

*Anastasia K. Lagutina*

## **Contemporary tendencies in theory and practice of foreign language teaching in EU countries**

*Anastasia K. Lagutina*

*senior lecturer*

*German and Roman Philology Department,*

*Humanitarian Institute,*

*Borys Grinchenko Kiev University*

*Kiev, Ukraine*

**Abstract:** this paper overviews the process of creation of the European Union from the historical aspect and follows the way of formation of the contemporary language and language teaching policies according to the up-to-date social tasks and existing problems in theory and practice of foreign language teaching which arouse in correspondingly. At the end of the XX – beginning of the XXI century human community faced the question of “communicative” co-existence of different nations, speakers of different languages, challenges of contemporary world, who have to understand the ideas of each other and to respect national identity. The language or the “mother tongue” is the embodiment of all nation’s cultural achievements, it is unique and ethnically peculiar. Each multinational and multilingual state inevitably faces the problem of language policy regulation. Contemporary period is characterized by emergence of a row of suprastate institutions, such as European Union (which Ukraine aims to integrate persistently), Commonwealth of Independent States (where Ukraine is an active member currently). The successful functioning of the institutions of the kind is in a way dependent upon the language policy implemented on their territory.

**Key words:** language policy, multilingualism, foreign language teaching, communicative approach absolutization, intercultural competence.

Introduction. Actuality of our investigation is caused by the factor that the language policy and the creation of common communicative area are one of the prior vectors of EU activities. The brand-new language reality, which is being created due to intensive migration and powerful informational streams is being determined by prevalence of bilingualism and multilingualism.

The object of the investigation – teaching of foreign languages (English in particular) in the countries-members of EU.

The subject – contemporary trends and problems in the theory of methodology of foreign language teaching on the territory of EU.

The techniques of gathering data included different methods of investigation: analysis of scientific sources on the problem under study, historical analysis, etc.

The aim of research was to consider the approaches of foreign languages teaching (including English) in the countries-members of EU, outline the tendencies of shifting learning priorities and corresponding methods of their realization.

Historical aspect of the general overview of European Union as entire English-speaking space. European Union (EU) is not a federation as, for example, the United States of America. It is not, as well, just an organization for co-operation among governments (as the United Nations Organization). European Union is unique in its kind. The countries, which are included in its structure, are left independent and sovereign but through uniting their sovereignty in one they have received such an influence, which each of these countries couldn’t have ever obtained by itself alone. In fact, the sovereignty consolidation intends that countries-members of EU delegate a certain part of their privileges in carrying out decisions upon mutually important issues to the common joint institutions in order to promote and provide highly democratic and European level in the decision-making process.

After the fall of communist regime in Central and Eastern Europe the citizens of these countries became close neighbours. And in 1993 the creation of “Common market” was accomplished together with the adoption of the “four freedoms”, concerning the free goods, services, people and money (currency cash) relocation. Unfortunately, then Ukraine was not accepted in the process, though our state is eagerly aiming to accomplish it. The 1990-es were also the time for the execution of several agreements and signing treaties: Maas treaty (1993) and the Amsterdam treaty (1999). Population became preoccupied with the problems of environmental protection and with the issues of joint actions in questions of security and defense. In 1995 three more new members joined the European Union, they were Austria, Sweden and Finland. To commemorate small village in Luxemburg, they gave name to “Shengen treaties”, which now allowed people to travel without customs’ and passport control [8]. This particular action taken as well allowed millions of young people to study in other countries with the

European Union support. At the same time, communication was facilitated greatly due to the active usage of mobile phones and the Internet.

The main legislative documents of European Union are the Unitary European Act and the Treaties of European Commonwealth. These documents proclaim the aim of creation; institutions, together with their functions and formative procedure; the main principles of EU functioning, competences, tasks and co-operation backgrounds .

According to the above mentioned documents, the aim of EU is as follows:

1. Well-balanced and long-term social and economical policy promotion, including the creation of the space without any inner frontiers and boundaries, provided with the help of economical and social leveling; creation of economical and currency union, which aims the implementation of common currency.
2. Strengthening of European commonwealth on the international arena by means of providing common foreign affair's policy and developing the policies in the field of joint defense.
3. Strengthening of rights and interests' defense of countries-members citizens by means of adoption of Union citizenship.
4. Development of close partnership in the sphere of judicial practice and domestic affairs section.
5. Preservation of the integration level achieved and outlining to which extend the policies and forms of co-operation stated by the Treaties need reviewing for procedures' and institutions' efficiency provision [5].

Language policy as an instrument of EU communicative space development. Contemporary European Union includes 27 countries-members, 500 million of citizens, 3 alphabets, 23 official languages, some of which possess the status of world languages. Among the official languages are: Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish. In general, the Union comprises about 60 languages. New languages are being brought in by immigrants. According to the latest data, nowadays there are 175 nationalities within EU [7]. Contemporary European society undergoes sufficient and rapid changes related to globalization, technological progress and due to integration increase and extension. Considerable is the inner mobility as well: today 10 million of Europeans work in other (non-native) countries-members. A number of above mentioned and some other factors makes it evident that European citizens' life becomes more international and multilingual.

From the very creation of the European states' commonwealth, which later developed into European Union, the necessity of communication in the multilingual environment has lead to the definition of certain principles and rules, realization of administrative and technical actions, which could give the possibility to exist and to develop the community as a whole and, as well, his separate members alone. The problem of multilingualism aroused a sharp need in a kind of multilingualism management and in a creation of a corresponding EU language regime. The language regime touches upon the issues of law, political, cultural, functional and budget character. Accentuation upon different components of the language regime determines various possible scripts of language problem resolution.

On the theoretical level scientists determine seven possible language regimes in EU, their core can be varied from implementation of one language as an official one to the usage of all official languages without administrative correlation (monolingualism, nationalization, limited multilingualism, asymmetrical systems, controlled monolingualism, controlled multilingualism, total multilingualism with administrative correlation, unlimited multilingualism). The EU language regime existing within the community is the result of the realization of certain language policy. The history of its formation gives reasons to claims its evolution.

Language problematic has become a separate branch of EU political activity, which has received a name "EU Language Policy". Relatively, the language policy can be divided into institutional and extra-institutional, according to the subjects and objects of realization; into supra-national, national and regional, according to the level of realization. Taking into consideration multilevelness and multidimensionality of EU language policy, it develops in various directions and with different pace. EU activities in the language sphere has received its concentrated expression in the concept of multilingualism, which is simultaneously a political motto in itself and EU action programme. It is declared that the EU aim in language sphere is the preservation of language diversity and encouragement of other foreign languages mastering by EU citizens. Created in 2008 Commissions High Level Group on Multilingualism defined the notion of multilingualism as follows:

- co-existence of different language communities within one geographical or geopolitical zone, or within one political community;

- societies', institutions', groups' and individuals' ability to communicate regularly more than one language [6].

Institutional language policy determines language usage within or among EU institutions, while communicating with the countries-members and their citizens as well as beyond the European Union boundaries. In terms of institutional policy the first regulation, which defined the official languages, was accepted in 1958. It defined Danish, French, German and Italian to be the first operational languages of European Union. Since then, together with the growth of community's countries-members number, grew the number of official and operational languages. Today, the quantity of official languages is less than the number of countries-members. This can be referred to the fact, that some of the countries-members have the same state languages. For example, in Belgium Flemish, French and German have the status of state languages; on Cyprus, the majority of population speaks Greek and it has already gained the official status. Before joining the Union, each candidate country defines by means of which among state languages (if there are several of them) they are going to fulfill communication with EU institutions. Agreement upon this question is being reached between the EU and each country in the Act of Accession.

Legislation and important or interesting (from the public point of view) documents are translated into all 23 languages. Any other documents (dealing with communication with national governments, decisions upon certain groups or individuals, correspondence) are translated only into those languages demanded by the situation. Within EU institutions rather diverse language regime is established. E.g., European Commission utilizes three languages for its inner needs – English, French and German. English is also operational language within European Central Bank. At the same time, the members of European Parliament require translation of the various documents into their native languages, therefore, its functioning appears to be multilingual from the very beginning.

On the regional level, the questions of utilizing of different languages spoken in the countries-members, but which are claimed to be official EU operational languages, are resolved separately. According to the separate arrangement with Spanish government some of the texts are also translated to the regional languages (Catalan, Valenciano, Galician, Basque). Luxemburg language (the state language of Luxemburg) and some other regional languages of countries-members, such as Welsh, Lappish, Sardinian, Breton, etc. were not even advanced for official status obtaining.

The recent events within the Union give us reasons to make a conclusion that the EU attitude towards language policy has changed, now giving it more importance than ever before. In the year 2007 its growing importance, for instance, brought changes into the European Commission as well. Earlier, this policy was the responsibility of EU Commissar on education, training, culture and multilingualism (since 2004 Ian Figel held the post), and January 1, 2007 a brand new separate post of EU Commissar on multilingualism was created. Nowadays Leonard Orban from Romania holds the post. He is a head of the Directorate-General for Translation, the DG for Interpretation and the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. L. Orban also supervises the Multilingualism policy unit. 3400 officials are under his charge, that is 15% of all European Commission staff – which gives us a perfectly clear idea of the scope and the meaning given to the language policy [2, p. 5].

Within EU there grows and understanding that the increasing level of economical, social and cultural integration demands higher degree of linguistic harmony. The foreign languages teaching policy, which can be viewed as a separate branch of EU language policy, is aimed to achieve this. We should point out that promotion of foreign languages learning has become a strategic activity, which has got its own name – Language Learning Policies.

In 1980ies – 1990ies EU launched a number of educational programmes. Almost all of them are concerned with language sphere, one way or another. Among those programmes the most worthy mentioning are:

- COMETT (Community Action Programme for Education and Training for Technology in the European Community);
- ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) – since 1987 more than 1,5 million of people took part in it;
- LINGUA (programme focused on foreign language learning promotion);
- TEMPUS (Trans-Mobility Programme for University Students);
- LEONARDO DA VINCI (programme focused on stimulation of new methods of teaching);
- SOCRATES (included both ERASMUS and LINGUA, but had an extremely great importance in broadening school spheres of activities because the COMENIUS programme had been already incorporated into the system of secondary education). The growing importance of the above mentioned programmes can be proved by their budget, for example, in 1984 it was 18,9 million ECU («European

Currency Unit» ECU — EURO), in 1987 – 77,2 million ECU and in 1990 it grew up to 140 million ECU. Altogether until 1999 European Commission had spent 850 million ECU for SOCRATES programme; 620 million ECU for LEONARDO and 126 million ECU for the project YOUTH FOR EUROPE. Since 1997 all EU educational programmes became gradually opened for the new applicant countries. According to the statistic data, from 2000 to 2006 almost 300 thousand people took part in the programme named LEONARDO DA VINCI.

Most of the programmes mentioned above have successfully incorporated the “Lifelong Learning Programme” in them. This particular programme is planned to be realized in six years (from 2007 up to 2013), it has a significant budget of 7 billions of euros and is aimed to support the projects of those educational institutions, which are concentrated on the interaction, co-operation and mobility (among inner training systems within EU) development. Among other ambitions is the gaining of possibility to compete with other programmes of this kind in global market. We may outline foreign language teaching as the substantial element of these programmes.

Before 2001 EU language policy was kept within the limits of the above mentioned programmes. But in 2001 the European Year of Languages accelerated language problems and brought them to the brand new level. On its termination European Parliament together with European Council adopted some resolutions and urged European Commission to work out succession of actions promoting and encouraging foreign languages learning.

We have to admit here that the language policy of consolidation has got a considerable support among EU citizens, as far as 67% of Europeans reckon foreign language teaching as a political priority; 29% more are absolutely sure in this statement and 84% of Europeans are positive of the thesis that each EU citizen should speak at least one more foreign language.

Lisbon Treaty outlined EU perspectives for the next decade and, again, underlined the importance of promotion EU citizens’ geographical mobility and improvement of foreign language learning. These aims became also a part of “Education and Training 2010” programme, which is, in its turn, a constituent component of Lisbon Treaty referring the educational issues.

In 2002 a significant event, in terms of language policy, took place. During Barcelona Summit of European Council heads of the states and governments of EU countries-members declared the introduction of new principle “mother tongue plus two” into educational systems of these countries-members together with “linguistic competence indicator”. It supposes the study of at least two foreign languages from early age and aimed on strengthening of “individual multilingualism”. As it was underlined by the high-rank officials, the realization of this aim is a long-term project, which has to become an important part of secondary, high and professional training EU educational institutions. The work upon the project has started recently and is in progress nowadays.

The result of these initiatives is that promotion of foreign languages learning and linguistic diversity have together become political priorities. Action Plan „Promoting language learning and linguistic diversity 2004-2006” was the European Commission’s reply to the European Council’s and European Parliament’s appeal. It also included the consultations results, held in 2002 – 2003. The co-operation was developed among EU countries-members within The Working Group on Languages. In terms of information and practical experience ex-change the Group meets regularly. It had an outstanding impact on Plan realization on national levels. Let us have a brief overview of plan realization and results as it has determined major goals to be achieved in three strategic spheres. These goals are as follows:

1. Lifelong learning of foreign language.
2. Improvement of foreign language teaching.
3. Creation of auspicious environment for foreign languages learning.

EU language policy, despite its short history, has achieved definite results, which are vividly exposed by Eurobarometer research. According to the results the quantity of EU citizens speaking at least one foreign language grew from 47% (2001) up to 56% (2005). There has also been marked the growth of Europeans who consider the learning of foreign languages to be useful (from 79% to 83% correspondingly), 53% of them consider the knowledge of foreign language to be extremely important [8]. The majority of European citizens approve EU political goals, which, in their turn, make it a must for every European citizen to speak two foreign languages, except his Mother tongue.

Theory and practice of foreign language teaching in European Union can be summarized in the following options. In 2001, which, as it is commonly known, was announced the European year of languages, two international conferences took place in Vienna. The first one, “The cost of monolingualism” (June) and “The future of multilingual Europe in extended European Union” (November). The leading motive of both conferences was the assertion of the fact that multilingualism is

an integral part of Europe's present and future and that the ability to speak several foreign languages is stipulated for not economical reasoning only, but, majorily, for the issues of general educational character, such as the factor of political and cultural personal development [6]. That is why on the contemporary social development level the role of culture-forming educational function increases dramatically. The one has to be transformed from the ordinary enlightenment mean into the culture-developing mechanism, forming the image of the World and human outlook.

Conclusion: Contemporary tendencies in foreign language teaching on the EU terrains might be reviewed as mentioned below. Accentuation upon different components of language regime determines varied scenarios of the principal problem resolution. The existing nowadays EU language regime is the result of implemented language policy within the community.

Language problems have become a separate vector of EU political activities and gained the name of "EU Language Policy".

To resolve actual tasks set in front of European methodologists it is necessary to reconstruct the whole way of methodological thinking, to abandon conservative methodological principles and streamlines and to search for optimal ways of bringing-up of XXI century multilingual European citizen.

The first rate in foreign language teaching (English among them) is still preoccupied with communicative approach, which is aimed on communicative practice. The above mentioned method is still "working" perfectly not only in Europe but, as well, in the USA.

The very essence of communicative method lies in adaptation of studying process to communication. The problem is that this process, the communicative model is rather simplified. Taking into consideration culture-formative concept of foreign language teaching the deviation from communicative approach absolutization is being observed. Besides, communicative competence is no longer the major objective of studying process, though the communicative orientation of the educational process is still observed [3, p. 313]. Now we may see the intercultural (so-called "social") competence as the prior objective and the process of foreign language teaching should turn into intercultural teaching. The essence of this process can be interpreted as "teaching of understanding of foreign", incorporating the overcoming of existing stereotypes and tolerance towards the other cultures representatives bringing-up.

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#### **Лагутина А. К., "Современные тенденции в теории и практике преподавания иностранного языка в странах Европейского Союза"**

**Аннотация:** в данной статье рассматриваются процессы создания Европейского Союза в историческом аспекте и прослеживаются пути формирования языковой политики и политики преподавания иностранных языков согласно актуальным социальным заданиям. Также исследуются соответствующие проблемы в теории и практике преподавания иностранных языков. В конце XX – начале XXI веков человеческое сообщество столкнулось с проблемой "коммуникативного" сосуществования различных наций, носителей различных языков, которые должны понимать идеи друг друга и научиться уважать национальную идентичность. Родной язык является воплощением всех культурных достижений наций, он уникален и этнически особенный. Любое мультинациональное и многоязычное государство неизбежно сталкивается с проблемой регулирования языковой политики. Современность характеризуется возникновением сверхдержавных институций, таких как Европейский Союз (членом которого Украина настойчиво пытается стать) и Содружество Независимых Государств (активным членом которого Украина и является). Успешное функционирование такого рода институций в некотором роде является зависимым от применяемой на их территории языковой политики.

**Ключевые слова:** языковая политика, мультилингвизм, преподавание иностранного языка, абсолютизация коммуникативного подхода, межкультурная компетенция.