

## Teaching particular languages

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### ENGLISH

**83–69 Buttjes, Deiter.** Verbale Interaktionen im Englischunterricht: Beobachtungen an Klassen des 5. bis 7. Schuljahrs. [Verbal interactions in English teaching: observations of lessons with the 5th, 6th and 7th forms.] *Linguistische Berichte* (Wiesbaden), **76** (1981), 52–63.

The author observed 47 English lessons for the 10–13 age range held in West German schools. The teachers who spoke the most in class made least use of the teaching aids available. They preferred to teach from the front of the class, they corrected pupils more frequently and their lessons were broken up into fewer separate activities, so each activity lasted longer. In general, however, the shorter and more varied the activities undertaken in each lesson, the fewer the discipline problems. The ideal length for each activity, irrespective of the subject matter or the treatment given it, is between five and ten minutes.

On the whole men teachers involve pupils more directly in lessons than do women teachers. The pupils tend to take a more active part in 'decentralised' lessons – those which involve group work or where teaching aids do the teacher's work. Older pupils contribute more to lessons because of their greater knowledge of the foreign language. Non-verbal communication in the form of confirmation or correction through gesture can reduce the amount of talking the teacher has to do.

**83–70 Jochems, Helmut.** Fachenglisch auf der Sekundarstufe II (Gymnasium). [English for Scientific Purposes in the upper classes of the German secondary school.] *Neusprachliche Mitteilungen* (Berlin, FRG), **34**, 4 (1981), 229–37.

There are good reasons for using texts in the scientific register in the English course of the upper classes of the *Gymnasium*: to increase pupil motivation, introduce this register to future university students, and present some world issues. Some characteristics of the scientific register are illustrated through the analysis of a sample text: high information content, limited number of concepts and discourse modes, rather formal vocabulary. Such texts lend themselves to the same treatment as literary texts, involving all four skills, proceeding from an elicitation of content through the acquisition and practice of linguistic forms towards the pupil's own productive work. Semi-popular English and American scientific magazines provide a good source for materials.

**83–71 Richards, Jack C.** (U. of Hawaii). Introducing the progressive. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **15**, 4 (1981), 391–402.

Contrary to what is often presented in grammar books, the progressive is not a tense (a grammatical form which depicts time) but an aspect (a grammatical form which depicts how an action unfolds). It is hence not a tense for activities taking place but

a grammatical form which is based on a distinction between stative and dynamic situations and is used for actions and events that are regarded as incomplete or developing. This should be the distinction that guides the organisation of the teaching of the progressive, and it will lead to classroom activities and exercises that relate the progressive to situations in which actions and events are seen, not on a time continuum, but as incomplete, temporary, or developing [examples].

**83–72 Rogers, John** (Victoria U., Wellington, NZ). 'The world for sick proper'. *English Language Teaching Journal* (London), **36**, 3 (1982), 144–51.

Should we continue to teach English to great numbers of children who then believe that they are entitled to a 'better' future? It may be dishonest to do this. Only a small percentage of English learners will ever use English for international communication. Very few school leavers actually need English for tertiary studies overseas. English is not the only means of access to Western development and 'progress'; it may not even be the best means. A lot of English is taught, but not enough is learned. University teachers throughout the world complain about their students' lack of skills in English.

This article explores the arguments for and against teaching English on a wide scale at secondary-school levels and below, and suggests some of the questions that course organisers and teachers should be asking themselves.

**83–73 Smith, Larry E. and Rafiqzad, Khalilullah** (East–West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii). English for cross-cultural communication: the question of intelligibility. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **13**, 3 (1979) [publ. 1982], 371–80.

To compare the degree of intelligibility between educated native and educated non-native varieties of English, a study was done with 1,386 people in 11 countries in Asia. There was a high level of consistency among the listeners as to the degree of intelligibility of the nine speakers tested. There was generally a high correlation between how much listeners felt they understood of the passages heard, and how well they did on a cloze test of that passage. No attempt was made to control the difficulty factor of the passages heard and, as expected, the difficulty rank ordering correlated highly with the rank ordering of both intelligibility and understanding.

Listeners from four out of a possible seven countries could identify their own countryman 70 per cent or better but only twice in these cases did they find their countryman to be the most intelligible. Since the listeners were seldom able to accurately identify the nationalities of the speakers other than their fellow countryman, it seems unlikely that national bias played any part.

Since native-speaker phonology does not appear to be more intelligible than non-native phonology, there seems no reason to insist that the performance target in the English classroom be a native speaker. Diversity in varieties of educated English certainly exists but is limited to phonology and vocabulary, not grammar. A person speaking any variety of educated English, although phonologically non-native, can expect to be intelligible to his listeners.

**83-74 Taylor, Harvey M.** (U. of Colorado). A viable ESL/EFL language lab. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **13**, 2 (1979), 229-39.

The uses and abuses of language labs in second-language education have reflected the shifts in second-language learning theory; in many ESL/EFL programmes the language lab programme is now of questionable value. Guidelines are given for evaluating and revitalising the language lab in terms of overall curriculum concerns, general effectiveness, available software/hardware, and learners' present and future needs. The respective merits of class labs, library lab systems, and self-paced ESL/EFL programmes are discussed. The focus is on effective software, using minimally complex lab equipment.

**83-75 Cowan, J. Ronayne** (U. of Illinois). English teaching in China: a recent survey. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **13**, 4 (1979) [publ. 1982], 465-82.

For three weeks in 1979, a team of four specialists sponsored by the US International Communication Agency visited China in order to survey aspects of English teaching there. The authors visited 21 educational institutions in five cities. This article describes aspects of language teaching policy in China, English curricula, teaching materials, and teaching methodology used at various levels of English instruction. It also touches upon teacher training and the utilisation of foreign experts in China's growing English teaching endeavour. Transcripts of EFL classroom interaction and samples of EFL teaching materials currently used in China are included.

**83-76 Richards, Jack C.** (Regional Language Centre, Singapore). Introducing the perfect: an exercise in pedagogic grammar. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **13**, 4 (1979) [publ. 1982], 495-500.

The perfect in English creates problems for both elementary and advanced learners. It is interpreted frequently as an optional alternative to the simple past tense; this interpretation of its function leads to frequent errors of tense usage. Difficulties with the present perfect tense are often reinforced by faulty teaching. The basic uses of the perfect are outlined and contrasted with the functions of the simple past tense. For some meanings of the perfect, namely, state up to the present and habit in a period leading up to the present, the perfect involves a view of time which contrasts with that implicit in the simple past. These are obligatory contexts for the perfect tense. With the resultative past meaning however, the perfect is an optional alternative to the simple past. Many teachers begin their teaching of the present perfect by introducing it in its resultative past meaning, thus leading the learner to think that the perfect is in free variation with the simple past. In this article a classroom lesson devoted to the perfect tense is discussed, showing how a basic confusion can be created for the learner if the resultative past meaning is taught too early, rather than introducing the perfect in contexts where it is clearly in contrast with the simple past. Suggestions for the teaching of the perfect are given.

## FRENCH

**83–77 Block, Gabriele and others** (U. of Bielefeld). Norm – Sprachniveau – Toleranz – Eine Bemerkungen zu den 'tolérances grammaticales ou orthographiques'. [Norm – level of language – tolerance. A comment on the 'tolérances grammaticales ou orthographiques'.] *Bielefelder Beiträge zur Sprachlehrforschung* (Bielefeld, FRG), 1 (1981), 3–42.

In 1976, the French Minister of Education published a new set of *tolérances grammaticales ou orthographiques*. An earlier edict, four French grammars and five German school grammars of French were analysed and found to be generally more normative than the *tolérances*. Grevisse was openly hostile to them, Dubois and Lagane was the least prescriptive; the German grammars followed Grevisse. In a subsequent survey, 51 pairs of sentences embodying alternative forms of the points under discussion were presented to 27 teachers of French, who were asked to indicate which they would mark as wrong in pupils' work. Teachers tended to follow the view of grammar books; greater flexibility of judgement was found where a problem was ignored in the grammar. However, some teachers considered the problems altogether marginal. The normative tradition is shown to be strong; the '*tolérances*' might form part of a description of French style at a later stage in the school course.

**83–78 Cardy, Michael and Boldt, Leslie** (Brock U. and State U. of New York at Buffalo). Report on a course/career: survey of university graduates in French. *Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto), 38, 2 (1982), 243–53.

A course/career survey was undertaken on a selected group of graduates of Brock University who majored in French between 1967 (the first graduating class) and 1978, in order (a) to help the university to strengthen its French studies programme, and (b) to test the viability of liberal (non-vocational) education at a time when vocational studies are increasingly favoured. Questionnaires asked for details of employment experience since graduation. Of 88 respondents, 20 had obtained a teaching qualification before taking their degree; over two-thirds of the rest obtained one afterwards. English was the mother tongue of less than half the respondents. Just under a quarter had continued their studies to the level of a master's degree, mainly in vocationally-oriented subjects. When beginning French studies, 61 per cent had intended to teach; in fact, nearly 74 per cent obtained work in the academic world. Reactions to the programme as an educational experience included a preference on the part of 78 per cent for literature rather than language courses (strong interest was expressed in French Canadian literature). The teachers among the respondents agreed that their courses had been well prepared, but that there should be greater stress on student participation and less 'lecturing', and more opportunity for the development of oral skills, particularly a stay in a French-speaking community (easily arranged in Canada). The second most frequent request was for more practical grammar courses, including translation and the introduction of more modern vocabulary from specialised fields such as business and technology. Responses were divided as to whether French programmes should be more vocationally oriented.

## GERMAN

**83–79 Kühn, Peter.** Notwendigkeit, Gebrauchswert und Verwendung von Grundwortschatzbüchern. [Need, value and use of basic dictionaries.] *Zeitschrift für germanistische Linguistik* (Berlin, FRG), **9**, 2 (1981), 164–79.

Frequency counts appear to provide an objective way of identifying the essential vocabulary of a language and almost all dictionaries of basic German have used frequency as their criterion. (Only the list underlying the Certificate of German as a Foreign Language is based on functional criteria.) A survey among 52 participants of a summer school indicated that most owned a bilingual or monolingual dictionary, but few owned a basic dictionary. A basic dictionary should not be a reference work or check list, but a learning tool. As such it should be organised on a basis of communicative value and not one of frequency; it should be presented in semantic groupings and not alphabetically, and should also contain information on language use.

**83–80 Reid, Constance L.** (U. of Colorado, Boulder). The acquisition of the verb–subject structure-rule by 'Gastarbeiterkinder' [immigrant workers' children]: implications for the teaching of German. *Unterrichtspraxis* (Philadelphia, Pa), **14**, 2 (1982), 195–207.

Methods used in, and problems concerned with, research into  $L_2$  acquisition (in this case German) are discussed and their possible implications for the classroom teaching of German as a foreign language outside German-speaking countries are demonstrated. The research problem was the acquisition of the verb–subject structure in declarative main clauses. The subjects of the five-month study were eight *Gastarbeiterkinder*. The language materials used were four basic types of carefully constructed sentences arranged in order of supposed progressive difficulty; the technique employed was elicited imitation (EI). The comparative results show that syntactic structure rather than length determined the difficulty of the sentences.

The implications of these results for the construction and selection of materials for the foreign-language classroom are discussed, including sentence length and structure, the ordering of sentences according to degrees of difficulty, and psycholinguistic criteria. [Appendix: EI model sentences and subjects' repetitions].

**83–81 Rösler, Dietmar** (Free U. of Berlin). Teaching German modal particles. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), **20**, 1 (1982), 33–8.

German modal particles have long been virtually ignored in both linguistics and language teaching. Among the reasons for this are the long-standing fixation on the sentence as a unit in grammatical analysis and the concentration on trying to find the 'best' method in language teaching. Besides, it is difficult to convey the meanings of modal particles and they usually do not have exact verbal equivalents in the learners' mother tongues. A short teaching-unit is described which would give learners the chance to meet modal particles in a communicative framework.

## SPANISH

**83–82 Chastain, Kenneth** (U. of Virginia). Native-speaker reaction to instructor-identified student second-language errors. *Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto), **38**, 2 (1982), 282–9.

This study aimed to determine how native speakers would react to those second-language errors perceived by intermediate Spanish instructors as being the most troublesome in their classes. Results indicate that, even in the absence of an adequate universe of discourse, 90 per cent or more of the native speakers were able to comprehend 40 of the 48 errors included in the sample. Those sentences that were not understood usually contained some type of word error: wrong, extra, or omitted word. However, 23 of the 48 errors were rated as unacceptable even though the native speakers had comprehended the meaning. For the most part, these were errors of form that did not affect the intelligibility of the message. On the other hand, 18 of the 48 errors seemed to be acceptable to a majority of the respondents. Most of these errors involved the use of definite articles or noun-adjective agreement.