From 'Profile' to 'Portfolio' and Beyond: the Image of Linguistic Policies and Sustainable Development in Language Teachers' Education

Anca-Mariana PEGULESCU*

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1. Can we speak about 'politics of multilingualism'?

Very many voices today ask the same question: can we speak about 'politics of multilingualism'? The label of 'lingua franca' has served linguistic, communicative and social purposes. However, 'the nation-state establishes a setting in which options and ligatures are provided through one (usually 'national') language' [Kraus, Grin 2018: 13].

English has been considered and still is, the *lingua franca* that has won this status through communicative purposes (to which political and economic ones can be added). On the other hand, a multiplicity of English varieties – a range of 'Englishes' that are standardized only in the written code – coexist. The Oxford Dictionary accepts the idea that any language can be used by speakers of different languages as a common medium of communication and therefore can become a lingua franca.

The advantages as well as the disadvantages of multilinguality have appeared sooner than expected. Nobody can deny real linguistic and cognitive benefits. Being able to operate through more than one language creates multilingual contexts and a multilingual philosophy, a material culture and a complexity of thinking [Aronin, Singleton 2012]. Professional development in teaching and learning languages brings together teachers' educators (specialists/methodologists working with pre- and in-service teachers of languages), mentors, decision-making factors in education, student teachers of languages, pupils, parents.

Multilingualism and professional development imply focusing less on the 'what' and more on the 'why' and 'how' organizing activities. Thus, teacher educators are supposed to listen to everybody's problems, conduct focus groups, set aside time for informal conversations linked to training, reflect on activities

* Romanian Academy, Division of Chancellery and International Relationships, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania (a_pegulescu@yahoo.com).

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emerging from learning experiences, create a continuum of freshness and relevance for the teachers they train.

1.1. The *'Profile'*

The *European Profile for Language Teachers Education*. *A Frame of Reference*, issued in 2004, is not a set of rules that a teacher educator as well as a language teacher should impose or accept. The '*Profile'* should be rather used as a check-list meant to help the decision-making factors responsible for the language teachers' professional development. It contains valuable information for all trainers, especially when targeting international and mentoral exchanges. It also displays independent learning strategies within life-long learning and new learning environments. A better transparency and portability of qualifications, a frame of reference that can be adapted to the existing realities and needs of different countries can be added. The *'Profile'* team of writers, coordinated by Professor Michael Kelly and dr. Michael Grenfell, has examined the languages teachers' education provision in over 32 European countries and underlined the necessity of a shared understanding and shared terminology in this domain.

From the '*Profile*' a student teacher of languages can catch a language education curriculum model that integrates academic study and the practical experience of teaching, an explicit framework for teaching practice (stage/practicum), the value of mentoring understanding, the image of an intercultural and multicultural environment, a continuous improvement of teaching skills as part of in-service education, the possibility of ongoing education for teacher educators. The four sections (Structure, Knowledge and Understanding, Strategies and Skills, Values) of the '*Profile*' convey a very important conclusion: language education is to be seen as a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary approach, allowing trainee teachers to work creatively and flexibly. The '*Profile*' special sections entitled 'Strategies for Implementation and Application' are meant to develop a critical and enquiring approach to teaching and learning modern languages. Learning to learn is probably what counts in the end because the key points in such a context are: organizing time, monitoring the learning progress, identifying areas of strength and weakness, recognizing different learning techniques and their contributions to learning. Training in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) opens large doors to methodologies and strategies for teaching another subject through the medium of a modern language. CLIL approaches encourage cooperation and teaching experience exchanges with colleagues from different disciplines.

Teaching foreign/modern languages is also teaching about other cultures and a way of safeguarding linguistic and cultural identity. Enhancing diversity means being aware of the central notions of plurilingual competence and pluricultural competence set out in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL)

1.2. The 'Portfolio'

The *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL) is:

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- a reflection tool;
- an assessment instrument for in-service teacher professional development;
- a means to an end and not an end in itself.

EPOSTL has a double function: an *informing* one, offering the image of a specific linguistic competence level and a *pedagogic* one, offering the image of the individual teaching competence progress and self-evaluation. It displays the following sections: a *personal statement* section – reflection on general questions related to teaching, a *self-assessment* section containing 'can do' descriptors, a *dossier* – evidence of progress, examples of relevant activities to teaching, a *glossary* of language learning and teaching terms, an *index* of terms used in the descriptors, a users' *guide* – detailed information about EPOSTL. The '*Portfolio'* has 193 *descriptors* of language teaching competences, *self- assessment scales* that can help a student teacher/a beginner teacher/an experienced teacher to visualize and chart one's own teaching competence. EPOSTL categorization of descriptors reveals several general categories: context, methodology, resources, lesson planning, conducting a lesson, independent learning, assessment of learning. EPOSTL in Romania has been used as a 'pre' and 'while' language training instrument presenting a set of necessary teaching competences:

- a number of practical guidelines;
- the validation of a theoretical model;
- the way of maximizing the teaching potential for the best practice in E/F/G/I/S/C/J/language teaching (through the nearby initials I am referring to the modern languages that are taught in both preuniversity and university education in Romania: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese)

Here are some examples of what a teacher of languages (be him/her a beginner or an experienced one) can use as a self- evaluation grid:

> 'I can create a supportive atmosphere that invites learners to take part in the speaking activities'
>
> *'Pot să creez o atmosferă încurajatoare care să-i invite pe elevi să participe la activităţile de comunicare'*
>
> 'I can understand the requirements set in national and local curricula'.
>
> *'Pot să înţeleg cerinţele curriculum-ului naţional şi local'.*

EPOSTL is still viewed in Romania as a change and an implementation instrument, taking into account a network of interrelated factors (universities, school inspectorates, schools). It emphasizes the role of evaluation in language teaching, student teachers of languages' interests, social and cultural contexts of learning. The change is especially felt in both pre-service and in-service education: teachers of languages' training design, a joined-up thinking regarding the language teaching competences, the appropriate and specific languages teaching evaluation procedures. Dissemination activities regarding EPOSTL in Romania took place mainly at a national level (mentors' conferences, Romanian Association of Teachers of English (RATE) conferences, workshops) and at an institutional level (universities and Teaching Staff Houses, as well as in schools).

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Using EPOSTL and its Romanian version I have produced as *Portofoliul European pentru Studenții care Studiază Limbi Moderne (PESSLM)*, a double aim could be attained:

- make student teachers of languages more independent in their learning and less dependent on the mentor(s);
- give student teachers of languages a sense of self-worth and achievement.

Having translated the '*Profile*' and EPOSTL into Romanian, I could understand better the *context* (the teaching process), the way teaching drivers act and what the end-users do. I could work more constructively with partners and colleagues (university methodologists, language inspectors and mentors) and encourage language learning and training opportunities as well as collaborative efforts.

2. New developments

Both the 'Profile' and EPOSTL are not promoting a particular methodology, they demonstrate how:

- teaching can support learning;
- a student teacher of languages can become an effective/efficient language teacher;
- being a teacher of languages is a complex job.

If I am to draw some *conclusions* on the 'Profile' and EPOSTL, I would say that:

- they allow a student teacher of languages time for planning, design & implementation;
- they train student teachers of languages how to be transparent in their evaluation/self-evaluation and build consensus, trust and engagement;
- they make evaluation itself a learning process;
- they monitor progress on a regular basis;
- they favor harmonizing personal planning with curricular objectives, according to the teaching needs

EPOSTL has made possible a new project named ACTOSTL that has used the ACTFL/NCATE/CAEP Teacher Standards and EPOSTL descriptors of teachers of languages' competences to define excellence in language teaching. ACTOSTL observation sheet focuses on several aspects like: teaching planning, teaching and class management, evidence of culture, learning assessment.

ACTOSTL has aimed:

- to highlight examples of good practice in teaching for purposes of determining high-leverage teaching practices;
- to focus on effective development of communicative and cultural competencies and assessment, identified in both frameworks.

More than waited is the new document entitled *Towards a Common European Framework for Language Teachers.* It is a project whose members have been engaged in an intensive final round of review and consultation. That is why the online *Guide to instruments and frameworks describing teacher competences for language education* will offer forty competence frameworks, proposing a model of

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teacher competences which, while related to learners' language and intercultural competences, are common to all teachers.

The need for such a common approach would contribute to a greater coherence in teacher education curricula, and would improve cooperation between teachers of different subjects, especially as regards language(s) in education. The feasibility of further common instruments represents not only a must but it is also a challenge.

Another project entitled *A Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches* or FREPA underlines the necessity to discover approaches of *plurilingual* and *pluricultural competences* as they are presented in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*.

Nowadays objective is launched, assumed and desired: a multilingual and multicultural environment. 'Efficient and effective management of a range of languages is a characteristic of plurilingual speakers of which modern societies are in need' is the message of the European Centre for Modern Languages from Graz, the coordinator of all the projects that are displayed and run by different teams of specialists.

A recent event – the Education Ministers' meeting in Brussels on 22d May 2019 has aimed to several aspects referring to:

- the introduction into education and training of the concept of language awareness, which provides an inclusive framework for language learning taking into account individuals' language skills;
- identifying and promoting innovative, inclusive and multilingual teaching methods using tools and platforms at the EU-level.

The 2019 EU Ministers of Culture's statement has underlined:

> the need to ensure a holistic and strategic approach to cultural policies at EU's level[meant]to highlight the diversity and wealth of Europe's cultures and languages (www.cultura.ro).

3. Conclusions

A global perspective involves a blend of quality education, mindness and management. Education and the languages teaching and learning represent an important driver in globalization and this fact has become a reality even if for certain countries it is still a challenge. International education, mentorship and shifts of motivation have crossed national borders and imposed the need for a vision. That would bring an international curriculum ready to train and build communities that can operate change and cultural awareness.

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Abstract

Between strategies and specific teaching techniques, the 40 possible training directions included in the *European Profile for Language Teachers Education* are not rules but needs for a better professional development. The *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* (EPOSTL) is a reflection tool for improving teaching and can help student teachers of languages as well as practicing language teachers to identify the necessary teaching competences, irrespective of the learning context. EPOSTL launches a very challenging set of didactic competences, as an opportunity for student teachers of languages and practicing teachers to reflect on their didactic knowledge and their teaching skills. The triangle formed by the pre-service key competences, the teaching descriptors and the teachers' dossier has been thought as a permanent exchange of ideas and examples of good practice.

In Romania as well as in the world there is an obvious need for a common evaluation framework, regarding the teaching competences for student teachers who intend to become language teachers. *EPOSTL* as well as the *Profile* are guides for disseminating examples of good teaching practice in a multilingual and multicultural Europe.

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