

Language Learning Journal – selected abstracts

NB: The Language Learning Journal has made some popular articles available for downloading without a journal subscription at <http://tiny.cc/LLJmostreadarticles> and <http://tiny.cc/LLJmostcitedarticles>, e.g.

- 'Value added' modern languages teaching in the classroom: an investigation into how teachers' use of classroom target language can aid pupils' communication skills **H. Crichton (2009)**
- Language learner strategy research & modern foreign language teaching and learning **M Grenfell (2007)**
- The languages classroom: place of comfort or obstacle course? **M. Nicolson and H. Adams (2010)**
- Score in French: motivating boys with football in Key Stage 3 **Ian McCall (2010)**
- Language acquisition **Nick Dwyer (2011)**
- Optimizing visually-assisted listening comprehension **Ahmad S Kashania et al (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)**
- 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)**
- Listening. Why? How? **Gary N Chambers (2007)**
- Return to gender: boys' and girls' attitudes and achievements **Ann Clark & John Trafford (2007)**

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

The effect of 'massed' task repetitions on complexity, accuracy and fluency: does it transfer to a new task?

Mohammad Javad Ahmadian (2011)

***Language Learning Journal* 39(3): 269-280.**

To date, research results suggest that task repetition positively affects oral task performance. However, researchers have not yet shown the extension of the benefits of repeating the same task to performance of a new task. This article first provides an overview of the currently available research findings on task repetition and then presents the results of a six-month study which aimed to find out whether or not the effects of massed repetitions of the same task carry over to performance of a new task. Thirty intermediate EFL learners from two intact classes participated in this study. Participants in the

experimental group were required to engage in a dialogic narrative task on Occasions 1 to 11 and then an interview task on Occasion 12, each occasion being two weeks apart. Participants in the control group, meanwhile, were only required to perform the oral narrative task at Time 1 and to engage in the interview task at Time 12. Results revealed that massed repetitions of the same task assisted subjects in the experimental group to outperform those in the control group in terms of complexity and fluency but not accuracy. In conclusion, it is claimed that the benefits of massed repetitions of the same task transfer to performance of a new task but not necessarily in all areas of performance.

Translation in language teaching: insights from professional translator training

Ángeles Carreresas & María Noriega-Sánchez (2011)

Language Learning Journal 39(3): 281-297.

The past three decades have seen vast changes in attitudes towards translation, both as an academic discipline and as a profession. The insights we have gained in recent years, in particular in the area of professional translator training, call for a reassessment of the role of translation in language teaching. Drawing on research and practices in the field of translation pedagogy and on our own experience in using translation in the language classroom, our article aims to map the interface between translator training and language teaching, with particular reference to a task-based approach in the context of a communicative framework. After a brief account of the controversy surrounding the role of translation in language learning, we begin by setting out the reasons why we believe language teaching can benefit from engaging in dialogue with the discipline of translator training. In the second section, we examine the recent application of a task-based approach to translator training and how this can, in turn, inform our practice in the language classroom. Finally we provide some sample translation-based tasks used in language undergraduate degree classes to illustrate the discussion.

Drama grammar: towards a performative postmethod pedagogy

Susanne Even (2011)

Language Learning Journal 39(3): 299-312.

This article presents the original concept of drama grammar, the synthesis of grammar instruction and drama pedagogy, which integrates both structural and communicative paradigms through a dialectic combination of acting and linguistic analysis. Based on the principles of drama pedagogy, drama grammar makes use of techniques from the performing arts, encompassing cognitive, emotional, social, practical and kinesthetic learning dimensions. Both the failed quest for the ultimate foreign language teaching method and inconclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of different approaches to grammar instruction highlight the necessity for postmethod approaches to grammar teaching and learning. An introduction of common drama pedagogy techniques provides an insight into drama-based forms of learning for the foreign language classroom, and a prototypical drama grammar lesson shows how the teaching and learning of grammar can be operationalized within the performative paradigm. Drama grammar can thus be understood as an important step towards a postmethod grammar pedagogy.

My UniSpace: applying e-mentoring to language learning

Ian Douglas McCall (2011)

Language Learning Journal 39(3): 313-328

This article discusses My UniSpace, an innovative project which involves undergraduate students in a British university mentoring online pupils aged 14–18 who are studying languages. The project was funded by Routes into Languages, an initiative aimed at increasing take-up in modern languages. My UniSpace offers pupils (mentees) the opportunity to develop their skills in the target language and to receive support in preparing for their language examinations by working with university student mentors, whilst at the same time allowing them to find out more about higher education. It also seeks to give the

mentors themselves the chance to develop their own communication skills, which might enhance their future employability. The article outlines the advantages of e-mentoring for widening participation in languages and how My UniSpace was set up. It then evaluates its effectiveness after its second year of operation in the light of feedback from the participants and by considering the documented exchanges that took place. Finally, it considers lessons that might be learnt to ensure that e-mentoring relationships in languages have a high chance of being successful.

Language learning and the raising of cultural awareness through Internet telephony: a case study

Elena Polisca (2011)

***Language Learning Journal* 39(3): 329-343**

This article seeks to assess the impact of V-Pal (Virtual Partnerships for All Languages) on the student language learning experience within a conventional UK higher education (HE) curriculum. V-Pal is an innovative computer-mediated language scheme, based on a reciprocal, distance-learning language project, run by the University of Manchester in collaboration with the University of Cagliari, Italy. The scheme seeks to promote cultural awareness-raising and language acquisition via a series of linguistic and cultural virtual encounters. It aims to enhance cultural sensitivity among participants; to stimulate them to reflect on their own culture by contrasting it with the target culture in a process of cross-cultural awareness; and to increase confidence in the use of the target language, in particular spoken skills. The project proposes one way of addressing the ever-changing needs of students by offering them opportunities for enhancing conventionally-taught classes independently of their tutor, but within a tutor-‘managed’ environment. This article explores the different stages of the pilot project and draws some conclusions based on data collected from participants. The initial positive results and the replicable features of the project suggest that V-Pal could be successfully exported to other HE settings as a means of enhancing cultural and language provision within the restrictions of conventional curricula.

Foreign language learning conceptualisations of distance learners in New Zealand: goals, challenges and responses

Ute Walker and Rosemary Haddon (2011)

***Language Learning Journal* 39(3): 345-364**

This article reports on a collaborative research project which involved first-year distance learners of Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish at a New Zealand university. Drawing on the principles of Allwright's exploratory practice, the study aimed to gain an insight into the learners' experiences and conceptualisations in terms of their goals, the challenges they encountered and their strategic orientations towards dealing with these. The research revealed that learners regarded their own effort as the most important factor in achieving their goals and overcoming the challenges of isolation, a key barrier to achieving their primary goal of communicative competence in their target language (TL). We argue that the learners' strong sense of self-reliance is an important catalyst for autonomous and independent learning, which needs to be supported through learning environments where students can act and interact in new and creative ways and which can help them cope with adopting new roles and ways of learning. To this end, the study's findings contributed to enhanced e-tutoring and the development of digitalised advice by near-peer role models, which aimed to reduce the learners' sense of distance, promote interaction and, ultimately, improve their quality of life as distance learners.

Constructing practical knowledge of teaching: eleven newly qualified language teachers' discursive agency

Maria Ruohotie-Lyhtya (2011)

***Language Learning Journal* 39(3): 365-379**

This paper explores the professional development of 11 newly qualified foreign language teachers. It draws on a qualitative longitudinal study conducted at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland between 2002 and 2009. The paper concentrates on the personal side of teacher development by analysing participants' discourses concerning language teaching. The study shows important differences in teachers' ways of conceptualising their environment and constructing practical knowledge on teaching. Teachers' sense of agency is identified as a major factor contributing to their professional development.

Recent publications related to languages and languages education

Modern Languages Excellence Report (2011)

<http://tiny.cc/MLExcellenceReport2011>

In Scotland, Excellence Groups were established to consider what makes for excellence in subjects, and in skills development, across learning. The Groups met a number of times in autumn 2010. This is the final report from the Modern Languages Excellence Group.

The Economic Case for Languages (2011)

<http://bit.ly/sLeN1U>

This research report raises awareness of the economic cost to the UK of its comparative weakness in language learning. Poor language competency is undermining the UK's competitiveness in international trade resulting in a loss of an estimated £7.3 billion per annum.

Levels of language study among young people are rapidly falling and yet there is a high employer demand for modern foreign language competency.

The report calls for employer support in demonstrating the workplace relevance of languages and highlights the influence that employers can have on young people's perceptions and decisions.

Labour Market Intelligence on Languages and Intercultural Skills in Higher Education (2011)

<http://www.ucml.ac.uk/shapingthefuture> (select employability 'resources' and scroll down to the pdf)

The report presents the results of research into the labour market for graduates with languages and intercultural skills, which demonstrates the employability of graduates who have developed such skills. It aims to quantify the job market for graduates with language skills, and establish a value for language learning in higher education.

It also discusses how graduates with international experience gained from language study and a period of study abroad are at an advantage in the job market. It explores how trends in language learning in higher education correspond to recruitment trends in the labour market.