Teaching for Three Kinds of Competence

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Abstract

This paper points out that all of our foreign-language departments share a rationale in designing their curricula. It concludes that the rationale is in actuality a foreign-language teacher’s threefold mission: to teach for the students’ linguistic competence, literary competence, and communicative competence. In order to reach a conclusion, the paper touches on such topics as practical vs. impractical courses, literary vs. ordinary language, literariness or poeticalness, grammaticality and poeticality, grammar and rhetoric, and the structuring art of selection and combination. To discuss the relevant topics and elucidate some relevant issues, the Russian Formalist ideas, the speech act theory, and some foreign-language teaching methods or approaches are greatly dwelled on, and some important points are made. We suggest that linguistic competence aims at truth (correctness of language), literary competence at beauty (the beauty of language) and communicative competence at goodness (appropriateness of language). We also assert that teaching is an art (of selection and combination); we have “impractical teachings” indeed, but never “impractical courses” so long as the courses involve the use of the target language. Finally, we claim that the idea of teaching for the three kinds of competence is as time-honored as Confucianism.

Keywords: linguistic competence, literary competence, communicative competence, literariness or poeticalness, language-teaching methods or approaches, Russian Formalism, speech act theory

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Introduction: Literariness

During the last few years, I have been called upon to evaluate a good number of the so-called “Departments of Foreign Languages and Literature(s),” “Departments of (Applied) English,” “Departments of Applied Foreign Languages,” etc., here in our country. I find there is one thing common to the curricula of all such departments: they all offer literature courses along with linguistics courses and language-training courses, although some of the departments have a higher proportion of literature courses while others offer more linguistics courses or language-training courses. This fact reveals that all such departments of ours share a rationale in designing their curricula. But what is the rationale?

Before we proceed to find the answer, I must point out another fact commonly found in our departments. That is, many students of our departments, especially those in the departments that offer more literature courses, keep wondering why they should take so many literature courses. “Aren’t we here just to learn such language skills as those of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation?” They often ask themselves, and their teachers or departments as well, questions like this. Some of them even go so far as to protest against listing literature courses among the required courses and plead that they should be provided with more “practical courses.”

Those students who want more “practical courses” may have the delusion that only such “practical courses” as English Conversation and English Composition can teach “practical English” while such courses as English Literature and American Literature can only teach “non-practical English,” that is, English not directly related to our everyday English. This delusion is based on the idea that literary language is distinguishable from ordinary language. And this idea is a debatable presupposition of the so-called Russian Formalism.

Roman Jakobson, as we know, once wrote: “The subject of literary scholarship is not literature in its totality, but literariness (literaturnost), i.e., that which makes a
given work a work of literature.”¹ Since Jakobson made this remark, scholars have indeed tried vigorously to inquire into “the distinguishing features of the literary materials” as Boris Eichenbaum wanted them to do.² In the course of seeking “literariness” or “poeticalness,” they have once considered the idea of “fictionality” and the use of images as the “distinguishing features.” But the typically Russian Formalist ideas in this regard are those developed by Viktor Shklovsky, Roman Jakobson, Boris Tomashevsky, and Jan Mukarovsky. Shklovsky regards “art as device”: he thinks that the literary or poetic art is to use verbal devices so as to “make strange” or “defamiliarize” the object depicted, and that literary or poetic language, therefore, can prevent “automatization” and effect “perceptibility” of the object by such devices.³ Jakobson tells us that the distinctive feature of poetry “lies in the fact that a word is perceived as a word and not merely a proxy for the denoted object or an outburst of an emotion, that words and their arrangement, their meaning, their outward and inward form acquire weight and value of their own” (quoted in Erlich 183). In the same vein, Tomashevsky states that poetic language is “one of the linguistic systems where the communicative function is relegated to the background and where verbal structures acquire autonomous value” (quoted in Erlich 183). And, similarly, Mukarovsky says that the function of poetic language “consists in the maximum of foregrounding of the utterance,” and he explains, thus:

In poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the object of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself. (43-44)

¹ This is English translation from Jakobson’s words in Nevešnaja russkaja poezija, p. 11, quoted in Erlich, 172.
² The translation is from Eichenbaum’s Literatura, p. 121, quoted in Erlich, 172.
I have attacked, elsewhere, the Russian Formalist ideas of art as just the “laying bare” of one’s technique, of literature as just a special use of language for its own sake, of defamiliarization (ostranenie) as the sole distinctive feature of literary or poetic language in contrast to practical language, and of foregrounding the utterance as the sufficient aim and quality of literariness or poeticalness. I have, instead, suggested that literariness or poeticalness is no other than verbal artfulness. Thus, literary or poetic language is an artful use of language for artistic purposes, not just a special use of language for its own sake. In fact, literary or poetic language may or may not deviate from or distort ordinary (or practical, standard, utilitarian, prosaic, scientific, everyday, communicative, referential, etc.) language. Just as “art for art sake” is but an empty slogan, so “language for language sake” (as implied in the concept of foregrounding the utterance) can only ring with a bogus truth.

I have been of the opinion that a piece of literature (e.g. a poem, a play, a novel, or an essay) is an artful piece of discourse “uttered” by the author to express a certain idea or feeling to the reader. It is consequently like any discourse in that it also involves the six “constitutive factors in any speech event, in any act of verbal communication,” as pointed out by Jakobson: addresser, addressee, contact, message, code, and context. It is only that when we talk about literature, the addresser or sender is the author or writer, the addressee or receiver the reader, the contact the medium (the book, the magazine, the website, etc., where the text appears), the message the idea(s) or the feeling(s) of the author or writer, the code the language used for the work, and the context the society or the world in which the work is written, produced, and read. When we talk about the poem “Dover Beach,” for

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5 Mary Louise Pratt, in contrasting “poetic” with “nonpoetic” language, says that “ ‘nonpoetic’ could be specified variously as ‘practical,’ ‘utilitarian,’ ‘spoken,’ ‘prosaic,’ ‘scientific,’ ‘everyday,’ ‘communicative,’ ‘referential’ or any combination of these without in the least disturbing the notion of what ‘poetic’ was” (5-6).

6 See Jakobson’s Language in Literature, p. 66.
example, the addresser or sender is Matthew Arnold, the addressee or receiver is each reader reading the poem, the contact is the medium through which the poem is printed and read, the message is the idea(s) or feeling(s) Arnold wants to convey through the poem, the code is the English language used for the poem, and the context is the society or world in which “Dover Beach” existed and exists. Besides being artful, a piece of literature like “Dover Beach” is different from a chance talk about the Beach in that the literary discourse continues to exist for different readers of different times and places to read while an ordinary discourse, once uttered and heard (or not heard), may just disappear for good, not to be noticed or mentioned again and again. So, in a sense, a piece of literature is a written or printed speech kept for repeated listening or reading.7

Talking of “speech,” we must understand that in writing a piece of literature, an author is also performing a “speech act.” Besides, a narrator in a literary work is also performing a speech act each time he or she narrates a story to the narratee. Likewise, all the characters therein are also performing speech acts each time they speak to one another. So, a literary work can be regarded as a “two-level speech act,” at least, containing the first level of the author addressing the public and the second level of the fictional figures—the narrator(s) and the character(s)—narrating or speaking in the work. Furthermore, since the fictional figures are usually involved in a series of talks, their speech acts naturally constitute what Teun van Dijk calls a “global speech act or MACRO-SPEECH ACT” (238).

According to J. L. Austin, as we know, “to say something is in the full normal sense to do something” (94). Furthermore, “saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience, or of the speaker, or of other persons” (104). To put it

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7 In attacking “phonocentrism,” Jacques Derrida, in his *Of Grammatology*, argues against treating writing as a contaminated form of speech, sees both speech and writing as signifying processes which lack “presence,” and reverses the “speech/writing hierarchy” by asserting that speech is a species of writing. Here I am in a sense deconstructing Derrida’s deconstruction by suggesting that writing is a species of speech as well.
simply in Austin’s terms, normally a locutionary act is always both an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. If we apply the speech act theory to the case of literature, we can say, for instance, that “Dover Beach” is Arnold’s written speech: when he wrote the poem, he was not merely delivering a form of locution; he was also performing the illocutionary act of warning his sweetheart and the world alike that Faith had ebbed into a critical phase by the time he came to the Beach with his sweetheart. In addition, we know the act must of necessity have become a perlocutionary act since the poem has had some instructive effect and brought about some subsequent criticism. So, a piece of literature is never merely an aesthetic object—an object with its intrinsic elements of beauty to delight people—it is also a social or ethical object, an object with its communicative message aimed to bring about a certain result and certainly often with some social or ethical consequence. That is why literature is traditionally said to have two functions: to delight and to instruct.9

Whereas a literary work can be regarded as a literary discourse which like any other form of communication shares the six essential factors of communication, and like any other form of speech can be investigated in terms of illocutionary and perlocutionary act, a literary work is nevertheless a special discourse indeed, but it is special not only in its extrinsic functions or purposes (both to delight and to instruct or inform) but also in its intrinsic textual details. There have been authors, to be sure, who choose to see no differences between literature and ordinary language. William Wordsworth, for instance, asserts that the poet is only “a man speaking to men” (255), and that “there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition” (253). And Molière made the

8 I have analyzed the poem as containing a “double speech act.” See “A New Linguistic Analysis of Arnold’s ‘Dover Beach’” in Critical Inquiry: Some Winds on Works, pp. 153-174.

9 Since classical times, the ultimate goal of poetry or literature is said to be “dulce et utile”: to please and to instruct; to seduce and to educate; to entertain and to teach. In Horace’s Ars Poetica, for instance, it is said that the aim of the poet is “either to benefit, or to amuse, or to make his words at once please and give lessons of life.” See Adams’s Critical Theory Since Plato, p. 73.
philosopher in *The Bourgeois Gentlemen* tell Jourdain that all speech is either poetry or prose and that Jourdain has been speaking prose all his life without knowing it. In real life, however, what is called prose or verse, when referring to the language used to compose drama, fiction, or poetry, is certainly distinguishable from ordinary speech.

In *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, it is said that “Words are used (1) for ordinary speech, (2) for discursive or logical thought, and (3) for literature” (Preminger et al. 291). Furthermore, it is suggested that “the language of ordinary speech is not prose, or at least is prose only to the extent that it is not verse”; verse has “some form of regular recurrence, whether meter, accent, vowel quality, rhyme, alliteration, parallelism, or any combination of these”; while verse results from conventionalizing ordinary speech by “recurrent rhythm,” prose results from conventionalizing ordinary speech by “a consistent and logical sentence structure”; discursive language “makes statements of fact, is judged by standards of truth and falsehood, and is in the form of prose”; “all verse is literary ... [but] all literature is not verse” (Preminger et al. 291).

In a book of mine, I have pointed out that the word “prose” can be understood in four different senses.10 In its broadest sense, prose is no other than ordinary speech: it is, as just mentioned above, that language which is “not verse,” or that language which lacks any conventionalized verbal rhythm or structure. In a broader (but not the broadest) sense, prose is that language which has a certain logical and linguistic organization of words analyzable in terms of style or rhetoric, i.e., the so-called “consistent and logical sentence structure.” In a narrower (but not the narrowest) sense, prose refers to the literary genre of “non-fiction,” which includes such literary sub-genres as biography, autobiography, character, memoir, diary, letter, dialogue, maxim, and essay, but excludes such non-literary writings as

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10 For this and the following points, see my book 《西洋散文的面貌》(*Aspects of Western Prose*), Chapter II. The four different senses of prose are suggested in the Chinese terms of “平白話”, “文章”, “散文”, and “小品文”.
found in books of history, philosophy, and science. And in its narrowest sense, prose refers only to the literary genre of essay, especially to the so-called “familiar essay,” which is often associated with such good prose writers or essayists as Montaigne, Bacon, and E. B. White.

Normally, when we speak, the speech certainly seldom shows any conventionalized verbal rhythm or structure as found in verse or good prose. That is, we seldom speak words with enough artful arrangement of verbal details. In other words, our speech often lacks prominent “literariness” or “poeticalness.” However, we must bear it in mind that there are indeed a lot of people (e.g. such people as called orators or humorists) who can occasionally speak not only prose but also verse so artfully and effectively that we may even praise them by saying that they are “speaking poetry.” Meanwhile, we must admit that all types of literature are certainly written in either verse or prose. But just as ordinary speech can contain verse, good prose, or even poetry, so literature can contain ordinary speech or prose in its broadest sense. Sometimes, ordinary speech in literature may be as artful and effective as any poetic or literary language in ordinary speech. For instance, after Goneril and Regan have got power and tried to ill-treat their father king by all means, Lear once says to them, “You think I’ll weep:/No, I’ll not weep” (II, iv, 282-3). What Lear says in that context is but ordinary speech. But the plain ordinary speech is uttered as a natural contrast to the flowery (hence, literary or poetic) language Lear’s two elder daughters formerly used to coax his kingdom out of him. And this natural contrast artfully and effectively pinpoints the “unnaturalness” of the daughters.

In his *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*, Geoffrey N. Leech considers many aspects of poetic style. But while he admits that poetic language “may violate or deviate from the generally observed rules of the language in many different ways,” he also tells us that “most of what is considered characteristic of literary language ... has its roots in everyday uses of language” (5-6). And so he further affirms in the meantime that “just as there is no firm dividing line between ‘poetic’ and ‘ordinary’ language, so it would be artificial to enforce a clear division between the language of
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poetry, considered as verse literature, and that of other literary kinds” (6). Then, as if to show the difficulty of separating poetic language from ordinary language or other literary language, Leech in his “Examples for Discussion” cites Philip Larkin’s “Toads” and asks “why this poem strikes one as colloquial and familiar in tone, rather than formal or elevated” (20-21). Indeed, when we read the poem, we will feel that the lines (at least such lines as “Lots of folk live on their wits:/Lecturers, lispers,/Losels, loblolly-men, louts--/They don’t end as paupers”) are words not unlikely to be heard in everyday speech.

I do not think it necessary for us here to go into the textual detail of a modern poem like Larkin’s “Toads” if we want to prove that literature or poetry can be made of everyday speech in addition to verse or prose. In an ancient epic like Homer’s Iliad, do we not see colloquial speech uttered by Achilles and other heroes? In a drama, Greek or Roman, are dialogues really very much unlike ordinary speech? In an 18th-century novel, say Defoe’s Robinson Crusoe or Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels, do characters not speak like us in practical conversations? In a 19th-century familiar essay like Lamb’s “Old China,” we read such statements as “I have an almost feminine partiality for old china” and “I love the men with women’s faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.” Do the statements deviate from ordinary language?

In Western literary theory, mimesis or imitation has since Plato been a central idea used to explain the relation between literature and life. The mimetic theory, as does the school of realism, stresses mainly the truthful, life-like verisimilitude found in a literary work’s verbal representation of people’s actions in life. Nevertheless, a really truthful or faithful representation of life in literature must of necessity include the use of “real language” for the narrators’ and characters’ speech, since speaking is a common action of people and speaking is normally done in “real language,” that is, the common, communicative language. That is why, in any work of any literary kind (except, perhaps, a surrealist or postmodernist work), the narrator of a story as well as the characters in the story must of necessity speak such “real language” as
understandable to others. 11

Talking of “real language,” Ferdinand de Saussure’s distinction between langue (language) and parole (speaking) may come to our mind. According to Saussure, langue is the language system preexisting actual speech, and parole is the individual utterance that realizes the system in actual instances of language.12 Behind this distinction, in fact, lurks our traditional understanding that we speak on the basis of, or in accordance with, grammar. If we follow the rules of grammar (regarding the formal features of a language, as the sounds, morphemes, words, or sentences), we will be able to speak correctly. Perhaps langue is a broader term than grammar. It covers all linguistic aspects of a language (phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic, pragmatic, etc.), while grammar normally only refers to such things as found in, say, Otto Jespersen’s A Modern English Grammar (i.e., rules of sounds, words, and sentences). Yet, all the same. Our speech or parole does observe the principles of langue or the rules of grammar. Grammaticality is, thus, of great importance to any speaker.

From the idea of “grammar” we are easily led to the idea of “rhetoric.” Rhetoric, as we know, is primarily understood as “the art of persuasion in speaking or writing” or “a system of persuasive devices,” as it is mostly associated with an “orator”; however, rhetoric can also be seen “from an Aristotelian perspective as the art of expressing truth clearly and logically,” and thus it is “a necessary part of education,” which along with grammar and logic constitutes “the TRIVIUM” studied in the medieval university (Frye 398). Anyway, today as we teach rhetoric in a language department, we think of it as something that goes beyond grammar to enable the students to speak or write not only “correctly” but also “effectively” or

11 In a surrealist poem, the language is hard to understand and it is not “real” in the sense that it is supposedly the language of the unconscious mind, not the normal language spoken grammatically out of one’s conscious mind. In a postmodern work, words may be just playful signifiers without carrying any “real” sense.
12 See de Saussure’s Course in General Linguistics, Chapters III & IV of the Introduction, pp. 7-20. For Saussure, parole is “real language” but linguists aim at langue, the system that real language derives from.
"beautifully."

In the so-called Prague School Theses of 1929, it is suggested that language "has either a communicative function, that is, it is directed toward the signified, or a poetic function, that is, it is directed toward the sign itself" (Pratt 8). Theoretically speaking, both to speak (or write) "correctly" and to speak (or write) "effectively" are to fulfill the communicative function, since linguistic communication, as does any other type of communication, normally expects to be effective but demands to be correct first. An incorrect piece of communication may not be "fatal" sometimes; it may still be able to convey its message roughly, marring neither its intention nor its result. Yet, more often than not, an incorrect instance of phrasing may cause misunderstanding or even displeasure on the part of the addressee. So, considering the "communicative function" of language, the teaching of grammar for correctness and the teaching of rhetoric for effectiveness are both necessary.

As to the aim of speaking or writing "beautifully," we must say, it is to be achieved not only by the teaching of rhetoric but also by the teaching of literature. If language has the other "poetic function" to fulfill, the function is to be testified not just in a work like Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Inventione*, Quintilian's *Institutio* or any modern book of rhetoric; it is to be testified in all literary or "poetic" (if you prefer the term) works and learned from them as well. Literature, as we have said above, aims both to instruct and to delight. To delight is to utilize language "beautifully." We admit that literature makes use of all rhetorical devices to make its language effective and beautiful. But literature is effective and beautiful not just because of its rhetoric, unless the sense of "rhetoric" is stretched to cover all literary or poetic devices.

Every piece of literature is a "composition." To compose is to select and to combine. When we speak, we select words first and then combine the words into phrases or sentences; we select phrases and sentences first and then combine them.
into a discourse. Similarly, when we compose a literary or poetic work, we select words first and combine them into statements next, and select statements first and combine them into a text next. The art of speech lies in the act of selection and the act of combination. The art of literature lies also in the acts of selection and combination. But the art of selection and combination as applied to the making of a speech or an utterance is primarily grammatical and rhetorical; it is usually confined to such linguistic or rhetorical matters as related to sound and sense in words, phrases or sentences. The art of selection and combination as applied to the making of a literary discourse or a poetic work does not rest with such linguistic or rhetorical matters. It often involves extra-linguistic and extra-rhetorical matters such as the choosing of narrators, the arranging of correlated images, the establishing of styles, the creating of thematic unity, and the use of intertextuality. A literary text is thus not only a linguistic text; it is a social and cultural text as well, a text that selects and combines for its own purpose all relevant, social and cultural entities involving not just sound, shape, and sense, but also situation—all the pragmatic as well as phonological, visual, and semantic aspects of verbal communication.14

Here we may note in passing that Jakoson’s study of “aphasia” (speech defect) led him from considering the vertical (selection) and horizontal (combination) dimensions of language to assorting “the similarity disorder” as the result of inability to select a proper linguistic element and “the contiguity disorder” as the result of inability to combine linguistic elements in a sequence. From the assortments, then, Jakobson went on to assert that the two kinds of disorder correspond to the two rhetorical figures of speech: metaphor and metonymy. And, further on, he suggested that normal speech tends towards either the metaphoric or the metonymic, and literary style or even literary movement also leans towards either extreme.15 I

14 For further discussion of the aspects, see my article “The Four Linguistic Spaces of Poetry” in my book Literary Theory: Some Traces in the Wake, pp. 143-160. The spaces of sound, shape and sense belong to the formal dimension; the space of situation belongs to the social dimension.

15 See “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” (pp. 95-114) in Part I of Jakobson’s Language in Literature. Jacobson regards the historical development from romanticism
do not think it very useful to adopt the two rhetorical terms for the dichotomy of normal speech or aphasia, nor for the description of a literary style or movement. But I do agree that any speech or any text may foreground or “lay bare” its strength (or weakness) on either the vertical axis of selection or the horizontal axis of combination. And that is where the success or failure of the speaking or writing “art” lies.

In regard to the axes of selection and combination, Jakobson has made a famous but sometimes puzzling statement: “The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination” (71). This statement refers to the fact of promoting equivalence to the constitutive device of the sequence such as the poetic convention of equalizing one syllable with any other syllable of the same sequence. Nevertheless, this statement may also imply and stress the fact that the poetic function, as fulfilled in a poem, manifests itself not only in seeking the metaphoric element of similarity in the selection of individual words, phrases, images, etc., for the poem, but also in seeking the same metaphoric element of similarity in the combination of such words, phrases, images, etc., in the poem. In Larkin’s “Toads,” for instance, the poetic function is seen in both the selection of the poem’s verbal details and the combination of such details so that we may know our jobs are like so many toads squatting on our life and pressing us to work on and on with all its disgusting pressure.

Mary Louise Pratt has called the Russian Formalist postulation of poetic or literary vs. nonpoetic or ordinary language “the ‘poetic language’ fallacy,” and has had a good discussion of the topic in her Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse. She doubts the validity of Jokobson’s “projection principle” and the Formalist “ideas of dominance and focus on the message” as “an answer to the question Jokobson poses: ‘What makes a verbal message a verbal work of art?’” (36). I also doubt the validity. I even doubt Jokobson’s idea of attributing “poetic
function” to a message predominantly focused on itself,\(^{16}\) preferring the Prague Linguistic Circle’s idea of seeing poetic function in the language’s being “directed toward the sign itself” rather than toward “the signified.” For me, what makes “literariness” or “poeticalness” is both the content and the form, both the signified and the signifier (to use Saussure’s terms). In ordinary linguistic communication, people may care mainly about the message or content. In literary or poetic discourse, people want to evaluate both the what and the how, both the message (the content or the signified) and the way of delivering the message (the form or the signifier of the message). People, in effect, are both instructed and delighted by both the what and the how.

Indeed, “grammaticality is to linguistics what poeticality is to poetics, and the difference between the linguist’s grammar and the poetician’s grammar is the difference between literature and nonliterature” (Pratt 11). We have suggested above that literature is to instruct and to delight, and therefore its language should be so used as to be able to express its ideas and feelings not only correctly but also effectively and beautifully. Grammaticality is in fact nothing but linguistic correctness. Poeticality (poeticalness) or literariness is linguistic correctness plus rhetorical effectiveness plus linguistic, rhetorical, extra-linguistic and extra-rhetorical beautifulness. So poetry or literature can be considered as the use of language par excellence. It is only that to achieve the excellence the art of selecting and combining linguistic and extra-linguistic as well as rhetorical and extra-rhetorical elements should be learned in time.

So far, I have dwelled too long on the topic of literariness or poeticalness together with the contrast of literary or poetic language with ordinary or everyday language. My purpose here is not to refute once more the Russian Formalist ideas,

\(^{16}\) Jacobson assigns correspondently six functions (emotive, referential, poetic, phatic, metalingual, and conative) to his six constitutive factors of communication (addressee, context, message, contact, code, and addressee). See his *Language in Literature*, pp.66-71. For me, there is a contradiction between regarding “poetic function” as message-centered and telling us “practical language” is also message-centered (i.e., stressing the content, not the form).
but to justify the teaching of literature in our foreign-language departments. So far, the points I have tried to emphasize are these: First, there is no literature but is made of language, oral or written. Second, literature or poetry can contain ordinary language, and ordinary language can contain instances of literariness or poeticalness. Third, both ordinary language and literary or poetic language are used structurally, that is, in the two basic ways of making a structure: selection (selecting elements) and combination (combining elements). Fourth, grammar or linguistics is the rules for structuring ordinary language; poetics is the rules for structuring literary language; rhetoric is the rules usable for both ordinary and literary language. Fifth, there is always art in doing anything: ordinary language can be spoken or written artfully, and so can literary language. Sixth, structural art lies in good selection and combination of structural elements: good speech or good literature is “good composition” (good selection plus good combination of linguistic and extra-linguistic elements). Seventh, artistic goodness lies in not just correctness but also effectiveness and beautifulness, that is, in the ability to teach (inform, instruct) and to please (amuse, delight).

TRIVIUM of Language Learning and Teaching

Education, as we all know, is the industry of developing the students’ competence for truth, beauty, and goodness. What is the mission, then, of a foreign-language department? The mission is, of course, to better the students’ foreign-language skills and knowledge. But what, after all, is the competence to be developed for such skills and knowledge? A simple answer may be “linguistic

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17 In ancient or primitive societies, literature (e.g. folk epics or folk ballads) is primarily oral in form and is transmitted by word of mouth.

18 In a letter to a young clergyman on 9 Jan. 1720, Jonathan Swift defines style as “proper words in proper places.” In Table Talk (23 July 1827), S. T. Coleridge defines prose as “words in their best order” and poetry as “the best words in the best order.” These definitions echo my point here since proper or the best words come from selection while proper places and the best order involve combination.
competence.” I say, “Yes, linguistic competence.” But what does it mean to a foreign-language student? It means, no doubt, the linguistic capacity of a fluent speaker of a foreign language, that is, the capacity of producing and comprehending words of a foreign language on the basis of an unconsciously assimilated knowledge of the language system. This capacity or competence is indeed of primary importance to a foreign-language student. However, is it enough for a language student to learn to speak and write the language fluently (that is, easily and correctly) and understand the language without difficulty while listening or reading?

I say fluency is not enough; comprehension is not enough, either. A really competent user of a language needs the ability to speak and write not only easily and correctly but also effectively and beautifully, and needs the ability to comprehend and appreciate not only the correctness but also the effectiveness and beautifulness of words while listening or reading. In other words, language has its aesthetic dimension, in addition to its linguistic dimension. That is why, in addition to “linguistic competence,” we also need “literary competence.”

The term “literary competence,” as we know, was introduced by Jonathan Culler in connection with Noam Chomsky’s “linguistic competence.” Therefore, if linguistic competence refers to a language user’s implicit, internalized knowledge of the rules of the language, literary competence then refers to a person’s implicit, internalized knowledge of the rules of literature. Yet, as we also know, Culler’s usage of the term “literary competence” is reader-oriented: he speaks of the term as “a set of conventions for reading literary texts” or as “the underlying system which makes literary effects possible” (118). He is right, of course, in saying this:

... it is, alas, only too clear that knowledge of a language and a certain experience of the world do not suffice to make someone a perceptive and

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19 See Culler’s *Structuralist Poetics*, Chapter 6, pp. 113-130. Noam Chomsky distinguishes linguistic competence from linguistic performance much like Saussure’s discrimination between *langue* and *parole*. But the notion of competence has the advantage of being closely associated with the speaker, rather than with the system of the language.
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competent reader. That achievement requires acquaintance with a range of literature and in many cases some form of guidance. (121)

But literary competence is not wholly a reader’s competence; it is a writer’s competence as well. Anyone that wants to write well (i.e., write effectively and beautifully) also needs “acquaintance with a range of literature” and “some form of guidance.” In actuality, insofar as literature remains in its oral state and insofar as literariness is also to be perceived in speech, the importance of literary competence is extended from the reader and writer to the listener and the speaker as well. It takes a person’s literary competence (in addition to linguistic competence) to listen well, speak well, read well, and write well (“well” in the sense of “effectively” and “beautifully” in addition to “correctly”).

Yet, we still cannot stop at literary competence. Literature is but a way of communication, though an important way among other ways. To use a language perfectly in communication, one needs “communicative competence” into the bargain. Communicative competence is what pragmatics deals with. It is the knowledge which enables speakers to “produce and understand utterances in relation to specific communicative purposes and specific speech contexts” (Traugott & Pratt 226). It is, to put it simply, the capacity for performing illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. It “comprises the ability to bring into association surface forms, interpersonal speech functions, and contexts” (Traugott & Pratt 227). It “includes the knowledge of what address forms go with what social relationships, what situations, and what attitudes” (ibid.). It “also includes knowledge of what communicative purposes these forms can carry out” (ibid.). In other words, it is the competence of taking into account all the six communicative factors Jakobson has pointed out. Hence, it is owned by those language masters who can communicate

20 The term “communicative competence” was coined by Dell Hymes in 1966. Traugott and Pratt took the term from Hymes’s “Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory,” in Language Acquisition: Models and Methods. Both Hymes’s and Chomsky’s ideas were originally research-based rather than pedagogic.
perfectly with others. It manifests the social/cultural dimension of language in addition to the linguistic and aesthetic dimensions.

In pragmatics, various attempts have been made to classify speech acts and look into each speech act to see what “appropriateness conditions” are involved in the act. It is beyond our scope here to go into all such pragmatic details. But it is all too easy to understand that certain words are indeed appropriate to a certain speaker or listener on a certain occasion, and yet the same words may be inappropriate if the speaker or listener or occasion is changed. For instance, the remark that “The grave’s a fine and private place,/But none, I think, do there embrace” is grammatically correct, rhetorically effective (since it is an understatement and it contains an “irony of situation”), and aesthetically beautiful (since it has rhythm and rhyme). It may be appropriate for a lover to make this remark to a lady if the lover is like the one in Andrew Marvell’s poem (a rational lover trying to persuade his mistress playfully and yet logically to accept his suit) and the lady is also like the “coy mistress” in the poem. However, it would be very inappropriate for a guest to make this remark if he is present at a funeral and is asked to comment on the fact that the dead (a man and his wife) are now buried together in the same grave. In that solemn situation, to a sad audience, to make a logical but playful remark like that would be a hurt to feelings rather than a show of wisdom.

We all know that this world is, here and there, always full of legal suits, family rows, bickers and quarrels of all sorts among people as well as humorous witticisms. The cause of all these is often in the ways of using the language. The language may be grammatically correct, rhetorically effective, and aesthetically beautiful, and yet if the language is inappropriate to the speaker (or writer) or to the listener (or reader) or to the situation, it then cannot but become futile, absurd, hurtful, or even fatal. The speaker (or writer) may regret having said it, the listener (or reader) may hate to have

21 In Traugott & Pratt, p. 229, for instance, six classes of speech acts (representatives, expressives, verdictives, directives, commissives, declarations) are listed. While linguists most commonly use the term “appropriateness conditions,” philosophers usually call them “felicity conditions.”

22 From Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress,” ll. 31-32.
heard (or read) it, and the social atmosphere or even the world’s status quo may have been deplorably changed by it. That is why we have to admit that a president’s humor can turn into rancor and a fop’s wit can turn into shit. And that is why we have to notice the “appropriateness conditions” of any speech act and build up our “communicative competence.”

So far, I have touched on all the three kinds of competence I intend to reintroduce here: namely, linguistic competence, literary competence, and communicative competence. Is there any other kind of competence, then, that we still need to build up in the course of learning a foreign language? If it is good to enumerate as many kinds as possible, there are always more and more kinds to think of. The “cultural competence,” for instance, may easily come to our mind. But “culture” is too abstract and too broad a term. Language is part of a country’s culture, and so is literature. Anything in society can be considered as a cultural product, and any competence (including the three kinds of competence just mentioned above) can be considered as part of one’s cultural competence so long as it is learned from and used in society. Therefore, insofar as we are concerned particularly with language as a tool for communication, it is sufficient to recognize just the three kinds of competence. While we focus on the linguistic (i.e., scientific), literary (i.e., aesthetic), and pragmatic (i.e., social or ethical) dimensions of the communicative process, we are aiming respectively at truth, beauty, and goodness in life.

**TEFL in Taiwan**

Certainly, linguistic competence, literary competence and communicative competence are the TRIVIUM of language teachers and learners. In the history of teaching English as a foreign language here in Taiwan, however, we have found an interesting fact: there seem to have been three different stages in which the three different kinds of competence have been differently aimed at. In the earliest stage, our teachers relied mostly on the so-called “grammar-translation method” and the
“audio-lingual approach.”\textsuperscript{23} That method and that approach both focus on the language \textit{per se} (e.g. the phonological, lexical, syntactical, and semantic levels of sentences). Hence, in adopting them our teachers’ emphasis was seemingly laid on the development of the students’ linguistic competence.

Later, the so-called “direct method” was adopted. The method was introduced primarily to increase the chance of exposing our students directly to the target language, of course. But when our teachers used this method to teach any course (be it a language-training course, a linguistics course, or a literature course), what was increased was not only the chance of exposing our students to the target language but also the chance to make our students directly familiar with the linguistic and literary knowledge of the target language. An English scholar using the direct method in teaching English literature, for example, would directly increase the students’ knowledge of English literature and the English language besides training their basic English skills. A really competent teacher might even lead the students to appreciate directly the literary beauty existing in the English text. So, the direct method could seem to have paid attention not only to the linguistic competence but also in some cases to the literary competence.

Nowadays, our teachers have begun to employ the “situational approach” or the “communicative approach.” Either of these approaches is a reaction to the traditional, grammar-based teaching or to any method that neglects the context of communication. Either approach accepts the speech act theory, emphasizes contextual analysis and regards the pragmatic aspect of language as important. Consequently, it seems to aim primarily at the development of communicative competence.

\textsuperscript{23} In her on-line article “Language Teaching Approaches,” M. Mazhar lists and explains nine approaches which have been used in the West: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method Approach, Reading Approach, Audio-Lingual Approach, Oral or Situational Approach, Cognitive Approach, Affective Humanistic Approach, Comprehension Based Approach, and Communicative Approach. But, as far as I know, only the four or five approaches mentioned in this and the following paragraphs have been popularized in Taiwan.
I do not think it right to claim that the newest method or approach is always the best. In my opinion, every method or approach has its strengths and limitations. What really matters is the execution. Teaching is itself an art. Art is always a matter of selection and combination. For me, a good teacher is an artful teacher, a teacher who can understand his or her situation each time, and then can select and combine if necessary his or her teaching materials, and finally can select and combine if necessary his or her teaching methods or approaches that are considered to be most suitable to the time and situation. It is not right to stick to one thing all the time.

Execution of TRIVIUM in Foreign Language Departments

With this understanding, then, we can come back to the problem of arranging and teaching curricular courses in our foreign-language departments. I have mentioned, from the outset, that our departments all offer literature courses along with linguistics courses and language-training courses. It stands to reason, of course, that literature courses are arranged for literary knowledge, linguistics courses for linguistic knowledge, and language-training courses for training such language skills as of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translation. Now, the problem is: Should “knowledge courses” be taught exclusively for knowledge and “skill courses” taught exclusively for skills? I say, “No!” In a drama course, for instance, we can teach the skill of conversation through the dialogues of a play, besides teaching the dramaturgy. In a phonology course, similarly, we can train the students to pronounce words correctly, besides letting them understand the rules of pronunciation. And, likewise, in a reading course, we can provide the students with literary or linguistic knowledge available in the teaching material, besides training them to read skillfully.

In fact, a teacher has to artfully adjust his or her focus every minute in teaching and grasp every opportunity to teach whatever needs to be taught then and there, no matter whether it is knowledge or skill, linguistics or literature. Suppose, for
example, a teacher is teaching Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily,” and the teaching has come to the part of the story where people find a bad smell coming from Emily’s house. At this juncture, the teacher may take the opportunity to say: “You see, someone suggests sending Emily word to have her place cleaned up within a certain time. But Judge Stevens rejects the idea because he feels it improper to accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad. From this incident you see that language does involve ethics. Pragmatics requires one not to say something on a certain occasion.” In saying this, the teacher is pointing out a fact to augment the students’ communicative competence, which he or she feels has to be taught for besides linguistic and literary competence.

Surely, any teacher of a foreign-language department must understand and bear it in mind that his or her mission is to teach for three kinds of competence at any time available. No matter what course he or she is teaching, he or she has to take every opportunity to increase the students’ linguistic competence by providing linguistic knowledge and training their linguistic skills, to increase their literary competence by providing literary knowledge and training their literary skills, and to increase their communicative competence by providing communicative knowledge and training their skills of communication. This threefold mission is not difficult to execute so long as the teaching materials and the teaching methods or approaches are well selected and well combined if necessary. If the teacher has this threefold mission in mind and can carry it out successfully, the students would not complain so much about arranging too many courses of one group (e.g. literature courses) into the curriculum or about listing a course (e.g. English Literature) among the required courses.

As far as I know, a literature course becomes “impractical” not because its textbook (e.g. the Norton Anthology) contains too much literature of the target language, but because the teacher only cares to cram superficial literary facts (an author’s life and works, a work’s dates of composition and publication, a poem’s theme or imagery, etc.) into the students’ crania. If the teacher can adjust his or her aim and method, the result may be very different. If in teaching Pride and
Prejudice, for instance, the teacher can stop occasionally at certain places to point out how pride is felt in Darcy’s words and how prejudice is seen in Elizabeth’s gestures, the students then might be impressed by the novel’s narration and description and by the communicative skills the characters have displayed, and then the students might think the course “interesting and practical” because the novel has good English to learn from, aesthetic beauty to appreciate, and social conventions to give heed to.

Conclusion

Now, I have come to the part of conclusion. I conclude that all our foreign-language departments offer three basic groups of courses (in literature, linguistics, and language skills) because they share the rationale of “teaching for three kinds of competence.” If any course should veer from the aim of our TRIVIUM, of our threefold mission to augment the students’ linguistic, literary, and communicative competence, it would then become an “impractical course” no matter whether its name is English Literature or English Linguistics or English Conversation. Theoretically, every course in our curricula is “practical” since it cannot but involve the teacher’s and the learners’ practical use of the target language. We have impractical teachings indeed, but never impractical courses.

Before I end this paper, however, I must point out another fact: that is, our Confucius has said pretty much the same thing about language, literature and our competence. On one occasion, he said: “Language is for fully expressing ideas. Literature is for fully applying language. Whose ideas can be understood without words? One cannot go far if one’s language is without literariness.” On another occasion, Confucius said that “one cannot speak well without learning poetics,” and

24 From “Hsiang-kuong’s 25th Year” in Tso-tsun (《左傳》〈襄公卄五年〉). The Chinese original is: 孔子曰: 「言以足志，文以足言，不言誰知其志？言之無文，行之不遠。」 The English translation is mine.
that “one cannot live well without learning ritualistics.”

On the first occasion, Confucius told us, in effect, that literary competence as expressed in literature is “for fully applying language.” By “fully” he might mean “in all respects” (including linguistic and extra-linguistic aspects; the aesthetic, social, cultural, and all other dimensions in addition to the linguistic dimension). For him, literary competence makes literariness in literature. When he said “one cannot go far if one’s language is without literariness,” he might be stressing the idea that to go far (that is, to make a far-reaching effect in one’s business), one has to make one’s language literary: that is, so fully applied as to possess correctness, effectiveness, beautifulness, appropriateness, etc.

On the second occasion, Confucius equated literariness with poeticalness, as many of us do. For him, poetics was also the art of applying language fully. When he said “one cannot speak well without learning poetics,” he might be suggesting that to speak effectively and beautifully one has to learn the art of making poetic language. But Confucius thought it not enough to speak well; he thought one had to live well. When he said “one cannot live well without learning ritualistics,” he might be suggesting that to live successfully one has to learn the social, ritualistic conventions.

So, for Confucius language education is very important and language can be perfect only when the aesthetic (literary or poetic) and ethical (social or ritualistic) dimensions together with the linguistic dimension are taken into consideration. In a word, our Confucius seems to have preached a long time the necessity of our present theme: “Teaching for Three Kinds of Competence.” Knowing this, we may prop our pride to face the Western language philosophers and we may also preclude the prejudice of vogue and admit that the idea of teaching for three kinds of competence is as time-honored as Confucianism.

25 From Confucius’ talk to his son Kung-li recorded in his Analects: 《論語》 (季氏篇). The Chinese original is: 「不學詩無以言」 and 「不學禮無以立」. The English translation is mine.
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為三種智能而教學

董崇選**

摘 要

本論文指出，我國外文系的課程設計，有個共同的理論基礎：一切都是為了培養學生在外語方面的「語言智能」、「文學智能」與「溝通智能」。文中談到許多相關問題，包括：課程之實用或非實用、文學的語言或普通的語言、文學性或詩文性、語法與詩法、文法與修辭、選擇與安排的藝術等。文中探討到俄國形構主義、語言行動理論，以及一些外語教學法。文中也提出一些主張：認為「語言智能」在求真（語法的正確性），「文學智能」在求美（詩文的娛樂性），「溝通智能」在求善（使用語文的妥適性），也認為教學是一種選擇與安排各種教材與教法的藝術，因此為了三種智能所開的課（包括文學課）都是實用的課；我們只有不實用的教學，沒有不實用的課程。其實，孔子早就提倡語言教學要兼顧三種智能。

關鍵詞：語言智能、文學智能、溝通智能、文學性、詩文性、
語言教學法、俄國形構主義、語言行動理論

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