

97-526 Zimmerman, Cheryl Boyd (California State U.). Do reading and interactive vocabulary instruction make a difference? An empirical study. *TESOL Quarterly* (Alexandria, VA), **31** (1997), 121-40.

Many teachers give little or no classroom attention to vocabulary, assuming students will learn words incidentally. Although research demonstrates that vocabulary can be acquired indirectly through reading, the question remains: does vocabulary instruction make a difference? This article reports on a pilot study of the combined effects of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction for U.S. second language (L2) students attending university-preparatory intensive English programmes. A 10-week classroom-based study tested the hypothesis that L2 students exposed to a combination of regular periods of reading and interactive vocabulary instruction would show significant increases in their knowledge of the

nontechnical terms that are used widely across academic fields. The students were divided into two groups: one received three hours a week of interactive vocabulary instruction plus an assignment to read self-selected materials; the other received the self-selected reading assignment only. The results suggest that interactive vocabulary instruction accompanied by moderate amounts of self-selected and course-related reading led to gains in vocabulary knowledge; students' perceptions of how best to learn words corroborated these results. It is argued that teachers should give consideration to the effects of combining reading and interactive vocabulary instruction.

Language testing

97-527 Alonso, Esther (California State U.). La evaluación de la actuación oral de los hispanohablantes bilingües mediante las directrices de ACTFL. [The evaluation of Spanish-speaking bilinguals' oral proficiency according to ACTFL guidelines.] *Hispania* (Greely, CO), **80**, 2 (1997), 328-41.

This paper reports on a study to test the validity of the ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) scale as an instrument for rating the oral communicative competence of Spanish-speaking bilinguals. 17 bilingual university students with different levels of communicative competence were interviewed following ACTFL guidelines. The study had three aims: (a) to compare and contrast the ACTFL oral descriptors for English speakers of Spanish with the performance of the bilingual Spanish speakers; (b) to present a profile of the linguistic characteristics of these Spanish speakers at different levels of communicative competence; and (c) to establish the extent to which the evaluative concepts

found in the ACTFL can be applied to the evaluation of these subjects' oral proficiency. Results demonstrated that most of the evaluative criteria of the test provide a valid measure of these subjects' performance. However, the 'Accuracy' criteria do not adequately describe the performance of the bilinguals, which it was found depends for the most part on the context in which the function is developed, whilst that of the English speakers tends to depend only on the function. The paper concludes with a discussion of the importance of these results for the design and implementation of foreign language courses for Spanish-speaking bilinguals.

97-528 Brown, James Dean (U. of Hawai'i, Manoa). Computers in language testing: present research and some future directions. *Language Learning and Technology* (<http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/llt>), **1**, 1 (1997), 44-59.

This article begins by exploring recent developments in the use of computers in language testing in four areas: item banking, computer-assisted language testing, computerised-adaptive language testing, and research on the effectiveness of computers in language testing. The article then examines the educational measurement literature in an attempt to forecast the directions future research on computers in language testing might take, and suggests addressing the following issues: (a) piloting practices in

computer adaptive language tests (CALTs); (b) standardising or varying CALT lengths; (c) sampling CALT items; (d) changing the difficulty of CALT items; (e) dealing with CALT item sets; (f) scoring CALTs; (g) dealing with CALT item omissions; (h) making decisions about CALT cut-points; (i) avoiding CALT item exposure; (j) providing CALT item review opportunities; and (k) complying with legal disclosure laws when using CALTs.

97-529 Chung, Jing-mei (Ming-Hsin Inst. of Tech. and Commerce). A comparison of two multiple-choice test formats for assessing English structure competence. *Foreign Language Annals* (New York), **30**, 1 (1997), 111-23.

This study uses item analysis techniques to compare two multiple-choice test formats, referred to here as Form A and Form B, for assessing student competence in English structure in terms of mean scores, item difficulty, and item discrimination. Data for this analysis are derived from test answer sheets completed by 239 students, which included 144 college students and 95 senior high school students. Form A is composed of 20 'sore finger' test items randomly selected from previous TOEFL papers, and is an error-detection task. The 20 test items on Form B, which are exactly the same sentences as those on Form A, are traditional multiple-choice items. The

results show that the mean score of Form B is significantly higher than that of Form A, i.e. Form B is much easier than Form A for the subjects of the study. It is therefore suggested that Form B may be more suitable for inspiring confidence in younger or lower-level students, while Form A may be more appropriate for higher-level students to train their error detection skills in grammar. Examinations of individual items reveal that difficulty and discrimination aspects are item-specific rather than format-dependent, and items with moderate difficulty indices tend to have better discrimination power.

Teacher education

97-530 Antonek, Janis L. (North Carolina U.), **McCormick, Dawn E. and Donato, Richard** (Pittsburgh U.). The student teacher portfolio as autobiography: developing a professional identity. *The Modern Language Journal* (Madison, WI), **81**, 1 (1997), 15-27.

This study argues that student teacher portfolios are a viable, effective, and appropriate tool in documenting teacher growth and development and in promoting reflective, thoughtful practice. The concepts of mediation, history, and conscious reflection, embodied in Vygotskian theory, are shown to provide a theoretical framework in which to understand and analyse portfolios in professional development programmes. Specifically, this study traces the unique

paths of two pre-service foreign language teachers who, through anchored reflection mediated by the portfolio, constructed a professional identity out of the historical and cultural conditions of their classroom experience. It is suggested that portfolios can go beyond a gatekeeping function to a means of informing teacher educators and forming the identities of novice teachers.

97-531 Blyth, Carl (U. of Texas, Austin). A constructivist approach to grammar: teaching teachers to teach aspect. *The Modern Language Journal* (Madison, WI), **81**, 1 (1997), 50-66.

This article claims that a constructivist approach to teacher education will help inexperienced teachers understand the learning and teaching of aspect, a core grammatical concept. The constructivist approach challenges teachers' traditional beliefs through activity, reflection and discourse, in both coursework and fieldwork; and offers them experiences as learners that confront traditional views of teaching and learning. By consciously experiencing the process of narration, i.e. how a speaker perceives

real or imagined events and then organises perceptions into a coherent recounting of events, apprentice teachers can construct a deeper awareness of the form/meaning aspectual correlations of the target language. More generally, this study argues that a constructivist approach to teacher education facilitates the development of an innovative grammar pedagogy by challenging apprentice teachers' traditional beliefs about the nature of grammar.