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INTEGRATING SIMPLIFIED AND ORIGINAL TEXTS

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Abstract

Among language teachers, the use of simplified texts is a complicated matter. This is particularly true with respect to literary texts. In examining simplified forms of literary texts, serious questions arise about the relationship between language and literature and the place of simplification within that relationship. This article asserts that simplified texts are of considerable value within the context of using literature in language teaching. The main contention is that simplified texts are a valuable teaching device when used on a comparative basis with original literary texts.

The history of literature as a tool in language teaching is a long and complex affair punctuated by vigorous debates over the appropriateness of literary texts in second language learning. Until the 1940s, as Stern (1983) notes, "The training of language teachers in the university was oriented towards literary scholarship and fostered a command of the language as a practical skill" (p. 155). He goes on to explain that, "It was not until the early years of World War II that linguistics was recognized as an important, perhaps even as the most important, component in a language teaching theory" (p. 156). From that time onwards, linguistics in its many forms has been the foundation on which teacher training, curriculum planning, and course design have built. Meanwhile, the role and status of literature as a tool in ESL teaching diminished

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steadily. In some cases, the reaction against literature was so strong that literary texts and the study of literature disappeared entirely from ESL curriculums.

Widdowson (1984) identifies the crux of the case against the use of literature in language teaching:

> It can be argued that literature contributes nothing to the utilitarian objectives of language learning. The current obsession with needs analysis and cost effective accounting which parades as pedagogy lends weight to this argument. Literature has no practical uses and so it is useless.

Recently, however, there are indications that literature is quietly reclaiming a respected role in language teaching (Spack, 1985; Kramsch, 1985). This is an encouraging development, especially for those who share Brumfit's (1985) concern about the "trivialization of language teaching" (p. xi), and in particular the reliance on ESL teaching materials that, while useful, may lack substance and meaning.

On the other hand, while literature's prospects seem to be on a slight rise, the same cannot be said of simplification. As Vincent (1986) states, in recent times "the basic idea of simplifying literary, or any text, for the foreign reader has been under review, if not attack" (p. 212).

Vincent, an advocate of simplified texts, provides a cogent summary of the objections to such texts:

> The essential feature of simplification is reduction, and this can result in loss. The original book is shortened, the number of characters, situations, and events cut, the vocabulary restricted, and the use of structures controlled. More significantly, perhaps, any unusual use of language – colloquialisms, idioms, metaphor, allusion – tends to be ruthlessly expunged, and any ambiguity or uncertainty in the text resolved. (Vincent, 1986, p. 211)

West (1950), another exponent of simplified texts, has made the point that such texts, whatever their virtues, can sometimes destroy a learner's motivation by taking away the essence of the original version and leaving in its place a flat, hollow, uninspiring substitute.

Anyone who has worked with simplified texts knows how accurate these criticisms can be. As with the quality of original texts, however, the quality of simplified texts varies considerably. There is no fixed process for simplifying a text, nor is the audience for such texts a completely unified body possessed of precisely the same language abilities. Though the process of simplification is often done conforming to certain strictly defined limits (number of words known by the target group, in most cases), there is no guarantee that the end result is satisfactory. Consequently, the scale and impact of the drawbacks Vincent and West have pinpointed will differ considerably according to the individual text under review and the circumstances in which it is used. Clearly, though, simplified texts are, by their very nature and purpose, subject to certain limitations which understandably challenge their effectiveness as language teaching aids.

At the same time, however, simplified texts have some intrinsic virtues. The most obvious among these is the accessibility such a text provides for less sophisticated or developed readers. Texts that would otherwise be too daunting to comprehend are made manageable through the stripped down language and modified grammatical structures contained in a simplified version. This, in turn, can produce a sense of achievement in the struggling or unsophisticated reader.

Carter (1986) has written of the importance of finding a 'way in' to a text, and of appreciating the 'literariness' of the language used by the author. Simplification, as will be discussed later, meets both these needs. Carter and Burton (1982) have discussed the benefits of a text that is "slowed down" through a careful approach to language, and here, again, simplification provides a means for doing just that. That is, the effect of a simplified text is much like that of a native speaker of a language slowing down his speaking speed to allow for the potential comprehension difficulties of the second language listener. The "slowed down" language becomes

more accessible through this process. In addition, Nash (1986) has pointed out the advantages of paraphrasing – a form of simplification – in terms of increased awareness of the special qualities of the original language in the text.

In short, simplification can, under the right circumstances, both provide greater insight into the language used in an original text, and enhance a student's ability to appreciate literature in a second or foreign language.

Before examining the use of simplified texts in more detail, it is necessary to draw attention to perhaps the greatest obstacle to any serious discussion of simplification. This is the problem of "either-or" thinking. All too often, teachers decide, or simply assume, that they must use *either* an original *or* a simplified form of a text. It is the contention of this article that there is an effective and valuable middle ground between the either and the or positions. That middle ground consists of a comparative approach in which *both* the original and simplified texts are used in concert with each other. This may be called an *integrated-simplification technique*. The fundamental principle underlying this technique is that simplified texts are used *in conjunction with* original texts through a comparative process in which salient features of the original work are highlighted by a close look at their alternative versions in the simplified text. By comparing the language, techniques, and structures used in both versions, a window or opening into the beauty and complexity of the language used in the original text, or of the communicative properties of the plain, direct language used in the simplified form, can be created. Effective use of this opening can provide extensive insight into language used in both a literary and/or a conventional mode, depending on the aims of the course and the teacher. Thus, simplified texts are integrated into the process of studying language through literature.

Simplification, Language, and Literature

Widdowson (1979) has described simplification as a 'learning strategy.' That is, simplification is not used merely to make things easier for second language learners (though that is a worthy goal in itself). Rather, when applied more comprehensively, simplification can be used in very concrete ways to increase or sharpen students' language awareness when it is perceived as a *tool* in language teaching.

But what does simplification mean? To quote Widdowson again: "I want to define simplification as the process whereby a language user adjusts his language behaviour in the interests of communicative effectiveness (Widdowson, 1979, p. 196). Further, he says, "In language teaching, simplification usually refers to a kind of intralingual translation whereby a piece of discourse is reduced to a version written in the supposed interlanguage of the learner" (Widdowson, 1979, p. 185).

Simplification, then, is the product of a carefully constructed attempt to rearrange discourse so as to match the linguistic needs and abilities of learners at a specific place in their language development.

Carter has noted that "in the teaching of a foreign language, opportunities should be sought for more extensive and integrated study of language and literature than is commonly the case at present" (Carter, 1986, p. 110). Implicit in this assertion is the notion that there is an intricate link between language and literature as teaching aids. A closer look at that link (which the integrated-simplification technique serves very effectively) is in order.

According to Brumfit and Carter (1986, p. 15), "Literary texts provide examples of language resources being used to the full, and the reader is placed in an active role in working with and making sense of this language." Along the same lines, Chapman points out that, "A work of literature is not only an imaginative representation of life. It is also an auto-

nomous linguistic structure, offering itself for scrutiny in terms of verbal selection and ordering" (1982, p. 51).

McKay (1986, p. 191-192) reinforces this point: "Literature presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined. Language that illustrates a particular register or dialect is embedded within a social context, and thus there is a basis for determining why a particular form is used. As such, literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use."

These remarks remind us that literature, with its specialized and meticulously crafted use of language, is an abundantly rich source for the study of a host of important linguistic elements contained in a literary text. The powerful, emotive language used in such texts is there before us waiting to be harvested, and our job as teachers is to find appropriate tools for the harvesting. What is needed is an effective instrument to make the harvesting possible.

By focusing on the language used in both an original and a simplified literary text, then, we can help learners concentrate on very specific uses and constructions within the carefully controlled linguistic environment of literary expression.

To take this one step further, and to proceed to the use of simplified texts, consider Widdowson:

> . . . [T]he study of literature is an overtly comparative one, since not otherwise can it be practised as an aspect of language learning in a more general sense. This principle can be put into practise by considering examples of literary discourse alongside conventional uses of language to demonstrate the differences in the way the language system is realized for communicative purposes. (Widdowson, 1975, p. 83)

Widdowson's idea of looking at literary and conventional language use side by side is where simplified texts fit into the picture. Learners are simultaneously provided with passages using the more sophisticated language of a literary text and the modified equivalent of that language in the simplified text.

With these two different versions placed next to each other in the manner of slides being alternated beneath the magnifying lens of a microscope, learners can easily and effectively move in whatever direction the course or teacher dictates. If it is a literature course, the language used in the original text can be analyzed very usefully as literary expression by being juxtaposed against an alternative non-literary version in the simplified text. In this way the literariness of the language and the literary functions such language performs can be highlighted and appreciated fully.

If language awareness is the goal of the course, the use of strikingly different renderings of the same idea serves as an excellent tool for language study. As Carter (1982, p. 11) observes, "Literature is an example of language in use, and is a context for language use. Studying the language of a literary text *as* language can therefore enhance our appreciation of aspects of the different systems of language organization." Or, as Littlewood (1986, p. 179) points out, "Literature now becomes a vehicle for the learning of differences between language varieties." The original and simplified texts, when examined jointly, provide insight into these 'systems of language organization' and 'language varieties.'

An added value of the use of simplified texts is that it both cements and illustrates the link between language and literature, a relationship that is useful and important to understand in second language acquisition at more advanced levels. It cements the link by showing, through the comparative process, specifically *how* language is used at different levels to convey meaning, feelings, images, etc. (i.e., the elements of literary expression). It illustrates that link by providing us with concrete examples of the varied ways in which those elements can be expressed. Thus, the comparison made possible by this technique enables learners to penetrate into the deeper realms of a literary text, where the real linguistic and literary treasures are to be found.

One potential difficulty must be noted here. Comparison works best when the contexts being compared are, in some sense, the same. If the subjects of the texts being compared differ, learners are deprived of a meaningful or clearly stated basis for the comparison, and the benefits of the exercise are likely to be extremely limited. If the purpose of the comparison is to make clear the differences between literary and conventional discourse, students must have a solid and effective means by which to observe those differences. The use of simplified, equivalent texts provides such a means for focused, useful comparison.

As a final comment on how the use of simplified texts enriches the link between language and literature, we can consider Moody's perspective:

> The English language, we know, is very rich in alternatives, and it is well to ask ourselves in considering each of these why it is "so and not otherwise." Sometimes it is useful to consider what alternatives could have been used, and whether any of them would have been more suitable. Then we can begin to value the effect of the one that the writer has actually used. (1968, pp. 22-23)

That is precisely what the use of simplified texts enables us to do.

The Appropriate Use of Simplified Texts

The technique is simple, and yet it has quite a number of exciting possibilities, depending upon the interests and creativity of the teacher.

Generally, the most useful way to apply this technique is to compare systematically equivalent sentences and paragraphs in the simplified and original texts. The focus of this side-by-side type of comparison depends upon the aims of the teacher. This can, of course, be done in class orally, and can stimulate some very interesting and useful class discussion – with the added benefit of allowing learners more opportunities to practice their spoken use of the language. This process can easily

be expanded from its simplest level of teacher-class discussion to group discussions, individual or group presentations, etc.

A more involved application is to ask students to do comparisons of textual passages, scenes, or whole texts in writing. This can take the form of guided exercises where students draft answers to very specific questions, or they can be asked to write essays discussing whichever elements of the comparison the teacher prefers.

Whatever application is used, it is vital to give careful thought to the *aims* of the comparison prior to launching into it. This is largely because of the varying quality of simplified texts, discussed earlier. Some texts, for example, may be too simplified for the purposes of the exercise. Since simplification is often done with specific grades or levels of learners in mind, the language and organization of the simplified text must be examined carefully in advance so as to match the needs of the learners using the technique. This, in turn, necessitates a clear grasp of the abilities, and the weaknesses, of the students in the course.

An effective analysis of the simplified text to be used requires a corresponding understanding of the original text selected for study. For instance, the themes of the original must be examined thoroughly in order to appreciate their representation in the simplified text. Furthermore, we must ask: How archaic, symbolic, complicated, or idiomatic is the language and/or the grammar of the original? Factors like these are important because they provide insight into the nature of the comparison to be made.

All the texts studied through this method in my course have been short stories. This is partly because, as noted by Moody (1971), Marckwardt (1978), and Hirvela and Boyle (in press), short fiction tends to be the most popular literary form among ESL students. Then, too, such texts require less time for outside reading and preparation, an especially important point when the students must read both the original

and simplified versions of the story. Short stories also tend to be highly concentrated in terms of plot, number of characters appearing in the story, and theme. This makes it much easier for students to identify the essential literary features of the text and thus enhances the process of comparison.

It should be pointed out that other literary forms are not really amenable to either simplification or, consequently, to this technique. True, a great many novels have been simplified, but so much so that there is little basis left for comparison (it is possible, for instance, to see 200-plus page novels reduced to several pages in the simplified or adapted form, rendering any comparative process quite unreliable). Poetry, by its very nature, cannot really be simplified within the same literary form or genre. To be sure, poems are simplified through paraphrasing in prose form; however, comparisons of these vastly different representations of the text would be difficult (though quite interesting for those willing to take on the task). As for drama, the nature of this genre once again makes simplification in any form a difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, matter.

With whom should this technique be used? I believe that, under the right circumstances (or rather in the hands of the right teacher), the technique could be used with learners of nearly any level of ability in the target language. This would especially be the case if language awareness is the goal of the exercise. For less proficient learners, comparing a tough original text with a simplified version might be helpful in terms of demonstrating the communicative properties of the kind of language used in the simplified text. However, I believe the kind of students I have worked with – upper intermediate and advanced learners (on the university level) – are the ideal group for a methodology of this type. For one thing, their ability to comprehend both versions of the text creates more room for comparison of the different forms of the story. Also, students at this point in their development are in a much

better position to express, verbally or in writing, what they are discovering as they make their comparisons. Finally, such students tend to be better versed in both literature and language (their own, if not that of the target language), thus broadening the scope of the comparative process. That is, instead of focusing strictly on more visible linguistic differences between the texts, as would be the case with less proficient learners, a teacher can examine more complex linguistic functions or various relationships between language and literature in the texts.

What are the specific purposes of this technique? What are the students expected to gain from it?

Since I have used the technique in a combined language/literature course, I have applied it toward increasing both "literary awareness" and "language awareness."

"Literary awareness" refers to recognizing and understanding the literary elements of the text, such as characterization, imagery, setting, scene, etc. These elements, which are not normally found in other forms of discourse, are an important part, collectively, of the deeper recesses of a language, in the sense that language is used in very particular ways to express them. Therefore, the language of the two texts is compared to see how literary conventions are developed via linguistic means. This method draws attention to these conventions, and therefore increases students' awareness of them.

This technique can work particularly well when using older original texts featuring language, structures, and styles that are not commonly found in contemporary literature. Such texts allow for more space between the original and simplified versions, and that gap is the source of considerable benefit to students when explored properly. This is equally true whether the comparison aims at increasing literary knowledge or language awareness.

Examples:
"The Gift of the Magi" and "The Country of the Blind"

An essential feature of O. Henry's short story, "The Gift of the Magi," is the use of the Magi – figures from the Bible who symbolize deep wisdom and understanding – to convey a moral message about the importance of giving rather than taking. The story itself describes the simple yet profoundly moving sacrifices a young married couple make in order to buy Christmas presents for each other.

The original ending of the story is written as follows:

> The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the magi. (Porter, 1945)

O. Henry's version is alternately subtle, humorous, didactic, and personal in nature (note the use of the first person point of view and the familiar way in which the audience is addressed). Linguistically and thematically, this ending is both complicated and highly stylized, a combination that would render it difficult for many second language readers to fully comprehend. However, an understanding of the techniques the author has used can be very helpful for ESL learners. We therefore need to find a 'way in' to his text. A comparison with two simplified endings of the story will enable us to do just that. This is the ending in the *Pocket Classics* text:

> The Magi were wise men who brought gifts to the Christ Child. They were the first to give gifts at Christmas time. In a way, Della and Jim were like the Magi. They sold their greatest treasures to buy gifts for one another. It didn't even matter that the presents

were useless. For with the combs and watch chain, they gave each other their love. And that was the wisest gift of all. (Porter, 1984)

This is a very modified version in which the lesson of the story is still present, but in the form of a straightforward style devoid of the charm, subtlety, and personal involvement of the author/narrator in O. Henry's text. A key difference occurs in the reduced emphasis on the Magi, who serve as an important image in O. Henry's text. The absence of these elements, and the effect their removal has on the reader's appreciation of the text, is something that can be examined with considerable benefit in the ways described earlier in this article. Conversely, the more direct, communicative use of language in the simplified text can be studied for its own virtues. Stripped of O. Henry's literary style, the simplified version relates the same essential message in a simpler, more conversational style that students may well be encouraged to emulate in their own writing.

The ending used in the *Oxford Progressive English Readers* text provides a further basis for useful comparison because it takes a very different approach to the process of simplification. In this version all references to the Magi have been removed. The title has been reduced to "The Gifts," and the story ends with the husband suggesting that he and his wife put away their gifts and have supper. At no point in the story is the message stated directly for the audience. How this approach compares to those in the other two texts makes for very interesting and profitable discussion. Is it the same story after simplification? Is it a better story? In what ways has the language changed from one text to another? Questions such as these, which we can explore under the controlled conditions provided by the text, enables us to take students to the heart of language and literature study.

The beginning of this same story is also worth examining for a closer look at the integrated-simplification technique. Here is O. Henry's version in the original text:

> One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. (Porter, 1945)

O. Henry's opening paragraph does more than just communicate essential information. In addition, we are given a hint of the great dedication of Della, Jim's wife. We sense the paucity, but also the great value in non-material terms, of the money she has managed to save. A meaningful but vexing process whereby one scrimps and saves laboriously over a long period of time in pursuit of a noble goal is revealed to us, adding a rich texture to the bare facts of the story and suggesting the deeper context and tone of the tale we are about to read.

That situation is changed completely when we look at the simplified version in the *Pocket Classics* text:

> Three times Della counted her money. One dollar and eighty-seven cents! That was all. And tomorrow would be Christmas day.

This version concentrates solely on the facts – and only some of them. What is missing is any sense of how hard Della has worked to save the money, and how she suffered emotionally as she struggled – against the grain of her kind, accepting personality – to bully the merchants from whom she shopped so as to save money for her husband's Christmas gift. We have no notion of where the money came from or how its collection reflects on Della herself. The underlying tensions and meaning of the story are not even remotely hinted at.

This is not to say that the simplified version is bad. Rather, it is useful for us because it is communicative instead of creative, and the gap between these two very different approaches to communication can be of extreme value to teachers in exploring the important linguistic and thematic contrasts between the two passages. By studying that gap, we can

show learners crucial differences between different types of discourse.

To illustrate the technique a little further, let's look at an example from the classic H.G. Wells short story, "The Country of the Blind." The plot of this story is simple yet intriguing. A mountaineer, Nunez, is cast by accident into a remote, legendary valley where blindness has reigned among all the citizens for several generations. The mountaineer, fully expecting to dominate the villagers because of his eyesight, is instead humiliated by them and, in the process, is taught vital lessons about himself and life. Like "The Gift of the Magi," the story takes the form of a parable.

To use a story effectively with this technique, careful selection of passages is essential. To make maximum use of the technique, passages that are linguistically valuable as well as thematically interesting work best. The following sample from "The Country of the Blind" was chosen on the basis of these criteria. The passage concerns a crucial moment in the story where Nunez, the mountaineer, tries to explain the full value and beauty of eyesight to his blind fiance from the valley, someone for whom he is prepared to have his eyes surgically removed. But as he explains what would be lost through the sacrifice of his eyes, his own mind is subtly turned against the whole idea of the operation and of joining the society of the blind people. The original version of this scene conveys the shifting of his attitudes, and the existence of his poetic soul, very movingly:

> There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things – the flowers, the lichens among the rocks, the lightness and softness of a piece of fur, the far sky with its drifting down of clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is *you*. For you alone it is good to have sight, to see your sweet, serene face, your kindly lips, your dear, beautiful hands folded together. . . It is these eyes of mine you won, these eyes that hold me to you, that these idiots seek. Instead, I must touch you, hear you, and never see you again. I must come under that roof of rock and stone and darkness, that

> horrible roof under which your imagination disappears. . . No; you would not have to do that? (Wells, 1967)

When we read Wells' text, we are transported into the soul of Nunez, and we see how deeply and lovingly he clings to sight. At the beginning of the paragraph, Nunez is describing the virtues of eyesight; by the end of the paragraph, he has talked himself into holding onto his eyes. Furthermore, we see his deep-rooted bitterness against the village leaders, who insist upon the removal of his eyes, and we are thus moved into the growing conflict within Nunez's mind. Within that one paragraph he is alternately a passionate, inspired lover and an angry, possibly violent, rebel prepared to do battle against those he resents.

This is how the same scene is described in the simplified text provided in the *Oxford Progressive English Readers* series:

> My world is sight. There are the beautiful things, the beautiful little things – the flowers among the rocks, the sky with its moving clouds, the sunsets and the stars. And there is *you*. It's good to have sight if only to see your beautiful face, and your dear, beautiful hands. . . (Toyne, 1974)

This text, while very communicative and effective for the less advanced reader, conveys none of the burning intensity of Nunez's passion or conflict, nor does it reveal the gradual but forceful change in his attitude toward his situation. Furthermore, the lovely diction in the Wells passage is missing in the simplified version.

A comparison of these passages will demonstrate the extra dimensions possible in language when it is stretched to its further limits. Through careful analysis of the two texts, students can be shown that it is not merely the added descriptive detail in Wells' version that gives it the depth lacking in the simplified text. Structure and diction have been used together to communicate subtle changes in thought and feeling within the character. Exploring how Wells did that, and how the simplified text didn't, will give students a greater

sense of the linguistic and thematic flexibility possible in the use of the language they are learning.

Evaluation

In general, my students have responded quite positively to the approach. The fact that the simplified texts used have been quite short and easy to read has meant that the student work-load has not increased significantly, thus allowing students to put considerable energy into the exercise. Furthermore, selective use of the approach seems important. Using the approach for every story studied in the course is not a good idea, as the students do find the approach fairly demanding. Then, too, to only study texts on a comparative basis casts the original texts in an unnatural light. Students have responded best to the technique when it was used from time to time, and for particularly difficult original texts. They have indicated that answering questions in writing has proved very helpful. They have also reported that texts studied in the conventional manner are approached with greater attention to detail (linguistic and literary) following the use of the approach. That is, the approach helps them to examine other original texts more actively or attentively.

Probably the most interesting response thus far has been to an experiment in which the students used the approach in contrasting ways with two O. Henry short stories, "The Last Leaf" and "The Gift of the Magi." The former story was read in its original form first, followed by the simplified text. The process was then reversed for the latter story. Upon completing the study of both stories, the students were asked to state and discuss, in writing, which reading sequence they preferred. Not surprisingly, most of the students indicated that they preferred reading the simplified text first. This, as expected, enabled them to enter the original text with a solid working understanding of the story itself, and it allowed them to pay immediate attention to specific linguistic and literary

features that otherwise would have been noted only in a subsequent reading, if at all. Comprehending the story was no longer a concern; thus they were free to appreciate the many structural elements of the original text. In short, they engaged the original text in a more informed position. This, of course, is precisely how ESL teachers hope their students will read an original text in English.

However, although students preferred to read the simplified text first, they liked the original text more. The convenience afforded by the simplified text was greatly appreciated, but the students recognized and reacted against the absence of more interesting linguistic and literary features. Some characterized the simplified text as "empty," saying that it was useful but devoid of substance. Seeing the simplified text in these terms greatly enhanced their appreciation of the sophistication contained in original literary texts. Hence, both their language and literary awareness were enriched by this use of simplified texts.

Taken together, these reactions suggest that this comparative method should be used prudently and with very careful attention as to which original texts should be studied in this manner. Furthermore, assigning the simplified text first is the most workable reading sequence from the students' point of view. However, I would urge that a more balanced approach be used, with the two reading sequences being alternated. Comparing very carefully selected portions of text is also essential if the approach is to be really effective.

Conclusion

There are, of course, many ways in which second language learners improve their ability to use that language, just as there are many different stages in their language development. Our task as language teachers is to help learners move from one stage to another. To do that, we need to give them a specific

sense of what lies ahead of them at the next level, so that they know precisely what it is they are aiming to do, or to know, next. The technique I have described, by allowing for comparisons of different levels of language use in very concrete terms, offers learners vivid examples of where they are coming from (simplified text) and where they are going (original text). Through detailed study of equivalent passages presented in alternate forms, we can gradually and carefully move them to the next stage in their ability. We allow them to see for themselves the next target in the climb up the acquisition ladder, and we give them a very useful tool in making that climb.

The many benefits of the integrated-simplification approach are available, however, only when teachers make careful use of the technique. This requires a clear understanding of:

(a) what the students are expected to learn through the approach;

(b) the essence of, and the differences between, the original and simplified texts being used; and

(c) an appropriate setting for, or means for the application of, the technique.

That is, which application of the approach will work best in light of the needs of the learners using the approach? Teachers must examine this question carefully to avoid entering into the process of comparing blindly or haphazardly.

Simplification has its limitations, and they need to be understood by advocates of its use as a language teaching aid. However, simplified texts are, by their very nature, highly communicative versions of more sophisticated texts, and as such they have considerable value as teaching tools when used in a carefully constructed relationship with an accompanying original text. Sometimes they can be used to introduce, or to prepare students for, a more difficult original text. At other times they can be used to shed light on important features of an original text through careful comparison of both texts.

When used in these ways, and on the level appropriate for the learners being taught, this combination of alternate texts is a highly useful instrument in language teaching, whether the focus is on second language literature study or language awareness.

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