ON THE NET

LiT*gloss*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading in a second language (L2) is important for a variety of reasons (see LeLoup & Ponterio, 2000*).* Reading authentic materials, in particular, allows L2 learners to engage with native speaker content, and ultimately the target culture. One body of authentic materials is that of literary texts, including those of more traditional prose fiction, poetry, and drama, but also culture, biography, travel, history, and a wealth of topics from other disciplines that might not be the typical fare of college language programs. Being able to read such texts in the original language is a goal of many a second language teacher and learner, and the experience of reading goes a long way towards building vocabulary and general linguistic competence. However, often the task of reading authentic text proves too daunting for the learner due to a lack of vocabulary and/or background knowledge. Consequently, the teacher feels compelled to turn to edited or even translated texts so that the students can appreciate the richness of the work in question. How much better would it be to be able to read a text in its original form but provided with vocabulary assistance and supplementary material that can enhance text comprehension?
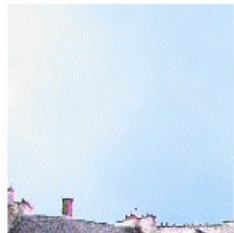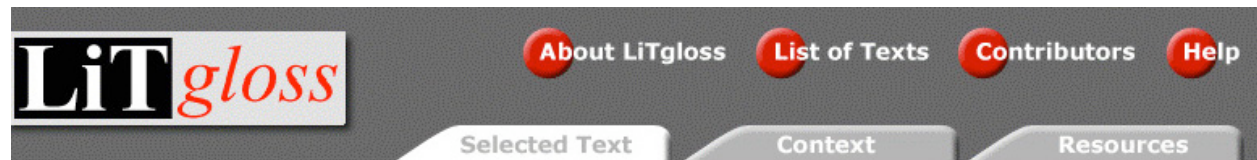

http://wings.buffalo.edu/litgloss/

The LiT*gloss* project at the University of Buffalo aims to enable language learners to access literary works in their original form in a purposeful way to promote reading comprehension and facilitate a deeper understanding of the text through annotation. This project and site (begun in 1999 with work continuing) provide a collection of texts originally written in languages other than English, along with additional materials to help provide context and annotations to assist in comprehension. Texts included in this project are of a literary, cultural, and/or historical nature.

The goal of the LiTgloss project is stated succinctly on the site: "The LiT*gloss* project is intended to promote a meaningful engagement with important texts on their own terms."

The site is very simple to use. An initial bar offers navigation buttons to aid the visitor in using the site effectively. An explanatory page ("About LiT*gloss*") gives a brief history of the project and offers a rationale. A "list of texts" is provided on another page. While some texts are password protected for access by University of Buffalo affiliated persons only (for copyright reasons), most texts are in the public domain and freely available to any and all users of the site. "Contributors" are identified with varying bibliographic data. Finally, a "Help" button takes the reader to a page explaining how to get the most from the site, including procedures for non-western fonts.

Beside the works themselves, other supporting materials are available to provide an historical context to the readings. These materials are available under the tabs "Context" and "Resources." An example of "Context" might be a brief biography and bibliography of the author, including an overview of the times during which the work was written. Other "Resources" include additional web sites devoted to the work and/or the author as well as images associated with the theme of the work, the author, and/or the historical timeframe.

The principle aid provided by the LiTgloss project to readers is glossing of the texts. Gloss = "a brief explanation (as in the margin or between the lines of a text) of a difficult or obscure word or expression" (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). The texts are presented and are glossed via multimedia. The reader can click on a word or phrase and see the English translation instantly.

|	The little popup windows for glosses are created using a free JavaScript application called OverLIB by Erik Bosrup. http://www.bosrup.com/web/overlib/ This utility is quite easy for a teacher to use.

"Aadarsh Prem," by Dr. Harivansh Rai Bachchan
annotated by Maykala Hariharan and Aditya Sachan

प्यार किसी को करना लेकिन
कहकर उसे बताना कया |
अपने को अर्पण करना पर
और को अपनाना क्या |

गुण का ग्राहक बनना लेकिन
गाकर उसे सुनाना | carrier of virtues
मन के कल्पित भावों से
औरों को भ्रम में लाना क्या |

In addition, many of the texts feature a speaker icon indicating the availability of an audio file to listen to the text being read by a native speaker. Sometimes the text has also been set to music, and the recording reflects this.
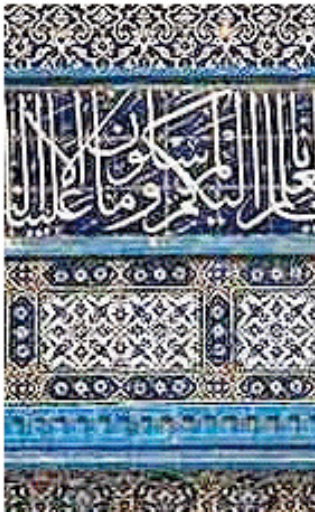
🔊 "Rita and the rifle," by Mahmoud Darwish
annotated by Mohammed Ajlouny

ريتا و البندقية
بين ريتا وعيوني . . بندقيه
والذي يعرف ريتا ينحني
ويصلي

Clickable links take the reader to texts from the large variety of languages offered thus far:

ARABIC | CATALAN | CHINESE | DUTCH | FRENCH | GERMAN | GREEK | HEBREW | HINDI | HUNGARIAN | ITALIAN | JAPANESE | KOREAN | LATIN | LATVIAN | NAHUATL | POLISH | PORTUGUESE | ROMANIAN | RUSSIAN | SANSKRIT | SPANISH | SWAHILI | VIETNAMESE

Finally, a whole section of the site is devoted to procedures for contributing annotated texts. Guidelines are provided for choosing a text, checking it for authenticity, preparing the text with annotations, and submitting the contribution. A new "Contributor" interface is promised in the near future, making submission very easy.

CONCLUSION

While the whole idea of text glossing is still somewhat controversial in the field of L2 research, many studies have shown some success in enhancing reading comprehension via the use of glosses (Cubillos, 1998; Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002; Lomicka, 1998). Generalization about glossing can blur important differences: glosses may be done in the target language or in the student's native language; and they may be located in plain view in the margin, at the bottom of a page, at the back of a book, or in a separate glossary for the particular text or for all texts in a work. These differences can have a major impact on how the gloss supports the reading process or perhaps interferes with it (Lomicka, 1998). Electronic glosses in web pages might be indicated by different colored or underlined text, a potential distraction, or, as is the case here, by a change in the cursor when the mouse passes over the glossed text. The ease of use and flexibility of the LiT*gloss* project is a most positive step in the direction of useful glosses, and readers are encouraged to consider participating in this collegial project.

REFERENCES

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