Literacy Development and Teaching East and East: Culture and Context - Text Relations

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Abstract

The problem of crossing cultural boundaries in the task of learning and teaching English literacy is examined, with particular reference to dominant approaches to teaching literacy and unexamined assumptions about the use of Western models of language learning. The possibility that target groups of students in Asian (and especially mainland Chinese) contexts may not find these models conducive to effective learning of English is explored, and some features of Asian understandings of discourse and of preferred learning styles are discussed. It is argued that a systemic-functional theory of language, developed under the influence of Chinese linguists, may provide a more appropriate and effective means of developing culturally sensitive approaches to literacy development and teaching, since such a model can systematically predict text/context relations and allows teachers to construct learning activities that reflect Asian students expectations and needs. Some features of such an approach are described, including methods of modelling text and involving students in the negotiation of meaning as texts are constructed.

Culture and Learning Contexts

The expression East and West can constitute a problem as a means of introducing a discussion of cultural issues in language and literacy development. It can imply orientalism - that there are impossibly different and ineffable cultures in countries defined by reference to and contrast with Western countries, and that these Eastern cultures are inaccessible to others, who are divided by some arbitrary geographical line from them. This thinking is now being challenged by many thinkers from elsewhere (Nandy, 1983; Kothari, 1987; Mazrui, 1986). Said (1978), in his important work on

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1 This article is based on a paper presented to the 22nd International Systemic Functional Congress, Beijing, 1995.
orientalism, argues that the orientalist attitude is a means of 'dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient' (p.3), and that this is seen also in the essentialising tendency apparent in representations of the 'other' (the Chinese, the Arabs etc).

Any construction of the notion of culture must attempt to avoid the tendency to essentialise it, to treat it as unified or simply received, and as unchanging. It is proposed that the construct is best understood as negotiated, as process or constructed, thus problematising polarised expressions such as high/low, advanced/traditional, together with notions like East/West, that imply a centre and periphery. These notions can be replaced with the argument that there is now a global, cultural economy, which is complex and has many points of overlap (Clifford, 1988). And so it is with language itself; it will be argued that it is a form of social practice, with a functional and social orientation, a system of resources rather than a set of rules, and that cultures are best seen as semiotic systems (systems of meaning) themselves.

Further, some notions of culture could imply that there are large-scale, separate, discrete blocs of peoples living in cultures that possess common characteristics, with no consideration being given to the distinctiveness of national cultural groupings, and of subcultures within each. Finally, it is important to stress that most cultures are in a state of change, and in the case of Asian cultures, that the pace of change is rapid and that they are receptive to global cultural influences.

The underlying issue of importance is the larger question of universality and difference amongst languages and cultures (Kandiah, 1994). This discussion of language and learning in different cultural contexts is based on the assumption that cultures are not unproblematic givens but are in process, changing rapidly, and being constructed within a global framework of intersecting influences.

**Literacy development in Asian contexts**

In countries such as Europe, America or Australia, there has often been an assumption, usually unexamined, that the sorts of models of English literacy development and associated pedagogies produced within their ambit are in some way archetypal or modal for the rest of the world. In these countries there has been some awareness of the
need to model literacy in its cultural context. In the U.S. Gee (1990), for instance, situates his discussion of literacy in a late capitalist context, although he does not discuss the cross-cultural issue. While in these countries there may be debate about the appropriateness of such modelling within their own cultures, there is not often any awareness shown of the implications of using these models in other cultures. Visiting academics who have taught English in China, for instance, tend to assume that Chinese students there would learn English better if their Chinese teachers would use American methods (see Kohn, 1992 for an example of this attitude, although with some concessions to Chinese pedagogy). It is these same sorts of assumptions about literacy and its development, built in to ways of learning and teaching literacy, that are recommended by researchers and teacher educators for use universally, and that are actively propagated in influential, international level publications and courses for the teaching of English to speakers of other languages. And at another level, there are some cultural settings where the expression 'literacy' itself is untranslatable and not easily explicable, as Western academic visitors to China can readily discover if they introduce this term into discussion without any explanation.

The notion of literacy itself is not self evident, yet many of these assumptions simply treat literacy as a culturally neutral tool or skill, thus psychologising thinking about language and literacy development and its teaching. The use of the psychological paradigm tends to set up a view that literacy is an individual activity, a cognitive process that takes as its purview the written language; the emphasis is on cognitive process, with relatively weak theorisation of language in its own terms. The resulting focus is on the individual, divorced from any social setting, so that inevitably there is little allowance made for cultural factors in literacy, with very little attention being given to factors arising from the characteristics of the language systems involved. There is little scope in such a model for specifically linguistic notions of semantic systems or the features of the written language, which is the domain in which the processing operates, nor of the socio-cultural system that provides the essential environment for the functioning of language. As Hasan puts it: "many of us are quite happy to subscribe to an a-historical, a-social, an a-semiotic view of human cognition" (1984, p. 85).

An alternative characterisation of this tendency has been to describe it as an autonomous model of literacy, where literacy is construed as an activity to be described in technical terms,
independent of social context (Street, 1993). From such a model of literacy and learning is constructed a pedagogy for the development of literacy, which consists of patterns of student activity construed as a series of strategies, devised on a means-ends basis. This notion of learners' activity includes an emphasis on the importance of their responses, often conceived as a rapid response. There is no indication in any of this discussion that these notions are likely to be culturally and socially specific. Rapid response to a teacher's question, for instance, may not be required in many Asian cultures, but 'wait time' may be considered to be essential (Biggs, 1994).

It is increasingly being recognised that it is no longer satisfactory to model English language (and literacy) development and teaching apart from the cultures of the target learners (Holliday, 1994; Kramsch, 1993; Byram, 1989; Street, 1995). Literacy is better understood as a set of social practices that are contingent on the cultural contexts in which these practices are carried out (Street, 1995). Approaches to understanding the development of literacy will need to carefully consider the cultural matrix of the learners, and build this element into the larger pattern comprised of linguistic, learning and methodological issues that are relevant to the development and teaching of a language. Whether the focus is on the learner coming to terms with the culture of the target foreign language or on the need for sensitivity to the culture of the learners, there is ultimately a complex and diverse relation between language, culture and learning that needs to be attended to by language teachers.

Work in Singapore by Tickoo (1994) suggests that, as far as language learning is concerned, there are some specifiable features in Asian cultures that set them apart from others. Multilingualism is often the norm for these cultures, in contrast to more monolingually oriented societies such as Australia and the U.S. (at political and administrative levels), and English is very often used as a language of the classroom, although it is also the language for scientific discourse; this latter aspect seems to have important implications for non-native speakers of English since they must construct their notions of science through the grammar and rhetorical structure of English.

Another feature of Asian cultures is their long, rich and diverse cultural histories and their own valued rhetorical styles and related grammatical realisations that enable them to construct texts of various types. There is a strong tradition of literacy that is evident throughout Chinese history, for instance. It is a normal expectation that young
students will expend considerable effort on the learning of the large set of characters that must be mastered to be literate in Chinese. Buddhist traditions of learning by rote and the Ch'an tradition affect methods of learning, as well as influences from British and Russian foreign language teachers. Activities such as memorisation of texts, the mastery of grammar rules, intensive reading and translation exercises appear to be the result of these influences. There are also studies indicating that Chinese learners are more analytic and visual in their styles of learning (Liu, 1986), a feature that may be a reflection of their distinctive language system in its written form.

Because of the long history of the art of writing in China there are well defined and preferred patterns that are expected in writing texts for various purposes, as Liu (1990) has pointed out. The expressions cited at the beginning of Liu's paper - qi (beginning), cheng, (transition), zhuan (turning), he (synthesis) and jie (end) discussed in Liu (1985, p.165) - are equally important still in Chinese writing. The structure of Chinese argumentative texts takes a characteristic form, the writer being concerned to take the reader through the steps selected so as to build up a case, unfolding the reasoning as a means of convincing the reader that the conclusions towards the end of the text are persuasive. The aim is to ensure that writer and reader arrive at the same conclusion together, although the conclusion itself may be indirect. As Liu points out (Liu, 1990), it is the various discourse patterns of Chinese that seem to be the main influence on Chinese students who are learning English, and an awareness of this pattern will assist teachers in supporting student writers.

In the culture of Vietnam an important assumption about presenting a point of view is that the propositions must be put forward politely, with the expression of appropriate attitude a key element in the construction of the discourse. To be polite one must 'beat about the bush' (to use a culturally specific metaphor) and begin with a very general proposition, using expressions, for instance, such as a person's 'noble career' and the 'engineer of the soul' to indicate an individual's experience and background before proceeding any further with the development of the argument. In this way the attitude to the topic is clearly signalled and the reader is prepared for the the rest of the text. It is then appropriate to introduce more detail into the text, building up various angles on the topic while continuing to foreground attitudinal elements and concepts. This is a less analytic approach than the Western one, and indeed it has been argued
(Nguyen, 1994) that it is more difficult to be precise about the topic under consideration in Vietnamese than in an English rhetorical structure.

The literacy constructs of different cultures - their rhetorical devices and the grammatical realisations of these - can be understood as instances of their cultures. Text or rhetorical structure can be examined within this framework (Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Bhatia, 1993). It may be assumed that there are some identifiable patterns in the discourse structures of English also, and that this pattern contrasts with other languages. Western writers propose that the argument text type puts an emphasis on the placement of a statement that embodies the central proposition being put forward by the writer early in the text, thus providing the writer with a starting point from which the construction of supporting evidence can then follow. This rhetorical strategy has sometimes been called linear, because the argument is being built up more strongly as the supporting material is presented in sequence.

Thus literacy activities (reading and especially writing) in a given cultural setting will reflect the rhetorical patterns that are valued in that community, so that people writing in a language other than their native language will tend to use the patterns that are prevalent in their own culture (Ostler, 1987). It is not clear whether these differences are free variation or whether they are culturally motivated. It seems to be the case that these different rhetorical or discourse patterns or structures are not strictly culture bound, in the sense that members of the culture are incapable of using other patterns, but rather that each cultural group has a preference for a particular approach, which is itself seen by members of that culture as functionally appropriate for the setting (Kaplan, 1987).

Such cultural characteristics appear to engender in members of that culture attitudes and proficiencies that will have an effect on their approach to literacy learning, and that will produce features of language development specific to that culture. These features need to be accepted as an important starting point for any consideration of English language and literacy development and teaching in Asian and particularly Chinese contexts. They are not immediately congruent with some features of many recent approaches to language and literacy teaching that are sponsored by various agencies. It is therefore desirable to build in to literacy approaches a capability to link cultural context and language systematically and predictably, so as to bring
together the goals of learning, the expectations and preferences of the learners and the texts and language features to be mastered, in an articulated whole. This context-language link can be explicated using a functionally oriented model of language and learning as a useful framework that may satisfy at least some of these requirements.

Culture and a Functional Linguistic Approach

Functional models of language, of which systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is an example, usually provide a description of the link between language and culture. The functional-notional approach to language teaching attempted to take this link seriously, but was not able to do so systematically. The communicative method now widely used in English language teaching also ties learning a language into the context of language use, and many approaches that are labelled 'communicative' take context seriously as a factor in the design of learning activities. Once again, however, it is acknowledged (Widdowson, 1990) that this methodology is not able to make any motivated or systematic (and therefore predictable) link between context and language system, particularly at the grammatical level.

SFL postulates that cultures themselves are semiotic systems, of which language is one instance; these systems include kinship relations, religious beliefs and practices and so on, many of which, to varying extents, express their meanings through language. Thus a culture is constituted by a set of semiotic systems, systems of meanings, and language is an important example of these systems.

This theory of language, a 'systemic-functional' one, makes claims not so much to the universality of its features as to their generality, or 'inherent properties of language as a semiotic system' (Halliday, 1994, xxxiv); both the 'metafunctions', or generalised uses to which language is put in its environment, and also the theory of meaning as choice, together with the link between metafunctions at the semantic level and other parts of the language system, are treated by the theory as general in this sense (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Halliday explicitly warns against 'the tendency to ethnocentrism in modern linguistics' and points out the difficulties in achieving a balance between likenesses and differences in descriptions of languages (Halliday, 1994, xxxiii). It is therefore important to distinguish between the actual description of any particular language, such as English or Chinese, and the metafunctional theory. There is therefore ample room for
variations in the descriptions of particular languages. In fact Halliday has been accused of biasing descriptions of English towards Chinese linguistic categories, since he began the development of SFL under the influence of his Chinese teachers, the linguists Luo Changpei and Wang Liaoyi, in China in the 1950s (Halliday, 1996).

Further, there are some descriptions of Chinese now being developed using functional theory and taking the patterns of Chinese grammar seriously in their own right - and, in the process, rejecting the ethnocentric notion that Chinese has no grammar (Fang, McDonald & Cheng, 1995; McDonald, 1991). There are major research projects investigating the computer modelling of descriptions of Chinese, Japanese and many European languages, using systemic-functional theory (Matthiessen, 1996). Thus functional theory, which makes limited claims for universality (or better, generality), asserts the importance of cultural context for any description of language, and reduces the likelihood that it is biased toward any particular cultural orientation.

Language seen in this way, therefore, can be examined with regard to its interaction with other forms of behaviour, according to all the variety and complexity of various cultural contexts, because any given language both construes and transmits its culture. This is not a claim about causation in the sense that language causes particular cultural features to emerge, because it is impossible to conceive of one without the other. Take, for example, such common activities as cooking or taking a bath, two forms of everyday life that Hasan investigated in a paper on this subject examining Urdu subject ellipsis (Hasan, 1984). These studies indicate that certain kinds of meaning style may be highlighted in different societies; a society may exhibit certain characteristics (in Hasan's study, homogeneity and closeness in relationships) that can then be taken up by the use of relevant grammatical realisations (in this case, subject ellipsis). While it is not claimed that languages are culture bound it follows, in the case of a functional approach, that it is easier for elements of a particular culture to be transmitted in its own language, and that this is likely because of the existence of the culture's meaning styles, which function unconsciously in an individual's experience. These meaning styles also enable, that is, bring into being, the behaviours and systems of values and beliefs that characterise the culture and make it distinctive. Thus the cultural and linguistic patterns are inseparable, and their interrelations must be carefully analysed in any consideration of language teaching across cultures. It is the cultural
context that is the source for understanding language and literacy development and teaching.

The constructs of literacy evident in different cultures have emerged and developed in their own contexts, and the influence of these contexts is a major factor in accounting for distinctive features of texts that occur in them, including their grammatical realisations. In SFL the context of culture is the environment of the language system; it enables us to describe and explain many aspects of literacy, because of the interrelation between it and the language system, which in turn acts as the meaning potential for texts that are instances of the cultural and linguistic systems.

The theoretical framework for understanding language and context that is assumed here consists of four elements based on these major factors of language and context (Halliday, 1992); these are context and language ('linguistic semiosis' below), viewed as both system and instance, as explained below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System (potential)</th>
<th>Instance (actual)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linguistic semiosis</td>
<td>text (language in use)</td>
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<tr>
<td>language (choices)</td>
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Both context and language can be viewed as systems, networks of choices available to people who are using language in the culture. Along the horizontal dimension in this diagram the activity is one of instantiation, or the actualisation of an relatively unlimited potential. With reference to context, this refers to potential behaviours at one end of the line, the sum of all possible behaviours and related artifacts of the culture, while at the other end are the particular, actual situations that we find ourselves in at any given moment in our lives.

When it comes to the level of language ('linguistic semiosis'), the reference is to the semantic level in the language system, meanings that are at risk as we speak and listen, or more formally, the potential for processing and producing texts. Texts are semantic units, consisting of sets of choices made from the language system at any given time (and situation), outputs or projections from the system.
Realisation, the vertical dimension in the diagram, is a dialectical, two way (i.e., non-causative) semiotic process. It operates between language levels, being a process of coding and recoding - from context to language and then down through the semantic, grammatical and phonological levels. It is always an interaction between the levels of context and language and also between the strata of the language system itself. Because the relationship is two way, text and system come into being together; as a result, context is realised in language and at the same time it is also constructed by language. It therefore follows that neither text nor context cause each other, and the same applies to the relation between culture and language that we have already discussed; this model cannot be said to be determinist.

There are also intermediate points along the horizontal lines: for context, there are cultural types or domains (institutions) and situation types, while for language there are registers and text types (genres). This last point indicates the importance of not regarding the two ends of the lines as separate entities; they are simply differences in perspective, or angles in time. The analogy of weather and climate may be used to clarify these relations; climate is the long term pattern of possibilities (e.g., 'a sub-tropical climate') while the weather today may be distinctly cool but nevertheless a part of the overall pattern. And particular instances of weather, imperceptibly and very gradually feedback into climatic patterns, thus bringing about change in the system itself. This model of semiosis is therefore to be characterised as a dynamic open system (Lemke, 1984). The same framework applies to language in use, and brings home the point that language, modelled in this way, is an open system, open to change through the texts that users produce.

The element of situation, that is, particular instances of the cultural context, can be described as the local environment of the text. It can be further analysed into the variables of 'field', the cultural activity, the 'tenor', the social relations between interactants, and 'mode', the way in which language itself is being used in the situation. These elements in turn are related to specified semantic resources and then to their grammatical realisations: field relates to 'ideational' meaning (or content) as realised in transitivity systems, where nominal and verbal aspects are foregrounded; tenor relates to 'interpersonal' meaning (concerning attitudes and judgements) as realised in mood and modality systems, where patterns of speech acts and modal verbs and adjuncts are called into play; and mode relates to
'textual' meaning, or text-forming resources, as realised in cohesive and thematic systems, with the focus on systems of conjunction, reference, and lexical chaining and on thematic progression throughout the whole text.

**Language and Literacy Development in Functional Terms: some teaching implications**

This framework provides a particularly rich and theoretically motivated basis for systematically predicting the sorts of language resources that are likely to be relevant in any cultural situation where literacy learning is under consideration, whether by teachers, curriculum planners or other educational authorities. It provides powerful tools for a culturally sensitive analysis of texts, allowing language teachers to:

- examine the strengths and weaknesses of their students' writing and reading,
- providing them with a shared metalanguage for discussing text as they interact with students so as to assist them in improving their literacy skills,
- facilitating teachers' choice of reading material,
- and, finally, providing a theoretically motivated base for their planning of language learning in general. It is in this way that the communicative method of language teaching can be usefully supplemented, by providing educators with a set of resources that are explicitly related to the contexts in which they work (Melrose, 1988).

There are other useful implications for literacy pedagogy to be found in the study of language acquisition and development. SFL incorporates within the general theory a functional approach to language development; this description of development puts the emphasis on the semantic system - that is, on learning how to mean (Halliday, 1975) - and proposes that any developmental change in learners' literacy proficiencies will be, to a significant extent, a function of the context in which the individual is using language. Development of literacy in this sense will take place as the individual learns how to mean, that is, learns how to construe the culture through the language system, within the framework of language and context relations outlined above. More specifically, it is possible to build in to this picture guidance to teachers by way of some
conditions for learning that have emerged from studies of early language development (Halliday, 1975; Painter, 1991). These studies have produced some general principles for language development, including the interactive relations with caregivers (parents, peers and relatives) that are conducive to development, together with the notion of modelling and joint negotiation of meaning that is characteristic of these relations. It is important to bear in mind that the patterns of interaction between caregivers and children described in these studies are culturally specific, and would need to be modified where it can be shown that they are not relevant in other cultural settings.

How then can we explicate the link between language, context and text in literacy development? Literacy development is a facet of language development in general, and language development takes place when there is change in the context of the language user. It is therefore appropriate, for educational purposes, to understand literacy development as context driven. Thus the learner is faced with the task of construing the social and cultural scene, through the texts that are negotiated with others, such as parents and family members before school, and teachers and peers in the school setting. As the range and type of context enlarges and varies so do the demands on the individual to enlarge their meaning potential by drawing on more and more of the resources of the language system (Winser, 1995). The principles underlying this pattern are outlined in the model on p. 37.

In this case the role of literacy teachers is to examine the context in which they work, and over which they have some degree of control, both at the broader cultural level (where there is less teacher control) and at the more specific, situational level of school and classroom. At the cultural level there will be factors such as system requirements, including examination patterns, as well as student factors such as motivation, purpose and learning expectations and styles. At the situational level teachers can analyse factors associated with field (content), tenor (ways of interacting with students) and mode (what channels and rhetorical styles are relevant), and can then delineate the specific language features that relate to these factors in the context. One way to do this is for teachers to reflect on their working context, using these situational variables, and then to amplify this context of texts and their use, as a means of support for students. The field of the classroom context is likely to be defined in terms of language and literature knowledges and skills, while the tenor is a complex of expectations and attitudes arising from the roles and relations between teachers and learners. The mode is also likely to be
open to much variation as the differing combinations of speech and writing, in combination with various text types, are brought into play.

Recent work on contexts and language learning (Gray, 1990; Christie, 1993; Winser, 1994) suggests that the teacher can contribute significantly to effective language learning by utilising the principle of context-text relations, and in particular, the specifiable relation between context of situation and appropriate language that is to be learned. By amplifying the context, that is, providing a system of scaffolding for language learning that is analogous to the scaffolding provided by parents to young children in home contexts, the teacher supports effective learning. The notion of amplifying the context involves the teacher's making explicit to learners the language requirements related to their own purposes, and this is further brought into play by sharing experiences with learners as the foundation for negotiating meaning with them. Such shared experience leads to concrete examples of situations where target language features can be highlighted, using a focus on modelling texts, by referring to their contextual and discourse features, including significant grammatical elements. In the context of Asian cultures this would involve a treatment in the classroom of the purposes of texts in that society, their co-texts, their rhetorical structure and specific grammatical and lexical features. The discussion by teacher and students of purpose and discourse structure should allow of a treatment of cultural matters that are relevant to the context of learning, including the meaning styles of the students themselves. Modelling sample dialogues or written texts is a common teaching practice in China, especially in the teaching of calligraphy; this feature of Chinese pedagogy can be built on and extended by this form of modelling, with its emphasis on an explicit treatment by the teacher of textual features as they relate to context.

A related feature of this approach is the activity of joint negotiation or construction of texts by teacher and student (Rothery, 1989), where the purpose of the construction or deconstruction of texts is shared by teacher and students and the activity of writing or reading is a joint one. The teacher's role is to lead and support the student group, from a vantage point of a fuller knowledge of the language features of the particular text being treated, while the students actively attempt to contribute to the textual activity in writing the text, on the basis that they have a substantial understanding of the field of the text. As the text is being visibly
constructed by the teacher on a board for all the participants to see, students have the opportunity to contribute, to propose and word some element of the text, and to observe as others do the same. Both modelling and joint negotiation or construction are teaching activities that assume that teacher and students have shared the types of experience that are being treated in the text, thus enabling the essential negotiation of meaning. For a fuller discussion of these applications see Jones et al (1989).

**Conclusion—Literacy and Context**

For large numbers of language learners throughout the world, many of whom live in less privileged sectors in their communities, learning another language, and particularly its written mode, is a means of access to another way of meaning and hence of knowing. Inappropriate methods of support for literacy development would tend to close off this new semiotic world to them with significant consequences, both personal and economic. There is therefore a need to adequately model the concept of language and literacy development across cultures so that pedagogical implications can be more effectively worked out by teachers.

The problem of intercultural communication is one factor that underlies the pedagogical issues that occupy the attention of teachers of English as a foreign language. As long ago as 1966 Kaplan argued, in a now well known article of the same name, that there are "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education" (Kaplan, 1966); the claim was and is (see Kaplan, 1987), that languages have specific preferences for different rhetorical structures, and that this produced a pedagogical problem for students learning to write acceptable texts in a second language, at least in those contexts where there is, of necessity, some interaction with native speaker writers. This discussion returns us to the issue of universals in languages: Kaplan argues that there is at least a possibility that there can be a theory of written discourse that is universal across languages; this proposal is speculative and in need of substantial investigation (Connor, 1996). The present argument is that different cultures value certain discourse patterns and that literacy teaching needs to take the variation seriously. In many contexts learners will have to come to terms with new patterns, and teachers will have to be able to show how both discourse and grammatical features correlate with contexts of both the learner and the target language.
It is therefore proposed that the development of literacy needs to be construed within the framework of the development of language, and that SFL, a model of language that is sensitive to contextual variables, is a possible means of constructing such frameworks. With a model that enables teachers to relate cultural context systematically and predictably to language, and to construct activities that enable students to negotiate meanings and texts, including matters of meaning style and rhetorical or discourse structure, it seems likely that TESOL practices can be enhanced and students’ proficiencies improved. This may particularly be the case in those situations where there are few native speaker teachers. However the essential principle is that the vast enterprise of English and literacy teaching as a foreign or second language could well be better served by taking more seriously these cultures’ own perceptions of language, literacy and learning, rather than adopting those parallel notions that have emerged from a quite different cultural context.

References


