**Two Uses of Language**

Richards views the poem as a response to a stimulus, which is located in the reader. But this subjectivism leads him to the conclusion that all poetic language is ambiguous, plurisignant, open to different meanings and so on. In this context, as David Daiches says, Richards investigates what imaginative literature is, how it employs language, how its use of language differs from the scientific use of language and what is its special function and value. Richards in his “Principles of Literary Criticism” expounded a theory of language, and distinguished between the two uses of language – the referential or scientific, and the emotive. A statement may be used for the sake of reference, which may be verified as true or false.  This is the scientific use of language.  But it may also be used for the sake of the effects in emotions and attitudes produced by the reference. This is the emotive or poetic use of language. The poet uses words emotively for the purpose of evoking emotions and attitudes considered valuable by him. For instance, the word ‘fire’ has only one definite scientific reference to a fact in the real world. But when poetry uses it in a phrase such as ‘heart on fire’ the word evokes an emotion – that of excitement.

While science makes **statements**, poetry makes **pseudo-statements** that cannot be empirically tested and proved true or false. A statement is justified by its truth or its correspondence with the fact it points to. On the other hand, the pseudo statement of poetry is justified in its effect of releasing or organizing our impulses or attitudes. Richards says, “The statements in poetry are there as a means to manipulation and expression of feelings and attitudes.”  Poetry communicates feelings and emotions. Hence, poetic truth is different from scientific truth. It is a matter of emotional belief rather than intellectual belief.  Poetry cannot be expected to provide us with knowledge, nor is there any intellectual doctrine in poetry. Poetry speaks not to the mind but to the impulses. Its speech, literal or figurative, logical or illogical is faithful to its experience as long as it evokes a similar experience in the reader.  Thus, a poem, as Richards defines it, is a class of experiences ‘composed of all experiences, occasioned by the words’ which are similar to ‘the original experience of the poet.’

**Four Kinds of Meaning**

In *Practical Criticism*, *The Meaning of Meaning* and *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Richards advocates a close textual and verbal analysis of poetry. Language is made up of words and hence the study of words is of paramount importance in the understanding of a work of art. Words, according to Richards, communicate four kinds of meaning. Or, the total meaning of a word is a combination of four contributory aspects —Sense, Feeling, Tone, and Intention. Poetry communicates through the interplay of these four types of meanings.

Sense is that which is communicated by the plain literal meanings of the words.  When the writer makes an utterance, he directs his hearers’ attention upon some state of affairs, some items for their thought and consideration. Feeling refers to the feelings of the writer or speaker about these items, about the state of affairs he is referring to. He has an attitude towards it, some special bias, or interest, some personal flavour or colouring of it, and he uses language to express these feelings. In poetry, sense and feeling have a mutual dependence. “The sound of a word has much to do with the feeling it evokes.” Tone means the attitude of the writer towards his readers. The writer or the speaker chooses and arranges the words differently as his audience varies, depending on his relation to them. Besides these,  the speaker’s intention or aim, conscious or unconscious, should also be taken into account. Intention refers to the effect one tries to produce, which modifies one’s expression. It controls the emphasis and shapes the arrangement. ‘It may govern the stress laid upon points in an argument. It controls the ‘plot’ in the larger sense of the word.’ The understanding of all these aspects is part of the whole business of apprehending the meaning of poetry.

**Stock- response**: Generally sense predominates in the scientific language and feeling in the poetic language. The figurative language used by poets conveys emotions effectively and forcefully. Words also acquire a rich associative value in different contexts. The meaning of words is also determined by rhythm and metre. Just as the eye reading print unconsciously expects the spelling to be as usual, the mind after reading a line or two of verse begins to anticipate the flow of poetry. This anticipation becomes precise when there is regularity of sound created through rhythm and metre.

**For Further reading**

For the purpose of communication, the use of metaphoric language is all important. “A metaphor is a shift, a carrying over of a word from its normal use to a new use”. Metaphors may be of two kinds : (I) sense-metaphors, and (2) emotive-metaphors. In a sense-metaphor the shift is due to a similarity between the original object and the new one. In an emotive metaphor the shift is due to a similarity between the feelings the new situation and the normal situation arouse. The same word in different contexts may be a sense-metaphor or an emotive one. Metaphor, says Richards, is a method by which the writer can crowd into the poem much more than would be possible otherwise. The metaphorical meaning arises from the inter-relations of sense, tone, feeling and intention. “A metaphor is a point at which many different influences may cross or unite. Hence its dangers in prose discussions and its treacherousness for careless readers of poetry, but hence, at the same time, its peculiar quasi-magical sway in the hands of a master.” In poetry,  I.A. Richards sums up,  statements turn out to be the indirect expressions of Feeling, Tone and Intention.

To sum up in the words of George Watson,  “Richards is simply the most influential theorist of the century, as Eliot is the most influential of descriptive critics.”  Richards’ claim to have pioneered Anglo- American New Criticism of the thirties and forties is unassailable. He provided the theoretical foundations on which the technique of verbal analysis was built. He turned criticism into a science, and considered  knowledge of psychology necessary for literary criticism. He inspired a host of followers, the most notable of whom is William Empson. With him, textual analysis came to dominate academic criticism. This anti-historical criticism became New Criticism. Undoubtedly, Richards is one of its primary founding fathers.

The heart of Richards’ framework of Practical Criticism is the idea that poetry is essentially a private experience. Practical Criticism as a technique of reading appears in Richards’ earlier work Principles of Literary Criticism (1924). Richards’ practical criticism is an exercise that is presupposed on the working of a mind as part of the nervous system, as part of impulses. In Principles of Literary Criticism, Richards defines a poet is one who can order his experiences and connect his disconnected impulses into “a single ordered response” (245). Language has to be used in a special “emotive” way so that the poet’s experiences can be stimulated in the mind of the reader. Reading a poem, then, is a process that will culminate in stimulating “equilibrium of opposed impulses” (251). There is no need of any context. The words of the poem ought to produce these impulses in the mind of the reader. The reader must understand the meaning based on the immediate impulses produced. Meaning is of four kinds – sense is the state/object to which the words direct the reader’s attention; feeling is the way the author sees these objects/states; tone is the author’s attitude towards the reader; intention is the effect which the author is trying to bring about by his words. “Understanding meaning”, therefore, is a complicated process, requiring a grasp not only of each of the four kinds of meaning, but also of their interrelations in the text. Also, a poem must produce in the reader appropriate responses to meter, rhythm, and the visual and aural character of words. Richards claims in Practical Criticism: “The only proper attitude is to look upon a successful interpretation, a correct understanding, as a triumph against odds. We must cease to regard a misinterpretation as a mere unlucky accident. We must treat it as the normal and probable event” (336). Richards sees a poem and the poetic experience as an isolated subjective experience. The poem is not an object in its own right, but an experience. Ideally it is an experience first of the speaker, and then communicated and induced in the reader. In either case, the poem is not an object existing outside of and independently of the mind. Richards suggests in Principles of Literary Criticism: “Let us mean by Westminster Bridge not the actual experience which led Wordsworth on a certain morning about a century ago to write what he did, but the class composed of all actual experiences, occasioned by the words, which do not differ within certain limits from that experience” (226). A mind is part of the nervous system, and a mind can influence other minds through the mediation of the stimuli. Then, the experience of reading a poem is a private process which is produced in a particular state of mind — a state of equilibrium. Reading and interpreting the poem induces a similar state of stimulus in the minds of the readers. Reading a poem becomes a private experience, part of transient equilibrium state of the nervous system, as Richards puts it, “the most delicate of all possible undertakings”: We have to gather millions of fleeting semi-independent impulses into a momentary structure of fabulous complexity, whose core or germ only is given us in the words. What we ‘make up’, that momentary trembling order in our minds, is exposed to countless irrelevant influences (317). It has to be noted that Richards does not negate the social character of a literary work. Richards stresses that the purpose of this training in practical criticism is not to acquire a heritage of literary wisdom, but to get rid of the preconceptions and stock responses; not to acquire membership of a literary community, but to commune with poetry – “Our feelings … are in the end the whole matter” (301). A poetic experience is conducted in the privacy of an individual mind; a discourse on poetry is merely an adjunct and not integral to the understanding of the poem. Richards rejects the existence of a special ‘aesthetic state’— a mode of experience radically divorced from practical matters such as inquiring and desiring: When we look at a picture, or read a poem, or listen to music, we are not doing something quite unlike what we were doing on our way to the gallery or when we dressed in the morning. The fashion in which the experience is caused in us is different, and as a rule the experience is more complex and, if we are successful, more unified. But our activity is not of a fundamentally different kind. To assume that it is, puts difficulties in the way of describing and explaining it, which are unnecessary and which no one has yet succeeded in overcoming. (12)Richards’s theoretical project was to insert the aesthetic into the everyday material experience. Without the poems’ titles, dates of publication, the poets’ names, Richards ‘close reading’ was a way to intervene in the context of reception, which is to say, the minds of actual, living readers. Criticism, as Richards saw it, was to be a project of aesthetic education.