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*Monika Łodej & Agnieszka Strzałka*

Pedagogical University of Cracow, Poland

## Introduction to the Special Issue on 'English language education: synergy between theory and practice'

The papers included in this volume represent a shared attempt to articulate synergy between theory-based and practice-based approaches to language education studies. The research laid out in these papers illustrates two ways in which synergy can be and has been developed between theory and practice. The collected evidence comes from investigations in sociolinguistics, language education and psycholinguistics.

This volume opens with reports on the role of social contexts in which languages are used. Both studies by Sciriha and Esimaje & Nnamani reflect on the use of English in bilingual countries. Lydia Sciriha presents the results of a large-scale scientifically-representative survey conducted amongst the Maltese bilingual population. With this report she attempts to show how the three different types of schools – state, church and independent – shape students' perceptions towards the usefulness and use of English in a number of domains. Alexandra Uzoaku Esimaje and Obiageli Nnamani investigate the social attitude of present-day educated Nigerians to Nigerian English (NE) in order to ascertain whether or not the variety suffers discrimination.

The following set of articles authored by Larroque, Stevkovska, Ruseva, Dzik, Asotska-Wierzba, Gorbacheva & Volnikova and Strzałka forms a coherent section that addresses research in language education. Their aim is to analyze specific properties of first languages and language attitudes that impact methodologies of teaching English as a Foreign Language. Patrice Larroque proposes that some English grammatical constructions can be symmetrically contrasted with their French counterparts. This can be applied to ease language learning and provide an embryonic method for students to shift from analytic French to synthetic English. Marija Stevkovska roots her research in Macedonian school contexts in order to exemplify the significance of comprehensible and meaningful input in teaching English to young learners (TEYL). In the same vein, Petranka Ruseva looks at imperatives used in the language of students during their pedagogical practice in primary schools in Bulgaria. The article by Dominika Dzik sets her research in the Polish context and looks at the development of multilingualism in students of Polish L1 who learn English and Spanish. Interaction between these languages is analyzed to investigate to what extent proficiency in English can facilitate the process of acquisition of Spanish lexis. A group of university students also forms the research

population of the study by Yuliya Asotska-Wierzba. The group is put under scrutiny to investigate the process of online scaffolding and how this can facilitate more effective acquisition of strategic academic reading skills. Gorbacheva and Volnikova address the issue of ethnic specificity of perfective forms in English and Russian as well as implications these differences may have for native speakers of Russian learning English. Similarly, Agnieszka Strzałka looks at the EFL classroom and the willingness of junior-high-school students to use the target language in the EFL class in Poland.

The paper by Monika Łodej adopts a psycholinguistic perspective on the reliability of IQ-achievement discrepancy tests in diagnosing dyslexia in speakers of two languages. The results are discussed with reference to school context to find out what the results of the IQ-achievement discrepancy tests can tell EFL teachers about their bilingual students' reading problems in Polish and English. The volume concludes with a contribution by Agata Cierpisz who offers an overview of Lankiewicz's (2015) monograph on *Language Awareness in the Ecological Perspective*.

All papers collected in this special issue on *English language education: synergy between theory and practice* exemplify a balanced approach between academic research and classroom practice. The contributors address the topic of language education and analyse it from various linguistic and cultural perspectives. This, in turn, provides the reader with a synthetic overview of current trends in educational research.