them-- are practically everlasting....

But the soul, the invisible part, which goes away to place that is, like itself, glorious, pure, and invisible--the true Hades or unseen world--into the presence of the good and wise God, where, if God so wills, my soul must shortly go.... If at its release the soul is pure and carries with it no contamination of the body, because it has never willingly associated with it in life, but has shunned it and kept itself separate as its regular practice--in other words, it has pursued philosophy in the right way and really practiced how to face death easily--this is what "practicing death" means, isn't it?

(Phaedo 80c-81e The collected Dialogues of Plato)

As generally accepted, the Socratic/Platonic notion of the soul, contributed greatly to the history of Western thought. Socrates' definition of death assumes that death is simply the release of the soul from the body and the body is a hindrance to the soul as it seeks to acquire knowledge. "If we are ever to have pure knowledge of anything, we must get rid of the body and contemplate things by themselves with the soul itself." (ibid, 66d) Therefore, to the ancient Greeks, death was a happy event, a moment of fulfillment for the seeker after truth.



As to the Hebraic tradition, the subject of death is approached in a different manner from that of the Greeks. In the light of the biblical tradition, especially exhibited in the New Testament, the basic conviction developed by early Christians was more of resurrection than of immortality. As commonly acknowledged, the Greek concept of immortality is incompatible with that of the Christians. While the Socratic/Platonic notion of death--the soul releasing from the body--emphasized the immortality of the soul, early Christians stressed that the real glory and victory for mortal man was the resurrection of the body. In the writing of Paul, it is stated:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body....

Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is thy victory?"

"O death, where is thy sting?"

(I Cor. 15: 41-55 RSV)

Thus, in contrast with Scorate's notion of death as a happy moment, as Gatch states (p.47): "Death in Paul's view is the 'last' and greatest enemy of man, yet an enemy whose power derives from man's own acts of sinfulness. The moment of death is, thus, one of obliteration or self-obliteration but for the intervention of God in Christ Jesus, whose own resurrection and glorification constitutes man's only hope of victory over death."

Nevertheless, the Greek and Hebraic traditions, despite their differences, shared the common belief in the afterlife, whether conceived as immortality or as resurrection. The fact that the Western philosophical and religious tradition venerates the concepts of "soul", "immortality", "resurrection", and "afterlife" seems to have implicitly motivated and inspired numerous Western writers and philosophers for centuries. Death, like love, has become one of the eternal themes in Western literature and has been considered "the most salient characteristic of life in our century... (and) a force against which the will of man must continually struggle." (ibid, p.3).

As one examines English literature, one cannot but notice the enormous body of works on death. To start with, William Shakespeare's Hamlet might easily be regarded as a play about death, throughout which the

reader as well as the hero is kept thinking about death. All the themes of the medieval memento mori are touched upon as Hamlet meditates upon the idea of being dead or alive. The priest makes a judgement on the state of the soul of Ophelia, who has killed herself. Hamlet considers the skull of the jester Yorick and comments on the decomposition of the body in the grave; there is even the ghost-king from beyond the grave. Hamlet is obsessed by his belief that death inaugurates an existence for the soul which may be even less desirable than life. He wonders if one should live or die and ponders on the fate of man after the hour of death:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep--  
No more, and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
The flesh is heir to; 'tis consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep--  
...

But that the dread of something after death--  
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns--puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?

(Hamlet III. i 55-83 )

At the end of the play, faced with the challenge of Laertes to duel, Hamlet achieves a sense of resolve which enables him to face death with equanimity: "If it be now; 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now;

if it be not now, yet it will come--the readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is't to leave betimes, let be." (ibid, V ii 220-224) From "to be, or not to be..." to "let be", Hamlet has come a long way. But the notion of death and the afterlife is clearly a crucial presupposition throughout the play.

The image of death as sleep occurs prominently in Hamlet and is also a preoccupation of the seventeenth century English poet, John Donne. His concern for death is considered neither simply metaphorical nor metaphysical." (His) Holy Sonnets 7 and 10-- undoubtedly two of the most beautiful devotional poems in world literature-- perform a similar operation on the orthodox idea of death as awakening to eternal life." (Norton p.1990 ) Here is Holy Sonnet 10:

Death, be not proud, though some have called  
thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost  
overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate  
men  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt  
die.

The glorification of the belief that "one short sleep past, we wake eternally" is the Western tradition that is, as we can see, intimately connected with the social ideals and religious beliefs. It is essentially a Christian notion of immortality versus death and soul versus body. Over the centuries, it has been deeply rooted in Western culture and the Western mind; and death as a literary theme has suffused Western literature. In a book like The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces alone, we come across a considerable number of works dealing with DEATH as the central theme:

The death of Hektor (Book XXII, Iliad, Homer)

Death of the Great Hall (Book XXII, The Odyssey)

The Death of Socrates (Phaedo, Plato)

The Death of Turnus (Book XII, Virgil)

The Resurrection ( The New Testament, Matthew)

Death of His Mother ( Book IX, St. Augustine)

Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradise (Divine Comedy, Dante)

Hamlet (Shakespeare)

Holy sonnets (Donne)

Ode on Intimations of Immortality ( Wordsworth)

Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on Melancholy (Keats)

I Died for Beauty... (Dickinson)

The Death of Ivan Llyich (Tolstoy)

Death in Venice (Mann)

The Waste Land (Eliot)

Lament for Ignacio Sanchez Mejias (Garcia Lorca)

Patriotism (Mishima)

In comparison, let us look at Chinese literature, which can be traced back to the middle of the third millennium before Christ. Chinese culture, marked by its antiquity and continuity, has remained homogeneous for at least three thousand years; its literature, like those of other ancient civilizations in the world, is rich and sophisticated in genres, such as--poetry, fiction and drama. However, if we begin to study the themes of Chinese literature, we shall find the noticeable stance in the absence of tragedy. Furthermore, we shall find a striking lack of literary works dealing with death. Why? It can perhaps be attributed to the absence of religious inspiration in Chinese literature. While Western literature, drama in particular, began in pagan ritual and developed in medieval mystery, Chinese literature has been to a great extent a secular literature for as far back as we can trace to more than two thousand years ago. When we think about the the intense Buddhist influence which swept the entire China from the fifth to the ninth centuries, we are surprised to find how comparatively little of it has been manifested in Chinese literature.

As David Hawkes put it aptly, "Imperial China may be likened to a medieval European society without Christianity in which all, not only half, the ruling class were

clerks. The immense esteem in which literacy and education were held meant that a great deal of literary activity was patronized and institutionalized by the state.... (In Imperial China,) the scholar class--the clerks--were Confucians, and their views on literature were coloured by their Confucian training." Despite all the debates and arguments, Confucianism is a secular and practicable moral philosophy that advocates the rituals (li) of personal cultivation and human interaction. It lays emphasis on the rigid relationships between emperor and subject, father and son, husband and wife (sangang) and sometimes two other relations are added: that between brothers and between friends (wu chang). Playing the role of Christianity in the West, Confucianism in China has molded the national character and influenced every aspect of its culture and society, including art and literature. "In a broad sense, much of Chinese literature is Confucian literature." (Liu, p.4) Since Confucianism stresses secular concerns, what has been reflected in literature is that Chinese writers and literati believe, even in modern times, that literature is a vehicle for moral teaching (wen yi zai dao) and their obligation as writers is to influence people to do good deeds and be happy in the secular world. Chinese writers are more concerned about "this life" (jinsheng) and "this world" (jinshi) rather than "afterlife"

(laisheng) and "the next world" (laishi). The Western thought of "immortality and "soul and body" is foreign, and the Western concept of tragedy outlandish. Death as a literary theme is almost a taboo. As Professor W. Liu writes, "Though a man may fall victim to the snares of fate and suffer from tragedies in real life, it would be the Chinese writer's duty to see to it that in literature's make-believe world sorrows are toned down and virtues are praised and duly recompensed. From the Chinese point of view it would be a blemish in a literary work not to give its readers a sense of satisfaction in the ultimate vindication and triumph of the good and virtuous." (p.5) Supporting the down-to-earth teachings of Confucius, the Chinese have created a literature whose main function is secular and utilitarian rather than ecclesiastical and aesthetic. This may have explained the conspicuous lack of literary works dealing with the unsung topic of death and afterlife in Chinese literature. One of the few exceptions in the history of Chinese literature, is perhaps the famous modern writer Lu Xun (1881-1936), who has in some of his works dealt with the theme of death. In his short story "In the Tavern", the protagonist, Lu Weifu, returns, at the request of his mother, to his old home in the south of China for the reburial of his long-dead brother. He can hardly remember what his brother looked like , yet he



feels the need to reunite with him by looking at the remains--in a certain sense, meeting face to face with death itself. It is no surprise that Lu Xun as a writer who has been influenced by Western literature would have chosen such a death theme. Interestingly enough, Lu Xun's notion of death is still different from that of the West. The following paragraph may give us a clear notion about the difference.

Indeed, the coffin was almost totally rotted away, and there were only some wood bits left. My heart beat quicker when I was carefully moving the bits aside to see my brother. Yet, beyond my expectation, there was nothing! No sheets, no clothes, and no skeleton. I thought they might have rotten out, but there should be some hair left, for it is said that hair is the most difficult thing to rot. So I bent lower and looked into the soil where, I supposed, used to lie my brother's head. Still I found nothing. Nothing! (Panghuang, 1924, p.32)

Whereas in Western concept the dead is inseparable from the living--as shown in works such as Joyce's "The Dead" and Shakespeare's Hamlet, in Lu Xun's story the dead and the living are absolutely separated--after one dies, nothing remains for the living.

This literary phenomenon discussed so far reveals the fact that a nation's culture nurtures and forms its literature and is at the same time reflected and embodied in the latter. It is advisable and essential for language teachers to fully recognize the usefulness of literature in teaching a foreign language and the

target culture. Literature furnishes the reader/student with a valuable socio-cultural context and linguistic situations through its setting, conversations, inner thoughts and activities of the characters. Thus, it is no exaggeration to state that literature can reach "the deep structure" of the culture concerned. To illustrate this point, let us examine another characteristic of the Western/American mind: individualism.

#### 6. Death of a Salesman

Again, it is perhaps best to do this is through an analysis of a literary work. For this purpose, I have chosen Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. Being a world famous "social dramatist", Arthur Miller, the contemporary American playwright, has written many plays which are most suitable for our purpose of obtaining cultural insights into American society. Of all his highly praised plays, such as All My Sons, Crucible, and A View from the Bridge, Death of a Salesman is considered as the most popular one internationally. It won a Pulitzer Prize and was adapted for radio, television, motion picture and has been put on stage in many countries, including China. In addition to its success in using superb verbal, symbolic and narrative techniques, the play gives the reader/audience a vivid panorama of American society in the 40's.

In 1983, Arthur Miller was invited to direct the play in China. Upon his return to the States, he wrote a book entitled Salesman in Beijing, in which he faithfully records the cultural clashes between him and his Chinese actors in the production of the play. The cultural clashes described in the book are most revealing and indicate persuasively the importance of crosscultural understanding. The first cultural problem they ran into, according to the playwright, was the playing time of the show. Although in written form a Chinese translation is usually much shorter than the English version, and it is also true with the translation of Death of A Salesman; nevertheless, in this case, the playing time of the show in Chinese lasted about four hours--an hour longer than the usual English presentation. Arthur Miller was amazed but he soon figured that it was a cultural difference. He asked the Chinese actors: "Is the normal Chinese rate slower than the English?". When one of the actors said: "It is true, we don't speak as fast as you.", they played recordings of the Lee Cobb performance and "they (Chinese actors) were a bit scared by the speed of the scenes. They don't see how they can keep a pace like that." This first cultural encounter is indicative of the slower pace of Chinese society--one of the features of a pre-industrialized society. To many Chinese, since ancient times, time is the endless aeon--there will be

always a tomorrow after tomorrow. In many respects, the pace of Chinese society is much slower than that of a post-industrialized society like the United States--the speech rate is certainly one case in point.

The second cultural problem they met with was that the Chinese actors found it hard to create an American kind of performance, because they were not used to "the usual direct and confrontational style of American behavior". In dealing with people Americans are normally more direct, more assertive, more straightforward and often more confrontational; whereas with the Chinese, as Arthur Miller noticed, there is "a usual sensitive diffidence". The Chinese do not normally put themselves forward unless asked and will not openly confront or contradict people. And this kind of diffidence and reluctance to put oneself forward is a "legacy of Confucian self-abnegation and the feudal suppression of individual personality ". This is something Arthur Miller "never really considered before".

Another interesting cultural discrepancy was the concept of sentimentality. While he considers his own play Death of a Salesman basically "a love story between a father and a son, and in a crazy way between both of them and America", Arthur Miller as a modern Western playwright never intends to make the play a melodrama--sentimentality is the last thing he wants. But his

Chinese actors, coming from a different cultural and historical background, were inclined to be melodramatic and overacting. To Miller's disappointment, some characters, such as Linda and Biff Loman, were played too weakly at the beginning. It took the Chinese actors weeks to realize the cultural clash and finally rectify the situation.

The above described sociocultural discrepancies that occurred between Arthur Miller and his Chinese colleagues have exhibited the difficulty in overcoming cultural barriers. But, it is exactly the difficulty that challenges language teachers to help the students in acquiring cultural insights. The play Death of a Salesman, in many ways, is a microcosm of American society and culture--a well-integrated and well-synthesized social context for crosscultural understanding. It introduces to Chinese students American travelling salesman, businessman, bartender, secretary..., familiarizes the students with "the American way of life", and above all helps the students to understand the complexity of life in a post-industrialized society and to see the root cause of the death of Willy Loman.

The late Chinese professor Lin Yutang wrote shrewdly five decades ago in his book My Country and My People: "To the West, it seems hardly imaginable that the relationship between man and man could be maintained

without reference to a Supreme Being, while to the Chinese it is equally amazing that men should not, or could not, behave toward one another as decent beings without thinking of their indirect relationship through a third party." (p.106) Here we can interpret it this way: whereas in a religious culture a Westerner cannot live alone as a MAN, it is impossible for a Chinese in a rather agnostic culture to live alone as an individual. Therefore, what stands out as a fundamental difference between the Chinese and the American minds might be the concept of individualism. While Westerners sometimes complain about the Chinese absence of sense of individualism, most Chinese often find Western individualism bewildering and incomprehensible. To examine the difference, it is best for us to look at the American definition of individualism; after all, the United States is the most representative country of the Western world. And individualism is generally considered by anthropologists the quintessence of the American character.

Modern individualism has its origins in Europe, where it emerged out of the struggle against the oppressive monarchical and aristocratic authority. But individualism has developed over the past two centuries into a pervasive and dominant social phenomenon in the United States. From the very beginning of their settlement in the New World, Americans have been holding

their individual independence in high esteem. Emerson's famous essay "Self-reliance", first published in 1841, is regarded by many scholars and educators as a fine example of prose, with its cogent logic, witty style and elegant language. Yet, apart from all this, "Self-reliance" is a valuable cultural asset and a "must" for a clear understanding of American individualism. This essay has glorified Emerson's well-grounded philosophy of individualism.

Before we review Emerson's essay, however, we need to mention the book Democracy in America by Alexis Tocqueville, a young Frenchman, who spent a year between 1831-1832 in the United States. This classic book "has provided its readers an unparalleled abundance of description, analysis, and prophecy concerning almost every aspect of the American scene", in which Tocqueville described the American individualism with both admiration and anxiety. As Tocqueville asserted, "it is individualism, not equality, that has marched inexorably through American history." Beyond doubt, individualism advocated and popularized by Emerson at the middle of the nineteenth century played a great role in shaping American society.

In his famous essay, Emerson wrote on nonconformity --the starting point of individualism:

Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser, who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? my friend suggested,---But these impulses may be from below, not from above." I replied, "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil." No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. (p.844)

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rite, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the would's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude. (p.845)

These two paragraphs fully represent Emerson's militant advocacy for independence/self-reliance which is otherwise known as American individualism. To Emerson, "No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature.... Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is



after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it." But to most Chinese, this may seem incomprehensible and unacceptable. The traditional Chinese society, with its emphasis on social harmony and rigid hierarchy, is a community-oriented and highly conformist one. In Chinese culture, the smallest unit in society is not the individual as in American society, and anyone who stands out as a unique figure is viewed as an "oddball" and not usually tolerated by society. Then, how would a play like Death of a Salesman be looked at through a Chinese eye?

From the political and ideological point of view, which is often labeled as "the Marxian class analysis" in China, the theme of Death of a Salesman is a familiar one to the Chinese audience: the tragedy of Willy Loman lies in the cruelty of the cut-throat rat race in a capitalist society like the United States. Willy Loman, as his name suggests, belongs to "the low class" and is mercilessly exploited by Howard and his ilk who represent the ruling capitalist class. Being an unprotected individual, Willy Loman simply has no way out, but, as a Marxist social critic may prescribe, to join the rank of the proletariat movement and fight against the evil capitalist system.... But, while this political approach may not be entirely off the mark, we can also approach the play from the perspective of cultural critique. And we may get some

revelation by focusing on the issue of individualism, which Emerson has eloquently defined in his essay.

Generally speaking, it is not at all difficult for the Chinese to comprehend the tragedy of Willy Loman, at least not on the surface. Death of a Salesman passes onto its audience many messages about American society and its people, some of which can be shared by people of all races and all times. As the playwright himself once commented, "what had become more and more obvious over the decades in the play's hundreds of productions throughout the world: Willy was representative everywhere, in every kind of system, of ourselves in this time." (Miller, Timebound, p.184) The love-hate relationship between father and son--how Willy presses Biff to be successful and how he is crippled by Biff's failure--and the image of a self-effacing mother like Linda Loman are not unfamiliar to and can easily be accepted by the average Chinese. Nevertheless, without a good understanding of the American concept of individualism, it would be difficult for a Chinese to grasp the whole meaning of this American play and the cultural insights it contains.

As a writer with a strong "social conscience ", Arthur Miller has written a play that with its immense empathetic power forces the reader/audience to be moved and touched and to identify themselves with the

characters in it. He uses very successfully a unique stage design, a simplistic story line, a heart-rending climax, realistic conversations and cinematic flashbacks, thus bringing the audience into "a world of reality".

The paradox is that the world of reality referred to here is built on a dream--the American Dream, that has animated the spirit of the American people for more than two centuries. Throughout the play, Arthur Miller illustrates the obsession about success in American society-- "to keep up with and be better than the Joneses". On this subject, Arthur Miller once said to his Chinese colleagues: "The idea (Happy Loman wants to start a sporting goods business out of nothing.) is absurd, but that is what is so persuasive about it. Most such ideas actually fail in America, but that doesn't stop people. I guess it's because they do succeed often enough to make it seem that absurd ideas can be brought off successfully. The idea of creating something out of your own head and making it happen still goes on in America. For lots of people there is still that kind of promise in the air, even if statistics disprove the likelihood you will really make it." (Miller, 1985) Arthur Miller's comment hits the nail on the head.

Willy Loman, a sixty-year-old salesman, has been "on the road every week" for his whole life, and has always dreamed that "some day I'll have my own business...",

bigger than Uncle Charley's." Although "they (his clients) know him up and down in New England, he feels that he is "always being contradicted." Loman has worked hard all his life, hoping to "accomplish something" and "there'll be open sesame for all of you (his family)." But the harsh reality is that he is now "old", "people laugh at him", and "there is nobody to talk to". Sadly, he confesses to his wife that "I get so lonely... and I get the feeling that I'll never sell anything again, that I won't make a living for you or a business for the boys. There is so much I want to make for ...."

Willy Loman looks up to his brother, Ben, thinking "That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate"; but he could not go to Alaska with Ben. He bears resentments against his friend Charley for his success and refuses to accept Charley's job offer; but in order to cover the fact that he has no more income, he has to swallow his pride and beg for loans from Charley. He has great hopes in his sons, especially Biff; but it breaks his heart to see that "In the greatest country in the world a young man (Biff) with such--personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker!" .... When the play begins, he arrives home, totally exhausted mentally and physically. At the end of the play when all his dreams are shattered, Loman, as a last resort,

kills himself in the belief that the insurance company would pay his family two thousand dollars.

The basic human desire to be successful is, surely, justifiable, especially in the United States, which is in many ways "a land of opportunities." But behind the American dream there lies a much deeper national instinct. It is much more than a desire for personal gains; rather, it is deeply rooted in the religious convictions of the early settlers in the New World. As Sydney Ahlstrom points out, the major themes in the American dream that stem from its religious origins have been: "a religious sense of mission, an abundant land, a noble hero, and a favoring Providence." (cited by F. Sontag, 1978) Nevertheless, the great American dream has also gone through considerable change during the past two centuries; and it has grown, over the years, more towards being individually-oriented, especially in comparison with the Chinese concept of ideal and success.

For the traditional Chinese, personal success means to be able to "provide substantial support to his children (yang er yu nu), to prove his filial piety to his parents (jin xiaodao), and more importantly to bring honour to the kin and ancestors (guang zong yao zu). Yet for the highly individuated American, the meaning of one's life is to be successful and to become one's own

person; and personal success means to gain recognition as an individual in the family as well as in society.

At the age of thirty four, Biff Loman finds himself still incapable of finding himself. "He became a moody man." "He was crestfallen." His father comments with spite that "Not finding yourself at the age of thirty four is a disgrace!"; his mother thinks that "He is still lost... very lost."; his brother also says to him: "You're not settled and still kind of up in the air...." But what tortures him most is his self-awareness of his failure as an independent individual. Biff is, as his brother Happy calls him, "an idealist"-- "Well, I tried six and seven years after high school trying to work myself up.... And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. I oughta be makin' my future. I've always made a point of not wasting my life." But when he finally realizes: "... my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! (and) everytime I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life", he says bitterly: "I think I'm just not smart enough to make any sense out of it for you (his father).... Having failed to gain recognition in society, Biff seeks reconciliation/recognition at home, pleading with his father for his understanding:

Why am I trying to become what I don't want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say

that?... Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!

This strongly reminds us of what Emerson writes in his essay:

Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, "O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Henceforward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no laws less than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavor to nourish my parent, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife,--but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier. If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my taste or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy that I will do strongly before the sun and moon whatever only rejoices me, and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest and mine, all men's, however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh today? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and if we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last." But so you may give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me, and do the same thing.

When his father, at the peak of his fury, refuses to listen, Biff Loman cries out:

Pop, I'm nothing! I'm nothing, Pop. Can't you understand that? There's no spite in it any more. I'm just what I am, that's all.... I'm a bum. I'm a dime a dozen....

That Biff, a full-blooded young man, utters such heart-rending confessions has touched deeply the heartstrings of millions of audiences. The tremendous success of the play Death of a Salesman lies in the playwright's profound understanding of the American psychology and his powerful revelation of the deceptiveness and destructiveness of the American dream. That Biff and his father have failed as self-reliant individuals is almost inevitable, because, as Arthur Miller put it, "it was ...a psychology hammered into its strange shape by society, the business life Willy had lived and believed in." (Timebound, p.182)

As Bellah et al (1985) write, Tocqueville warned in Democracy in America that "...some aspects of our character--what he was one of the first to call 'individualism'--might eventually isolate Americans one from another and thereby undermine the conditions of freedom." The striking truth is: Coming from their cultural traditions, many Americans today define personality, achievement, and the purpose of human life in such alienating ways that they often find themselves as individuals suspended in glorious, but terrifying, isolation. Since Tocqueville wrote his book in 1840,



individualism in America has developed so pervasively that "it has come to mean many things, to contain such paradoxes and to cause some of American deep problems both as individuals and as a society." When "a psychology is hammered into its strange shape" and an ideal is pushed to the state of obsession, it is bound to fail. That is the tragedy of Willy Loman and that is what kills him. And this is undoubtedly the "deep-structure scenario" the Chinese student has to grasp to comprehend a play like Death of a Salesman and to fully understand the American people and their culture.

In his introduction to Americans and Chinese, Commager sums up Francis Hsu's analysis on American individualism:

Professor Hsu has traced the influence of the principle of individualism in the large and in the small. He observes it in the nature of the American political system, the workings of the criminal law, the attitude toward nature, the conduct of foreign policy, and the waging of war. He explores it in the relations of parents and children, the attitude toward ancestors and posterity, the cult of youth and the fate of age..., the concept of success and the ratings of prestige, the psychology of games and sports, and many other areas of human endeavor ... Individualism, he contends, explains why competition permeates every aspect of American life: the struggle of children for the attention and the affection of their parents, and the struggle of parents to win the attention and approval of their children; the concern of the American woman... to win her husband anew every day, the anxiety of the husband to prove that he is a success and thus deserves the respect and affection of his wife; the deadly competition for place and recognition within

every organization from the corporation to the university; the readiness of churches to vie with each other for membership and contributions and for ostentatious displays of prosperity much as business enterprises vie with each other. (p. xxv)

As we can see, the play Death of a Salesman has truthfully reflected this harsh reality in the American scene. Thanks to the playwright's masterful skill, we are enabled to sense vicariously the deep insecurity felt by the Loman family--the insecurity that comes from too much emphasis and dependence on self, and from the lack of anchorage--the anchorage that "comes from being part of something bigger than themselves, from a network of interdependencies and associations". As Commager concludes: "It is because Americans lack this (anchorage) that they are so restless, so discontented, so unfulfilled and unhappy, so ready to abandon home, family, religion, career, friends, and associates for the will-o'-the-wisp of success--a success which, almost by definition--they can never wholly win. It is because they lack security that they feel compelled to prove themselves, over and over...."

To both our delight and dismay, we see all this in Willy Loman and his entire family--all so convincingly shown in the play Death of a Salesman. Driven by the will-o'-the-wisp of the American dream and deprived of security and anchorage in life, the Lomans are so discontented, so unfulfilled and unhappy, and so ready to

abandon home, family... and even life. With his marvelous technique and profound understanding of the American psychology, Arthur Miller has demonstrated most successfully to us language teachers how literature can help in promoting the students' crosscultural awareness!

CHAPTER V  
SOME PEDAGOGICAL THOUGHTS

In the last chapter, the hypothesis of teaching literature as material for enhancing crosscultural understanding was examined theoretically and some examples to illustrate the argument--literature provides the most valuable vicarious experience--were presented. Our goal is determined: literature should and can be taught in a foreign language classroom for the aim of acquiring crosscultural understanding. Next, there will likely be questions like: How to apply this to the classroom, and what are the adequate methods? Yet, to try to provide an answer to these broad issues in this preliminary study may sound too ambitious and pretentious. Nevertheless, I would like to share some pedagogical thoughts in this chapter.

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the contributions of Widdowson's Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature is his emphasis and efforts on turning literature as a discipline into a pedagogy. His "Exercises in Literary Understanding" has provided a useful alternative pedagogic approach to teaching literature. Likewise, when trying to teach culture through literary works in a language classroom, what are the pedagogic concerns?

## 1. Krashen and Oller

First, we should be familiar with and try to apply current language teaching theories to practice, especially those that are related to teaching literature. "Theory is considered implicit in the practice of language teaching. It manifests itself and provides guidance in the planning of a course of study, in the routines of the classroom, in value judgments about language teaching, and in the decisions that the language teacher has to make day by day." (Stern, p.23) To understand his remark certainly has great practical significance.

According to Krashen (1985), "a theory is a collection of related, testable hypotheses." "The Input Hypothesis", as he says, "is the most important one in second language acquisition theory today because it attempts to answer the central question: How is language is acquired?" The Input Hypothesis claims that "we acquire language in just one way--by understanding messages or obtaining comprehensible input. More specifically, we acquire a new rule by understanding messages that contain this new rule. This is done with the aid of extra-linguistic context, knowledge of the world, and our previous linguistic knowledge." The Input Hypothesis claims several important aspects of second language acquisition, but it stresses the need for

comprehensible input and the important function of the classroom. "If beginners 'go to the country', they will encounter only incomprehensible input, or noise. But a well taught language class can give beginners a concentrated dose of comprehensible input right from the first day. The goal of the language class is to put students in a position to understand the language of the 'outside' world, to make them 'intermediates'."

Equipped with Krashen's theory of the Input Hypothesis, we can very well justify our argument that to use literary works for the purpose of learning culture in a language classroom setting is one of the effective ways to acquire the target language, because, a) in addition to the rich and authentic linguistic situations, literary works offer the maximal extra-linguistic socio-cultural context and tremendous knowledge of the "other" world, which is essential to making the input comprehensible; b) literary works can be taught both efficiently and effectively in the classroom setting, giving students "a concentrated dose" of comprehensible input and making them "intermediates." Death of a Salesman, for example, present students with a great number of new vocabulary and new grammar structures--many being American colloquialisms; but more important, it exposes the student to the extra-linguistic context of American society and its people, such as the different life-styles

of different classes in the United States, their conversations and confrontations, and the interactions between family members and people of different social status.

Closely related to Krashen's input hypothesis are Oller's textuality, expectancy and episode hypotheses:

In Oller's opinion (1983), Krashen's "input hypothesis" makes it clear that the acquisition of a second language depends on access to and utilization of comprehensive input, and that more than mere "access" is required. Krashen's theory differentiates mere "input" from "intake" and claims that "the input should be a little beyond the student's present stage of development."

Language teachers all know that simple "exposure" is not enough; yet it is still necessary to answer the question Oller raised: how to make "input" become "intake"-- how to make the leap from the spoken or printed elements of the target language to comprehension. Oller's question led him to formulate three additional hypotheses: "the textuality hypothesis, the expectancy hypothesis and the episode hypotheses. First, "the textuality hypothesis proposes that the events of experience have a textual character--that they are temporally organized and arranged in sequence"; second, "the expectancy hypothesis calls attention to the

cognitive momentum that accompanies the production or comprehension of discourse"; third, "the episode hypothesis suggests that text will be easier to produce, to understand, to recall, and in general to profit from if it is episodically organized". Oller asks, "What can we conclude from the input, textuality, expectancy, and episode hypotheses?" His answer is that "It seems to me that several significant implications can be drawn for second language instruction, and for education in a more general sense as well. These can perhaps best be summed up as caveats which have their roots in successful story writing techniques." Pedagogically, these working theories can also be applied to teaching literature in a language program, since writers, as a rule, have good story writing techniques and their works are usually organized temporally and arranged in sequence, suspense and episodes.

Let us now return to Death of a Salesman. The play consists of, as the subtitle goes, "Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem". The events throughout the play are, with the exception of Uncle Ben's appearances, temporalized and sequentialized. Although it is a play, full of dialogues and monologues, Death of a Salesman is a fine piece of narrative with a highly "motivated" story line. Willy Loman comes home one evening from his usual business trip, exhausted and



dispirited. He picks on his wife and almost everyone around him. He has had his hopes and dreams; and he was popular with his clients; but he is getting "too old" for his job; he has great hopes in his sons; yet they are failing him.... Facing unemployment and all kinds of bills to foot, he begs for loans.... However, he still keeps his pride and love for his family; when finally realizing that his son no longer has any spite against him, he is so deeply touched and disturbed that he kills himself.... Arthur Miller's story is narrated in such a temporalized and sequentialized manner--episode after episode and within certain expectancy--that the narration flows so naturally that the reader can easily comprehend it.

On the other hand, unlike those "poorly structured" pattern drill texts of "the old school", the play contains a series of conflicts--the conflicts between Willy and his son Biff, his friend Charley, his boss Howard, his wife Linda, and most tragically, the self-conflict within himself. Oller wrote in 1983: "A little more than seven decades ago, John Dewey (1910) noted that reflective thinking is always occasioned by trouble. A difficulty arises in experience and provides the incentive for reflection.... Or casting the whole matter in Piagetian terms (Piaget 1981), it may be argued that conflict is the principal source of the affective fuel

that powers the cognitive engine." As we can imagine, the great conflicts in the play--confrontations and climaxes--generate suspense, motivating the reader to "desire for the end".

Oller points out: the process of pragmatically linking input in the target language with the facts of experience depends on comprehension, and can be facilitated by capitalizing on the textuality of ordinary experience, respecting its logic, harnessing the cognitive momentum that this logic creates, and in general by employing good story telling techniques in preparing, packaging, and presenting language teaching materials. Apparently, literary works like Death of a Salesman by and large boast such facilitative qualities. Therefore, in view of the hypotheses of Krashen and Oller, students will find the extra-linguistic context as well as the linguistic elements contained in literary works much easier "to produce, to understand, to recall and to profit from" than those "unmotivated" texts of the "fading era".

Besides Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Oller's three additional hypotheses, it is necessary to get well-acquainted with some other related working theories of teaching and learning. Since the course: "literature for crosscultural understanding" requires reading and writing as two essential components. Pedagogical strategies,

such as "instructional scaffolding", will prove to be particularly useful.

## 2. Instructional scaffolding

The concept of instructional scaffolding was developed by Langer and Applebee (1983, 1984, 1986) as an important strategy of effective instruction in reading and writing. It deals with the instructional interactions between the teacher and the pupil--basically the teacher's role as a mediator between the text and the reader/pupil. Langer and Applebee claim that their theory grows out of a view of language learning that has been heavily influenced by the Vygotskian notion that "intrapsychological (individual) skills could be best developed by interpsychological (teacher-student) activities." A. Brown and R. Ferrara (1985) point out:

Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development rests heavily on the key concept of internalization. Vygotsky argues that all higher psychological processes are originally social processes, shared between people, particularly between children and adults. The child first experiences the active problem-solving activities in the presence of others but gradually comes to perform these functions independently. The process of internalization is gradual; first the adult or knowledgeable peer controls and guides the child's activity, but gradually the adult and the child come to share the problem-solving functions, with the child taking initiative and the adult correcting and guiding when she falter. Finally, the adult cedes control to the child and functions primarily as a supportive and sympathetic audience. (p.281)

It is based on his theory of the gradual internalization of cognitive development that Vygotsky developed his famous concept of "the zone of proximal development". In his own words, it is "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (1978, p.86) Vygotsky views that before the child achieves the conscious control over a new function or conceptual system, the tutor in effect performs the critical function of "scaffolding" the learning task to make it possible for the child to internalize external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control.

Fundamentally, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) focuses on language as a social and communicative activity and views language learning as growing out of a communicative relationship where the adult helps the child to understand as well as to complete new tasks. Vygotsky and his colleague Luria (1929) maintain that the contribution of the social environment is a critical feature of every learning activity because it is through the social interchange that language is mediated and learning takes place. They believe that higher level skills are the result of the child's learning of soci-

al and functional relationships; in becoming literate, children learn the structure and processes inherent in socially meaningful literacy activities. In this way, processes that are initially mediated socially become resources available to the individual language user. In the course of successive experiences, children develop their own self-regulatory abilities. Thus, approaches that are initially socially mediated are eventually internalized, and become part of the repertoire of the individual.

Basing their ideas on Vygotskian theories, Langer and Applebee (1986), introduced the idea of instructional scaffolding, and proposed, more specifically, five components of effective instructional scaffolding: Ownership, Appropriateness, Structure, Collaboration, and Transfer of Control or Internalization. Their intent is to develop "the concept of instructional scaffolding as an important component of effective instruction in reading and writing, functioning much as the adult in the mother-infant pairs: simplifying the situation, clarifying the structure, helping the student accomplish tasks that would otherwise be too difficult, and providing the framework and rules of procedure that the student will gradually learn, so that the instructional support will no longer be necessary."

It may be argued that the skills that students learn, such as reading and writing, are constrained and fostered by the social, cultural and educational contexts within which they grow up. While learning to read literature, language students, including those of an advanced level, will unavoidably encounter many problems concerning the cultural context/background of the target language. Here, the "instructional scaffolding" is needed: the teacher serves as a facilitator or a mediator between the text and the reader/student. Starting from "Ownership", the teacher gives students the room to have something of their own to say in the interpretation they draw in the reading. First, say, ask students what messages they themselves can get from reading a play like Death of a Salesman--seeking the student's response. The students are, quite expectedly, unable to accomplish the whole task--failing to see the complex human interrelationships in American society. But as Vygotsky states that instruction should be addressed at the zone of proximal development--tasks that a learner can complete with appropriate help, the teacher should offer help before "the stretch is too far", and guide students through the activity--carefully structuring it by asking them about what they know about the American dream and the Western concept of individualism and providing them with background and

comparative perspectives. But one important thing is that "effective instructional interactions build upon and recast student efforts without rejecting what students have accomplished on their own. In other words, there should be "collaboration"; and the teacher should avoid taking the role as a judge--the role of evaluation, because the final goal is for students to internalize--to ensure "the control of the interaction is gradually transferred from the teacher to the students. To provide instructional scaffolding for enhancing students' cross-cultural understanding is a very difficult task, for the teacher has to be thoroughly equipped with cultural backgrounds of both the home culture and the target culture and has to be critically aware of some important issues that will be addressed in Chapter Six. (An example of instructional scaffolding will also be given in the same chapter.)

### 3. Selection of texts

In order to maintain a "zone of proximal development", one of the pivotal follow-up measures is the selection of texts. The key to success in teaching literature in a foreign language classroom, to a very large degree, relies on the literary texts selected. What are the most suitable literary works or forms for students to elicit cultural patterns or indicators? But

before discussing the subject, it is essential to bear in the mind that the audience we are concerned with in this study is mainly of the lower-advanced and advanced level (junior or senior English majors at Chinese colleges). Linguistically, they should be quite at ease with speaking and comprehension and competent in reading and writing. What they lack most is the insights into the target culture, its patterns and values. And that is where they can be helped most by teaching literary works in the classroom. As far as the selection of texts is concerned, apart from considering the variables of students--their backgrounds, levels of proficiency and motivations and so on--there are some other aspects we ought to deliberate:

1. Even though the main purpose here is to teach literature for crosscultural understanding and the students concerned may be of an advanced level, we should consider the linguistic structure of the texts chosen. Structural suitability should be emphasized and texts which use archaic structures are to be avoided. Generally, texts will be selected from modern works. The reasons are: a) they are, linguistically, not too complex and more applicable to our students; b) chronologically, they are closer and are more accessible to us. However, works like the Bible and the drama of Shakespeare could also be used, because these two great bonanzas of li-



terature have had the most significant impact on the whole of Western civilization for many centuries. In practice, of course, some kind of modern versions can be used.

2. Another concern is with the formal appropriateness. Highly stylistic varieties should be avoided. Poetry is beautiful and often carries rich cultural messages; but its unique linguistic features make it quite inaccessible. Novels are invaluable because they give us specific cultural patterns and mores through the lives of the characters over a period of time in an ideal social and cultural context; but their length is something hard to deal with pedagogically. Therefore, for the sake of practicality, short stories and plays are more acceptable. Short fiction with its compactness and expressiveness appeals to students generally. Also, it can usually be finished at one sitting or within a couple of classroom hours. As to plays, they could be the most effective. With its usual rising, falling actions, the rising tension which normally leads to a climax and the final denouement, drama has always enjoyed the greatest popularity among both students and teachers. Noticeably, the most distinguishable characteristic of a play is that it is usually impersonated by actors. Students can play the roles in the play, which will undoubtedly increase

their interest and help them to understand and remember the linguistic points and cultural messages.

3. In selecting texts, educators should adopt an open-minded attitude and be on guard against the tendency of intellectual snobbery. For many decades, academicians have persistently insisted on "offering nothing but the best for our students" (Norton Anthology preface, 1985). But what, after all, is the standard for the so-called "best"? Despite the continuous efforts of many scholars to be rid of this narrow-mindedness, the elitist view of canonizing the masterpieces still exists. Many so-called minor writers and writers of different ethnic backgrounds have been excluded. To judge what is the best literature for our student is a very subjective matter. Different audiences and different eras demand different criteria. For instance, Jack London was for many years quite popular in China and many other countries; but in his own country he was often referred to as a minor writer. O. Henry in his heyday attracted the attention and admiration of millions of readers and many critics as well; but now O. Henryism is generally associated with words like "hasty", "superficial" and "dazzlingly flippant". The twentieth century has witnessed many political and artistic movements, which have brought forth "a century of isms" and, consequently, a pluralism in literature. In the West, the United States in

particular, a whole variety of ethnically different literatures has appeared, such as those of the Afro-American, the Yiddish, the Chicano and the native American. Together with other regional and subcultural literatures, they have established their own images and values. For the aim of acquiring cultural insights through literature, they are extremely good resources. Therefore, in selecting texts, it is essential to cast off the elitist bias about "the canon of high literature", and try to include as many culturally diversified literatures as possible.

4. In selecting texts for crosscultural understanding, a thematic approach is recommended. The concept of cultural theme was first introduced by Opler (1945). He states: "a limited number of dynamic affirmations can be identified in every culture."; and "the aggregate of these affirmations form themes, a theme being "a postulate or position, declared or implied, and usually controlling behavior or stimulating activity, which is tacitly approved or openly promoted in a society." Damen (1987) explains: "These themes, fashioned from sets of cultural postulates or assumptions (dynamic affirmations) about the world, provide blueprints for behavior. Postulates spell out positions taken about the world and human experience; cultural themes reflect the orientations."

Referring back to the "cultural models theory" of Holland and Quinn (1987): "A very large proportion of what we know and believe we derive from these shared models that specify what is in the world and how it works.", and "cultural models are presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior." Obviously, these shared models are "cultural themes". But now we shall ask: Where do we find evidence of themes and postulates? Damen advises: "They are echoed in the expression of folk wisdom or common sense found in our proverbs and metaphors; they are preserved in the amber of our crystallized systems of values and beliefs." As a matter of fact, they exist pervasively in our daily language and, unquestionably, in our treasure house of literature.

Apart from the above four "criteria", for students in China or other third world countries, there is still another important factor for us to consider, that is: ideology. As mentioned in the first chapter, China's leadership has always been very concerned for "maintaining the purity of proletariat ideology". Western ideology other than Marxism is not encouraged in China, if not completely forbidden. This national political policy has been affecting, almost beyond comprehension,

all the spheres of the superstructure of Chinese society, education being one of the most vulnerable areas. In China, the government's concern over the purity of ideology is carried out through centralized censorship. Undeniably, absolute freedom is nonexistent in any human society; and a certain amount of censorship is unavoidable. As to foreign language teaching, especially in selecting texts, the ideological criterion should be given due attention. But the ideological concern should by no means restrict and impede the development of education. For instance, Western literary works, especially modern works such as "Catcher in the Rye" and "On the Road" may contain some so-called "harmful elements" and "bourgeois liberal thinking"; yet in order to obtain insights into Western society and culture, our students need adequate exposure to these works. Needless to say, trying to understand some values is different from accepting them.

#### 4. Tripmaster Monkey

Following the step of selecting the text is the important issue of how to teach it. In most cases, our course will be primarily a course of reading and writing --the concentration, conceivably, is more on the former. Rosenblatt (1978) makes a distinction between two different kinds of reading: efferent reading and aesthetic

fact away with us; when we read aesthetically, we read to live through the text (RTP, p.27-p.28). Obviously, when teaching literature to our students, we should emphasize what Rosenblatt calls the aesthetic reading, because it is after all more related to understanding culture, primarily, treating text "as a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience with literature and with life", and "as a blueprint, a guide for the selecting, rejecting, and ordering of what is being called forth". The students may start to read the text efferently--to use the text to acquire certain linguistic information; yet in order to promote their language skill onto the level of language use (versus language usage --to use the two terms defined by H. Widdowson), they should be encouraged to read aesthetically--to familiarize themselves with the cultural assumptions contained in the text.

Now let us examine how a literary work could be approached at both efferent and aesthetic levels. The following passage about a young American Chinese named Wittman Ah Sing is taken from Maxine Hong Kingston's recent novel Tripmaster Monkey:

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Wittman was one of the first passengers to board, and chose the aisle seat behind the driver. He threw his coat on the window seat to discourage company, stuck his long legs out

diagonally, and put on his metaphor glasses and looked out the window.

Up into the bus clambered this very plain girl, who lifted her leg in such an ungainly manner that anybody could see up her skirt to thighs, but who'd be interested in looking? She was carrying string bags of books and greasy butcher-paper bundles and pastry boxes. He wished she weren't Chinese, the kind who works hard and doesn't fix herself up. She, of course, stood beside him until he moved his coats and let her bump her bags across him and sit herself down to ride. This girl and her roast duck will ride beside him all the way across the San Francisco--Oakland Bay Bridge. She must have figured he was saving this seat for her, fellow ethnick.

The bus went up the turnaround ramp and over a feeder ramp, this girl working away at opening her window--got it open when they passed the Hills Brothers factory, where the long tall Hindu in the white turban and yellow gown stood quaffing his coffee. The smell of the roasting coffee made promises of comfort. Then they were on the bridge, not the bridge for suicides, and journeying through the dark. The eastbound traffic takes the bottom deck, which may as well be a tunnel. You can see lights between the railings and the top deck, and thereby identify the shore, the hills, islands, highways, the other bridge.

"Going to Oakland?" asked the girl. She said "Oak Lun."

"Haw," he grunted, a tough old China Man. If he were Japanese, he could have said, "Ee, chotto." Like "Thataway for a spell." Not impolite. None of your business, ma'am.

"I'm in the city Fridays to work," she said. "Tuesdays and Thursdays, I'm taking a night course at Cal Extension, over by the metal overpass on Laguna Street. There's the bar and the traffic light on the corner? Nobody goes into or comes out of that bar. I stand there at

that corner all by myself, obeying the traffic light. There aren't any cars. It's sort of lonely going to college. What for you go City?" He didn't answer. Does she notice that he isn't the forthcoming outgoing type? "On business, huh?" Suggesting an answer for him.

"Yeah. Business."

"I signed up for psychology," she said, as if he'd conversably asked. "But I looked up love in tables of contents and indexes, and do you know love isn't in psychology book? So I signed up for philosophy, but I'm getting disappointed. I thought we were going to learn about good and evil, human nature, how to be good. You know. What God is like. You know. How to live. But we're learning about P plus Q arrows R or S. What's that, haw? I work all day, and commute for two hours, and what do I get? P plus Q arrows R."

She ought to be interesting, going right to what's important. The trouble with most people is that they don't think about the meaning of life. And here's this girl trying for heart truth. She may even have important new information. So how come she's boring? She's annoying him. Because she's presumptuous. Nosiness must be a Chinese racial trait. She was supposing, in the first place, that he was Chinese, and therefore, he has to hear her out. Care how she's getting along. She's reporting to him as to how one of our kind is faring. And she has a subtext: I am intelligent. I am educated. Why don't you ask me out? He took a side-eye look at her flat profile. She would look worse with her glasses off. Her mouse-brown hair was pulled tight against her head and up into a flat knot on top, hairpins showing, crisscrossing. (Do Jews look down on men who use bobby pins to hold their yarmulkes on?) A person has to have a perfect profile to wear her hair like that. She was wearing a short brownish jacket and her bony wrists stuck out of the sleeves. A thin springtime skirt. She's poor. Loafers with striped socks. Flat shoes, flat chest, flat hair, flat face, flat color. A smell like hot restaurant air that blows into alleys must be coming off her. Char sui? Fire duck? Travelling with food, unto this generation.



Yeah, the lot of us riding the Greyhound out of Fresno and Watsonville and Gardena and Lompoc to college--even Stanford--guys named Stanford--with mama and grandma food in the overhead rack and under the seat. Pretending the smell was coming off somebody else's luggage. And here was this girl, a night-school girl, a Continuing Ed girl, crossing the Bay, bringing a fire duck weekend treat from Big City Chinatown to her aging parents." (p.73-p.74)

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Maxine Hong Kingston, the Chinese American author of The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts and China Men, has in many ways constructed a real story in her first novel Tripmaster Monkey, which is rooted in the ancient Chinese legend about the Monkey King. Although this novel has similar concerns, the voice is drastically different from that of her previous autobiographic books. If The Woman Warrior tells the story about a Chinese girl raised in a traditional Chinese family in America, who finds herself at once steeped in and at odds with Chinese culture, the protagonist of Tripmaster Monkey is Wittman Ah Sing, a young man who is no less American than Jack Kerouac or James Baldwin. Named after the American poet Walt Whitman, he is "as American as five generations in California and a Berkeley education in the 1960's can make him." Yet being a Chinese by origin, Wittman finds himself perpetually in the

predicament of being regarded as a Chinese. Every day he asks the question: "How can someone raised on Mickey Mouse and Life magazine still seem so exotic, so inscrutable to his countrymen?" In this new book, Maxine Hong Kingston is once again admirably successful in her efforts to examine and describe the "crossing and criss-crossing" between Chinese and American cultures. In this sense, Kingston's Tripmaster Monkey and her two other books are ideal teaching material for crosscultural understanding.

The above quoted passage is an excellent illustration of the cultural clashes between people who even belong to the same ethnic group. The conversation between Wittman and the Chinese girl he meets on a bus illustrates most vividly the different mentalities of the two; and Wittman's monologues reveal altogether his personal dilemma of whether "to belong or not to belong". To read such a passage in a language classroom may be done in two modes. In an efferent mode, the students are supposed to "carry away" certain factual information (when and where these two people meet, what they are wearing, how they start to talk, and how they like each other....) and linguistic components: new words and phrases such as "put on his metaphor glasses", "ungainly manners", "a feeder ramp" "Continuing Ed" "bobby pins" and "yarmulkes"; and stylistically unfamiliar structures:

short elliptical sentences, mixture of the writer's narration and the character's inner thoughts.

At this level, literature can help students to develop both language use as well as language usage, because literary works like Tripmaster Monkey present language in discourse in which the contextual setting and role relationship are well defined. Nevertheless, to thoroughly master language use relies on, to a great extent, the cultural assumptions in the text. It is necessary to introduce aesthetic reading to the student--try to relate his or her world of experience to the text, especially the specific cultural assumptions. The short passage we have taken from M. H. Kingston's Tripmaster Monkey reflects vividly the mentality of Wittman Ah Sing, a young man of Chinese-American culture; and this superbly written passage can be best understood in terms of cross-cultural understanding.

To provide the students an "instructional scaffolding" and to guide them specifically to the rich cultural messages in the passage, a checklist should perhaps be a series of questions as follows:

1. What kind of city is San Francisco, where the story happens? Any cultural specifics?

(The answer can be: it is a multicultural city, a place where many Chinese live and a place where the East and the West meet and intermingle....)

2. What are the traditional Chinese values, in terms of family relation and lifestyles?

(Draw the student's attention to the girl's "string bags of books and greasy butcher-paper bundles and pastry boxes".)

3. How Chinese is the girl, in terms of traditional values?

(Her "ungainly manners: the way she dresses, sits, talks..., the course she wants to take..., the "heart truth" she is trying for....)

4. Why does Wittman think that the girl is "boring, annoying, and presumptuous"?

(Her looks: flat shoes, flat chest, flat face..., and her family background...)

5. Do you agree with Wittman that "Nosiness must be a Chinese racial trait."?

(Ask the student to explain why he or she agrees or disagrees.)

6. What do you think of Wittman as a Chinese American? Is he somewhat lost between the two cultures?

(The instructor may tell the student that Wittman is a fifth generation Chinese American and then ask the student whether Wittman is as American as he thinks.)

7. Why do you think Wittman tries to reject his own cultural tradition? How would you handle the situation?

(Wittman later tells the girl that he is Japanese....)

If students read the entire book of Tripmaster Monkey, they will find that Wittman Ah Sing's Chineseness fills him constantly and alternately with feelings of superiority and inferiority, humility and pride. Why all

this agonizing over one's origin? What causes this? And how should one cope with this human predicament?... By asking and helping the student to answer these questions, the instructor, working as a mediator, can establish a personal and aesthetic interaction between the student and the passage; and thus the student's crosscultural awareness will be enhanced. Through reading works like The Woman Warrior and Tripmaster Monkey (also works by writers like Lin Yutang, Pearl Buck, and Han Suyin), students get acquainted with Chinese Americans and their culture as one of the subcultures in American society; in the meantime, through comparison, students are enabled to understand more clearly and deeply their home culture. Ultimately, this deepening of cultural understanding will be of great help to students with their command of the target language.

In the final analysis, the basic premise underlying this literary-cultural approach to language learning is that literature is an integral part of culture, and culture is an integral part of literature. It is an acknowledged fact that language and culture are inextricably bonded in human society; and it is also an unquestionable fact that all creative writers base their works on a conscious or unconscious contact with social reality and cultural patterns. Given these facts, it is hoped that language teachers and students promote the use of

literature in their classrooms, for its cultural value as well as its linguistic and aesthetic values.

CHAPTER VI  
CONCERNS AND CONCLUSION

1. Concerns

This last chapter will deal with some of the issues that we should be critically aware of in applying this literary-cultural approach in second language acquisition. First of all, we should see harm in attempting to depend too heavily on cultural generalizations abstracted from literary works. As mediators, teachers themselves need pertinent cultural orientation first; and they should realize that although literary works are often compared to the "mirror of culture", "it is unhelpful to view literature as a naturalistic picture of life." (Povey, 1967)

Still, we may argue that there is usually a certain amount of truth in generalizations; and quite often to generalize is a necessary step and an effective method in research. As to the study of culture, it is inevitable to draw generalizations, without which a foreign learner will be deprived of the guidance and grounds in exploring and comparing the target and home cultures. Yet, the questions remain how far we should go and how much we can rely on generalizations. With regard to this, Tocqueville has set us a good example and has provided some lessons as well.

As shown in his book Democracy in America, Tocqueville was single-mindedly interested in finding the general principles of democracy in America, comparing and contrasting them with those of his native France. Many of his generalizations concerning politics, religion, government, art and literature in America are considered by scholars as "amazingly shrewd and perceptive"; and Tocqueville himself is regarded as "a master prophet and political scientist". As Richard Heffner (1956) remarks, "many of his brilliantly intuitive insights into the dynamics of nineteenth century democratic life hold true for our own times as well, and one is over and over again astonished at the way history has borne out numbers of his most sweeping assumptions." But on the other hand, Heffner points out that "In his eagerness to generalize..., Tocqueville frequently indulged in the most blatant kind of a priori reasoning. New to America, and basically unfamiliar with its mores and institutions, he would formulate an abstract principle upon the scantiest substantive evidence. And then he would use his further observations only as proof of these somewhat intuitive generalizations rather than as the basis of more objective conclusions."

Here, we need not go into the details of how young Tocqueville failed in "distinguishing between those patterns of thought and deed (in America) which were



genuinely democratic in their origin and those which were merely the product of a continuous frontier experience and an English heritage". But Tocqueville's penchant for generalization which made him "fall into a basic methodological trap" should not be repeated in our practice of using literature for acquiring crosscultural understanding. In teaching literature, either a short story or a play, because of our eagerness to generalize, we will probably see the trees for the woods and fail to perceive the cultural messages in the text with precision and clarity. Worse still, we teachers may, under the influence of stereotyping, draw from a piece of literary work or a particular character some wrong conclusions about the target culture and pass them onto our students.

Another important aspect of teaching culture in language classrooms is that culture patterns and culture values change. As society grows, social values change; people change; and their ways of life change. What was valued yesterday may not be valued today; what is precious today may be discarded tomorrow. And what was considered immoral before may well be accepted now, and perhaps will be again rejected in the future. Take individualism as an example, it lies at the core of American culture; and it played, historically, an important and constructive role in forming American character; however, individualism in America has over the

century become, as Bellah points out in Habits of the Hearts, linked with so many deep problems in American society that people have begun to analyze it critically and doubt whether American individualism has gone too far and fallen into the trap of self-indulgence.

Hence, as learners or teachers of culture, we have to constantly modify and update our views. This awareness of the necessity of adapting our minds to the ever-changing situation can also be viewed from a theoretical and philosophical perspective. As Robinson remarks (1985), "Marx suggests that cultural change is a socio-historical, dialectic process in which the new product (i.e. change) is the result of a synthesis between the old and the new.... man has no fixed nature but is constantly reacting to and integrating new situations to create the present state of existence. Existence, for Marx, is a dynamic state---'As individuals express their life, so they are... men, developing their material production and their material intercourse alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking' (Marx and Engles, 1970)" Therefore, culture change, according to Marxian philosophy, is a socio-historical process and is innate in the culture. However, we should point out that culture change tends to happen most drastically when there is great social turmoil. The fact that the concept

of self has undergone a rather drastic change in contemporary China can serve as a good example.

Unquestionably, the self is a very important concept for understanding a society and its culture. Just like any socio-cultural concepts, the concept of self in contemporary China has its continuity as well as its discontinuity. As we discussed earlier, the American self is characterized by individualism. Godwin Chu states (1985): "It (individualism) tends to assert one's self rather than accommodate others and to strive a high degree of self reliance and independence.... The traditional Chinese self, on the other hand, appears to be relatively more oriented toward the significant others, rather than toward the individual self." Traditionally a Chinese individual primarily exists in relation to "the five human interreactions" (wu lun) advocated by Confucius. Thus a male Chinese would consider himself a subject, a son, a husband, a father, a brother and a friend, but rarely himself as an individual. One's strength was by and large derived from relations with "the significant others"--the collective kinship networks; and the self-other relations were sustained by such cultural values as loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, tolerance, integrity, dignity, and endurance.

After the 1949 revolution, the Chinese concept of self has to some degree kept continuity, because the

Communist Party had made an effort to maintain the traditional collectivity. Although an individual was now encouraged to be a "socialist new man", this "new man" still belonged to what was called the "big socialist family", which was based on similar ideas and values. What was favored and advocated instead were loyalty to the Party and the Chairman, dedication to the Revolution, and strong ties with the "class brothers and sisters". Yet on the other hand, the Chinese concept of self has over the years, especially in the past decade of reform, lost continuity and gone through a drastic change. After the unprecedented "cultural revolution", during which people lived through extreme chaos and hardships, the Chinese people began to question such traditional values as "absolute loyalty", "tolerance" and "complete selflessness"; and meanwhile, also due to the influence of Western thought brought into China with the economic reform, people began to develop a new sense of self--the rediscovering of self and emphasis of individuality. This kind of self-affirmation versus self-negation is particularly strong and common among the younger generation.

In fact, this changed concept of self was one of the major factors which generated and elevated the recent prodemocratic student movement in China. On the Tiananmen Square in Beijing, those students declared

proudly that "We are the new generation, the thinking generation. We are just who we are!"; and they sang loudly "the Internationale": "There have never been any saviours. We do not need gods and emperors. To create a happy new world, we have to emancipate ourselves." This strong new sense of self differs very much from the traditional Chinese self--it exists independently and tries to free itself of the feudalistic submissiveness toward authority and dependency on the relations with "the significant others." In this manner, the continuity of the concept of self in Chinese cultural tradition has been disrupted. Godwin Chu points out:

The new Chinese self no longer maintains a continuity with the past as closely as the traditional Chinese self did. It is more assertive, less accommodating, and less submissive to authority figures than in the past. The new Chinese self is not as strongly anchored on enduring family relations and traditional values in the past but leans more toward relations built on what appears to be a utilitarian and material basis. (ibid, p. 272)

It is important to point out: the emerging of the new Chinese self is not peculiar to the P. R. China--it has also appeared in Taiwan. Yang Guoshu (1986), a Taiwanese scholar, sums up in his The Metamorphosis of the Chinese (Zhongguoren de tuibian) the changes of the Chinese since the 1970s:

1. People are less concerned about other people's opinion of themselves, whereas the

tendency towards self-affirmation is getting stronger.

2. The attitude of hesitation, modesty and conformity is diminishing, whereas the tendency toward independence, self-assertativeness, and the desire to control others is getting stronger.

3. Submission toward authority is lessening, whereas the notion of utilitarianism is strengthening.

4. The belief that external factors, such as fate, opportunity, and human relations, control and affect one's life and destiny, is weakening, whereas the idea that one's life and fortune depend on internal factors, such as one's own diligence and ability, are getting stronger.

5. In the relation between man and nature, the belief that man should go with nature is diminishing, whereas the notion that man should conquer nature is stronger.

6. In terms of human relationships, the deference for hierarchy is diminishing, whereas the demand for equality and the stress on individuality is getting stronger.

7. People's concept of time is oriented more toward the present and the future rather than the past.

8. With regard to values of life, the virtue of self-examination and self-cultivation is no longer emphasized, whereas the emphasis on action and accomplishment is getting stronger, and the psychological desire for success for the sake of success is getting more important.

....  
(Translated from Chinese by H. R. Lan)

Needless to say, the emerging of a new Chinese self will bring forth other foreseeable cultural changes in Chinese society, such as: the dispersion of kinship networks and diminished ties to the family. As

educators, we should be, therefore, fully aware of the social meaning of cultural changes and their impact on cultural patterns and values, for we know they will quickly be reflected in language.

Not unrelated to the above two issues is the concern about the evaluation of other cultures. First, we should try to avoid certain evaluation in our teaching, especially simple remarks of value judgement, such as: "Individualism advocates very selfish pursuits and has degenerated into self-indulgence in America." and "Filial piety is feudalistic and should be gotten rid of." Human society and culture are indeed multidimensional and far too complex for us to learn and evaluate in a classroom over a rather short period of time. Admittedly, in learning a foreign language, it is almost impossible to avoid evaluation of the target culture; for evaluation is, after all, a major dimension of human perception. What is important is that we realize how misunderstanding and miscommunication occur in evaluation and how positive evaluation should be developed among people of different cultures. In teaching foreign literature, cultural misreading and misinterpretation is also a common phenomenon. Here we can again cite Kingston as an example. In her article "Cultural Misreadings by American Reviewers" (1982), she writes:

When reading most of the reviews and critical analyses of The Woman Warrior, I have two reac-

tions: I want to pat those critics on their backs, and I also giggle helplessly, shaking my head. The critics did give my book the National Book Critics Circle Award; and they reviewed it in most of the major magazines and newspapers, thus publicising it enough to sell. Furthermore, they rarely gave it an unfavorable review. I pat on them on the back for recognizing good writing--but, unfortunately, I suspect most of them of perceiving its quality in an unconscious sort of way; they praise the wrong things. (bold type by the quoter)

What Kingston complains here is mainly:

Now, of course, I expected The Woman Warrior to be read from the women's lib angle and the Third World angle, the Roots angle; but it is up to the writer to transcend trendy categories. What I did not foresee was the critics measuring the book and me against the stereotype of the exotic, inscrutable, mysterious oriental.... I had not calculated how blinding stereotyping is, how stupefying. The critics who said how the book was good because it was, or was not, like the oriental fantasy in their heads might as well have said how weak it was, since it in fact did not break through that fantasy.

Kingston continues to give us some examples of what she calls "exotic-inscrutable-mysterious oriental reviewing":

Margaret Mannings in The Boston Globe: 'Mythic forces flood the book. Echoes of the Old Testament, fairy tales, the Golden Bough are here, but they have their own strange and brooding atmosphere inscrutably foreign, oriental.'

Barbara Burdick in the Peninsula Herald: 'No other people have remained so mysterious to Westerners as the inscrutable Chinese. Even the word China brings to mind ancient rituals, exotic teas, superstitions, silks and fire-breathing dragons.'

Helen Davenport of the Chattanooga News-Free Press: 'At her most obscure, though, as when telling about her dream of becoming a fabled



"woman warrior" the author becomes inscrutable as the East always seems to the West. In fact, this book seems to reinforce the feeling that "East is East and West is West and never the Twain shall meet," or at any rate it will probably take more than one generation away from China.'

Joan Henriksen in a clipping without the newspaper's name: 'Chinese-Americans always "looked "--at least to this WASP observer--as if they exactly fit the stereotypes I heard as I was growing up. There were "inscrutable." They were serene, withdrawn, neat, clean and hard-workers. The Woman Warrior, because of this stereotyping, is a double delight to read.'....

Then, the author cries out in protest:

How dare they call their ignorance our inscrutability? ...To say we are inscrutable, mysterious, exotic denies us our common humanness, because it says that we are so different from a regular human being that we are by our nature intrinsically unknowable. Thus the stereotyper aggressively defends ignorance. Nor do we want to be called not inscrutable, exotic, mysterious. These are false ways of looking at us. We do not want to be measured by a false standard at all. (p.55-p.57)

The issue raised here by Maxine Hong Kingston is indeed an important question for us to consider. If one evaluates a work from the angle of one's own cultural baggage, in M. Kingston's case--a WASP point of view, one will inevitably head for misreading and miscommunication. Kingston sharply and correctly points out: "To call a people exotic freezes us into the position of being always alien--politically a more sensitive point with us because of the long history in America of the Chinese Exclusion Acts, the deportations, the law denying us

citizenship when we have been part of America since its beginning." So owing to the lack of true crosscultural understanding, miscommunications often occur. That M. H. Kingston's The Woman Warrior was misread by critics in America reminds us of another famous book which was misread by critics in China--Pearl S. Buck's The Good Earth.

Pearl S. Buck (1892-1973) was an American author who was brought up in China and received both American and Chinese education in her youth. She lived in China for nearly forty years and then in America for more than forty years. During her fifty year career as a writer, she published more than eighty five books, of which about fifty are fiction. She was bilingual and bicultural, and like Maxine Hong Kingston, was a genuinely crosscultural writer. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1938, mainly for her novel The Good Earth which was published in 1931. Concerning the writing of The Good Earth, Pearl Buck once said: "My story had long been clear in my mind. Indeed, it had shaped itself firmly and swiftly from the events of my life, and its energy was the anger I felt for the sake of the peasants and the common folk of China, whom I loved and admired, and still do." (My Several World p.279-p.280)

The Good Earth, part of a trilogy about the peasant life in pre-Revolutionary China, is full of sympathy

toward the Chinese peasantry; and by describing how precious the good earth is to them, Pearl Buck successfully dramatizes the disparity between the rich and the poor as well as the rise and fall of families in rural China. This novel has had enormous success in the West since its publication. It has been rendered into over thirty languages and made into a play and a film. Its great appeal to the Western readership can be explained by its rich cultural messages as well as its deep humanitarianism. All kinds of rural Chinese customs, festivals, religious beliefs and practices are vividly delineated in and interwoven with the daily life of the Wang family. But because of political and cultural prejudices, such an influential book on China's rural life has been forbidden in China ever since the 1949 Revolution. It was severely criticized for "its Western naturalistic description of and attack on the Chinese peasantry--lamprooning on their greed, ignorance, slavishness, selfishness, superstition, primitiveness, snobbery, and laziness". And because of this book and other political reasons, Pearl Buck's last wish to go back to China before her death in 1973 was refused--the Chinese government never granted her the visa!

These two examples tell us clearly that perhaps due to our human cognitive tendency for consistency, people are prone to be misled by their prejudices against other

cultures and their defensiveness for their own culture-- or as G. Robinson put it, "people tend to interpret the behavior of other people in a way which is consistent with their established frame of reference. In order to maintain consistency, people may reject, discount or distort information that does not fit the established framework."

Judging people from other cultures is complex; and reading works by foreign writers is no less difficult. Just as people have many layers, literary works have many layers. Works written from a crosscultural perspective often have deeper and broader "hidden meanings and messages". In our teaching, we should be always cautious and be fully aware of this fact. No matter how difficult it might be, the ultimate goal for us foreign language teachers should be to help students to overcome language barriers and to enhance their crosscultural awareness and foster a positive crosscultural understanding. If we fail to do so, then the East and the West shall never meet, indeed!

## 2. Conclusion

In this study, I have addressed briefly and broadly the relationships between culture, literature and language and the importance of crosscultural understanding in language learning. While my main purpose is to provide

a theoretical framework for my hypothesis, I have also tried to address some concrete issues pedagogically. R. Politzer says in the Georgetown University Report of the Fifth Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Teaching:

As language teachers, we must be interested in the study of culture not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the other country but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching at the same time the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning, for unless he is warned, unless he receives cultural instruction, he will associate American concepts or objects with the foreign symbols. (1959:100-1)  
(Quoted by Valdes, p.123)

Therefore, in order to prevent the student from associating his native concepts or objects with the foreign symbols, being it Chinese, Japanese or English, we simply have to teach culture together with linguistic symbols and rules. To achieve this purpose, the study of the literature of a target language is a unique and perhaps the most efficient way of apprehending a culture in its complex particularities, its nuances and its characteristic tone. G. Amirthnanayagam, a poet and essayist, says (1982): "Literature is an invaluable cultural expression because it springs from its cultural nexus, if it may be so called, with an immediacy, a freshness, a concreteness, an authenticity and a power of meaning which are not easily found in other emanations

or through channels." Literature with its unique appeal and emphatic power is of great help to both the teacher and the student; and indeed, the teaching of literature in a foreign language classroom is both an obligation and a great joy.

Moreover, we ought to look beyond the subject we teach. In the world today, different cultures and different societies co-exist. People frequently say "the world is getting smaller and smaller" and sing "We Are One World"; and yet a surprising amount of misconceptions and misunderstandings between cultures and peoples still exists. This unhealthy situation often causes mutual distrust and hostility, leading to national, racial and political conflicts and confrontations. As foreign language teachers, we feel that it is our sacred duty to try to bridge the gaps between different cultures and societies by promoting crosscultural understanding through language teaching.

In today's "global context", English is so widely spread that it has become almost a world language. It is "now in daily use not by seven million people (as in Shakespeare's days) but by seven hundred million."

(Quirk, 1985) Significantly, only half of the seven hundred million English users are native speakers. English as the most widely used language in the world is playing a very important role in bridging the gaps

between nations and races. Being used by people from so many different cultures, English has been stamped with all kinds of cultural identities, which is another important fact for us to probe and think about. But we may also bear in mind that despite the different cultural traditions and different sets of values in this world, literature does touch our common humanity, and the realm of literature is by all accounts human nature in action.

Pearl Buck, a product of Eastern and Western cultures, was always intrigued in writing about the complicated encounters of the two worlds; but she at the same time had always been prompted by her ideal of creating "one world" out of her "several worlds". She had great faith in human nature; to her, the noble human feeling is "the universal brotherhood". (She constantly referred to the Chinese sayings: "All men are brothers." and "All under heaven are one.") However, her ideal about the one-world does not mean that all cultures should be merged into one; rather, she says: "Each state, each party, each group, takes pride in its own being, in its difference, as well as in its union with the whole." (What America Means to Me p.163)

Talking about the cultural discrepancies he encountered in Beijing, Arthur Miller wrote with most admirable insight and deep-felt humanity in his book Salesman in Beijing (1985):

Thus we dispense with culture, hammer away at the opacity of our languages, strive to penetrate rather than justify ourselves or defend the long past. Indeed, our whole objective has been to unearth our common images and analogous--if superficially different--histories. ... The job of culture, I have always thought, is not to further fortify people against contamination by other cultures but to mediate between them from the heart's common ground."

If all the people of the world share this belief "from the heart's common ground", "the Internationale shall be the human race !"

--the end-



## APPENDIX

### WIDDOWSON'S QUESTIONS ON FROST'S "DUST OF SNOW"

Question 1 Using a dictionary if necessary, note down as many details about the meanings of these words as possible: crow dust snow hemlock tree

The learners can be encouraged to note any detail, both those which relate to the denotation as well as those which relate to the connotation of these terms. Their findings should, in fact provide a useful basis for a discussion of these two kinds of meaning so that the analysis of the poem can itself serve as a link between literature and language teaching, a link which, as was pointed out before, a stylistic approach to literature naturally establishes. but to return to our poem; let us suppose that the question yields (with some prompting by the teacher) results of something like the following sort:

crow:	bird--organic animate winged	ugly noisy bird of ill- omen
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black  
feeder on  
carrion--dead and decomposing flesh

dust:	inorganic inanimate	dirty result of neglect
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particles of matter  
dry remains of the dead

snow:	inorganic inanimate frozen vapour white wet	winter clean pure
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hemlock tree:	tree--organic, inanimate, poisonous
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This is a very varied collection of "details" of course.... The heterogeneity does not matter particularly at this point ( though some teachers might wish to guide the learners to a more refined analysis by a preliminary discussion of basic semantic notions): the important thing is that the learner has broken the lexical items into a number of component part. The next step involves synthesis. We want the learner to discover any possible semantic links between the items by looking for similarities in the different parts. A question like the following might serve our purpose:

- Question 2      Which of these terms are linked by
- a) having the same details?
  - b) having details which are related in meaning?

The following observations are likely to emerge (given some assistance by the teacher). Dust, snow, and hemlock tree are linked by virtue of the common feature of inanimacy. The last of these is linked with crow in that they share the common feature "organic" without having the common feature "animate" and dust and snow are even more closely linked in that they have two features in common: "animate" and "organic". As far as 2a is concerned, then there is no direct link between all four terms by virtue of them having the same feature(s) in common but they are brought into association through the mediation of features in hemlock tree which is organic like crow and inanimate like dust and snow, the latter two being closely linked by having two features in common (thereby, of course, making the phrase dust of snow easily interpretable). Notice that at this stage we are not concerned with whether or not these findings are significant for an understanding of the poem: we are simply getting the learners to recognize a semantic association, no matter how trivial it might turn out to be, with reference to certain features that they have been led to discover in their analysis of these terms.

Let us now turn to the kind of results that might come from answering 2b . Crow and dust might be said to be linked in that the

dictionary entries "dead and decomposing flesh" and "remains of the dead" are semantically similar. One might say that there is a link, though less binding, between these terms and hemlock tree through the feature "poisonous" since poison cause death. Thus these three terms are associated as having some reference to the notion of death and this notion would appear to be particularly prominent in relation to crow since this term also has features "black", a colour associated with mourning, and "bird of ill-omen". These features are brought into prominence precisely because of their relevance to features in the other terms: in this context, "winged" and "noisy" are not, as it were, activated, though in other contexts of course they may be. Turning now to snow, it might be observed that it is possible to link this term with the others through the feature "winter", since this might be glossed as "the dead season of the year", and perhaps "frozen". Furthermore, snow, as has already been pointed out, shares the feature of inanimacy with dust and hemlock tree, all three terms being associated with lifelessness, and it is also linked with crow by virtue of rhyme. Crow is the only term which has the feature "animate" as opposed to "inanimate" but at the same time it has a preponderance of features associated with death.

We are perhaps now in a position to put the kind of question traditionally asked in literary study:

Question 3      What does the event described in the first verse suggest to the poet?

The investigation into the meanings of these four terms and the way they are linked yields evidence that what they refer to in combination, as themselves features of a composite notion, is death or lifelessness. This notion is the common factor. The kind of close security of how these terms take on value in relation to each other prepares the way for interpretation, and Question 3 can now be answered on the basis of actual evidence drawn from the analysis of the poem and not simply by reference to a general intuitive impression of what the poem is about. The event of the crow

shaking snow down on him puts the poet in mind of death and we can arrive at this conclusion by recognising that a number of common elements or feature of meaning in the four nouns of the first verse converge on this notion. I am not saying that the first verse only expresses a sense of death. One could proceed further in the analysis and discover other possibilities. So far, for example, our questions have been directed at discovering common features which associate the four terms in the first verse. A question might also be asked about contrasting features: dust and snow, for example are linked by two common features, as we have seen, but at the same time they are distinguished by two contrasting features: dust has "dry" whereas snow has "wet" as one contrasting pair, and another set of contrasts is "dirty" on the one hand and "clean" and "pure" on the other. Furthermore, although crow and snow are associated in some ways, they are also in direct contrast by virtue of the features "black" in crow and "white" in snow. Having provoked these observations by an appropriate question, we might then return to a reconsideration of Question 3, and we might interpret these findings by saying that what the first verse expresses is not simply a sense of mortality but a recognition that things which are distinct and which indeed may represent opposites can be reconciled by a unifying vision of an ultimate reality. so it is not just that the crow serves as a kind of memento mori but that its shaking down of snow on the poet's head makes him think of death and life as reconciled, just as other opposites are reconciled in the poem: animate/inanimate, organic/inorganic, dry/wet, black/white and so on. The unifying patterns in the expression of the poem represent the unifying pattern of the experience of the poet. We can conclude that it is this sense of underlying and resolving oneness that gives the heart a change of mood and 'saves' the day. The use of save, with its religious connotations, is itself significant.

(Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature, p.104-  
p.107)

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