

Speaking and Instructed Foreign Language Acquisition

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Speaking and Instructed Foreign Language Acquisition

Edited by

Miroław Pawlak, Ewa Waniek-Klimczak
and Jan Majer

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materials. Patterns of change: Model accents, goals and priorities' (2005), 'Metacompetence-oriented model of phonological acquisition' (2005), 'In search of cross-modal reinforcements in the acquisition of L2 practical phonetics'(2007), 'On hearing colours – cross-modal associations in vowel perception in a non-synaesthetic population' (2009) and 'L2-accented speech in L3 production' (2010).

Agnieszka Wróbel is an English teacher and teacher trainer. She is interested in phraseology and lexical approaches to foreign language teaching. Currently, she is involved in research into explicit teaching of formulaic language to Polish learners of English in formal classroom setting. The research is part of her PhD thesis at the University of Warsaw.

Preface

Few of those involved in instructed language acquisition would disagree that, whatever be learners' aptitude or motivation, developing the ability to speak in a foreign language is an extremely difficult and arduous task. This is because the acquisition of speaking involves the mastery of the different language subsystems to the point that they can be employed automatically in spontaneous communication, simultaneous focus on comprehension and production, which is difficult to achieve because of limited attentional resources, as well as the impact of a wide range of social factors that often determine successful attainment of communicative goals. The challenge is further compounded in a situation in which learners have rather limited access to the target language both inside and outside the classroom, which is the norm in the majority of foreign language contexts. For this reason, there is a need to explore issues connected with teaching, learning and testing speaking with a view to translating the guidelines stemming from theoretical positions and research findings into feasible and context-sensitive pedagogical recommendations. Such is the rationale behind the present volume, which considers speaking in terms of influential theoretical perspectives, representative of both the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic approaches, investigates various individual variables that can affect the development of speaking skills and reports the findings of research projects focusing on different aspects of instructed acquisition of speaking in a foreign language. The book brings together 20 contributions by Polish scholars, experts in the field of applied linguistics and second language acquisition specialists, which are divided into three parts according to their dominant theme, with similarity of topic rather than alphabetic order being the main principle of organization in each of them.

The first part, titled *Theoretical perspectives on instructed acquisition of speaking*, comprises six papers that strive to show how leading theories and hypotheses can be applied to explaining the processes of acquiring, producing and teaching different aspects of a foreign language. It opens with a chapter by Mirosław Pawlak who demonstrates how influential psycholinguistic perspectives on second language acquisition can provide insights into instructed acquisition of speaking and proposes on that basis a tentative model of developing oral communication skills

in the foreign language classroom. Agnieszka Nowicka and Weronika Wilczyńska, in turn, tackle the issue of authenticity of oral communication, postulating integration of the individual and sociocultural dimensions of communicative actions as well as arguing that successful speaking instruction requires the existence of a pragmatic context and anchoring teaching practices in social-function models such as genres. The contributions by Piotr Białas and Agnieszka Wróbel focus on the role of formulaic sequences in learning how to speak in a foreign language. Both of them recognize the contributions that these multiword units can make to the acquisition of speaking skills, with the former emphasizing the need for their proceduralization and the latter cautioning that their application may lead to fluent but inaccurate target language use and offering a handful of pedagogical implications. In the next chapter, Jan Majer seeks to account for the occurrence of code switching in negotiated repair in the foreign language classroom from the perspective of sociocultural theory and recommends relaxation of the language policy in educational discourse so that it resembles nonclassroom bilingual interaction. Sociocultural theory is also invoked by Anna Niżegorodcew who combines this perspective with that afforded by *Lingua Franca* English and makes the point that English for Academic Purposes can be viewed not only from a pedagogical but also from a sociocultural angle as a distinctive type of interaction coconstructed by speakers in nonnative discourse and as a regulatory process of identifying with an academic community of practice.

The seven chapters included in Part 2, *Speaking and individual variables*, focus on the way in which individual variation can affect instructed acquisition of speaking. First, Adriana Biedroń discusses the cognitive and affective characteristics that enable learners to reach a near-native level of proficiency when it comes to their speaking skills and reports the findings of a qualitative study that investigated the profiles of three such exceptional learners. Then, Ewa Waniek-Klimczak describes the findings of a research project that was aimed at correlating advanced learners' grades in pronunciation, speaking, grammar and writing courses, and then relating these to such personality traits as self-image, inhibition, risk-taking, ego-permeability and ambiguity tolerance. The chapter by Krystyna Drożdżal-Szelest, in turn, stresses the role of learners' awareness of oral skills as a key factor in developing their ability to communicate in a foreign language and discusses the results of a small-scale study that examined this kind of awareness among advanced learners of English. Aneta Calka brings our attention to pronunciation learning strategies, an area that has been thus far surprisingly neglected, and reports the findings of a preliminary study the aim of which was to identify strategies of this type used by advanced learners of English and put to the test a classification that she devised.

Pronunciation is also the focus of the contribution by Magdalena Wrembel who explores the role of awareness in learning this language subsystem and discusses the results of a research project in which think-aloud protocols were employed with an eye to identifying the strategies used by English philology students to consciously monitor pronunciation while speaking. The last two chapters included in this part deal with the impact of language anxiety on the ability to speak in a foreign language. In the first of these, Krzysztof Nerlicki concludes on the basis of a diary study conducted among Polish students of German studies that anxiety appears before the act of speaking, often as a result of negative experiences, and has a detrimental effect on language production. In the second, Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel conceives of anxiety as a factor producing communication barriers in a foreign language and reports the findings of a longitudinal research project that investigated the relationship between language anxiety and senior high-school students' assessment of their speaking skills.

The last part of the volume, *Research into instructed acquisition of speaking*, includes texts primarily devoted to empirical investigations of different facets of speaking in a foreign language. In the first contribution, Sebastian Piotrowski revisits the problem of authenticity, analyzing it empirically from the perspective of a focus on meaning, focus on form and focus on the process of task performance, and concludes that its presence depends on the extent to which classroom discourse fosters authentic interaction in the target language. Subsequently, Irena Czwenar reports the findings of a longitudinal investigation in which she traced the oral development of nine upper-intermediate and advanced students of English in terms of fluency, accuracy and lexical and grammatical complexity over a three-year period, finding that although the participants improved on these measures, they advanced their oral proficiency in different ways by prioritizing some of the dimensions over the others. Improvement in oral production in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity is also investigated by Anna Mystkowska-Wiertelak who reports the results of a study that examined the effects of task repetition. Emphasis is then shifted to the role of modern technology as Mariusz Kruk looks into the use of the internet and instant messengers in instructed acquisition of speaking and reports the results of a quasi-experimental study that demonstrate that such tools can indeed promote the acquisition of speaking skills by senior high-school learners. In another empirical contribution, Dorota Werbińska applies metaphor-based approaches of processing metaphor and metaphor processing to the investigation of learners' beliefs regarding the acquisition of speaking skills in English, German and Russian. Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska focuses on errors in the pronunciation of entire words as being more detrimental than segmental or prosodic inaccuracies, and reports the results of a