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***THE PITFALLS OF TEACHING GRAMMAR, LEXIS AND
ANGLO-SAXON CULTURE AT A COLLEGE LEVEL,***
edited by Grzegorz A. Kleparski, Anna M. Pietrzykowska,
Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2001, pp.
106. ISBN 83–7338-035–3

After more than a decade of existence of Teacher Training Colleges in Poland it is frequently claimed that these institutions have already fulfilled their role of educating foreign language teachers and now nothing interesting can happen. However, it occurs that the Colleges still carry out their educational mission. Moreover, they constitute small local academic centres alongside with the universities supervising their activity. The Teacher Training College in Chełm (NKJO-Chełm), for instance, in co-operation with the Department of Theoretical Linguistics of the University of Rzeszów (UR) and with the financial support from the British Council, organised a symposium on selected problems of teaching structures, vocabulary and Anglo-Saxon culture. The proceedings of the conference which took place in May last year are reflected in the volume *The Pitfalls of Teaching Grammar, Lexis and Anglo-Saxon Culture at a College Level* edited by Grzegorz A. Kleparski and Anna M. Pietrzykowska. In the editors' note the readers are informed that the authors contributing to the volume discuss the issues ranging *from more theoretical and philosophical disputes on foreign language teaching to the applicability of various methods of teaching and testing students' knowledge [...], to finally generating comments on the availability and quality of titles used for running grammar, lexis and culture courses at a College level.*

The problem of material selection and evaluation for teaching Anglo-Saxon culture is analysed in two contributions. In one of them (*Some remarks on selected Anglo-Saxon culture teaching materials*) G.A. Kleparski (UR) and M. Wysokiński (NKJO-Chełm) point out the need for creating a British and American culture studies handbook not only catering for the university students' needs but also meeting the expectations of the secondary school graduates

preparing for the entrance exams to English departments. The authors complain that at present *there are painful gaps* in a seemingly wide choice of materials offered on the Polish market. Therefore, the authors outline a checklist of basic criteria for choosing an effective handbook and evaluate selected titles available in Polish bookshops. The assessment criteria, based on the authors' experience in teaching at the Teacher Training College in Chełm, include clear presentation of factual information devoid of biased interpretations, objective explanation of the origin of certain events, customs and traditions, and finally highlighting crucial differences between Poland and English speaking countries. A highly critical opinion about teaching materials is also expressed in the paper entitled *Rule Britannia vs. Cool Britannia – two alternative approaches to teaching British history and culture* by T. Niedokos (the Catholic University of Lublin). The author claims that the British-produced culture handbooks fail to provide readers with clear presentation of facts. On the contrary, readers are frequently introduced to contradictory interpretations of historic events and cultural phenomena as a result of academic debates between English-centred chauvinists (*Rule Britannia*) and supporters of political correctness (*Cool Britannia*). Indeed such an exposure to debates or various opinions can make lecturers' and students' life harder. It may be argued however that pure facts do not always give a true account on history or culture, as it is frequently a case of personal interpretation. In my opinion, making such an interpretation is a feasible task even for the college students or young inexperienced academics. After all, academic research is frequently based on interpreting opinions expressed in various sources.

For readers eager to find some useful hints on how to approach the Anglo-Saxon culture studies there are two more contributions in the volume: R. Giszczak (NKJO-Chełm) writes about American counter-culture of the sixties and M. Chwalewska (NKJO-Chełm) suggests incorporating non-verbal behaviour into culture aspects. Unfortunately, the author of the latter paper confines herself only to some theoretical remarks and fails to suggest any classroom techniques helping students to understand crucial differences in paralinguistic features between the Anglo-Saxon countries and Poland.

Teaching lexis is given a considerable amount of attention in the volume. Matching language synchrony and panchrony in linguistic analysis seems to be an interesting suggestion as, according to G.A. Kleparski's opinion, it facilitates a thorough comprehension of idiomatic expressions (*On introducing elements of language panchrony in the teaching of idioms*). The above approach may successfully convince college students that idioms do not particularly have to be learned by heart. D. Grymuza (NKJO-Chełm) argues in her paper entitled *Vocabulary instruction in communicative language teaching* that using context is also very advantageous in teaching lexis. B. Lipczyńska (NKJO-Chełm) and G. A. Kleparski (UR) in the only contribution written in Polish discuss various

aspects of selecting vocabulary exercises in relation to a given text. B. Kochman-Haładaj (UR) shows how the Polish language assimilates some English lexical elements as a result of the process of economic globalisation. T. Karpiński (NKJO-Chełm) argues that vocabulary building and revising may gain more attractiveness and effectiveness if moving pictures are used (*Moving pictures as a means of vocabulary acquisition by first year students of English*). Unfortunately, the paper is overloaded with statistics. It would be more comprehensible if the author presented the data using graphic representations (charts, tables, grids, etc.). What is more, the high precision of providing digits sadly does not entail the precision of quoting the film titles (cf. ‘Saving Private Ryan’).

In contributions regarding teaching foreign language grammar A. Urban (NKJO-Chełm) and G.A. Kleparski argue that using grammatical aspects may largely facilitate presentation of English tenses (*Aspectual approach to teaching English tenses*), and B. Czekaj (NKJO-Chełm) with G.A. Kleparski evaluate popular grammar handbooks used at the Departments of English on the basis of both their own and their students’ opinions (*Some remarks on selected grammar handbooks available to Polish students*). However, the authors fail to mention how the data were collected. The more inquisitive readers would probably appreciate a more precise account on the nature of the survey whose results are quoted in the paper.

Methodological perspective is not neglected in the volume. T. Zygmunt (the UMCS University of Lublin) argues that the long forgotten Grammar-Translation Method may, after some modifications, become very useful again, not particularly for teaching Classical Greek or Latin (*The grammar-translation method in the integrated approach of ‘bottom-up’ and ‘top-down’*). G.A. Kleparski and A.M. Pietrzykowska attempt to prove that the presentation of typical openers, links and closers makes the process of developing foreign language communicative strategies far more effective (*Openers, links and closers: Selected problems of teaching English communicative strategies*).

Thirteen papers, wide scope of interest, various domains of English Studies covered, nicely edited – the volume is undoubtedly worth recommending to all College teachers who represent a reflective approach to their work. Even if we do not find all the answers to some pervasive questions, the volume will certainly encourage us to ponder over the quality of our work. This, in turn, should help us to avoid pitfalls of dull routine.