

# FIPLV

## DRAFT DISCUSSION PAPER

### THE FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

#### 1 Context

In some areas of the globe, the teaching profession is in crisis. The teaching of languages is, to a greater or lesser degree, affected by this crisis.

#### 2 Background

At the meeting of the FIPLV World Assembly in Paris in July 2000, time was allocated to the discussion of this issue and the related aspect of student attrition rates in language courses. The need for a discussion paper on the topic was stressed. This paper has undergone extensive revision in light of input from colleagues across the globe.

#### 3 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is not so much to identify the reasons for the current crisis in some areas - which we will inevitably do to understand the situation more clearly - but to identify solutions already in place in some countries and to draw upon these and our collective expertise to propose strategies to redress the current, unacceptable situation. Another key objective is to identify what role FIPLV, its members and other (language) teacher associations can play in this campaign. As such, this paper should not be seen as static but as a dynamic document which would evolve as a reaction to further input of strategies and success stories.

#### 4 The Profession

Aspects of the crisis which have been identified - with specific example - relate to the key areas of: (1) teachers; (2) students; (3) teacher training; (4) conditions; (5) curriculum; (6) policy; (7) programs; (8) practice; (9) perceptions; and (10) language trends.

#### 5 Teachers

Aspects of the crisis include:

- the aging of the profession (eg Australia, New Zealand, Sweden (Tholin 2001), etc)
- a shortage and significant attrition rates in language teachers (eg Australia, Sweden (Tholin 2001), USA (Lipton 2000: 3), etc)
- many retirements in the near future in several countries, exacerbated by early retirement schemes in some countries, such as the "85 factor" in Canada (FIPLV 2000)
- the disappearance of teacher graduates to other countries (Cunningham 2000:15)
- the qualifications of teachers, the lack of satisfactory qualifications in some cases, and many teachers of TESOL who have no training whatsoever (Nunan 1999:1).

We can be negative and pessimistic about the age and shortage of teachers, but that does not help. Let's be positive and creative! There is both the need and the opportunity to replace many aging educators, such as myself, who would be facing retirement over the next decade or so.

The sufficient supply of excellent teachers is pivotal to the future of the profession. What is required to achieve this are:

- renewed optimism in the profession
- the creation of teacher recruitment task forces
- an agreed theoretical and empirical base (Nunan 1999a:1)

- mandatory quality assurance, quality of teaching and professionalism
- professional development for teachers in the areas of proficiency and pedagogy
- linguistic proficiency, empathy and compassion

## 6 Students

The most important element in teaching languages is the student. While we believe that the most effective means of getting students in language classes is government policy which underwrites and resources language study, the most effective means of keeping students in classes is the personal challenge of the teacher. Some trends which need to be addressed are:

- insufficient numbers of students choosing languages in their primary, secondary and tertiary education and student attrition rates in courses for languages other than English
- the number of students decreasing considerably in some countries (eg Germany), discouraging Governments from offering (enough) new positions
- the international mobility and potential employability in other high-profile, more lucrative professions
- enrolments per 100 students (in languages) having dropped from 16.1 in 1960 to 7.6 in 1995 in the USA (*GEN-Global English Newsletter* 5 1999:5).

The objective, clearly, is to motivate students to want to study languages. Some suggestions are:

- an early start to language learning, notably in the primary sector and in immersion programs
- compulsory language study for a significant period of schooling
- transparent and cohesive strategies for continuity between levels of schooling
- teaching strategies to invoke elements pertinent to modern media and technological developments
- a focus on areas of interest and evolving (preferred) learning styles of students
- a consideration of multiple intelligences theory and practice
- increased retention rates in language classes at all levels

## 7 Teacher Training

The future of the profession depends upon its rejuvenation. Some concerns for consideration include:

- the need to pay for tertiary education
- the decision of secondary and tertiary students not to become teachers
- secondary graduates not being attracted in sufficient number to tertiary pathways which include languages (Cunningham 2000:14)
- insufficient numbers of students identifying language teaching as a career option either during or at the end of their university studies
- the challenge of attracting teachers to the profession
- cuts to the number of languages offered at the tertiary level (eg Australia, Sweden (Tholin 2001), etc)

The solutions are evident where languages have status, strong policy is in place, sufficient resources are allocated, quality assurance is mandatory and there is united support of government, the community, parents, teachers and students of languages.

To ensure a sufficient number of excellent language teachers, teacher pre-service and in-service is critical. Some recommendations include:

- the provision of adequate places in free (or heavily subsidised) tertiary education and professional development at minimal or no cost
- the existence of advanced education and training, standards of practice and certification (Nunan 1999a/b: 1), sound pedagogy, effective teaching tools, excellent curriculum, appropriate assessment and reporting practices
- the reintroduction of an entry requirement of successful language study to tertiary courses
- a “high-profile campaign to attract more language teachers to all sectors of education by implementing a series of short- and long-term measures” (Nuffield 2000:95)
- teaching being publicised in the wider community, where necessary, and resourced as an attractive profession
- effective planning and the training of a new cohort of teachers skilled not only in their chosen curricular areas, but also in the uses of ICT (where possible) to enhance their pedagogical skills
- ICT as a major focus of professional development for existing teachers in those countries where the technology is available and accessible
- strict codes of practice in the teaching profession and in the use of ICT
- enhanced sharing of multilingual information, resources, etc, as a reality on the Web and through other means
- checklists for skills in technology in teacher training, such as that proposed in Debski & Levy (1999:352-353)
- the encouragement and publicity of projects collecting data on language teaching internationally and other relevant fields, such as that of the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT) ([www.linguanet.org.uk](http://www.linguanet.org.uk)) and Linguanet ([www.ac-dijon.fr/crdp/conseil/linguane.htm](http://www.ac-dijon.fr/crdp/conseil/linguane.htm))

## 8 Conditions

We are aware of many of the causes of the shortage across primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In Australia, for example, the number of languages graduates undertaking qualifications for education is minuscule, when faced with the projected demand over the next decade.

As more and more demands are placed on educators at all levels and, in the face of public attitudes often unsupportive of teachers, the past gloss has disappeared from the teaching profession in the eyes of many potential educators. Teacher shortages threaten in many countries for a range of reasons:

- the negative atmosphere prevailing in schools in some parts of the world
- perceptions of inadequate salaries
- unavailable vacancies in desired locations
- fixed or short-term contracts
- cuts to teacher employment despite increasing student enrolment, increased allotments and larger class sizes, often in a reign of economic rationalism
- more (administrative) demands placed on teachers at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- professors, elite educators, having to become managers, administrators, finance experts in a dollar-driven environment

Teaching conditions require attention in:

- the allocation of sufficient resources
- essential incentives being put in place
- reasonable workloads and an elevation in prestige

- adequate staffing levels to ensure the employment of a sufficient number of excellent teachers to enable all students to access quality language programs
- appropriate or increased salaries being offered (as in Victoria, Australia, leading to a 25% increase in students opting for tertiary courses in education in 2001)

## 9 Curriculum

The curriculum content is also very important for the retention of students as they proceed through the various levels of education and for the longevity of the profession. Some issues include:

- changes and cuts to the curriculum
- differences from country to country
- issues with terminology and criteria
- allegations of a 'crowded curriculum'

The content of language courses offers the key ingredient in attracting and retaining student participation, interest and learning. Some areas include:

- a relevant and motivating curriculum
- informed and flexible rationale
- what is taught and how it is taught
- meaningful and transparent assessment
- informative and forward-looking reporting
- effective strategies to ensure curricular coherence and continuous learning from primary through secondary to tertiary programs
- the expansion of immersion programs to use the language as a means of delivering the curriculum

While empirical data is still scant on the effectiveness of using modern technologies for language teaching, we have a gut feeling that not only motivation but also competence in learning would be enhanced by linguistic and cultural reading and research, for example, which calls upon the resources of the Web and encourages email exchange with learners and speakers of the language elsewhere across the globe.

## 10 Policy

The Director-General of UNESCO correctly identifies that "education for all is without a doubt the most crucial challenge of our day", as "knowledge is at the centre of economic development and social transformations" (Matsuura 2000:2). At the same time, we read in the *UNESCO Courier* (November 2000) of the privatisation of education (pp 16ff).

In line with priorities already identified and being undertaken by UNESCO, it is recommended that:

- UNESCO be the forum through which to promote and uphold the primary and overriding responsibility of the State to ensure the right to **quality** education for all, taking advantage nonetheless of the many new possibilities being made through partnerships with the private sector, civil society and other actors (Matsuura 2000:2)
- the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity be a clear focus of policy development

Issues impacting on the profession in the area of policy are:

- lack of policy and government support

- lack of planning to replace those teachers leaving the profession
- Government refusal to acknowledge an impending teacher shortage (Cunningham 2000:15)

The most effective means of retaining the existing linguistic wealth globally is to have linguistic diversity, the promotion, teaching and learning of languages, enshrined in government policy and law where there is a priority commitment made to fund the education and support for languages in the wider community.

This is an ambitious requirement, especially given the regrettably low number of languages policies in place across the globe - and in the paucity of resources allocated.

Excellent educational policies have existed across the globe and would serve as sound models from which to develop cohesive policies for education by States, regions, unions and globally. To assist us in the realisation of this cause, I exhort all to read and consider the findings and recommendations of the Nuffield Languages Enquiry, published in 2000 as *Languages : the Next Generation*. This thorough study provides excellent, insightful targets for action, and should be used for extrapolation globally, where required.

What we need to do further in the context of policy is:

- encourage States to enact (educational) policies which are inclusive and non-discriminatory, reflecting UNESCO's second strategic axis of "enhancing diversity"
- encourage States to adequately resource the existential and social needs of their constituents, with a clear focus on adopting and fully resourcing the quality teaching of languages at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels
- encourage States to give due consideration to the teaching of several languages - especially in addition to English - whether these are of local, strategic or international importance
- teaching to be the basis of language learning and language policies
- ensure that UNESCO, member NGO's and other relevant agencies assist States in the development of the above policies
- the discouragement and downsizing of outsourcing of education generally and language programs specifically
- "designate languages as a key skill and, in consultation with the many sectors and interests which contribute to the nation's economic and social wellbeing, (should) formulate a national strategy for the development of capability in languages . . ." (Nuffield 2000:84)

## 11 Programs

Excellent programs exist at all levels across the globe. A major initiative is the project led by the Council of Europe, that of the European Year of Languages - 2001 (EYL-2001). The major aims of this project, which have obvious global relevance, are:

- to increase awareness and appreciation among young people and adults, including parents, policy deciders and those responsible for language teaching, of the richness of Europe's linguistic heritage
- to celebrate linguistic diversity and to promote it by motivating European citizens to develop plurilingualism, that is, to diversify their learning of languages including less widely used and taught languages, whilst also protecting and encouraging multilingualism in European societies
- to encourage language learning on a lifelong basis, not only by creating an awareness of its necessity, but also by providing sufficient information concerning ways and

possibilities of learning, depending on regional and national situations and possibilities  
(Herold 1999:1)

As a result, it is desirable that:

- the activities of the EYL-2001 be extended beyond the calendar year of 2001
- similar projects (possibly modelled on the EYL-2001) be initiated in other areas of the globe to increase educational and community awareness of the value of languages and linguistic diversity

## **12 Practice**

We can also draw upon exemplary **practice** in the teaching of languages.

One educational model to epitomise the objectives dear to us, which we would like to share with you, is a school in Australia. Established in 1935, the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) ([www.vsl.vic.edu.au](http://www.vsl.vic.edu.au)) teaches languages in an out of hours context to those students who cannot access their language of choice in the mainstream school.

Over the following 65 years, the VSL evolved and grew to the extent that now 40 languages are taught - excluding English - to 13000 students in 660 classes across 35 metropolitan and rural centres. Six of these languages, plus Latin, are taught to another 1300 students via distance mode throughout the State of Victoria. The students are generally of school age, but there are some adults enrolled.

It is recommended that:

- the quality teaching of languages be resourced at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of public education (cf Nuffield 2000: 90-93: Recommendations #7-10)
- wherever possible, access to technology (ICT) be available to students at all levels of primary, secondary and tertiary education
- courses in keyboarding skills continue to be available at all levels of education above the lower primary level, where possible
- strict quality controls be placed on the content and delivery mechanisms of online courses at whatever level of learning
- to enhance future prospects and be flexible lifelong learners, children should acquire not only skills in literacy and numeracy but also in technology, before the end of primary education.
- initiatives, such as the Global Classroom ([www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/gc](http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/gc)) of the Department of Education, Employment and Training in Victoria (Australia), be publicised and replicated to improve student collegiality and learning internationally
- the example of the Victorian School of Languages be publicised and promoted as a model upon which similar schools could be created elsewhere to address the language needs of primary and secondary students unable to access their language of choice in mainstream schools

## **13 Perceptions**

External to education per se but having a telling impact on the profession, are the issues of:

- declining prestige, questionable status and decreasing attractiveness of the languages profession
- "teacher bashing" by authorities and in the media in some countries (eg Canada)
- public attitudes often unsupportive of teachers

Government education policy requires change in many settings, with the desirable ramification on the perception of teachers and teaching. We need:

- strong policy in place, ensuring linguistic diversity, the promotion and teaching of languages are a priority
- “campaigns to raise the profile of languages (. . .), promoting positive attitudes towards languages and language learning, raising their potential at all levels, and fostering a culture where using more than one language is an attainable goal for the majority” (Nuffield 2000:86)
- to “appoint language(s) supremo(s) whose task would be to work with government at the highest level, with government departments, national agencies, employers and the general public, to ensure effective implementation of (the) national strategy for languages” (Nuffield 2000:85)
- “languages supremo(s) (to) encourage key national organisations, providers of languages education and employer interests to form strategic partnerships in order to match provision with national needs and promote the link between languages and employability” (Nuffield 2000:87)
- to approach the media and develop strategies in this context (as TESOL had successfully employed a lobbyist, as reported by David Nunan (FIPLV 2000))
- to recognise solutions evident where languages have status
- united support of government, the community, parents, teachers and students of languages (Cunningham 2000:17)
- media and publicity campaigns to attract and recruit teachers (as is happening in Victoria, Australia)

#### **14 Language Trends**

With the emergence of English as the international lingua franca, we need to produce arguments to counteract a minimalist approach to language choice in policy and practice, by stressing:

- the importance of multilingualism and multiculturalism being made clear to everybody concerned, especially students and the authorities
- the global linking of companies requiring more than just English

#### **15 Associations**

The rejuvenation of the cohort of language teachers is reflected by the need to encourage young teachers to join our associations, adding their enthusiasm and recent training to the wisdom and expertise that we have accumulated over the years (Cunningham 2000:17).

Strategies to make the teaching profession more attractive provide some solutions, but other initiatives should also be implemented to motivate secondary and tertiary students to pursue language studies with the ultimate destination of teaching languages. Associations are well placed to assume responsibility for some of these strategies:

- the organisation by associations of professional development activities which address the perceived needs of language teachers
- the encouragement of all language teachers to give a little in sharing their accomplishments in the classroom
- the encouragement of all language teachers to participate in professional development activities of teacher associations and to publish in the journals of associations or on their websites
- the encouragement of all language teachers to offer papers, lead workshops or report on best practice in their classrooms

- free membership for trainee teachers, the reduction of fees for young teachers and free membership for one year to faculty heads (Helen Coltrinari, FIPLV 2000)
- pro-active involvement of younger colleagues, encouraging them, building up their self-confidence, motivating them to become part of a larger, skilled international profession
- the encouragement of younger colleagues to participate in our congresses and other events, by extending a hand of friendship, including them, introducing them to others, once they are there, and the forging of collegiate and personal friendships
- active involvement in international projects, such as the European Year of Languages - 2001, Linguapax and others
- the organisation of international and/or cross-cultural activities to bring language teachers together, (such as the FIPLV/Linguapax International Workshop on the Teaching of Languages for Peace, which brought together 35 teachers from 27 countries in Graz in 1998)

#### 16 **Other**

There are other arguments, other strategies:

- the preparation of documents, arguments, such as that stating that the loss of languages created an ecological crisis (Konrad Schröder, FIPLV 2000)

#### 17 **Challenge**

For reasons outlined in this paper, we need to act now to safeguard the priority and prominence of language teaching in education, recruit graduates to the profession and share with policy decision-makers across the globe not only an awareness of a critical situation, but also provide strategies and solutions to redress the situation.

Consequently, I exhort you to add perspectives to the situation outlined above and, more importantly, share with us your ideas on how we can assist our global community in retaining the linguistic wealth it currently enjoys.

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