

tempt to defend literature teaching by posing the questions: "Is literature language? Or is language literature?" Littlewood's paper tries to relate the various demands which literary texts make on readers to the needs of foreign language learners, and considers the implications thereof for the selection of texts and methods. Brumfit attempts to define the relationship between general reading ability in a foreign language and literary response. These three papers are concerned with general principles, while the other four in this section focus on specific issues. Sandra McKay illustrates ways in which a literary text may be used or misused in order to achieve 'aesthetic response'. Boyle looks critically at testing language and identifies the problem that the things we most strongly wish to teach in literature classes are not amenable to the kinds of testing procedures traditional in foreign language work. In considering the relationship between simplified and unsimplified texts, Monica Vincent suggests in her paper that the use of linguistically simpler texts need not make the process of reading easier. The last paper in this section, by the Kenyan novelist Ngugi, addresses the cultural implications of the study of literature, which he sketches in a negative light.

The final section of the book, which contains five papers, looks at the issue of fluent versus accurate reading with specific reference to East Africa (papers by Brumfit and Pettit), as well as to British education. Other issues raised in this section are: reading a few works in detail as opposed to vast amounts of reading at a more superficial level; reading speed and the design of a literature curriculum. A sample examination paper is also provided.

It is impossible to do credit to the wide range of views and the vast ground covered in this volume, in a review of this nature. It is fair to say that the reader is offered a series of exciting and thought-provoking articles so arranged as to present a progression of general principles as well as practical problems and activities. As such, it is a very useful composite of theory and ideas, making an outstanding contribution to an area of applied linguistics which is of increasing interest and concern to language teachers. I heartily recommend it.

J.J. Swartz

### Winifred Crombie

*Discourse and Language Learning: A Relational Approach to Syllabus Design.* Oxford: O.U.P., 1985 (130pp.)

*Process and Relation in Discourse and Language Learning.* Oxford: O.U.P., 1985 (150pp.)

The two books are complementary volumes. The first deals with practical aspects of syllabus design, while the second provides the theoretical basis for the suggestions postulated in the first. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall deal with each volume in turn, with references being made to the companion volume wherever it seems necessary.

The first volume details the approach outlined in her entry for the 1980 English Language Competition run by the English-Speaking Union. It arises from the firm criticisms that she has of the direction "communicative" syllabus design has taken. South African course designers or those concerned with syllabus design and even curriculum development would do well to consider what she has to say. She points to the tendency among syllabus designers to elevate function at the expense of structure; to design syllabuses for specific purposes instead of general purposes; to enter into discussions on aspects which they do not properly understand; and to introduce parameters which are unrealistic or about which research has little to offer in the way of guidance.

She believes:

- 1 that structure and function are equally important;
- 2 that discussions about syllabus design should begin with a consideration of the principles involved in designing general syllabuses rather than with a consideration of needs specification for learners who may have specific communicative objectives;
- 3 that syllabus designers must necessarily restrict themselves to categories which are finite, systematizable, and at least reasonably well understood;
- 4 that syllabus designers should take as their starting point and organizational principle those aspects of discourse construction and comprehension which all learners, whatever their cultural and language background have in common" (p. x).

She believes that the notional approach has not provided a genuine alternative to structural syllabuses. She strongly defends the “good“ structural syllabus, pointing out that course materials often draw attention to both meaning and discourse value since they are cyclic rather than linear. They are not, then inherently insensitive to meaning. Much of this argument aims to refute the allegations of Wilkins (1976) and other proponents of the notional-functional approach. She concludes that the “main difference between a structural syllabus and a notional-functional syllabus is that, in the latter case, categories of communicative-function are added” (p.13). She is rather less charitable about functional-notional syllabuses than she is about structural syllabuses, not allowing in this case that teaching materials and procedures might compensate for discrete-item inventory. She argues firmly that since units of value do not have value in isolation, the course writer’s task becomes impossible. He would be likely to encourage the idea that “meaning is more or less fixed – that discourse value is a property of a particular grammatical expression rather than of the relationship between units of language and the linguistic and non-linguistic context in which they occur” (p.14). In her view this could actually hinder communicative competence. Objectives have to be clearly stated. For this reason, she has as many misgivings about an approach which comprises a series of activities (however interesting or stimulating) as she has about a course comprising discrete items and units. South African course designers might do well to give serious consideration to this view.

At the heart of her approach is the view that it is the relationships which underlie the construction of coherent discourse which should provide the conceptual framework of a syllabus. Structure and lexis would be introduced within this framework as learning proceeds. Designers must be concerned with a dynamic view of language as a meaning-creating system and hence adopt an approach which “takes an adequate account of language as coherent discourse” (p.8). A relational approach would give centrality to binary values. These in turn may be divided into two types: interactional values and general discursal values. Interactional values refers to “functional components of a conversational discourse and generally relates to the interaction between the

conversational contributions of different speakers” (p.4) e.g. Elicitation – Reply. General discursal values are those which may occur in any type of discourse, e.g. Reason – Result. She convincingly illustrates her view that an approach using only unitary values is restrictive. For instance, “I suggest you do that exercise again” might be wrongly interpreted as a suggestion instead of a command (p.7). Values are established through relationship between units of language within a discourse, as well as by explicit signalling. For her, “the ultimate aim is that the learner should reach a degree of competence at which he can not only recognize and use value signals, but also recognize where and when they need not be introduced and where and when they must not be” (p.6).

Chapter 2 deals with general semantic relations; Chapter 3 with interactive semantic relations while Chapter 4 involves a careful consideration of discourse relations and macro-patterning. Throughout she demonstrates that a discourse-centred approach is necessarily an integrated one. A consideration of general semantic relations, for instance, must also involve a consideration of reference, substitution and ellipsis. In Chapter 5, Winifred Crombie points to the fact that there are many ways to design a relational syllabus. It merely requires that every aspect of the system under consideration be given due attention. Her suggestions as to what a course book might be like are terrifyingly precise in their analysis of the individual core units, and their role in supplementing relational frames (e.g. Reason-Result) and relational cues (e.g. because). The important role of prior concentration on structural and semantic units is also suggested as a means of ensuring that these structures can be used as naturally as possible in creating and comprehending coherent discourse.

“This would lead to a situation in which homogeneous relational inventories were two-tiered (with primary core units feeding extension and integration core unit), and co-operative relational inventories were four-tiered (with structurally labelled units feeding semantically labelled units feeding primary core units), and primary core units feeding extension and integration core units.” (p. 87).

In Chapter 6, she offers practical suggestions about ways in which semantic relations and

discourse planning could be incorporated into classroom practice to develop reading, writing and listening skills. Many would find this the best part of the book. She makes the useful points that learners often have to deal with imperfect material (e.g. lectures!) and that they usually fail to recognize that signals or cues are sometimes used to deliberately mislead. Course writers would do well to include training in this regard.

This is an exciting and challenging work, which draws on various approaches to discourse analysis showing how they are applicable to language teachers. It makes heavy demands on the reader who is not well-versed in discourse analysis. However, once the specialist terms have been mastered (the companion volume would be very helpful in this respect), the uninitiated reader will at least have an awareness of the inherent dangers in approaches which do not take account of the interaction between sentence and context, if he cannot fully appreciate the six advantages of a relational approach provided. Those who are concerned with analytical language study, or are syllabus designers should find this work of great interest.

The second volume is best used, as it was intended, as a companion to the first. She believes that pedagogic proposals must arise out of and relate to sound and clearly explained theory. This book, then, is a bold invitation to judge the pedagogic proposals in **Discourse and language learning: a relational approach to syllabus design** in the light of the descriptive account provided.

Winifred Crombie has two main concerns in writing this book:

*My first aim has been to investigate in a preliminary way, the direction in which an operational approach to language study might lead. My second aim has been to attempt to provide language teachers with an account of semantic relations which might form the basis of a new approach to syllabus design. (viii)*

Its value, however, as a contribution to theoretical description is somewhat reduced because it is so particularly tied to its companion volume. Nevertheless, she has presented a valuable preliminary investigation. The field of relations and relational coding is characterized by interesting exploration. This represents the first coherent

and consistent description. Here, for instance, she presents a framework which links ethno-methodological conversation analysis, pragmatics and discourse analysis. Not only the relationships between these research areas are highlighted, but their direct bearing on text grammar is explicitly explored. Her reasons for an operational approach to language in the companion volume become clear. Throughout she draws on authorities in the field.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One (Semantic relations between propositions) is concerned with those operations (or relations) which underlie discursive coherence, and the way in which they may be signalled and coded in English. Part Two (Semantic relations within the propositions) is concerned with case grammar, as well as the ways in which intra-propositional relational coding is done in English.

Chapter One, which precedes Part One, acts as a brief overview, pointing to the seminal work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1971) with regard to "unitary values", and clearly establishing the inescapable link with a specific context of situation. She provides definitions of terms such as "binary", "anaphoric", "deixis" and the way in which discursive relationships are identified. In doing so, she acknowledges the major contributions made to the field by Grice (1975) and Winter (1977). The discussion is complex and often elliptical, which seriously limits its value for most teachers.

In Part One, Chapter Two, Section A groups semantic relations into 9 categories, giving them rather more complex and fuller treatment than afforded them in the companion volume (Temporal, Matching, Cause-Effect, Truth and Validity, Alternation, Bonding, Paraphrase, Amplification and Setting/Conduct). The descriptions provided are very clear. In addition, graphic illustrations are provided of the way in which semantic relations interact in discourse. Two discourse extracts – one literary, the other technical – are most usefully analyzed. First, the anaphoric references are identified, and second, the semantic relations. Section B is concerned with interactive semantic relations, while Section C is concerned with interactive semantic relations and general semantic relations in conversational discourse. Chapter Three deals with semantic relations and intonational disambiguation.

tion: the important role of intonation in creating meaning. Closely linked, Chapter Four explores lexico-syntactic signalling and then leads into an examination of textual cohesion and lexical and syntactic coding. Part Two focuses on intra-propositional relational encoding in English and has a particularly useful treatment of the predicate.

As is the case with the other volume, a bibliography is provided. An index would have been valuable, especially for those unfamiliar with the specialist terms.

The two volumes represent a valuable contribution. They will undoubtedly receive wide attention. It is to be hoped that we will soon have the benefit of further research and more practical guidance in this area. At present, the books address the adult situation only. South Africans would welcome ways of increasing the communicative competence of black high school pupils, in particular, so that they are better able to meet the demands of the job market.

E Ridge