

Active learner attitudes in learning Spanish as a foreign language

Constructivist approaches

SUMMARY

Spanish is currently one of the most popular languages in Poland's secondary schools. Interest in this language has grown continuously around the world over the last 20 years. Małgorzata Spychała-Wawrzyniak's is the first published work on the teaching of Spanish in Poland and on educational attitudes from the constructivist point of view. As such it fills a gap in knowledge in this field. The publication is divided into four parts, the first three of which are theoretical and deal with three central issues: attitudes, constructivism and autonomy. Each of these is analysed in terms of foreign language learning and teaching, in this case the Spanish language. Although the term 'attitude' is used mainly in the fields of sociology, social psychology and psychology, the author shows the immense role played by attitudes in effective language learning and the factors which condition positive or negative attitudes.

In Chapter One the author draws attention to the nature of motivation, values and convictions with regard to language learning, all of which are concepts closely linked with attitudes. Chapter Two is devoted to the issue of the language teacher's competence with reference to the constructivist approach. The author's analysis covers the qualities of a good language teacher, which help learners, particularly those who are active, autonomous and have strong intrinsic motivation, to build their new linguistic and cultural knowledge. Chapter Three concentrates on the role of autonomy and the development of autonomous attitudes in active and capable learners who participate in 'language olympics' competitions. Chapter Four presents the results of empirical research on attitudes of active learners studying Spanish at the Polish secondary-school level and higher.

Translated by Rob Pagett