
Teaching particular languages

Chinese

96-358 Yuan, Boping (Cambridge U.). Acquisition of base-generated topics by English-speaking learners of Chinese. *Language Learning* (Cambridge, MA), **45**, 4 (1995), 567-603.

This study investigated the acquisition of base-generated topics in Mandarin Chinese by 102 British university students learning Chinese as a second language (L2). Chinese differs from English in that in Chinese the topic can be base-generated, whereas in English it has to go through the process of movement. The hypothesis was that it would not be difficult for English speakers to acquire the base-generated topic in Chinese because in the acquisition of Chinese, English-speaking learners are exposed to positive evidence of base-generated topics. However, this hypothesis was not confirmed; the learners acquired the base-generated topics quite late. The difficulty the learners had in acquiring the

base-generated topic in Chinese could be due to a combination of several factors. The learners at elementary, intermediate, and higher-intermediate stages may have adopted an incorrect parsing strategy in processing sentences with base-generated topics. This incorrect parsing strategy diminished the triggering effect of the positive evidence for Complement Phrase projection, absent at the initial state of the L2 acquisition of Chinese. In addition, there is misleading evidence in the learners' input data in support of the learners' adoption of the incorrect parsing strategy, which further delays the acquisition of the base-generated topic in Chinese.

English

96-359 Hewings, Martin (Birmingham U.). The English intonation of native speakers and Indonesian learners: a comparative study. *RELC Journal* (Singapore), **26**, 1 (1995), 27-46.

Comparative studies of the English intonation of native speakers and learners are needed to help inform teachers on what they should teach about English intonation and how they can best teach it. This study compares intonation in parallel recordings of English speech produced by British and Indonesian subjects. Included in the main

findings are that the Indonesian subjects produced shorter tone units, more level tones, and selected falling tones in contexts where native speakers selected rising tones. Implications for teaching intonation and suggestions for further research are presented.

96-360 Hsiu, Sophie and others (City Poly. of Hong Kong). ESL learners' word organisation strategies: a case of Chinese learners of English words in Hong Kong. *Language and Education* (Clevedon, Avon), **9**, 2 (1995), 81-102.

Although there is some research on English as a second language (ESL) learners' use of strategies in organising words when learning English (Chamot, 1984; Henning, 1974), it is not certain that these strategies apply to all learners, especially those who share homogeneity in their writing system as well as their first language. It is therefore necessary to look at a larger sample of homogeneous population learning ESL, namely a Cantonese-speaking sample. As organised words are easier to store in, and retrieve from long-term memory (Thompson, 1987), investigating young learners' word organisation strategies will help teachers and

researchers identify factors related to such strategies. This paper reports data collected by students teaching ESL supervised by their instructor. The first year students paved the way for this type of research by testing its feasibility. As results proved that word grouping was a worthwhile study, another investigation was undertaken by the second year students. 55 secondary school students (mean age 14.5) were individually investigated on their word organisation strategies given a list of 50 words. Results were analysed descriptively and statistically. Implications for teaching words and word knowledge are discussed.

96-361 Iles, Zara (U. of York). Collaborative repair in EFL classroom talk. *York Papers in Linguistics* (York), **17** (1996), 23–51.

Repair is the structural or organisational mechanism that allows speakers to deal with breakdowns in speaking, hearing or understanding. Little is known about the nature of error repair in the classroom despite the fact that an accurate account of this aspect of English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom talk is of primary concern to second language research. This paper adopts a conversation analysis perspective to examine how the recurrent features of repair amongst native speakers are

employed by teachers and learners in EFL classrooms. Data from audio-taped lessons in individual and multi-national classroom teaching situations were analysed to reveal how types of correction reflect the agenda of the lesson and learner competence. Results showed that correction was actively and collaboratively negotiated in the classroom and that different forms of repair strategy affected both interaction and the lesson agenda.

96-362 Kailani, Taiseer Zaid (Al Quds Open U., Jordan). A synthesized pedagogical methodology for English classroom interactions. *IRAL* (Heidelberg, Germany), **33**, 4 (1995), 333–44.

This paper reviews briefly some recent developments in foreign language teaching methodology and how they have affected the English language teaching situation in Jordan and other Arab countries. The classroom practices, the techniques of teaching and the general proficiency of the secondary school leavers are considered with the aim of highlighting the limitations of the methodology currently used. As a remedy to the present English as a foreign language situation, the author proposes a pedagogical methodology in which the learning activities play a key role. This methodology is seen as a practical orientation to modify traditional practices and to increase the

number of opportunities for language application in the classroom, the only setting where pupils can learn and practise the use of English because the language is not used extensively outside school. The paper discusses the implementation of this methodology. Three levels of practice are assigned for each unit. The first and lower level is medium-oriented communication; the second and intermediate level is fluency practice; and the third and highest level is the application phase where pupils can communicate ideas or accomplish some function in the language through various types of discourse. How these three levels work is shown by an illustrative procedure.

96-363 Montero, Begona and others (Valencia U.). Exploiting authentic videos in the teaching of ESP. *Unesco ALSED-LSP Newsletter* (Copenhagen), **19**, 1 (1996), 22–34.

Authentic video materials are highly motivating for learners of English for Special Purposes (ESP). The paper describes how, for example, an Open University video on magnetism can be used with a Spanish-speaking group. Pre-viewing activities, comprising a general introduction to the topic and essential vocabulary, are followed by a first viewing of the video, which is shown without stopping to

give the students an overview of the main points. After testing the students' general comprehension, the video is re-shown several times, accompanied by a variety of while-viewing activities. After-viewing activities then reinforce the ideas and language presented. [The video script is included in an Appendix.]

96-364 Paran, Amos. Reading in EFL: facts and fictions. *English Language Teaching Journal* (Oxford), **50**, 1 (1996), 25–34.

This paper examines the representations of the reading process in a number of English as a foreign language (EFL) methodology texts. It argues that many of these representations are dated, and based on a theory that was never a mainstream theory of first language reading. Research findings are quoted to strengthen a bottom-up view of the reading

process: good readers do not rely on hypothesis formation and prediction as much as is commonly thought. Visual input and bottom-up processing during reading are of great importance. The paper concludes with suggestions for exercises to strengthen automatic word recognition in EFL readers.



96-365 Register, Norma A. (U. of Washington). Second-language learners and taboo words in American English. *English Today* (Cambridge), **12**, 3, (1996), 44–49.

The active teaching of taboo words to second language learners of English has long been avoided by English language teachers. It is assumed that swear words will be acquired outside the classroom by exposure to television, music or the internet. It is argued here that unfamiliarity with this area of language could disadvantage language learners. To address the lack of both research and teaching materials in this field, this study aims to produce preliminary comments on the level of recognition and frequency of use of certain taboo words by second language learners. A corpus of learners of a

range of nationalities completed a questionnaire which tested their recognition and comprehension of twenty 'vulgar' expressions and asked whether learners would use these with friends or strangers of either sex. The findings indicated that male learners knew slightly more of the expressions than female learners and that males were more inclined to use them, especially among same sex friends. It is maintained here that more detailed studies in this area should be carried out in order to establish more specific information on how and why English language learners acquire taboo language items.

96-366 Seedhouse, Paul (U. of York). Classroom interaction: possibilities and impossibilities. *English Language Teaching Journal* (Oxford), **50**, 1 (1996), 16–24.

Recent communicative approaches have suggested that one goal of English language teaching (ELT) should be to replicate 'genuine' or 'natural' rather than 'typical' or 'traditional' classroom communication. This article argues that such a goal is both paradoxical and unattainable, and that there are serious flaws in the assumptions underlying the

communicative orthodoxy concerning ELT classroom interaction. It is also argued that it would be more satisfactory to take an institutional discourse approach, where classroom discourse is regarded as an institutional variety of discourse, in which interactional elements correspond neatly to institutional goals.

French

96-367 Froc, Myra A. (U. of Regina). Error correction in French immersion. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto, Ontario), **51**, 4 (1995), 709–17.

The problem of error correction in the French immersion classroom is considered. The way in which a second language is acquired is examined, together with the way that the first language can interfere with the learning of the second. Various types of errors are described, which have arisen through misinterpretation and then have continued to be made by the student. These errors can result from too literal a translation from the student's own language, for instance where an English verb is substituted as a direct translation from French, or

where a word has been left out. Other errors can originate from an overgeneralisation of a rule, or from nervousness or anxiety. It is suggested that errors can be corrected by the use of writing. Errors can be discussed generally in the classroom, but this does not correct all errors. The most successful use of writing is described as that where the teacher and student discuss problems before the student gives a talk. Other students can then question and correct the writing, and this can help the speaker develop a higher level of linguistic ability.

96-368 MacFarlane, Alina and Wesche, Marjorie Bingham (U. of Ottawa). Immersion outcomes: beyond language proficiency. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto, Ontario), **51**, 2 (1995), 250–74.

This study examined the self-assessed proficiency, language-related attitudes and French use patterns of 21 former immersion students who are now working or pursuing graduate studies. The results showed that most of these graduates considered their attitudes towards francophones to be more positive than those of their English program counterparts. Although students expected high levels of future use and many expected to use French in their careers,

use of French by these graduates, with notable exceptions, is low. Nevertheless, most graduates reported a very high level of satisfaction with their immersion experiences. Perhaps the most interesting outcome is the indication that early French use and contact with francophones outside the classroom is related to the development of higher French proficiency and to greater use of French in daily life.

96-369 Rogers, Carmen Villegas (Xavier U., Louisiana). Language as a reflection of culture: from literal meaning to conceptual awareness. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto, Ontario), **52**, 1 (1995), 48-58.

This article illustrates one approach to presenting language as a reflection of culture, taking as a topic the marked tendency in French to use negative terms to express positive concepts. Negation in French becomes a fertile source of pedagogical activities since it allows reflection upon at least three points to help students go beyond the mere grammatical context: first, a rich repertoire of negative elements not found in other languages:

second, a preference in French toward the use of negative constructions in situations where the same ideas could be expressed in the affirmative ('Ce n'est pas mal'); and third, a look at negative traits commonly attributed to the French (a sense of distrust). As students become more aware of these phenomena, they will be in a position to begin to search for more subtle insights into the values, attitudes, and lifestyles of the target language group.

96-370 Rose, Russell G. (U. of North Carolina). French-language satellite TV in the classroom. *Foreign Language Annals* (New York), **28**, 4 (1995), 518-26.

Foreign language teachers now have access to more instructional resources than ever before. One of these resources, a technology that is often underutilised, is satellite television. Satellite television can provide, especially in the case of French, a continuous stream of up-to-date, authentic language and culture materials to the classroom or

lab. The challenge of satellite television is what to select among the many available programs and how to incorporate them into instruction. This article describes the elements of satellite technology, provides information on French and other foreign language programming, and offers suggestions for exploiting satellite television in the classroom.

96-371 Sanaoui, Razika (York U.). Processes of vocabulary instruction in 10 French as a Second Language classrooms. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* (Toronto, Ontario), **52**, 2 (1996), 179-99.

This paper offers detailed descriptions and illustrative examples of processes used by 10 French as a Second Language (FSL) instructors to teach vocabulary to adult FSL Learners in Vancouver, reporting qualitative analyses of classroom transcripts and pedagogical materials the instructors used to teach their lessons. Two main findings of the study are that

these teachers emphasized semantic aspects of lexis over all other aspects of vocabulary knowledge, and that lexical instruction in analytic and experiential classes was characterized by similar features. Pedagogical implications and directions for further research are suggested.

Italian

96-372 Arthur, Gabriella Colussi (York U.). Beginners' level textbooks for Italian in the '90s: an investigation into the current North American textbook market. *Italica* (New Brunswick, NJ), **72**, 4 (1995), 452-73.

This article, the first in an intended series of investigations into textbooks for teaching Italian, compares seven books for beginners currently in use. Consideration of changing methodologies is followed by a brief description of each book and a discussion of the similarities and differences between them. It is argued that these particular books seem to indicate a domination of teaching at the elementary level by textbooks that have now appeared in several

editions. Though the courses are rooted in the audiolingual approach, successive editions have been adapted to changes in methodology and the books considered here reflect an integrated or eclectic approach. There is little to distinguish between them except their ancillary materials. Various aspects of comparison [e.g. overall organisation, grammatical structures] are shown in detail in tables at the end.

96–373 Bénéteau, David P. (Seton Hall U.) **and others.** A survey of pedagogical software use in Italian, 1995. *Italica* (New Brunswick, NJ), **72**, 4 (1995), 425–51.

This survey, the first to target Italian specifically, looked at the extent to which computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is used in the teaching of Italian. It covered word processing, off-the-shelf programs, authoring programs, software development and network usage. The method by which the survey was carried out is described and the results discussed. Software that is both available commercially and being developed in research projects is described, though it is not evaluated. It would appear that, although many Italians now use word processing skills in their professional lives and many more are experimenting with simple programs

in their teaching, there are few CALL projects involved in the teaching of Italian compared with that of other languages. It is argued that, with computing in language teaching now an active research area, with language journals and computer magazines reviewing software and up-dating on program up-grades, and with equipment used by both teachers and students becoming more sophisticated, Italianists should be developing more short-term projects to provide state-of-the-art software. Ways in which Italianist organisations can help networking are also suggested.

96–374 Laviosa, Flavia (Wellesley Coll., Mass., USA). How to test and evaluate oral proficiency in Italian. *Tuttitalia* (Rugby), **13** (1996), 3–15.

The recent shift in language teaching towards oral proficiency in turn raises the question of how it can be tested and evaluated. The complexity of spoken language means that it cannot be assessed on the traditional basis of discrete grammatical items used in written tests. The four main areas discussed are: the importance of integrating a proficiency orientation into regular class work and testing for oral skills; the American Council on the teaching of Foreign

Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency descriptors; the assessment criteria and structure of the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview; and the design (with guidelines and detailed examples) of tests for assessing spoken Italian at college level. Although the article is directed at teachers of Italian, many of the points raised will be of interest to teachers of other languages who are wanting to develop a proficiency-based curriculum.

Russian

96–375 Rifkin, Benjamin (U. of Wisconsin-Madison). Error gravity in learners' spoken Russian: a preliminary study. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis.), **79**, 4 (1995), 477–90.

This study was designed to begin the work to establish a hierarchy of error gravity for different types of common errors in American learners' spoken Russian. Respondents included native speakers of Russian and English, teachers and non-teachers, and residents of Russia and the U.S. Respondents were asked to compare a series of paired sentences that were identical except for a particular error and to select which sentence they found to be less irritating. The sentences were

selected from oral proficiency interviews conducted with intermediate-level learners of Russian. Respondents' selections of the least irritating utterances of each pair were analysed in order to establish a hierarchy of error gravity, and the hierarchies established for each respondent class were compared to determine if representatives of each respondent class had similar or different views of the severity of different error types.

96–376 Rubenstein, George (Defense Language Inst., Monterey). On case errors made in oral speech by American learners of Russian. *Slavic and East European Journal* (Madison, Wis.), **39**, 3 (1995), 408–29.

The author describes a study aimed at analysing spoken errors made by American adult learners of Russian (at four proficiency levels), with particular reference to potential evolutionary change as speaker competence develops and to possible resemblances between errors made by foreign language and first

language (L1) learners. The article focuses on a single error-type (misused noun case forms), extracted from an error corpus of 4300 items. An outline of the curricular-instructional context at the Defense Language Institute is followed by a discussion of the causes which, it is claimed, can be attributed to

psycholinguistic factors and such unsuccessful learner strategies as experimentation and simplification. Noun-case errors were subdivided into, for example, within-case, outside-case or plural/singular switching contexts [tabular data], the study apparently revealing that the overgeneralisation strategies of American learners differ fundamentally from those of Russian children, involving elements of L1 transfer (e.g. the SVO structure of English). Difficulties also arose when learners confused 'government' (collocational) rules, linking verbs with incorrect prepositions. The research seemingly indicated that as speaker proficiency developed, the

number of case errors decreased (as opposed to any change in the type of error made). The article concludes by claiming that the results of the study have practical pedagogical implications with regard to preventative and remedial teaching. It is felt that an awareness of common, recurring errors would allow teachers to inform learners explicitly of the relevant error-prone points and to develop special classroom tasks which either concentrate on the form being confused or reinforce complex rules. In effect, teachers would be well-advised to activate their learners' 'Monitor' to assist the development of effective self-repair strategies.

Spanish

96–377 Barry, Sue and Lazarte, Alejandro A. (Auburn U.). Embedded clause effects on recall: does high prior knowledge of content domain overcome syntactic complexity in students of Spanish? *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis.), **79**, 4 (1995), 491–504.

This study tested the effect of embedded clauses on recall for English-speaking high school students reading Spanish historical texts. 24 students with high prior knowledge of Incan history and 24 with low prior knowledge read texts concerning the Incas. Three levels of syntactic complexity were defined: Level I (LI) contained the *essential* ideas for the topic; Level II (LII) embedded one clause with *nonessential* information within LI sentences; and Level III (LIII) embedded an additional clause

within LII sentences. A significant *decrease* in the recall of the *essential propositions* occurred as the level of syntactic complexity increased. Readers with high prior knowledge recalled significantly more of the essential information for LI and LII. However, recall scores for the *essential propositions* in LIII were nearly equal to those for the low prior-knowledge group. In conclusion, the study found that complexity of sentence structure seemed to cancel the advantage of previous exposure to the content domain.