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

reference of *hedge* to politeness-related features of academic writing, such as impersonal constructions, the use of the passive, and lexis-projecting emotions. It is suggested that *hedge* be more usefully reserved for expressions of epistemic modality, or markers of provisionality, as attached to new knowledge claims. It is further argued that it is not possible to designate certain kinds of lexis as epistemically modal and that authors can only be held responsible for modalising, or hedging, their own propositions. A new definition of *hedge*, closely related to the ordinary definition, is suggested, together with a taxonomy of the hedges which would fit this definition so far identified in academic writing.

98–290 Ferris, Dana R. (California State U., Sacramento) **and others**. Teacher commentary on student writing: descriptions and implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 2 (1997), 155–82.

Teacher response to student writing is a vital, though neglected, aspect of second language (L2) composition research. The study reported here seeks to add to the previous research through the development and implementation of an original analysis model, designed to examine both the pragmatic aims and the linguistic forms of teachers' written commentary. This model was used in the examination of over 1500 teacher comments written on a sample of 111 essay first drafts by 47 advanced English as a Second Language university students. It was found that the teacher changed her responding strategies over the course of two semesters; that she provided different types of commentary on various genres of writing assignments; that the amount of her feedback decreased as the term progressed; and that she responded somewhat differently to students of varying ability levels. It is suggested that the study raises several implications for L2 writing instruction as well as for analyses of teacher commentary.

98–291 Godev, Concepción B. (Coll. of Charleston, S. Carolina). Claiming space for literature/culture and academic writing in the foreign language composition class. *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes* (Toronto, Ont.), **53**, 4 (1997), 634–47.

This paper discusses the concept of academic writing and its role in Foreign Language (FL) curricula in general and in FL composition courses in particular. The discussion points out the importance of linking reading and writing assignments in the FL composition class, in order to introduce students to the type of writing they will be expected to do in subject matter courses, namely literature and culture courses. The objectives of FL composition classes are examined in light of the demands students will encounter in literature/culture courses. These objectives are further examined in contrast to the objectives of ESL (English as a Second Language) composition classes. Space for literature in the FL composition class is claimed not only on the grounds that literature is the subject that many FL minors and majors study the most, but also on the basis that literary texts, if appropriately chosen, are a source of authentic linguistic and cultural information, as well as a tool to generate critical thinking.

98–292 Hyland, Ken (City U. of Hong Kong) **and Milton, John**. Qualification and certainty in L1 and L2 students' writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 2 (1997), 183–205.

A major problem for second language (L2) students writing academic essays in English is to convey statements with an appropriate degree of doubt and certainty. Such epistemic comments are crucial to academic writing where authors have to distinguish opinion from fact and evaluate their assertions in acceptable and persuasive ways. Despite its importance, however, little is known about how L2 writers present assertions in their writing, and their attempts to master appropriate forms are often measured against the work of expert writers. Based on a corpus of one million words, this paper compares the expression of doubt and certainty in the examination scripts of 900 Cantonese-speaking school leavers writing in English with those of 770 British learners of similar age and educational level. A detailed analysis of the texts reveals that these L2 writers differ significantly from the native speakers in relying on a more limited range of items, offering stronger commitments, and exhibiting greater problems in conveying a precise degree of certainty. The authors highlight a number of issues raised by the research, and make some pedagogical suggestions for developing competence in this important pragmatic area.

98–293 Kehagia, Olga (U. of Thessaly, Greece) **and Cox, Margaret**. Revision changes when using word processors in an English as a Foreign Language context. *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (Lisse, The Netherlands), **10**, 3 (1997), 239–53.

The study reported here focuses on the use of word-processors when revising in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context. More precisely, it attempts to identify the magnitude of effects of EFL writing expertise, text importance for students and computer familiarity upon the kinds of revision. University first year (advanced in computing) students were asked to write one argumentative essay. Revision time did not eventually exceed the one and a half hour. Both the essay and revisions were carried out with computers (PCs). Analysis revealed that all kinds of revision changes, except micro- and macrostructure ones were not significantly related to each other. Microstructure changes accounted for the highest variation and had the strongest relation with all revision changes. Meaning-preserving changes accounted for the lowest variation and had the weakest relation with all revision changes. Importance of text for the students was found to be the most important and significant predictor variable for the

number of changes performed. In contrast, the effects of EFL writing expertise and computer familiarity were found either non-significant or relatively unimportant.

98–294 Kubota, Ryuko (U. of North Carolina). A reevaluation of the uniqueness of Japanese written discourse. Implications for contrastive rhetoric. *Written Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA), **14**, 4 (1997), 460–80.

According to contrastive rhetoric research, Japanese expository prose is characterised by a classical style (*ki-sho-ten-ketsu*), reader responsibility, and an inductive style with a sudden topic shift. It is claimed that English readers have difficulty comprehending texts written by Japanese writers because of such culturally unique conventions. This article challenges these hypotheses concerning the uniqueness of Japanese texts. It argues that previous studies tend to view language and culture as exotic and static rather than dynamic, and overgeneralise the cultural characteristics from a few specific examples. Also, these characterisations of Japanese written discourse can be challenged by multiple interpretations of *ki-sho-ten-ketsu* offered by composition specialists in Japan and the linguistic and educational influences from the West on the development of modern Japanese since the mid-19th century. This article suggests that researchers and writing teachers should be wary of stereotyping cultural conventions of writing.

98–295 Matsuda, Paul Kei (Purdue U.). Contrastive rhetoric in context: a dynamic model of L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 1 (1997), 45–60.

The notion of contrastive rhetoric was first proposed as a pedagogical solution to the problem of second language (L2) organisation, and the subsequent development in research has generated, among other valuable insights, three explanations for the organisational structures of L2 texts, including linguistic, cultural, and educational explanations. However, the contribution of contrastive rhetoric to the teaching of writing in English as a Second Language has been limited because of the underlying assumptions that have guided the early pedagogical approaches. This paper identifies a static theory of L2 writing that has been widely used in teaching organisational structures, and considers how the pedagogical application of insights from contrastive rhetoric studies has been limited by this theory. To overcome what are seen as the limitations of the static theory, an alternative model of L2 writing is proposed, and its implications for further research and the teaching of L2 writing are discussed.

98–296 Porte, Graeme K. (U. of Granada). The etiology of poor second language writing: the influence of perceived teacher preferences on second language revision strategies. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 1 (1997), 61–78.

Much previous second language writing research has sought to compare the so-called 'skilled' and 'unskilled' writer, suggesting that one major difference may lie in their approaches to revision. Specifically, unskilled writers have been seen to revise from a narrow outlook, addressing the surface grammatical structure of compositions, usually at word level, rather than deeper issues of content and organisation. However, the issue of what may lead them to concentrate more on certain aspects of their revision remains unexplored. Specifically, little is known about how underachieving English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writers perceive revision in academic writing contexts, and the possible effect of these opinions and contexts on their revision strategies. This descriptive study focuses on what was revealed about this issue from semi-structured interviews over a 9-month period with 71 underachieving EFL undergraduates. Most participants were able to reflect on their revision behaviour and describe their current strategies, which were often observed to be pragmatically based and derived from perceived teacher preferences in past or present classroom practice and from feedback on writing. Revision of compositions was generally described as involving little more than a proofreading exercise. Evidence was found that local teaching strategies and evaluatory procedures might reinforce these pragmatic, yet ultimately restrictive, revision practices. The article ends with suggestions regarding revision strategy training with underachieving learners.

98–297 Riazi, Abdolmehdi (Shiraz U., Iran). Acquiring disciplinary literacy: a social-cognitive analysis of text production and learning among Iranian graduate students of education. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 2 (1997), 105–37.

The problem addressed by the study reported here was how non-native speakers of English acquire domain-specific literacy suitable to their academic discipline in a graduate programme. The participants were four (one female, three male) Iranian doctoral students of education in their second year of residency. A naturalistic, qualitative approach was used, with data collected through questionnaires, interviews (structured, unstructured, and text-based), written documents (texts produced by the participants, their professors' feedback on the papers, and course outlines), and process logs. The participants were followed through their graduate seminars over a five-month period as they prepared for and performed assigned academic writing tasks in their second language (L2), English. Weekly face-to-face interviews focusing on participants' behaviours, decisions and concerns constituted the central data-gathering method. It is claimed that the study adds to the literature

suggesting that the achievement of disciplinary literacy in an L2 in a graduate programme such as education is fundamentally an interactive social-cognitive process, in that production of the texts required extensive interaction between the individual's cognitive processes and social/contextual factors in different ways.

98–298   Rubin, Donald L. (U. of Georgia) **and Williams-James, Melanie.** The impact of writer nationality on mainstream teachers' judgments of composition quality. *Journal of Second Language Writing* (Norwood, NJ), **6**, 2 (1997), 139–53.

Teachers' evaluations of student writing are susceptible to the influence of extraneous factors, including stereotyped expectations based on students' ethnolinguistic identities. Even teachers' detection of surface errors in student writing is vulnerable to such expectancy sets. Non-native speakers of English (NNSs) who exit sheltered English as a Second Language classes may therefore be subjected to unduly negative evaluations due to mainstream teachers' negative expectations. On the other hand, it is possible that mainstream teachers overcompensate and are especially lenient with NNSs. The study reported here attributed fabricated student identities to a standard set of essays into which specific errors had been intruded. The fictional students were either Southeast Asian, Northern European, or U.S. native English speakers (NESs). Mainstream composition teachers evaluated the writing samples using rating scales, and they also wrote marginal comments and signs. Analyses indicated an advantage favouring the Asian writers over the NES writers in ratings of overall composition quality. No differences in the number of errors detected for each writer nationality were found. On the other hand, teachers' ratings of NNS writing were best predicted by the number of surface errors they detected. Ratings of NES writing, in contrast, were justified by marginal notations and comments; teachers tended to write longer comments when they judged the writing to be poor. The significance of the study is to enjoin composition teachers to reflect on their differential dependence on surface error when evaluating NES and NNS writing.

98–299   Schleppegrell, Mary J. and Colombi, M. Cecilia (U. of California, Davis). Text organisation by bilingual writers. Clause structure as a reflection of discourse structure. *Written Communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA), **14**, 4 (1997), 50-3.

This article compares essays written in Spanish and English by two advanced-level bilingual writers whose prior formal academic writing instruction has been only in English. The authors describe both writers' discourse-organisational and clause-combining strategies, showing that one writer's organisational structure reflects explicit planning, whereas the other employs a more emergent organisational structure for her essays. In each case, these choices are the same for Spanish and English. Analysing these writers' clause-combining strategies demonstrates that organisational structure at

the discourse level is reflected in the types of clause combinations chosen by the writers at the sentence level, with one writer using more simple sentences and embedded clauses and the other using more hypotactic and paratactic clause combinations. The article demonstrates how clauses constitute and reflect the structure of texts, and suggests that development of a repertoire of styles and discourse strategies depends on control of a variety of syntactic options.

Bilingual education/ bilingualism

98–300   Candelier, Michel (U. René Descartes, Paris). La bipolarisation précoce bilingue: préparation à l'Europe ou consécration des inégalités? [Selective bilingual education: preparation for Europe or creation of inequality?] *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée* (Paris), **106** (1997), 175–86.

Claims are often made for the positive role of bilingual education programmes in preparing pupils for citizenship of the European Union (EU). This paper examines the validity of such claims from a sociology of education perspective, drawing on a range of education policy documents from both the EU itself and two member nations, France and Germany. It refers to bilingual schemes in operation within the public education systems of these two nations: the introduction of a second language into the mainstream timetable of elementary schools, and at secondary level the establishment of, respectively, *sections européennes* (European sections) and *bilinguale Züge* (bilingual streams). It is argued that, despite the greater tradition of egalitarianism within the French education system, a low level of commitment to the extension of the elementary schemes and selective recruitment onto the secondary streams renders them elitist in effect if not intent. The author concludes that there is a fundamental tension between the rhetoric of democratisation and European unity, and the pressure on schools to sort pupils for the job market. It is argued that bilingual streams represent a compromise between these two demands, and may effectively serve to increase rather than decrease social inequality.

98–301   Corsetti, R. and others. Won, tu, treeh: bilinguismo, bigrafismo estrategie ortografiche. [Won, tu, treeh: bilingualism, biliteracy and spelling strategies.] *Rassegna Italiana di Linguistica Applicata* (Rome), **29**, 2 (1997), 107–30.

Despite the growing pressure placed on primary schools by worldwide migration movements, the development of literacy among young bilinguals still awaits proper investigation. As a contribution in this direction, the study reported here examines the spelling errors of three bilingual children and two adults with native-like fluency in two European languages. A large corpus of