

European Policies in TEFL Teacher Education
José Manuel Vez

José Luis Ortega Martín
Universidad de Granada

In this paper, published by *The Open Applied Linguistics Journal*, 2008, 1 (1-8), Prof. Vez creates a link between the problems that arise when a European dimension in foreign language teaching is introduced, particularly with respect to the role that teacher education institutions as well as programmes should play. The author maintains that Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) approaches in Europe will be more efficient and effective and will have the chance of introducing a European dimension in teaching English if a shift in emphasis in foreign language teaching from form-oriented to more communication-oriented and culture-oriented is promoted.

In the introduction, the author highlights the main role of foreign language education, referring to the need to ensure a liberal diversity of languages and cultures, including English, as part of the cultural support of an authentic European dimension in foreign language teaching. Particularly significant is the term *Englishization* used by the author to refer to the condition for access to social positions and resources, given that it is the wealthiest and best educated people who also have the best access to English. The need to speak two or more languages as well as the need for a sense of European citizenship are considered key elements if we want to avoid stereotypes and ethnocentrism.

A series of initial problems are mentioned as the reference to Chapter 38 of the *European Profile for Language Teacher Education (A frame of reference)*, where the concept of European citizenship is introduced and where it is clearly stated that European citizenship should be promoted in other areas besides (foreign) languages. Facts such as the importance that is still given to written skills over oral ones, the role that strategic competence should play as well as the *interactional* and *discourse routines*, the need for a European spirit, which will develop a sensitivity in the learner for otherness and will contribute to counteracting undesirable stereotypes or the need for school teachers to be enrolled in projects with other school colleagues are indicated as main initial problem areas to be considered.

Next, the author points out some implications for foreign language teacher education, proposing a raising of the student's awareness of discourse and speech-act conventions and formulas, suggesting that a study of speech-act realisation and discourse regulation should be a compulsory component of the TEFL student teachers' professional curriculum.. Compensatory strategies (CpS) in foreign language communication are also indicated as key in foreign language teacher training. «The more incomplete our oral command of the foreign language, the more we shall have to revert to a skill of compensating for shortcomings in our competence».

Finally, the author addresses the proposals of the Language Policy Division (Council of Europe), considering the fact that all Europeans are allowed to acquire the competences necessary to communicate in several languages a right and a necessity, the basis for intensified co-operation (bilateral, trilateral, multilateral,...), a guarantee for increased mobility and exchanges and the assurance of better access to information through media and ICT. The author mentions

a «revitalised sense of community» after naming the separation of two worlds (the world of technologies and markets, and the world of cultures, instrumental reason, collective memory, signs and meanings) and carries out a revision of the different policies proposed by the Council of Europe in this matter: proposals of projects and activities which aim at moving beyond individual and collective linguistic and cultural barriers and creating synergies in the areas of education (trans-national mobility, life-long education, new approaches in language learning and teaching, access to new multimedia learning environments, the Net-days projects,...). Particular attention is paid to the Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (*CEFR*) and the European Language Portfolio (*ELP*) highlighting the key role played by these documents in the collaborative attempt to meet the challenge of multilingual and intercultural communication. To finish, Prof. Vez mentions the *Manual for relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*, to be published in 2008, and which will contribute to competence building in the area of linking assessments to the CEFR, encourage increased transparency on the part of examination providers and encourage the development of both formal and informal national and international networks of institutions and experts.

In conclusion, the author suggests that not only social sciences, history and economics have a role in the development of the *citoyenneté Européenne*, but also foreign languages; this contribution will be created only if they develop from mainly form and grammar-oriented to communication-oriented disciplines, taking seriously the realisation of speech-acts and routines and fostering the use of compensatory strategies to make that interaction as satisfactory as possible; and that this is a major task for language teacher education departments.

As a final reflection on the paper, I must add that it has become a main tool to understand key issues involved in fostering the *Europeanization* of the twenty-seven «nationalistic states» considering the teaching of languages with a complete review of the situation and the tools that the Council of Europe proposes. The main goal is clearly stated and very well sustained: teachers, with a higher degree of responsibility and knowledge than before, will stimulate in our young people an awareness of their own culture and respect for the different cultures of other communities with which we form a Union.