

Teaching particular languages

ENGLISH

84-231 Dorrity, Terry (Free U. of Brussels). Using logical programmes in ESP. *ELT Journal* (London), **37**, 2 (1983), 145-9.

The Scientific English course at the Free University of Brussels includes practice in the use of spoken English in a variety of situations. The heterogeneous nature of the groups means that there is a lack of common research experience, which precludes the situation where everyone is an 'expert' and informed discussion can take place. Logical problems provide a way of enabling all students to approach a topic as equals. [Two sample problems are discussed.]

The students were given the problems in English, took notes and had several days to consider them. The solutions had to be communicated in logical order and unambiguously. Vocabulary and structures which were likely to be needed were revised beforehand. The logical approach allowed the students to argue and question each other's solution.

84-232 Frye, Ann H. (U. of Bologna). On the acquisition of politeness in English as L2. *Papers on Work in Progress* (Bologna, Italy), **10** (1983), 6-12.

In a study of politeness strategies used by speakers of English as a second language (Italian university students at various proficiency levels), subjects were given a role-play situation to reveal their use of politeness features in speaking to superiors, subordinates and equal familiars. Positive and negative politeness can be distinguished: linguistic features of positive politeness include greetings, extended openings and closings, in-group identity markers, small talk, and back-channel cues; those of negative politeness include hedges, conventional indirectness, pre-sequences, and question-tags.

The data showed that some positive politeness features emerge quite early, especially greetings and pre-closings such as *okay*, which were almost always present, even in the speech samples of beginning students. With the partial exception of pre-sequences to directives, the acquisition and appropriate use of negative politeness strategies are considerably more difficult. In particular, forms of conventional indirectness were almost completely absent from the data. No doubt this is partly due to cultural differences: Italians are 'less polite' than British and, probably, Americans, i.e. they tend to use fewer indirect strategies to perform face-threatening acts. However, this may also be due to limited grammatical competence.

84-233 Hamp-Lyons, Elizabeth (Western Illinois U.). Motivation for learning English as a world language: integrative and instrumental. *World Language English* (Oxford), 2, 3 (1983), 145-9.

ESL/EFL teachers tend to assume that their students are integratively motivated (i.e. desirous of being assimilated into English culture); if this is not the case, the learning process may be negatively affected. On the other hand, long-stay students will need to adapt their behaviour to survive socially and academically in the host country. Resistance to integration into Western culture should not be resented by the teacher. Instrumental motivation can be equally as effective as integrative motivation in language learning. Teachers need to develop cross-cultural sensitivity – overseas experience, particularly in an alien rather than a similar culture, is valuable. In teaching, they should make a distinction between integration and adaptation, the latter being necessary to some extent, and not necessarily objectionable. It is possible to modify behaviour without compromising values. A comparative approach to culture is useful, either in the form of an optional course or as a vehicle for an advanced reading class. Some degree of academic acculturation is necessary even for students who are purely instrumentally motivated.

84-234 Havranek, Fleurette (IUT, U. of Paris XIII). Politique des langues et pédagogie aux adultes dans les grandes entreprises en France. [Language policy and adult education in large firms in France.] *AILA Bulletin* (Madrid), 2, 30 (1981), 62-73.

The place of English in the education and training programmes of 11 large companies (French and multinationals) is studied: its relative importance compared with other subjects, type and level of English taught, number of hours devoted to it, and selection of students. Unlike smaller firms, the large companies already had their own programmes and did not need the law of July 1971 to encourage them to organise courses for their employees in working hours. In practice English was always taught for business and professional reasons and to those who already had some knowledge, as firms were unwilling to spend the time and money required to bring beginners to an acceptable level. There was a conflict between the needs of the job and the number of hours which could be given to language classes. However, learners enjoyed the advantage of being taught in small groups. Teachers were all young English or American university graduates who enjoyed executive status in the companies they worked for. Their pay was higher but the hours were longer than if they worked in state education. Universities should be prepared to meet the demand for courses from smaller firms which lack the resources to provide their own.

84-235 Hiller, Ulrich. 'Contracted Forms' im gesprochenen Englisch. Ihre Frequenz und Distribution als Funktion des Sprachregisters. [Contracted forms in spoken English. Their frequency and distribution as a function of register.] *Die neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main), 82, 1 (1983), 15-27.

Following a definition of the term 'contracted forms', there is a discussion of the positions in which a contraction is possible and the different types are listed. The

presentation of contracted forms in technical and school grammars is briefly touched upon, whereby it becomes clear that the particular chapters are very unequal and indeed contradictory; frequency and distribution of these forms are only vaguely dealt with, if at all.

The aim of this study is to gain some clarity about frequency and distribution of contracted forms by means of a quantitative and qualitative analysis of three different corpora of spoken English. It is shown that frequency is a function of the language register: the higher the degree of informality, the higher the percentage of realised contractions. Thereby differences result, not only with regard to positive and negative contractions, but also within the individual morphological and structural patterns significant differences can be shown which reveal many illustrations given in grammars as being in need of correction. The problem of the contraction 'noun + auxiliary form' is quantitatively and qualitatively presented and a distinction made between regressive and progressive contractions.

84-236 Pickett, Douglas. Language and literature: spoken and written forms. *World Language English* (Oxford), 2, 3 (1983), 183-6.

English is not only the medium of one of the world's greatest literary traditions but also the primary language for the translation of other literatures. The written language of contemporary literature in English, including translation into English, is much more uniform than the many local spoken forms would lead us to expect. With the wide spread of literacy and verbal media, speech no longer takes precedence over writing. Soon, communities the world over will have the visual dimension of language. The uniformity of the code of written English counterbalances the dialectal fragmentation of English as it grows into a world language.

84-237 Scholfield, P. J. (University Coll. of N. Wales). The role of bilingual dictionaries in ESL/EFL: a positive view. *Guidelines* (Singapore), 4, 1 (1982), 84-98.

Instead of proscribing all use of bilingual dictionaries (BDs), the teacher should evaluate the available alternatives and teach pupils how to make effective use of them. There is an important distinction between comprehension use and production use of dictionaries. For comprehension a large English vocabulary is needed, and the meaning is the critical information in the entries. For production a smaller English vocabulary should be covered, and the focus is on all the kinds of information (in addition to meaning) which must be supplied to enable the learner to use a word correctly. Although the teacher's eventual aim is to wean the learner on to good monolingual English dictionaries (such as Hornby), no great harm will result from use of an English → L 1 BD. Three main points for the teacher to look for are a wide coverage of L2 items treated, accessibility (such as strict alphabetical order for derived words), and accuracy of information offered about L2 items.

Many of the skills needed to use a BD are the same as those needed for monolingual dictionary usage. They include working out what item is causing the learner not to understand the sentence in question, recognising inflections, using English alphabetical

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order fluently, learning to look in more than one place, and deciding which of the meanings fits the context where the unknown item was met. Actual practice with the teacher in class is the best policy.

84–238 Skeldon, Phil and Swales, John (U. of Aston in Birmingham). Working with Service English timetables. *ELT Journal* (London), **37**, 2 (1983), 138–44.

The most common difficulty facing the teacher of Service English is low priority in timetabling, resulting in few hours and the worst times of the day. English 'mini-weekends' are proposed as a possible partial solution and the article describes one such experiment. The Friday night and Saturday morning were regarded as an opportunity for more intensive and integrated language practice, the content not to be too 'heavy' and the heterogeneous group of participants to get to know each other better than was possible in the usual classes. A six-hour problem-solving activity involving work in small groups was selected: groups were asked to design an automatic music machine. After being given introductory reading material for practice in 'information search' reading, the groups familiarised themselves with the basic principles, compared results, then each group produced a design to suit suggested available materials. They then watched a television programme in which teams were set the same task of devising a music machine, and afterwards modified their own designs according to what they had seen and learned.

For the final presentation, groups produced a master version of their design and completed a short technical report on its development. The mini-weekend ended with an evaluation of the designs. Students enjoyed the experiment, but half would have liked an optional 'support system' of language exercises on specific points.

FRENCH

84–239 Candel, Danielle. A propos de dictionnaires du français langue étrangère. [Dictionaries of French as a foreign language.] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **49** (1983), 110–26.

The compiler of a dictionary for foreign learners encounters in a more acute form the same constraints and problems of selection and definition as all dictionary makers, but enjoys the advantages of a clearly defined public. Seven French-as-a-foreign-language dictionaries were compared and studied. They varied widely in their professed aims, in size, and in the type of vocabulary included. Most were directed towards young learners, one was intended for adults and one claimed to be suited to mother-tongue users also. Some inconsistencies between their aims and the actual dictionary entries were noted. All were illustrated, most contained explanations and commentaries, sometimes in excess of what was required.

A good dictionary assists the foreign learner to grasp the meaning of words in everyday use, avoiding literary terms and confining itself to what is needed for a minimum command of the language. Definitions should be clear and accompanied by examples. Illustrations which are apt and explicit are to be welcomed.

84-240 Chansou, Michel. Pour une réflexion sur la nomenclature des dictionnaires de l'école élémentaire. [On elementary school dictionaries.] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **49** (1983), 127-46.

Teachers of 54 elementary classes in Montereau, a *circonscription* including the old city, new urban areas and country districts, replied to a questionnaire on the dictionaries they used with their classes. The *Larousse des débutants* was the most popular, with the *Nouveau Larousse élémentaire* in second place. Teachers felt that some technical terms should be included in an elementary school dictionary but rejected slang and colloquial language. However, they were prepared to admit many bookish words, unlikely to be meaningful to a child.

84-241 Chiss, Jean-Louis (École Normale de Cergy-Pontoise) **and Filliolet, Jacques** (U. of Paris X). Des changements théoriques dans la linguistique au renouveau de l'exercice de grammaire? [Could changes in linguistic theory lead to a revival of the grammar exercise?] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **48** (1982), 46-61.

A discussion of the influence of linguistic theory on French mother-tongue teaching in French schools, illustrated by an examination of four recent textbooks. Discourse/conversation analysis approaches have far-reaching implications for the consideration of the effectiveness of the exercises and activities pupils are required to do in the classroom. Exercises are used very extensively (sometimes almost without regard for their value), with the aim of ensuring that pupils perform 'language activities', and this '*région de l'exercice*' tends to reduce the emphasis (and time) given to exposition.

84-242 Descamps, J. L and Vaunaize, R. Le dictionnaire au jour le jour en milieu adulte. [Day-to-day use of dictionaries by adults.] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **49** (1983), 89-109.

Three hundred and eighty adults (members of clubs and associations and parents of schoolchildren contacted through the school) were asked whether they owned a dictionary and how they used it. They were also asked to keep a record of the number of times they consulted their dictionary over a period of one month and the reason. Only monolingual French dictionaries were included. One hundred and seven replied (more women than men).

The most common reason for referring to the dictionary was to check the spelling or look up the meaning of a word. Most users were satisfied with their dictionary. The most common criticisms concerned the absence of the word sought and circular definitions. Schools should teach the use of dictionaries.

84-243 Eisermann, Helmut. Behandlung von Sachtexten im Französischunterricht. [The treatment of factual texts in the teaching of French.] *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht* (Stuttgart, FRG), **64** (1982), 283-94.

In teaching French civilisation, factual texts are now accepted, though still under-used when compared with literary texts. Authentic factual texts, e.g. newspaper cuttings, require the student to have much of the prior knowledge a writer takes for granted

in his French readers, though fabricated factual texts can be used in class in the early stages. In both cases, valuable support can be given to the textbook by the use of such texts in the language acquisition stage (*Spracherwerbphase*). Practice in cursory reading, summarising, role playing, etc., can be given to get students involved early in the communicative concerns of the target speech community. At the transition stage (*Übergangstufe*) the choice of texts should be functionally based. At the higher stage (*Aufbaustufe*) factual texts can, like literary texts, be analysed into the structural, rhetorical and grammatical units that give them coherence and, after analysis, exercises of synthesis and reconstruction can be set. [An example of such analysis is carried out on a French text about tourism in Corsica.]

84–244 Ewald, Dieter. La fable: un genre qui évolue – Zur Erarbeitung der literarischen Evolution im Französischunterricht der Sekundarstufe II. [The fable: a developing genre – analysis of literary development in upper-secondary-level French.] *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht* (Stuttgart, FRG), **65** (1983), 3–11.

Ability to analyse the development of literature and appreciate literary genres gives the school student a deeper understanding of literature. The fable is an excellent medium for developing this awareness of genre in students. This article demonstrates how La Fontaine's fable *Le Corbeau et le Renard* can be used as a basis for analysis, the ultimate aim being to encourage students to produce their own fables.

Students are led through various stages of analysis during which they become aware of the structure of the fable, its comparative importance in France and Germany, its treatment in modern times, its use as a medium of political satire and how different versions of it reflect changing moral attitudes within France and outside. They are then stimulated by means of modern fable texts and comic strips, etc., to write their own fables.

84–245 Powell, Robert and Littlewood, Peter (U. of Bath). Why choose French? Boys' and girls' attitudes at the option stage. *British Journal of Language Teaching*, **21**, 1 (1983), 36–44.

A survey of attitudes to French among third-year pupils was carried out in two comprehensive schools, to investigate whether there was any correlation between attitudes to French and various other factors including sex, social class, intention to continue with the subject, the job the pupil expected to do on leaving school and whether the pupil had ever visited France.

In both schools, more girls opted for French than boys. Their attitude to France and the French language was more positive than the boys'; they were more confident in their view of French as it affected themselves. When boys chose French, it was for instrumental reasons, such as filling in the timetable or finding another examination subject. Girls enjoyed written work more than boys, though both sexes were less enthusiastic about spoken French. A surprise was that social class played no significant role in the distribution of attitude scores.

The attitudes of the girls were more conducive to success in the subject than those of the boys. Paradoxically, the jobs the girls expected to take up were not ones in which

a foreign language was an obvious requirement; they may be the victims of sex-stereotyping which makes girls think that language examinations will stand them in good stead. For a majority of the boys, a language was simply an unnecessary requirement for an unskilled job. Pupils complained about the difficulty of understanding French, about having to work from the blackboard or from the book. Neither boys nor girls thought of French as a 'girls' subject'. Pupils who scored high on the attitude tests opted for French in the fourth year. They were mainly of professional and clerical supervisory parental occupations, and tended to be those who had visited France. Teachers seemed to consider the cultural aspects of language learning to be paramount, but pupils made this aspect a very low priority.

84-246 Vigner, Gérard. L'exercice en français langage étrangère. [The exercise in French as a foreign language.] *Études de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **48** (1982), 62-79.

The exercise, defined as a language task broken down into a repetitive sequence of minimal items based on a homogeneous structure and permitting little or no variety of student response, has become the inevitable accompaniment of foreign-language learning whatever the approach adopted. The old grammar-translation exercises have given way to structural ones, replaced in their turn by the new exercises which set the task in a situational context and attempt to introduce phonological and other non-grammatical elements. The widespread use of the exercise, however, reflects teacher convenience as much as any deliberate choice of approach to language learning and teaching. The presumed universal validity of the exercise may be doubted. There is need of exercises based on cognitive theories of language acquisition. Research has a role to play in improving classroom practice.

84-247 Wojnicki, Stanislaw (Warsaw U.). Frequency analysis in preparing LSP reading courses: verb conjugation in French chemical texts. *Glottodidactica* (Poznań, Poland), **15** (1982), 91-9.

A corpus of French chemical texts was analysed, concentrating on verb conjugation [lists of results]. Results were highly homogeneous, despite the various domains of chemistry and the different styles of the authors. The analysis shows which moods, tenses, voices and persons are necessary for understanding such texts in a reading course. The criteria outlined for this research would aid in working out minimal grammatical syllabuses for LSP courses.

GERMAN

84-248 Hartmann, R. R. K. Das zweisprachige Wörterbuch im Fremdspracherwerb. [The bilingual dictionary in foreign-language learning.] *Germanistische Linguistik* (Marburg, FRG), 3/6 (1980) [publ. 1983], 73-86.

A survey of dictionary use among 185 teachers and learners of German in south-west England was conducted to elicit information in the specific dictionaries used, frequency and purpose of use, and the kind of information sought.

A wide variety of dictionaries was found to be in use (the most popular being Cassell's), mostly acquired early on in the study of German, though the majority received no advice on which to buy, and over 90% had never had systematic practice in its use. Most used the dictionary at least once a week, primarily for translation into or out of German. The information required was largely about meaning, grammar, or usage; information on pronunciation and etymology was seldom sought. Grammatical words were looked up more than slang or taboo words. Some implications of these findings for the form of learners' dictionaries are discussed.

84-249 Kramersch, Claire J. Discourse function of grammar rules: topic construction in German. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis), 67, 1 (1983), 13-22.

German attaches great importance to logical relations in discourse and to the concept of narrative progression. It relies on word order and on the alternation of theme and rheme to construct topics. While English often uses separate propositions or frames the theme so that the integrity of the subject remains, topic establishment in German is built into the syntactic structure. Awareness of the discourse function of German syntax on the part of teachers and grammar writers would help English speakers learning German understand some of the many non-subject-centred but rather theme-centred structures of the German language. Examples in which English speakers typically re-establish subject prominence are, for instance, passive constructions (*ich werde gedankt*; *das Bett ist nur einmal drin geschlafen worden*), infinitive constructions (*der Arzt hat geraten, meine Frau ins Krankenhaus zu gehen*; *sie will ihr Mann Autofahren lernen*), focus constructions (*mehr Schlaf ist was ich brauche*; *das ist was ich glaube*). They also prefer the subject-prominent relative clause to the typically German theme-centred extended modifier construction. Contrastive exercises could clarify the differences in thematic progression in English and German discourse.

The findings confirm the axiom that no syntactic structure can serve as a substitute for any other. Drills and exercises should not lead the student to believe, for example, that the active is a substitute for the passive voice. Syntactic choices are made by the speaker/writer according to the perceived needs of the communication. No linguistic feature should be taught outside the context of the communication which gives it its meaning in discourse. In this context, the role of rhythm and intonation in expressing the choices of the speaker is essential. Intonation should be taught as an integral part of the syntactic feature.

Instead of the grammatical syllabus found in traditional textbooks, a discursive syllabus, built around the communicative needs of topic construction, might be more useful for developing communicative competence at all stages of second language learning. It would bridge the gap between the formal grammar lesson and the informal conversational activities.

The German language offers a good example of the way in which syntax meets the discursive needs of speakers/hearers and writers/readers engaged in communication. These needs are rooted in networks of conceptual relations which are in part language- and culture-specific. A pedagogic grammar should put the emphasis on the ways in which the foreign language conceptualises reality and on the syntactic realisation of those concepts for the construction of discourse.

RUSSIAN

84–250 Borowsky, Viktor A. Hörverstehen im Russischunterricht. [Listening comprehension in the teaching of Russian.] *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht* (Stuttgart, FRG), **63** (1982), 177–83.

Training in listening comprehension has been more carefully developed in the USSR and the GDR than in the West, and their methods can be applied to the teaching of Russian as a foreign language in West Germany. The methodology involves training in repetition, anticipation, auditory analysis and memory, understanding of Russian spoken at normal speed and gist comprehension. Various exercises are described. Some concentrate on partial skills such as the identification of phonetic features, e.g. in unstressed syllables, or on word recognition in different lexical and syntactic environments. Short or adapted texts are used to practise detailed understanding; longer texts, often authentic excerpts from television or radio, serve for gist comprehension. Understanding is tested in the mother tongue: this is justified as a necessary feature of training.

SPANISH

84–251 Lucas, Geoff (Trinity and All Saints Coll., Leeds). Pupil-led group work in Spanish (or how to make yourself redundant in the classroom and enjoy it!). *Vida Hispanica*, **32**, 2 (1983), 26–31.

A team of four adults carried out a project with a third-year mixed-ability group in a comprehensive school, in their second term of learning Spanish. Involvement was confined to one out of four weekly lessons, and was concerned with oral exploitation/extension work, with the four adults as group leaders. Each mixed-ability group worked on short aural/oral activities planned in advance by the team. After three weeks, group leaders chosen from among the pupils took over. Sets of group leader notes were devised to guide them. Many activities involved a combination of skills for variety and as support for less confident pupils. The pupil leaders were left to their

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own devices as much as possible: the team intervened only if invited, but kept a checklist of the number and type of interventions made. Pupils adapted quickly to the new way of working and showed themselves willing and able to assume much of the responsibility for, and control over, their own learning. It was necessary to have at least one 'reserve' group leader in case of illness; leaders had to be trained in preliminary briefing sessions to pronounce words correctly. Pupils all responded entirely positively to the experience; 20 out of 26 had been leaders by the end of the project and all but one found the task 'easier and better than I expected'. All but one of the pupils later opted to continue Spanish in the fourth year.