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Case studies of language learners as a tool for helping teachers understand the experience of language learning
Elaine K. Horwitz, Peggy Pei-Hsuan Hsieh, Joshua D. Bonzo, Dafu Huang, Yoon-Hee Na and Brian G. Rubrecht

Abstract
This paper evolved from the Second Language Learner class at The University of Texas at Austin (USA) and seeks to describe the perspectives, learning strategies, and experiences of five adult language learners in a variety of language learning contexts. The Second Language Learner class is designed to help language teachers better understand the needs and experiences of the learners they will be working with. The paper consists of case studies prepared by course participants based on the perspectives and analytic tools addressed in the class. It ends with a consideration of the benefits of preparing and using learner case histories in methods courses for new language teachers.

Power Shifts in a Language Learning Career

Elizabeth Walker

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Abstract
Following epistemological approaches taken by feminists and scholars of colour, this paper examines personal experience of learning four languages. On reflection, a striking feature was the shifts in power experienced in the different learning contexts. Power issues in language education have been researched by applied linguists since the 1980s, from the microsocial classroom level to the macrosocial international level. This contribution to the growing database of first-person accounts of language learning describes classroom level power shifts occurring over 35 years. The classroom took many forms along a continuum from a traditional, teacher-fronted place, thousands of kilometres from the target language context, to a room in a private home within the target language community. The analysis of power change takes into account curriculum, context and the person in context. This framework’s three dimensions are mainly informed by Johnson’s (1989) framework for evaluating curriculum learner-centredness, Auerbach’s (1995) analysis of power in classrooms and Norton Peirce’s (1995) conceptualization of social identity and self-investment in language learning. Some observations are made regarding the relationship between learner power and learning outcomes. The relationship is not a simple positive correlation across contexts, as the power factor interacts mainly with the learning purpose and contextual factors. As far as the data nature allows, some implications are drawn for language learning in both traditional and alternative classrooms.
Learning Cantonese in the community: An exploration of the role of social interaction in language learning

John Trent
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Abstract
This paper reports on a study of interaction between learners of Cantonese as a second language in Hong Kong and native speakers beyond the classroom. The primary aim of this study was to investigate how learners experience, feel about and respond to such interaction. In addition, the study sought to explore whether such experiences, drawn from a group of largely native English speakers pursuing professional careers, differed from those of Norton’s (2000) English language learners, who, in contrast, were confined to positions of relatively low socio-economic status in Canadian society. Data were collected from thirteen subjects using interviews and a diary study. The results suggest that learners experience a wide range of feelings, both positive and negative, in their interaction with native speakers. One of the principal findings of the study was that learners often engineer potentially negative encounters into positive language learning outcomes. These results point to the importance of interaction in second language learning and to the role of the classroom teacher in preparing learners for such encounters, through, for instance, service learning programs.

The boy who Mary loves him is called John: A study of the resumptive pronoun problem and its correction strategies

Alice Y.W. Chan
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Abstract
The resumptive pronoun problem is a very common problem encountered by many learners of English as a second or foreign language irrespective of their L1 backgrounds. This article discusses the nature and possible causes of the problem, outlines some pedagogical implications, and suggests ways which teachers can use to help students overcome the problem. It is argued that for Hong Kong learners whose native language is Cantonese, which is a dialect of Chinese, the source of the problem is both L1- and L2-related. The acceptability of resumptive pronouns in Chinese and the adoption of a processing strategy to retain the logical structure of a clause are arguably the main causes for the problem. A consciousness-raising approach to remedial instruction, which aims at arousing learners’ awareness of the nature of the problem and the target language norms, is suggested as a possible remedial measure.

Experiential learning in bilingual workplaces in Hong Kong: Business English in the Workplace Project

Monica Hill and Elaine Martyn
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Abstract
Against a background of growing unemployment in Hong Kong, this project set out to give students the opportunity to experience a two-week work placement with companies in Hong Kong focusing on English business writing skills. Workshops were held before, during and at the end of the placements to focus on business writing and communication skills. Teachers visited the companies to monitor the process and gain feedback from employers. This paper will first highlight the background literature which suggests that work placements can enhance the motivation, awareness and communication skills of students in the local context of bilingual workplaces in Hong Kong. Next, the stages of the project, Business English in the Workplace, are described and feedback from student participants and workplace hosts are presented. Final reflections on the project highlight its strengths and difficulties faced.
Profiles of strategic expertise in second language reading

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Abstract

This article sets out to report the findings of a think aloud-based study of reading behaviour in second language English. The main aim of the study was to investigate strategic reading behaviour among subjects and use the results to construct profiles of relative expertise in second language reading. Such profiles not only provide valuable information for teaching and learning in their own right, they are also vital in helping to bring to realization tertiary-level educational initiatives to produce independent, life-long learners; initiatives which are likely to fail unless students develop effective strategic reading abilities. The subjects of the study were 60 first year students studying business-related subjects at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU). Data were gathered by concurrent think aloud protocol and were recorded and transcribed. NUD*IST software was used to analyse the data. Evidence from the study indicates that three broad but clearly differentiated reading strategy profiles may be described: the inexpert, the emerging expert and the expert. These are presented and discussed in relation to the literature and transcriptions from the think aloud sessions.

Cultural knowledge and foreign language teaching and learning: A study of Chinese Family schemas in language, culture and intercultural communication

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Abstract

A wide range of cultural knowledge with regard to families has been abstracted from Chinese life experiences over generations as Chinese Family schemas. This paper applies schema theories to the study of Chinese language, culture, and intercultural communication in the context of mainland Chinese speakers of English interacting with Anglo-Australians. It is found that Chinese Family schemas are extensively instantiated in the Chinese folk art of chun lian, literature, idioms and common sayings, forms of address, greetings, Chinese discourse and intercultural discourse. It is argued that, since Chinese Family schemas are culturally-saturated, if not appreciated or ignored, they are likely to cause intercultural miscommunication. Thus it is implied that teaching and learning a foreign language (English for instance) may incorporate the overt investigation of cultural knowledge such as family schemas in the curriculum. Teaching materials might include some cross-cultural texts for learners to analyse the embedded cultural knowledge, and classroom activities might be organised with the theme of cultural experiences. The goal of language teaching and learning may include learners’ ability to negotiate at the level of cultural schemas as well as the level of language, to achieve successful communication.
Use of Verbs in Teacher Talk: A comparison study between LETs and NETs

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Abstract
Using the framework of Halliday’s functional grammar (1994), this study analyses the data of a locally-compiled corpus, CELT, with a specific concern for what and how meanings are constructed and conveyed via the use of verbs in local English teachers (LETs) and native English teachers’ (NETs) classrooms in Hong Kong. An analysis of the top-ten lexical verbs indicates that given the socio-cultural and linguistic differences in the teachers’ background, teacher talk by LETs and NETs share certain similarities. Both groups use language in doing (material process), feeling and perceiving (mental), saying (verbal process) and explaining (relational/existential process). The analysis also reveals some differences. While the two groups share 60% of the top-ten lexical verbs, they use the same items in different ways. LETs tend to use an item in its basic sense, making a clear boundary between process types; NETs, on the other hand, use a word in different senses and in figurative speech, thus transforming one process to another. Although small in scale, the study has some pedagogical implications for teaching and learning English in the Hong Kong context.

Motivations in the Code-switching of Nursing Notes in EFL Taiwan

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Abstract
Nursing pre-professionals are required to practice writing nursing notes in Chinese before they start to practice nursing in hospitals. However, as soon as these nursing pre-professionals enter the real work context in Taiwan, they start to write in both English and Chinese. Although EFL learners are taught to write in Chinese at school, the result is not effective because social pressures such as time constraints and the need to accommodate are a compelling force that motivates nursing professionals to switch codes. This has led to a confusing situation and may have even encouraged code-switching in the notes written by the nurses in training or in the work context. What seem to be needed are clearer guidelines which lead to improved communication among medical professionals. Understanding why EFL learners might make certain choices in language use can lead to more tolerant and appreciative attitudes toward the learners’ full range of communicative resources. However, for language teachers, code-switching may have detrimental consequences which they have an obligation to bring to the attention of appropriate audiences.

Chinese language sources for Chinese Pidgin English: What we know and what we need to know

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Abstract
The existence of the contact language Chinese Pidgin English (CPE) has been copiously documented, but its exact nature is obscured by a number of factors. The time depth since its inception and the fact that the language is no longer spoken makes access to reliable data difficult. Evaluation of such data that exist is made more difficult by the spurious nature of some sources. Even those European observers who were not ridiculing the language or inventing passages may have recorded what they heard through a filter which tended to hear forms in terms of their relation to standard English. A valuable source of comparison is provided by the writings of Chinese-speaking observers during the time when Chinese Pidgin English was spoken. There are two main sources of information: The Common Language of the Red-haired Foreigners, a short CPE phrasebook printed around 1850 in Guangzhou, and Tang Tingshu’s six-volume Chinese-English Instructor. Some descriptive work on these works has been carried out, but a great deal of analysis remains to be done.