Foreword

The mid-1970s was a significant period for research into language instruction as it marked the beginning of an interest in the language learner, captured in the title of James Oller and Jack Richards' (1973) edited book *Focus on the Language Learner*, with the subtitle 'Pragmatic Perspectives for the Language Teacher'. Up to that point researchers had tended to amplify language teaching methodology as key to language learning, with the contributions of individual learners as a relatively inert part of the process. It was the landmark studies by Joan Rubin and David Stern published in 1975 that shifted our attention even further towards seeing language learners as people who bring their own awareness, styles and strategies to the process of language learning. From this point on, the field of language learning and teaching became interested in the strategies learners use to develop proficiency in the target language, the range of variables that affect strategy use, the efficacy of particular strategies and/or combinations of strategies, and approaches to Language Learning Strategy Instruction. As enquiry into strategy instruction developed, it addressed a number of fundamental questions using a range of conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches: What models are there for strategy instruction? How have they been implemented? What are the features and principles of strategy instruction? How can teachers be guided and supported to include strategy instruction in their language classes? What evidence do we have for the efficacy of strategy instruction?

This edited collection gives analytical attention to these fundamental questions, responding to the challenge for more detailed evidence of the exact nature of the intervention, the theoretical and methodological underpinnings, and careful examination of key features such as the role of teacher feedback. While models of strategy instruction have become more complex and sophisticated over the past three decades or so as researchers and teachers have attempted to make strategy instruction both situated and relevant to the immediate needs and motives of language learners, the chapters here extend further this trajectory of enquiry; they consider how strategy instruction can relate to the diversity of student backgrounds and the complexity of their needs within and across different settings including interrelationships with language and content instruction, for example. The book also opens up new areas of strategy instruction relating to grammar,

pragmatics and cultural awareness, areas which have hitherto received relatively little attention but which remain high-stakes areas in language use in a globalized world. Importantly, the book takes a multiperspectival view of strategy instruction, focusing not only on models and frameworks, learner needs and settings and particular language skills, but also in considering curricula, materials, teacher roles, the ways in which scaffolding is enacted in classrooms, and the potential of digital environments and mobile language learning. The chapters productively explore tensions between what researchers have come to know about strategies and strategy instruction, and what can usefully be applied in language classrooms by teachers who face competing demands on their classroom time and personal resources. This is achieved by a deep and empathetic understanding of teachers' needs and classroom realities together with productive approaches to finding new ways for teachers to experience the value of strategy instruction – which teachers can then convey and re-enact in their settings as part of their everyday practices.

This is an important and long-overdue book addressing significant questions about strategy instruction in relation to theory, research and practice and the interrelationships between them. In this it skilfully balances the twin concerns in Oller and Richards' book, namely that theory and research focusing on the learner also need to address the realities of language teachers and to offer pragmatic perspectives that respond to those realities. The editors – Anna Uhl Chamot and Vee Harris – each pioneered approaches to strategy instruction, Anna in the United States and Vee in the UK, and led the way in inflecting those approaches for younger learners, adolescents, children in language immersion classrooms, and in content-based second language instruction, to give but a few examples. They both worked too to ensure that strategy instruction would not be eclipsed as a marginal activity and they did this by embedding it within teacher education programmes and by researching its wider relevance; one example is in Vee's work on the interrelationships between first and second language awareness among adolescents through cross-curricular collaborations. During the period that they as editors have both worked to bring this collection together, Anna's life was drawing to a close, and on 2 November 2017 she passed away. Joan Rubin's tribute to Anna is included in this volume together with a number of short personal reflections on her contribution to our work and our lives as researchers, language teacher educators and teachers, as well as to the lives of innumerable lifelong language learners.

The editors and authors are to be commended for bringing together this volume at what is arguably a critical time for language teaching and strategy research: language teaching and strategy research have both been marked by a degree of precarity in terms of declining interest in languages in many instructional settings, and questions about whether strategies actually exist. At the same time, in other contexts, the relevance of

language teaching and of strategy research is manifestly evident, as individuals continue to seek to learn languages (whether to improve their life chances or for important personal goals or for the sheer pleasure of being able to speak another language) and learners, teachers and researchers continue to seek ways of enhancing target language learning opportunities. It is my view that strategy instruction will continue to mediate our access to and understanding of a wide range of practices, contexts and settings for language learning and teaching; this volume gives us new ways of reappraising current approaches to strategy instruction. More importantly, it gives us a lens to examine our wider accountabilities at a time when, for many, language instruction is a high-stakes activity and when intergroup encounters and their outcomes raise worrying questions about the potential for coexistence in a shared world.

Cynthia White
Massey University, New Zealand

Reference

- Oller, J.R. and Richards, J.C. (eds) (1973) *Focus on the Language Learner: Pragmatic Perspectives for the Language Teacher*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.