

“What African Literature is in the Complexity of *The Interpreters* (Wole Soyinka)? Is there any way our Biased Ugandan Readership could be Re-educated to Like its Style and Appreciate its Message?”

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ABSTRACT

This article re-examines views of some literary critics who find Soyinka’s style intolerably complex and those who disagree with this extremist view. The article further examines reasons given by each group. An attempt is then made to summarize the reasons given for the complexity of *The Interpreters* by getting into the text to reappraise the major styles Soyinka employs. Behind all this is an attempt to demonstrate that Soyinka is very much a committed artist giving a scathing comment on the corruption and bankruptcy of the so-called leaders (interpreters) of a newly independent Nigeria (Africa). Finally, as a rebuttal to increasing anti-Soyinka critics within our local/Ugandan society, some of whom mere singers of prejudices, the article attempts an ‘educating crusade’: challenging practicing teachers/lecturers first, and then extending this to our Language Education Curriculum in Teacher Training Colleges and Universities to re-examine the way we prepare our teachers of English and Literature for the critical task ahead during their execution of professional obligations. This is how the article looks at *The Interpreters* as a very important pointer to something that has gone wrong with our pedagogical and methodological practices. It is not Soyinka alone under attack when we label him too complex to deserve our attention but many other authors constantly being pooled into the ‘hole of poor or no readership’ in this country.

Key words: Complexity, Reappraisal, Committed Artist, ‘Educating Crusade’, Language Education, Professional Obligation.

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubting that Wole Soyinka is a difficult author to read. This article will demonstrate this truism by referring to scholars who attest to this and even those, such as Chinweizu, et al. (1985), who feel Soyinka’s style too Eurocentric (British) to be part of African literature. It is such extreme stand that has prompted us to add our voice to scholarship that persuades especially African readers to reappraise Soyinka’s works and eschew downright condemnation of his style based on prejudices and what Djelloul Bourahia: 2018; Codjo Akogbeto: 2015; Babatune and Edonmi: 2009; et al call “low brow readers” with self-serving interests and a failure to pay attention to Soyinka’s creativity. But what has further prompted us to raise this issue of Soyinka’s complexity is a trend within our Ugandan institutions that has relegated Soyinka’s works and other so-called complex authors to locker-rooms and dusty shelves of our libraries and book stores. Prejudice has grown so much that, recently, at a Literature Workshop at one of our esteemed universities, a group of teachers/lecturers staged a stand to convince everyone present: (swearing by their experiences), Soyinka’s

novels, poems and ‘tough’ plays should not be prescribed texts for our students at any level! It was like a re-activation of “Condemnation Song and Refrain” played over and over in these past years of declining Education standards in our country. A handful of lonely voices plaintively pleaded, cautioned against “poisonous myths, prejudices and misconceptions”, in vain. Looked at seriously and foreseeing implications of such bias, a remedy must be found, especially given the very low level of reading interest among our learners and teachers across all levels of education and the overwhelming attention the ICT world has opened to us where the TV, Film and Smart phone phobia are attracting us away from reading. This article, therefore, intends to do four things (demystifying and educating process) -

- To go through the storyline of the novel and demonstrate how the events could be happening anywhere in any post-colonial African country, Uganda inclusive;
- To examine some views of literary critics/scholars who are anti-Soyinka and those pro-him so that we balance our judgment and appraisal of Soyinka against extremism;

- To review key styles of this novel and allow our students of *Literary and Pragmatic Stylistics* to compare their theory with practice in an actual work they themselves could be asked to appraise;
- To, finally, make a case for how we could begin to interest ourselves and our future generations into re-embracing the so-called 'complex works' through the new approaches to reading and re-examining what literature really is all about today. It is on this note that this last part of the article finds rationale – the implied critical importance every Initial Teacher Training Language Programme should play in the demystification of anti this or that writer.

REVIEW OF NOVEL'S CHARACTERIZATION VIS-VIS MEANING

This novel has always received mixed reactions from literary critics, learners, teachers and lecturers of English/literature in respect of its complex form and almost impenetrable content/message. First of all, with regard to matter, a number of literary critics rank Soyinka as one of the best for exposing the true enemies of Africa's post-independence states: the new breed of corrupt and despicably selfish Africans, and not the often blamed scapegoats, the imperialists (Palmer: 1979; Gakwandi: 1977; Biodun Jeyifo: 2004; Hugh Hodges: 2007; et al). Palmer (1979: 241) summarizes this view by claiming the novel successfully depicts a committed author, truthfully exposing debasement of standards in his then Nigerian society through realistic depiction of corruption, incompetence, nepotism, brutality, injustice, poverty, social inequality, materialism, hypocrisy and snobbery. In this regard, he believes *The Interpreters* "is probably the most comprehensive expose' of the decadence of modern African society that has so far been published". Such critics, therefore, rightly point out the realistic portrayal of Soyinka's interpreters as intellectuals with initial revolutionary minds but who soon turn disillusioned and become social misfits. "They are united by youthful energy, intellectual vigour and a cynical disapproval of the moral emptiness of their society". (Gakwandi: 67). But what we soon witness is a display of, for instance, various incapacities to cope with the demands of political and social commitment to strive to effect change.

The First Example is Egbo

He declines to take up the throne of his aging grandfather, a traditional leader we learn has taken up corrupt practices of state governors. The young Egbo has also an opportunity to inherit the palace harem and acquire more women and other royal privileges later, but this attraction to 'old savagery' does not appeal to him; it would be a 'mutilation of his beginnings' (*The Interpreters* 1970: 11). Nor has he the mettle to oppose the omnipresence of political incompetence with massive moral decadence as symbolized in the squalor and night soil all over town, even on roads! Thus, Egbo ends up flowing with the political-social tide (*TI* 1970: 12), daily involved in menial tasks of the Foreign Office, signing bicycle permits and vouchers. Little wonder he and the

other interpreters make bars and nightclubs their pastimes, an indication of failure to cope with demands of the righting the wrong because the corrupt political class they find in power gives these idealists no chance to protest and practice reforms. Like his absurdist friend Sagoe, Egbo, too, finds fulfillment in amusement pastimes. Around the Cambana night club setting, a storm has subsided and he realizes, from his drunken stupor, what has been causing the 'plop' sounds around him: raindrops from a leaking roof, some of the drops into his beer. "I don't need his pity. Someone tell God not to weep into my beer" (*TI*: 7). The night storm has ravaged buildings and poor people are homeless, but he callously turns the catastrophe into a joke (*TI*: 16), as Sekoni moralizes about the plight of these destitute. But to Egbo, the storm is a poetic beauty: it is merely a loss of "One tooth" (from the sky). "The sky-line has lost a tooth from its long rotted gums" (*TI*: 16), which further infuriates Sekoni's moral stance and sympathy for the destitute.

It does not take long for Egbo to lapse into total absurdist, immoral living. Soon he also finds his saved friend, Dejiade, a threat to live with: Dejiade's moral attitude to life makes Egbo feel morally guilty. At the moment, Egbo has a killing craving for Simi, the celebrated prostitute, destroyer of men's manhood and chauvinism. He trains all his energies to conquer her invincibility, as if this is the new political task the nation needs. Pent up feelings of orphan life under an aunt's harsh handling that sets in him an initial fear of women, the beatings for his 'paganistic leanings' (*TI*: 17), the sex-urges that spring up in him and are first fulfilled while abroad studying, failure to make sense of the new life back home after university life... all these now crystallize and turn him into a deviant. He is not afraid of a Simi who 'brakes men and friendship'. Like a demented creature, he craves for 'submission to the beast'; with pockets full of money, he begins wooing the prostitute and succeeds. Ironically, this unquenchable craving for sex leads him later to entrap a university student he ends up impregnating and abandoning.

A Backboneless Sagoe

He undoubtedly shows best how a new individualistic and absurdist way of living soon grips all interpreters: he turns totally atheist. After idealistic displays of 'hating the moral decadence' of the new rulers, determined to oppose his corrupt employers (at the "Independent Viewpoint" newspaper), his only ironic achievement is to belittle his would-be employers as idiots during his interview when he sarcastically, but again ironically pits his intelligence above theirs (*TI*:79). Interestingly, this is the self-made 'sensible intellectual' who finds a common messenger, Mathias, his only perfect type of company because, Sagoe concludes, they share that senseless *Voidancy* philosophy of his, in short, an existentialist nihilism that proclaims him a totally disenchanting creature. "There is nothing difficult about (*Voidancy*), Mathias. You listen and you will understand the philosophy of shit. Of-isms I dirge this day, from holocopathic Marxixm to existentialism... *Voidancy* remains the one true philosophy of the true Egotist." (*TI*: 71). Within the intricate stylistics of this novel, the juxta-positioning of Sagoe's office to negative sym-

bols of the novel is revealing: his office is very near ‘shitful lavatories’; he never seems to escape the presence of ‘carnivorous and sex-maniac’ Chief Winsala who even trails him to his hotel and demands bribes, like a demonstration of how life is best lived in the new nation; Sagoe never stops being naively amused by Sir Derinola (the Morgue, his Managing Director) who incidentally pushes the final button for Sagoe to be given the journalist’s job at the Media House for the promise of a bribe. Ironically, all these exposures to symbols of corruption crystallize into what Sagoe himself eventually becomes: a would-be-critic who ends up trapped into the morgue of corrupt practices and bureaucracy. He himself, as he faces an interview to start his career, tells us he watches daily the human garbage of ‘reapers where they did not sow’: from false *compensations and claims, lost elections, missed nominations, thug recruitment, financial backing, Ministerial-in-lawness, Ministerial poncing, general arse-licking, Ministerial Concubinage...* (TI 77). This is Soyinka showing us ‘the lavatories’ and ‘Morgue’ offices from which the political class and their corrupt elite reap profits, immense riches. Therefore, Sagoe has taken up a live-and-let-live life, transitioning from binges in bars and night clubs and then into the consoling bosom of educated but quasi-traditional girl-friend, Dhehinwa, who is much more sensible than he is, controlling his libido and wild manners. She will accept to sleep with and marry him only when he denounces his Voidancy philosophy.

Sekoni

He is a consummate engineer and sculptor, an intellectual the nation could profit from given his zeal to serve the country. He really wants development and works hard for government officials to see he means it. Ironically, this is what makes him collide with the same bureaucrats who have fraudulent dealings with a quack expatriate engineer. Sekoni is a barrier to corruption and must get his dangerous patriotism frozen. His inability to break through this corruption barrier is symbolized in his stammering and stuttering, taken by his detractors as signs of madness and idiocy. This is a prophet rejected by his own country; even his fellow interpreters do not seem to understand this genius icon of uprightness in their midst. Sekoni, in fact, uses revealing terms at different times which apply to the dumbness of the government officials and the world around him. He says they are ‘Nnnnnihist!’ (TI: 22) full of ‘p-p-profanity!’ (p 25)... When he is forcibly taken to an asylum for his insistence on testing the power he has installed in a rural town where he had been posted, in fact a determination to lead the way to patriotism, he reaps what corrupt politics does to development and progress-minded patriots: destruction. Against crippling individualism, greed and materialism he has no chance. Soon, he dies in a car accident. The scene is mucky - the grand plans and idealism from some university abroad are summarized as mere crusts of dirt with his mashed up body in a mangled vehicle.

Bandele, a University Professor of English

Acknowledged by many critics as the most intellectually sober, a detached observer, quiet and pragmatic, his actions

and thought are said to be Soyinka’s ‘*authorial voice*’ specially noted for advocating ‘individual will...that spouts in the face of other wills’ (Ouno et al: 2016; Brodie: 2013). He understands Lazarus’s religious fervor as another form of escapism into myth-making, which is not different from Kola’s straining at representing fulfilling reality at the Pantheon canvas. He is for allowing people to be themselves in the quest for what life means to them. He cautions those who don’t make much of Lazarus’s religious fervor: “*When you create your own myth, don’t carelessly promote another’s, and perhaps a more harmful one*” (TI: 178). He strongly disapproves immorality displayed by Egbo, Dr Lumona, Chief Winsala and Prof Oguazor. At the end of the novel, he is revolted by their malicious gossip and callousness against the student Egbo has impregnated and abandoned. He closes his communion with these so-called university interpreters with what sounds a prophetic curse, ‘*I hope you all live to bury your daughters*’ - (TI: 178). But, that is all that is achieved: an idealistic moral stance with no sign of collaborating with fellow Been-To’s to effect some development ideas for the ruined nation. “Bandele was a total stranger, and becoming increasingly inscrutable” (TI: 244). He has retreated into an ethereal world of rationalization. The overwhelming effect of corruption practices around him seem to make him too inert to make practical suggestions for change.

Kola

This is an accomplished university lecturer of Fine Art and Graphics. He seems completely consumed in his contemplation and drawing of the Pantheon on a huge canvas, a surrealistic presentation of lives of all interpreters and other characters that intrigue him. Principal among the later are Lazarus the prophet and the American Negro, Joe Golder. Eventually, of course, it all comes to nothing. His total frustration as the novel ends summarizes again the lives of interpreters: they are watching a play at the university theatre, apparently a dramatization of a search to fulfillment of selves, just like he is now earnestly yearning to pull off impossible relationship with another man’s wife (Mrs Fayesi).

And Kola, who tried to see it all (the drama of life, his Pantheon), who tried to clarify the pieces within the accommodating habit of time, felt, much later... that it was a moment of frustration, that what was lacking... was the power to shake out events one by one, to space them in intervening standstills of the period of creation. *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child...* (And looking at Bandele)... if only we were, if only we were and we felt nothing of the enslaving cords, to drop from impersonal holes in the void and owe neither dead nor living nothing of our selves, and we should grow towards this, neither acknowledging nor weakening our will by understanding, so that when the present breaks over our heads we quickly find a new law for living. *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child...* (And holding Monica’s hand on her trembling arm, he knew): it is a night of severance, every man is going his way... TI: 244-245).

Other Interpreters

The novel also presents quite a number of minor interpreters in the form of symbols of the rotting nation owing to the corruption of top politicians and intellectuals/civil servants in privileged positions: the thoroughly corrupt Chief Winsala, Fayesi, Sir Derinola, and then Prof Oguazor, and the horribly debauched Dr Lumonye. Bamiro (2016) calls them ‘*petrified brains, concerned only with facades and trivia... (men consumed by) materialism and utilitarianism*’. To these are added Sogoe’s girl-friend, Dehinwa, some big man’s Personal Secretary. She is, perhaps, best appreciated for allowing Soyinka to dramatize the endemic ethnic and tribal feelings still gripping the nation, for, her mother and aunt will not hear of Dehinwa marrying not only a ‘cursed albino’ (meant to mean Egbo) but a stranger from the North. As for Simi, she reinforces the mythical life of Egbo. She has been the sought-after treasure he thinks will offer him the desired solace and self-fulfillment, but a new catch, the unnamed university student, seems to have supplanted Simi. This mercurial libido in him has turned a ‘quasi-religion’ (Brodie: 86). A rocky enclave below which is a tranquil pool has turned his sacred shrine, ‘*his preserve, a place of pilgrimage*’ (TI: 127) where a swim, tranquil rest and contemplation offer him a chance to appreciate, among other preoccupations, the marvels of his women. He is totally unaware of the disease and stamp of immaturity he carries: infantile infatuation. But, as Palmer (1979) summarizes the rot satirized in the novel, it is the Ibadan university establishment, including their wives, that is dramatized as most despicable: aping grotesquely English mannerisms to show they belong to ‘special class’, indulging in back-biting, intrigue, character assassination and incapable of maintaining professional ethics. Even the blood-thirsty masses, chasing Noah the thief to tear him apart, become part of the novel’s collection of vulgar and crude society depicted, save for Sekoni and Bandede. The night-soil men, their trade and the putridity they carry from all over the city (replicated all over the country) complete the symbol the nation and society have become: rotten, irredeemable.

CRITICS’ MIXED VIEWS ON SOYINKA’S STYLE

Filtering out the above messages of the novel from characterization, however, is no easy task at all as the novel is indeed a labyrinth of incredibly taxing styles woven into an equally complex language. Among many works which have labeled Soyinka’s work as an example of ‘cultural colonization’ is *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* by Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike (1985). Their scathing attack on Soyinka labels his fiction “*a stiff, pale, anemic poetry, to slavishly imitate 20th Century European modernism, with its weak precocity, ostentatious erudition, and dunghill piles of esoteric and obscure illusions, all totally cut off from the vital nourishment of our African traditions and home soil...* (p2). The diction here hardly hides anger and frustration; it is another “Song and Refrain of Condemnation” some Ugandans have echoed. There is a lot to conclude from the diatribe. The criticism set

off volleys of pro and anti Soyinka’s style of writing. In fact Ashcroft and Tiffin (2004: 125-131) remark on how this kind of acrimony on what constitutes good “African literature” was running a risk of producing a polarized debate with the Chinweizu school producing an extreme left wing of racist nationalism after some vague call for writers to return to ‘true Africanness’ versus clinging to colonial strings. With a touch of sarcasm, Tanure Ojaide (2009:3), discussing how critics have started a partitioning and canonization process of African writers, paraphrases unfair critics of Soyinka as critics convinced that some “*...contemporary writers...are writing more to please their Western audiences and publishers rather than their own African people they write about (thereby pushing for) the issue of canonization in modern African literature*”. By implication, therefore, from an unfair judgment, Soyinka has been canonized by imperialist critics and publishers as a true artist. The Chinweizu vitriolic attack is also mitigated by those who wish us to see Soyinka’s style as something personal, an individuality that is part and parcel of his art across genres (Cook: 1980; Luvai: 1973 et al). Other defenders of Soyinka are equally scathing, attacking his critics as “*lowbrow readers*” owing to self-serving interests and a failure to pay attention to and respect Soyinka’s creativity (Djelloul Bourahla: 2018; Codjo Akogbetu: 2015; Babatunde and Edonmi: 2009; Palmer: 1988; Abubakar and Ishaku: 2016; et al). Palmer (1979: 264-65) agrees that Soyinka’s style is indeed an unnecessarily complex labyrinth of “*allusions, cryptic images and metaphors (having) liberties with syntax and vocabulary (associated with poetry, with tremendous density of texture, compactness and economy of language, and sometimes the language overdone and confusing*”; but he still credits Soyinka with being a unique craftsman surpassing most African writers in the manipulation of language to suit his purposes. Abiola Irele (2001: 62) even considers it “*curious the failure of Chinweizu and his cohorts to recognize in Soyinka’s work a fundamental element that is in profound agreement with their indigenist and nativistic precepts beyond the gratuitous modernism*”. He adds that it is even more curious their failure to credit Soyinka with his ingenious use of Yoruba gods and myths; this is, after all, what Kola’s Pantheon, Sekoni’s Wrestler and Lazarus’ religious search are all about in the end: creative attempts to find meaning in life.

SOYINKA’S MAJOR STYLISTIC DEVICES

Satire and Historiography

History and style consistency have absolved Soyinka of any wrong vis-à-vis accusation of no commitment to African affairs. His satirical way of ridiculing post-colonial idiosyncrasies not only in his Nigeria but across the African continent has endeared him to many scholars, what with a 1988 Laureate award for this tremendous literary effort. What was initially mistaken for Soyinka’s ‘meaningless’ language has, with more critical exertion on the part of impartial readers and critics, proved an invaluable lesson in what a creative genius can do with any well mastered language. Sola Adewemi (2006: 31) calls to our attention, for example, what

many cursory readers may miss: an economical stylistic use of characterization to bring into play multitudes of characters peopling *The Interpreters* as part of the key *types*, the major interpreters; so, the novel is peopled with travelers, identity-seekers like Peter (the German traversing Africa on an American passport), Joe Golder (the almost raceless homosexual) wrecking havoc among university students in the background, professional academics represented by the crude Dr Lumonye and Prof Oguazor, religious types such as ‘born again’ Lazarus with his coterie of thieves, murderers, prostitutes and thugs as represented by Noah the pickpocket; we then add the disreputable judge Sir Derinola (the Morgue) symbolically presiding over dead justice together with morally dead Justices; the corrupt Chief Winsala as the face of the innumerable politicians who have wrecked havoc to the new nation... Then there are millions of parasites in form of the Simis who must also live comfortably, thanks to the sex maniac Egbo’s of new Nigeria; the Dhehinwas and their illiterate mothers and aunts must also be represented to demonstrate how millions of Nigerians still believe in the traditional ‘sanctity’ of tribalism and ethnicity. On top of these, we also can add the hordes of cheaply employed night-soil men who, ironically, would never hear of city council outlawing use of night-soil buckets for evacuation! The new Nigeria has failed to modernize this very important facet of civilization because politics of profiteering is stuck in the groove of individualism. Moreover, these thousands and thousands of the poor workers would be unemployed and worsen poverty levels; this is, therefore, a symbolic love for squalor, rot, the putridity of corruption on which the privileged class live. Then we have Egbo’s (Soyinka’s) examination of thousands of people burying the Morgue as compared to those he is following (eleven) burying Lazarus’s friend. Hangers-on around a dead Morgue tell what it is like to be moneyed and in power: a dead money magnet is like a carcass, attracting naturally millions of dung-flies... But, all these are connected by a carefully worked out thread of history.

What helps the reader to flesh up ridiculed characters and events is the string up of past and present events, following characters’ lives, a historiography that does not display itself as easily as it does for instance in Ngugi’s narratives. This, to Eldred Jones, is what gives the novel-structure a compactness a cursory reader may not notice (*TI*: pp 1-2, Introduction to the 1970 edition). It is such a satirical angle of this historiography and its condensed poetic prose that allow a discerning reader to decipher far more behind even a simple scene. For instance, when Egbo contemplates choice of taking over the grandfather’s throne or remaining at the drudgery of Foreign Office, his mind is in a very revealing dramatic semi-monologue contemplating the wisdom of returning to this dead history:

Well, he could stay. Osa Descendants Union sent their spokesmen to plague him daily, all bitten by the bug of an ‘enlightened ruler’, and gradually Egbo had begun to wonder and to set the dull cabinet faces of the Foreign Office. And a slow anger built in him panic and retraction from the elaborate pit. What did they demand of him? How dared they suggest obligations? And this stranger whose halting breath he could hear in their every

plea – and stranger he was, separated by a generation no less tenuous – a father whose dug-out moved among the settlements spreading a Word which in spite of ritual acceptance altered little, a father whose careless death left a bigger doubt than the conversions in a life-long Evangelism. And his mother was the princess Egbo whose burden it was he now carried; hers was the line of inheritance and she had gone down at the same spot and there was nothing but the rusted cannon left of her... Mentally he surrendered the effort of unraveling blood skeins and was left only with their tyrannous energies (*TI*: 12).

This extract is short, but it is a complex piece of styles and messages: we have the ironic twist on an expected traditional ruler that has also attracted hangers on and delegations of old Egbo’s people to him in fawning adoration of a new, younger Egbo now seen as ‘enlightened ruler’. We know elsewhere this old Egbo (grandfather) on the throne is as corrupt as the Chief Winsalas. So this young Egbo must now decide, extricate himself from the ‘elaborate pit’ and ‘obligations’, the horrid future of corrupt practices the delegations of his people want him to embrace as a means to share in the national cake. The allusion to evangelism is well elaborated in Brodie (2013) concerning Egbo’s father having taken to religious preaching instead of waiting to succeed his father; then the allusion to Egbo’s mother as having preferred motherhood and queen-ship to religious fanaticism (again a veiled reference to Soyinka’s own mother known to have been such a fanatic). The larger allusion is what Abubakar and Ishaku (2016) have referred to as Egbo representing the ‘sub-consciousness’ of Soyinka. Egbo’s loathing for power is Soyinka’s revulsion against ‘the absurdity of society’ and ‘the decadence of power’ having observed the merging of colonial and post-colonial idiosyncrasies symbolized in the new African leadership. A continued history of corruption can be gleaned from the individual histories of Chief Winsala and Sir Denilora; then from the self-serving “Independence Newspaper” ever eschewing committed criticism of post-colonial corruption (because Chief Ediitor Nwabuzor was appointed to protect the hydras of this evil). We note also how post-independence class differences have taken root as symbolized in the separate residences of a rich Ikoyi suburb of the city: the colonial whites that stayed after independence have been joined by the new “African whites” and have created a little ‘apartheid’ away from the common herd, just like the Oguazos and Lumonyes at the university campus... This is the history of loss of identity by Africa’s new leaders, wishing to cling to the benefits of colonial leftovers too attractive to abandon. One sees this much more elaborately dramatized in *Anthills of the Savannah* (Achebe) through the excesses of the President and Ihaji Abdoul Mahmoud. But the shocking intellectual bankruptcy we observe at Bassa University (*Anthills*) is exactly the same as that Soyinka dramatizes in *The Interpreters*: it is the same sad history of post-colonial failure by the elite leadership to lead the newly independent nations to sane development for their citizens.

Soyinka’s Satirical Description in Poetic Prose

Often, it is not ease to get the humorous ridicule Soyinka packs into his description. For instance, in the above extract

on Egbo, Soyinka satirizes and decries the practice of some African writers crying over the past too much as if in exhumation of ancestors and all their barbarities. It is again an extended attack on the platitudes about the excellence of Negritude. So, in the above extract, one can understand why Egbo (Soyinka) ‘surrendered the effort’ of retracing the ancestral kingship-line. Then one notices a presence of a poet in the description: the love for metaphors, imagery and symbolism compacted in the piece— ‘plague’, ‘dull grey file cabinet faces’, ‘panic and retraction’, ‘elaborate pit’, ‘obligations’, ‘stranger’ with a ‘halting breath’, ‘careless death’, ‘rusted cannon’, ‘blood skeins’, ‘tyrannous energies’. It is these twists to even everyday words that make them sound coinages that baffle and confuse an unpracticed reader. In fact Bamiro (1996:19-26) has Soyinka in mind when he says some African writers have become astute handling pragmatics of English language: a communicative goal that disregards full statements, the so-called use of ‘standard ‘English, disregard of auxiliaries, tense markers, articles and question tags etc. The language used becomes the “natural language...in its commonsense, everyday, spontaneous spoken form”, a style he credits to Halliday (1995:142) who names it “Doric style”. Bamiro adds that all this is meant to allow “*African writers...subject the English language to a process of adaptation to meet their African experience by incorporating into dialogues and narration many art-forms translated from their mother tongues*” (22-23). Bamiro believes this is where Pidgin English comes in handy even for educated people when circumstances demand proximity and familiarity with the half-educated or when one wants to lend local color to a discussion. This is what is happening between Mathias and Sagoe at his Newspaper office, although Sagoe maintains ‘correct’ English use. This Doric style may best be demonstrated when Soyinka again fuses it with Yoruba words in a powerful description of Sir Derin and his Board; it is a brief dramatic monologue of Sagoe now back to face the interviewers. His critical mind (Soyinka’s) is now scanning the Board’s evils: it is a

board-room, filled, as with all boards, with Compensation Members. Lost elections, missed nominations, thug recruitment, financial backing, Ministerial concubinage...Sagoe occupied his first few minutes fitting each face to each compensation aspect and found that one face stood out among them... It surfaced quietly at the far end of the table and a pair of yellow eyes surveyed him above the silver rims of old fashioned spectacles. In his own person, however, there was something odd. This was his cap. It was a simple *abetiaja*, but worn so that the ears were front and back, not bent above each ear as in normal use. This sage-like oddity possessed a narrow head, tapering backwards like the carved head of an *ibeji*, a true phrenologist collector’s piece. Sagoe stared, but he was new in the country and had not heard of the famous cranium of the Morgue, and the ever growing catalogue of myths which surrounded it. Never without some covering, some said it ended in hole, and others claimed it ended in a triple point and was in its own lightning conductor. Others more curious than the rest tried to find his barber and question him. The

miracle was that Sir Derin was not an idiot, for this was the average cretin bonce (*TI*: 77).

The reader must now supply meanings to the whole compensation saga (types of exploitative ventures throughout the whole nation). He must use Sagoe’s monologue to visualize the political machinations of a Third World country, politics meeting immorality, many types of corruption, the ironic humor of these so-called judges as heads of immoral practices now subjecting Sagoe to a ‘selection process of getting the right responsible civil servant’ for an editor’s job. The reader must research to know what *abetiaja* and *ibeji* are and what they add to a now clearly satirical description of Sir Derin, and why he (for sure) is sarcastically given this ‘Sir’ epithet, because he also bears another satirical epithet, the Morgue. A wordy writer might have wanted to clarify all these for readers using even a few clarifying clauses and sentences, but Soyinka splashes his metaphors and symbols on paper, not randomly, though, but with a key leading technique: description. Then he lets the reader grapple with stringing up bits of comprehension helped by what is known of Sir Derinola and Chief Winsala in the rest of the novel. At times Soyinka’s prose lapses into Surrealism and stream-of-consciousness. Let us examine a piece from the end of the novel describing what we should decipher from Kola’s Pantheon:

And of these floods of the beginning, of the fevered fogs of the beginning, of the first messenger, the thimble of earth, a fowl and an ear of corn, seeking the spot where a scratch would become a peopled island, of the first apostate rolling the boulder down the back of the unsuspecting deity – for they must learn the first stab in the back and keep inferiors harmless within sight – and shattering him in fragments, which were picked up and pieced together with devotion; shell of the tortoise around divine breath; of endless chain for the summons of the god and the phallus of unorigin pointed at the sky-hole past divination; of the lover of purity, the unblemished one whose large compassion embraced the cripples and the dumb, the dwarf, the epileptic – and why not, indeed, for they were creations of his drunken hand and what does it avail, the eternal penance of favoritism and abstinence? Of...of...of...of...of... (*TI*: 224-225).

Palmer (1979: 265) comments on this torrent of words as “*Soyinka making forays into the world of legend*” but still unjustified because “*he is merely demonstrating his undoubted control over words*”. A very apt comment indeed, because we can decipher he is in his myths about gods and beginnings of life (of these floods...beginning...fevered fogs...first messenger...) and the start of life with first creatures (...fowl...ear of corn...and then the ‘peopling’ of the earth..., with the first abomination: man betraying his god...). Up to this point, one could imagine Soyinka is alluding to the Creation story in the Genesis. But the thread disappears because the author suddenly disappears into his mental creations. This is why we tend to believe Abubakar and Ishaku (2016: 110) that Soyinka’s style in this novel, is, in the main, *psychopathological* and *biological* in the sense that such a writing betrays infiltration of childhood and other experiential impulses, images and experiences into a text. What could have come out well in a verbal exchange with

someone gets blurred into obscurity when written out; this is how such texts depict an author's frame of mind. This also explains the plot-less nature of the novel, incomplete threads of flashbacks, flashes of myths and areas of interior monologues because things, events and concepts appear in the author's mind in a surrealist and stream-of-consciousness manner (2016: 111). Abubakar and Ishaku, as others have suggested, believe ‘*the interpreters are more like a portrayal of the artist himself with each of the characters representing an aspect of his belief, attitude and experience*’ (p 112). They quote Soyinka's rejection of ‘the glories of ancestral past and Negritudism’ [as he wrote in *A Man Died* (1975: xiii)] to show, for instance, how Egbo dramatizes Soyinka's mind (as hinted on above), given even that his Simi must be Soyinka's fictionalized girl in “Idanre”, a one Oya he flirted with as in the Egbo-Simi fashion and then ditched her. This psychosis could then explain the puzzling stylistics and semantics of the above text vis-à-vis paradoxes, myths, total overhaul of syntax, prepositional phrases taking over subject positions, each meant to start a new idea and gerunds replacing finite verbs, etc.

Soyinka's Satiric Humor and use of Pidgin English

We see this right from the start of the novel when Sagoe's hangover makes him hate any noise and Soyinka makes a humorous remark that actually labels Sagoe a certified drunk from now onwards: ‘*Metal on concrete jars my drink lobes*’. And the humor carries on as Egbo, too, realizes the bar's floor is all rainwater from a leaking roof: ‘*Someone tell God not to weep in my beer*’. But on some occasions this humor is corrosively judgmental, too satirical to miss, like when we observe and listen to a drunk Chief Winsala angling for a bribe from a spiteful Sagoe, and then later a waiter has to confront this elephantine Chief to pay. Or when this huge frame covered in his Chief's *agbada* is trying to rape a new secretary and both get entrapped into the enormous folds of his attire. But she extricates herself artfully from under him, spluttering for help, leaving a shamed, squirming practiced rapist arranging his miles of dress around his near nakedness. Or when we listen to the ironic and ridiculous urgency of Mrs Oguazor, at her tea-party, coaxing Mrs Fasesi to follow civilized manners and behave as a well-bred English woman: please, join other ladies upstairs and freshen up (whether you like it or not), and, please, don't be seen alone with men downstairs here after all of us good-mannered ladies are upstairs...; please. a real good lady must look her best in company of gentlemen... please... please... And Mrs Fayesi rejects the condescension. The ‘well-bred’ hostess turns the whole scene farcical as we watch to conclude what reduces post-colonial intelligentsia and politicians into scourges of the masses: pretentiousness and aping of the white man; deep-rooted bush manners hidden by cosmetic attires, make-up and a foreign language; total lack of a sense of some Africanness to preserve since occupying the roles of our erstwhile white masters does not necessarily turn us into well-groomed, civilized white beings. This is why Soyinka introduces plastic decorations in the home of the Fayesis to symbolize conscienceless beings, puppets simulating life. It

is almost the same face of crudeness that we watch at the end of the novel when Prof Oguazor, Ayo Fayesi, Dr Lumonye etc turn despicable little minds discussing the misfortune of a university girl (impregnated by Egbo): the malice, the gossip, the total lack of professional ethics especially on the part of Dr Lumonye who shamelessly reveals how he sleeps with such girls before helping them to abort.

This ridiculous display of crudeness and ingrained corruption and a lack of imagination is what makes such commentators on Post-colonial Africa, as Frantz Fanon (2003:156-157), observe:

National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only the empty shells, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been. The faults that we find in it are quite sufficient an explanation of the facility with which, when dealing with young and independent nations, the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state... cracks (and other weaknesses which show) as the historical result of the incapacity of the national middle class to rationalize popular action...their incapacity to see the reasons for that nation. (It is) the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mold that its mind is set in (which boils down to greedy acquisitions).

When we factor in the conflict between the Been-To's and university intelligentsia clashing with illiterate but powerful politicians as seen in a symbolic clash between Sagoe and Sir Derinola at the “Independent Newspaper” offices, then the question of national development is shelved altogether in a survival war. Neither the entrenched political class nor the so-called intellectuals, social misfits, in effect (Al-Assad Omar: 2015), are capable of steering the nation.

Soyinka makes also Pidgin English a powerful tool of ridicule when used by Chief Winsala stepping out of his high station to play a ‘fawning fool’ before Sagoe at the hotel while soliciting a bribe. Bamiro (1996) notes this is a writer's way ‘to lampoon the moral decadence’ of a society when the Winsalas stamp themselves with corruption-discourse that plunges them into a class of semi-illiterates and crooks. Ashroft and Tiffin (2004:75-77) show very well how pidgin, in a literary work, points out class differences, just like, for instance in Dickens' *Hard Times* when we listen to the subjugated factory workers discussing their plight and blaming it all on defenseless Steven Blackpool. Achebe also uses the same Pidgin English style in *No Longer at Ease* to show how the emerging Umuofia semi illiterates and town dwellers show they, too, belong to ‘the schooled class’, the new ‘emancipated’ generation. It gives such a people ‘group identity’, some prestige. They have a medium to talk with and approach the educated Obis. But, with Chief Winsala, it is an affirmation their bush-life upbringing may never go out of some of these emerging rulers of post-independence Africa.

These divisions of techniques and comments on Soyinka's style and messages are not at all meant to do him full justice. For, in a single paragraph, he is able to marshal

up pragmatic-semantic coinages that will carry also irony, humor, sarcasm, metaphors, imagery, symbolism, allusions, allegory, myths, Pidgin English, incorrect and incomplete and badly punctuated syntax, word-coinages, et c. The task for the reader is to find leads into all sorts of connotations. Reading Soyinka, therefore, is certainly like trying to fit jig-saw puzzles together. This is why many critics agree that one of the complex features of *The Interpreters* is the plot-less narration (Cook: 1977; Palmer: 1979; Gakwandi: 1977; Biodun Jeyifo: 2004; et al). One has to rely on flashbacks (themselves not so easy to graft together) and how the main interpreters keep on bringing us facets of the Nigerian pre and post-independence upheavals. The so-called minor characters, therefore, also become very useful characterization: for instance, they become crucial clues to complete that huge symbol of squalor and putridity surrounding Ibadan, splashed even on roads, following the Denilolas and then the Lumonyes into university premises. We believe no one should begrudge Soyinka this gift of language and portrayal of human vices in such an intricate way.

Description and Scene-sequencing as Plot-structuring

What has been described as a plot-less novel by many critics may, after all, get its logical sequence from the descriptive sequencing of scenes that embed same themes. For instance, instead of treating us to long descriptions and historiography of the growing class differences, poverty and disillusionment, Soyinka lets us accompany Sagoe to the Ikoyi suburb and briefly mentions the segregated rich settlement of the remaining post independence whites and their Black white men. Then, suddenly, and immediately, at a nearby cemetery, two scenes catch our attention: the first is called “a joke!”, a procession of eleven mourners of one of Lazarus’s followers with a “jutting coffin, a rude, vulgar work”, an “ignoble death” (*The Interpreters*:111-12). Immediately juxtaposed to this is another spectacle: a mile of cars and thousands of human mourners accompanying Sir Derinola’s hearse to the same cemetery. A splendid scene of rich pageantry: the “gory carnations”, forty cars, a flower-smothered hearse, more and more wreaths on mourners’ arms to complete the practice of holding “orgiastic funerals”. Then Soyinka suddenly turns this second funeral into what Nigerians behold every now and then: similar orgies at weddings, child-naming, engagements, cocktail parties, et c. Blaring loudspeakers announce Derinola’s “great works” to mourners. Then the bathos moment, like a curse-epitaph: “his life our inspiration, his idealism our hopes, the survival of his spirit in our midst the hope for a future Nigeria, for moral irredentism and national rejuvenescence...” (p 113). The choice of bombastic words, the exaggerated carnations and numbers of cars and humans and then turning the funeral into a feasting occasion... this is all to ridicule a post-independence competition crazy for showing off even among the not-so-rich. The reader is left to connect this to forms of corruption earlier enumerated in Sagoe’s subconscious as he awaits being interviewed. We cannot forget to connect this scene of Sir Derin’s funeral with Soyinka’s earlier description of a “speaking corpse” interrogating Sagoe at the “Independence Newspaper” offices.

He is angry at Sagoe’s insolent answers. “*The carcass of the Managing Director swelled, spurted greasy globules of the skin in extreme stages of putrefaction and burst in an unintelligible stream through the ruptured throat. ‘Do you think we have come here to tolerate your cocky impudence?’ (TI: 76).* The monster is decidedly a symbol of dead morality. And Soyinka will demonstrate how this death has trickled down to even the riff raff: pick-pockets, beggars, touts, and other ‘vocational idlers’ (TI: 113).

Immediately after observing the long rotted remains of Sir Derin buried, Sagoe leads us to the scene of a vulgar love for bloodletting: the hunt for Noah the thief. Soyinka’s description of the earnestness of this assorted crowd is frightening: real animal hunting is on, like hounds after a rabbit ready to tear it to pieces. Noah’s fright is desperate, suicidal, plunging him into a lagoon to escape capture – better drown than let the hounds get me. And, as usual, Soyinka accompanies the hunt with derision of the various hunters: (TI: 113ff). So, he urges on Noah –

Run, Barabbas, run... Run, you little thief or the bigger thieves will pass a law against your existence as a manace to society... run, Barabbas from the same crowd which will reform tomorrow and cheer the larger thief returning from his twentieth Economic Mission and pluck his train from the mud, dog-wise, in their teeth (p 114).

Naturally, therefore, the big thieves have taught the young ones how to survive. So, crime turns into a pastime and a vocation for the poor. Violence against their own likes is satisfying because it exorcises the pent-up emotions in a mixture of sadism and masochism, just like the unjust brute laws of the State exercise brutal injustice on the poor.

CONCLUSION

These brief divisions of techniques and comments on Soyinka’s style and messages are not at all meant to do him full justice. In a single paragraph, he is able to marshal up pragmatic-semantic coinages that will carry also irony, humor, sarcasm, metaphors, imagery, symbolism, allusions, allegory, myths, Pidgin English, incorrect and incomplete and badly punctuated syntax, word-coinages, et c. The task for the reader is to find leads into all sorts of connotations. Reading Soyinka’s narrative, therefore, is certainly like trying to fit jig-saw puzzles together, a re-plotting of the novel for self. This is why many critics agree that one of the complex features of *The Interpreters* is the plot-less narration (Cook: 1977; Palmer: 1979; Gakwandi: 1977; Biodun Jeyifo: 2004; et al). So, since many ‘complex’ works have been published and many more will be, what do we do to accommodate them into ‘likeable, readable literature’?

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHERS/LECTURERS AND INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING (ITT) FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS

The rationale for this section is NOT to discuss methodology of literature-language teaching/learning but to make broad theoretical, pedagogical and methodological implications

the above examination of *The Interpreters* should mean for teachers and learners of these subjects. The Language Programme curriculum of our colleges and universities has over time combined the two subjects under the term Double Main, implying every teacher-trainer and trainee must embrace them as one and see their inter-relationships. This, to us, is a very good starting point in the demystification process we want to propose. One fact is clear: Soyinka's works and such similar difficult ones from other writers worldwide will have to be read, studied, if the objectives of this Double Main Course are to be realized. To us, therefore, text complexity should instead begin to form a challenge for especially Initial Teacher Training educators and trainees in Language Education. Briefly, therefore, we would like to sketch out what we feel should form areas of emphasis while training teachers of English/literature in our Foreign Language context.

Language Education and Linguistics

All our teacher-trainees are expected to have some good grounding in *Morphosyntax*, *Semantics* and *Pragmatics* to prepare them for good analysis of the English grammar and meaning-making. Some colleges and universities go even further to add *Sociolinguistics*, *Psycholinguistics* and *Phonology and Phonetics* to have a deeper appreciation of *Applied Linguistics*, hoping indeed that teacher-trainees will clearly see and use the interconnections in these branches of *Educational Linguistics* to deepen their pedagogic and methodological astuteness and to appreciate how *Linguistics* becomes a deepening of Language Education approach. Unfortunately, this is where the problem lies: we must acknowledge that trainees often view each branch as a separate entity, vaguely having some unclear connection with Language Education. To make it worse, we must acknowledge also that our trainees' knowledge of grammar is far from the requirements for healthy classroom practices. The effects of the nation's 'Dark Ages' during the turbulences and wars of the 70's and 80's have dogged us. Among the many problems we must acknowledge and plan to tackle include lack of enough textbooks and qualified teachers, very poorly stocked libraries, a crippling lazy attitude towards reading even among teachers of English/literature, poor methods of delivery that have turned literature into a package of crammable facts the teacher must deliver (lecture-and-notes method) to learners, et c. We must no more bury our heads in the sand. Anyone who recalls the classroom practices of the 60's and early 70's (surviving in only few Church-founded schools today) will tell how we have generally digressed from collaborative teaching/learning to transmissive practices. We cannot change this attitude unless we acknowledge that we have lumped up together some good and some misleading practices into which we have gradually included also some half-truths, myths, misconceptions, prejudices, exaggerations, and even lies. Definitely this mish-mash deserves a frank, thorough questioning. This is where we could humbly re-examine roles of teachers, learners and any text they use in a classroom/lecture-room context.

Role of teacher, learner and text

Each of these certainly needs by far a much more detailed examination, but for our purposes in this article, we shall fuse them together but emphasize their inseparability. Lazar (1993); McRae (1991); Maley and Duff (1989); Tomlinson (1986); Wright (1987); et al give extensive examination of these elements and their inseparability. They also advise we understand 'text' as a *stimulus* to trigger collaborative work. This is why they advise that even a non-verbal sign could form a crucial 'text' to engage teachers and learners to respond to the implied and hidden messages in such a 'text' and exploit its ideational and representational potentials (McRae: 1-2). The approach works for language and literature teaching because, as we are to see in 5.4.1 below, the two must also be treated as inseparable and complementary in the whole educational process as learners and teachers deal with all manner of texts and writers and styles. This is why "emphasis on the text as the starting point for all literature study is of paramount importance" (MacRae 1991: 120-121). This is what should help us understand the Reader-Text Theory in the appreciation and comprehension of any text (what we read).

Reader and text

Instead of lamenting about complex language (from lexis to syntax and then style), we should think of how these can be gradually taught, simplified by way of good language and literature methods. We have to continually ask ourselves how we direct learners to appreciate how to make meaning in what they talk and read, and, therefore, what learners should write and how. They must be led to know how communication gets effected by even a single word or wrong/change in punctuation; how an incomplete statement, intentionally constructed, within a given context contributes to text meaning; they must not be fed only on theory of *Stylistics* but must learn its complexities practically from what they write/talk. Learners must know that it is experiences of life that we and other people write and talk about, in and out of class. They must be shown how, for instance, their childhood experiences or those in their town/home/village/country contribute to their language input so that we lead them to understand where written texts come from and what they talk about as part of our/their experiences. So, in the modern methods of defining a *text*, the emphasis is on sensitizing learners about how texts communicate with readers about such vast experiences. According to Birch (1990: 159-60), analyzing *how* a text means, vis-à-vis text approach, involves a much more dynamic activity, whose underlying theory suggests that meanings aren't simply put into a text by a writer/speaker, but are constructed by the reader/hearer. What this implies is that the only way we have of constructing a reading for a text is through our *own* socially determined language as reader/hearer. In effect, each time a reader reads a text, a *new* text is created. This creation, as discussed in Birch (1990), implies a reader's ability to recognize social, political and economic realities, (to grasp the conflicts being dramatized). It is a rejection of writers and critics who still think of

literature (text material) as a static, objectively explainable discipline or content whose “fixed” views must be preserved and transmitted. Fortunately, very many critics are giving us revolutionary and methodological insights into how we should answer another crucial question from a radical critic, Culler. The question which is the title of his critical essay is, “What is Literature Now?” (2007). The article questions fossilized views that support literary Canonism. It is in line with Walcott’s (2003: 370) views, too, rebutting literary canon. Walcott states unequivocally, “*When these writers (and so pro canon critics, too,) cunningly describe themselves as classicists and pretend an indifference to change, it is with an irony as true of the colonial anguish as the fury of the radical. If they appear to be phony aristocrats, it is because they have gone past the confrontation of history, that Medusa of the New World*”.

These remarks are made, therefore, to support the theory behind Reader-Text co-creation of meaning, that is

- Seeing a text as a social interaction: reader grasping how social forces are at work, how other texts he has read enlighten him more with this intertextuality;
- Reader creating an own reaction, in his own words or linguistic engagement with the text, constructed from and determined by social, cultural, ideological and institutional forces (Birch 1990:161). Therefore
- Grasping properly experiences that go into proper text interpretation: your language, background, biases, ideas, beliefs, politics, education... the institutions and discursive practices that constitute one’s social networks, all of which make ‘your intertextuality’; (Birch 1990: 162).

These views on intertextuality are emphasized also in Ashcroft, et al. (2003); Haberer (2007); Bazerman (2003); Zengin (2016); et al. This concept is defined in Leitch (2001:21) thus: Intertextuality is, therefore,

“a text’s dependence on prior words, concepts, connotations, codes, conventions, unconscious practices, and texts. Every text is an intertext that borrows knowingly or not, from the immense archive of previous culture”.

In an earlier work, Leitch (1983:59) states the same emphasis that every text is an *intertext*, a text between other texts, and is “no longer the object with which textual criticism used to deal. Actually it is no object at all; it is, as a way of writing...a productive (and yet not necessarily being a merely agreeing) process” (p 37).

Therefore, these modern views on text analysis challenge anyone dealing with Literature/Language teaching and learning to refocus their attention to two issues: to see any text before us as some part of our context we should share a conversation with, using our past and present experiences. Secondly, to discover how literary stylistics or literary linguistics should help us see the language of literature as a sociological tool for discussing issues of life, us. This view re-enforces what, much earlier on, Wellek’s and Warren’s (1948:4) theory of literature advises: how we should view literature, viz – “determining causes to economic, social, and political conditions” in a text; not regarding it as “a series of unique works with nothing in common nor a series of works enclosed in time-cycles” of, let’s say “African”, “Romanticism”, “Negritude”, et c (p 35). One sees, therefore,

that the theory of intertextuality was as live then as it is today, so that it is worth our while to critically view what, for instance, Structuralism and Deconstructionism have to offer us in terms of the ultimate goal: valuing the Text-Reader relationship/response in language and literary studies. We use these terms, Structuralism and Deconstruction, because they are part of the theory supposed to be studied by Language Education students. What is crucial is to ask – do they understand properly the implications of these theories of literature and connections to methods of good reading habits and skills?

Literature as language

The views above lead us to seriously think of how literature should be used to teach language. This new trend is now a proven fact that literature, after all, is language in its best form (Lazar: 1993; McRae: 1991; Widdowson, H.G.: 1978; Squire (Ed): 1987; Gee, J.P.:2008; Brumfit and Carter: 1987; Brumfit: 1985; Maley & Duff: 1989; Hall, G: 2005; Collie & Slater: 1987; et al. Intertextuality and literature as faces of language are concepts demanding a re-examination of how Language Education is conducted in Institutions training future language teachers. This must start with a good knowledge of the Theory of Language Teaching and Learning. We must face the reality that no one gives what he does not have. If some instructor’s knowledge of theory of Language teaching/learning is deficient, if he cannot tell how a learner could be helped to acquire a language fast and most efficiently, if he does not know circumstances that promote or hinder this learning; if he does not understand the strategies a learner could use to acquire this language, et c, et c, then his imparting Language Education is terribly deficient and needs Language and Methods Development, a retooling process to demystify his many private agendas and theories he carries to the classroom.

Literacy at the heart of learning

The other requirement in our demystification process for better Language Education is to get learners to properly understand the modern way of defining good, meaningful *literacy*. It is not to be taken as the traditional understanding of basic knowledge in reading, writing and counting. True literacy comes from very many sources: many varied contexts, extensive reading, communing with very many texts and experiences, so that, beyond a university degree, literacy begins to show in and grow further with one’s immense understanding of his world around him and beyond, an understanding that creates more knowledge and creates a *whole person* called educated. Literacy, therefore, is, as Cazden puts it (1982:413), a true understanding of the vital role of CONTEXT in education, context as “anything that affects the reader’s or writer’s response to the piece of written language that is the focus of immediate perceptual attention”. And this attention must focus on *external social context* as well as on one’s ‘*contexts in the mind*’. Research has shown, therefore, that to talk of teaching English and Literature implies imparting literacy (Langer:1992)– that is, an exercise in

manipulation of language and thought to engage in when we make sense and convey ideas in a variety of situations; it involves ways of thinking, which we learn in the many CONTEXTS of our lives. It enables the personal empowerment that results when people use their literacy skills to think and rethink their understanding of texts, and the world. It gives importance to individuals and the oral and written texts they create and encounter, and calls upon as well as fosters the kinds of language and thought that mark good and sharp thinking.

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