Teaching particular languages

ENGLISH

82–53 Dickerson, Wayne B. (U. of Illinois). Bisyllabic Laxing Rule: vowel prediction in linguistics and language learning. *Language Learning* (Ann Arbor, Mich), **30**, 2 (1980), 317–29.

Research to help learners of English use spelling clues to predict the vowel and consonant sounds as well as the stress of words has revealed a rule simplification which has practical and theoretical implications. This paper shows that the well-known Trisyllabic Laxing Rule is a subcase of a much simpler and more general vowel quality rule, the Bisyllabic Laxing Rule. On the practical side, the Bisyllabic Laxing Rule gives ESL students a way to predict vowel qualities which previously they could only guess at. On the theoretical side, the rule (and others like it) challenges the conventional representation of underlying vowels and the use of vowel alternation rules in the generative description of English phonology.

82–54 Hill, J. K. (U. of Kent at Canterbury). Effective reading in a foreign language: an experimental reading course in English for Overseas Students. *English Language Teaching Journal* (London), **35**, 3 (1981), 270–81.

Outside the United States, 'rapid' or 'effective' reading courses are regarded with suspicion, although nearly all native readers can achieve significant improvement. Language students especially are trained to read carefully for the purpose of translation or literary appreciation; they have little experience of fluency. An experimental reading course in English as a foreign language is described, carried out at the University of Kent at Canterbury in the context of vacation courses for Belgian university students studying English for their degree course. All students were given an initial timed reading test in the foreign language. Teaching sessions concentrated on the slow reader's insistence on reading every word, by explaining the redundant nature of the written code, and stressing that ideas are normally more important than words. The students had to be released from their feelings of guilt at not reading every word. The second major obstacle is sub-vocalisation: paradoxically, this may be easier to abandon in reading a foreign language because it is so difficult to do satisfactorily. Students kept a record sheet and graph of results and had regular practice in reading a variety of material against the clock. A control group was also tested. A comprehension score of 70 per cent minimum was aimed at. Initially, most students performed at about 200 wpm (very slow or slow for a native speaker). In each year of the experiment a significant improvement was seen, with an average increase of 57 per cent. Final speeds ranged from 173 wpm to 620 wpm (over two-thirds in the range 200–350 wpm, i.e. 'medium fast'). The control group improved at an average of 15 per cent. [Tables of results.]

82–55 McCrae Cochrane, R. (Olin E. Teague Veterans' Centre, Temple, Texas). The acquisition of /r/ and /l/ by Japanese children and adults learning English as a second language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (Clevedon, Avon), **1**, 4 (1980), 331–60.

In Experiment I, 54 native Japanese children (ages 3–12) and 24 Japanese adults residing in the USA were required to produce and discriminate the English /r/ and /l/ in a variety of speaking and listening tasks. Children's /r/ and /l/ speaking performances were found to be significantly better than adults'. Three factors – age, sociolinguistic factors, and linguistic factors – emerged as significant predictors of the Japanese children's /r/ and /l/ abilities. No significant predictors were found for Japanese adults' performances. In Experiment II, 17 of the Japanese subjects received identical, programmed /r/ and /l/ training, followed by repetition of the initial evaluation procedures. Only the Japanese adults improved significantly on all post-training measures.

82–56 McKay, Sandra. ESL/Remedial English: are they different? *English Language Teaching Journal* (London), **35**, 3 (1981), 310–15.

Can the writing problems of non-native speakers be dealt with adequately in remedial courses for native speakers? Several factors would suggest that this is not possible. (1) Even though the syntactic errors of both types of students are similar, the different reasons for these errors often demand different 'remedies'. (2) In terms of the rhetorical dimension of writing, foreign students and American students may be motivated by very different writing topics; furthermore, non-native speakers will need more explicit attention to English rhetorical patterns and contextual restrictions on word choice. Ultimately, the learning process is dependent on how a learner views himself. While a basic writing student may view his writing problems as non-existent or as closely related to other learning problems he is having, a non-native writer may view his problem as dependent on a mastery of English grammatical and rhetorical patterns. All of these factors support the need to continue examining why writers, whether native or non-native, make the errors they do, and to select remedies on that basis.

82–57 Meloni, Christine F. and Thompson, Shirley E. (George Washington U.). *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **14**, 4 (1980), 503–10.

Students are frequently required to present oral reports in ESL classes, but little has been written to guide the instructor in helping the students to prepare these reports or to aid the instructor in evaluating them. This article first discusses the value of oral reports and their place in the ESL curriculum, then presents materials developed for use in intermediate level ESL courses and tested over a three-year period in George Washington University's ESL programme. These materials include guidelines for choosing a topic, preparing the report, recording the rough draft on cassette tape, presenting the report in class, and leading a discussion afterwards. Two evaluation forms are discussed: one by the instructor, and one by the students.

82–58 Ostler, Shirley (U. of Southern California). A survey of academic needs for advanced ESL. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **14**, 4 (1980), 489–502.

The American Language Institute, University of Southern California, recently conducted a study of their students' assessments of what academic skills they expected to need in order to successfully complete their studies, and a self-assessment of their success in using English in varied social and business settings. The study revealed that there is a clear distinction between the academic skills needed by graduate and undergraduate students; many students were concerned over their inability to read complex academic material; some of the skills assessed were major-specific and, although students felt quite comfortable in some language settings, their confidence decreased sharply in those settings requiring creative language skills.

82–59 Perkins, Chris (Braunschweig). Teaching advanced oral English. *Die neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main), **30**, 1 (1981), 56–73.

A significant improvement in students' spoken fluency can be achieved within the classroom if learning activities are provided which offer balanced and extensive practice in both the productive and receptive abilities. This is more easily done at post-intermediate than at advanced level, because at the former level the teacher can still work within a framework of controlled language practice. The advanced learner needs bridging material, of which little is available commercially, which gives practice in free creative expression and will help him in situations requiring English outside the classroom. Receptive fluency is also important: a student's ability to recognise and understand needs to be far more extensive than his productive capacity. Authentic materials are essential for improving discrimination and comprehension of spontaneous language, including ungrammatical and non-standard speech, and regional accents. Video-recorders offer an opportunity to study paralinguistic expressions which are an integral part of conversational communication.

Productive skills at advanced level cannot be neatly categorised for the student. They need to be made aware of elementary distinctive features like vocalisations (*mm*, *oh*, *er*, *well*), ellipsis and connectives, which help to give an impression of fluency. Students need the opportunity to practise the creation of extended discourse within classroom time-restraints: some recommended techniques are discussion work, role-play, oral composition, interpreting and language games [discussion].

82–60 Regent, O. Approche comparative des discours de specialité pour l'entrainement à l'anglais écrit. [A contrastive study of specialised discourse for training in written English.] *Mélanges Pédagogiques* (Nancy), 1980, 117–56.

Recent studies of written communication have emphasised the importance of discourse organisation and rhetoric for the learning of reading and writing in a foreign language. This paper describes an attempt at a constrastive study of specialised discourse in French and in English. A corpus of medical articles all on the same subject has been analysed at various levels of discourse organisation. Visual aspects of the printed page and sequences of discursive and communicative acts are contrasted; the differences

noted stem largely from a slightly different philosophy of science in the two cultures: whereas the French authors take scientific data as the core of discourse, the English tend to organise it in view of a demonstration. Some consequences for the learning of reading and writing in ESP are suggested.

82–61 Swales, John (U. of Aston in Birmingham). ESP: the textbook problem. *ESP Journal* (Washington, DC), **1**, 1 (1980), 11–23.

Although ESP textbooks have been purchased in considerable quantities, they have been surprisingly little used. Thus, the ESP textbook problem is seen as being essentially one of educational failure. The major cause of this failure could lie either in the product (the textbook) or in the primary user (the ESP practitioner). The problem as posed thus raises at least two inter-related issues: what should be the purpose and role of ESP textbooks, and what is properly involved in being an ESP professional? However, an approach to these issues is obscured by some of the facts of ESP history, such as market forces in publishing, the status of the ESP practitioner, textbook analysis and trends in research and development, all of which have contributed to the abuse and disuse of textbooks. However, a reconsideration of the role and structure of ESP textbooks would allow them a restricted but legitimate place in ESP work. This proposal is illustrated with an example from English for Academic Legal Purposes.

82–62 West, Gregory K. (U. of Florida). 'That' nominal constructions in traditional rhetorical divisions of scientific research papers. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **14**, 4 (1980), 483–8.

Advanced ESL students in science and technology have difficulties with nominalisation and with the rhetoric of scientific papers. This article investigates the relationship of nominalisation occurrence and scientific rhetorical divisions by testing the significance of the association between *that*-nominal frequency and four scientific research divisions – Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion – in 15 biological sciences articles. Counts of T-units per rhetorical section and *that*-nominals per rhetorical section were converted into ratios of *that*-nominals per 100 T-units per rhetorical section. An analysis of variance on the ratios showed that the density of *that*-nominals differed significantly between rhetorical sections, and a comparison of all possible pairwise combinations of the means of the rhetorical section ratios indicated that significant differences existed between the Introduction section and the Results section and between the Methods section and the other three sections. The significant differences in *that*-nominal frequency between rhetorical sections suggest that English of Science and Technology teachers and text writers could meaningfully co-ordinate the teaching of *that*-nominal constructions and the teaching of the four divisions of scientific research papers.

FRENCH

82–63 Carton, F. M. Un cours fonctionnel à distance: description d'une expérience. [A functional course by means of distance teaching: description of an experiment.] *Mélanges Pédagogiques* (Nancy), 1980, 1–16.

This paper describes an on-going experiment in training adult beginners (Latin American engineers about to come to France) in oral expression. The first goal is to acquire the communicative means necessary to cope with four top priority situations and then master the communicative functions involved in understanding and making oneself understood (asking for repetition, confirmation, etc.); thus proposing contents that fit both the four original situations and future usage. Use of a hierarchical face-to-face interaction model allows a fairly independent presentation of the different elements and easier transfer to other situations. The methodology used (introduction to the theoretical model, observation of real interactions and 'conversations' with the tape-recorder) leads the student to learn to tackle complex communicative events whose constituent elements are dependent on the participants' reactions. Other features of the experiment (all deriving from this approach) are: separation of training in comprehension and expression, remedial strategies, lack of translation, use of authentic documents and self-direction.

82–64 Mäsch, Nando. Sachunterricht in der Fremdsprache an Gymnasien mit deutsch-französisch bilingualem Zug. [The adoption of a bilingual German/French approach to the teaching of general subjects in German grammar schools.] *Neusprachliche Mitteilungen* (Berlin, FRG), **34**, 1 (1981), 18–28.

In the Federal Republic there are 21 grammar schools, with mainly German pupils, which have adopted a bilingual German/French approach to the teaching of general school subjects such as geography or history. The teacher must make sure that an ever increasing proportion of each lesson is conducted in French. By the time the pupils have reached the tenth class (i.e. are about 16 years old) French can be used exclusively. When the teacher's mother tongue is French this goal can be achieved earlier. The pupils should always be allowed to use German if necessary. If the subject under discussion is peculiarly German, speaking French is artificial and difficult. The teacher must make sure that the motivation and spontaneity of the pupils are not adversely affected, and that they gain a positive attitude to the language. French texts, adapted if necessary, and monolingual French dictionaries should be preferred.

The guidelines of the German education authorities are adhered to. With regard to assessment, one authority stipulates that greater importance should be attached to knowledge of the subject matter than to linguistic achievement. The first bilingual *Abitur* in 1979 showed that the pupils' grasp of the various subjects had not suffered because they had been taught in a foreign language.

82–65 Melpignano, Richard J. (Framingham State Coll., Mass.). A different use for French songs in the classroom. *Foreign Language Annals* (New York), **13**, 6 (1980), 455–7.

The transcription of popular song lyrics (musical *dicteé*) is a method for developing advanced students' aural comprehension of French. After the first playing of a song, students jot down any words they recognise; a later stage is to complete a fill-in-the-blank text. [Preparation of songs for transcription. Short selective list of records.] The method can be adapted for less advanced students.

82–66 Piazza, Linda Gaylord. French tolerance for grammatical errors made by Americans. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis), **64**, 4 (1980), 422–7.

Because few communicative criteria exist to aid foreign-language teachers in determining the severity of their students' errors, this study was undertaken to investigate French people's tolerance for sentences containing grammatical errors typical of Americans learning French and to establish priorities for correcting those errors in the classroom. The study aimed to determine: (1) the degree to which the grammatical errors interfered with sentence comprehensibility; (2) the degree of irritation caused by the errors; (3) whether the errors were more readily tolerated under spoken or written mode of presentation; and (4) the rank order of the errors in terms of sentence comprehensibility, irritation, and mode of presentation.

Results showed that the less comprehensible error types were the most irritating. Greatest tolerance was shown for errors of tense usage and agreement. Incorrect word order was relatively non-irritating but caused comprehension difficulties. The least tolerance was shown for errors of verb forms and pronouns. Errors were more readily tolerated in written than in spoken language samples. Teachers should be aware of the relative seriousness of different grammatical mistakes in order to determine priorities for correcting students errors, for grading tests and for emphasising different grammatical structures.

82–67 Ruprecht, Alvina (Carleton U.). Les média dans la salle de classe: l'enseignement du français aux étudiants en journalisme. [The media in the classroom: teaching French to students of journalism.] *Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto), **37**, 2 (1981), 320–8.

The professional journalist needs to be able to formulate questions, to comprehend information received and transmit it to a third party and to have access to a variety of communicative skills. Authentic materials from television and the press figured prominently in an advanced French course for English-speaking trainee journalists. TV broadcasts and newspaper articles were not however used to stimulate discussion on their subject matter. Attention was instead focused on reading between the lines, on interpreting the images, and on the ways in which the reader or viewer, and the news itself, can be manipulated – for example by comparing the treatment given to the same story by different newspapers or different TV channels.

ITALIAN

82–68 Freedman, Alan (U. of Salford). A better Italian course? *ATI Journal* (Beccles, Suffolk), **32** (1981), 13–25.

A discussion of desirable features of an Italian course for beginners at secondary or tertiary level including motivation, course books, the syllabus, aural comprehension, vocabulary teaching, testing, and oral work.

RUSSIAN

82–69 Drage, C. L. Problems in teaching Russian stress to British students. *Journal of Russian Studies* (Lancaster), **40** (1980), 23–30.

Some guidelines on teaching Russian stress to British students are proposed, laying emphasis on contrasts between English and Russian stress, and demonstrating patterns in Russian stress. Interference caused by specific features of stress in English, such as pitch variation and alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables, must be eliminated. The only satisfactory general rules on Russian stress are formulated in morphological terms and the soundest rules are those relating to adjectives and to particular suffixes. Most Russian words have fixed stress, and those which have mobile stress fall into only three basic patterns.

Mastery of the patterns of stress mobility is so vital that the stress pattern of a whole declension of a noun should be presented at one time, rather than in successive lessons. Secondary stress patterns are examined; they should be taught at a later stage.

82–70 McKenna, Kevin J. (U. of Colorado). Teaching Russian to scientists: a single skill approach. *Slavic and East European Journal* (Madison, Wis), **24**, 4 (1980), 400–11.

Many American scientists are highly motivated to acquire a reading knowledge of Russian, which has now supplanted German as the most important foreign language for scientists. The author recommends using *A Contextual Approach to Russian* (Daugherty & Plank, 1974), which focuses on functional rather than formal grammar, and emphasises a systematic approach to phrase and sentence structure, including work on word roots, rather than grammatical rules and declensional endings, as in traditional courses.

Use of this course made a noticeable improvement in the students' comprehension of written Russian and in the numbers who continued to use Russian after the course. The authors' 'contextual strategy' helps students to 're-learn' the ability to look at a text as a whole, and to scan for keywords. Sentence decoding is done by 'topic/message' recognition. Other useful techniques are anticipation, recognising parallelism, and paraphrase. Vocabulary building is taught by 'derivational predictability', and emphasising the semantic fields of word roots.

82–71 Mey, Hartmut. Schriftliche Handlungen des Erfassens und Einprägens bei der Lexikaneignung. [Written activities which aid the acquisition and memorising of vocabulary.] *Fremdsprachenunterricht* (Berlin, GDR), **24**, 9 (1980), 439–40.

It is important to give the pupil a thorough knowledge of phonetics when he first starts to learn Russian in order to minimise the possible ill effects of introducing the written word early on in the course, such as interference from mother-tongue pronunciation. A combination of acoustic and visual stimuli is significantly more effective in language teaching than when the stimuli are restricted to those of hearing and speaking. If oral and written activities are to be mutually reinforcing they should be used together from the early stages. Phonetically similar lexical items should be differentiated primarily by written activities. New lexical items should be jotted down in lesson time.

82–72 Morkovkin, V. V. and others. О возможном типе активного словаря для нефилологов. [A model for a generative dictionary for non-students of language.] *Русский язык за рубежом* (Moscow), **1** (1981), 74–9.

Existing dictionaries for non-students of Russian are of the passive type, and even contextual dictionaries do not meet the non-native speaker's need to communicate. He needs an active (generative) dictionary, which must contain an indication of the use of the catchwords and a mechanism allowing a language task formulated in the user's native language to be realised in Russian.

A model for a generative dictionary is proposed, in which lexical articles are divided into three types, basic, derivative and referential, and three corresponding types of lexical article are suggested. Particular importance is attached to word-forming clusters containing various parts of speech. The relative advantages of translation and definition of catchwords are examined. Two types of generative dictionary are needed, according to whether the specialist literature is commonly published in Russian, in which case a description of the combinability of words will suffice, or in the foreign language, when bilingual indexes are required as well.

82–73 Scherr, Barry P. and Robinson, Lawrence W. (Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire). Creating computer-assisted drills for Russian: the structure of the data base. *Russian Language Journal* (Michigan), **34**, 118 (1980), 21–36.

The programme described uses BASIC to provide vocabulary drills and a series of grammar exercises on noun, verb and adjectival endings, and on numerals. [System of classification and coding of lexical items and forms, particularly the treatment of irregularities.] A transliteration system is used whereby at entry a single symbol is used for each Russian letter, thus being re-interpreted by a sub-programme into a standard transliteration form presented to students. Each vocabulary entry has three

parts: English definition, Russian word (nominative for nouns, infinitive for verbs) and a code.

Students may test themselves starting from English definitions or Russian words; they may specify upon which forms they wish to be tested, and from which lessons of the course they wish items to be drawn. The programme is used as a supplement to classroom instruction. It scores, retests mistakes and provides a rough diagnosis of the type of errors made.