

Preface

Theoretical positions regarding second or foreign language teaching come and go, bringing with them proposals on how different aspects of instruction should be conducted to the benefit of learners. Teachers might be advised, for example, to promote reception rather than production of grammatical structures, follow a task-based rather than a structural syllabus, correct only those errors which are likely to impede communication, adopt a process approach to writing or emphasize alternative over traditional forms of assessment in their classrooms. The problem with such recommendations, however firmly they might be grounded in theoretical considerations or research findings, is that they are often contradictory, which is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that they represent the convictions of their proponents who go to great lengths to produce or interpret empirical evidence in a way that supports their cause. After all, language learning can be aided by a number of instructional practices, with the effect that it may not be exceedingly difficult to show that a specific technique or procedure is effective in some circumstances. Besides, pedagogical solutions that are demonstrated to be efficacious in one context or group of learners may fail dismally in another, due to a wide array of factors, such as, for instance, differences in the amount and type of out-of-class exposure, teachers' beliefs or learners' motivation, to name but a few. For this reason, there has always been and always will be a pressing need for classroom-oriented research which would put the pedagogic proposals advanced by specialists to an empirical test in real classrooms, but also determine the effectiveness of specific instructional procedures or help identify conditions in which successful learning and teaching can take place. This is the rationale behind the present volume, which, constituting a follow up to the collection of papers edited by Pawlak, Mystkowska-Wiertelak and Bielak (2014), aims to illustrate the multifarious ways in which theory and research can be reconciled with classroom practice.

The book brings together 18 papers and has been divided into three parts, each including contributions of a similar nature, with the caveat that such a division is always to some extent arbitrary as many articles have many foci and it was the most prominent of those that motivated decisions concerning assignment. Part I,

Research Directions and Methodology, comprises six papers with a focus on both general and specific choices that have to be made when conducting empirical studies, touching upon the need for integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, construction of instruments that can be employed to tap willingness to communicate and pronunciation learning anxiety, as well as the use of such data collection tools as narratives, observation schemes and interviews. Part II, *Empirical Investigations*, includes eight papers reporting the findings of studies dealing with the beliefs of future teachers, both those more general and those related to writing skills, the relationship between in-service teachers' beliefs about teaching young children and their classroom practices, with a particular emphasis on assessment, the contribution of lexical richness to the quality of written texts, the development of interlanguage pragmatics with respect to speech acts, and learners' opinions about the use of video games. Finally, Part III, *Linking Theory and Classroom Practice*, brings together four contributions which highlight the ways in which theoretical positions can inform pedagogical decisions, focusing on the role of age, the application of principled eclecticism in a CLIL classroom, successful implementation of strategies-based instruction, as well as the use of film adaptations in teaching foreign language literature. I am convinced that the volume will provide food for thought and be a source of inspiration for both scholars conducting research on second and foreign language teaching, be they experienced academics, graduate or doctoral students, and teachers wishing to enhance the effectiveness of their classroom practices.

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Reference

- Pawlak, M., Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A., & Bielak, J. (Ed.). 2014. *Classroom-Oriented Research: Achievements and Challenges*, Heidelberg—New York: Springer.

Classroom-Oriented Research

Reconciling Theory and Practice

Pawlak, M. (Ed.)

2016, XV, 286 p. 1 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-30371-0