

**Ewa Donesch-Jeżo**

## **PREFACE**

The role of foreign languages in three fundamental areas of human activity – science, education and culture – cannot be overstated. This volume contains ten articles concerned with this universal and complex issue.

Foreign languages are essential to ensure that people can work, learn and travel freely throughout the world. In all areas of human activities within science, education and culture, foreign languages have been indispensable means of communication between various communities and nations. Currently there are 24 official languages recognised within the European Union (EU), apart from regional and minority languages as well as languages brought by migrant populations. Of them, the English language is regarded to be the lingua franca of the dissemination of scientific and professional knowledge on the international arena. The adoption of English as the prevailing language of science is due to historical, political and economic factors which promote English over other languages such as French, German, Russian or Spanish. German was the language of scientific communication in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, in most European countries, researchers prefer to publish their work in English rather than in their native language. For example, about 80% of all the indexed journals publish their articles in English. Through publishing and giving talks at conferences in English, researchers can gain international recognition and become members of the international academic community. Moreover, many non-English language journals, including some Polish ones, require the titles and abstracts in English for articles

in other languages. No wonder that the ratio for publications in English to publications in other languages is considerably high. However, recent studies have shown that a certain amount of scientists still publish in their native language, and this differs across disciplines. The tendency to publish in languages other than English has been observed in the “softer” disciplines such as Social Sciences, Psychology, and Art, whereas publishing in English dominates in “harder” disciplines such as Physical and Life Sciences.

Increasing globalisation has created a large need for people to learn foreign languages to communicate in the multiple-language world. Consequently, the role of foreign languages at all levels of education cannot be underestimated, since they open up opportunities for the future of young generations, ensuring that language is not a barrier to participation in society. Many countries have adopted education policies requiring teaching at least one foreign language at the primary and secondary school levels. In the vast majority of EU member countries, learning English as a foreign language is mandatory. Many of the eastern and northern European countries before joining the EU in 2004 or 2007 had the foreign language learning policy requiring obligatory learning the Russian language. This situation has changed dramatically, and by 2014 in most of these countries the percentage of pupils learning English had risen to 80%, and in Poland to over 90%. In 2002, the Barcelona European Council recommended that at least two foreign languages should be taught to all pupils. In Poland English is the main foreign language taught to all primary school children, and at secondary general education, pupils learn two foreign languages, preferably English and additionally one out of four languages such as French, German, Italian or Russian.

In 2008 a European Council Resolution was issued on a European strategy for multilingualism, which perceives languages in the wider social context, helps to acquire language skills, and promotes linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue.

Speaking a foreign language enables understanding other cultures. Study of foreign language and culture related to its country offers many other benefits. It strengthens language communication, and provides insights into our own language and culture. In addition, it expands our view of the world in general, and helps develop an appreciation of cultural values and traditions as well as artistic expression in such areas as literature, film and art. In the field of foreign language teaching, there is one important aspect that should be pointed to, namely, the relationship between knowledge of a foreign language, and knowledge of the culture related to that language.

The topics presented here deal with studies performed by the authors of the articles within the field of applied linguistics, translation studies, and culture, aiming to improve the effectiveness of the language use and language instruction.

Jerzy Freundlich reports on his observations made during the teaching of beginner-level Mandarin Chinese as a second foreign language (L3) through the

medium of the learners' first foreign language, English (L2), to a mixed group of native Polish (L1) and Ukrainian (L1) speakers at B2-level of English. The author, investigating the problem of language transfer, points to the fact that in the process of learning Chinese, the students face a number of challenges such as the nature of the language itself, and the forward transfer from both L1 and L2 in L3 production. The author is particularly interested in the extent to which transfer from L2 (in this case English) takes precedence over transfer from the learner's native language. Preliminary findings suggest that while at the early stages of L3 acquisition, forward transfer takes place from both L1 and L2, in the course of learning, there is a tendency towards a greater transfer from L2.

Ewa Donesch-Jeżo, applying a contrastive approach to discourse analysis, explores the rhetorical and linguistic features as well as promotional aspects of research article abstracts. The knowledge of these features of the abstract is essential for Polish academics who intend to publish their research in prestigious international journals. The study is based on the corpus, comprising 60 research article abstracts in the domain of linguistics, written by authors from two different cultural and linguistic backgrounds: native speakers of English and non-native speakers (Polish authors). Based on the move analysis model, metadiscourse model, and using concordancing software, the analysis shows how rhetorical conventions govern the structure of the abstract, its grammar and promotional style. This study and learning tasks, suggested by the author, increase the understanding of this genre which would allow to write an article abstract in a convincing and credible way within the standards of academic rhetoric.

Monika Kusiak-Pisowacka deals with the skill of reading – an important element of foreign language (FL) competence. The main assumption of the article is that reading is a private and individual act as much as it is public and social. In the first part of the article two conceptualizations of reading are discussed – a psycholinguistic perspective and a socio-cognitive one, along with selected theories that represent each perspective. The author discusses various types of subskills of reading that can be developed in learning foreign languages in an institutionalized setting: expeditious global, expeditious local, careful global and careful local. Special attention is given to critical reading, which according to the author of the article, is the main type of reading that advanced-level learners should develop. The discussion is illustrated with the examples of tasks taken from the author's teaching practice.

Joanna Niemiec is concerned with the process of identifying and assessing her learners' needs related to their English language acquisition, which is a vital part of designing and carrying out the language courses of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Moreover, as she underlines, the process of needs assessment is an important source of information which enables to interpret and address the actual problems and expectations of learners in target situations thus improving their language performance. The article provides an account of an analysis of

a questionnaire survey carried out by the author among learners from medical university. The purpose of the study is to present the perception that learners have of their English language needs and purposes. Findings enable to construct a tightly focused syllabus to meet the specific needs of learners in the context of medical disciplines and their future occupation.

Joanna Małocha is concerned with the problem of teaching methodology of an uncommon language, namely the Coptic language, which is viewed in the milieu of Central European humanists as exotic, and its knowledge in this area is extremely rare. The author notes that though the Polish historical and patristic research into the literature in this language revealed the existence of a number of translations of valuable Coptic works, there is the lack of specialized literature which addresses the teaching of that language. The present considerations are an attempt to fill this gap by proposing a theoretical model of competence which a teacher of this language is expected to possess. The proposed model is based on the author's teaching practice and on the results of a questionnaire survey conducted among students, which pertained to the students' expectations regarding the competence of the Coptic language teacher.

Agnieszka Kościńska points to the fact that ensuring continuous development of communicative competence in foreign-language classes is a challenge for teachers of foreign languages. One of the ways that can help achieve this goal is the use of information and communication technologies in the process of L2 teaching. The article aims to present specific technological solutions that can be used during classes, which make teaching not only more attractive, but also support the development of the learner's autonomy. The author underlines an important aspect of the use of Internet resources in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language, which is a wealth of materials contained in them, ranging from websites with articles in a foreign language, educational games, language courses online, platforms offering exercises perfecting language skills to the possibilities of real conversation with native speakers of the language or entering the virtual world whose inhabitants speak a foreign language.

Maria Kliś in her article analyzes the linguistic and psychological basis of teaching and learning foreign languages. She points out the specifics of the process of learning a foreign language compared to learning of other subjects due to the fact that in a situation of learning a foreign language, the language becomes an object, not a tool for learning and teaching. The author also describes the cognitive, intellectual and other personality factors affecting the process, and the effects of learning a foreign language, pointing to a variety of internal (individual) and external (general social) benefits of mastering a foreign language.

Agata Hołobut, touching the problem of translation studies, comments on the translational strategies used by Polish authors: Czesław Miłosz, Julia Hartwig, Zofia Prele, Tadeusz Rybowski, Paweł Marcinkiewicz and Piotr Sommer in rendering the poems by W.S. Merwin into the Polish language. Referred

to by Hirsch (2013) as “the most international of contemporary American poets”, W.S. Merwin has revolutionized American poetic idiom, perfecting his unpunctuated, cryptic style modeled on spoken word. On the basis of selected poems by W.S. Merwin, published within the last thirty years, Agata Hołobut discusses the variety of styles used by the above-mentioned translators and their attitudes to Merwin’s open form and anti-humanist perspective, rooted in deep ecology.

Finally, Kinga Sorkowska-Cieślak and Michał Cieślak investigate the readiness of websites of Polish museums for virtual visits of English-speaking internet users. On their websites, museums make their collections and educational materials available online, as well as they provide information about current exhibitions and functioning of their facilities. Despite the progress that has been made in the museum websites over the years and the possibilities of obtaining national and European funds for the development of cultural projects, not all museums have professional websites. To improve this situation, the authors examine websites of Polish museums in terms of sharing information in English. They found the lack of an English version of the website in some of the museums and, in those present, a number of shortcomings.

It is hoped that the topics of articles presented in this volume will be inspiration for further research.