

Elke Hentschel (Bern)

Again: Foreign Language Teaching.

Editor's preface to *Linguistic online* 10, 1/02

This is the second issue in a row dealing with the subject of foreign language teaching and learning, which certainly can be taken to indicate the undiminished actuality of the subject.

This time, the programmatic paper comes from Theo Harden (Dublin, Ireland) and deals with the silent assumption that learners have a positive attitude toward the language they are supposed to learn, or the culture that it belongs to. In this view, only the lack of linguistic knowledge prevents them from getting along peacefully with members of other cultures. However, as Harden shows quite convincingly, this is not a very logical assumption. Empathy, understanding, is by no means identical with sympathy. Douglas Adam's fantasy of "the poor Babel Fish [who], by effectively removing all barriers to communication between different races and cultures, has caused more and bloodier wars than anything else in the history of creation"¹ finds its scientific grounds in this article.

Approaches from very different angles have been gathered under the heading "individual questions". Mohammad R. Talebinezhad and Mohammad Aliakbari (Isfahan, Iran) deal with English as a foreign language, English as a second language and English as an international language in the context of the Iran. Merle Jung (Tallinn, Estonia) considers the possibilities of using language play in literary texts in the context of foreign language lessons, whereas Doris Grütz (Weingarten, Germany) analyses academic lectures on economic subjects as an issue of foreign language teaching and learning. Her paper is concerned with text structuring meta-communicative expressions on one hand, and with the terminology relevant to the specialization on the other hand. Finally, Torsten Schlak (Osaka, Japan) considers the nature of learners' strategies and their possible use in Business German lessons at the University of Hawai'i.

The two papers on "grammatical problems" are dealing with two completely different subjects. In Michael Richter's (Kleve, Germany) article on "scope and semimodal verbs", this grammatical problem is treated thoroughly, but no immediate transfer of the results to the field of foreign language learning is made, nor is it intended. The opposite approach has been chosen in Elke Hentschel's (Berne, Switzerland) paper on "unnecessary rules", where grammatical rules and descriptions are analysed exclusively with respect to their functionality in language teaching.

Last but not least, there is again a target paper in this issue: Thomas Studer (Fribourg, Switzerland) takes a critical look at different attitudes towards dialects in the context of teaching German as a foreign language, including those uttered in the last issue of *Linguistik online*.

¹ Quoted from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979).