Reading

98–281 Brown, Steven (Youngstown State U., OH). Modality in prereading: an investigation of intertextuality. *Reading in a Foreign Language* (Oxford), **11**, 1 (1997), 85–96.

The value of prereading tasks or schema activation activities has been widely attested to in second/foreign language reading research. There has, however, been little research on the modality in which prereading tasks are delivered. The study reported here compared two types of schema activation activity with a control group that received no schema activation. The two types of schema activation were: *read schema activation,* in which students read a whole text related to the target text, and *written schema activation,* in which students wrote what they knew about the topic of the target text. The control group read the target text twice. Subjects were Japanese women college students, who were randomly assigned to groups. Each group received each treatment. There were no significant differences among the groups, suggesting that, with experienced readers such as these, simply reading a text twice may be as valuable as completing a prereading exercise.

98–282 Cevo, Carla (Rome). La lettura nel processo di acquisizione di una L2 in età precoce: un progetto multimediale. [Reading during the early stages of the L2 acquisition process: a multidisciplinary and multimedia project.] *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* (Rome), **29**, 1 (1997), 133–55.

This paper is centred on the assumption that the 'reading' phase is a crucial one in the language acquisition process. Theoretical studies in psycholinguistics and applied linguistics have stressed the cognitive and creative character of the skill of reading. However, reading practice in the second language (L2) has generally been left to the higher grades of education, and specifically related to the study of geography, history and literature. The author claims that, apart from a scattering of pre-reading activities, there has so far been no systematic early approach to L2 reading. This paper offers an attempt to encourage children to read by working on their particular interests in those areas which stimulate the use of the five senses, i.e. acting, playing, drawing, manipulating, etc. Practical examples are provided of the use of reading material with young classroom learners which, it is claimed, will stimulate the acquisition process through a cognitive approach, and through various multidisciplinary and multimedia teaching techniques.

98–283 Cornell, Alan (U. of Plymouth). Some features of journalistic business German texts and their significance for reading comprehension. *Language Learning Journal* (Rugby), **16** (1997), 70–75.

Students taking business courses with an applied language component will encounter many journalistic texts. This paper attempts to set out some significant features of such texts in the case of German, and to link these features to potential difficulties with reading comprehension in English mother-tongue learners. Journalistic business texts tend to have an inductive structure: a specific anecdote draws in the reader and leads on to a more general point. Students not realising that the 'human-interest' stories are merely a journalistic device may produce poor and distorted summaries of texts. The stories may also contain unfamiliar, sometimes colloquial, lexical items. Direct quotation is frequently used, and students should be aware of discourse marking through a wide variety of verbs of reporting which often indicate the attitude of the person quoted or of the writer, and serve to structure the progression of the argument. Idioms, metaphors and phaseologisms can be opaque to learners, who also need to recognise the uses of cliché and of 'elegant variation', a popular device for avoiding lexical repetition. Specialist lexis (*Fachsprache*) is more problematic conceptually than linguistically; semantic fields may not map exactly against the learner's language; and it can be difficult differentiating between near-synonyms. The paper concludes, however, by acknowledging the value of journalistic business texts, in spite of practical problems in their use.

98–284 Plomp, Florence (Utrecht U.). Een empirisch onderzoek naar het effect van lexicale structuurmarkeringen op tekstbegrip in de eerste en in de tweede taal. [An experimental study into the effect of lexical signalling on first- and second-language text comprehension.] *Toegepaste Taalwetenschap in Artikelen* (Amsterdam), **56**, 1 (1997), 47–62.

In research into reading, it has regularly been claimed that the signalling of coherence relations by means of connectives (e.g. *however, because*) or signalling phrases (e.g. *The solution to this problem is..*) facilitates the processing of expository texts and increases recall from texts. This paper presents a reading experiment which examined the role of signalling in both first (L1) and second language (L2) reading. 23 Dutch university students who had specialised in Italian language and literature participated in the experiment. Two variables were manipulated: signalling (implicit *vs.* explicit) and the language in which the text was written (Dutch or Italian). The participants read two expository texts, either in L1 or L2, verified statements, and were given both an immediate and a delayed free-recall task. The results showed a positive tendency towards a signalling effect in both the L1 and L2 conditions.

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Writing

98–285 Ridgway, Tony (Queen's U., Belfast).
Thresholds of the background knowledge effect in foreign language reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language* (Oxford), **11**, 1 (1997), 151–75.

There is much evidence to support the hypothesis that familiarity with topic enhances comprehension, although some studies have failed to come up with a significant correlation between topic familiarity and increased comprehension. This article explores the hypothesis that this effect–referred to as the background knowledge effect–occurs only between two thresholds. Below the lower threshold, linguistic knowledge is insufficient to allow the inferential processes constituting the effect to operate; while above the upper threshold linguistic competence permits interpretation of texts on any non-specialised topic with ease, so that, although background knowledge is at work, its effect is not detectable. Participants in the study were Turkish foundation year university students in Business and Built Environment, who were given three tests of academic writing. The research indicated that a lower threshold may exist, while the existence of an upper threshold is still an open question. The research contained in this article was conducted under the supervision of Dr. Anthony Bruton, of the University of Seville, whose important contribution the author wishes to acknowledge here.

98–286 Taguchi, Etsuo (Daito Bunka U., Japan).
The effects of repeated readings on the development of lower identification skills of FL readers. *Reading in a Foreign Language* (Oxford), **11**, 1 (1997), 97–119.

Recent research on reading in a first and second language suggests the critical role word recognition skills play in the development of fluent reading. In first language research, repeated readings have been found to be effective in developing automaticity in word recognition skills, increasing reading rate, accuracy in identifying words, and comprehension. The aim of the study reported here was to see if this method would also be effective for slow beginning readers in a foreign language, in terms of increasing their oral and silent reading rates. Participants were 15 university students in Eastern Japan, selected by means of a cloze test and Pre-TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores. The students were assigned to practise repeated readings from textbooks at a level which matched their selection scores. The procedure was conducted three times a week over a 10-week period. In each 30-minute session, the students read a passage seven times: the first reading was silent and timed; the next three were 'assisted' silent readings, i.e. accompanied by an audiotaped model; and the last three were again silent and timed. The results showed that, for practice passages, silent reading rates increased significantly even after the seventh reading. However, transfer of practice effects to a new passage was not found to be significant in either oral or silent reading rates, with one exception:

the lowest level of readers showed a significant improvement in their oral reading rates.

98–287 Walker, Carolyn (U. of Exeter). A self access extensive reading project using graded readers (with particular reference to students of English for academic purposes). *Reading in a Foreign Language* (Oxford), **11**, 1 (1997), 121–49.

In the context of a university English Language Centre, where students were preparing for tertiary level study through English, development of an adequate reading ability was perceived to be a problem. This paper reports the project set up in response to this perception, a self-access extensive reading project using graded readers, set up with the help of the Edinburgh Project in Extensive Reading (EPER). Feedback on the project was sought from students, who were also tested over three university terms. The results showed not only that progress as measured by test scores correlated positively with the amount of reading done, but also that students rated the project favourably.

Writing

98–288 Belcher, Diane L. (Ohio State U.). An argument for non-adversarial argumentation: on the relevance of the feminist critique of academic discourse to L2 writing pedagogy. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 1 (1997), 1–21.

The author proposes that the feminist critique of academic discourse has begun to heighten awareness of the agonistic, competitive nature of much academic writing in English. This article considers what the implications of this gendered discoursal consciousness may be for second language (L2) writing educators, both as teachers and as academic writers themselves. Vignettes of two L2 writers who have successfully negotiated non-adversarial academic texts are presented and discussed. Finally, guidelines for a non-adversarial model of academic discourse are suggested.

98–289 Crompton, Peter. Hedging in academic writing: some theoretical problems. *English for Specific Purposes* (Oxford), **16**, 4 (1997), 271–87.

It is claimed that, while recent studies of hedging in academic writing have argued for the inclusion of hedging in English for Academic Purposes syllabi, they have not, unfortunately, worked from a common understanding of the concept. This paper reviews and evaluates some of the different ways in which the term *hedge* has been understood and defined in the literature. Although the use of hedges as a politeness strategy offers the fullest functional account of hedging in academic writing, there has been a tendency to extend the

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