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Critical and Intercultural Theory and Language Pedagogy

Glenn S. Levine
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Editors

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Chapter 5

Toward a Contact Pragmatics of Literature: Habitus, Text, and the Advanced Second-Language Classroom

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Abstract

Drawing on field/practice theory and pragmatic stylistics, this chapter proposes a new aggregate model for upper-level second-language literature teaching called "contact pragmatics." While fostering a native-like reading context, teachers can simultaneously encourage students to recognize literature as a form of social practice articulating to various, loosely concentric fields of interpretation: from the native "ratified" reader to the "unintended" second-language reader position. Contact pragmatics shifts pedagogical focus to the interstices, overlaps, misalignments, and disjunctions between these concentric fields, acknowledging that at their center lies a linguistic utterance designed to operate within certain fields of opposition and exchange. Contact pragmatics thus expands the scope of pedagogical inquiry from the historical, national, and cultural resonance of a given text to its social embeddedness in a shifting landscape of linguistic markets. The chapter offers concrete, classroom-based examples of the pedagogical dilemmas and experiences that gave rise to this concept as well as suggestions for how to incorporate it in curricular design.

Introduction

We begin with a story of split expectations, or—as social theorist Pierre Bourdieu might call them—"misaligned habituses." The homework for the day was to read the short text "Familie in Kürze" (Family in Brief) by Elisabeth Alexander. Because of its relatively simple vocabulary and sentence structures, this particular literary vignette often appears in second- and third-year German language textbooks. The version displayed in the second-year German text *Mitlesen, Mitteilen*, in use in the course at hand, prefaces Alexander's domestic portrait with a short biography of the author:

> Elisabeth Alexander was born in 1932 in Linz/Rheinland and lives in Heidelberg. She attended a Catholic girls school but married before completing her secondary education. She later earned her *Abitur* the hard way by attending an *Abendgymnasium*. Her career as a writer began with the publication of poems in 1963. Since 1970, she has been a freelance writer and journalist. In this story as well as in her many other short stories and two novels, she depicts the role of a wife and mother in a male-dominated bourgeois society. "Familie in Kürze" (Family in Brief) is taken from her collection

> *Damengeschichten* (Stories of Ladies), first published in 1983. She has also written a collection of *Herrengeschichten* (Stories of Men; 1990). (Alexander, 2008, pp. 26–27)

This introduction positions the spotlighted literary text for a certain didactic function in a third-semester course, a content-based language class covering post-World War II German history and culture. That week, the class was beginning a chapter on Germany in the 1970s and 1980s that included a section on feminism and women's movements. The references made here to Alexander's bourgeois childhood and young marriage link her biography to an interpretation of "Familie in Kürze" (Family in Brief) that the textbook authors expect to solicit—namely, that this text depicts "the role of wife and mother in a male-dominated society." For the instructor, a female graduate student, terms like "male-dominated" and "bourgeois," coupled with the date of publication, 1983—arguably the peak of the German women's movements—could signal nothing if not a deliberately critical view of gendered divisions of labor in modern German society. While the story is told tersely and soberly by a third-person narrator, the extensive details about this housewife and mother's cooking and cleaning, as well as the lack of information about her feelings and thoughts, could—from the instructor's point of view—not possibly be interpreted as an euphoric tableau of women's social subjectivity. Moreover, this was an understanding that she expected her students would easily share, and her lesson plan was designed to direct students toward the linguistic means by which this critique was being waged and then to begin to tie in some historical information in preparation for the following day's lesson. She was then appropriately caught off guard when two of her eight students, both female, had come to a completely different interpretation. "I would rather be the woman in this story, because she takes good care of her family and feels happy and fulfilled," wrote one of the female students.

There was clearly nothing wrong—inferentially or analytically—with the student's response to this first of the textbook's suggested discussion questions: "Would you rather be the woman or the man in this story?" After all, the question directly asks for a personal preference, and yet, in light of the second question—"The style of the author is such that she narrates without commentary. Does she also narrate without any criticism? Why?"—it also seems to be guiding students to reiterate the same socially critical reading that the instructor had assumed, a reading that would perhaps come as second nature for the story's intended German audience. Yet nothing explicit within the text addresses the happiness or unhappiness of the female figure. Whether her life leaves her feeling fulfilled remains unthematized. What we do know is that she "cooks well. She cleans well. She can also bake well." The vocabulary and grammatical structures were clear to the student, giving the text a "consistent interpretation" (Carrell, 1984). Can it possibly be said, then, that the students had misread the text?

To pose the question differently, what constitutes an appropriate reading of such a text by our advanced second-language students? Numerous studies have demonstrated the vital role that background knowledge and interpretive schemas play in analytical reading (Altmayer, 2002; Bernhardt, 1991; Carrell, 1984; Swaffer, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). It could be argued that the students lacked the cultural knowledge and experience that had guided the instructor and textbook authors to

treat Alexander's vignette as a critique and that the contextualization provided was simply not sufficient to attune the students to the cultural climate of Germany in the 1980s. However, citing *contextualization* as a supporting pedagogical framework only raises more—and more precarious—questions about our use of the literary text in an advanced second-language classroom. What is the advantage of teaching literary works at the intermediate and advanced levels of language study if not to expose students to exactly this kind of cultural information in a more embedded format, while also introducing them to longer and more complex stretches of text?[1] This leaves instructors in a methodological double bind. Either the cultural information must be supplied by the instructor and/or the textbook, thus railroading a specific, sanctified, "native" interpretation of the literary text, risking cultural reification, and preempting students' readings of the text, *or* lessons focus on the students' personal readings that emanate from their experiences as nonnative language learners. In the latter case, one risks neglecting the fact that other readers, including—and perhaps most importantly—the intended audience of the text, might be operating under other schemas of interpretation that are themselves socially inculcated and thus as analytically consequential as the cultural content that the text was meant to provide.[2] Most textbooks' historicist treatments of literature include a mixture of both of these approaches, and yet neither really gets students to any deeper understanding of literary discourse as a dynamic site of intersection between language and culture, nor do they promote the development of literacy in the sense of the ability "to reflect critically on communication in all the forms it takes" (Kern, 2002, p. 23).

Contextualizing the Language/Literature Curriculum Today

Of course, this contemporary classroom scenario of text and context resides within a peculiar institutional context of its own. As language instructors, program coordinators, and university professors, we find ourselves in an era characterized by at least three complex trends: (1) the diplomatic, one-language/one-culture model of cross-cultural study is losing its heuristic credibility (see Block & Cameron, 2002; Kramsch, Howell, Warner, & Wellmon, 2007); (2) administrative and enrollment concerns have led to a fragmentation of curricular priorities among both students and teachers (the perennial vicissitudes and alternating primacy among culture, literature, or language) (see Katz, 2001; Maxim, 2006; Modern Language Association [MLA], 2007); and (3) a revolution in the *very nature* of the second language as a language-in-use, as hypertext communication technologies make daily innovations in the living language accessible to advanced students in a formidable variety of forms (see Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008). No matter how vigorously we may prize the unique permanency of the literary utterance for intellectual and pedagogical reasons, technology has decentered the literary text in advanced foreign language learning. The stable literary text now holds a minority position in relation to the reservoir of linguistic practices our students will tend to encounter every time they enter multilingual, multimedial cybertraffic.

For these reasons among others, this chapter foregrounds examples of a contact-pragmatics approach—a concept we hybridize from contact linguistics and literary pragmatics—an approach that shifts the focus of analysis from the "text itself" to the gaps and overlaps among the ways disparate native and nonnative readerly communities may tend to "comprehend" that text in variously appropriate ways. Rather than providing a native-like reading context, teachers can encourage students to recognize literature as a form of social practice articulating to various, loosely concentric fields of interpretation: from the native "ratified" reader to the unintended second-language reader. Contact pragmatics shifts pedagogical focus to the interstices, overlaps, misalignments, and disjunctions between these concentric fields, acknowledging that at their center lies a linguistic utterance designed to operate within certain primary domains of opposition and exchange.

With his analysis of the practice called "la perruque" (the wig), Michel de Certeau (1984) afforded critical value to the dynamics of what might be called the "appropriate misuse" of authoritative materials:

> La perruque is the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer. It differs from pilfering in that nothing of material value is stolen. It differs from absenteeism in that the worker is officially on the job. La perruque may be as simple a matter as a secretary's writing a love letter on "company time" or as complex as a cabinetmaker's "borrowing" a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room. Under different names in different countries this phenomenon is becoming more and more general, even if managers penalize it or "turn a blind eye" on it in order not to know about it. (p. 25)

What is it, then, that second-language learners "borrow on company time"—emotionally and semiotically, intentionally or unintentionally—from target-language texts and course materials designed to nurture them toward the orderly labors of native-like comprehension? Are these furtive borrowings, in the final analysis, learning practices or resistance practices? In either case, are we to "turn a blind eye" to the symbolic domains in which these reappropriative practices take place, as de Certeau suggests French factory managers do, or would we do well to welcome them into the realm of classroom analysis, perhaps under the intellectual auspices of "translingual competence"? (MLA, 2007).

We claim that contact pragmatics can augment existing literature-intensive advanced foreign language curricula, through a shift in scope, one that can be realized without a grand methodological overhaul. The subject of our consideration is not the individual classroom teacher or learner per se but rather—in Pierre Bourdieu's words—"the social and intellectual unconscious embedded in [his or her] analytic tools and operations" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999, p. 36). Our wager is that advanced language teaching can complicate the myth of a unitary Germanness or Frenchness while making students aware of how culturally inculcated schemes of perception do structure how we speak, write, understand, interpret, and respond to language. We suggest a series of concepts—from practice theory, language ecology, pragmatics, and stylistics—that may be put to use in intermediate and advanced language teaching with the goal of setting some new stakes for the intersection of language, culture, and literature.

It is something of a misfortune for literary scholars working in stylistics and pragmatics that "fallacy" has been so mortally affixed to authorial "intention" in literary studies. The curse of *intentional fallacy* often means a forcible disarticulation of authoriality from text, of text from context, of utterance from field of possible utterances.[3] The proscription on so-called authorial readings still holds sway over literature curricula, and one's demonstrated willingness to bracket out an author's intended meaning has served as nothing less than a rite of passage for literary enthusiasts who wish to become literary researchers. A by-product of this doctrine is that it impedes discussion of the practical (stylistic) choices that authors make in relation to the field of possible utterances on which that text stakes its meaningfulness in a given society, that is, of how differential relations are manifested linguistically. (Said another way, the author moratorium throws the baby of sociostylistic relationality out with the bathwater of biographical reading.)

Meanwhile, though the vice of "intentional fallacy" still haunts most literature-oriented classrooms, teachers of literature tend to be much less forthright in insisting that students resist what might be called a "national fallacy," that is, the tendency to preferentially locate a text within the singular temporal and geographical construct of a given national literary history—such as "*Vormärz*," "post-Wall literature," or "the German women's movements"—and also to resist the broader assumption that a given literary utterance is primarily of interest in discourses of "Germanness" or the "German cultural tradition." Even in curricula that are conceptualized as cultural studies or viewed through the lens of New Historicism, the second-language text is most often made to perform, artificially and/or preemptively, on a stage of national identity construction. In fact, many of the texts that we, as foreign language teachers, assign—not to mention many that we might assign if it weren't for this bias—are relatively *disinterested* in the national as a rhetorical or cultural category. Often—and despite the titles of our courses—their stakes lie in arenas that are at best tangential and in many cases fundamentally oblique to national coherence. Though allowing such texts to mean in "anational" or nationally indifferent ways may at first seem to destabilize our curricular paradigms, doing so will help students reflect on and expand the palette of contexts in which readers might situate a given text.

In order to describe the social universes in which social practices—including those that are predominantly linguistic or literary-textual in nature—live out their symbolic life from conception to reception, Bourdieu introduced the concept of *field*. Field, according to Bourdieu's practice theory, is a system of relative values within which a given act accrues social capital—be it implicitly or explicitly—in relation to the actions and possible actions of other players on that field (Bourdieu, 1991). Field, like context—and such related notions as "cultural moment" or "historical background"—helps to explain the social universe in which a particular work or linguistic utterance becomes possible, comprehensible, and then compulsory—in situ and in posterity. Field as a concept, however, differs from context in a few notable ways. Unlike how "context" is often operationalized in sociocultural theory, fields have durable histories that extend beyond the immediate situation of the utterance. Field is, however, not reducible to a historical background, neither in the sense of a grand national narrative nor

in the material and economic conditions of a singular temporal and geographical space. Furthermore, because of the rigorous syntactical regularity of human languages, linguistic practices have a logic all their own that cannot be explained with recourse to the level of cultural discourse. For this reason, Bourdieu (1993, p. 181) cautions against what he calls the "short-circuit effect," the attempt to partner works of art directly to social or historical structures. Differential linguistic repertoires, including style and genre, are the basis for the relational value of a given literary utterance, but they are not immediately derivable from cultural history.

Turning again to the classroom anecdote with which we began, we can reexamine the problem of context, which was arguably to blame for the diverging interpretations among the instructor and her two students. Through the course materials and the thematic unit within which this text was read, the students had been presented with a historical context for the vignette, namely, the German women's movements of the 1970s and 1980s. They had been given some biographical context in the form of the introductory paragraph cited earlier. The historical background and biographical information were intended to direct the students' attention toward the historically situated thematic unit within which the vignette had been featured, but Alexander's text does not explicitly thematize women's problems. On the contrary, the critique is waged not through what is emphasized but through that which is left unsaid. This is pointed out in one of discussions questions included in *Mitlesen, Mitteilen* that asked students to consider what we as readers *don't* learn about the woman through the text and what significance this might have (Morewedge, 2008). In order to see how "Familie in Kürze" functions as social criticism, what the students seemed to be missing was an awareness of the sociostylistic context, for example, the textual practice of using life stories as socially critical exempla—a practice that was peaking in the midst of the German social movements of the mid-1970s. Treating the story primarily as a conveyor of themes, the textbook led students to focus on the "what," the informational value of a stretch of discourse, but their unfamiliarity with stylistic and generic contexts left them unable to critically apprehend the "how." As a lens through which we locate and organize texts and the social work that they perform, the concept of *field* reminds us that historical epochs, national discourses, and the biographical situations make up only one sphere of a given work's "context."

Reading Relationally

Theorists from Norbert Elias to M. A. K. Halliday to George Lakoff have stressed how our "ordinary language" privileges metaphors that close the door on certain lines of thought. For Elias, the problem is that our languages privilege substances and states rather than relations and processes, thereby making it difficult for us to perceive linguistic utterances as socially situated practices rather than as ideal forms or inherent structures. If this is true in our "ordinary languages," the problem is only compounded when one is struggling to figure out what "ordinary language" might be in a second-language context. Caught up in the earnest work

of sorting out new grammars, new vocabularies, and new frameworks of meaning making, our students tend therefore to approach the language as structural sets and rules rather than as moves and tactics within a dynamic field of social play. Without pedagogical encouragement, they are therefore *far less likely* to pursue a relational stance toward speaking in that second language than, perhaps, in their home languages. Generic schemas, in the sense of typified ways of producing and receiving texts, are vastly less accessible to foreign language readers regardless of their surface-level proficiency.[4] Generic markers also point to the fields in which a given utterance participates and to which positions it will conventionally be assigned. This is one of the reasons behind the much-cited fact that foreign language learners often have trouble understanding the more global and social meanings of a text, even as they clearly understand individual words and sentences (see Carrell, 1988; Kaplan, 1966; Long, 1989; Nostrand, 1989).

For instance, Byram and Kramsch (2008) describe the difficulties inherent in teaching texts that presume interpretive schemas very different from those familiar to the students, through the example of a fourth-semester German class at the University of California, Berkeley. The students in the course were asked to read a series of literary texts from or about East Germany. The authors note that although students were making use of the structures and vocabulary they had learned while reading literary works about adolescence in East Germany, their understanding of the concepts and ideas in the texts was circumscribed by their own personal experiences. Byram, the instructor of the course in question, notes in an excerpt from the teaching logbook that she kept at that time,

> Most of my students were too young to remember a time when socialism was a viable worldview, and class discussions showed that their interpretations and evaluations of texts by East German authors were colored by their post-Communist American viewpoint. Even more distressing, they seemed unable to recognize that their perspective was influenced by their historical and ideological circumstances. (Byram & Kramsch, (2008, p. 28)

In other words, the students were accessing "American" schemas in order to understand "German" texts. Byram goes on to observe that, for this reason, the students in the course immediately dismissed texts narrated from a "socialist" perspective as propaganda while understanding similar texts told from a more familiar "Western" point of view as informative. The pedagogical problem that Byram and Kramsch highlight here is similar to the one introduced earlier with Alexander's "Familie in Kürze." Rather than treating the texts relationally as products and processes of complex social exchange, the students were evaluating only the information presented, and they were doing so through the only interpretive frameworks that they knew. But how could they be helped to understand that categorizing discourse into "propaganda" versus "information" was a positional practice and that the same text might be read very differently by someone who had been raised and educated in different cultural and ideological circumstances?

Bourdieu's concept of the habitus can help us to understand the difficulties that we, as language teachers and learners, face when confronted with new

schemas and new fields/worlds of representation. The sociological concept of habitus, as used by theorists such as Norbert Elias and Marcel Maus, refers to those aspects of culture that are anchored in the everyday habits of individuals or groups. Bourdieu later defined habitus, notoriously, as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to act as structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). In short, the habitus encompasses the many schemas with which a person might be socially inculcated as well as a sense of who can use them, in what fields of practice they appear, and what values and meanings they will typically garner. Because it operates through our predisposed habits, tastes, and beliefs in relation to the fields within which we do our linguistic practices, the habitus serves a preemptively normalizing function. Though habitus does not mechanically determine the positions taken by social actors, such as our students, we nonetheless come to anticipate—through its "structuring structures"—certain types of social action from certain actors in certain fields. This is even the case when the "social actors" we encounter are our very own selves in the midst of practice, as we assess (often subconsciously) what actions are feasible and favorable. The habitus accounts for the fact that our thought structures are tied to social and material conditions of everyday practices (see also Lantolf & Thorne, 2006); the cognitive is thus always already cultural. By virtue of the habitus, individuals are inclined to seek certain pursuits, avow certain tastes, and interpret in certain ways (Bourdieu, 1991). In the vocabulary of language ecology, the habitus works to determine what "affordances," what opportunities for acting we (human actors) perceive as possible or appropriate. A given reader's or speaker's habitus, as it articulates to the fields germane to that person's social position, drives two important processes: *euphemistic censorship*, the sanctioning of certain ways of acting, speaking, and interpreting, typically without any external directive or coercion; and *misrecognition*, the symbolic manifestation of social power in ways that make it appear to be a force of some other kind—something rooted in atemporal or natural truth, value, or necessity (Bourdieu, 1991). In our estimation, it was this second operation of *misrecognition* that led the students in Byram and Kramsch's account simply to accept the familiar perspective as information while dismissing another perspective as propaganda. Misrecognition can in turn lead to censorship in that it becomes an interpretive disposition shared by individuals who participate in the same field(s). This is perhaps one of the most powerful lessons at the higher levels of foreign language study: recognizing that one's angle on the world (or a text) is not commonsensical or truthful. Advanced language learners are not just incrementally honing their proficiency; they are accessing and inhabiting new frameworks of conceptualization as well.

Yet, thanks to the "durability" of habitus, social actors such as our students spontaneously reproduce long-held ways of "styling" in the world—unintentionally, contrary to their acquired second-language proficiency, and without considering these behaviors on the level of discourse. For centuries, explicit grammar instruction has served as an artificial booster for teaching adult learners certain types of linguistic forms by highlighting structural norms and recurring paradigms that are socially incommensurable with those learners' habitus. Similarly, a differential stylistics grounded in practice theory could help learners to become cognizant

of the ways in which discursive effects are generally linked with particular, authorized and legitimated forms. In order to make students aware of how unfamiliar schemas operate and how they are signaled through symbolic means—such as schema headers, linguistic deixis, and point of view—our task as language teachers is to make apparent that which is typically misrecognized, or "read over."

The key is therefore not to generate advanced language learners who speak, think, or react in a certain way but rather to promote active recognition of the field-contingent restraints on legitimate and authorized language in a given genre of speech or text—in other words, to invest in a habitus-based understanding of how people read, how they "precognize" the position they are to take up in the *social* game of reading. Meanwhile, they become aware of the fact that there are other players taking positions, simultaneously, in their midst: other students, teachers, reviewers, authors, native and nonnative speakers, social entities, and communities. This kind of relationality is the proper purview of twenty-first-century language curricula and a pedagogy that *teaches* through an idiom of traffic, translation, positionality, and relationality. In the realm of foreign language learning, this network of position-takings is doubly rich with what contact pragmatics (i.e., a convergence of at least two universes of expectation) can bring to bear on a particular text and its relation to intended and nonintended readers. To return to a question posed at the beginning of this chapter, the assessment of reading comprehension is not reducible to whether students have correctly or incorrectly understood a text. Instructors and students together must also consider the ways in which the legitimacy of different interpretations is regulated, how linguistic styles and genres are connected to these processes, and what new meanings their emerging transcultural positions as second-language learners might tend to privilege.

Contact Pragmatics and Differential Stylistics

In developing a working definition of contact pragmatics, we consider the following aspects: (1) the universe of discursive precognitions that "native" (i.e., intended) readers may have of a certain text; (2) the oblique, ill-fitted, and unsanctioned presumptions that nonnative, second-language readers of such an utterance may tend to have; (3) the generic, stylistic, and formal properties of the text where the precognitions mentioned in items 1 and 2 may overlap; and (4) the constellation of differences (or, in Bourdieu's terms, the distribution of symbolic capital) that obtain when the first three aspects are analyzed in tandem and with equal weight. Contact pragmatics would assume that neither the native nor the nonnative interpretive presuppositions are more analytically "correct" than the other and that much can be learned about the legitimacy conditions of a given field by playing on these using "the wrong rules," as some of the students reading Alexander's text did.

In the illustrations of contact pragmatics that follow, we hope to demonstrate how texts can index a socially situated exchange by stylistic means—one not only

between a solitary, abstract implied author and a solitary, abstract implied reader but also between the following:

- Two or more social entities (persons, groups, imagined communities) obliged by institutional orthodoxy or societal directive to address and listen to one another on certain topics of interest and not others;
- Two or more social entities who monitor each other's expectations and responses to the textual artifact in question, often through paratexts and posttexts;
- Two or more social entities who use intratextual means to preempt, or "precognize," the responses of others;
- Two or more social entities with obliquely overlapping linguistic repertoires, where these overlaps are an explicit or implicit concern of the text;
- Two or more social entities with heavily documented and often ritualized modes of perceiving, addressing, imposing on, offending, hailing, or describing one another;
- More than two social entities, one of which is implicitly or explicitly an unconsecrated bystander to the symbolic exchange taking place between two others. (Often, this oblique position is where our second-language students find themselves located.)

From this point of view, texts are occasions not only for aesthetic appreciation, but, in the words of Irving Goffman (1964), also for "mutual monitoring possibilities" among actors as they position themselves within a social landscape. Our pedagogical purview thus extends to the contacts and conflicts that have ensured the text its exchangeability in situ. The question remains, can one teach toward such a pragmatic critique by using primarily intratextual means?

To provide or not to provide context is, however, a dilemma that arises in almost any given advanced second-language teaching method. Granting primary emphasis to national-historical context can cause students to feel unsteady about the legitimacy of their own interpretations, leading even those individuals who enjoy reading to proclaim that they dislike "the study of literature." This became clear in a recent seminar taught by Chantelle Warner at the University of Arizona that had the ambitious goal of relating more than nine centuries of German cultural history to a group consisting of both advanced undergraduates and first-year master's students. One of the longer works read during the semester, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* (The Sorrows of Young Werther), elicited some of the strongest reactions from the class participants. In the reaction journals, which they kept as part of the course work, several students decried Werther's "whininess" and an allegedly pervasive "melodrama" in the work. Their encounter with Goethe's epistolary novel had been complemented by readings and in-class discussions of the historical background, including the literary historical context of *Storm and Stress*, to which the work belonged, and they were more than capable of relating these facts to aspects of the work; however, what was leaving them cold was the fact that their responses of disdain, repulsion, and in some cases even empathy or amusement so often had no place in upper-division

language and literature courses (see Krueger, 2001). They were, to borrow the words of Sally Magnan (2004, p. 97), not being ratified as "participant users" of Goethe's text. Moreover, they had not gained any further understanding of literary language as anything more than a conveyor of historical discourses, something bereft of social power, sociolinguistic intimacy, and pragmatic force.

What was initially missing from the lessons was a pedagogy that could enable students to analyze their own affective and stylistic reactions to the text as something intellectually relevant, something that they could channel into a better understanding of the pragmatic horizon of the work in Goethe's time. The first step was to recognize that the evaluative adjectives with which students peppered their journal entries—whiny, annoying, and melodramatic—were responding to identifiable stylistic effects of language in the text and not to overall, extralinguistic mood or aura. The sentence breaks, exclamations, and parenthetical interjections that "characterize" Werther are discrete features of the language, as is the overwhelmingly subjectivist perspective that obtains in its epistolary form. Using these textual features as a starting point, students could be encouraged to explore phenomena of "contact" from various angles. The following are sample activities:

- Consider what descriptive words Goethe's contemporaries might have used to describe the effects of the same textual features that had led students to perceive Werther as whiny. The students can be given examples from contemporary reception (e.g., from Reclam's corresponding *Erläuterungen und Dokumente*) and cull their answers from these documents. Examples: "empfindungsvoll" (sentimental), "allzuweiches Herz und feuerige Phantasie" (an all-too-tender heart and fiery fantasy), "Schwärmerey" (excessive sentimentality), "überspannt" (high-strung), "entsprungene Desperation" (emanating desperation), "dieses gefährliche Extrem des sentimentalischen Charakters" (this dangerous extreme of the sentimental character). Based on this list of descriptive terms, students can ascertain to what degree Goethe's eighteenth-century readers were evaluating the same textual features negatively or positively and compare them with the reception by the class. In the case of *Werther* reception, students may notice that many of Goethe's contemporaries also viewed Werther's outbursts of emotion with derision or alarm. The analysis of these varied pragmatic effects also allows students to explore the dynamic and often contested fields of practice within which the work played out as opposed to seeing the text as merely a point within a static line of literary history.
- Are there genres or fields of practice in contemporary U.S. society in which comparable textual features might be found? If so, what are the typical effects of these stylistic devices? In considering stylistics in this way, students are able to see that the various meanings that linguistic features bear are themselves social and conventional. Students might, for example, note that many of the same stylistic devices can also be found in Twitter and texting genres, with their frequent use of exclamatory expressions and ellipses. This leaves them to contemplate whether the sense of melodrama that they perceived is also linked to other textual

and extratextual features of the work, such as the *foreignness* of the eighteenth-century German or the topic at hand: Werther's love for the figure Lotte.

- Are there genres or practices today that you would describe using the terms that some of Goethe's contemporaries applied to his work? For example, what texts do you perceive as "empfindungsvoll" (sentimental)? Discuss the differences between the textual features of these phenomena and of Goethe's *Werther*. Are there notable differences between the fields of practice within which they participate? Like the previous set of questions, the aim of this line of inquiry is to turn students' attention to points of convergence and divergence between the pragmatic effects of a given text in two distinct times and places—in other words, in two fields of practice.

Such activities not only create new intellectual inroads by which students can access the larger historical context, which was the stated objective of this survey course, but also recast the works as *socially* situated acts of symbolic exchange in which the students may not be the most ratified of interlocutors but are nevertheless legitimate participants.

Another face of contact pragmatics emerges when we consider the works of the contemporary Berlin-based author Emine Sevgi Özdamar, whose texts regularly destabilize the pragmatic horizons that demarcate a field such as "multicultural literature" or "new German literature." Acutely aware of the position of cultural contact that her texts inhabit between multiple pragmatic universes, Özdamar routinely exploits the uneven distribution of symbolic capital between "native" and "nonnative" reading practices by including utterances and backchannel references that would bear symbolic capital among some readerships and not others. Whereas the previous example suggests how twenty-first century students can become "participant users" of Goethe's late eighteenth-century novel, Özdamar's texts dramatize the social dynamics by which legitimate "participation" in a textual event is afforded and intratextually rescinded, often in the course of one turn of phrase.

As we suggested in the introduction earlier, twentieth-century literary-theoretical legacies provide ample support for both historicist (whether New or old) and text-immanent (i.e., New Critical or New Formalist) approaches to analytical reading in classroom settings. Under these two spheres of influence, the text is either a freestanding aesthetic artifact or a bearer of historicity and an actor on history. (In the main, teachers of upper-level literature and culture courses tend to allow texts to be, in some way, both aesthetic and historical.) What is less than present on this binary spectrum, however, is the possibility that a given text may be social and perhaps primarily so: that its gamut of investments and intensions may be part of a situated exchange—or an extended stretch of talk—between persons, communities, and institutions. While this notion of text as embedded social act comes as no surprise to researchers in linguistic anthropology, education, or discourse analysis, the social nature of textual artifacts remains itinerant, if not homeless, in literary studies—despite inroads from reader-response and reception theories of the 1980s. While historicist approaches continue to locate textual

meaning through webs of intertextuality, they neglect the fact that Bakhtinian dialogism, from which Julia Kristeva later developed this concept, referred not merely to an infinite matrix of literary citation but also to the social call-and-response in which the work engages (Bakhtin, 1994; Goffman, 1964).

Taking Özdamar's 1988 *Karagöz in Alamania* as an example, a text can thus be apprehended not as a stand-alone literary artifact but as an opening "response bid" in a cycle of bidding about "multiculturalism" in post-Wall Germany that would last 20 years. Its appreciability as an aesthetic artifact notwithstanding, this text is quintessentially "excitable" speech, in Judith Butler's (1997) sense of language with consequences, but it is also excited and exciting speech—at the level of the word, the sentence, and the work as a whole: excited because it is the refined rebuttal to a sustained institutional campaign throughout the 1980s to confer native-informant value on a certain narrative regime related to multiculturalism and Turkish migration in West Germany and exciting because it is structured and stylized in such a way as to hail various social personae among its readers as interlocutors, thereby questioning not only the position of "minority author" but also the field of "multicultural literature."

To further our conceptual exploration of contact pragmatics in second-language classrooms, the following analysis of *Karagöz* will try to push beyond the tropes that tend to garnish multiculturalist literary analysis—particularly those of "playing with the reader's expectations," "undermining stereotypes," and "destabilizing norms." While these are indeed time-honored rhetorical operations, the tropes themselves are not specific enough to account for the rich contact-pragmatic aura of this text. Özdamar's *Karagöz in Alamania* is designed to oscillate between accommodation and opacity, between consolation and disintegration; its routine overtures to the reader intend not only to ensure transparency for German readers but also to simultaneously undermine native-speaker privilege. Its bilingual title, for instance, *Karagöz in Alamania/Schwarzauge in Deutschland* (Black Eye in Germany) obscures as much as it clarifies about the story's translingual bearing. To translate the Turkish "karagöz" into the German "Schwarzauge" (Black Eye) does very little to inform the addressee about the word's meaning; *karagöz* is an Anatolian tradition of satirical shadow puppetry. Still, the gesture of translation itself transfers interpretive responsibility away from Turkish-speaking readers and onto German speakers. Meanwhile, the translation of Alamania into "Deutschland" (Germany), in turn, indexes a discrepancy between oral and written cultures; the standard Turkish for "Germany" is the three-syllable "Almanya" rather than the potentially four- or five-syllable "Alamania" used here (Özdamar, 1998). What appears to have been the writer's polite accommodation of the non-Turkish-speaking reader is also simultaneously an imposition and subterfuge. A disorienting, stereoscopic function of utterance is thus in force even in the text's title.

While an advanced second-language classroom discussion about this text might typically prompt students to identify lexical clusters such as its first line, "Es war einmal ein Dorf" (Once upon a time there was a village), in order to orient students toward genre-specific conventions, a contact-pragmatics approach helps students understand not "what" the text is but rather "where it stands" in a field

of social negotiations. Questions for students might include the following: Why is a bilingual (i.e., subtitled) title such a strange symbolic gift for a writer to confer on his or her readers? What social circumstances tend to be inscribed in such an exchange? Students may take this occasion to describe their beliefs about translation and translatability as such: Is a translation a replacement for an original language? Is a translation usually between two languages only? Does translating guarantee both equivalence of meaning and equity of access? Does it increase understanding or rather perpetuate cultural alienation? Given appropriate time to prepare, students can narrate stories about situations in which they have experienced translation as a kind of violation, when translational acts have exacerbated understanding or consensus as much as it facilitated them.

As they read the first few pages of the text, students may be asked whether they notice ways in which translation—as a mode of social exchange—continues to structure the narrative. The narrator frequently interprets for the characters whose utterances she animates, using such on-record gestures of disambiguation as "Er meinte damit, dass . . ." (With that he meant that . . .) Perhaps students will also notice the writer's oddly bald-faced metadiscursive explanation about the conversation underway between the two protagonists: "Die beiden sprachen über dieses Geschäft nicht direkt, sondern in Sprichwörtern" (Neither character said anything about this business directly; rather, they spoke in sayings). Like the text's intended domestic audience, advanced second-language students might register frustration about how this sentence preemptively flouts Grice's (1975) pragmatic maxim of quantity—a contribution ought to be as informative and only as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange. Shouldn't the textual evidence itself—the words the characters exchange with one another on the page—suffice to indicate to readers whether their talk is direct or indirect, whether it is explicit or parabolic? Why, then, the quizzical rhetorical surplus and ostentatious interventionism on the part of the narrator? Students might then consider a situation in which one of their friends or relatives—perhaps even someone who speaks the second language they are learning—overexplained a practice or phenomenon of apparent mutual interest. What social roles does such an occasion distribute and/or reinscribe? How does it feel to be told how to understand something when one has already labored to produce a perfectly sufficient homegrown explanation? What might compel someone to translate others' actions in this way? Does the overexplainer do so out of habit, malice, institutional prescription, or merely misplaced good faith? In what ways does a reader feel imposed on by a narrator, and how is this affective realm particularly relevant in teaching to translingual competence? Such questions, which foreground the social and emotional physics of translingual behavior, can stimulate language students' intellectual inquiry into the vast palette of symbolic actions that constitute "language" in use.

Another early feature of Özdamar's story indicates the playfulness that can result from textual "contact" between two or more linguistic habituses. Take, for instance, the progressive constitution of new social positions that occurs over the text's first pages, as the narrator attempts to naturalize one of the figures into an emergent, artificial lexicon between writer and reader. At first, each character is

named loosely according to his or her actions: the one who stole apples, the one who possesses a tree. Gradually, as the narrative establishes a space for precedent and mutual orientation among writer and intended addressee, the everyday, descriptive noun phrases "the possessor of the apple tree" are replaced by the bureaucratically tinged neologism apple-tree-possessor (Özdamar, 1998). From a contact-pragmatic point of view, we can understand this progressive series of reified equivalences as an ironized recasting of German immigration discourse—that is, the institutional invention of civic identities for non–European Union immigrants through legal categories like *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker), *Kontingenzflüchtling* (contingency refugee), *Heimatvertriebene* (person driven out of his or her homeland and those expelled from parts of Germany annexed by Poland or Russia), *Aufenthaltsbefugnis* (residence warrant), *and ausländische Mitbürger* (foreign fellow citizen), all of which bear the durable power to regulate nonnative activity on German soil. Through the inconspicuous dubbing of an "*Appletreepossessor*," the narrator dramatizes a process of euphemistic implantation by social-pragmatic means: how an inchoate, unprecedented phenomenon becomes a recognizable term through cooperative talk and discursive exchange. Pragmatic "contact" is signaled here also through the narrative's incremental, tactical appropriation of a linguistic feature of German that does not exist as such in Turkish (or in English), namely, a fondness for compound words.

An aspect of contact is simultaneously afoot as the classroom-based second-language student, the intended domestic-native reader, and the Turkish-German multilingual author symbolically converge on the dubious linguistic legitimacy of "appletreeposessor"—in implicit opposition to, say, "guest worker." By learning through such examples that the appropriateness conditions for a given language item develop not through a central native authority but rather through contact and conflict between various speech communities, students can develop a nuanced understanding of the politics of generativity in a second-language context and the pragmatic schemas that underlie it.

Implications

We have sought to highlight how literary texts are, with few exceptions, the artifacts of infinitely many subtle calibrations and recalibrations of appropriate social exchange as they are experienced and encoded in a given field of practice. The pragmatic transactions we have traced need not detract, however, from more traditional literary-aesthetic inquiries in the classroom. Though classroom discussions of such questions of readerly habitus may appear at first glance to do little to inform students about themes of contemporary German-Turkish affairs or the Storm and Stress period of the eighteenth century, they provide a broader metacritical occasion as students come to terms with the affective construction of nativeness and the implicit assumptions about who has a right to respond to literary texts and in what ways.[5] A contact-pragmatics approach to the teaching of texts in the foreign language classroom forces us to complicate what we accept as reading comprehension.

Students at the advanced level of language learning—and to some degree already in the earlier levels—can be reasonably expected to reflect on a few facts that should embolden, not short-circuit, a sense of purpose in their chosen field of study:

1. The metaphors of "mastery" and "acquisition," which construe language as stable, substantial, and finite, often run counter to the spirit of critical language studies, which places emphasis on positionality and relationality.
2. Language studies, considered broadly, *should* become more difficult and ambiguous in scope as one progresses to the advanced levels in a second language. Students who graduate from a communicative language program and stream into an upper-level class often assume that the only thing that has become more difficult and decentering for them is the sheer amount and complexity of the language on the pages they are assigned to read. In fact, something much more formidable is taking place. They are stepping into a field of symbolic exchanges that extends far beyond the denotative and connotative reaches of any discrete text.[6] They are becoming participant users whose legitimacy within the second language will be brokered through social dynamics rather than through accuracy or proficiency alone.
3. Intercultural understanding is not the only goal. Success in advanced language studies often simply means being able to *mark* the epistemic blind spots in a given translingual situation, not necessarily in being able to overcome that limitation—to enact the intercultural virtue known as "bridging the gap." Advanced language proficiency is arguably about being able to see those gaps even when they are not to be expeditiously overcome. Yet the diplomatic thrust of many textbooks often overlooks this fact either by adopting a rhetoric of bicultural relations, which assumes an equally invested, imagined native interlocutor on the other end, or by privileging universal conceits—rather than local takes—on topics such as gender, the environment, or multiculturalism.

In developing advanced language curricula, we instructors and program directors can also unambivalently embrace two realities: a number of students insist that they want to study language and culture but not literature. Meanwhile, we continue to attract a fair number of students who are drawn to the language exactly because they are interested in literature.[7] By seeing literature as situated social practice, we are able to speak to both. Language students today from both factions are prepared, by the globalizing tendencies of their era, to engage in a more reflexive mode of language analysis, one no longer wedded to the ideal of learning about a single national culture. They are ready to explore the varied and complex ways in which texts participate in multiple social worlds and to reflect on the stakes these texts maintain in the ever-emerging multilingual subjectivities of their readers. Engaging soberly and playfully with such questions can lead students toward a renewable curiosity about what it means to take up a lifelong position as a second-language (or third- or fourth-language) speaker and reader.

Notes

1. See, for example, the discussion of literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Hall (2005).
2. Compare with Schultz (2002). See also Bretz (1990), wherein she argues that students in classrooms where interpretation is driven by the instructor or the textbook may learn a lot about those particular texts but learn very little about practices of reading and interpretation.
3. The term "intentional fallacy" was coined by literary critics William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley in their essay of the same name, which was published in 1946 in *Sewanee Review* (Vol. 54). It was revised and republished in Wimsatt's 1954 book *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (University Press of Kentucky: Lexington), pp. 3–18.
4. Compare with the Georgetown Multiple Literacies Project, which in practice emphasizes primarily linguistic features of genres, such as narrative structural markers of temporality, syntactic phrasing, and lexicogrammatical features (see Curriculum Project, n.d.).
5. Recent interdisciplinary conversations on world literature and literary comparatism have also been turning toward the social pragmatics of literary dissemination across languages as crucial topics for literary criticism, ones that can no longer relegated to translation studies or the sociology of literature (Apter, 2006; Casanova, 1999; Moretti, 2005).
6. Carroli (2008), Katz (2001), and Scott (2001) demonstrate how working with literature can help language students explore the multiple layers of meaning in a given text.
7. Interestingly, Paran (2008) notes that students continue to find the reading of literature an enjoyable part of foreign language learning as long as they are exposed to a healthy balance of learner-centered and text-centered approaches.

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