
Teaching particular languages

Chinese

96–493 Hong, Wei (Purdue U.). On developing business Chinese. *Journal of Language for International Business* (Glendale, Arizona), **7**, 2 (1996), 28–37.

With the increasing demand and number of students who desire to compete in the international economy in their careers, their ability in terms of language communication with foreign business partners faces an enormous challenge. This paper examines the significance of foreign languages for business,

particularly business Chinese, in the '90s, its curriculum requirements, and the impact of business languages on international businesses. Furthermore, it proposes a developmental plan for business Chinese at the college level including goals, course materials, learning activities and teacher training.

Dutch

96–494 Hazenberg, Suzanne and Hulstijn, Jan H. (Vrije U., Amsterdam). Defining a minimal receptive second language vocabulary for non-native university students: an empirical investigation. *Applied Linguistics* (Oxford), **17**, 2 (1996), 145–63.

This study aimed to discover how many, and which, Dutch words an adult non-native speaker needs to know receptively in order to understand first-year university reading materials. Firstly, an assessment was made of the representativeness of a list of 23,550 words (lemmas) taken from a school dictionary for a 42 million-word token corpus of contemporary written Dutch. Using frequency as a criterion, it was found that text coverage substantially increased with up to 11,123 words (i.e. words occurring more than 100 times in the corpus), but not beyond. An assessment was next made of the representativeness of the same list of 23,550 words for a relatively small corpus of first-year university reading materials, in which the percentage of tokens covered did not

differ substantially from that in the larger corpus first analysed. A 140-item multiple-choice vocabulary test was then developed to measure receptive knowledge of 18,615 content words of the 23,550 list. This test was administered to (i) native speakers entering university as freshmen, (ii) non-native graduate students, and (iii) non-native prospective students taking a Dutch language entry examination test battery. Extrapolations of the test scores showed that the average vocabulary size of these three groups was 18,800, 15,800 and 11,200 respectively. It is concluded that the minimal vocabulary size needed for university studies is 10,000 base words, substantially more than the 3,000 or 5,000 suggested by earlier Dutch studies.

English

96–495 Allison, Desmond and others (U. of Hong Kong). Reading-writing connections in E.A.P. classes: a content analysis of written summaries produced under three mediating conditions. *RELC Journal* (Singapore), **26**, 2 (1995), 25–43.

A recent study by the authors has proposed a rationale for investigating the effects of mediating tasks upon a summary writing activity for tertiary-level students using English as an educational medium. The tasks in the study involved a group discussion or a reading comprehension exercise, with a third condition providing for immediate access to the text and summary instructions with no mediating activity. Following a brief review of the experimental design and procedures, the authors now present an original comparative analysis of the

content of summaries written by students under the three different task conditions (approximately 30 students in each group). The content analysis examines the selection of topics, their sequential development and especially their relative prominence in these summaries. The discussion of implications for teaching assesses the merits of mediating tasks as language activities and also comments on their probable effects upon final written outcomes.

96-496 Carrell, Patricia L. (Georgia State U.) **and others.** Personality types and language learning in an EFL context. *Language Learning* (Ann Arbor, Mich.), **46**, 1 (1996), 75-99.

This paper presents the results of a study of the relationships between the personality types of a group of English as a foreign language (EFL) students in Indonesia and various measures of their academic performance in a semester-long course including a series of EFL language measures. Students were entering a class of English majors (N = 76) at a university in Indonesia in the autumn of 1991. They were tracked through their performance in an Integrated Course, a 9-hour-per-week intensive basic course they needed to pass in order to move on to any second semester or higher course. The course is team-taught in 3 sections of students, with 3 teachers teaching each section. The students were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), which had been translated into Indonesian. The validity and reliability of using this as a measure

of students' personality types is reported and discussed. In addition, the students were tested monthly on reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. Results show that these EFL students are almost evenly divided between extroverts and introverts, with over 50% of the students being 1 of 2 (out of 16 possible) types: ESTJ (37%), ISTJ (21%). The distribution of types for these EFL students is similar to those of English as a second language (ESL) students in similar studies. Although extroversion and introversion are related to vocabulary and composite course scores, there are few other direct relationships between learners' personality types and their language performance. Implications for further research and for EFL/ESL classrooms are discussed.

96-497 Hargan, Noeleen (U. of Rome). Misguided expectations: EFL teachers' attitudes towards Italian university students' written work. *Language and Education* (Clevedon, Avon), **9**, 4 (1996), 223-32.

This paper offers a critical review of assumptions frequently encountered in connection with the teaching of writing in English as a second or foreign language at university level. It deals in particular with the suitability (or otherwise) of the models of academic research and writing proposed, particularly, but not only, in situations where the students' first language (L1) is the medium of instruction. Focusing on the situation of the Law, Politics and Economics Faculties of one particular

Italian university, it describes some of the problems which English-language teachers and students have faced in connection with cultural norms, writing skills and academic performance. In arguing that the central issue is a problem of cross-cultural communication rather than a strictly pedagogical one, the paper suggests that it is teachers' expectations, tasks, materials and evaluation criteria that are to change, and not students' behaviour.

96-498 Jacobs, George M. (SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore) **and Ball, Jessica** (Nanyang Technological U., Singapore). An investigation of the structure of group activities in ELT coursebooks. *English Language Teaching Journal* (London), **50**, 2 (1996), 99-107.

This article reports a study examining the use of group activities in English language teaching coursebooks published since 1990. Ten randomly selected coursebooks were analysed in order to find the number and percentage of group activities as a whole, and of those group activities rated as fostering co-operation. The results are discussed in light of

theory and research on co-operative learning, task-based language teaching, and the roles of learners, teachers, and coursebooks. Suggestions are made for how group activities can better foster co-operation among group members, by encouraging positive interdependence and individual accountability.

96-499 Meyer, Lisa (Carleton U., Ottawa). The contribution of genre theory to theme-based EAP: navigating foreign fiords. *TESL Canada Journal* (Montreal), **13**, 2 (1996), 33-45.

In this article social constructionist genre theory is utilised to illuminate several issues of debate in

theme-based English for academic purposes (EAP) pedagogy, including programme goals, course



design, and course content. Genre theory shows us that genre mastery requires a student to become enculturated into the community and its values, and that criteria for mastery of a genre are community-determined. It is argued, then, that EAP instructors cannot hope to teach students the specific skills they will require for all their future content courses. What they can do is to give students strategies that

will enable them more easily to enter and thus determine the expectations of, any community. Certain genre theorists propose that to give students strategies involves leading them through the processes of acquiring a genre in an authentic social community such as exists in content courses, and this article attempts to show that theme-based pedagogy may be failing to do this in several regards.

96-500 Pennington, Martha C. (City U. of Hong Kong). Pattern and variation in use of two languages in the Hong Kong secondary English class. *RELC Journal* (Singapore), **26**, 2 (1995), 80-105.

Language use observed in the English classes of eight Cantonese-English bilingual secondary teachers in Hong Kong is examined in relation to the presentation of lessons and other kinds of classroom activities. General patterns and individual variation

are reviewed, and a classification system of 'compensatory' and 'strategic' language use is developed to describe the findings of the author's study in the context of previous research on Hong Kong secondary classrooms.

96-501 Sasaki, Miyuki (Nagoya Gakuin U.) and **Hirose, Keiko** (Aichi Prefectural U.). Explanatory variables for EFL students' expository writing. *Language Learning* (Ann Arbor, Mich.), **46**, 1 (1996), 137-74.

This study investigated factors that might influence Japanese university students' expository writing in English. 70 students of low- to high-intermediate English proficiency were examined along a variety of dimensions, namely, second language (L2) proficiency, first language (L1) writing ability, writing strategies in L1 and L2, metaknowledge of L2 expository writing, past writing experiences, and instructional background. These multiple factors were considered as possible explanatory variables for L2 writing. Quantitative analysis revealed that (a) students' L2 proficiency, L1 writing ability, and metaknowledge were all significant in explaining the L2 writing ability variance; (b) among these 3 independent variables, L2 proficiency explained the largest portion (52%) of the L2 writing ability

variance, L1 writing ability the second largest (18%), and metaknowledge the smallest (11%); and (c) there were significant correlations among these independent variables. Qualitative analysis indicated that good writers were significantly different from weak writers in that good writers (a) paid more attention to overall organization while writing in L1 and L2; (b) wrote more fluently in L1 and L2; (c) exhibited greater confidence in L2 writing for academic purposes; and (d) had regularly written more than one English paragraph while in high school. There was no significant difference between good and weak writers for other writing strategies and experiences. On the basis of these results, an explanatory model for English as a foreign language writing ability is proposed.

German

96-502 Tisdell, Mariel (U. of Queensland). Incorporating German into the wider curriculum. *German Teaching* (Rugby), **13** (1996), 6-13.

This article suggests that second language teaching can be carried out through the medium of other subjects. Examples are given to show how German can be taught through Mathematics and Science. Mathematics is described as one of the easiest subjects to incorporate into the teaching of a foreign language, as it involves numbers and mathematical concepts. Apart from the wide range of vocabulary needed, relevant grammatical features of the German

language include the plural of nouns, expressions of quantity and verbs in the present tense and in the imperative. Science is also described as a particularly interesting and stimulating area for the purpose of teaching a second language. Relevant linguistic aspects include comparisons, statements of similarities and differences, and verbs expressing activities, changes and developments. An increasing number of Australian primary schools are now

teaching German in this way and the experience gained has made teachers consider this method for use in secondary schools. The conclusion lists the benefits to be expected from such a teaching

method, such as an increased range of vocabulary, a higher level of proficiency, a greater interest in various features of the language studied and an increased level of motivation amongst the pupils.

96–503 Vilar Sánchez, Karin (U. of Granada). Text(sorten)kompetenzerweiterung im Deutschunterricht für Ausländer: Formale und funktionale Analyse sowie Gegenüberstellung verschiedener Textsorten. [Extending text (type) competence in teaching German as a foreign language: formal and functional analysis and comparison of different text types.] *Zielsprache Deutsch* (Munich, Germany), **26**, 4 (1995), 180–94.

The advanced learner of German must be taught to distinguish between various types of text, despite the fact that in practice most texts are mixtures of various ideal text types. A sample lesson from the author's teaching is given, which shows the same incident being described in different contexts. Text types adduced are: oral, colloquial; semi-formal report (newspaper style); formal report (court proceedings); and literary text. Analysis of these text types is undertaken on parameters of lexis, tense structure and syntactic complexity. Words are

graded in tables according to pejorative, neutral and positive semantic content, e.g. *Mann, Kerl, Typ*. The tables are then compared for different text types. Use frequency of certain connectors (conjunctions, etc.) is similarly treated. It is argued that the type of lesson outlined is especially relevant for trainee translators, whose sensitivity to the 'markers' indicating text variety should thereby be increased. This facilitates translation from the foreign language using appropriate registers.

Latin

96–504 Ball, Robert J. and Ellsworth, J. D. (U. of Hawaii). The emperor's new clothes: hyperreality and the study of Latin. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis.), **80**, 1 (1996), 77–84.

The authors claim that the movement to teach Latin by the four skills approach, exemplified by the New York State syllabus 'Latin for communication', falls within the context of bizarre attempts to convince the public that a dead language is a living language. The psychological factors fuelling that movement arise from a perceived need by endangered Latin teachers to survive in a modern language world and from a romantic desire to re-create the past – where reality is replaced by 'hyperreality'. This obsession

with the 'real thing' has led to the creation of 'hyperreal Latin' – a prominent feature of the New York State syllabus, which essentially claims to teach students to speak, hear, write, and read Latin like the ancient Romans. The purpose of this article is to refute that spurious and unattainable claim, while calling for a return to an honest and reasonable way of teaching the classical language, along lines that help preserve its uniqueness and traditional integrity.

Russian

96–505 Thompson, Irene (George Washington U.). Assessing foreign language skills: data from Russian. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis.), **80**, 1 (1996), 47–65.

The purpose of this study was to assess the speaking, reading, listening, and writing proficiency of students of Russian after 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years of study using tests based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL) proficiency scale in order to gather empirical data on proficiency levels currently attainable within the context of academic Russian language programs.

The following questions were considered: (a) What are the proficiency levels of students of Russian in the four skills after 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 years of study? (b) Is there a significant positive correlation between proficiency levels in the four skills and levels of study, and what, if any, conclusions can be drawn from the findings with regard to basing language requirements of the ACTFL scale? (c) Is there a



significant positive correlation among proficiency levels in the four skills? (d) What problems are associated with setting proficiency standards for foreign language (FL) study which are based on the *ACTFL Guidelines*? Results indicated that each additional year of study resulted in a decrease in the proportion of lower proficiency learners and a concomitant increase in the proportion of learners at the next higher level, but the picture of proficiency that emerged from this study is one of overlapping

ranges of performances with no exact correspondence between levels of study and levels of proficiency in speaking, reading, listening, and writing. The correlations among the four skills were not particularly strong, suggesting that they follow different paths of development which do not always parallel each other. Concerns about using the 1986 *ACTFL Guidelines* for setting curricular goals for language study and for test development are discussed.

Spanish

96–506 Moore, Zena (U. of Texas, Austin). Teaching culture: a study of *piropos*. *Hispania* (Worcester, MA), **79**, 1 (1996), 113–20.

In spite of the fact that *piropos* are described in Spanish textbooks as 'sexist compliments', they continue to be taught as an aspect of Hispanic culture. But these textbook references, which constitute the primary sources of linguistic and cultural input for most Spanish students, appear not to be reliable sources. The information about *piropos*

presented in the textual readings is significantly different from information provided by native speakers, indicating possible cross-cultural differences in interpretations of *piropos* and underscoring the importance of validating sources of cultural information.