

Miscellaneous

Self-assessment

University professors were asked to assess their own performance. **94%** of them were of the opinion that their own performance was above average.

(Survey of the University of Nebraska in the 1970s)

Why doesn't that surprise me?

Teachers' identity

We are not born teachers, we are trained ones and we take to our classrooms not only our skill but also our personality and identity. This has been largely overlooked in research, but here is an article which addresses the issue.

The authors examine how novice English as (ESL) teachers learn to teach and how this learning-in-practice experience shapes their identities as teachers. For 1 academic year, they followed 2 graduate students in a MA for TESOL programme at a U.S. university as they taught their own ESL classes for the first time. They analyse 2 case studies from a situated learning perspective, and show an intertwined relationship between novice teachers' identity development and their changing classroom practice. Based on their findings, they argue for the need to include a deeper understanding of teacher identity development in the knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

(Kanno & Stuart, 2011)

Thought processes of teachers

For those that have decided to progress from BA to MA, this will come as a confirmation for their decision. For the authors of the following article, “differences in degrees are synonymous with different levels of teacher education and, consequently, a good approach to determining the effect of education on the thought processes teachers experience in their classrooms.”

They investigated the differences in pedagogical thought units between teachers with a BA and those with an MA. They found that, on the whole, M.A. teachers produced significantly more pedagogical thoughts compared to the B.A. teachers: The average pedagogical thought units for M.A. teachers was 5.18 per minute, whereas B.A. teachers produced 2.58 of such units per minute. In terms of thought categories, the same families were observed for both groups; however, there were slight differences in their ranking and significant differences in their frequency.

(AKBARI & DADVAND, 2011)

That the brain hemispheres have something to do with learning (here language learning) is nothing new. However, this is the first time that I have read a paper which actually advocates the examining of students and teachers whether they are right – or left hemisphere dominant and then plan the language course accordingly. This is very intriguing and maybe she is onto something here. In addition, the author provides a comprehensive literature review.

Second language teachers as second language classroom researchers

“This article takes the case for the importance of teacher involvement in research as theoretically proven. It does so whilst acknowledging that it will be quite some time before we can claim that empirical data points to a link between teachers' contribution to research and improvement in the UK's majority cultural group's capacity to speak languages other than English. It attempts to propose and define classroom-based research as an integrated part of the teaching process, one which should not, if the conceptual leap can be made successfully, result in an increased workload for the practitioner. After some advice on how to go about reading articles in international second language acquisition journals, the author proposes some simple techniques for carrying out research in the four language skills, in vocabulary learning and in other aspects of language acquisition.”

(Macaro, 2003)

As I mentioned above, there is a deplorable lack of research that is conducted by the teacher in the classroom. Research is mainly conducted by outsiders, determined by the education authorities. I can only endorse the sentiment of the above author.

SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS

This is D. Larsen-Freeman's introduction to her article:

Just as applied linguistics (AL) may be said to be an emerging discipline, so too is one of its sub-fields, second language acquisition (SLA). The parallelism may not be surprising; after all, a difference of only about twenty years separates the points at which the two were identified as

autonomous fields of inquiry. Then, too, the two share central defining concepts. AL draws on multidisciplinary theoretical and empirical perspectives to address real-world issues and problems in which language is central (Brumfit, 1997). SLA draws on multidisciplinary theoretical and empirical perspectives to address the specific issue of how people acquire a second language and the specific problem of why everyone does not do so successfully. Furthermore, the two share something else: At this juncture in the evolution of AL and SLA, both are grappling with fundamental definitional issues, ones even extending to the nature of language itself. (See Larsen-Freeman 1997a for how this is true of AL.) Should AL and SLA deal successfully with these challenges, both will have much to contribute in the decade to come. Should they instead succumb to internecine feuding and fragmentation, the future will not be as bright. In this chapter, I will first make some introductory remarks about the SLA process and the differential success of second language learners. Next, I will discuss the fundamental challenges that this characterization faces. Then I will say what contributions I think SLA is capable of in the coming decade; I will also note the main obstacles confronting it. I will conclude by nominating topics for a training and development curriculum for future applied linguists from an SLA perspective.

(D. Larsen-Freeman, 2000)

Second language acquisition, applied linguistics and the teaching of foreign languages

“Given the current popularity of second language acquisition (SLA) as a research base for the teaching and learning of foreign languages in educational settings, it is appropriate to examine the relationship of SLA to other relevant areas of inquiry, such as foreign language education, foreign language methodology, and applied linguistics. This article

makes the argument that applied linguistics, as the interdisciplinary field that mediates between the theory and the practice of language acquisition and use, is the overarching field that includes SLA and SLA-related domains of research. Applied linguistics brings to all levels of foreign language study not only the research done in SLA proper, but also the research in stylistics, language socialisation, and critical applied linguistics that illuminates the teaching of a foreign language as sociocultural practice, as historical practice, and as social semiotic practice.”
(Kramsch, 2003)

Internet

Jarrell (2008) investigated Internet chat as a potential motivating learning tool in the language classroom. He found that student participation in online chat groups motivated them to speak English and suggests that Internet chat can be used to deliver meaningful and appropriate language tasks in the ESL/EFL classroom.

This is an article that surveys the internet for useful sites for the language researcher (Gottwald, 2002). The finding is that “the most informative sites for SLA research are created by private individuals, and that professional or organizational sites generally have less to offer the serious researcher.” However, for me the most interesting - and annoying - sentence is that “researcher Websites that are essentially pedagogical in nature or that address the needs of second language teachers rather than researchers have been excluded”. This is precisely the opposite of what I and others are advocating, namely that teachers can be and should also be researchers if the situation permits it.

CROSSING FRONTIERS: NEW DIRECTIONS IN ONLINE PEDAGOGY AND RESEARCH

Research on networked language learning is now entering its second decade. While earlier research tended to focus on the linguistic and affective characteristics of computer-assisted discussion in single classrooms, more recent research has increasingly focused on long-distance collaboration. This type of learning environment is challenging to arrange, because it involves diverse learners who operate with different cultural backgrounds, communicative expectations, and rhetorical frameworks. These features, as well as the fact that the communication takes place both inside and outside of class and on students' own schedules, also pose special research challenges. This chapter summarizes what knowledge has been gained about learning and instruction in long-distance online exchanges, focusing on three key themes: (a) linguistic interaction and development, (b) intercultural awareness and learning, and (c) development of new multiliteracies and their relations to identity. In each area, research has indicated that there is no single *effect* of using online communication, but rather that processes and results vary widely depending on a range of logistical, pedagogical, and social factors. (Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004)

English as lingua franca

A lingua franca is generally described as related to the size of the mother tongue community, the number countries where it has official status, the number of people using it as a foreign language, the functional range of a language, that is its presence in various domains such as media and science, its economic strength, stereotypes and attitudes related to the language and the promotion of the language, planned or not. (Darquennes & Nelde, 2006; Phillipson, 1992)

Warschauer (2000) examines the situation of English in this era of globalisation and describes a new stage called *informationalism* (Carnoy, Castells, Cohen, & Cardoso, 1993). This will give more weight to the L1 speaking teachers since they are increasingly more them. English will become a daily language or large parts of the world population.

I would add that they will mostly speak to people whose native language is not English either. This has ramifications for teaching. The poster of the Horse Guard on the classroom's wall is no longer appropriate. In a globalised world there is no need to dwell on the cultural differences between Anglo-Saxon countries and the larger rest. They are not particularly interested. The last decades have shown that some parts of the world even hate the idea of the Western culture on which the Anglo-Saxon culture is based. Nevertheless, they are forced to speak English to express this hate. What a conundrum. See also: Barber (Barber, 1995). Although it has to be said that some researchers claim to have found a correlation between culture knowledge and language attainment (e.g. Tsou, 2005). Most seem to be of the opinion that a language can only be taught in the contexts of its culture (e.g. Hüllen, 2006)

Seidlhofer et al. (2006) describe the situation that English is dominant in Europe and that this has led to numerous discussions about its widespread functions and special status compared to all other European languages. Yet, many of these discussions conceive of Europe as a group of nation states where English is either a first or a foreign language. This chapter seeks to question this well-established distinction by investigating what is in fact the most common use of English in Europe, namely English as a lingua franca (ELF). Examples of a particular approach to ELF research are provided in the form of two case studies focussing on different aspects of ELF interactions. Also, this chapter highlights some future directions

for linguistic research and addresses the challenges that the emergence of ELF poses for various areas of applied linguistics.

One thing that interests me is her observation that there is, for all intents and purposes, on one hand a European policy to curb the dominance of English, which is widely ignored even in European institutions, and on the other hand there is a “top-down” policy to include English in general education. To supplement this, there is also a “bottom” up situation. People realise the need for English and vote with their tongues.

During the 20th century, the teaching and learning of foreign languages has gained an unprecedented importance. This pertains mainly to English in its world-wide use, but also to other national languages. The question is discussed of whether new vernaculars are to be taught merely as the instrument of communication, i.e. in a practical sense, or whether further-reaching pedagogical goals should be envisaged. During the 19th and 20th centuries, educators in Germany discussed this issue heatedly with reference to the teaching of Greek and Latin vs. the teaching of French and English. Using these thought-provoking discussions, the idea is floated that foreign language teaching should always include reflecting on the respective culture in which the language is embedded and on the general rules and conventions which guide its use. (Hüllen, 2006)

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

This chapter shows just how deeply affected English has already been through its unprecedented spread, and the unique function it has as *the* world language. It argues, however, that it would be premature to launch into a discussion of the teaching of this lingua franca before certain prerequisites have been met. The most important of these are a conceptualization of speakers of lingua franca English as language users in their own right, and the acknowledgment of the legitimacy of, and indeed the need for, a description of salient features of English

as a lingua franca (ELF), alongside English as a native language (ENL). The presentation summarizes the empirical research into the lingua franca use of English, which has recently gathered considerable momentum. It sets this research in relation to other relevant work in descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics for language pedagogy. Finally, it discusses the implications of this historically unique situation for potential developments in the pedagogy of English teaching and outlines some research questions that must be addressed if advances in the teaching of English as a lingua franca are to have a secure theoretical and descriptive base. (B. Seidlhofer, 2004)

TEACHER TRAINING FOR ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA

The global demand for English has broad implications for teacher preparation in lingua franca settings. Given that up to 80 per cent of all English teachers globally are non-native speakers of English, the quality of their professional preparation and their degree of language proficiency are key issues. This review surveys research on non-native English-speaking teachers related to teacher preparation, including issues of pedagogy and language varieties. Suggestions for future research include consideration of how teacher educators might address the issue of Inner Circle and Outer Circle varieties of English and how teachers' cultural knowledge can be addressed within teacher preparation curricula.

(Snow, Kamhi-Stein, & Brinton, 2006)

NNST vs. NST

There is a lengthy article about the debate non-native speaking teachers (NNST) vs. native speaking teachers (NST). It gives an overview of the debate so far and is rather comprehensive (Moussu & Llorca, 2008). I think I have made my view clear in "Case Study: Introduction).

Regular verbs, past tense and frequency: tracking down a potential source of NS/NNS competence differences

Earlier research (e.g., Clahsen, 1988; Meisel, 1991) indicates that adult second language (L2) learners have difficulties determining the relationship between obligatory verb-raising and verbal inflection. This observation led Clahsen and others to the conclusion that Universal Grammar is not available to the adult L2 learner. The experiments reported here address a more parsimonious explanation for this observation, namely, that L2 competence includes a deficit that affects only the lexical or morphosyntactic mechanisms involved in verb-raising. Specifically, the studies examine one of two possible loci of this deficit and indicate that this possibility may be ruled out. (Beck, 1997)

L1 and L2 in the classroom

This article by Turnbull and Arnett (2002) is related to the one above. It is about the question whether the teachers' and students' native language should or could be used in the classroom. Again, I have discussed this briefly in "Case Study: Introduction".

Plagiarism and second language writing in an electronic age

As the title suggests, the authors examine plagiarism that has been made easier by the internet in the past. These days there are antiplagiarism detection devices which are very effective. There is an extensive reference list on this subject. (Flowerdew & Li, 2007)

Ercegovac and Richardson (2004) give an overview of the

literature on this subject and Howard (1995) discusses plagiarism and the “academic death penalty”.

Here in Germany, in the recent past, quite a few very prominent people had their academic titles withdrawn because of this. Plagiarism cannot be tolerated, of course, but this fear of being accused of plagiarism has resulted in some (very) excessive quoting which is not always necessary. For instance, if somebody states something that is simply common sense, there is no reference needed. At least this is my opinion.

Quantitative Research Methods, Study Quality, and Outcomes: The Case of Interaction Research

This article constitutes the first empirical assessment of methodological quality in second language acquisition (SLA). The authors surveyed a corpus of 174 studies within the tradition of research on second-language interaction, one of the longest and most influential traditions of inquiry in SLA. The findings indicate not only strengths and weaknesses but a possible relationship between study quality and outcomes (this is hardly surprising); improvements over time and methodological trends are also noted.

(Plonsky & Gass, 2011)

Age and language learning

The structure of age: in search of barriers to second language acquisition

The article examines recent evidence that has been offered to support the notion of a sensitive period for second language acquisition. An analysis of that research leaves several questions unresolved. Two small-scale studies are described which attempt to explore some of these issues. In both cases, it is found that the correspondence between language structures in the first and second language is the most important factor

affecting acquisition. The age at which second language acquisitions begins is not a significant factor in either study, but the length of residence, indicating the amount of time spent speaking the second language, is significant in the second study. The conclusion is that there is insufficient evidence to accept the claim that mastery of a second language is determined wholly, or even primarily, by maturational factors. Some suggestions are made for an alternative interpretation based on processing differences between older and younger language learners.
(Bialystok, 1997)

The Role of Imagery in Dictionaries of Idioms

This article adopts a cognitive linguistic approach to idioms as motivated lexical units. The focus is on lexicographic applications of the notion of motivation; specifically, on the usefulness of imagery in the form of pictorial illustrations and etymological notes in idioms dictionaries. The authors discuss the main features of idiom semantics, review the results of research into the influence of motivating information on idiom acquisition, and outline the issue of imagery in idiom entries, highlighting the problems involved. Finally, they report on a study with Polish university students of English. The authors' findings point to a facilitative role of pictorial illustrations on short- and long-term retention of both form and meaning of idioms. In contrast, etymological notes do not have any positive effect.

(Szczepaniak & Lew, 2011)

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