

# Preface

As Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 18) so aptly comment, following the observation offered by Gaies (1980), “(...) the classroom is the crucible—the place where teachers and learners come together and language learning, we hope, happens. It happens, when it happens, as a result of the reactions among the elements that go into the crucible—the teachers and the learners”. In practice, this means that even the best laid-out plans concerning how a lesson should proceed are subject to far-reaching modifications as a result of the various interactions taking place in the course of this lesson, with the consequence that the impact of the pedagogic choices made by teachers is extremely difficult to predict. This is because, on the one hand, such practices have to be modified in many cases in the face of unexpected events in the classroom or their limited efficacy in a particular context, and, on the other, even if they are fully implemented, their impact on second language development is mediated by a number of variables, the most important of which are teacher characteristics and individual learner differences. All of this points to the need to carry out research on different aspects of teaching and learning languages in a classroom setting with an eye to gaining more profound insights into these processes and devising ways of enhancing their effectiveness, such that would be firmly grounded in current theoretical positions and empirical evidence, but at the same time be practicable in a specific instructional context.

The present volume contributes to this line of inquiry by bringing together papers dealing with different facets of classroom-oriented research, ranging from reports of original studies to considerations of issues in research methodology, as well as providing useful guidelines for everyday classroom practice. The book is divided into four parts, each including contributions touching on similar topics, although, in some cases, the choices had to be somewhat arbitrary due to the fact that the articles were related to more than one of the leading themes. Part I, entitled *Individual Variation*, contains four papers which demonstrate how the characteristics of learners and teachers, in particular age, anxiety, beliefs and the use of language learning strategies, impact different aspects of classroom language learning. Part II, *Teaching and Learning to Teach*, focuses upon the role of the teacher, both in terms of his or her role in managing classroom interaction, problems involved in teacher education, and the contribution of action research. The common theme in Part III, *Instructional Practices*, are the different actions

taken by teachers in order to develop all the components of communicative competence, with the papers included therein being tied, among others, to the employment of Internet resources, assessment of learners' abilities and the possibilities of integrating content and language in the classroom. Finally, Part IV, entitled *Research Tools*, is devoted to issues involved in studying the teaching and learning processes during language lessons, focusing in particular on the use of teacher narratives and lesson observation, the benefits of applying mixed methods research, and the role of triangulation in investigating learner autonomy. We believe that, thanks to the diversity of the topics covered, the multiplicity of theoretical perspectives embraced, the inspiring examples of how classroom-based studies should be designed and conducted, as well as sound guidelines for classroom practice, this edited collection will be of relevance not only to experts in the domain of second language acquisition, but also to methodologists, materials writers, graduate and postgraduate students, and teachers wishing to enhance the effectiveness of their instructional practices.

Mirosław Pawlak

Jakub Bielak

Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak

## References

- Allwright, D. and K. M. Bailey. 1991. *Focus on the language classroom. An introduction to classroom research for language teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaies, S. J. 1980. Classroom-centered research: Some consumer guidelines. Paper presented at the Second Annual TESOL Summer Meeting, Albuquerque, NM.

Classroom-oriented Research

Achievements and Challenges

Pawlak, M.; Bielak, J.; Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (Eds.)

2014, XVII, 301 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-00187-6