Building Bridges

Building Bridges:
Integrating Language, Linguistics, Literature, and Translation in English Studies

Edited by

Najma Al Zidjaly

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Education is all a matter of building bridges.

—Ralph Ellison

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Part III: Beyond Building Bridges

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INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

BUILDING BRIDGES IN ENGLISH STUDIES

NAJMA AL ZIDJALY

The field of English Studies, some scholars argue (e.g., English, 2012), is here to stay. Most, however (e.g., Berlin, 1996; Eagleton, 1987), are not so hopeful. In one way, though, academic researchers are in accord: English Studies and English departments are at a critical juncture and the path ultimately taken will affect the future in many ways. Thus, the future depends on what we do now: We can secure the discipline's survival by redefining its historical role in the social sciences; or, if fragmentation and fuzziness of the discipline's internal nature and goal continue to exist, we can ensure its demise. Hence, the main challenge that English Studies faces today is the threat of being cast to the periphery of academia. This challenge was brought on by the identity crisis that has plagued the field and the changing reality of the academy, which has come to value practice over theory. To escape this fate, McComiskey (2006) argues, English Studies needs to plainly redefine its values, aims, and worth within a continuously changing field and ever more complex world.

This book explores what is needed to change the course of English Studies, and how this change can be achieved. *Building Bridges: Integrating Language, Linguistics, Literature, and Translation in English Studies* has its origin in the 2007 first international conference of the English Department at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. The first edition of the collection was published in 2009 (SQU Press). And yet, the calls put forth in the original volume have never rung more true than today, namely to build bridges between 1) the different parts that make up a modern English department, and 2) our students and the classroom. While the focus of some of the chapters is the Middle East, with a special emphasis on Oman, the theories, methods, and practices presented are by and large applicable to various contexts across English departments and English language classrooms around the world. Some chapters have been updated and revised; others were left untouched because of their timeless quality.

Since the volume balances theory with practice (it shows and does not only tell), it will prove valuable for both teachers and students.

The catalyst for the idea of reaching across disciplines, and providing an opportunity for interdisciplinary dialogue regarding the diversity and richness of English Studies, was a practical concern: The diverse members of the conference committee—including teachers of English, linguistics, literature, and translation—wanted to organize and participate in an inclusive conference. This was seen as crucial due to the cooperation and involvement required to organize a large conference, and, more importantly, due to the shared goal of holding a conference that would encourage a "cross-fertilization" of ideas which would benefit everyone—teachers and students alike. Thus, the idea behind the English Department's first international conference emerged as a means of ensuring the involvement of all and as a way to serve and benefit from the diversity of our field.

A foremost goal of the book is to launch numerous lines of communication among academics in the fields of English Studies and English language teaching. The volume includes papers that bridge both a nexus of ideas and a variety of methodological concerns. In so doing, it is hoped that the book makes us realize that in an era of globalization, multidisciplinary connections, and interdisciplinary concerns, we have much to learn from each other. As a linguist, I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity, through organizing and participating in this conference, and later through editing the original and this new second edition of the volume, to learn from my colleagues in literary and translation studies and to make connections that I have been able to bring into my classrooms and share with my students. I believe that such exchanges, then, benefit both faculty and students by sparking an ongoing, collaborative academic discussion. These will, ultimately, assure the success of English departments.

A tangible example of creating lines of dialogue and accentuating sameness, rather than the obvious differences, is the tradition of building bridges long held by the English Department in Oman. In 2003, the English Department faculty created its series of faculty seminars and workshops. At its conception, the series was envisioned as a platform for faculty members to present, explore, express, and establish readings in the four disciplines of the department (language, linguistics, literature, and translation). Later, much to our delight, the series became a platform for exchanging ideas and debating resolutions. Participants have presented methodologically oriented papers, facilitated roundtable discussions on literary theories, held dramatic readings of established literary texts, and

directed subject-specific forums based on pedagogical areas in language skills, literature, and translation. Recently, the forum has invited visiting speakers from outside the department and the university for an even more involved dialogue.

In a similar spirit, the present book provides a much needed opportunity to reflect by convening forums on the concerns English departments and their faculty members share. Its aim is to make us reflect on our accomplishments in the 150 years since the creation of English departments around the world as well as to consider the current status and future of our discipline. The very call for building bridges, as argued by Adrian Roscoe in this volume, implies that not all is well. However, one axiom remains true: Pause and reflection are necessary at this stage in the development of English Studies and English language teaching as it is practiced in the 21st century. Consequently, the chapters in this volume consider numerous theoretical, methodological, and applied issues. In so doing, these chapters invite further contemplation of our field.

I now turn to a brief synopsis of the history of English Studies and English language teaching to contextually situate the chapters in this volume (c.f. McComiskey, 2006; Howatt & Widdowson, 2004; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

English Studies and English Language Teaching

What constitutes English Studies, a field that was created in the second half of the 19th century, differs according to different social, political, and cultural milieus (Engler, 2000). In some countries, especially English speaking ones, "English Studies" usually exclusively refers to the academic discipline that studies literatures written in the English language (including literatures from the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the Philippines, India, and South Africa, among other areas). In other countries, English Studies or English departments include the studying of English literature and linguistics, English as a second or foreign language, applied linguistics, language learning, culture and communication, and, more recently, translation studies.

The teaching of English as a component of university education is about 250 years old in English-speaking countries. Departments of English are even younger (Parker, 1967). In fact, teaching English as an academic profession and creating English departments across the globe prospered only in the 20th century as a result of the two world wars that established the United States as a world power in Europe and the rest of the world.

However, teaching English as a foreign language, which comprises a main discipline in many English departments in non-English speaking countries, started much earlier than that.

According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004), the teaching of English and other modern languages began in England at the end of Middle Ages when English finally succeeded in replacing French as the language of the Kingdom. The authors divide the history of English language teaching into three stages. The first stage in the development of foreign language teaching (1400-1800) is characterized by small-scale enterprises that focused on rote learning of grammar rules and the use of translation (mostly from Ancient Greek and Latin) as a teaching method.

The second period (1800-1900) started when English expanded from Europe to the rest of the world and is characterized by a focus on language education. This period marked the advent of linguistics. Three major approaches dominated the teaching of foreign languages in this stage: the grammar-translation method, the direct method, and the reform movement, which rejected translation and rote grammar learning.

Beginning from the 1900s up to the present day (the third period of English language teaching), teaching English emerged as a profession on its own. While many approaches were created during this period, they all finally succumbed to the communicative method, where students are encouraged to put their knowledge to communicative use. This method continues to this day.

Howatt and Widdowson (2004) successfully argue that a quick glance at the history of English teaching suggests that it is characterized by a succession of different ways to conceptualize two concerns: "purpose" (what kinds of students we would like to produce) and "process" (what is the best way to achieve this goal) and how they relate to each other. These two concerns, Richards and Rodgers (2001) propose, have always been answered within social, political, and historical contexts. In other words, the changes that English language teaching has gone through over the years have always been a response to either the social and political milieu at the time or a response to the latest advances in theories of language. Thus, Kelly (1969) and Howatt (1984) suggest that although the concerns that face English language teaching and English departments today are not new, the answers are.

So what are the current social and political factors that are affecting English language teaching and what kinds of answers are emerging in response?

For starters, the end of the British Empire has led to the demise of the superiority of British English and the emergence of many new other

Englishes; ironically, this did not stop English from becoming a global language (Crystal, 2003). In addition, advances in technology have brought about new ways of conceptualizing language use and new ways of recording and analyzing language (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). The advent of globalization, moreover, has led to the reemergence of cultural identities and the accentuation of intercultural communication. This reemergence counterbalances the effects of globalization to ensure that the dominance of English as a global language does not result in erasing cultural values (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004). Last but not least, economic concerns have pushed English language teaching and English departments all over the world to meet utilitarian needs (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

All of these factors clearly have implications for the kinds of students we wish to produce and the methods we use to achieve that goal. The chapters in this volume present a rich dialogue related to our new purpose and process.

The necessity of defining the purpose and process of a field is especially crucial today if we are to fulfill our aim of aiding struggling English departments across English and non-English speaking countries. The primary source of the exertion has always been the strain of defining English Studies and what it stands for. While Howatt and Widdowson (2004) characterize the history of English language teaching as a progression of purpose and process, McComiskey (2006) characterizes the history of English departments as a progression of specialization and expansion. In its early manifestations, English Studies widened its scope so much that it meant many different things—including philology, oratory, rhetoric, grammar, and literature—leading to its struggle to delineate its purpose and thereby maintain the sense of coherence vital to academia. As knowledge became specialized in the twentieth century, however, so did many academic fields including English Studies. This has resulted in specialization, to keep a fragile sense of unity (McComiskey, 2006).

These simultaneous and contrasting pulls of expansion and specialization have led to many of the plagues that have inflicted English Studies over the years. McComiskey (2006) believes that chief among these issues is specialized curricula and the resulting hyper-specialized, fragmented faculty and students. This in turn has further fueled the identity crisis of English departments and the inevitable challenge of pinpointing departmental goals and purposes in a world increasingly characterized by clarity of aim. Other resulting problems include conflicts among the diverse components that make up English departments, especially between literary criticism and language science. Ultimately, many disciplines (e.g.,

communication and philology) seceded from English departments because they had been overlooked. All of these challenges, coupled with the changing nature of the world and academia, have led to the discipline's disconnection with the real world. It is these conflicts and the resulting incoherence of purpose and process that have compelled many to paint a bleak picture of English Studies, especially in this present time where precision of goal is a requisite.

McComiskey (2006) argues that for English Studies to escape its seeming fate, it needs to "prepare students for a full and meaningful existence both inside and outside of the classroom" (p. 46). This goal requires curricular reform and the integration of the different fields that make up a modern English department. That is, for English Studies to become acclaimed and considered worthy in this day and age, departments need to "equip students with tools they will need to be productive citizens of their own academic, professional, personal, and public communities" (p. 48). These tools in turn require a change of direction for English Studies. English Studies needs to move away from the internal conflicts of the past to become an integrated field that balances theory with practice (McComiskey, 2006).

This present book offers practical guidelines (process) by which this necessary integration (purpose) is accomplished. It also shows how such collaboration can empower students and better prepare them to face reality. *Building Bridges*, thus, is a resource book for both teachers and students in English Studies and English language teaching classrooms around the world.

Overview

The selected chapters in this book question norms and emphasize connections between various components of English departments. The volume also questions traditional roles of translation and translators. Specifically, the collection calls for emphasizing cultural diversities, personal values, and the collaborative renegotiation of norms. Additionally, the collection calls us to empower students by providing them with learning strategies, contextualizing the learning process, and accentuating their particularities and individualities.

The volume is organized into three parts: The first part focuses on empowering students through building bridges in the language classroom between the diverse components of English departments such as students and teachers as well as students' personal knowledge and cultures and the language classroom. Chapters presented in the first part move beyond

theories into giving practical tools to incorporate the learner's personal experiences into the classroom setting and to keep particularities and individualities alive. The second part deals with translation, a relatively new addition to English departments. Although translation is clearly important within the paradigm of communication technologies, it is often taken for granted. Chapters in this part deal with the roles of translation and translators in the 21st century. These chapters also address translation problems between Arabic and English and offer ways to make translating more attuned to students' and translators' linguistic and cultural environments. The final part of this volume includes two chapters that build bridges beyond English departments.

The volume's three main parts are preceded by an intriguing chapter by Adrian Roscoe, in which he addresses the current state of English Studies at a time of perceptible uncertainty around its "purpose" and "process." Roscoe puts English Studies on "the psychiatrist's couch," as he states. He traces back the philosophical conflict surrounding this subject to the 17th century when the world became a different place due to science. This was accentuated in the 19th century when two competing streams of thought emerged: philosophical radicalism and philosophical conservatism. Roscoe questions the danger of radicalism and the oxymoronic status of the postmodern academe, where humanities seek to be inhumane and science seeks to be humane. While the chapter does not take one side or the other, it does caution against opting for one direction or another without giving it much thought. It is not enough to build bridges; rather, we should first ask why we need bridges.

Part 1: Empowering Students through Building Bridges in Language Classrooms

The first part of this volume consists of seven chapters that conceptualize different ways of empowering students for a more involved learning experience. The first call to empower students comes from Guy Cook, who argues for rebuilding broken bridges between translation and second language learning. While translation was a major method in teaching foreign languages in the 15th and 16th centuries, it was rejected by the reform movement in the 19th century for what Cook considers to be no apparent good reasons. In this first chapter, Cook debunks and refutes all arguments presented against the use of translation in language classrooms. He classifies these arguments into scientific reasons, pedagogic reasons, and utilitarian reasons. Then he presents the arguments of identity and cultural understanding for using translation in language classrooms. Cook

suggests that translation accentuates students' personal and cultural knowledge. Further, it is needed in this divided world because it promotes the maintenance of cultural and linguistic diversity, links students' cultures and identities to the classroom, and promotes cultural understanding, which is much necessitated in this era.

In the next chapter, Naghmana Ali goes one step further in accentuating students' personal, social, and cultural identities by proposing a holistic, postmodern syllabus that includes using journals and diaries to narrow the gap between students' personal lives and knowledge, their cultures, and the language classroom. This chapter builds on Cook's argument about the importance of students' cultural identities and the importance of making the lives of students—especially marginalized students, like women—relevant to the classroom. The proposed syllabus, which provides a method of incorporating personal knowledge into the classroom, encourages self-reflection and critical thinking by capitalizing on learners' past experiences. It also validates life experiences of the learner, which makes for a more involved and powerful learning experience where voices are heard and self-direction is encouraged. This empowers learners by giving them learning opportunities in which they are not positioned as novice and helpless.

Thomas Roche proposes a similar means—diary writing—to empower students. He suggests that this form of writing builds bridges between students, who have normally been viewed as novices needing guidance, and teachers, who have normally been viewed as the know-it-all authorities. While diary writing has been advocated as a necessary learning tool (Ali uses it as a tool in her chapter), many still do not know how to master this valuable educational resource. This chapter presents the findings of a study that was conducted by Roche himself in a German learning institution and later replicated in an Omani college. The results show that diary writing changed students' styles of learning in the proposed direction. This chapter further makes practical recommendations on how to use journals and diaries in language classrooms. In other words, it demonstrates how to incorporate students' personal, practical knowledge into education for a more involved, multi-directional learning process.

The fourth call of empowerment comes from Chandrika Balasubramanian, who examines different ways to incorporate corpus linguistics into the language classroom using the Internet and other new advances in technology. This is empowering for students and teachers alike in that it shows teachers how to use and take advantage of the latest advances in technology and demonstrates how teachers' use of technology benefits students. Specifically, Balasubramanian examines particular ways

in which methods of corpus linguistics and the available language corpora online can be used in educational contexts to teach vocabulary and grammar. She accentuates through examples that teachers can use corpus linguistics with no computer knowledge to suit their own needs and those of their students. Balasubramanian also makes recommendations for ESL and EFL textbooks. Her work suggests various ways that taking advantage of technology, language corpora, and corpus linguistics offers benefits to teachers and learners.

While the previous chapters deal with empowering students in the area of language, Rosalind Buckton-Tucker proposes using textual intervention to ease the difficulties that students of foreign language find in studying literature. Textual intervention is where students rewrite a text or part of a text with certain changes to deepen their understanding of the text's underlying issues. Thus, textual intervention engages students in creative exercises that simultaneously motivate them to embrace the initial difficulties they encounter when reading texts written in a foreign language. Buckton-Tucker argues that textual intervention is empowering because students find the exercise stimulating, which helps them demonstrate more original insight in response to critical questions. The personalized nature of this exercise further enables students to accept the diversity in interpretation and to develop their skills in argumentation. Textual intervention, thus, is more empowering than handing students a ready-made interpretation (characteristic of many traditional approaches to teaching literature to second language learners).

A second call to combat traditional approaches to literary texts, which have always been mostly interpreting, comes from Vijay Singh Thakur. Thakur demonstrates the necessity of building bridges between linguistics and literature to help literature students in a foreign language classroom systematically arrive at meanings of literature texts. Specifically, Thakur proposes applying the tools of critical discourse analysis in literature classrooms to teach students how identities emerge and power is negotiated in literary texts. Thus, instead of telling students how to interpret texts, Thakur proposes arming them with linguistic tools to arrive at meaning, so that they see for themselves how interpretations emerge. This leads to a more stimulating and engaging learning experience. It also raises students' awareness of discourse patterns in everyday interaction, which may increase their abilities to scrutinize the world carefully and, if need be, alter their perceptions of the world. Further, Thakur concludes, this analytic approach provides a valuable testing ground for the discourse theories themselves.

The first part of the volume ends with a chapter that celebrates students' collective past and cultural identity. Fawzia Al Seyabi and Tausiff Sultana report the results of a small classroom-based research project examining the newly designed Omani folktales component in reading courses of the Language Center at Sultan Qaboos University. Contrary to traditional approaches that neglect folktale literature in foreign or second language classrooms because they contain rebellious voices, this chapter argues for the inclusion of folktales based on analysis of how students collect, read, analyze, and understand the Omani folktales. The findings of Al Seyabi and Sultana's study illustrate that students benefited greatly from working with Omani folktales. The authors suggest this is so because the inclusion of folktales bridges the gap between students' collective past, their heritage, and the language classroom. This chapter, thus, serves as a call for globalizing that which has always been looked at as localized and, in consequence, marginalized. In their conclusion, Al Seyabi and Sultana demonstrate how such an inclusion can take place. This chapter, hence, illustrates an additional means to foreground students' cultural identities.

Part II: Translation as a Process of Building Bridges

The second part of the volume, which deals with translation, translators, and translation problems, commences with a chapter by Juliane House in which she outlines an integrative theory of translation as a process of recontextualization. In this approach, translation is not conceptualized as part of the original text's linguistic and cultural context, nor does it fully belong to the receiving linguistic and cultural context; it is located in "Third Space." This new approach builds bridges between the cultural, literary, and the linguistic approaches to translation by adopting a functional view of translation. This functional view challenges the traditional notion of translation as simply a pristine replacement of one meaning with another. In the Third Space, translation is a process of recontextualizing by extracting a text out of its original context and placing it within a new context. This chapter, thus, problematizes the notion of translation by pointing out its manipulative nature. This is important for all (students, teachers, and readers) to know to keep collaboratively building bridges and to keep lines of communication open between localized cultures.

Another caution against the manipulative power of translations and translators comes from Mona Baker. Baker argues that over the years, translation scholars have theorized the role of translators in social and

academic contexts in rather naive and idealistic ways by painting them as conscientious, peace-promoting professionals. This romanticized conceptualization of the role of translators is misleading because it overshadows the fact that translators are ingrained in multiple narratives. As a result, they neither erect bridges nor fill in gaps; they, instead, deliberately engage in propagandizing specific personal or political agendas of various natures. While some may promote peace, others might create war. Which ideological narratives we prescribe to on a personal or collective level is not a question of which agenda the narrative is following, but rather a question of our own agendas. Thus, Baker cautions, we are all susceptible to this subjective process.

This manipulative nature of translations and translators is further exemplified in David Wilmsen's chapter about his personal experience in translating non-fiction essays by a prominent Egyptian writer from Arabic to English. As a translator, Wilmsen shows what is involved in translating a piece of non-fiction, highlighting the ways in which the process involves selective appropriation and negotiation between translator, living author, and publisher. Wilmsen's narrative, thus, demonstrates that the process of translation is not as innocent or ideologically pure as it is sometimes conceptualized to be; it also problematizes the role that original authors play vis-à-vis translators of their work. This complicated view of the process of translation as a subjective method involving constant negotiation that requires building bridges between many voices, narratives, and aims is much needed in this globalized world where cultural understanding is increasingly important. Wilmsen's chapter is a call for an accurate representation rather than an idealized and simplistic view of the process of translation.

The notion of translation as a complex process is further demonstrated by Mohamad-Habib Kahlaoui, who explores a rarely investigated cause of mistranslation: that of induced mistranslation, which occurs when a grammatical rule misleads the EFL learner who has been taught to take such rules for granted. Because this superficial semantic approach to the workings of language discounts linguistic and cultural context and the intention of speaker, it usually leads to either avoidance strategy or mistranslation. To resolve this problem, Kahlaoui proposes an alternative method in which translation is conceived as a decision-making process that depends on understanding the workings of language in both source and target texts. Rather than applying descriptive rules blindly, the alternative framework contextualizes texts by looking closely at language in use. Kahlaoui concludes by pointing out that while we owe much to descriptivism, we cannot overlook its limitations. Thus, he calls for an

update of grammatical rules. This call is poignant for translators and the world at large, for accurate translation is key to building bridges through the precise transfer of information.

That translation is not a mere replacement of one meaning with another is further illustrated in Ali Mansouri's chapter, which also deals with mistranslation. As a means to arrive at accurate interpretations, translators frequently turn to bilingual dictionaries to find translational equivalents. This practice is argued to be inadequate in the case of English and Arabic, for current bilingual dictionaries are not equipped to deal with semantic differences between the two languages. Thus, they fail to offer accurate translational equivalents and, consequently, lead to mistranslation. To resolve this quandary, Mansouri proposes an alternative method based on componential analysis of meaning. This method requires conducting a componential analysis of the semantic fields of both source and target texts. This approach, which necessitates the knowledge and mastery of at least two linguistic systems, is shown to enable the capturing of accurate translations by taking the semantic context of both source and target languages into consideration. This chapter, thus, offers an additional argument for the conceptualization of translation as a complex process involving building bridges.

Part III: Beyond Building Bridges

The volume ends with two chapters that build bridges that reach beyond the divides within English Studies. The first builds bridges between fiction and music. Leila Hejaiej approaches the history of jazz music through analyzing the language of fiction authored by Noble Prize winner Toni Morrison. Specifically, she examines how both music and linguistic forms shape each other simultaneously in the novel *Jazz*, which bears rather clearly marked references to musical material and styles. On the one hand, Hejaiej illustrates how music becomes a dominant factor influencing the action of characters in *Jazz* and, on the other hand, she reveals how the novel's linguistic structures, scenes, and settings reflect the era and elements of jazz music.

The last chapter by Clive Holes pays homage to Oman. Holes, a sociolinguist of the Arabic language and a veteran observer of life in the Arabian Gulf, chronicles the linguistic changes that have arisen over the last 50 years in the spoken Arabic dialects of the Arabian Gulf, with a special focus on the linguistic landscape of Oman. He also speculates on how these dialects may develop over the next 50 years. This concluding chapter brings home the point of this volume by accentuating connection