

II. BOOK REVIEWS

Przemysław Gębal / Władysław Miodunka. *Dydaktyka i metodyka nauczania języka polskiego jako obcego i drugiego. / Didactics and methodology of teaching Polish as a foreign and second language.* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. 2020. Pp. 454

The past two decades have seen the impressive development of Polish glottodidactics (Gębal & Miodunka 2020: 16), i.e. a field of study investigating “the processes of teaching and learning Polish as a foreign and second language” (Miodunka 2016: 54). It is a discipline with a solid theoretical basis, a growing body of research and a modern approach to language education, as exemplified by the volume under review, the third title in a glottodidactic series from Polish Scientific Publishers. Gębal and Miodunka, who are specialists in teaching Polish as a foreign language (PAFL) and in foreign language teaching, apply their expertise to provide a comprehensive textbook on teaching Polish to foreigners, in response to the significant changes which have taken place in this field since the first textbook of this type (Seretny & Lipińska 2005) was published at the beginning of the 21st century.

The division of the reviewed monograph into two parts – preceded by an introduction – reflects the distinction highlighted in the title. Part One, entitled *Didactics of the Polish language in the world – its traditions, development so far and perspectives*, comprises seven of the thirteen chapters of the book and commences with a short chapter addressing terminological issues, among others, the reasons for the relatively late emergence of the term *Polish glottodidactics*, the interrelations between the didactics and teaching methodology of Polish as a foreign and second language, as well as their place within the discipline. Since many topics appertaining to the didactics of foreign languages in general are discussed extensively in the second volume of the abovementioned glottodidactic series (Gębal 2019), Gębal and Miodunka focus in their publication on selected issues, particularly relevant to the didactics of the Polish language.

Accordingly, Chapters Two and Three present the history of teaching Polish as a foreign language until 1939 and its evolution in the contemporary period (i.e. since 1952). It is stressed that teaching PAFL can be traced back to the 16th century and predates the introduction of classes of Polish as a mother tongue in the school system by around 200 years. Describing these origins, Gębal and Miodunka pay attention to the pivotal role of foreigners as the authors of the first Polish language grammars and textbooks for foreign learners of Polish. The publication emphasises the importance of the last 60 years because they have brought the

beginning and growth of theoretical reflection and research into Polish language teaching and learning, which has ultimately led to the development of Polish glottodidactics. As the authors demonstrate – referring to coursebooks, teaching methodology publications and important glottodidactic phenomena – from the 1980s onwards (albeit more visibly in the later decades), efforts were also made to transfer modern methods used in the didactics of world languages to the PAFL classroom, culminating in the systematic implementation of European standards in the domain after 2004.

The next two chapters provide valuable insights into the situation of teaching the Polish language around the world (Chapter Four) and Poland's language policy since the last decade of the 20th century (Chapter Five). Having gathered data from multiple sources, Gębal and Miodunka describe two groups: learners and teachers of Polish in various types of schools and at universities abroad (with an interesting example of Polish Studies in South Korea), present their motivations as well as focus on selected problems of teacher training. The issue of popularising the Polish language in the world is analysed more extensively in relation to language policy, whose significance, according to the authors, became clear prior to Poland's accession to the European Union. Various linguistic publications referenced in the volume contain what Gębal and Miodunka view as a comprehensive programme to promote the Polish language, addressed to a wide public, including foreigners of non-Polish origin. As the authors subsequently admit, in the absence of a coordinating institution at the national level, it is universities, teachers of PAFL, foreign specialists in Polish studies (the contributions of the latter are acknowledged in a separate sub-chapter) that have proved instrumental in this area. Readers also learn about the state certificate examinations in PAFL, held since 2004, which are discussed here at length and recognised as both “a breakthrough innovation” (Gębal & Miodunka 2020: 78) in teaching Polish to foreigners and a tool for promoting the language and raising its prestige.

The overarching notion – supported by modern research – present in the next two chapters is that language education should not be limited to helping students acquire language proficiency in a narrow sense, but ought to contribute to their overall personal growth, thus enabling them to be actively involved in learning and societal participation. Gębal and Miodunka regard this approach as crucial to teaching Polish as a second language, which began developing in response to recent migration processes and is explored in Chapter Six, together with the related topic of Polish as a language of schooling. An analysis of the solutions adopted in the Polish education system and abroad provides a context for the subsequent discussion of useful publications and conceptions that could enhance teaching children with an immigrant background. In Chapter Seven, apart from highlighting the interdisciplinary dimension of Polish glottodidactics, the authors offer a synthetic overview of a wide array of influential concepts and directions in the teaching of foreign languages today (e.g. constructivism, intercultural education, the didactics of multilingualism, action-oriented approach).

Part Two of the book – *Methodology of teaching and learning Polish as a foreign and second language* – comprises six chapters (from Chapter Eight to Thirteen). Central to this part are its first two, and longest chapters. Chapter Eight focuses on methods of developing students' linguistic competences; the opening section, devoted to the description of the competences,

is followed by sub-chapters which deal successively with the questions of teaching Polish pronunciation, orthography, grammar and vocabulary. The authors provide brief information about the language subsystems, their place in foreign language teaching and about relevant PAFL research. They also draw readers' attention to difficult aspects of the Polish language and present appropriate teaching techniques as well as useful textbooks. Linguistic competences, among others, allow learners to perform language activities, whose presence in the language classroom is the topic of Chapter Nine. Gebal and Miodunka adopt the contemporary, action-oriented perspective promoted by the CEFR (2001) and CEFR CV (2018). They depart from the vision of the four language skills and describe language performance in terms of eight types of language activities, i.e. oral and written: reception, production, interaction and mediation. After a general overview of the issue, they characterise the activities in this order (production and interaction are presented together), discussing their psycholinguistic and glottodidactic aspects as well as recommended teaching procedures. Importantly, in contrast to most textbooks on the methodology of foreign language teaching, the volume takes into account mediation activities, which have only recently been defined more thoroughly in the CEFR CV (2018).

Chapters Ten and Eleven cover further significant subjects, namely teaching Polish culture and the use of information and communication technologies in language education. Although the cultural component has always been an intrinsic part of language teaching, the approaches to teaching culture have changed over time, as the authors explain, analysing general tendencies and specific publications by specialists in teaching PAFL. Additionally, Gebal and Miodunka, who concentrate on the current trend, i.e. intercultural education, explain how to develop learners' intercultural competence. In comparison with culture, the presence of modern technologies is a much newer phenomenon in language teaching, but it has already evolved from Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Apart from discussing this evolution and the place of modern technologies in teaching PAFL to date, in Chapter Eleven the authors quote a list of criteria designed with the aim of facilitating the evaluation of online language courses.

The last two chapters – while relatively short – centre around two problems of practical importance. Chapter Twelve is devoted to the principles of designing a language course and planning a lesson, with particular attention paid to the structure of a teaching unit in communicative language teaching and in the action-oriented approach. What readers may also find useful is that they are provided with tools for evaluating their own lessons. Chapter Thirteen, on the other hand, addresses the topic of assessing students' language ability. The authors briefly discuss not only several important aspects of traditional language testing (such as the classification of language tests or the criteria for their evaluation), but also strategies which determine the effectiveness of continuous formative assessment. Moreover, they include information about available test preparation books.

In the Conclusion, which contains an overview of the contents against a background of other glottodidactic publications, the authors outline suggestions for the future, stressing the importance of interdisciplinary research for further development of Polish glottodidactics. The book concludes with the bibliography, appendices and summaries in three languages.

The volume under review is an impressive work which promotes contemporary standards in language teaching and constitutes a modern resource for students training in the area of teaching Polish as a foreign and second language, designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills required in their future profession. Interestingly, in accordance with current pedagogical models, the authors engage readers in tasks based on the covered topics, encouraging them, for example, to discuss the ideas presented, analyse the materials in the appendices or search for further information.

However, as well as being an innovative and comprehensive textbook, the volume can be perceived as a panorama of teaching Polish to foreigners in the past and today, as Gębal and Miodunka highlight the role of the people who have shaped this history – both teachers and learners. Equally important, the publication unveils new perspectives for the development of Polish glottodidactics in the coming decades. Therefore, it will prove both interesting and informative not only for students, but also for practising teachers, lecturers, researchers and other professionals who intend to explore the subject of teaching Polish as a foreign and second language.

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