

Challenges of Foreign Language Instruction in the University Context

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Challenges of Foreign Language Instruction in the University Context

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Contents

Introduction (<i>Danuta Gabryś-Barker</i>)	7
Arkadiusz Rojczyk, Andrzej Porzuczek EFL pronunciation teaching to Polish English studies majors	9
Agnieszka Solska Puns as tools for teaching English grammar in a university context . . .	27
Dagmara Gałajda Developing speaking skills in conversation classes	49
Krystyna Warchał Academic Writing instruction – some missing links	71
Dorota Lipińska Teaching translation as part of a practical EFL course in teacher training groups	87
Danuta Gabryś-Barker Developing language awareness through students' conceptualisations: Metaphoric approach in content courses	107
Ingrid Bello-Rodzeń, Aida Montenegro Teaching Spanish as an additional foreign language to experienced learners	127
Katarzyna Bańka Challenges of the Chinese language teaching in the university context . .	163

Introduction

This volume entitled *Challenges of Foreign Language Instruction in the University Context* aims to present experiences of teaching a foreign language in a modern languages university department. The texts are based on the teaching practice of lecturers at the Institute of English, University of Silesia, where most instruction in the programme of studies offered to students is in English. This is assumed to be possible as the students entering the programme are expected to have mastered English as a foreign language at an advanced level and are able to function in it in philological content courses, such as linguistics, methodology of teaching, and literary courses, among others. Thus, the challenges observed and discussed here relate to teaching English to students at a rather high level of language competence and to using English in content courses as a language of instruction. These challenges are also found in teaching additional foreign languages in a way which should reflect that fact that these students are experienced language learners and so their previously-gained FL competence in English can be of assistance in learning further FLs. This characteristic should be taken into consideration by FL instructors of the further languages which are chosen as minors in neophilological studies.

The collection of texts presented here comes from experienced university teachers of practical English classes and other foreign languages and from university lecturers in content courses run in English. The teaching approaches presented range from more teacher-centred ones in the areas which require a stronger theoretical focus, to more learner-centred ones in the areas which aim at skills development. These approaches also express the individual preferences and teaching styles of individual teachers developed over their professional careers. Each of the texts opens with a theoretical background discussing the major

characteristics of language acquisition/learning processes involved in developing a given aspect of language competence or a language subsystem and their teaching implications. The authors discuss the major issues and challenges they face in their instructional practices in relation to approaches and methods used, as well as syllabus construction or the forms of assessment employed. Each text aims to offer effective and tested teaching solutions in given contexts as derived from expert practice over years. Additionally, readers are presented with sample questions and tasks, which can be used directly in a FL classroom in teaching a specific aspect of a FL discussed in the text. Each article is accompanied by an extensive references section embracing a whole range of available theoretical and practical sources on teaching and learning a foreign language relevant to the topic focus of the particular article.

We hope that the present volume will be a valuable source of didactic advice and guidance for Ph.D. students involved in university teaching as well as for novice teachers and lecturers in modern languages university departments. On the one hand, all of them can most probably identify with the variety of challenges described by individual authors in their daily teaching of a FL. On the other, they can benefit from the expertise found in the texts of experienced and accomplished university teachers in responding to the challenges encountered in their recently embarked upon professional lives, and use it to their advantage. The texts in this volume may also be of value to those of us who have been teaching for a longer period, have gained extensive experience, and are successful, but who would also like to try something more innovative perhaps, more creative, or just different to break out of a settled routine.

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