

## Teaching particular languages

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### ENGLISH

**82-442 Abbott, Gerry** (Dept. of Education, Sarawak). Understanding one another's Englishes. *World Language English* (Oxford), 1, 1 (1981), 1-4.

In multilingual countries where English is the second language, used for various national purposes, special varieties of English emerge, often called 'new Englishes' (NE). The teacher may well know the difference between the English he hears on the BBC World Service and his own NE, but is unable to produce anything other than a local range of English, including formal usage and an informal 'off duty' dialect. The NE is a sort of communal 'interlanguage' somewhere between the target language and the mother tongue. If the influence of the target language (the presence of numerous expatriates and locals trained in the standard British English model) diminishes, the influence of the mother tongue on the NE may well increase, thus drawing the NE further away from the British model and restricting its intelligibility outside the national boundary.

Even in primary schools, it would be best if both local and international Englishes could be deliberately used. The NE would be the language of classroom business, but the material for study would comprise samples of English being used as an intercultural language, e.g. a Kenyan greeting an Arab visitor, or a Malaysian introducing an Australian to a Filipino. The nationalities and situations used initially would be those most likely to be encountered. Sometimes, NE exchanges between local people could be contrasted with an equivalent exchange in an international version, a British version or a North American one. This should improve tolerance and sensitivity.

**82-443 George, H. V.** (U. of Wellington, New Zealand). Unhappy professionalism. *World Language English* (Oxford), 1, 1 (1981), 9-14.

The professionalism of foreign-language teachers makes things difficult for their clients. They think they know what is best for learners, but they are apt to follow professional fashion. Reading is the skill most Ministries of Education want for their students; instead, time is wasted on oral drills. The professionalism is tolerated because foreign-language learning is associated with the selection of the élite, the clients are young and captive and are encouraged to be dependent. English is increasingly an international language in situations which exclude native-speakers. The idea of maintaining a native-speaker standard brings with it the fiction of control through standard examinations. Those who fail the exams still form part of the society using English and affect the general standard achieved.

Countries needing international English need teaching that is culturally neutral, non-élitist and learner-orientated. They need a professionalism which leaves only a small place for teacher status and respect for a model. Less teaching is needed – one to three years should be enough. Learners can then go on to get their own experience.

Learning can be made easier if the input is made to take account of the statistical aspect of ordinary language experience, i.e. teach simple forms with a high probability of occurrence. The teacher need not fear redundancy-reduced forms. There is no reason why words cannot be learned in a de-contextualised way (i.e. through translation), since they have to be de-contextualised for free use. A country, or group of countries, could set up a bureau for expert translation of professional English (scientific or technical) into basic English. The task of learning basic English would then be easier for scientists or engineers.

**82-444 Hirsch, Wolfgang.** 'Follow Me' – Ein Erfahrungsbericht. ['Follow Me' – a report of how the course has been received.] *Der fremdsprachliche Unterricht* (Stuttgart, FRG), **60** (1981), 286–91.

This report discusses *Follow Me*, a new course in English for adult beginners which proved to be only a qualified success. The course participants complained that, because of the pressure to get through a unit each week, there was too little time to reinforce and revise the material learnt in previous lessons. Moreover, their frequent requests for syntactic explanations were not granted. The participants resisted those exercises in which they were required simply to repeat 'parrot-fashion' sentence patterns, the linguistic structure of which they did not grasp. In the teacher's view, the course is over-complicated because it is based on too great an abundance of material and relies too heavily on technical resources. In addition, there ought to be, inbuilt in the course, a greater progression towards linguistic creativity on the part of the learners. The success or otherwise of the course depends above all on the teacher. The money spent on developing this course would have been better used in providing further training for the teachers.

**82-445 Politzer, Robert L.** (Stanford U.) and others. Teaching standard English in the third grade: classroom functions of language. *Language Learning* (Ann Arbor, Mich), **31**, 1 (1981), 171–93.

This study is based on the examination of 20 lessons, each about 20 minutes long. Ten of the lessons dealt with teaching standard English negation (lesson 1), ten of the lessons dealt with the teaching of standard English past tense formation (lesson 2). The pupils were third graders, predominantly speakers of Vernacular Black English (VBE). The purpose of the study was (1) to determine the distribution of the main classroom discourse functions (e.g. Informing, Eliciting, Evaluating, Replying) throughout the lessons and (2) to examine the incidence of use of VBE English grammar throughout the lessons. On the basis of pre- and post-tests given to pupils, each group of ten lessons was also subdivided into five high-achieving and five low-achieving teaching performances. High and low achieving performances were compared on selected distribution of discourse function moves.

Transcriptions of the lessons were segmented into T-units (main clause + possible subordinate clause) which were in turn assigned to discourse function categories. As expected, Eliciting, Informing, Evaluating were by far the most frequent discourse categories used by teachers, while the category of Replying represented nearly the only discourse function (over 90 per cent) utilised by pupils. VBE was used only

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occasionally by the teachers – either spontaneously or for the purpose of demonstrating a point of grammar (3.3 per cent of moves in lesson 1, 0.35 per cent of moves in lesson 2). Use of VBE by pupils – either spontaneously or in drills – was also relatively scarce (7.3 per cent in lesson 1, 1.2 per cent in lesson 2).

Only one of the comparisons of ‘high’ and ‘low’ achieving teacher performances indicates a significant difference between the two groups. In lesson 1 the high-achieving teachers devoted higher proportions of their moves to Elicits than the low-achieving ones. An examination of the lesson transcripts suggests that this fact may be explained by the ‘low’ teachers’ tendency to devote much of their lessons to Informs dealing with a clarification of the concept of negation. This clarification, however, may have been superfluous and was, at any rate, unrelated to the criterion test. It is suggested that analysis of discourse functions may be a useful approach to the study of teaching efficiency if it is related to meaning and the concepts of a specific lesson.

### **82-446** **Pride, John B.** Native competence and the bilingual/multilingual speaker. *English World-wide* (Heidelberg), **2**, 2 (1981), 141–53.

The traditional view of the native speaker is that he/she acquired the language/s in question in the first few years of life, whereas a sociolinguistic perspective sees this as only one of several requirements. Nor is language use in the home or use in ‘everyday communication’ a helpful guide, since many English-educated Africans and Asians decide to speak English rather than their native language in the home; everyday communication is characterised by complex patterns of code-switching and code-mixing. The speaker’s feelings of identification with, and perceptions of, his language/s are highly important. ‘Native competence’ is probably a more valid notion, defined here as a form of self-knowledge and a means to self-expression within the context of culture. If, for some particular speaker, knowledge of a particular language brings an increment of self-knowledge and if proficiency in this language confers extra powers of self-expression, then to that extent the language is a native language for that speaker.

### **82-447** **Stubbs, M.** The sociolinguistics of the English writing system or why children aren’t adults. *NISLF Journal* (Belfast, N. Ireland), **6** (1980), 6–14.

Some characteristics of the English writing system are examined which may cause problems for children learning to read: certain aspects of the system are (1) peculiarly adult (beyond the experience of young children), (2) peculiarly English (assuming native knowledge of the English language), and (3) peculiarly literate (assuming a highly literate reader with a wide vocabulary; it is a visual system biased towards fast, silent reading).

Pupils need to know how the system works. The one-spelling-one-meaning rule is rarely explained, though the visual regularities involved can easily be shown. Learners need practice in dealing with permanent written text, which involves skills not required in processing spoken language, in reading at different speeds, re-reading, scanning, skimming, using indexes and reference books, etc, otherwise they will never fully profit from the information storage potential of written language.

**82-448 Turner, John F.** Grading the present progressive. *Die neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main), **80**, 3 (1981), 194–202.

One of the points of emphasis in German introductory English textbooks is the use of the present progressive. This paper questions the prevailing treatment of this grammatical problem. An approach to teaching idiomatic English is outlined which should help to avoid the common mistake of overusing the present progressive: (1) presentation of this form is delayed until more useful forms have been established; (2) interrogative constructions are only introduced after the corresponding affirmative constructions; (3) the contexts and situations in which the present progressive is presented should reflect more closely actual usage, and obligatory uses given priority over optional uses; (4) the value of 'simplified rules' should not be over-emphasised.

**82-449 Besse, Henri** (CREDIF, ENS de St.-Cloud). Des convenances du discours littéraire à la classe de langue. [The place of literature in the language class.] *Français dans le Monde* (Paris), **166** (1982), 55–63.

The study of literature has not hitherto enjoyed a large place in French-as-a-foreign-language classes. If literary works are to be used to help students study the language their special nature must be respected. The subject of a poem, or other work of literature, is the poem itself. Unlike the often used non-literary authentic texts, literary texts are relatively autonomous, and can be appreciated independently of their context in space and time, which renders them more accessible to the foreign learner. Through literature students can explore the possibilities of the language they are learning.

## FRENCH

**82-450 Seelbach, Dieter** (U. of Mainz, GDR). Syntax und Semantik französischer verben. [The syntax and semantics of French verbs.] *IRAL* (Heidelberg), **19**, 4 (1981), 295–315.

The relationship between the syntax and semantics of a large number of French verbs is examined with a view to applying the results in language teaching. An analysis taking as its point of departure the formal features of the verbs in question and based on a version of distributionalist and transformational grammar (Z.S. Harris) proved useful in the investigation. Traditional rules of grammar, such as those presented by Grevisse for the use of the *infinitif pur*, and 'semantic' verb classes, such as 'volitional verbs', are subjected to criticism and new verb classes, among them 'verbs of communication' and 'psychological verbs' – each with several sub-categories, are proposed. Contrastive analyses of French, German and Italian which make use of a considerable amount of data (verb tables published by M. Gross) and which are carried out within the framework of formal grammar have made it possible to formulate new rules covering constructions with the infinitive in French in the terminology of traditional grammar.

**82-451 Steinmeyer, Georg.** Kommunikation als zentrales Lernziel? Gedanken zu einer Akzentverlagerung im gymnasialen Französischunterricht. [Communication as the central learning objective? Thoughts on a shift of emphasis in the teaching of French in German grammar schools.] *Die neueren Sprachen* (Frankfurt am Main), **80**, 6 (1981), 529-40.

In foreign-language teaching in recent years the main stress has been on communicative competence, which is essentially understood as the learner's ability to put his knowledge to practical use in everyday or professional situations. Such a utilitarian attitude towards language teaching cannot satisfy in the framework of a curriculum aiming at developing critical judgment and mutual understanding. Especially in the case of teaching French at German grammar schools, a functional approach should take into account the specific historical relation between the two countries and integrate elements which are not solely communicative, even into a beginners' course. A realistic approach should base its methodology upon the conditions under which the majority of pupils will be likely to use French, which would entail a reduction in the training of oral productive competence.

## GERMAN

**82-452 Löschmann, Marianne and Löschmann, Martin** (Leipzig). Funktion und Gestaltung von Aufgaben und Übungen zur Paraphrasierung. [The function and design of paraphrasing exercises.] *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (Leipzig), **19**, 1 (1982), 10-17.

Although paraphrasing is used in foreign-language teaching, it is not usually identified as such. This article is an attempt to define its role and suggest appropriate exercises in paraphrasing for use within the framework of a communicative-functional approach.

The functions of the paraphrase are to effect communication where it might otherwise break down, to bring out the communicative-pragmatic and stylistic components of the language, to achieve linguistic economy, and to give the speaker more time to think. Paraphrases occur in various forms, e.g. as substitutions through synonyms, transformations of sentences, etc. Paraphrasing can be a means of condensing or expanding the original text or utterance, and can be used in the teaching of both receptive and productive skills. [Examples of exercises using paraphrase in class.]

## SPANISH

**82-453 Zwerling Sugano, Marian.** The idiom in Spanish language teaching. *Modern Language Journal* (Madison, Wis), **65**, 1 (1981), 59-66.

The article explores the problem which idiomatic expressions pose for second-language learners and teachers. A classification of Spanish and English idioms based on

contrastive analysis is proposed: (1) institutionalised expressions of politeness or greeting, (2) idioms with close lexical and structural parallels in Spanish and English (*refrescar la memoria* 'refresh the memory'), (3) idioms which change one or two significant content words (*tomarle el pelo* 'pull someone's leg'), (4) idioms which can be understood figuratively because of semantic or lexical similarities between Spanish and English (*dar fruto* 'to bear fruit'), (5) idioms with little or no (or false or misleading) resemblance between Spanish and English (*darse cuenta de* 'to realise'), and (6) proverbs.

The teaching programme should attempt to bring idioms to the students' attention from the earliest stages, beginning with (1) and (2), always presenting them in a meaningful context. Towards the middle of the first year, (3) can be introduced as they relate to the current lesson. Once the students' vocabulary is broad enough to encompass the necessary lexical items, (4) can be introduced: they are useful for illustrating differences between the two languages. Type (5) should be preserved only in the second year because they are likely to cause the most learning difficulties. Type (6) can be introduced from the beginning as an occasional spice. Consideration should be given in all cases to such factors as frequency and extent of usage, triteness, social class connotation, transitoriness, transformability. [Exercises for teaching idiomatic expressions are suggested.]

## RUSSIAN

**82-454 Beloshapkova, V. A. (Moscow).** О принципах описания русской синтаксической системы в целях преподавания русского языка нерусским. [Principles of description of the syntactic system of Russian in the teaching of Russian to non-Russians.] *Русский язык за рубежом* (Moscow), 5 (1981), 58-63.

A set of parameters for syntactic description are discussed, based on the premise that the planning of Russian language courses for non-Russians must rest on systematic and exhaustive descriptions of the semantic and communicative bases of syntax. To this end a typology of meanings is presented, and the types of syntactic structure which may realise them discussed.

Crucial to the practical application of such an approach in language teaching is the 'complex model' – a set of syntactic features which form a constant basis for the realisation of meanings related to particular situations. This notion can be used to isolate the major features which need to be presented in teaching. Some examples involving location are analysed.