

## Teaching particular languages

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### ENGLISH

**85–387 Abbott, Gerry** (Manchester U.). Should we start digging new holes? *ELT Journal* (London), **38**, 2 (1984), 98–102.

This article responds to questions raised by John Rogers [see abstract 83–72]. His suggestion that we might as well stop teaching English to so many young people who eventually make no use of it is countered by considerations of non-interference, equality of educational opportunity, and the inherent value of foreign-language learning. On the other hand, his support for the teaching and use of the mother tongue is wholeheartedly endorsed, and it is suggested that many teachers of ESL have a contribution to make here.

**85–388 Weissberg, Robert C.** (New Mexico State U.). Given and new: paragraph development models from scientific English. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **18**, 3 (1984), 485–500.

The existence of the paragraph as an authentic feature of written English is not in doubt. However, there is evidence that the kinds of traditional rhetorical categories (such as definition, cause/effect, and comparison/contrast) commonly presented in ESL composition textbooks do not in fact accurately describe the majority of paragraphs actually written and published in English. As an alternative, a set of descriptive models for teaching paragraph development in ESL writing classes is offered here based on the 'given/new contract', a theory of information distribution developed by text linguists and validated by psychologists in studies of reading comprehension. Also described here is a study carried out to determine the ability of these alternative models to describe paragraph structures that occur in experimental research reports published in English. Results indicate that various patterns of given and new information which conform to the models are in fact regular features of the 60 paragraphs studied. Applications of the models to ESL composition classes are discussed, with special reference to courses in scientific and technical writing. The use of the given/new model at the editing stage is illustrated with examples from student papers.

### FRENCH

**85–389 Besse, Henri** (CREDIF/ENS de Saint Cloud). Eduquer la perception interculturelle. [Teaching cultural awareness.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **183** (1984), 46–50.

Learners interpret cultural phenomena, like linguistic phenomena, in the light of their own preconceptions. Contrary to the views of some experts, genuine communication is possible in the classroom, and even, when the teacher is a native speaker or the class

is working on authentic documents, intercultural communication. Though some learners welcome and enjoy the opportunity to be 'somebody else', others are reluctant owing to feelings of insecurity and a fragile self-image – hence the importance of work in small groups and of the attitude of the teacher in providing reassurance and compensating for such feelings. Introducing the cultural aspect makes language learning and teaching more interesting and enjoyable.

**85–390 Cabut, Hélène and others.** Où suis-je? De la relation apprenant/environnement. [Where am I? The learner/environment relationship.] *Mélanges Pédagogiques* (Nancy), 1983, 29–52.

During intensive French courses for engineers (mainly from S.E. Asia and Latin America) at Nancy and Lyon in the summer of 1983, experiments and activities took place with the aim of discovering how students interpreted and reacted to their environment, enhancing their cultural awareness, and providing data on learner/environment interaction.

Cultural factors were considered to be particularly important in second-language learning. Responses to an initial questionnaire suggested that those with favourable attitudes towards France found French easier. Interpretations of extracts of films shown out of context and without the soundtrack were compared with those of a French control group. Students were asked to study, observe and give their impressions of a particular district in the town where they lived, draw a mental map of the town, and identify, locate and find their way to a designated feature or public building, activities which required them to use their language in an authentically communicative situation while at the same time extending their knowledge of the town. The usual classroom activities were thus enriched by the element of personal experience.

**85–391 Kühn, Olaf and Rattunde, Eckhard.** Einsatz von Videoszenen über Städte- und Schulpartnerschaften im Französischunterricht. [The use of video scenes about twin towns and schools in the teaching of French. *Die Neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main), 83, 3 (1984), 330–47.

The motivation for language learning engendered in young learners by a stay abroad is often not sustained by or reflected in classroom language learning. School coursebooks, even those based on communicative principles, do not and indeed cannot prepare these young learners for exchange visits abroad or work through their experiences with them afterwards. Video, however, can be used successfully for this purpose. Commercially prepared video courses are of little use compared with those which are prepared by the schools for the particular visits in question. The advantages of video for such purposes are discussed and mooted disadvantages either questioned or rejected.

A detailed description of an experiment is given in which young learners at a Freiburg school were prepared for a visit to an exchange school in Besançon, France. Filmscripts were prepared and scenes enacted by pupils at the French school on the basis of these were filmed. Some scenes proved to be less useful than others for the purpose of preparing the Freiburg pupils for their visit to France, but those scenes

## 272 *Teaching particular languages*

chosen as useful demonstrated to them the kinds of situations in which they were likely to find themselves in Besançon, as well as the kind of deviations from the more standard French of the filmscripts which they could expect to encounter, the role of gesture in communication, and redundancy in communicative use of language. This preparatory work by means of video proved to be highly motivating for the Freiburg pupils. It is emphasised that such video work cannot stand alone but requires supplementation by other materials such as brochures and maps and that video scenes should be used to motivate further linguistic interaction among pupils.

**85–392 Stern, H. H.** (Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education). A quiet language revolution: second-language teaching in Canadian contexts – achievements and new directions. *Canadian Modern Language Review (Toronto)*, **40**, 5 (1984), 506–24.

The paper evaluates developments in the teaching of French as a second language in Canada over the past 20 years. Bilingual proficiency among Anglophones has improved enormously in this time; there is also greater public awareness and a better understanding of language issues – people feel it is not impossible to learn French. It was French immersion which created this change. Invented and launched by parents, it has gone from strength to strength and has spread across Canada and to other languages. Research has accompanied immersion from the beginning. It has shown that more French is learnt than under normal school conditions; it is not perfect bilingualism but is still a substantial advance, and the children's general educational development does not suffer.

Other factors which have contributed to the quiet language revolution are: public service language training, the work of the Commissioner of Official Languages, the organisation called Canadian Parents for French, and the research carried out by many different agencies.

The teaching of French in regular French language classes, so-called 'core French', did not fulfil its initial promise, though it acted as the trail blazer for immersion.

New directions for the future are (1) improvements in French immersion, (2) a re-orientation in core French, (3) greater emphasis on minority languages and foreign languages, (4) a new approach to language studies in universities, and (5) teacher training. The chief priority should be the review and reform of university language studies.

**85–393 Swain, Merrill** (Ontario Inst. for Studies in Ed.). A review of immersion education in Canada: research and evaluation studies. *ELT Documents* (London), **119** (1984), 35–51.

Results of research and evaluation studies associated with immersion programmes for majority languages (i.e. English-speaking children in Ontario and Quebec) indicate that pupils achieve high levels of proficiency in their second language (French) while developing and maintaining normal levels of first-language development. They attain near-native competence in comprehension but not in language production; their communicative skills are ahead of their grammatical correctness. The same curriculum

content is covered as in the regular English programme, without any long-term deficit in academic achievement.

It is preferable initially to teach literacy-related skills directly in one language only (either second or first). Once such skills are well established they will transfer readily to the other language, provided that it has been mastered. Ability to function in context-reduced cognitively demanding tasks in the first language underlies the ability to do the same in the second. Students who begin their immersion programme at a later age make more rapid progress in literacy-related aspects of the second language than do early immersion students. The ability to function in a context-reduced cognitively demanding task in the second language is a gradual learning process; immersion students take up to six or seven years to demonstrate levels of achievement in the second language comparable with those of native speakers. The language of tests is an important consideration when testing for knowledge of subject content.

For immersion education to achieve similar goals for minority-language children, their first language will need to play as strong a role cognitively, psychologically and culturally as it does for English-speaking Canadians.

## GERMAN

**85–394 Campana, Phillip J.** (Tennessee Technological U.). And now for a word from our sponsor: radio commercials for listening comprehension in German. *Unterrichtspraxis* (Philadelphia, Pa), **17**, 1 (1984), 39–43.

There are few materials which are suitable for training beginners in German in listening skills, and indeed there are few such materials available. Most listening materials are designed for the more advanced students, and yet beginners should indeed be taught how to listen to authentic materials and to develop strategies for coping with authentic vocabulary and structure.

Radio commercials are found to be particularly suitable as listening comprehension pieces for beginners. They are brief, contain redundancy of language, correspond to everyday language and contain a cultural message also. Moreover, radio commercials are designed to make the messages and slogans they contain memorable and cause something like an involuntary physical response on the part of the listener in that the words conjure up the appropriate pictures in the listener's mind. The subject of the radio commercial can be introduced by props and pictures which are then removed to encourage pure listening comprehension in which the students learn to use other strategies and resources for understanding. Radio commercials can be used for training in listening comprehension in the early stages and as the basis for dictations, for example. With more advanced students, commercials can be found which are suitable intensive listening exercises in which, for example, newly introduced grammatical structures are listened for. Some commercials are also useful for pronunciation exercises, while some can also be used to convey cultural similarities and differences between Germany and the learners' own country. Some commercials reflect the latest vernacular and its obvious inclusion of Americanisms while others exemplify German

## 274 *Teaching particular languages*

accents and dialects. Others reflect other cultural and social influences on German society such as that of the *Gastarbeiter*. The article offers examples of commercials suitable for all these purposes and indicates why they are suitable.

**85–395 Näf, Anton** (U. of Freiburg, Switzerland). Satzarten und Äusserungsarten im Deutschen. Vorschläge zur Begriffsbestimmung und Terminologie. [Sentence types and utterance types in German. Some proposals for definitions and terminology.] *ZGL* (Berlin, FRG), 12, 1 (1984), 21–44.

The descriptive apparatus used to label grammatical concepts in German linguistics is discussed. A section then illustrates the use of the terms 'Zukunft' and 'Futur', bringing out the distinction between the notion of futurity (the former) and the form of the verb (the latter). The discussion shows how in the linguistic literature the forms of sentence types have often been confused with their use or function.

A typology of sentence types is presented defining them strictly according to formal criteria, with mood as the primary distinctive feature. Six major types of sentence are distinguished and labelled by means of terms of Latin origin [*Deklarativsatz*, *Interrogativsatz*, etc.]. Then utterance types in German are treated and are labelled with commonly used terms, based on the German equivalent of the 'Threshold Level' specification [*Kontaktschwelle Deutsch als Fremdsprache*]. The relationship between sentence types and utterance types is discussed; a sentence type may express several communicative functions. Which of the potential utterance types is intended depends in each individual case on the concrete situation in which the utterance is made. Several examples of the relations between sentences and speech acts are given for German. Finally, the implications for mother-tongue instruction of the presented material are briefly touched upon.

**85–396 Pfeiffer, Mary Beechy** (Coll. of Wooster). Annäherungen an des Alltagsleben: Sachbezogene Dias als Mittel landeskundlichen Lernens. [Towards representing everyday life: specially prepared slides for use in the teaching of cultural studies.] *Unterrichtspraxis*, (Philadelphia, Pa), 17, 1 (1984), 10–27.

This article shows how slides can be used to supplement the cultural content of course books and indeed provide explanations for cultural points mentioned in coursebooks but insufficiently explained. Detailed examples are given of how slides can be used to supplement and explain particular remarks in a coursebook and of how such slide series should be selected. The aim is to bring German-speaking life close to the students and to help them understand the reasons for social phenomena which they might feel to be strange to them and their way of life. A series of slides in conjunction with a coursebook is discussed in terms of the help it gives students in social understanding as well as in vocabulary. By the inclusion of such slide series in German courses, students were motivated and became more willing to accept or approach with an open mind the aspects of German life which might seem strange.

**85–397 Tobin, Yishai** (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev). Linguistic theories and reading German: applying two linguistic theories to improve reading comprehension in German. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), **22**, 2 (1984), 95–108.

Case has been analysed according to quite different theories: Fillmore's deep structure case grammar and the more recent form-content analysis; each is summarised in turn. Pedagogically, case grammar is weak because the number of cases is somewhat arbitrary and indeterminate, and the meanings, functions and prepositions associated with them tend to overlap. However, these defects can be offset by the notion of Participation derived from form-content analysis; it assigns relative roles to participants in an event which can be described by a verb in a specific context. The semantic substance of systems of participation is, therefore, the degree of contribution to an event. While it can include many of the roles represented by case in natural language, it is not tied to formal case markings and ignores the genitive, for example, because it does not contribute to an event. It can therefore describe languages like German and English equally well, regardless of the relative importance case markings have in each.

For a pedagogic grammar, however, it does not matter which of these models more accurately represents reality, since both can be combined to produce a model that assists intermediate and advanced students of German to read better. By isolating the noun and verb elements according to the model, the reader will infer who is doing what to whom and thus crack the code of the more intractable German sentences.

**85–398 Wohlert, Harry S.** (Oklahoma State U.). Voice input/output speech technologies for German language learning. *Unterrichtspraxis* (Philadelphia, Pa), **17**, 1 (1984), 76–84.

Computers need special speech recognition devices to be able to analyse 'voice input' from a student. Such devices use a computerised process which analyses sounds and stores them as patterns of electronic signals, so-called templates, in the computer's memory. When the computer can match the template with the pattern of the student's voice input through a microphone, speech recognition occurs. The cost of such systems has fallen recently, making them more accessible to schools and colleges. The Scott Instruments Vet-2 system is described: it is a small box with an interface board for Apple or Franklin computers, a headset with microphone, a software package and documentation. It provides a step-by-step approach for programming self-designed lessons. The system was tested for classroom use by selecting 160 of the most commonly used German strong verbs, which are not usually mastered even by advanced students; these verbs were divided into groups of ten, and drills created to practise different forms. When the student's response is not accepted, he/she is prompted to try again. Another use is pronunciation practice.

A study of the effectiveness of this program showed that students worked longer in the language laboratory than on their own at home. They mastered 87 per cent of the verbs studied on the computer and only 67 per cent of those studied at home. The Vet-2 system does not distinguish unstressed vowels very well, strongly observes the rhythm of a sentence and, like the human ear, confuses certain consonants or consonant clusters.

## ITALIAN

**85–399 Zuanelli Sonino, Elisabetta.** L'insengamento dell'italiano con un approccio comunicativo. [A communicative approach to the teaching of Italian.] *Civiltà Italiana* (Florence), **6**, 1/3 (1983), 78–95.

Research into Italian has been historical or descriptive, with little direct relevance for teaching the language. Most available courses and teaching materials are traditional in type. A communicative approach requires study of who learns Italian as a second or foreign language and why – as language of culture and wider communication (Malta and Somalia), to retain a sense of national identity (emigrants), to acquire the national language, for business and professional reasons, and so on – in order to discover what their communicative needs are and whether teaching is to be addressed to individuals or communities. Appropriate syllabuses can then be devised.

## SPANISH

**85–400 Woehr, Richard** (California State U.). Of people, things and the Spanish reflexive. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), **22**, 3 (1984), 163–81.

An actor-focused classification of the situational contexts in which Spanish reflexive constructions appear is more readily grasped by the student striving for communicative competence than abstract syntax-based concepts, and actor–verb frames are also more meaningful than the often confused and confusing presentations based on traditional grammar.

Four earlier, syntactical approaches are examined and a threefold classification based on the conceptual message conveyed is proposed: (1) people acting – personal, involved and impersonal; (2) things happening – active, passive; (3) interaction – people or things (reciprocal action), two or more people involved in the same experience, people and things simultaneously. The step-by-step progression from people to things to people-and-things together is easier for the learner to identify and internalise. The metalanguage we use when teaching to present grammar should ideally be as concrete as the people and things to which the constructions themselves relate.