

*Magdalena MIERZWA*

**THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT THE  
COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY LEVEL (PAPERS FROM THE  
THIRD CHEŁM SYMPOSIUM HELD IN APRIL 2003)  
GRZEGORZ A. KLEPARSKI (ED.)**

**NKJO-CHEŁM PUBLISHERS, 2003, PP.93. ISBN 83-911683-5-2**

*The do's and don'ts of teaching English at the college/university level (in higher education)* edited by Grzegorz A. Kleparski is a compilation of 12 papers from the third Chełm symposium held in April 2003. The publication presents works that could be thematically organized into three sections: cultural studies, literature, and linguistics/glottodidactics. What follows is a brief outline of the contents of the collection and an attempt to formulate some critical remarks.

Should the reader be seeking information concerning the function and perception of space and territory in forming both students' communicative and cultural competences, this can be found in the first paper. Marta Czechowicz, the author, at the very beginning of her article incorporates Hall's (1966) explanation of the notion 'proxemics' stating it is *the study of the human use of space within the context of culture*. The scholar pays special attention to the inconstancy of human awareness of distance and territory, which are determined predominantly by culture, nationality, personal conditions, to mention but a few factors. In the paper particular emphasis is placed on teaching university and college level foreign language students an awareness of social differences and misunderstandings that can occur when not obeying the norms of closeness or remoteness. Furthermore, some examples are demonstrated and characterized.

In the following article an attempt is made to analyse the issue of the translatability of culture-specific phrases and expressions. Quoting two eminent researchers – Sapir and Steiner – Piotr Cymbalista stresses that there are no two identical semantic systems in which all lexemes have a corresponding counterpart, which is, according to the author, the chief obstacle for students to overcome. To be capable of translating a notion from one's mother tongue into a target language or vice versa successfully, they not only have to comprehend the

very semantic concept of the lexical item, but the extra-linguistic knowledge too. Additionally, an overview of the strategies employed to conquer culture-embedded difficulties in conveying the precise meaning when translating is offered.

The third contribution aims at defining the role of using the mother tongue (translation) in reading comprehension. The reading process is viewed here as an activity which is carried out in order to obtain a message, in which a background knowledge plays a fundamental role. Scholars Marcin Grygiel and Grzegorz A. Kleparski give evidence as to why it is so crucial to train college/university students, probably in vast majority teachers-to-be, that transference of information from the L1 to the L2 and vice versa, although not always being precise, is of no less importance than providing monolingual definitions. Furthermore, the article discusses the need for instructing undergraduates with Contrastive Analysis since by comparing two language systems and searching for counterparts of the lexemes one can anticipate, explain and later on eliminate potential errors (interference). The structure of the paper, which is subdivided into 6 parts, makes it easier to follow and comprehend.

The fourth reviewed work, entitled “Teaching interpretation necessitates teaching stylistic devices – as illustrated by the example of ‘The Thought-Fox’ by Ted Hughes” is a practical hint for a linguistic study of poetry illustrated by the example of the poem of Ted Hughes. The goal of this article is to familiarise the audience with techniques of interpreting poetry. It focuses on the use of figurative language (stylistic devices – both phonosemantic and phonostylistic) and their significance for understanding the poem. Agnieszka Kallaus and Grzegorz A. Kleparski claim it is impossible to interpret a poem without studying its form since it exerts a direct influence upon the meaning. Thus, some guidelines are given for college or university literature teachers to copy in order to help students analyse poetry efficiently.

For readers eager to find some useful ideas on the role of teaching phonology at the higher education level the following article will unquestionably be appealing. The paper of Robert Kiełtyka and Grzegorz A. Kleparski is divided into three passages. In section 1, two subjects – phonetics and phonology – are introduced, clarified and compared. Section 2 focuses on the significance of the abstractness matter that should be incorporated at a college or university level as a tool to develop students’ abstract thinking ability. Moreover, it gives useful examples of relatively abstract linguistic phenomena (e.g. the process of conversion or the so called empty positions traceable in phonology, syntax and morphology). The purpose of section 3 is to display instances of Old English homorganic lengthening as an example of the phonology process, which, according to the authors, ought to be taught at the academic level due to the fact that it helps undergraduates understand such things as historical sound alternations and linguistic transformations. The paper is followed by a list of 16 entries recommended for further reading.

The next piece of work, in turn, deals with the concept of falsity in foreign language teaching. Grzegorz A. Kleparski skilfully gives explanations and plenty of remarkable examples of false scent in literature studies, false beginners in glottodidactics, false paronymy in lexicology, false splitting in historical linguistics and, finally, false friends in semantics. The question of false cognates, which are the main subject under discussion here, is perceived as a source of negative transfer when acquiring a foreign language. Hence, it is recommended that they be dealt with in a consistent fashion at the level of university and college teaching. Accenting the text in various ways by using italics, numbering, enlarged font size and so on makes the paper look clear and neat. Thus, it is comprehensible and pleasant to read.

The ensuing paper – by Bożena Kochman-Haładaj – brings the readership closer to the beliefs, law, cultural heritage and customs of Native Americans. It stresses, moreover, that there is a need to discuss the history of America’s residents, as well as present the situation and living conditions in reservations at academic classes and lectures.

“Historical perspective in teaching linguistics is a must” is the title of the following article. The person behind this title – Andrzej M. Łęcki – in his outstanding piece of work successfully provides a number of arguments for the necessity of incorporating diachronic linguistics into foreign language teaching curricula at the post high school education stage. The article is rather lengthy, but tremendously absorbing. Lots of appealing etymology explanations of lexical items are included. More importantly, Łęcki proves that, unless a mastery of historical linguistics is gained, one cannot be viewed as a competent and adequately-qualified language tutor.

Dorota Osuchowska, in turn, introduces a key difficulty first-year English Philology students have, namely, an inability to employ glossaries, not to mention their lack of knowledge concerning dictionary types. She draws conclusions from questionnaire research and her own professional experience. Besides, in the publication some practical solutions to overcome the problem and improve undergraduates’ performance are offered.

A study on Shakespearian language, with double speak at the centre of attention, is the subject of the next paper, by Anna M. Pietrzykowska and Grzegorz A. Kleparski.

The penultimate work, “Teaching American government. The inquisitive or political decision making approach”, authored by Damian S. Pyrkosz, touches upon the problem of American culture studies; how to organize classes with university and college students and what exactly should be taught. What intrigues this scholar most is the question of American political system.

In the final piece of work Jolanta Sobiecka provides a brief outline of the difficult and uncertain situation of state-funded Teacher Training Colleges in Poland.

Taking the compilation as a single entity, there are, unfortunately, some minor limitations concerning not so much the content but rather the technical side of the volume. There are a number of spelling mistakes, the use of Polish diacritical marks, the absence or overuse of punctuation marks (especially in footnotes and references), and a lack of consistency in a way of writing compound lexemes (with or without a hyphen). In some parts, the text is not justified but right-aligned, some words are mistakenly printed in bold font, and occasionally too much space is left between words and lines. Another lapse one can fall upon is to be found in the very first paper: here the bibliographic entry of one book in the reference list is incomplete. In another example – a quotation is not supported by the author, so the reader has to take the trouble of comparing the publishing date (which is put in brackets) with the reference supporting the article. One also gains the impression that the work is deficient in its organization. It would be much simpler to comprehend if the articles were not arranged in an alphabetical but rather topical order. Reorganising papers into 3 sections – literary studies, culture and EFL methodology – would be advisable.

Despite these minor failings, the merits of the collection are indisputable. It seems to be exceptionally useful for academic tutors as well as students who are preparing themselves to be good and effective language teachers. The addressees should benefit due to its adequate and attractive topic selection. The people behind the twelve papers present information in an intelligible and logical way, which allows the reader to follow it with ease. Besides which, they all use straightforward syntactic structures, unsophisticated lexis and, what is more, provide matter-of-fact and rich definitions of novel terminology which is introduced. It is noteworthy that all papers, with the exception of the last one, are accompanied by footnotes and/or references, which offer appropriate and captivating details related to the issues under investigation.

The volume under examination is definitely worth reading. The recipients will undoubtedly appreciate it. *The do's and don'ts of teaching English at the college/university level* may be highly recommended to those who are seeking a comprehensible, condensed and lucid publication on the subjects presented.