

Teaching particular languages

ENGLISH

84–584 Alptekin, Cem and Margaret. The question of culture: EFL teaching in non-English-speaking countries. *ELT Journal* (London), **38**, 1 (1984), 14–20.

Two conflicting pedagogical views exist in teaching EFL (English as a foreign language) abroad. One, promoted chiefly by native English-speaking teachers, is that English teaching should be done with reference to the socio-cultural norms and values of an English-speaking country, with the purpose of developing bilingual and bicultural individuals. The other, advocated by the host country where English instruction takes place, is that the teaching of English should be independent of its nationality-bound cultural context, with a view to creating bilingual yet not necessarily bicultural people. This article discusses both positions in the light of cognitive, affective and cultural data – in particular with a focus on the native English-speaking teacher in the host society. It is then suggested that successful bilinguals should serve as pedagogical models (instead of monolingual and monocultural native English-speaking teachers), and that local and international contexts which are familiar and relevant to students' lives should be used (instead of unfamiliar and irrelevant contexts from the English-speaking world).

84–585 James, Gregory (U. of Exeter). English teaching in Albanian schools. *World Language English* (Oxford), **3**, 2 (1984), 81–4.

The author had the opportunity to observe and conduct an English class in a state high school in Albania [school system is described]. Modern-language study begins in the fifth grade (first year of secondary school) and pupils have a choice of one of three languages: English, French or Russian. About 60 per cent opt for English. Within the educational system, activities are divided into three parts: academic learning, productive labour and military training. A good deal of the textbook material reflects these aspects of school life; there is a heavy concentration of sociopolitical material, particularly for the 15–17 age group. English is learned not for social interaction but in order to discuss, translate and propagate revolutionary themes and ideas. The methodology is firmly based on grammar, with few games and no inter-pupil activities. Emphasis is put on rote-learning, stressing accuracy and conformity with the textbook. Pupils spoke well and clearly; all their answers were prepared. When taking a class, the author found they responded enthusiastically and expressed themselves well. Unfortunately, they have few opportunities to use their English, and learning nothing about the countries where English is spoken.

84–586 Li Xiaoju (Guangzhou Foreign Language Institute, China). In defence of the communicative approach. *ELT Journal* (Oxford), **38**, 1 (1984), 2–13.

The project CECL (Communicative English for Chinese Learners), developing new EFL materials for students of English in tertiary education in China, was carried out

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by the author and two Canadian teachers. The aim of basing the materials on the communicative approach caused controversy in China. There must be real reasons for communicating real situations and real roles, not empty talk or memorised language of the kind with which Chinese learners are apt to startle foreigners. Real communication has an element of unpredictability. Even in 'receptive' skills like reading and listening, there is freedom for interpretation, unless teachers force one 'correct' interpretation on students before they can do any interpreting. Such teachers protect their students by removing likely difficulties in advance, making it difficult for them to cope later on. Authentic language means language used for communication situations which are relevant to the students. They soon develop the ability to cope with it. In the CECL materials, grading is done by controlling the tasks set. Sufficient exposure to the target language is essential: the Chinese maxim of 'learning sparingly but well' is quite inapplicable to language learning. It is not a matter of looking up then memorising every word. Traditionally a language lesson in China consists of a focus text and a list of language points drawn from the text. Traditional teachers miss this focus when teaching in terms of tasks. Likewise, whereas the Chinese tradition is for the teacher to be at the centre of classroom activities, communicative methods are student-centred, so teachers feel uprooted when removed from their normal position. The communicative approach demands initiative and intellectual effort from learners.

84–587 Merghelani, Abdul Rahman Amin and Yassin, M. Aziz F. Why 'English' literature in the Arab EFL context – and why not. *Incorporated Linguist* (London), 22, 4 (1983), 200–4.

Now that Arab countries have broken free from colonial tutelage and have begun to re-develop their own cultural identity, motivation to learn English is instrumental rather than integrative; knowledge of English offers a better chance of study abroad. English is increasingly used as an international language by Saudis in international trade or business. Two unofficial objectives in studying English are to pass the entrance examination of the most prestigious university colleges in Saudi Arabia, which use English as the medium of instruction, and to obtain skills which enhance employment prospects in, for example, the air industry. Saudi learners are not interested in materials embodied in a framework of British or American domestic behaviour, or in studying English literature. What they need is a tool for communication for use within their own cultural framework. School textbooks deal with topics emanating from typically Saudi everyday activities and customs. Native-like performance is no longer paramount. Corresponding changes in the organisation of EFL programmes naturally followed from the change in objectives. Controversy rages over the usefulness of literary and linguistic studies when students have consistently low standards of language performance. Modifying academic programmes has made them even less effectual. Some suggest teaching masterpieces of Third World literature in English to avoid the bias towards Anglo-Saxon culture. What is important is that literary works selected for study should be related to students' linguistic competence. Literature should be a springboard for, and the raw material of, exercises in language skills.

84-588 Meziani, Ahmed (U. of Rabat). Modality in English and Moroccan Arabic. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), 21, 4 (1983), 267-82.

Modal verbs can express semantic categories such as 'doubt' or 'certainty' and semantic characteristics such as 'permission' or 'ability'. This distinction can be explained in terms of 'knowledge' versus 'decision', a dichotomy that parallels Halliday's distinction between 'modality' and 'modulation'. A negative modal verb can express a negative proposition or a negative modality. It is concluded that in the knowledge component, many English modals have no counterpart in Moroccan Arabic. These are 'must' (deductive), 'may', 'might', 'could' and 'can', 'will' and 'should'. In the decision component, it seems that there is an over-use of Moroccan Arabic *ixes* ('must'), covering 'must'/'have to', 'ought'/'should' and 'will'. Such distinctions make modal verbs particularly difficult for most learners of foreign languages.

84-589 Rodger, Alex (University of Edinburgh). Language for literature. *ELT Documents* (London), 115 (1983), 37-65.

Aimed at provoking ESL teachers to reconsider the aims of literature courses and at suggesting methods of attaining their revised aims, the article defines literature as foregrounded discourse which draws attention to its own form and composition in contrast to what the student knows of normal, non-literary language. Students must learn both to recognise the special conventions of literature and the nature of literary communication ('communication-awareness'), and to make sense of a writer's exploitation of ordinary language to fashion a work of literature ('language-awareness'). He must see the language itself, not merely look through it to the meaning, and must recognise that in literature the precise contextual value of every word, phrase, clause, etc., can only be inferred from its interaction with others in the text.

This should lead to a 'literary competence', the ability to tread a work of literature with an understanding of how literary discourse works. The reader has to reconstruct his own version of the author's meaning, and needs a critical metalanguage to be able to discuss his subjective interpretation with others and measure how far it is typical or justified. This intersubjective discussion is fundamental to the personal discovery of literary significance by the reader, which alone justifies literature courses. Such a course of discovery is exemplified in an analysis of a short poem by Ezra Pound.

84-590 Taha, Abdul Karim (Kuwait U.). Types of syntactic ambiguity in English. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), 21, 4 (1983), 251-66.

Twelve types of syntactic ambiguity are distinguished in terms of the constituent structure(s) of sentences and phrases. For example, -ing + Noun constructions such as 'flying teacher' can be compound nouns or adjective + noun, though both are noun phrases. In speech the two are given distinct stress patterns, but in writing context may help to determine the correct interpretation. For each type of ambiguity, ways of resolving or avoiding it, especially in writing, are recommended for the use of learners of English.

FRENCH

84–591 Bryant, William H. (Western Washington U.). Syntax flowcharts for advanced French courses. *Foreign Language Annals* (New York), **16**, 6 (1983), 469–79.

The use of syntax flowcharts can help make syntax more meaningful and comprehensible through the graphic illustration of syntactic rules. Flowcharts for the following syntactic structures in French are presented for consideration: (1) the negating of verbal expressions; (2) the balancing of conditional tenses; (3) the use of the imperfect (*imparfait*) versus the compound (*passé composé*); (4) the agreement of past participles; and (5) the sequence of tenses in the subjunctive mood. Although the flowcharts shown in this article are specifically in French, auxiliary adjuncts may be utilised in any foreign language class. In Spanish, for example, flowcharts would prove useful in helping to present the difference between *por* and *para*, or between *ser* and *estar*. In German, flowcharts might show German prepositions and the different cases which they govern in various situations, or word order in subordinate clauses. In Russian, flowcharts could be used to help get across the idea of perfective versus imperfective aspect, or to point up the difference between the various contexts in which Russian verbs of motion are used. Flowcharts are meant to enhance – not replace – grammatical explanations by the instructor, and may even be used as a heuristic device by students to discover for themselves the underlying structure of rules of application of a particular syntactic structure.

84–592 Callamand, Monique and Pedoya, Elisabeth (UER–EFPE, Paris III). Phonétique et enseignement. [Phonetics and language teaching.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **182** (1984), 56–8.

Current communicative language-teaching methodology has neglected pronunciation. A module for Spanish speakers, to be taken before the language course proper, illustrates a strategy for integrating pronunciation teaching into a communicative course: students are acquainted firstly with the rhythmic and intonational characteristics of French speech and secondly with its articulatory characteristics of intensity and labiality; they are then asked to distinguish French utterances, words and sounds from non-French ones, which leads them on to vowel–grapheme correspondences and to the differentiation of easily confused vowels. For the students the value of relaxation and breathing exercises and of the appreciation of the physical (acoustic and kinesic) aspects of pronunciation are emphasised. For the teacher, awareness of the French phonological system, causes of interference, techniques of correction and the need for short, varied and amusing activities within the general communicative activities and for a good model are underlined.

84-593 Gentilhomme, Yves (U. of Besançon). *Le français peut-il/doit-il être étudié/enseigné comme une science?* [Can/should French be studied/taught as a science?] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **51** (1983), 104–26.

This is a study of three short fragments of scientific text: (a) from a guidebook to mushrooms, (b) from a school final year mathematics book, (c) from a chemistry textbook. The principal characteristics of each (information structure, vocabulary, syntax) are described. In conclusion, five hypotheses/postulates for teaching with such texts are put forward: (1) every didactic process is strongly linked to the teaching situation; (2) avoid teacher-centred teaching; (3) teachers need some competence in the subject to which the text refers; (4) learner-centred teaching must take account of the background and present and future needs of learners in each case; and (5) the previous four postulates are intended as practical suggestions, not theoretical observations.

84-594 Weiss, Francois (Bureau d'Action Linguistique, Athens). *Types de communication et activités communicatives en classe.* [Types of communication and communicative activities in the classroom.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **183** (1984), 47–51.

Four types of communication are found in the language classroom: didactic, which takes up the greater part of the class time; imitative, including memorisation and reproduction exercises; simulated, including role-play, where the learner enjoys more scope for imagination and initiative; and authentic communication. But the teacher-dominated classroom affords little opportunity for real communication.

Language games and group work give scope for student creativity. If learners are to achieve a degree of communicative competence, they need practice in real communication. [Various classroom activities are proposed which promote real communication between students.]

84-595 Zarate, Geneviève (BELC). *Objectiver le rapport culture maternelle/culture étrangère.* [Objectivising the relationship between the native culture and foreign culture.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **181** (1983), 34–9.

Teachers and taught alike attach great importance to up-to-date information about France and French life, but the teaching of French culture should not be confined to providing students with a mass of factual information to be memorised, but should rather be directed towards helping them understand a culture different from their own. Since our knowledge and understanding of our own culture is largely intuitive, the native informant is not always the best; the outsider has a valid viewpoint. Nor should the teacher be endowed with a false authority as intermediary. Stereotypes of the 'typical' Frenchman should avoided.

84–596 Zöfgen, Ekkehard. Verbwörterbücher und Verbvalenz im Französischunterricht. [Verb dictionaries and verb valency in the teaching of French.] *Linguistik und Didaktik* (Munich, FRG), **49/50** (1982), 18–61.

Dependency relations in grammar, including valency, have a strong didactic tradition, particularly so in the case of verb valency. This derives from the central position of the verb in a construction as also from the frequency of mistakes made in second-language learning which relate to the valency properties of the verb. A number of critical issues of importance to applied linguistics on the one hand and/or to valency theory on the other are discussed, firstly in relation to an existing valency dictionary (the *Französische Verblexikon* of Brusse and Dubost (Stuttgart, 1977)), and secondly in promoting a reformed version of this dictionary, meeting with greater adequacy the needs of advanced learners. Issues raised include the form a dictionary entry should take (abstract structural framework, German equivalent, contextualising examples), the valency-theoretical distinction between *Ergänzungen* (complements) and *Angaben* (adjuncts), the balance between explicitness and exhaustiveness, and the choice of examples.

GERMAN

84–597 Herwig, Rolf. 'Kohärenz' in Textlinguistik und Fremdsprachenmethodik. [Coherence in text linguistics and language teaching methodology.] *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (Leipzig, GDR), **21**, (1984), 36–41.

Coherence is a concept in text linguistics which takes its realisation in various syntactic (e.g. the use of pro-forms), semantic (e.g. relations such as synonymy) and text-structural (e.g. causal sequences) ways, as well as by the relations of an utterance to its extra-linguistic causes and effects. While coherence is an attribute of communication that has universal nature, learned as it is in the acquisition of a first language, the actual means by which this attribute is realised are language-specific and thus require a degree of explicit coaching, which must take place with due consideration of the use to which the second language is to be put. Insights into text-linguistic patterns of this type should thus be applied in the development and use of teaching methods and materials.

SPANISH

84–598 Kurtz, Don L. and Luna, Anne M. (New Mexico State U.). Utilizing community resources: the conversation lab. *Foreign Language Annals* (New York), **16**, 6 (1983), 433–6.

Utilising volunteers from the local Spanish-speaking community, the conversation lab was developed in order to provide students with a safe environment in which to consolidate interactive skills. In the conversation lab described, a group of Spanish-speaking senior citizen volunteers met with first- and second-year students twice

weekly on a one-to-one basis for unstructured conversation. Both students and staff benefited from the programme, and results indicate the practical value of incorporating the conversation lab into the regular foreign-language curriculum.

84–599 Werner, Reinhold (University of Erlangen–Nürnberg). *Das Bild im Wörterbuch: Funktionen der Illustration in spanischen Wörterbüchern*. [Pictures in dictionaries: the function of illustrations in Spanish dictionaries.] *Linguistik und Didaktik* (Munich, FRG), **49/50** (1982), 62–94.

Using numerous examples mostly from monolingual Spanish dictionaries, the case is argued for more systematic, purposeful and imaginative use of pictures in dictionaries. Definitions consisting of words alone are often circular and in any case require the use of a metalanguage that the dictionary user is in process of learning. So much more can be achieved with pictures, of which eight basic types are identified and exemplified.

The potential of pictures in dictionaries is then considered from various points of view. They have a greater impact on learners; they are essential for the designation of semantic primitives that cannot be further analysed in language; within the tradition of structural semantics, they can show the field components covered by a generic term, describe components composing a superordinate term, name the parts of complex items, and display the associations and paradigmatic relations of particular terms. Furthermore they can not only reproduce the appearance but illustrate the function of things, and thus bring together both description and functional definition.

Clearly, not all the illustration types will be used for all these possible purposes in any one dictionary. Rather they must be matched as is appropriate for the purpose of the dictionary and its prospective users.