

FINAL REPORT

SYNTHESIS REPORT

SECTION THREE

STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE 9-10 JUNE 1995 "LANGUAGE STUDIES IN EUROPE - CO-OPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION": CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OUTLOOK

A large part of the Conference was taken up by discussions - both in plenary sessions and in group sessions - of new needs in education and training and new measures required in the light of the needs identified. The most fruitful part of the debate took place in six workshops which addressed the following specific topics:

- *Extending the Use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) in Languages*
- *Language Teacher Training*
- *Languages in Employment - Integration of Language Studies into Other Subject Areas*
- *Active or Passive Multilingualism?*
- *Intercultural Competence*
- *Postgraduate Programmes*

The following Conference report is based on the group reports submitted by the rapporteurs and chairpersons of the workshops. It also draws on written statements submitted by a number of participants after the end of the Conference.

1. EXTENDING THE USE OF THE EUROPEAN CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEM (ECTS) IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGES

Chair: Bertil Holmberg

Rapporteur: Hugh Ridley

Student mobility under ERASMUS/LINGUA Action II has had an extremely positive effect on the quality of Language Studies in higher education. The current level of mobility needs to be maintained and, if possible, raised even further. However, to improve the quality of student mobility in this area, renewed efforts have to be made in the direction of full recognition and integration of study abroad. Without any doubt, a large-scale introduction of ECTS in languages would be the best way of ensuring full recognition and integration.

While the participants of the workshop on ECTS came out clearly in favour of the implementation of ECTS in Language Studies, they expressed the opinion that the introduction of ECTS might, at least initially, require a certain degree of flexibility. In this context, a number of areas of potential difficulty were identified. They included

(i) the difficulty of establishing transparency of information relating to prerequisites and levels

(ii) particular difficulties inherent in what was seen as the "non-canonical" nature of Language Studies (course structures, defining work-load norms, length of learning-units, asymmetrical nature

of linguistic experience of translation/interpretation students in visit to target country, and grading problems)

In view of these potential difficulties, the participants of the ECTS workshop felt that further discussions and trial runs might be needed before the system was generally introduced. These could take the form of national projects - like the successful implementation of ECTS in law faculties in Dutch universities - or be conducted as transnational pilot-studies with the aim of identifying models of good practice in the application of ECTS to language studies. Here, the experience of institutions currently extending ECTS to languages should be particularly useful.

2. LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING (INCL. IN-SERVICE TRAINING)

Chair: Graça Abranches

Rapporteur: Vasso Tocatlidou

2.1 General recommendations

(i) While fully recognising and respecting the divergence between and characteristics of the national structures and delivery systems of language teacher training, the European Commission should set up and support a major project aimed at the implementation in all the Member States of certain principles regarding the training and professional qualifications of language teachers.

(ii) Initial and in-service language teacher training should form a continuum. The Commission should support training institutions' initiatives intended to put this principle into practice.

(iii) The learning of foreign languages is a prerequisite for mobility, co-operation and mutual understanding within Europe. In consequence, it is not enough that language teacher training should be concerned only with language teaching at school. The wide-ranging effects of foreign language teaching and learning extend also to adult education, commerce and industry. Initial and in-service training programmes should equip future and practising language teachers with new professional skills, enabling them to help language learners to acquire competences needed in working life.

(iv) Bilingual education has been shown to lead to a higher level of language competence than is normally achieved in school teaching. Future language teachers should be equipped with the linguistic competence and the factual and procedural knowledge needed in bilingual education; they should also be acquainted with the principles of bilingual education.

(v) The new technologies offer great potential for co-operation between teacher trainers and for the exchange of linguistic resources as well as of teaching and learning materials. In view of this, it is of the utmost importance that the Commission should encourage and support initiatives seeking to research and develop the use of new technologies in language teacher training.

(vi) The European Commission should see to it that minimum acceptable levels of professional knowledge and skills to be required of language teachers throughout the European Union are achieved and guaranteed in all the Member States. To this end it should support projects which pursue the following objectives:

2.2 Specific recommendations

Mobility

- (i) Enable all future language teachers to spend a period of between six and twelve months in the respective target-language countries.
- (ii) Seek to introduce a concept whereby all future language teachers are required to spend a period of time in a country whose language is different from the language(s) they are studying in order to sensitise them to what is involved in learning a new language. (For example, a German student of English would do a Spanish course in Spain.)
- (iii) Support the exchange of foreign language teachers between target-language countries, enabling them to refresh their linguistic competence and to become acquainted with different teaching methods.
- (iv) Promote 'European workshops' aimed at developing the 'European dimension' through joint courses dealing with innovation in language teaching.
- (v) Urge the Member States to support mobility at all levels through supplementary grants.

Joint programmes

- (i) Encourage the development of programmes offered jointly by institutions responsible for initial teacher training and schools as well as by language departments and departments of other disciplines.
- (ii) Promote theoretical and practical training courses offered jointly by training institutions and institutions from professional life, aimed at developing specific professional competences (for example, a course jointly run by an initial training institution and a chamber of commerce or by an in-service training institution and a local government) in order to improve language teaching for specific professional target groups.
- (iii) Promote courses offered jointly by departments of different foreign languages for the training of teachers of more than one foreign language.
- (iv) Support research projects on issues central to language teacher training (methods and instruments for assessing student performance, analysis of professional needs, development of innovative materials, etc.)
- (v) Promote the joint development of training modules by institutions in more than one Member State by the use of information technology.
- (vi) Support joint projects for the development of materials and instruments for innovative and distance training.

Intensive programmes

- (i) Promote, through multinational research programmes devoted to specific topics, intensive training courses staged in target-language countries for both language students, i.e. future language teachers, and students of other disciplines.

(ii) Promote the training of foreign language teacher trainers through intensive courses for more than one language jointly developed by a number of university departments.

(iii) Promote the setting up of joint programmes or summer schools for future or practising language teachers coming from different countries.

3. LANGUAGES IN EMPLOYMENT - INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE STUDIES INTO OTHER SUBJECT AREAS

Chair: Staffan Wahlén

Rapporteur: Thomas Fraser

3.1 This workshop dealt with two distinct areas: the training of interpreters and translators and language programmes for students of other disciplines. In addition, the question of programmes in major non-European languages was brought up in plenary session.

3.2 Training of Interpreters and Translators

3.2.1 Interpreters and translators have a crucial role in the creation of Europe. In order to avoid unfair discrimination, all citizens of the European Union must be able to avail themselves of the services of professional interpreters or translators if the need arises, be it in a personal or professional context.

3.2.2 There was complete agreement on the following points:

- Translation and interpretation are professions in their own right requiring professional training programmes. Neither traditional nor alternative language programmes constitute professional training programmes of this kind.
- Training programmes need to be geared to the professional needs of interpreters and translators -- to a larger extent than has widely been the case in the past.
- Translating and interpreting are separate skills, requiring separate training programmes.
- There is a special need for more qualified interpreters and translators in less widely used European languages.

3.2.3 While there was agreement on the above principles, opinions differed with regard to the specific professional needs of interpreters and translators and the appropriate structure and content of training programmes. As regards the training of interpreters, a convincing case was made for this to be done at postgraduate level and carried out by professional interpreters. Courses of this kind could be relatively short provided the students had a high level of linguistic competence in a number of languages and met certain other prerequisites, such as familiarity with specific subject areas. What emerged from the discussion was the need for closer co-operation, at European level, between training institutions and experienced professionals.

3.2.4 There is also a need for inter-institutional co-operation at European level to provide high-level language training for future interpreters and translators in less widely used EU languages.

3.3 Language programmes for students of other disciplines

3.3.1 Language provision for students of other disciplines must be improved and diversified. The possibilities for learning languages of other participating countries must be extended to a wider population of non-language majors. To this end, new language modules should be developed, preferably through joint programmes carried out by universities from a number of different countries.

3.3.2 There is a need for general language programmes available across a range of disciplines as well as for discipline-specific programmes. General language programmes should concentrate on languages for academic purposes and on preparation for study abroad. While discipline-specific programmes seem to be particularly relevant to certain subjects like, for instance, business studies and law, efforts should also be made to provide teaching of the content of specific subjects through foreign languages in the students' home universities, preferably by native speakers of the language studied. This is already done in several countries at advanced level -- not only in English, but also in German, French and Spanish. To this end, greater use should be made of students and staff on exchange.

3.3.3 While opinions differed on the place and status of Language Studies in non-language programmes - should they be compulsory or optional? - there was complete agreement on the need for non-language students to be given credit in some form for any language course followed.

3.3.4 There is a need to determine, preferably at EU level, recognized levels of performance in languages and to develop a language testing system recognised both by employers and academic institutions. Proficiency tests for students in higher education as well as for language learners in general are available or are currently being developed for a number of languages in a number of EU countries. The European Commission should support a joint project or projects aimed at determining levels of proficiency for different skills across the whole range of languages, including grading scales, and at further developing and improving testing methods.

3.3.5 Genuine improvement in the area of language provision for non-specialists will only come about if the status of teachers working in this area is improved. This requires recruitment at a high standard of language skills - native or near native - proper training and the carrying out of research in this field. The training of language teachers could be carried out jointly by universities, and the Commission should encourage joint curriculum development in this field, possibly at Master's level. Training programmes should include elements from areas such as applied linguistics and language learning theory as well as practical training. Whereas such training programmes already exist for the more widely used languages, they are non-existent for the less taught languages; this also argues for joint curriculum development. Language teachers should continue to be eligible for European staff mobility programmes.

3.3.6 The use of new media and new technology has great potential for language programmes for non-language students. This would include video, cable TV, computers, e-mail, Internet, World Wide Web etc. The Commission should encourage joint projects aimed at developing the opportunities offered by these media for autonomous learning and distance learning. There is also a great need for self-learning materials, and materials development of this kind should be encouraged and supported.

3.4 Major non-European languages

European language policies have so far rightly stressed the importance of promoting the teaching and learning of the less widely used and taught languages of the European Union. However, European language policies also have to take into account the need for continued and increased dialogue with the rest of the world. Support should therefore be given to the joint development of programmes in major non-European languages; such projects should be undertaken jointly with institutions from target-language countries.

4. RECEPTIVE MULTILINGUALISM

Chair: Christian Wentzlaff-Eggebert

Rapporteur: Alexander Schwarz

The workshop discussed the topic at two levels: a theoretical, ideological level and a practical, pragmatic level. The discussion centred round a number of axioms put forward by the chairman and the rapporteur.

4.1 Axiom One: Multilingualism is an important aspect of the richness of European culture. The diversity of languages, including those of minority populations, should be preserved and supported out of respect for the people living in Europe.

4.1.1 Language is an expression of peoples' identity. People can express and preserve their own identity in situations where they can speak and write their own language. The multilingualism of Europe is both an expression of its cultural wealth and a barrier to communication. The linguistic and cultural wealth can only be preserved if a way is found whereby the language barriers can be lowered. Receptive multilingualism would seem to be the most promising prospect.

4.1.2 Language is also an expression of power. Linguistic diversity in Europe has always gone hand in hand with differences in economic and political power. Is it not true that the economically strongest countries in Europe, which represent the "major" languages, decide which languages are used in negotiations etc.? Is not all this talk about "multilingualism" and "linguistic diversity" naive, or worse, a deliberate attempt to veil the differences in economic and political power that exist between countries in Europe?

4.1.3 The discussion of the above points led to the following conclusions: There is a need for clear policies concerning the diversity of languages and cultures in Europe. Concrete projects in the field of receptive multilingualism have to start from an open and frank debate about the issues involved.

4.2 Axiom Two: In addition to active foreign language competence receptive competence in foreign languages should be developed.

4.2.1 While, over the past few decades, the importance of active foreign language competence has time and again been stressed by both political authorities and language experts, long-established methods of developing reading competence - for instance in the area of ancient Greek and Latin - have almost been forgotten and methods of transferring listening comprehension skills from one language to other related languages have not been sufficiently developed.

This emphasis on active competence, which, for a long time, was viewed positively, is seen in a more critical light as English, and also French and German, are beginning to threaten the development of

less widely used languages in the fields of science and commerce and as mediums of cultural, especially literary, identity.

4.2.2 Experience has shown that, given a sufficiently high degree of motivation, receptive skills can be acquired within a relatively short period of time, and it is perfectly feasible to acquire receptive competence in a number of languages. It would seem important to gear programmes aimed at the acquisition of receptive skills to the specific needs of particular target groups.

4.2.3 In addition, research projects have shown that it is possible, within a short period time, to acquire reading comprehension for specific purposes simultaneously in a number of languages related to the speaker's mother tongue or to a foreign language in which the learner has acquired a high level of competence. Drawing on these research findings, further projects should be undertaken for other purposes and different groups of languages.

4.3 Axiom Three: All young Europeans should have communicative competence in two languages from two different language groups and receptive competence in a number of languages belonging to these groups.

4.3.1 Certain countries in Europe, for example Finland, show that active competence in two languages is possible given the right motivation and circumstances.

4.3.2 On the basis of active competence in one Romance and one Anglo-Germanic language, receptive competence in a number of languages of the European Union can be acquired within a short period of time if the conditions are right. Every effort should now be made to develop appropriate methods and institutional conditions to make this practicable.

4.4 Axiom Four: Apprendre à comprendre les langues

This axiom has become common practice in wide areas.

(i) All over the world people are used to conducting bilingual or multilingual conversations in which all participants express themselves in their own native languages.

(ii) Students and professionals read specialist texts written in languages of which they do not have a good active command.

(iii) In the cultural domain, we watch films and theatre performances in the original in a number of languages.

4.5 Axiom Five: A research project should be launched aimed at developing methods for promoting and achieving receptive multilingualism.

4.5.1 In order to arrive at a pedagogic model which takes account of the particular linguistic situation in each country, the project should be carried out by specialists from all the countries concerned. The following steps should be taken by the group envisaged:

- open a debate about multilingualism in Europe, collecting and propagating arguments which show that multilingualism is necessary and feasible
- collect and disseminate relevant research findings
- bring together experts in the field

- produce and spread teaching and learning materials
- train and advise language teachers

4.5.2 The initiatives outlined above can only succeed if they are supported by academic and political institutions at local, regional, national and European level.

4.5.3 Academic institutions and authorities at the various levels should provide financial support for students willing to acquire receptive multilingual competence. Multilingualism should feature in assessing staff for appointment and promotion at relevant levels in the public sector.

5. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Chair: Luisa Quartermaine

Rapporteur: Althea Ryan

Generally speaking, research and education in Intercultural Communication is aimed at increasing our understanding of the cultural behaviours and attitudes which determine the ways in which we communicate. Unless they are known to and understood by the parties involved, differences in these behaviours and attitudes constitute often invisible barriers to effective communication across cultures. Practical training in Intercultural Communication is seen among other things as a means of reducing the adverse effects of stereotyping, as a way of facilitating the mobility of human resources by enhancing skills of situational adaptability, and as a preparation for working in international and multicultural environments. Particularly with regard to mobility, an internationally recognized form of intercultural certification would be an advantage. (With thanks to David Marsh for his ideas and formulations.)

With these factors in mind, the workshop on Intercultural Communication formulated a number of axioms and developed a set of recommendations.

5.1 Axioms

5.1.1 It is important to avoid Eurocentricism because

- the major languages of Europe are global and multicultural
- many of our students do not come from Europe originally.

5.1.2 Languages, generally speaking, cannot be taught 'naked' (i.e. the purely instrumental 'give us vocabulary and grammar that's all we need' attitude.)

5.1.3 Training in Intercultural Communication theory and skills need not be tied to language teaching.

(i) It can be done in its own right, i.e. to help prepare students of any subject to go to countries where they do not speak the language; in this sense, it can be a useful means of encouraging students to go on exchanges to countries with seldom learned and taught languages.

(ii) It can provide a useful bridge between cultural and linguistic disciplines in 'traditional' language/literature type courses.

5.1.4 The goals of general Intercultural Communication courses would be:

(i) to arouse intercultural awareness

(ii) to train the ability to observe behaviour In such courses there would be a focus on awareness of one's own culture and of others' cultural stereotypes of ourselves, as well as on other cultures.

5.1.5 As a language-related discipline the goals of Intercultural Communication would be:

(i) to provide a content bridge to link language, literature and society elements in courses of studies

(ii) to develop intercultural behavioural skills and awareness both generally and between specific cultures

(iii) To act as an explanatory discipline in relation to contextual knowledge, e.g. social organisation, literature, history, politics etc.

5.2 Recommended action to be taken

The action elaborated below may be achieved through staff exchanges, staff workshops across national boundaries for dissemination and exchange of information, and curriculum development projects. The majority, maybe all, of these activities and projects would need to be internationally based.

5.2.1 Preparation of a status report regarding the teaching of intercultural competence in the Member States (not only in relation to European cultures). This report would serve the purpose of pooling existing knowledge and skills and be a necessary preparation for curriculum development.

5.2.2 Development of a framework for levels and types of skills in Intercultural Communication in relation to the training of different target groups: students, language students, teacher trainees, language teacher trainees, teachers (in-service courses), teacher trainers/university staff.

5.2.3 Development of sets of curricular goals for Intercultural Communication teaching at these various levels and to the various target groups.

5.2.4 Development and adaptation of methodologies for teaching the various levels and types of Intercultural Communication skills to these varied target groups.

5.2.5 Development of content modules of different types and at different levels for each European culture to be used by members of that culture to create self-awareness.

5.2.6 Work towards an international certification of intercultural training based on the projects outlined above.

6. POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Chair: Frans Zwarts

Rapporteur: Angela Chambers

6.1 Definition of area

The topic of the workshop was the possibility of European co-operation in programmes of teaching and research at the level of MA and doctoral dissertation. Given the importance of language study as a force for greater understanding among speakers of different languages in Europe, and the need for more theoretical and empirical research in some areas of Language Studies, it was agreed that co-operation in this area should be given priority. The success of undergraduate exchange programmes among language students should now be extended to postgraduate level, especially since the number of students concerned is often small.

Despite strong support for this proposal, participants were keenly aware of constraints which could inhibit progress. These include differences in the structure of postgraduate programmes in the various states, perceived differences in the level of study, and the lack of internationally accepted systems of equivalences. The most important sources of variation appear to be the nature of entrance requirements, the length of the programme, the role of the didactic component in relation to research programmes, the position of the supervisor(s), and the admission of external examiners (Doctor Europaeus).

6.2 Case Study: European MA in Linguistics

Sharon Millar (Odense University, DK) gave a short description of the European MA in Linguistics which has developed from an ICP involving co-operation between several European universities. Her account revealed the complexity of the issues to be resolved and the flexibility needed if such initiatives are to succeed. Areas discussed included the designation of core areas and options, difficulties arising from differences in fee structures, viability of student numbers, and accreditation of awards.

6.3 Discussion and proposals

The discussion focused on the need for structures which would ensure quality and equivalence in standards. The following were identified as priority areas for future European co-operation.

(i) *Coursework*

The tendency to introduce taught courses in research programmes was welcomed. It was agreed that international co-operation in this area would help to make joint courses viable by bringing together small numbers of students from various universities. Co-operation in curriculum development and in the delivery of such courses was recommended.

(ii) *Summer and winter schools*

Summer and winter schools could also be developed as intensive programmes for students from several universities.

(iii) *Supervisor and external examiner*

The role of the supervisor or supervision committee and of the external examiner should be discussed, so that joint programmes could be offered with similar or equivalent structures.

(iv) *Study abroad*

Funding to assist postgraduate students to study abroad was considered to be particularly important. Students should be given the opportunity to study at a university where research expertise is available. In this context, the issue of co-supervision has to be resolved.

(v) Reciprocity

It was considered that any attempt to balance the number of exchanges between individual universities would be too restrictive in this context. It was felt that some other mechanism should be found.

7. OUTLOOK

7.1 A large part of the plenary sessions at the Conference was taken up by discussions about future developments envisaged by the SOCRATES Programme, especially about the new type of university co-operation projects that have come to be known as "Thematic Networks". Conference participants were fully aware of the fact that the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the knowledge of the languages of the European Union was to be one of the main objectives of the SOCRATES Programme, that this is an area which calls for the setting up of a thematic network, and that the Scientific Committee is seen as a forerunner of the new type of co-operation projects. In fact, a large amount of pertinent advice was offered to the Scientific Committee, and a number of participants from representative institutions and associations expressed their interest in becoming involved in any future action the Committee was going to take.

7.2 Both the National Reports and the workshops at the Conference revealed that there is a high level of awareness inside and outside institutions of higher education of what the current needs in the area of Language Studies are. Also, as the above recommendations show, experts widely agree on the kinds of action required to meet these needs. However, it also became clear at the Conference that most of the recommendations expressed need further study before they can be transformed into concrete projects and that future projects in this area should be properly coordinated.

7.3 European Language Council (With thanks to Robert Clark for his ideas and formulations.)

7.3.1 It is against this background that the SIGMA Scientific Committee on Languages proposes to set up, as a permanent forum, a European Language Council to serve as an interface between institutions representative of the subject area of Language on the one hand and international and European governmental and non-governmental organisations and Member State authorities on the other. The purpose of this European Language Council would be to bring a European level of integration to higher education and research in the area of Language Studies. In particular, it would focus on the social and professional needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe and seek to initiate actions aimed at the improvement and diversification of language teaching and learning. In doing so, it would look at all sectors of education and training, including the links between higher education and school as well as those between the initial and in-service training of language teachers.

7.3.2 At the national and international level there are many bodies already providing a useful degree of integration in the area of Language Studies. There are, for example, national associations for the study of one national language (and literature) or a group of languages (and literatures), and associations for the study of a particular aspect of pedagogic or professional practice such as foreign

language teaching methodology, translation, interpretation etc. Some of these bodies work internationally, and some work at a specifically European level; some are almost entirely unaware of the existence of parallel bodies in neighbouring countries. In addition, there are semi-governmental organisations operating at an international level which have produced a large amount of ideas and practical work relevant to Language Studies. Finally, there are the Council of Europe and the European Commission and their activities in this field.

7.3.3 With regard to the measures proposed in the National Reports and at the Stockholm Conference, the European Language Council would fulfil two crucial functions: It would pool all the expertise available in this area and it would bring together all the organisations, authorities and institutions whose support is crucial for the putting in place of the measures proposed.

7.3.4 In addition, the European Language Council would have to address a further two issues.

- It would have to design and establish links between the areas of education and employment.
- It would have to reflect on co-operation between the European Union and other continents and propose measures in the area of Languages designed to facilitate the co-operation.

7.3.5 The Scientific Committee proposes that the European Language Council should be officially founded at a Conference in the autumn of 1996 or the spring of 1997 to which all bodies currently operating in the field of Language would be invited.