

Preface

It is with great pleasure that I welcome readers to this collection of papers. The book has benefited from the contribution of several researchers from Poland and abroad. In recent years, most of them have cooperated with the Research Group of the Foreign Language Teacher Training College at the Jagiellonian University. Several of the papers were presented at a seminar which explored different aspects of dialogue in foreign language education organized by the college in May 2007.

The aim of the publication is to stimulate discussion about the multifaceted nature of foreign language education and the interplay between the various factors influencing foreign language learning and teaching. Recently, we have observed a growth in the popularity of the concept of dialogue. Scholars from diverse backgrounds, such as psychology, philosophy or education, have investigated their notion of dialogue.

As editor of this publication, I suggested that the following perspectives of dialogue be explored in relation to foreign language learning:

- an intrapersonal perspective, i.e. the dialogic nature of foreign language learning – processes internal to the learner;
- an interpersonal perspective, e.g. the interaction between learners and the teacher;
- a dialogue within the institution or between several institutions, e.g. cooperation of teachers with various stakeholders;
- a dialogue between various disciplines and approaches in teaching and researching.

I invited writers to comment on the following aspects of dialogue:

- the form of dialogue, e.g. different techniques applied by learners and teachers;
- the subject of dialogue, e.g. linguistic competence, intercultural competence, attitudes;
- the effectiveness of dialogue, e.g. a sense of success in learning and teaching;
- the roles of participants in dialogue, e.g. how learners and teachers construct their roles;
- the range of dialogue, e.g. dialogue between learners, between the teacher and learners, and between the school and learners.

The publication addresses the diversity of the issues mentioned above. Anna Niżegorodcew presents her reflections on a dialogic forum organized at the 2006 Polish Neophilological Society conference. She explores the nature of academic discourse as constructed by the conference participants.

The next two papers focus on developing intercultural communication. Firstly, Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich discusses intra-cultural aspects of dialogue during intercultural activities; she demonstrates how intercultural studies can facilitate a better understanding of one's own culture. Secondly, Dorota Owczarek looks at the idea of dialogue as developed by Bakhtin in exploring the philosophical foundations underpinning intercultural communication and education.

The next two authors view dialogue as verbal interaction of foreign language learners. Joanna Rokita-Jaśkow discusses the role of parent-child interaction in the development of foreign language communicative abilities of young learners. Agnieszka Nowicka explores the question of how interaction participants construe their situated identities in dialogues in English, and looks at the role of the teacher in this process.

Liljana Skopinskaja and Monika Kusiak report on studies that investigate foreign language reading. Skopinskaja discusses the essence of critical reading through the perspective of dialogic interaction between reader and text, as well as between the target culture and the students' own culture. Kusiak reports on the think-aloud study, investigating how advanced learners read in their native and foreign languages. She focuses on a dialogue between the think-aloud methodology and the construct that the study explores, i.e. reading.

The next three papers deal with the role of information and communication technology in foreign language education. Leszek Bajkowski presents an overview of dialogue systems in the field of human-computer interaction. Jarosław Krajka describes the process of dialogue among students, teachers and industry representatives during the development of the information technology curriculum at the teacher training institution. Magdalena Szczyrbak discusses the role of students and the teacher in student-teacher dialogue in Web-enhanced foreign language learning.

In the last contribution, Vita Kalnberzina presents the results of a study which measures the level of anxiety during foreign language learning, and the impact of this on exam performance. She explores whether it is factors of an intrapersonal character or those of an interpersonal character that are most influential in learners' test performance.

Keeping in mind the topic of the publication, as editor I intended to create a context within which researchers are able to exchange views in a dialogic encounter with other scholars. I believe that "real" dialogue requires the roles of both a participant and an observer. To achieve this, I invited the authors of the papers and other scholars to comment on the contributions in this publication. I assumed that this form of dialogue could facilitate an awareness among the authors of their own assumptions and perhaps more importantly enrich their research with new meanings.

I believe that the polyphony of voices presented in this publication will illustrate to readers that it is only by facing a diversity of perspectives that can we create a more complete, though not a less complex, picture of foreign language education. I hope that the book will inspire readers to ask questions and pursue new paths along "old, well known" themes concerning foreign language education.

I would like to express my gratitude to those who helped me with developing this book. I would like to thank Prof. Anna Niżegorodcew for her continuous encouragement and support. I am grateful to Prof. Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pędich for her valuable suggestions concerning the form of the publication. The publication could not have been produced without financial support of Prof. Zofia Berdychowska, Dean of the Faculty of Philology of the Jagiellonian University and Dr. Janusz Król, Head of the Foreign Language Teacher Training College, Jagiellonian University.

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