

Language Learning Journal – selected abstracts

NB: The Language Learning Journal has made some popular articles available for downloading without a journal subscription (status: September 2012):

Most read articles (<http://tiny.cc/LLmostreadarticles>):

- Language acquisition **N Dwyer (2011)**
- Language learner strategy research and MFL teaching & learning **M Grenfell (2007)**
- The languages classroom: place of comfort or obstacle course? **M. Nicolson and H. Adams (2010)**
- Optimizing visually-assisted listening comprehension **Ahmad S Kashania et al (2010)**
- Score in French: motivating boys with football in Key Stage 3 **Ian McCall (2010)**
- The beliefs of two expert EFL learners **Sarah Mercer (2010)**
- Language learner strategies **Michael Grenfell & Lynn Erler (2007)**
- Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3 **James A. Coleman, Árpád Galaczi & Lluïsa Astruc (2007)**

Most cited articles (<http://tiny.cc/LLmostcitedarticles>):

- The year abroad and its effects **Paul Meara (2007)**
- Learner strategies and self-efficacy: Making the connection **Suzanne Graham (2007)**
- Teaching in the target language: a problem in the current orthodoxy **David Atkinson (2010)**

The following recently published articles are available for download with a journal subscription:

Capacity building for primary languages through initial teacher education: could specialist and non-specialist student teachers' complementary skills provide a winning combination?

Jan Rowe et al (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(2): 143-156.

There has been much debate about the development of a suitably qualified workforce to deliver the objectives of the Key Stage 2 language learning entitlement in England. The model of a skilled primary languages subject leader, working in collaboration with enthusiastic generalist class teachers is emerging as a consistent preference. Relatively little research and discussion has centred on the role of initial teacher education in developing this model amongst future newly qualified teachers. This study investigates the impact of primary modern languages (PML) provision as a compulsory element of primary postgraduate teacher training in a university in the northwest of England. Data are drawn from specialist linguists hoping to become subject leaders and from non-specialists aiming to contribute to PML provision as part of their teaching repertoire. Key findings demonstrate the positive impact of this provision. The enthusiasm, complementary skills and symbiotic development needs of these two groups of student teachers, suggest an important role for initial teacher education in supporting the future success of primary languages and identify the need for targeted continuing professional development if the initial gains are to be sustained and enhanced.

Emergent communities of practice: secondary schools' interaction with primary school foreign language teaching and learning*Michael Evans and Linda Fisher (2012)****Language Learning Journal 40(2): 157-173.***

The aim of this paper is to give an account of the response of secondary schools to the primary school foreign language teaching initiative recently introduced by the UK government. The paper also explores defining features of the process of cross-phase interaction and the role that knowledge and collaborative practice plays in generating change in perceptions and pedagogical practice. Our analysis draws on evidence from survey and case study interview data collected in a longitudinal study of the impact of the language policy initiatives on secondary school foreign language provision.

Using CLIL to enhance pupils' experience of learning and raise attainment in German and health education: a teacher research project*Tessa L. Mearns (2012)****Language Learning Journal 40(2): 175-192.***

This paper describes and evaluates an action research project carried out by a teacher in an English comprehensive school, where a class of 13- to 14-year-olds was taught personal, social and health education and German through content–language integrated learning (CLIL) over a six-week period. The purpose of the study was to explore how CLIL would influence both motivation and attainment by giving learners the opportunity (i) to experience language learning with a broader, more applied purpose; (ii) to experience success in TL interactions; and (iii) to use linguistic structures in a more 'natural' context. The findings of the study were mixed with regard to motivation, as pupils struggled to equate their continued lack of confidence after a short period of CLIL with their increased academic success. With regard to attainment, the most able pupils exceeded their previous achievements by at least one National Curriculum level, although little improvement was noted in the levels of the less able pupils. This could be attributed to the short time frame of the study, and the resulting lack of confidence referred to above. This research is also evidence of the developing role of practitioner–research in the academic community, the validity and importance of which is also discussed.

Bridging theory and practice: developing lower-level skills in L2 reading*Shigeo Kato (2012)****Language Learning Journal 40(2): 193-206***

Studies on L2 reading have provided extensive evidence for the significant contribution of lower-level processing skills in learning to read and the critical impact on the overall development of L2 reading of more accurate and fluent connections between three sub-lexical components: phonology, orthography and semantics. The broad consensus among researchers in this field is that while beginning readers rely more on phonological processing during reading, skilled readers tend towards orthographic processing. However, currently in L2 reading pedagogy, the repertoire of practical techniques to address developmental changes in the word recognition process is as yet limited. This article thus sets out to bridge theory and practice for teaching L2 reading by presenting a series of stepwise instructional techniques for promoting accuracy and fluency in the connections between the above three sub-lexical components. To do this, it draws on findings from cognitive psychology, in particular in relation to the construct of the phonological loop in the framework of working memory, which has provided important implications for L2 acquisition as a whole. It also takes a cross-linguistic perspective, discussing the potential pedagogical implications of different L1–L2 variations.

Exploring the listening process to inform the development of strategy awareness-raising materials

Maria Blanco and Juan J. Guisado (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(2): 223-236

This article reports on a small-scale qualitative study aimed at exploring the listening process in a group of Spanish beginners in a UK higher education context. The specific aim of the study was to inform the development of materials for listening strategy awareness-raising activities. The exploration was focused on identifying (a) strategies used by the students in listening coursework tasks, (b) easy and difficult aspects of the tasks, and (c) affective responses to the tasks. The participants in the study were students whose overall course performance was judged to be excellent. Data were collected through one-to-one stimulated recalls, and transcripts were coded mainly using taxonomies found in the literature. The findings revealed a good number of strategies, self-management processes and additional factors influencing the students' listening process. In addition, the findings provided insights into the enjoyment and frustration experienced by students when working on listening tasks. Pedagogical applications of the findings are discussed.

Gender and language learning strategies: looking beyond the categories

Indika Liyana and Brendan John Bartlett (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(2): 237-253

Research on language learning strategies (LLS) has pointed to a significant association at a general level between learners' gender and their choice of LLS. To explore this generality further, we conducted a study on gender and strategy use with Sri Lankan learners (N = 886) of English as a second language (ESL) in five different learning contexts: speaking in class, listening in class, listening and speaking outside class, reading in class and writing in class. We found that when preferences for individual strategies were considered rather than for strategies in some broadly categorised group such as cognitive, metacognitive or affective strategies, some preferences did not associate with gender; nevertheless, some strategies were clearly preferred by males while others were clearly preferred by females. Perhaps most importantly for teacher development, we found that there were distinct preferences for males and females depending on the learning contexts in which specific strategies were reportedly being utilised.

Learning German formulaic sequences: the effect of two attention-drawing techniques

Elke Peters (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(1): 65-79

This article reports a small-scale study that investigated the effect of (1) an instructional method, viz. directing learners' attention to formulaic sequences (FS) in a text, and (2) typographic salience, i.e. bold typeface and underlined, on foreign-language (FL) learners' recall of FS and single words (SW). Twenty-eight FL learners read a glossed German text in two conditions. The experimental group was instructed to pay attention to both FS and SW during reading and write down unfamiliar FS and SW, whereas the control group was instructed to pay attention to unfamiliar vocabulary in general. All the participants were forewarned that a vocabulary posttest would follow the reading task. Unlike the control group, the experimental group was explicitly told that they would have to translate SW as well as FS into German. The target items were divided into 12 SW and 12 FS. Half of these SW and FS were underlined and printed in bold typeface, the other half was not. The results indicate that typographic salience had an effect on participants' recall scores, whereas the instructional method did not. Furthermore, the effect of typographic salience seemed to be particularly beneficial for learning FS. These findings suggest that typographic salience facilitates FL learners' noticing and learning of unknown lexical items and of FS in particular.

Tracking the changes: vocabulary acquisition in the study abroad context

Tess Fitzpatrick (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(1): 81-98

Empirical evidence suggests that the study abroad experience accelerates growth in global vocabulary knowledge. The exact nature of this growth is rarely reported, however, and there is little documented evidence to indicate whether it is linear or uneven, whether the speed of growth is constant or changing, or whether the study abroad context favours the acquisition of certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge over others. This paper introduces and evaluates a method of tracking incremental changes in vocabulary knowledge during a year of overseas study. Lexical knowledge is elicited through a word association task completed by the learner at six-weekly intervals. Responses to the task, although not formally constrained, are dependent on the conceptual and lexical associations of the test-taker. Data sets are analysed using a word-knowledge framework, and findings reveal a gradual increase in some aspects of vocabulary knowledge (the number of collocations and native speaker-like associations), but striking inconsistencies over time in others (e.g. word form, form-meaning connections, orthography). The study uses an innovative application of an investigative tool to capture stages in the micro-development of the lexicon, thus exposing the complex and multi-dimensional nature of lexical acquisition

Foreign language vocabulary development through activities in an online 3D environment

James Milton et al (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(1): 99-112

Online virtual 3D worlds offer the opportunity for users to interact in real time with native speakers of the language they are learning. In principle, this ought to be of great benefit to learners, and mimicking the opportunity for immersion that real-life travel to a foreign country offers. We have very little research to show whether this is the case, however, nor how best to take advantage of virtual travel for foreign language development. This paper investigates the vocabulary environment and learning among learners in the Vill@ge virtual learning environment in Second Life. It appears that outside controlled learning activities, the lexical environment is poor and offers little opportunity for lexical growth. However, there is some evidence that learners, even in a short space of time, can improve their speed of language interaction and their fluency, and in focussed vocabulary-learning activities uptake was good and comparable with more traditional vocabulary-learning activities.

A model of L2 vocabulary learning and retention

Martin Willis and Yoshie Ohashi (2012)

Language Learning Journal 40(1): 125-137

Vocabulary is an essential component of language. It is central to reading ability, writing ability and listening ability, and the most important aspect of second-language (L2) knowledge for academic achievement. The aim of this paper is to investigate quantitatively some of the factors that make some L2 words more difficult to learn and retain over time than others. It builds upon similar research carried out by Milton and Daller which investigated the relationship between word difficulty and frequency, cognateness and word length, but differs from it in the type of test used to measure word difficulty and the ways in which cognateness and word length were operationalised.

Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the cognitive benefits of speaking a 'minority' language.

Fraser Lauchlan et al (2012)

International Journal of Bilingualism

The research reports on a study investigating the cognitive benefits of bilingualism in children who speak the minority languages of Sardinian and Scottish Gaelic, in addition to their respective 'national' languages of Italian and English. One hundred and twenty-one children, both bilingual and monolingual, were administered a series of standardised cognitive ability tests targeted at the four areas that have been previously shown to be advantageous to bilingual children in the literature, namely, cognitive control, problem-solving ability, metalinguistic awareness and working memory. The bilingual children significantly outperformed the monolingual children in two of the four sub-tests, and the Scottish children significantly outperformed the Sardinian children in one of the sub-tests. The differences found were largely due to the superior performance of the Scottish bilingual children who receive a formal bilingual education, in contrast to the Sardinian bilingual children who mostly only speak the minority language at home. The implications of the results are discussed.

Recent publications related to languages and languages education

Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 approach (2012)

The Scottish Government's Languages Working Group published their final report and recommendations for language learning in Scotland in May 2012. This Report brings forward far reaching recommendations by the Languages Working Group, with the purpose of establishing a new model for the learning and teaching of languages in Scottish schools. The above is complemented by the document below:

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/researchandstatistics/languagesworkinggroup/>

Talking the talk so that Scotland can walk the walk: A rapid review of the evidence of impact on Scottish business of a monolingual workforce (2012)

The purpose of this report was to report findings to the Languages Working Group of the cost to Scotland of a monolingual workforce in order to support the delivery of an action plan for the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning for the manifesto commitment 'that all students develop 1+2 languages' [mother tongue + 2 additional languages].

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00393436.pdf>

European Commission (2012). First European Survey on Language Competencies

The ESLC was established to provide participating countries with comparative data on foreign language competence and insights into good practice in language learning; 'not only ... a survey of language competences but a survey that should be able to provide information about language learning, teaching methods and curricula'. The ESLC is also intended to enable the establishment of a European language competence indicator to measure progress towards the 2002 Barcelona European Council Conclusions, which called for 'action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age'. It is the first survey of its kind.

Final report; technical report; executive summary: <http://ec.europa.eu/languages/eslc/docs/en/>

Press release: http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/press_releases/2012/pr1229_en.htm

European Commission (2012) Europeans and their languages. Special Eurobarometer

Report; annex, summary -

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_399_380_en.htm#386

Eurydice (2012) Key data on education in Europe

Full report - http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php

PDF - http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/134EN.pdf

Eurydice (2012). Key data on education in Europe - highlights.

Key Data series - http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php

PDF - http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/134EN_HI.pdf

Tinsley, T. and T. Comfort (2012). Lessons from abroad: International review of primary languages.

http://tiny.cc/Lessons_from_abroad

CBI (2012). Education and skills survey 2012

Report - http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf

Press release - <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2012/06/further-progress-on-school-and-college-leaver-attainment-requires-radical-new-vision-cbi-pearson/>

What languages do UK managers value? (graphic) - <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/news-articles/2012/06/which-languages-do-uk-managers-value/>

Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (2012). Languages in a global world: learning for better cultural understanding

http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/languages-in-a-global-world_9789264123557-en