

Afterword

There is an intense debate in Sweden as well as in many other countries in the world about the significance and role of foreign language learning and teaching. This discussion takes place in the current context of societies where international communication is a natural part of many citizens' everyday life. Virtual encounters in foreign languages are frequent both at people's work and in their free time. A virtual reality is what people are used to in meetings with the help of digital tools. This phenomenon requires skills in foreign languages. For efficient communication across the countries in Europe, citizens need to be able to communicate in at least one foreign language. The English language often takes this role and in communication between people it is to a great extent used as a lingua franca. This puts new demands on material and methods used in the foreign language classroom. We need to think about how to teach foreign languages in order to prepare young people for this lingua franca communication. The focus in that context is on effective communication and interaction. At the same time, learners' have expectations on more student-active approaches in the language learning classrooms, as well as the fact that the learners' own experiences of the language outside school, so called extra-mural English, is considered, and the language teacher is to meet these demands.

The contributing authors in this book all provide useful and relevant insights into various aspects of research on the teaching and learning of foreign languages as well as findings related to what teachers need in the new language learning and teaching situation described above. This research field is vast and comprises for instance both studies of specific languages in use in the classroom, and interdisciplinary approaches and investigations. Consequently, this volume with its contributions by participants from the Exploring Language Education conference at Stockholm University in 2018 reflects this diversity and creativity found among language teachers and researchers all over the world. For language teachers at schools, the book provides highly relevant

areas of interest and the challenge is to find the concrete application of the findings in classroom settings.

What is inspiring, after having read the contributions, is that even though the focus is on Sweden and the United States, the teaching of foreign languages is international in itself so that local practitioners and researchers all over the world can find something of interest in the conceptual or the empirical presentations, although some are positioned in a local context.

The relationships between broad concepts in the field of the didactics of foreign languages are relevant to discuss and possibly to clarify as done by Nina Spada and John Levis. The fact that widely spread and used concepts in language education can be differently used in various cultural settings makes it important to discuss and define them in order for teachers all over the world to fully understand each other in discussions and comparisons of methods, material and curricula. Since teachers are to be updated and well acquainted not only with documented experiences and conclusions by fellow teachers from classrooms but also with findings by researchers, this book is extremely useful and valuable for foreign language teachers. It is a strength of the present volume that it can bring together researchers and practitioners in fruitful discussions within the field of second or foreign language learning and teaching.

Furthermore, there is no doubt about the fact that this book has parts that are relevant in the field of language teacher training. Naturally, both the introducing chapters which treat language education, second language acquisition and linguistics, and the three chapters presenting findings from empirical studies contribute in a sophisticated manner to the understanding of the complexity of language learning and teaching.

What is presently emphasized more and more is that the foreign language teacher is regarded as both a practitioner in the classroom and a researcher. Therefore, it is a pleasure to see that the five chapters in the book address issues that are really in focus in the discussions among foreign language teachers, language teacher students and teacher educators. One of these issues is related to oral production and working with our attitudes to foreign accents and our perceptions of native versus non-native production in the classroom and whether to apply a more

normative or descriptive approach. Another issue is translanguaging which currently is a phenomenon discussed both from a descriptive point of view and a teaching strategy in the classroom for successful communication. The last issue to mention is on the one hand the dominance and special role of the English language in the field of language learning, and, on the other hand, the emergence of the awareness of the numerous other languages that are used in a multilingual and multicultural society which definitely have significant roles to play in communication today, and in language teaching and learning in the future. In this context Nina Spada's discussion of second language acquisition and L2 pedagogy is extremely interesting.

The fact that a chapter is dedicated to oral proficiency and the communicative aspects on teaching and learning pronunciation is really relevant for the current situation in societies across the world. Today, the research field of English as a lingua franca makes more and more impressions on practitioners and as a consequence, dialects and accents in relation to identity are concepts that are given more attention and prominence in the learning of a foreign language. The language teacher now faces new challenges in the learning of oral production and interaction. It is interesting to see that in the learning of oral proficiency we do not only consider pronunciation but see several more aspects, such as pragmatic and situational competence. At the same time, the traditional question of whether using the target language only or not in the classroom is treated. In the context of the multilingual classroom where there are several mother tongues represented among the learners, there is an interest in turning to a more authentic-like situation when all the linguistic resources available are expected to be in use for effective communication. In this context it is therefore valuable that the chapter by Amanda Brown, Robert James Lally and Laura Lisnyczyj deals with classes with students with different L1, differences in cultural backgrounds and with multilingual backgrounds. It goes without saying that students' attitudes to classroom language practices is a highly complex area and that we need more studies in this dynamic and innovative field of research.

Young learners' learning of English is in the same way a slightly new research area, at least in Sweden. It is consequently important that this area is represented in the text by Liss Kerstin Sylvén.

This chapter deals with the significance of the exposure of English outside school, that is, extra-mural English. We may expect an increasing interest in this area of research during the coming years, especially when it comes to the acquisition of vocabulary and listening comprehension among young learners. For primary school teachers, these concrete findings are of great interest for understanding when, where and how the learning of English takes place for the very young ones.

English has a very strong position as a foreign language in Sweden, as is the case in many other countries in the world. In Sweden it is sometimes even questioned if the English language should be regarded as a foreign or a second language. Other foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish currently have a totally different situation. The last chapter clearly shows these different, and sometimes even problematic and challenging, conditions for these three languages at Swedish schools. The authors highlight central concepts in language learning such as the learners' motivation and attitudes as important factors to consider in order to come to terms with the current situation. This is definitely an area worth looking into if we are going to reach the goal in the European Union that all citizens are to master two more languages besides their mother tongue.

With this first volume from the first ELE conference, an important step is taken by providing a selection of current thematic areas in research where fundamental questions are raised. We all look forward to future ELE conferences when hopefully, new perspectives from all parts of the world together with both global and local perspectives on areas which are not discussed in this volume will be covered. These areas are, for instance, the didactics of literature in the foreign language classroom and young learners' acquisition of language skills in extra-mural English.

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