

INTRODUCING A EUROPEAN DIMENSION INTO EFL TEACHER EDUCATION

JOSÉ MANUEL VEZ*

University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to create a link between the problems that arise when we try to introduce a European dimension in foreign language teaching, particularly with respect to the role teacher education institutions and programmes should play. A shift in emphasis in foreign language teaching from form-oriented to more communication-oriented work and culture-oriented work should not only make EFL learning and teaching more efficient and effective, but also, at the same time, offer the chance of introducing a European dimension into the very heart of foreign language teaching. This means that foreign language teachers, more responsibly and knowledgeably than was the case in the past, will give shape to a kind of *intercultural foreign language education* in which the unique ways of communicating in the various European communities are highlighted. If done in the right way, this could stimulate in our youth an awareness of their own culture and respect for the culture of other speech communities and nations with which we are forming a political and monetary union. Below, an attempt will be made to elucidate this idea. First looking at a few problems can best do this.

RESUMEN

En este trabajo planteamos la construcción de un nexo de unión entre aquellos problemas que surgen a la hora de pretender introducir la dimensión europea en la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras, sobre todo en relación al papel que deberían jugar en ello las instituciones encargadas de la formación del profesorado y sus programas de formación. El cambio de énfasis que ha protagonizado la vida didáctica de estos últimos años, desde tareas de aprendizaje y de enseñanza más orientadas hacia la forma lingüística hacia tareas metodológica más centradas en los aspectos comunicativos de la lengua y en la cultura, debería desembocar no sólo en aprendizajes más eficaces y efectivos sino,

* José Manuel Vez is Professor of Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Education at the University of Santiago de Compostela. His research interests include critical applied linguistics, foreign language teacher education, and issues relating to language and education.

JOSÉ MANUEL VEZ

sobre todo, en una buena oportunidad para introducir la dimensión europea en el propio corazón de la enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras. Esto viene a decir que el profesorado de lenguas extranjeras, con más responsabilidad profesional y con mejores competencias lingüísticas que lo que ocurría hace décadas, será quien deba asumir el reto de dar forma a una *formación intercultural en lenguas extranjeras* que ilumine de manera especial las formas singulares de comunicarnos entre los ciudadanos de las diferentes comunidades europeas. Si se logra hacer de la manera deseable, serviría para estimular entre nuestros jóvenes una mayor conciencia de los valores de su propia cultura, al tiempo que un mayor respeto por la cultura de las demás comunidades y naciones con quienes ya formamos una unión política y monetaria. El texto que sigue no es más que un intento de esclarecer esta idea. Una idea a la que no le faltan problemas de partida a los que echaremos un vistazo en primer lugar.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans ce travail nous envisageons la construction des rapports entre les problèmes surgis lorsqu'on essaie d'introduire la dimension européenne de l'éducation dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères et le rôle censé jouer par les institutions chargées de la formation des enseignants et leurs programmes de formation. Le changement de centration qui a eu lieu au sein de la didactique des langues au cours des dernières années –des tâches d'apprentissage et enseignement centrées sur la forme linguistique aux tâches méthodologiques centrées sur les aspects communicatifs de la langue et sur la culture– devrait aboutir à des apprentissages non seulement plus efficaces et effectifs mais, plutôt, à une belle occasion d'introduire la dimension européenne au cœur même de l'enseignement des langues étrangères. Cela revient à dire que ce sont les enseignants des langues étrangères, doués d'une plus large responsabilité professionnelle et de meilleures compétences linguistiques qu'auparavant, qui doivent relever le défi de mettre en oeuvre une formation interculturelle en langues étrangères qui éclaire spécialement les façons de communiquer particulières entre les individus des différentes communautés européennes. Tout cela, réussi de manière désirable, permettrait de promouvoir chez nos jeunes apprenants une plus grande conscience des valeurs de leur propre culture et, en même temps, un plus grand respect envers la culture des autres communautés et nations avec lesquelles nous avons composé une union politique et monétaire. Donc, ces propos ont été conçus dans le dessein d'éclaircir cette idée. Une idée non sans problèmes initiaux et qui vont être tout d'abord considérés.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language education, in line with current innovation trends all over Europe, may be viewed within the framework of an interpara-

digmatic change which is characterised by the generally accepted feeling that language is the most significant social activity human beings are able to perform.

From a time in which there was neither a popular nor an educational consensus about the part foreign languages should play in students' life at school, we have moved to a position in which foreign language education plays a central role in our (primary and secondary) curriculum development and in teacher education, both initial and in-service.

Europe is both genetically and linguistically the poorest part of the world (3% of the world's languages, if we count in ex-Soviet Union and discount the languages of recent immigrants). Still, education of most nationals and almost all immigrant minorities participates in committing linguistic imperialism, via EFL, instead of supporting the languages that could enrich Europe via *inter-comprehension* in various European languages. There are many different explanations about this situation, even from the most radical side of the problem. But facts are the way they are and, year after year, an English-only Europe (Phillipson, 2002) is growing up and up. Anyhow this is not the point here. I will refer to the necessity of maintaining a liberal diversity of languages and cultures, including English, as part of the cultural support of an authentic European dimension in foreign language teaching.

Of course achieving high levels of competence in English is something that enhances one's chances on the labour market. The question is *not* whether or not children should learn English at European schools –of course they should. The question is how they can best do it having into account the fact that in most situations in the world using English as the unique medium of foreign language education for non-English speaking children is not a solution. Moreover, it is a big problem.

The globalisation which accompanies the neo-liberal ideology of the free markets is closely linked to the expanding international use of English. As we all know, since World War II English has become the dominant international language, and that process is now accelerating with the USA as the one remaining superpower. Other international *linguas francas* (such as French in western industrialised societies or Russian in the former eastern block) are in decline. *Englishization* is socially divisive in that a knowledge of English is increasingly a condition for access to social positions and resources (including access to elite positions in the new neo-liberal economy), yet in many societies it is the wealthiest and best educated people who also have the best access to English. This is accentuated by the fact that most of the knowledge on

which the knowledge-based economy operates is knowledge in English; and English is the main language of international institutions. Thus one aspect of research on language teaching and learning in the new neo-liberal europeanization –relating to the category of economic and political ‘semiotic systems’– is on its relationship to ‘*Englishization*’: how that privileges particular countries and elites, new forms of multilingualism, the consequences in terms of the marginalisation of other languages, and in terms of ‘linguistic human rights’ (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999).

In a Europe that strives for unity in more and more fields of human enterprise –cultural, economic, juridical and perhaps even political–communication between member states and, at the grass-roots level, between individuals across borders and cultures is of the most vital importance. In all the challenges offered to us by the growth towards real integration of the various nationalities into what Churchill already called “*The United States of Europe*”, a reasonable spoken and/or written command of at least two, if not even *three*, languages spoken within its perimeter takes absolute priority. Without it *the free movement of persons* becomes a hollow phrase. A policy aimed at making one or two major languages the exclusive means of communication across state borders at the expense of many others will only seemingly simplify European integration. Refusing to meet the challenge of maintaining a liberal diversity of languages and cultures will not only culturally impoverish the Europe of the future, it will also cause resentment on the part of the minority language communities. Foreign language learning and teaching, also of minority languages, giving explicit attention to the socio-cultural aspects of the target language community, therefore, will remain a *central task of education* –in particular, teacher education– in European member states and deserves a lot of attention and investment of means.

The unification of Europe at grassroots level is facing problems which, perhaps, are even bigger than those at the top. The latter will eventually be overcome, if only because of economic necessity. However, work towards a solution of the problems at the basis of the European Community has hardly started yet. Only recently does the bottom-up process of establishing empathy with Europe and a sense of European citizenship in our youth through education seem to have become a serious issue in Brussels. Ignorance among the young of other ways of living and other forms of social interaction in the various national and speech communities of Europe is a marvellous breeding ground for ethnocen-

trism and mutual stereotyping. Such stereotypes may have a long-lasting influence on a naïve and undeveloped mind if *education* does not provide an antidote. If we want a European sense of belonging to develop, and at the moment one has to look high and low to find a trace of one, *teacher education* will have to take on the responsibility for promulgating, even promoting “*European-ness*”.

This paper attempts to create a link between these two problems. A shift in emphasis in foreign language teaching from form-oriented to more communication-oriented work and culture-oriented work should make EFL learning and teaching more efficient and effective, and also, at the same time, offer the chance of introducing a European dimension into foreign language teaching. This means that foreign language teachers, more responsibly and knowledgeably than was the case in the past, will give shape to a kind of *intercultural foreign language education* in which the unique ways of communicating in the various European communities are highlighted. If done in the right way, this could stimulate in our youth an awareness of their own culture and respect for the culture of other speech communities and nations with which we are forming a political and monetary union. Below, an attempt will be made to elucidate this idea. First looking at a few problems can best do this.

1. INITIAL PROBLEM AREAS

a) In order to develop into the United States of Europe it is of the utmost importance for Europe that its inhabitants speak *several*, but at least two, of its languages. This mastery will have to be mainly *oral* (receptive and productive), however important written command may be in commerce and industry. In the context of the development of what has come to be called “*la citoyenneté Européenne*” in Brussels, oral command of one or more foreign languages is of supreme importance. That this view is shared in policy-making circles in Brussels becomes apparent when we look at programmes like ERASMUS and LINGUA, which are meant to offer tomorrow’s European intelligentsia a chance to learn foreign languages and become acquainted with other ways of looking at life.

In spite of much lip-service paid to the importance of the development of *oral* proficiency in foreign language teaching, this aspect of linguistic skill has never had any real priority in the foreign language

classes in a majority of European countries for a number of reasons, which will not be dealt with here. I have given explicit reasons about this problem with respect to the educational situation in Galicia somehow (Vez & Martínez, 2002). Reading skills still form the nucleus of the national examination of linguistic skills. The testing of oral communicative skills (which are usually interpreted as meaning: speaking skills) is left to the schools themselves. Somehow the emphasis in language teaching policy will have to be shifted. This will not prove easy.

b) Even if the tradition in foreign language teaching could be influenced to such an extent that oral communicative skills would become the focus of teaching and learning, it would prove impossible to prepare the learners, in the time allowed (the European average time is about 4-6 years), for all the situations in which they may be called upon to function in the foreign language later. Therefore, we shall have to help and stimulate them to make as efficient and effective use as they can of what language command they have acquired in school. In other words we shall have to help them develop their *strategic competence* in order to compensate for shortcomings in their language proficiency and to stimulate their ability to negotiate meaning appropriately. Too little attention is paid to this aspect of language command at present in a vast majority of European countries.

c) One of the most frustrating consequences of an inadequate command of a foreign language is the fact that one cannot play the desired role in communicating with speakers of that language. In order to be able to do this one must dispose of a set of *interactional routines*. During exchanges of staff and pupils between schools, which are strongly stimulated at present, learners may find themselves staying in families abroad. Pupils will subsequently need to be able to function discursively on a different level from the one they naturally use in their peer-group. Classroom teaching, generally speaking, does not pay sufficient attention to the *discourse routines* they are then in need of (Faerch *et al.*, 1984). If these routines are sufficiently automatised, they may not only enable the speaker to play the desired role in the interaction, they also give him or her time to activate his (socio) linguistic competence. Moreover, as research suggests, they also play a stimulating role in the language acquisition process (Hatch, 1983).

d) The European *spirit* is hardly evident in large sections of the population of the European states. A lot of stereotyping of each other's cultures is at the basis of a lot of jokes that are bandied about, and the emotions engendered by international football championships could

hardly be considered a sound basis for generating new feelings of European solidarity. Personal and socio-cultural filters prevent us from seeing the other culture in its true perspective. These filters consist of criteria which we have developed ourselves or which have been instilled in us by the socio-cultural group to which we belong. They find their origin in unpleasant personal experiences or in historical events that have determined the present political or economic situation. They cause us to find certain things normal or good and others strange or even wrong. These attributive concepts are handed on to our own cultural surroundings as characteristic of the other culture. The problem is that the other culture is not given a fair deal as incompleteness in the information is accepted. Thus, the image we have, or get, of the other culture is warped. We then proceed to generalise on the basis of such partial and incomplete information to our heart's content. Feelings of solidarity with the other culture become then difficult if not impossible.

Foreign language teaching can contribute to counteracting such undesirable trends, which are so frustrating for European unification. Of central importance here is the development of a sensitivity in the learner for the otherness of the other culture through an emphasis on the different ways in which the other speech community generally reacts to life and *does things with words* (differences in discourse regulation and speech-act realisation). An important aspect of this sensitivisation is the development of the above-mentioned *strategic competence* (and a meta-communicative awareness of this competence) during the teaching-learning process. This competence helps the learner to learn to negotiate meaning and to help himself when his (socio) linguistic competence is inadequate or lets him down.

The meaning that is negotiated in international discourse is full of cultural pitfalls, and misunderstandings are lying in ambush. Certain sensitivity to possibilities and possible problems coupled with a linguistic capability to negotiate meaning is of great importance for successful *intercultural communication*. An insight into the way in which foreign language discourse is regulated guides the learner into the quintessence of the otherness of the other culture. Superficial stereotyping on the basis of practical knowledge may thus be discouraged. The learner may be induced to put his or her own culture in perspective instead of considering it the absolute norm by which everything else has to be judged. The problem is, of course, that in our school curricula hardly any attention is paid to aspects of communicative competence like this. *Oral* discourse, at best, comes at the bottom of the list of proficiency requirements,

and consciousness –raising concerning discourse phenomena seems out of the question– (Vez & Martínez, 2002).

e) At present, it is only geography and history teachers and, exceptionally, economics teachers who, in the course of their professional education, are brought into contact with Europe's unification process in some of its facets. In view of the importance of foreign language teaching for the success of this process, language teachers, too, will have to be given a thorough introduction to Europe (Beernaert, Van Dijk, Sander, 1993). They need this in order to co-operate with their geography and history colleagues in school projects. For the time being, however, such introductions do not yet feature very largely in foreign language teacher education curricula neither in Spain nor elsewhere in Europe.

2. IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

In the light of the above-mentioned problem areas we will have to devote explicit attention in initial and in-service foreign language teacher education, to discourse phenomena and speech-act realisation. Both of these reveal how people use their meaning potential in their particular culture-specific way. Also, as suggested above, concentrating on the formulaic nature of speech-acts and discourse regulation is an effective way of setting about foreign language teaching. In writing the foreign language teacher education curriculum it is just as indispensable to pay careful attention to the regulation of oral interaction as to the morpho-syntactic properties of the foreign language. If we wish to introduce the European context into language teaching this regulation, with its sociocultural and meta-cognitive basis, can no longer be ignored. Raising the learner's consciousness of the grammar of oral interaction must no longer be left to chance as has been done for so long in the past.

To be sure, the acquisition of pragmatic and discourse skills in the foreign language was, and still is, guaranteed here and there in teacher education by offering the student an extended stay in the target language country. The chances of being allowed such a stay, however, are slim for the individual student, even today in the age of extended programmes like ERASMUS and LINGUA. Such a stay, however, is of the greatest importance for the foreign language teacher to help him develop an insight into the regulation of foreign language discourse

and give him an opportunity of becoming skilled in its manipulation. Policy makers in Brussels seem to have underscored such a statement with their LINGUA programme. However, the length of the LINGUA stay abroad appears a major obstacle for most teacher education institutions, as their profession-oriented programmes cannot easily accommodate such a long absence of the student (Bruce, 1990). Shorter (too short?) stays of just one month are now being considered.

Therefore, a raising of the student's awareness of discourse and speech-act conventions and formulas is necessary. No less so for those students who are lucky enough to be allowed a lengthy stay abroad. For they may pick up an easy fluency in the foreign language during such a stay (invaluable in itself as this may be!), but it seems naive to expect them to go in for sufficient reflection on pragmatic and discourse differences between mother-tongue and foreign language. This is as unwarranted as expecting foreign language learners in a natural acquisition situation, and without a basic grounding in grammar, to develop a conscious knowledge of the foreign language's morphosyntactical regulation. The study of morphology and syntax is, and has been, since time immemorial considered a matter of course in foreign language teacher education curricula. By the same token a study of speech-act realisation and discourse regulation should be made a compulsory component of the EFL student teachers' professional curriculum.

In the preceding section discourse regulation and speech-act realisation were taken together. It may be useful to deal with speech-act realisation separately here. A foreign language teacher needs an insight into *how things are done with words* in the foreign (and contrastively his or her own) language. S/he needs an insight into the distinction between direct and indirect, conventional and unconventional speech-acts if s/he is to heighten his or her awareness of how language *works* in human interaction. This awareness forms the basis of his or her ever-growing realisation of how the other speech-community often looks at reality differently, and of how members of that community deal with one another differently, in other words of how that community has a different cultural perspective from his or her own. When using indirect and unconventional speech-acts, for example, we appeal to knowledge we share with our interlocutor. We take it for granted that s/he will understand our implications, and that s/he shares our discourse rules.

Teachers who have developed a respectful insight into the otherness of such conventions in the foreign language are satisfactorily equipped to immunise their students against the tendency to stereotype

other speech communities or nations on this point. They can show how relative such conventions –including mother-tongue conventions– are and that what seems funny or strange or even weird, is nothing but another way of dealing with reality, intrinsically neither better nor worse than what is customary in the mother-tongue. Study of discourse conventions and a comparison of speech-act realisations in both the mother tongue and the foreign language should therefore become an issue in foreign language teacher education curricula and should be appropriately introduced into the classroom.

Furthermore, study of the use of *compensatory strategies* (CpS) in foreign language communication will have to be made part and parcel of foreign language teacher education. 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. In order to be able to do that efficiently and effectively we need the necessary phrases and vocabulary, practice in using them appropriately and again, of course, awareness. The student teacher not only needs to become adroit in availing himself or herself of all sorts of CpS, s/he also needs to be stimulated to think about the phenomenon itself and experience the use of CpS for communicative as well as learning purposes.

As foreign language learners we shall *never* become native speakers (NSs) of that language. This can *never* be the purpose of foreign language teaching. Therefore, in our communicating with speakers of the foreign language there will be a more complicated process of negotiation of meaning than is the case in our mother tongue. Beside a command of vocabulary and morpho-syntactic phenomena we need for this negotiating process a knowledge of language formulas (speech-act realisations and discourse regulatory formulas) and a skill in using them appropriately on the basis of our socio-cultural and metacommunicative awareness. The complexity of the process naturally entails misunderstandings. It is, therefore, not at all a wild thought to introduce exo-linguistic discourse into the input material that we confront learners with. This discourse contains misunderstandings that may typically arise between non-NSs (NNSs) and NSs, and between speakers of various European languages via a lingua franca. The inevitable use of all sorts of CpS (for vocabulary, but also for discourse regulation and speech-act realisation) in this sort of communication may serve as examples of an *intercultural negotiating process* and will reveal the importance of CpS. It will also bring foreign language use nearer to the learner's experience and could therefore be more motivating.

Europe and its unification should not be made into a separate school subject. It needs to be integrated into topics dealt with in relevant school subjects. Foreign languages, on the basis of the above reasoning, as carriers of a cultural load, should be among those subjects.

Co-operation between all subjects concerned in school projects should be one of the ways in which Europe is given a place in the school curriculum. Obviously, in this context foreign language teachers need to be able to communicate with their colleagues in the other subjects. Therefore they should be given a basic introduction into Europe's history and its present state of affairs.

3. HOW ARE THESE REQUIREMENTS TO BE REALISED IN THE CURRICULUM?

For the analysis of discourse by the student, an inventory of discussion topics will have to be made and in order for him or her to study speech-act realisations a list of examples of unconventional indirect realisations in context is needed.

Points of interest for *discourse analysis* (cf. Vez, 2000) will certainly have to include opening and closing routines and turn-giving, turn-keeping and turn-taking conventions, cohesion and coherence conventions, *routinised chunks* of discourse and the use of the so-called *gambits* (Nattinger and De Carrico, 1989).

Equipped with such inventories the student will have to learn to make analyses of NS and NNS discourse produced on the basis of the same communicative tasks. In making these analyses the student should distinguish as much as possible between discourse conventions and speech-acts (at times they may overlap). Discovering differences and similarities between NS and NNS discourse and its regulation will no doubt be an invaluable preparation for the student teacher for the intercultural language classroom later, as well as for his or her own observation potential if s/he is allowed a lengthy stay in the target language country during his or her education programme. S/he will experience the cultural embedding of a language at first hand and see how cultural differences manifest themselves in language use.

Learning to use CpS in the mother tongue takes place largely unconsciously. We pick up this component of our communicative competence more or less automatically.

As a rule we do not reflect on our use of CpS. It is therefore striking that in institutionalised foreign language learning we see that learners

do not easily revert to their use and if they do, that their range of strategies is rather limited and their use of them rather laborious. It seems as if traditional foreign language teaching is not sufficiently communicative and too form-oriented to allow a natural process as the development of CpS in the foreign language to take place. We will, therefore, have to make our students aware of their CpS use and help them refine it in support of the further development of their own proficiency and as part of their didactic preparation as foreign language teachers. The nature of the exercises and the methodology used in the process may be a model for their later practice.

It is of importance for all teachers who want to promote Europe and European citizenship to have a thorough knowledge of the idea of Europe and its origin and history. They should also, and this goes for foreign language teachers in particular, be sensitive to the uniqueness of the various European (sub) cultures as they are to be found in the variety of speech-communities in the European area. This knowledge and sensitivity may help liberate the mind from ethnocentrism and from the urge to stereotype other cultures.

In order for a school team of teachers to be able successfully to set up projects aimed at the development of a sense of European citizenship in their pupils it is necessary that they understand one another on the point of the project's purpose. They need a measure of shared knowledge and outlook concerning Europe and its future. Teacher education curricula, therefore, need to contain multidisciplinary courses or projects on Europe. An important role in planning and organising these is to be played by foreign language departments. For, as stated above, it is only in contact with other Europeans, through the language of one of the participants or through a lingua franca, that one may become really aware of the otherness of the other culture.

If one has been made conscious of these differences and has been prepared for dealing with them in a negotiating process, the communication may be ever so much more satisfactory. Materials and methodology geared towards this consciousness-raising process should be developed in training establishments to be used for their own students and in order to be shared with schools. Foreign language teachers in schools should likewise be prepared to play their role in Europe projects. Their initial education programmes should have equipped them with the necessary knowledge and skills to do so to the benefit of all concerned.

Into the bargain, schoolteachers should be willing, in keeping with their linguistic education, to contribute ideas to preparing the pupils for

fruitful exchanges with schools in other European countries. In view of obvious restraints on time that the initial curriculum is subject to, this last claim, however, may need to be relegated to in-service education and training.

Success in foreign language teaching lies with a teaching adapted to the context. Quite for a long time serving foreign language teachers in many European countries have mimetically used materials and practices devised for a different context (professional contexts, the diverse and specific-purposes context of the many private language schools in Europe, etc.) which is widely different from the ordinary compulsory education context. The lack of a teaching adapted to the compulsory school context may be the main reason for a not so happy situation prevailing in foreign language education in Europe. Using Streven's (1977) well-known metaphor, one context is the tail and the other one maybe the tusks of the foreign language elephant. They require different treatments and we should not pretend otherwise.

But, on the other hand, the success or failure of the foreign language class depends very much of the teacher him/herself. For quite a long time foreign language teachers in European countries, considering themselves as *specialists*, have not paid much attention to the fact that the foreign language school teacher is also (and basically) an educator and will not only have to teach the language but also contribute to the pupils' general education developing their intellectual capabilities and personal development, fostering positive attitudes towards the language class and helping them to become co-operative individuals in society (Richards and Nunan, 1990). And this is, precisely, one of the facts which is being fostered by education reform standards in the field of foreign language education in Europe.

Based on the current assumptions derived from a basic foreign language curriculum (Vez, ed, 2002), a variety of roles for foreign language teachers have recently become part of a tacit agreement both in initial and in-service language teacher-education in the majority of European countries. Adopting an eclectic and integrative constructivist model about new curricular ideas devised by the various reforms in all European countries for our specific language syllabuses, we may say that foreign language teacher education in Europe reflects, at present, new trends of innovation in the following sense: current assumptions about language, language learners and the language learning process are demanding a foreign language teacher profile as an informant, facilitator and monitor of the new language learning experiences, diagnoser of needs and

interests, motivator and generator of positive attitudes, provider of linguistic and communicative activities, developer of strategies and procedures, and finally, evaluator and assessor of the new language learning process and the language learning outcomes.

One final thing I would like to deal with is the new trends we begin to observe in many European countries with regard to promoting awareness of the European dimension of teacher education on the side of school foreign language teachers at school and teacher educators. A shift in emphasis in foreign language teaching, as I stated before, from form-oriented to more communication-oriented work has made teaching more efficient and effective, and also, at the same time, has offered the chance of introducing a European dimension into language teaching. This means that many European foreign language teachers, more responsibly and acknowledgeably than was the case in the past, are progressively giving shape to a kind of *intercultural language education* which helps, with no doubt, to the creation of that desirable stimulation in our youth of an awareness of their own culture and respect for the culture of other speech communities and nations under a totality of perspectives, in the way it was clearly expressed by Th. Sander (1993, p. 48) when concluding that:

“It is desirable (if it is not a necessity in the face of European integration) to increase awareness of the European/international dimension in teacher education, and this European/international dimension will have to be a totality of perspectives –geographical, cultural, socio-economic, historical and political–. For the rest, different people will have different opinions about political positions to be taken, about the aims of European teacher education, about teaching/learning strategies in introducing a European/international dimension and about effects produced in the field of knowledge, skills and attitudes of the younger generation”.

Foreign language teachers and teacher educators, more than other colleagues, are used to handle insights into the distinction between conventional and unconventional speech-acts when they have to heighten their awareness of how language works in human interaction. This awareness forms the basis of an ever-growing professional realisation of how other speech communities often look at reality in a different way, and of how members of that community deal with one another differently. So teachers who have developed a respectful insight into the otherness of such conventions in the foreign language are better equipped to immunise their students against the tendency to stereotype other speech communities or whole nations on this point (Vez, 1995a).

I think that we are now in a position to say that the development of the particular knowledge, skills and attitudes of the foreign language teachers that are necessary to help them play an active role in the process of europeanization is beginning to be considered a major task for university departments involved in language teacher education in Galicia as well as for institutions responsible for in-service teacher education (Vez, 1995b; 1995c).

4. CONCLUSION

If the development of a "*citoyenneté Européenne*" in the student teacher and learner is taken seriously by teacher education institutions and schools we should realise that not only the social sciences, history and economics have a role to play in the planning and organisation of projects or courses aimed at furthering this development. Also foreign languages have a clear-cut and very important contribution to make. They will only be able, however, to make such a contribution if they develop from mainly form and grammar oriented to communication-oriented disciplines. This implies that on a par with issues concerning the forms of the foreign language, the realisation of speech-acts and routines for the regulation of discourse must also be taken seriously and learners must be encouraged and helped to use compensatory strategies to make the interaction as satisfactory as possible.

It also implies that next to consciousness-raising regarding the differences between mother-tongue and foreign language in the morphological and syntactic field, serious attention should be given to study of the differences between how other speech communities *do things differently with words* and have different ways of regulating discourse. Foreign language teaching does not only become more efficient and effective in this way but it may also make a contribution to the development of an *intercultural awareness* in the learner, which makes for better communication across borders, and which is a prerequisite for the *europeanization* of what are now still mainly nationalistic states. The development of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the foreign language teacher that are necessary to help him or her play a stimulating role in the unification process of Europe, is a major task for language teacher education departments. They should work towards performing this task much more emphatically and explicitly than has been the case so far.

REFERENCES

- BEERNAERT, Y.; VAN DIJK, H.; SANDER, TH. (1993). *The European Dimension in Teacher Education*, Brussels, ATEE-RIF SNW 4.
- BRUCE, M. (1990). "Teacher Education and the Erasmus Programme", *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 12, 3.
- FAERCH, C.; HAASTRUP, K.; PHILLIPSON, R. (1984). *Learner Language and Language Learning*, Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.
- HATCH, E. M. (1983). *Psycholinguistics: a second language perspective*, Rowley, Mass., Newbury House.
- NATTINGER, J. R.; DECARRICO, J. S. (1989). "Lexical Phrases, Speech-Acts and Teaching Conversation", *AILA Review*, 1989.
- PHILLIPSON, R. (2002). *English-only Europe? Language Policy Challenges*, London, Routledge.
- , and SKUTNABB-KANGAS, T. (1999). "Englishisation: one dimension of globalisation", in Graddol, David and Meinhof, Ulrike H. (eds.), *English in a changing world. AILA Review*, 13, Oxford, The English Book Centre, pp. 19-36.
- RICHARDS, J. C.; NUNAN, D. (eds.) (1990). *Second language teacher education*, Cambridge, CUP.
- SANDER, TH. (1993). "Discussing the meaning of the European dimension in teacher education: criteria, problems, implications", in Beernaert, Y.; Van Dijk, H. and Sander, Th. (eds.), *The European Dimension in Teacher Education*, Brussels, ATEE Publications, pp. 35-57.
- STREVEVS, P. (1977). *New orientations in the teaching of English*, London, Oxford University Press.
- VEZ, J. M. (1995a). "Le véhicule de culture de proximité", in Atal, J.-P. et al. (Coord.), *Comprendre les langues, aujourd'hui*, Paris, La TILV, pp. 95-108.
- , (1995b). "Perspectives communicatives et développement des curricula des langues européennes", *ELA (Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée)*, n° 100, pp. 55-66.
- , (1995c). "The social context of EFL", in Madrid, D. and McLaren, N. (eds.), *A Handbook for TEFL*, Alicante, Marfil, pp. 15-37.
- , (2000). *Fundamentos lingüísticos en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*, Barcelona, Ariel.
- , (2001). *Formación en didáctica de las lenguas extranjeras*, Rosario (Argentina), Homo Sapiens.
- , (ed.) (2002). *Didáctica de la lengua extranjera en educación infantil y primaria*, Madrid, Síntesis.
- , and MARTÍNEZ, E. (2002). *Competencia Comunicativa Oral en Lenguas Extranjeras. Investigación sobre logros del alumnado gallego de Inglés y Francés al finalizar la ESO*, Santiago de Compostela, ICE-Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad.