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# Teaching particular languages

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## English

**89-353 Allwright, Joan** (U. of Lancaster). Don't correct – reformulate! *ELT Documents* (London), **129** (1988), 109–16.

Traditional ways of giving learners feedback about their writing tend to concentrate on surface errors of syntax, lexis, etc., ignoring the more central issues of composition which cannot be dealt with consistently by notes in the margins. Not only is such feedback inefficient, but it constitutes 'spoon-feeding' and reduces the students' chances of developing the autonomy they need as writers after their EAP writing classes have finished. The students need to be able to accept responsibility for editing, correcting and proof-reading their own texts.

An alternative form of feedback is reformulation, i.e. an attempt by a native writer to understand what a non-native writer is trying to say and then to re-write it in a form more natural to the native writer. A reformulator is likely to make the sort of changes which supply order and cohesion if these are lacking in the original text [example].

Since the author lacked native speakers with

whom to pair all the students, a strategy was developed involving class discussions of one reformulation of one representative non-native text. The first stage is to set a common writing task of which the basic content is provided by the teacher in the form of notes, graphs, diagrams, etc. Students form groups to decide how to use the information and order their ideas. Students then write up their text out of class, being encouraged to write several drafts. The teacher reads all final drafts and selects one for reformulation. The non-native and reformulated version are then typed for clarity and to preserve anonymity. The class then compares and discusses the two versions. After this session, everyone revises and edits their own drafts, which are returned with comments and any corrections. The students are soon able to do their own reformulations of fellow-students' texts, as their autonomy develops.

**89-354 Alptekin, Cem** (Boğaziçi U., Istanbul). Chinese formal schemata in ESL composition. *British Journal of Language Teaching*, **26**, 2 (1988), 112–16.

Studies have shown that different cultures have different ways of viewing the world and of expressing thought. A brief summary of the classical Chinese world view shows that there are fundamental differences from the Western perspective. In the West events are seen in terms of cause and effect and history is seen as progressing in a linear movement. A Chinese approach emphasises history as having a cyclical movement, without a fixed starting point and with events occurring through 'meaningful coincidences'. Opposites can be seen as complementary.

These features are seen in Chinese writing and

speech, where the interrelatedness of all phenomena is emphasised and where comparison is often employed rather than syllogism and opposite ideas are seen as complementary rather than in conflict. To Westerners the Chinese style of communication may appear indirect.

A survey of 42 Chinese graduate student compositions at Ohio State University revealed many of the features of Chinese thinking and rhetoric. This clearly showed that teachers need to be aware of the relevant cultural differences in order to help students conform to the thought pattern of the language and culture being taught.

**89-355 Budd, Roger** (U. of Canterbury). Simulating academic research: one approach to a study-skills course. *ELT Journal* (Oxford), **43**, 1 (1989), 30–7.

A simulation of a piece of genuine academic research was set up as a way of practising directly the skills required. The paper describes the month-long experiment, carried out by a multinational group of students on a pre-session study skills course. The rationale for the simulation is presented, and a description of the day-to-day progress includes examples of task sheets provided at different stages and of students' abstracts of the papers they pre-

sented. A short evaluation includes a summary of the skills that had been practised. The experiment worked better for some students than for others; comment is made on the way in which cultural differences affected students' performance. Recommendations for future courses are made. The simulation was felt to have reflected real-life processes in a very productive way.

**89-356 Dunkel, Patricia A.** Academic listening and lecture notetaking for L1/L2 students: the need to investigate the utility of the axioms of good notetaking. *TESL Canada Journal* (Montreal), **6**, 1 (1988), 11-23.

A review of materials over the past 20 years reveals the variety of instructional approaches taken to help L2 students develop academic listening and notetaking skills. There is a considerable amount of interest in providing pre-university ESL/EFL students with experience in encoding and decoding spoken academic discourse.

The literature concerning L1 notetaking shows that there is a positive correlation between notetaking and information recall (17 out of 35 studies support this view). There has been little research on L2 notetaking: the methodological approaches used in investigating L1 notetaking divide into the naturalistic approach and analytic experimental methods, both of which have drawbacks. Both approaches should be drawn on in L2 notetaking research.

The axioms of good notetaking were largely

framed intuitively. Though written with L1 notetakers in mind, they are relevant for teachers trying to develop the notetaking skills of L2 learners. Guidelines suggest that teachers: (1) show students that different styles of notetaking are appropriate to different aims and subject matter; (2) make clear the organising principle of different lectures, (3) use advance organisers or skeleton notes to make the ideational scaffolding clear, (4) teach students to recognise verbal signposts (rhetorical cues) in a lecture which makes evident the structure of the information, (5) teach students to flag changes of topics and themes, (6) point out that lecturers may use humour or asides to maintain attention, (7) allow sufficient time for notetaking, and (8) encourage students to take notes, and then provide feedback on how they might be improved. [Possible directions for further research are suggested.]

**89-357 Evans, Eston E.** (Tennessee Technological U., Cookeville). 'Advanced' ESL reading: language competence revisited. *System* (Oxford), **16**, 3 (1988), 337-46.

Some 237 overseas students at US universities were tested on their ability to recognise which noun phrase goes with the last verb in sentences such as *John has promised Bill to leave* and *The businessman Mr Smith wanted John to meet was in New York*; they scored much worse than a native-speaker control group on all five syntactical patterns studied. This shows that even advanced learners may have problems with syntactic processing in reading, and

may use Richek's 'Minimal Distance Principle', assuming that the nearest noun must be the subject of a verb.

We should therefore be cautious of fashionable approaches emphasising only lexical comprehension and top-down strategies in the teaching of reading. Bottom-up processing and attention to syntactic detail also need to be taught.

**89-358 Remsbury, John A.** (U. of Mohammed Ben Abdullah, Fez). Interference-problems of Arabic-speaking learners of English and French. *British Journal of Language Teaching*, **26**, 2 (1988), 119-20 and 125.

Arabic speakers will probably have more difficulty learning French in an area such as the Gulf, where English is widely used. In North Africa, French is the more important language and so English may be more difficult to learn. Various problems can arise for Arabic speakers transferring between English and French. Similar words can be spelt slightly differently, there can be confusion concerning a silent 'h', and similar sounding words and phrases can have different meanings. The English Present Perfect tense can be used to indicate past events which have a link with the present. French can only

express this by adding extra words to the verb. French and Arabic possess a similar intonation and pronounce 'r' similarly. The regular, stressed pulses of English can take many years for a student to identify.

Language students often take a long time to realise that certain genres of both French and English literature should not be taken too literally, e.g. satire. As this applies to both languages, the study of English and French literature may assist an Arabic speaker to understand the literature of the other country.

**89-359 Snow, Marguerite Ann** (California State U., LA) **and Brinton, Donna M.** (U. of California, LA). Content-based language instruction: investigating the effectiveness of the adjunct model. *TESOL Quarterly* (Washington, DC), **22**, 4, (1988), 553-74.

This article encourages linking English/ESL courses with content courses to integrate better the different skills required for academic success by linguistically and academically weak students. The example used is the seven-week Freshman Summer Program (FSP) at the University of California (UCLA).

Undergraduate students typically cannot recognise relevant data. They need help with analysis and the organisation of arguments from several sources. They must focus on critical writing and thinking skills. Language and content instruction must be integrated.

FSP students, mainly science majors, are generally low-income, ethnic or linguistic minority students. The non-native speakers of English are often Asians with an American secondary education. Twelve to

fourteen language classes and eight content classes are held weekly. Tutorial and counselling services are available.

Students claimed that FSP helped them adjust well the UCLA, its facilities, and its academic demands. It increased self-confidence. They appreciated help with skills like time-management, note-taking, pre-writing strategies, proof-reading and preparation of reading guides. Few FSP students dropped out of college and a respectable GPA was maintained overall. ESL FSP students had considerably lower placement scores than non-FSP ESL students, but afterwards performed just as well in testing. Student motivation in the language class increases in direct proportion to the relevance of its activities.

**89-360 Tahririan, M. H.** (Shiraz U., Iran). Attitude and methodology in teaching English as a foreign language. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (New Delhi, India), **13**, 1 (1987), 93-100.

Following the Islamic revolution in Iran, foreign language teaching, particularly of English, came into question by both learners and teachers, and became unpopular as an imposition of the former regime. Eventually it was decided to retain English in the curriculum; students felt that it would promote rather than harm their revolutionary goals.

Two questionnaires were carried out, one for teachers and another for students, to investigate attitudes, methods and materials. Of the teachers, 58 were from guidance schools and 32 from high schools – all were Persian. Some 859 pupils in the last year of high school or equivalent returned questionnaires. Despite their motivation for learning English, students did not feel satisfied with what they were learning: they learned little or nothing about the culture of target language speakers, they

rarely had an opportunity to speak English, they thought their materials were too simple for them, and they felt English should be considered as being more significant than other courses and allocated more time.

The data obtained from the teachers showed a disconcerting amount of pessimism and disappointment. They felt that because students did not know why they were learning English, motivation was low; textbooks were unsuitable. Their replies showed that the teachers had done little to counter these problems. The dominant methodology was grammar-centred. The teachers complained about lack of time allocated to English (three hours per week). Things are unlikely to improve for students unless teachers' problems are tackled, and there is a consequent shift in their attitudes and methods.

**89-361 Weir, Cyril** (U. of Reading). Academic writing – can we please all the people all the time? *ELT Documents* (London), **129** (1988), 24-34.

Questionnaires for staff and students (both British and overseas students) investigated problems experienced in academic writing at tertiary level, and the criteria applied by staff to assess written work. This article deals only with the part of the questionnaire which dealt with the standards desired of overseas students as compared with their British counterparts.

It was found that subject tutors were more concerned with content than with mechanical accuracy. The most important criteria in their assessments of written work are the relevance and adequacy of the subject content, the clarity of the message and the arrangement and development of written work.

**89–362 Zhou Zhijian.** From General English to EST: a proposal to reform China's service English teaching. *TESL Canada Journal* (Montreal), **6**, 1 (1988), 51–9.

This paper gives a brief survey of service English teaching in China and proposes reform based on the theory and practice of the ESP/EST approach. The survey describes the course materials, classroom teaching activities, and students' reactions to them under the General English approach now prevalent in China, while at the same time noting an apparent upsurge of interest in EST among Chinese learners and teachers of English. The proposal argues for a

shift from General English to EST and offers solutions to such problems as the preparation of EST course materials, the training of EST teachers, and the testing of EST learners. The paper also reveals how expatriate teachers of English working in China could assist in the reform and why textbooks produced in the U.S. and Britain do not suit Chinese students of science and engineering very well.

## French

**89–363 Chouf, Jean-Claude** (U. of Regina). Morphosyntaxe et sémantique: les phrases disloquées. [Morphosyntax and semantics: dislocated sentences.] *Bulletin of the CAAL* (Montreal), **7**, 2 (1985) [publ. 1989], 29–38.

One area of applications of linguistic notions to the teaching of French as a second language is the use of dislocated sentences. In this article the authors attempt to define the limits and possibilities of an exercise involving reconstruction of dislocated sentences, and at the same time report on in-class experience with the exercise. In order to qualify as a 'dislocated sentence', certain requirements that determine in part the limits of its use must be met. Sentences currently used in class are essentially dictionary examples, due to their typical organisation around a semantic 'core'. Dislocation consists of presenting the student with a column of disarranged sentence elements, each conserving its original morphological marks. Thus the exercise is

one of reconstruction and not of creation. It is useful in controlling mastery of the language and the vocabulary, but also aids in learning, the teacher passing from one student to another correcting attempts at reconstruction as the exercise progresses. In this way, learning and its control focus on the major linguistic aspects of an utterance, while pinpointing the morphosyntactic and semantic constraints of the production of a plausible sentence. The dislocated sentence becomes an integrated learning experience insofar as morphology is associated with practical knowledge and with the logic of the real world. Midway between recognition and production, the dislocated sentence can be classified as a complete tool.

**89–364 Dubuisson, Colette** (U. of Quebec at Montreal). La notion de grammaticalité abordée à l'aide d'un exercice informatisé. [The notion of grammaticality brought to the aid of a computerised exercise.] *Bulletin of the CAAL* (Montreal), **7**, 2 (1985) [publ. 1989], 79–89.

Anyone who has attempted to teach the notion of grammaticality to primary school students understands how delicate the subject can be. It is often difficult for students to comprehend what determines whether or not a series of words constitutes a sentence. In many cases, not only do they produce ungrammatical sentences spontaneously when writing, but they also experience great difficulty in evaluating the grammaticality of a written text

presented to them. In this paper, the authors examine how they came to these findings and describe the computerised exercise (Phrases/Système PLATO) that allowed them to examine the subject with second-level primary students. From there, they show how this exercise allowed them to bring the students to formulate their own interesting generalisations on word order, sub-categorisation of verbs, and structure of a sentence in French.

**89-365 Jaussaud, Françoise** (American Sch., Madrid). Faut-il mettre 'un bonnet rouge' à la grammaire française? [Liberation for French grammar?]. *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **222** (1989), 45-50.

Tradition is more important than efficiency in the teaching of French grammar. The new methods used in Madrid's American School will not be used in France where their effectiveness has been recognised but the approach judged unacceptable. Grammar has become a respected old lady whose frailty is ignored. Grammar and communication are seen as mutually exclusive and the language is becoming poorer as a result. We must liberate the old lady from her prison.

The verb is the root of all grammar and traditional thinking concerning it must be ignored. The writer presents four tables of about 20 verbs, each allowing

the study of the morphology of all verbs at any time. Irregular verbs disappear as a category. The first stage is the present tense and basic grammatical structure. Then comes a study of other tenses. Each tense is studied in relation to other points of grammar, vocabulary and other skills. Grammar, an explosion of language emanating from the verb, is revitalised and leads to communication. It must become less of an intellectual exercise and must lose its taboos. Methods must be rejuvenated, and flexible, motivating educational materials must be created.

## German

**89-366 Delisle, Helga H.** (New Mexico State U.). Communicative function of contracted prepositional forms in German. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis), **72**, 3 (1988), 277-82.

In German, certain combinations of preposition and determiner can occur in two forms: a full form (e.g. *an dem, auf das*) and a contracted form (*am, aufs*). *Er kletterte auf das Dach* or *aufs Dach* (He climbed on the roof) are both possible. It is argued that, far from being optional, the choice of form is constrained by factors such as stress on the determiner, or whether the following noun is modified by a relative clause (both requiring the full form). The fact that contraction can also be obligatory [examples] cannot be explained by informality of style. Instead, the author looks to the role of contracted and full forms in guiding the hearer towards the referent of the noun in the prepositional phrase. Use of the

contracted form assumes that the referent is known to both speaker and hearer and is uniquely identifiable [examples]. Otherwise the full form is used.

Combinations of preposition and determiner which never contract, may contract, and must contract are discussed. Implications for teaching are outlined, and it is recommended that the initial emphasis should be on teaching cases of obligatory contraction, and using exercises based on pairs of contrasting conversational exchanges. Analysis by students of cases occurring in authentic texts, and translation into German, are also suggested.

**89-367 Götze, Lutz and Pommerin, Gabriele.** Bilinguale und interkulturelle Konzepte vor dem Hintergrund der Zweitspracherwerbsforschung. [Bilingual and intercultural approaches in the context of research into second-language acquisition.] *Ziellsprache Deutsch* (Munich, FRG), **4** (1988), 31-40.

Despite developments in research, teacher-training and curricular material, attempts to clarify educational issues relating to the children of immigrant families in West Germany have failed. Over 60% of such children leave school with no qualification and almost 10% of Italian and Turkish pupils attend schools for children with learning difficulties. Approaches such as simple immersion in the mainstream or teaching in homogeneous national groups are rejected by the authors, as is the

traditional view that success in L2, and therefore educational achievement, depends mainly on age at arrival, length of stay, and early integration into the German school system. On the other hand, older children arriving with a firm foundation in the mother tongue fare no better.

Language policy is considered in the light of theories of second-language acquisition, social and psychological factors, and the wider political context. Optimum conditions for L2 learning are

identified, of which the most significant are contact with German peers, attending German schools, and parental expectations. A framework for evaluating approaches to intercultural and bilingual education is introduced.

The authors argue for mother tongue teaching and a child-centred approach which caters for individual differences. There should be co-ordination between the content of the curriculum and children's linguistic progression.

**89-368 Paulsell, Patricia R.** (Michigan State U.). The syntactical and grammatical characteristics of business German language: a methodological problem. *Die Unterrichtspraxis* (Philadelphia, Pa), **21**, 2 (1988), 178-85.

The last 10 years have seen a considerable increase in the demand for German language teaching for business and professional purposes. However, appropriate teaching materials have been insufficiently developed to meet the needs of American students (who are the largest market for such courses) at the high level of proficiency required and with proper consideration for those aspects of grammar and syntax peculiar to business language.

This article examines the detailed study by deCort and Hessmann of the grammatical and syntactical nature of business German, and extracts from it the most important discussion points for teaching, which are: (1) length and complexity of sentences;

(2) passive voice and 'passive substitutes'; (3) nominalisation; (4) extended modifiers; (5) semantic problem areas.

Another major problem discussed concerns the students' previous learning experience, since most business courses are taught at intermediate to advanced level. Students have often had either no previous experience of the necessary grammatical concepts, or have been taught these concepts very hurriedly. Students often appear prejudiced against concepts such as the passive. Instructing students with the right teaching materials will quickly correct previously held views and ensure more successful learning.

**89-369 Sutherland, Richard.** Inexpensive use of the videodisc for proficiency: an attempt to link technology and teachers. *CALICO Journal* (Provo, Utah), **4**, 1 (1987), 67-80.

This article illustrates an inexpensive use of videodisc technology in the foreign-language classroom for proficiency and provides information on foreign-language discs. It gives directions for combining disc materials with a given text to produce a

proficiency-oriented syllabus. It also shows a simple technique for individualising videodisc instruction. It concludes with case studies of students who learned German via individualised instruction mediated by videodisc materials.

## Russian

**89-370 Ertelt-Vieth, Astrid.** Die sowjetische Ethnopsycholinguistik und das Modell der Lakunen in der landeswissenschaftlichen Forschung. [Soviet ethnopsycholinguistics and the use of the 'lacunae' model in regional studies research.] *Die Neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt-am-Main, FRG), **87**, 5 (1988), 553-69.

This article begins by considering the relationship between foreign-language instruction and the study of the cultural, social, political, and geographical context in which the target language is the vehicle of communication. Attempts to integrate different aspects of cultural background in the foreign-language curriculum need to address the problems of correctly identifying, selecting and classifying the wealth of detail about everyday life, and ensuring its validity and relevance for the language classroom. As yet, there is no adequate model for describing the

linguistic and non-linguistic characteristics of a national speech community. However, using interviews from 30 West German students about everyday life in Moscow, the author demonstrates a new approach employed by the 'Group of Psycholinguistics and Communication Theory' at the Moscow Academy of Sciences, particularly the 'lacunae' model of Sorokin and Markovina.

The model is a means of classifying features of language and behaviour in foreign cultures, 'lacunae' being defined as culturally specific elements

which make understanding difficult for the recipient. The basic distinctions are between 'linguistic lacunae', 'lacunae' in written texts, and 'cultural lacunae', each of which is further subcategorised.

Identifying and classifying 'lacunae' includes Sorokin's technique of comparing translations with

original texts. The author extends existing techniques by presenting interview data obtained from foreign visitors to native inhabitants of Moscow. Original statements and subsequent comments can then be subjected to a contrastive analysis.

**89-371 Schupbach, Richard** (Stanford U.). On technical Russian and the teaching thereof. *Slavic and East European Journal* (Madison, Wis), **32**, 3 (1988), 445-60.

Technical Russian (TR) is professional, written description of scientific or technical research and findings. This definition applies to highly quantified disciplines - mathematics, physics, chemistry - as well as to less thoroughly quantified areas of inquiry - historical geology, geography, linguistics.

There are considerable differences between tra-

ditional classroom Russian and TR. The general themes that dominate a wide range of disparity are: the use of codes, pervasive complexity, the interchange of parts-of-speech, and homonymy. In order for the average student to acquire reliable understanding of TR, special attention should be paid to these problems.

**89-372 Sharkova, T. L.** Коллективные формы работы как один из эффективных способов организации учебной деятельности. [Group work as one of the effective methods of organising educational activity.] *Русский язык за рубежом* (Moscow), **6** (1988), 30-2.

Soviet teaching has for many years made use of group work and there have been many experiments carried out to discover its usefulness. Research has shown that a collective approach can result in more effective learning. It has advantages such as providing a common fund of knowledge and language, and enabling decisions to be taken more quickly and accurately. A student is thought to be best motivated by tasks which have both an educational and social value.

A course is described which includes different types of group activity, all taking place within a common teaching framework whereby students are

given a work programme, duties are distributed and a leader chosen. A useful activity was found to be the work conference which debated topical subjects.

Three detailed examples are given of different types of group activity. The first involves the forming of an inner and outer circle. Students stand in pairs facing each other and discuss a given topic. Then the outer circle moves clockwise, a new pair forms and again discusses a given subject. The second activity is a question and answer game on cards given to students and the third is a collective quiz game with three teams.

## Spanish

**89-373 García, Erica C. and v. Putte, F. C. M.** (Reiksuniversiteit Leiden, The Netherlands). The value of contrast: contrasting the value of strategies. *IRAL* (Heidelberg), **26**, 4 (1988), 263-80.

In order to discover the basis for the Imperfect/Preterite opposition in Spanish and to devise strategies to enable Dutch mother-tongue learners to acquire native-like skill in deploying these tenses, the task of transposing into the past tenses a story by Jorge Luis Borges, *El Muerto*, told in the historic present, was set to two groups, one of native

Spanish speakers (half Spanish and half South Americans from different countries) and one consisting of Dutch teachers of Spanish.

There proved to be a large measure of agreement between the two groups. However, where they diverged in their choice of Preterite or Imperfect, the non-natives tended to rely on lexical clues and

on the immediate context, while the native Spanish speakers were more aware of the narrative line and the wider context.

Learners should be first introduced to the most obvious and polarised uses of these tenses, and then gradually become sensitised to the way they are

opposed within the Spanish verb system. Various exercises are suggested. [Appendix categorises and tabulates Preterite and Imperfect correspondences in a Dutch translation of a story by Gabriel García Marquez.]

**89-374 Lantolf, James P.** (U. of Delaware). The syntactic complexity of written texts in Spanish as a foreign language: a markedness perspective. *Hispania* (Worcester, Ma), **71**, 4 (1988), 933-40.

Written work by 23 intermediate students and 12 graduate students (five being native speakers) of Spanish at the University of Delaware was examined for complexity and sophistication of writing using the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) and the Sentential Complement Hierarchy (SCH). The written work consisted of exam papers, compositions, term papers and master's degree theses, to which were added for comparative purposes eight editorial articles from Latin American newspapers and magazines.

The type of written material proved at least as

significant an influence on the level of writing skill as did language proficiency, since not all writing tasks compel the writer to focus on the formal properties of language. However, the lack of any marked difference between the intermediate students and the non-native graduate students seems to indicate that writing instruction has been rather neglected in foreign language programmes, and that language departments could give more attention to the findings of linguistic and psycholinguistic research.