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Certain events within the last 10 years (after preliminary trials in the mid-80s) have powerfully stimulated a new awareness and interest in developing innovative aspects of foreign-language teacher education in Spain. I shall try to briefly deal with the most significant ones.

There seems to be an increasingly stronger consensus in the approach to foreign-language education which has developed over the last decade and comprises a loose combination of ideas, attitudes and assumptions about the work of the foreign-language teachers which, taken together, have radically changed the former orientation of language teaching university departments (responsible for initial language teacher-education), CEPs (responsible for in-service teacher education programmes) and language teachers associations. There are, in my opinion, four elements which are powerfully contributing to this consensus:

1) Awareness of problems of foreign-language education and planning.

In recent years, we can observe a deeper interest in a planning model which attempts to place legislative and educational decisions in their proper framework, namely, in the sphere of social interaction and social values where these decisions must be really implemented. In order to be of sufficient quality, foreign-language planning must be part of other social changes and must relate to continuing values and attitudes. To be more effective, foreign-language education in a community with two official languages, as is the case in Galicia for example, must take account of the many assumptions which socio-linguistic studies have brought to light. We are in a position to assure that these conditions are now becoming an integral part of present concern in the development of foreign-language education in bilingual communities, as a consequence, a reinvigorating factor in foreign-language teacher education.

2) A new syllabus for foreign-language education.

We are living in exciting times in the development of programmes for foreign-language teaching and learning and for the consequent education of foreign-language teachers. For the first time in Spain, ideas which were speculative in the late 1970s and 1980s have the increasing support of academic research and classroom experience. Our view of language and foreign languages as both form and function, as an interdependent system of text, ideation and inter-personality with a focus on the negotiation of value receives support from studies in both linguistic pragmatics and pedagogical grammar; our view of foreign-language learning as a process of psychological negotiation with a focus on the enhancement of cognitive capacity receives support from both experimental studies in classroom language learning and from ethnographic accounts of language learners' behaviour; while our views of language practice and management, with its focus on the social context of teaching and learning, acts to create the conditions whereby both the prerequisites of this view of language and this view of learning can be met in practice.

This powerful confluence of interest among the three indispensable elements which participate in the process of foreign-language teaching and learning has recently imposed inescapable demands on all those involved in the development and implementation of curricula, not least upon teacher education (Vez, 1996). The result of that is a new syllabus for language education (embracing first and other added languages), under the auspices of the reform, which contains two points of pressure, innovation and change: i) the curriculum guidelines and the associated syllabuses for first and foreign languages; ii) the classroom and its procedures. One relevant fact here is the present curriculum approach in this country which seeks interdependence and mutual influence between purposes, method and evaluation rather than viewing each component separately. As a curriculum model concerned with communication as an objective

and as a means, it is bound up with ideological issues of the exploration of value systems and, at the same time, it implies that learner variability and diversity will impose pressures upon school teachers' capacity to pre-plan learning processes. Hence it requires greater classroom freedom at the point of determining syllabus direction and concretisation in each particular cycle of Primary and Secondary Education.

Both general and specific curricula proposed for the reform of Primary and Secondary Education are based on the new curricular ideas devised by Spanish educational psychologists (see, for instance, Coll, 1987). These ideas, which have obviously generated important changes in *post-reform* teacher education programmes, adopt an eclectic and integrative constructivist model that emphasises the *procedures* (related to procedural knowledge), or operations and strategies necessary for the students to learn, against the other two types of defining contents: the *concepts* -rules, definitions, facts- related to declarative knowledge, and the *attitudes*, related to the social-affective field, that can change the language learning process, positively or negatively. One reason for this is that it is procedures which allow students to acquire concepts, develop attitudes and, in short, learn to learn more things about the foreign language, either on their own or within the group.

Concepts, procedures and attitudes are grouped into two content areas (comprehension and production of spoken and written linguistic communication and socio-cultural aspects) in the case of Primary education, and three content areas (comprehension and production of spoken and written linguistic communication, socio-cultural aspects and language awareness) in the case of Secondary Education. The new *Bachillerato* (upper and non-compulsory education for 16 to 18 year old students) adds one more: the student's learning self-regulation or autonomy, a basically instrumental area which is common to all the subjects included in the curriculum of this stage.

One thing, however, needs a different sort of analysis: the teaching of one foreign language (just *one* and not two or three). The introduction of the study of a foreign language at the age of eight in Primary Education does not necessarily guarantee that children will learn that language faster and better than they were doing in the pre-reform period. Even so, it is worth noticing that as language learners they are going to be exposed to a new language for a longer period of time (an eight-year period for compulsory education) than many pupils of the same age in other European countries. However, the pupils' introduction to the study of a foreign language at this early age has not been accompanied with the provision of the necessary resources and administrative work on the side of teacher education which is required to create and operative and successful learning environment. As White (1988) has claimed, an innovation usually brings about a series of knock-on effects and we should be prepared for them, and, of course, eight-year olds should not be taught in the same way as twelve year olds, which is the starting age foreign language teachers were previously used to cope with.

3) *INSET developments.*

Nothing changes unless in-service teachers change. And they do not change by law or by decree. Teachers may choose to develop and change within one administrative frame or within another. Most in-service teachers think that, basically, if we strip it to its bare bones, all that the present Reform amounts to is an extension of the compulsory cycle of education, maybe coupled to a few changes to make the whole frame more adapted to the student needs in a world of rapid and continuous changes and demands. They are right in their criticism when they say that this is, essentially, an administrative reform and not a pedagogical one that affects their teaching directly.

But, of course, this is only one side of the coin and such comments are made from a very narrow perspective. If there is a pedagogical side, it does not lie with the overall structure in any case, but with the development of new syllabi devised in a way to accommodate the new longer frame. And in that direction -in the INSET direction- the reform (in general) and the new language curricula which have been laid out under the perspective and context of each Autonomous Community (in particular), are useful instruments in one very important aspect: they provide in-service teachers with an opportunity to rethink their foreign-language teaching

practice and to check if it is as successful as it should be. They also make it possible to analyse foreign-language teaching comprehensively and to relate it to other basic concepts and, beyond language teaching, to other areas of educational activity.

As Stern (1983: 515) put it a long time ago,

“Language teachers -probably more than other professionals- find that they are constantly bombarded from all sides with a surfeit of information, prescriptions, directions, advice, suggestions, innovations, research results, and what purports to be scientific evidence.”

INSET developments in foreign-language education are not free from such influences. For the thoughtful practitioners, in the same way as it happens to student teachers of foreign-language education, it is extremely hard to pick their way through the mass of accumulated information and matters of opinion, and to make sense of the vast literature distinguishing between solid truth and ephemeral fads or plain misinformation. Above all, there is a feeling that it is hard for them to decide what of all this contributes to any improvement in foreign-language learning. And, sometimes, a radical believers' attitude for innovation concerning the innumerable INSET programmes carried out in Spain does not permit for them to judge what Zeichner (1983: 3) could observe in the U.S. teacher education context many years ago:

“Our models of both research and practice in teacher education tend to be limited in number and narrow in scope and are too closely tied to paradigmatic orientations that are dominant at particular points in time.”

But we are, it would seem, in the grip of our history of foreign-language education, and there is little choice but to march forward into the future, taking up the challenges which impose inescapable demands on in-service education programmes and activities.

4) *Foreign language education and the European dimension.*

Success in foreign language teaching lies with a teaching adapted to the context. Quite for a long time serving foreign language teachers in Spain have mimetically used materials and practices devised for a different context (professional contexts, the diverse and specific-purposes context of the many private foreign-language schools all over the world, 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 Spain. 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 Spain, 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 & 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 Spain.

Based on the current assumptions derived from the foreign language curriculum in the whole country, 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 Spain. Adopting the eclectic and integrative constructivist model which was mentioned in 2) about new curricular ideas devised by the reform for our specific language syllabuses, we may say that foreign-language teacher education 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 Spain 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 Spanish 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: 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 *Europeanisation* is beginning to be considered a major task for university departments involved in language teacher education as well as for institutions responsible for in-service teacher education (Vez, 1995b; Vez, 1995c; Vez, 2008).

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