The four skills

Writing

"On the basis of our examination of L2 writing scholarship published between 2000 and the present, we describe and reflect on developments relating to the teaching of L2 writing. While our primary focus is applied research, we have also addressed basic research that has clear implications for pedagogy. The paper includes an overview of relevant basic research (i.e., research on the phenomenon of second language writing), a discussion of relevant applied research (i.e., research on second language writing instructional principles and practices), an examination of some general issues and concerns that have important implications for second language writing instruction, and an assessment of the current status of the field along with our thoughts on where it might go in the future."
(Silva & Brice, 2004)

"This paper addresses the need to re-evaluate the aims and objectives underlying the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in a European context. I argue here that for students to develop fully their abilities as writers, the objectives set in individual classes must reflect students' communicative purposes, rather than those of expert writers, and for that reason specific student writing models are needed. This paper proposes a methodology for the development of such writing models, and presents results of the application of this methodology to the analysis of a corpus of 55 student paper conclusions. The notion of student genre(s) adopted here challenges the tacit assumption that EAP is a homogeneous whole, and that expert models can realistically be used as models in teaching EAP student writing.
(Hüttner, 2008)

Teaching writing to low proficiency EFL students.

This article describes a genre-based literacy pedagogy which can be used with English language learners. The pedagogy discussed involves a combination of two explicit teaching methodologies, a genre-based and activity-based pedagogical approach. The pedagogy was introduced in an English Club at a local Hong Kong school, as part of a collaborative research project. In this article, we discuss the approach used and present examples of the students' work. The findings are particularly suitable for educational contexts where the students are low proficiency English as a foreign language (EFL) learners.
(Firkins, Forey, & Sengupta, 2007)

'Fire your proof reader!' Grammar correction in the writing classroom.

This article critically reviews the usefulness of grammar correction in second language writing instruction through the eyes of five second-language writers. It first examines the validity of four teaching principles that appear to influence how writing instructors approach error correction in classrooms and concludes with discussions as to why grammar correction is necessary for second-language writers.
(Shin, 2008)

Tech-era L2 writing: towards a new kind of process.

This study argues that L2 writing pedagogy needs to give more recognition to the impact emerging from new technological tools and online resources. While shifts in approaches from product to process to genre are well documented in the literature, little research has appreciated the collective influence generated by

advances in technology. It is suggested here that developments in software and online resources are leading to improvements in many areas of student writing, both at the levels of language and content. Moreover, efficient use of this technology could have a significant effect on the way in which teachers provide feedback. Collectively, these advances suggest a new dimension has entered the writing process.
(Stapleton & Radia, 2010)

'Would you perhaps consider …': hedged comments in ESL writing.

Both research and practice have shown that while some comments on L2 writing lead to substantive revision, others go unattended, failing to achieve their anticipated instructional effect. It is therefore crucial to determine how learners perceive different commentary types, so that teachers can enhance the efficacy of their feedback. The present study shares practical suggestions on making written comments more effective, based on the results of an examination of the effects of four different commentary types on ESL students' essays: statements (stating students' problems), imperatives (directly asking students to change, delete, and add), questions (showing elements of doubt and uncertainty), and hedging (avoiding directness by implying or suggesting). While hedging comments were associated with substantive and effective revisions, stimulated recall interviews revealed that challenges may exist for ESL writers in interpreting hedging comments appropriately because of the difficulty in understanding their pragmatic function.
(Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010)

Reading

R. Carter provides an overview of literature and language teaching 1986–2006. He starts with this quotation from C. Brumfit.

"The teaching of literature can thus be seen as a means of introducing learners to such a serious view of our world, of initiating them in the process of defining themselves through contact with others' experience. How it is best done, what the relationship between 'reading' and 'literature' needs to be for the greatest number of people to be led to literature, exactly what books are appropriate at what levels – these are questions for teachers to address. But the seriousness of the enterprise should not be doubted. It is only when these reading processes are centrally addressed as processes and when the debate moves away from content to what we do with literary texts, that genuine literary issues can be addressed." (Brumfit, 2001, p. 91)

"This chapter builds on prior reviews of reading theory, search, and assessment published in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* and uses them and additional current research to develop a set of 10 instructional implications for second language reading. The review draws upon both L1 and L2 research to demonstrate support for instructional approaches that (1) ensure fluency in word recognition; (2) emphasize the learning of vocabulary; (3) activate background knowledge; (4) ensure acquisition of linguistic knowledge and general comprehension; (5) teach recognition of text structures and discourse organization; (6) promote development of strategic readers rather than mechanical application of strategy checklists; (7) build reading fluency and rate; (8) promote extensive reading; (9) develop intrinsic motivation for reading; and (10) contribute to a coherent curriculum for student learning. There is empirical support for each of these

implications, although at the same time, additional research related to many is needed to further identify aspects of effective L2 reading instruction in particular settings. While further research alone does not guarantee improved reading pedagogy, it provides one means of identifying specific aspects of reading abilities and testing alternative instructional practices and is thus a crucial component in the search for more effective outcomes."
(Grabe, 2004)

Renandya (2007) discusses the empirical support for extensive reading and its pedagogical applications. He arrives at the not so surprising conclusion that it is so beneficial that teachers cannot but make use of this pedagogic tool.

The keyword here is "extensive". This means by definition extensive input which is always beneficial. The author is obviously a NNSE since he refers to his own learning of English. He apportions the mastery of his English in part to his extensive reading of English. I can confirm this experience. When I began to learn English in England (in my 30s) I also read extensively. In fact, right from the start I bought the complete Oxford History of England (16 volumes). It took me 3 years (on and off). I frequently surprised my English friends with words they had never heard of.

This study examines gender differences in cognitive and metacognitive strategy use in the context of an English as a foreign language reading comprehension test. Three hundred eighty-four Thai university students took a multiple-choice reading comprehension test, then completed a questionnaire on their strategy use. Gender differences were analysed using multivariate analysis of variance. Males and females did not differ in their reading comprehension performance and their use of cognitive strategies. Unexpectedly, males reported significantly higher use of metacognitive strategies than females. Within the same achievement groups (highly

successful, moderately successful, and unsuccessful), however, there were no gender differences in either reading performance or use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies. The article discusses the implications for future gender-based research. (Phakiti, 2003)

A framework for developing EFL reading vocabulary

Effective second language vocabulary acquisition is particularly important for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners who frequently acquire impoverished lexicons despite years of formal study. This paper comprehensively reviews and critiques second language (L2) reading vocabulary research and proposes that EFL teachers and administrators adopt a systematic framework in order to speed up lexical development. This framework incorporates two approaches: 1) promoting explicit lexical instruction and learning strategies; and 2) encouraging the use of implicit lexical instruction and learning strategies. The three most crucial explicit lexical instruction and learning strategies are acquiring decontextualized lexis, using dictionaries and inferring from context. Implicit lexical instruction and learning can take many forms including the use of integrated task sets and narrow reading; however, this framework emphasizes extensive reading, which is arguably the primary way that EFL learners can build their reading vocabulary to an advanced level. The principal notion underlying this framework is that the most effective and efficient lexical development will occur in multifaceted curriculums that achieve a pedagogically sound balance between explicit and implicit activities for L2 learners at all levels of their development. (Hunt & Beglar, 2005)

Listening

Berne, J. E. provides a view of the literature concerning listening comprehension strategies.
(Berne, 2004)

There is also a more up to date review of the literature.
(Field, 2008)

"Listening is probably the least explicit of the four language skills, making it the most difficult skill to learn. This chapter begins with a brief overview of cognitive processes involved in listening and their implications for L2 listening instruction. Recent research (1998–2003) on a variety of instructional techniques to help L2 listeners process linguistic input is then reviewed, noting insights that can inform listening instruction, particularly techniques that can teach students how to listen. Two approaches to listening instruction are presented: an approach to raise metacognitive awareness about listening (favoring top-down processes) and an approach to develop lexical segmentation and word recognition skills (favouring bottom-up processes). An integrated model for L2 listening instruction is proposed. Finally, recent research on different types of listening (e.g., academic listening, bidirectional listening) and the sociolinguistic dimension of listening are reviewed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research. The basic premise underlying this chapter is that, given the critical role of listening in language learning, students need to "learn to listen" so that they can better "listen to learn.""
(Vandergrift, 2004)
The reference list is extensive.

Richards (2005) examines two views of listening, as comprehension and acquisition. He suggests that these two views pose some problems in the classroom and with listening material.

'Teacher, the tape is too fast!' Extensive listening in ELT.

For many years, research effort has been devoted to understanding the nature of listening strategies and how listening strategies used by good listeners can be taught to so-called ineffective listeners. As a result of this line of research, strategy training activities have now become a standard feature of most modern listening course books. However, in this article, we maintain that given the lack of evidence of success with this approach to teaching lower proficiency EFL learners and the fact that strategy training places a heavy burden on teachers, an extensive listening approach in the same vein as an extensive reading approach should be adopted.
(Renandya & Farrell, 2011)

Speaking

"This chapter reviews research and practice in six main areas relevant to the teaching of speaking: (1) the growing influence of spoken corpora, (2) the debates concerning native speaker (NS) and nonnative speaker (NNS) models for spoken pedagogy, (3) the issue of authenticity in spoken materials, (4) approaches to understanding speaking in the classroom, (5) the selection of texts and aspects of spoken language for the teaching of speaking, and (6) developments in materials and methods for the teaching of speaking. Spoken corpora, whether NS corpora collected in "old" or "new" variety locations or NNS corpora based on learner data or expert/successful user data, have generated vigorous debate as to how spoken language should be modeled for teaching, and their influence is being seen in shifts in methodology toward language-awareness-based approaches as well as new materials based on lexicogrammatical and discoursal corpus evidence. Various approaches to understanding classroom speaking are also reviewed, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis,

cognitive approaches, and the Vygotskian perspective. Applications of insights from these approaches are reviewed, especially how the approaches affect the selection of texts and language features to be taught. Finally, practical discussion on the teaching of specific spoken genres is reviewed and probable future directions are discussed."
(McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004)

'Small Talk': developing fluency, accuracy, and complexity in speaking

A major issue that continues to challenge language teachers is how to ensure that learners develop accuracy and complexity in their speaking, as well as fluency. Teachers know that too much corrective feedback (CF) can make learners reluctant to speak, while not enough may allow their errors to become entrenched. Furthermore, there is controversy over the effectiveness of recasts (the most common form of CF) in promoting acquisition. This article explores a methodology, 'Small Talk', which aims to resolve some of the tensions between the need to encourage truly communicative language use and the need to develop complexity and to bring focus on forms into the syllabus in ways that can be recognized as valid and relevant by both teachers and learners. It presents some preliminary research on the viability of this CF methodology premised on attention to, and arising from the needs of, the individual learner.
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