Enter subhead content here

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CONTENT

Editorial
The Impact of the New Global Economy On Business Communication Skills
David Kirk Vaughan

Teaching oral communication skills to Business English learners
M Ashraf Rizvi

Representation of Sociolinguistic Realities in Language Teaching
Maya Khemlani David

Articulating /p/ in English and Arabic
Kapil Muni Tiwary

Building a Networked Learning Environment for Interactive Online Language Training
Pran Nath Pandit

Information Technology Literacy in the Lives of Language Teacher Trainees in Malaysia
Ambigapathy A Pandian

Language Classroom Observation: How do researchers and participants manage?
Pramela Krish

Review: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics, by Ronald Wardhaugh

Han Jing-Mei

ABSTRACTS

The Impact of the New Global Economy on Business Communication Skills

David Kirk Vaughan

As the business world becomes more diverse, competitive and result-oriented, the importance of business communication skills continues to increase and the enrollment of English-as-Second-Language (ESL) students in business colleges across the world continues to expand. With the whole world becoming a global market and business becoming a link between people and countries, business communication skills are crucial to professional success today. However, success in communicating in the global environment will depend not just on an effective style but on the ability to analyze, organize, and present essential information effectively. This article argues that globalization is having a profound impact on

Building a Networked Learning Environment for Interactive Online Language Training

Pran Nath Pandit

This article investigates the potential of web's multimedia capabilities and interactive functions as a means of online dissemination. It describes the relevance of online interactive training programmes for national workforces, which require continual training, updating and upgradation of skills and knowledge. One area that undercuts all fields of professional knowledge is skills in language. The author argues that building a Networked Learning Environment (NLE) is essential to widen access to interactive Language Training Programmes. Online teaching of languages combines the advantages of print, audio, CD ROMs and DVDs and adds continuous interaction

http://jcpparagon.tripod.com/id15.html
business communication tasks, and new kinds of communications tasks or skills will be required in the new environment of globalization. These skills include multiple language facility and cultural awareness capability, legal sensitivity, ability to understand and explain quantitative data, knowledge of high-tech communications capabilities, recognition of collateral communication requirements, and ability to analyze and prioritize information.

Teaching oral communication skills to Business English learners

M A Rizvi

This paper outlines an approach to the teaching of oral communication component of a Business English course to a group of Arab students doing National Accounting Diploma at Sultan Qaboos University, the national university of Sultanate of Oman. Although most Business communication courses in Asian universities do include an oral communication component, the time available for it is very limited as this has to among peer learners and tutors, the facility for instantaneous feedback and solution of problems, and continual updating and upgrading of information and skills to cope with the ever increasing needs of workforces.

The challenge is to make language training available to a great number of people by devising customized, demand-based online language training programmes. This can be effectively achieved by Indira Gandhi National Open University, a fast growing distance education university in Asia. The need is to undertake a pilot project first and give online courses together with partial on-campus training before phasing out to entirely online dissemination.

Information Technology Literacy in the lives of Language Teacher Trainees in Malaysia

Ambigapathy A Pandian

The changing technologies for
compete with many other components. As a result, Business communication teachers find themselves involved in teaching oral communication skills in just a few classes due to academic compulsion. They often need to devise short cuts to improve oral communication skills of their students in order to make them take more active role in several academic activities that require oral competence. This paper presents a way of teaching oral skills that expresses a realistic attitude about what should be expected of Business English learners who need to improve their English oral presentation skills despite the constraints of classroom time and space.

Representation of sociolinguistic realities in Language teaching

MAYA KHEMLANI DAVID

In this paper, the author argues that language teaching and instructional materials must not be divorced from socio-cultural realities. It is argued that when teaching English as a medium of communication within the ASEAN region, it is vital that Asian value systems and not transplanted TL (English) values are literacy and changing instructional practices are some of the serious challenges that teachers confront today. Interestingly teacher training is one area that involves the teaching and learning activities of a large number of young people who in turn will engage in lifelong learning assignments. This paper focuses on information technology experiences and literacy among trainee-teachers specializing in the teaching of Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil languages in Malaysia. It aims to assess the experiences of teacher trainees with information technology -- to examine first some of the patterns of computer usage and knowledge about software applications and information technology in their study programme and secondly, to find out to what extent these individuals were thinking
reflected in speech and social interaction with our Asian neighbours because if TL value systems are reflected in our speech patterns with our Asian neighbours it could lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown. It is also argued that the language teachers’ role is to alert and sensitize his/her students on the differences in the communication styles and expectations of native speakers using English as contrasted with non-native speakers. The ability to switch and accommodate to their interlocutors will result in a high degree of communicative effectiveness. Based on the results of a critical examination of 20 textbooks which are used from the first year of English language teaching, the author tried to determine whether L1 cultural norms were being reflected in teaching materials.

Articulating /p/ in English and Arabic

Kapil Muni Tiwary

This paper deals with the problems involved for the native speakers of Arabic learning English in Yemen in the articulation of one English phoneme, /p/ and its confusion with the English phoneme /b/. As the learners face a major learning task here, and the teachers of English face a serious teaching problem, it is argued that it may be necessary in teaching pronunciation to develop in the learners some degree of ‘conscious’ control of the organs of speech –

Language Classroom Observation: How do researchers and participants manage?

Pramela Krish
what we call a ‘phonetic skill’. The paper describes the techniques for teaching the phonetic skill to the native speakers of Arabic learning English to articulate voiceless bilabial stop [p] of English. The techniques proposed are based on the well-known general phonetic facts of aspiration and voice lag, and the relationship between the two in English. As the recent growth in the use of English in Yemen has led to changes in learners’ pronunciation needs and goals, there is urgent need to consider the widespread use of these techniques to train different groups of learners of different levels of proficiency in the universities of Yemen located in different parts of the country to produce voiceless bilabial stops [p] of English. Only then the validity and value of these techniques can be properly assessed and affirmed.

Classroom research investigates the process of language teaching and learning as they occur in the classroom and deals with immediate and practical problems facing language teachers and learners. Research of this nature is meant to enhance the effectiveness of the education system and could be sensitive and demanding as it involves administrators, language teachers and language learners directly. As education is essentially a practical rather than a theoretical activity, the field of educational research is different from many other areas of research. This paper based on interviews and discussions with administrators, teachers and students, discusses some of the problem areas faced by researchers in managing language classroom observation. The paper also attempts to formulate a set of guidelines and provide useful tips for potential language classroom
Gender in Communication: Utilisation of Similar Linguistic Devices

JARIAH MOHD JAN

During the last few decades, rigid role patterns have changed and as a result, gender notions have changed as well. Men and women are increasingly becoming each other’s equals in areas of education and profession (Van Baalen, 2001). As language helps people to create their identity and their gender, it makes sense to assume that when people’s ideas of masculinity and femininity change, their language changes as well.
This paper looks at communication between men and women in public discussions in Malaysia, particularly with their use of linguistic devices. With reference to the literature on the subject, especially in studies by supporters of the “dominance approach”, the notion of hedges is used to argue that women use language in a tentative way. Male use of language is said to express authority and power whereas women, who deviate from the male norm, show their weakness through their choice of linguistic devices, such as hedges.

This study investigates whether the language of men and women are becoming more similar as a result of changing gender notions. The analysis of this study was based on several recordings of public discussions and relevant language samples are presented for the purpose of discussion. One major finding of this study shows that hedging devices are not primarily female linguistic devices because men use them as well and in ways similar to women.

Interacting with advertisements: Making sense through text construction and deconstruction

CHAN SWEE HENG
AIN NADZIMAH ABDULLAH
CHAN MEI YUIT

Linguistic, social and cognitive factors in a discourse system are tightly interwoven. This also applies to subsystems such as the discourse of advertisement. Advertising input leading to product awareness, attitude change, and act of purchase rely on assumptions made about hierarchical sequence of effects brought about by language use. In this study, an attempt is made to explicate the concerns of advertising text input and resulting product awareness through text construction and deconstruction. An understanding of text construction is embarked through coherence analysis and a study of the text structure. Deconstruction is applied through the examination of the meaning contributed by attributes and claims found in the advertising texts. The data are obtained from selected advertisements with a focus on skin care products.

Cracking the Code: Creating an Online Technical Writing Course for Corporate Clients in Southeast Asia

DIPika MUKHERJEE

This paper describes the challenges involved in the creation of online self-access modules for corporate clients who require proficiency in Technical Writing. This project was started in Nanyang Technological University in 2000, and some online modules were developed based on the traditional two-day workshops conducted onsite at the client’s workplace. The focus of this paper is to examine the implications for online education beyond
academic institutions and within corporate settings, where the course creation must necessarily allow a great deal of flexibility while addressing the need for specific applied knowledge required by industry practitioners.

While describing the genesis of the online course, this paper will also examine how the new technology can address the issues of meeting the specific expectations of clients, collaborative learning and the challenges of quality assurance and accountability, all within the framework of the needs of the Southeast Asian workforce.

The Socio-Cultural Dimension of Business Letters: Letters Written in English in Malaysia

STEFANIE PILLAI

Business letters written in different settings are bound to display socio-culturally related aspects. Thus, differences in the way aspects like politeness, power and distance are realized are to be expected even if the same language, such as English, is used in different countries. This is because socio-cultural norms have been found to be present even in seemingly formulaic communication such as business letters (Vergaro, 2004). In relation to this, a total of 100 business letters written in English to and from Malaysians from three areas (legal, media and information technology) were examined. The letters were examined using the two dimensions of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory: social distance and relative power in relation to positive and negative politeness strategies employed. The results show that business letters written in English in Malaysia display particular patterns of language use that relate to these dimensions of politeness in Malaysia. Among these patterns are the way in which terms of addresses are used and the way that letters are closed. Such results have implications for the way in which business correspondence is taught in Malaysia as they show that the socio-cultural dimensions of letter-writing cannot be ignored.

The Power of Vocabulary: Deconstructing Images of the older woman

KUANG CHING HEI AND MAYA KHEMLANI DAVID

Critical analysis is the ability of a reader to respond critically to the intentions, contents and possible effects of messages and texts. Critical discourse analysis of a text can help readers become aware of the power of discourse in empowering specific groups of people like the old. Age, gender and ethnic identities can and are
socially/culturally constructed at the discursive level. This research, using a framework of critical analysis, argues that new magazines focusing on a target group are ideal sites for examining changes in ideological bias. The study explores the issues of age and feminine representation and identity in a recent popular magazine published in the United Kingdom. The focus is on how age is represented and shaped in the text. Critical discourse analysis is used to scrutinize the prevailing stereotypical representations of age and help us negotiate our position in relation to age-related identities socially/culturally constructed at the discursive level. Critical language awareness will provide the means of uncovering the underlying ideological bias in discourse and helps to expose hidden forms of power through the manipulation of language.

Requests and Cultural Norms

Maya Khemlani David & Kuang Ching Hei

Requests, like other speech acts express cultural norms and values of a society. Malaysians are reputed to be aware of status and hierarchical differentials and for their indirectness in discourse. The paper assumes there are differences in the extent of indirectness by Malays, Chinese and Indians, who are the three major ethnic groups in multilingual Malaysia. The writers examine written requests by staff in a private educational institution to a person in authority i.e. the Deputy Director of the institution. These requests come from Malay, Chinese and Indian staff. This paper analyses written requests to determine if:

1. awareness of local cultural variables is reflected in the discourse of requests, and if

2. a difference in the degree of indirectness by the different ethnic groups and across gender exists.

The writers argue that teachers of English in a multilingual society must be aware of such variations in discourse styles. Research is essential so that teachers can disseminate such findings to learners.

CUSTOMER-SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS TRAINING: IRONING OUT THE GREY AREAS

RAJESWARY A. SARGUNAN

Malaysia’s vision of attaining ‘developed-nation’ status, in accordance with its VISION 2020, is heavily dependant upon its industrialisation and globalization strategies, which in turn rely on effective communication skills. Although such courses abound, there are several glitches that prevent optimum efficiency. These include the amorphousness of the relationship between the various stakeholders involved in these courses, and their roles and responsibilities in the learning encounter. These issues have been explored, and remedies suggested, but there is still a need to
research this issue. This study attempts to investigate the issues stated above with regard to two communication skills programmes, namely Technical Report Writing and Oral Presentation. Investigative tools include questionnaires and interviews; these were administered to the various stakeholders in the teaching / learning encounter, namely the students, the lecturers, administrative personnel from the institutions involved, the sponsors/paymasters, and the end-users of the learners’ skills and services.