

TNP LANGUAGES

National Report on Curriculum Innovation In Latvia (20.12.2002)

Introduction.

1.1. The system of Higher education.

1.1.1. Recent changes in the system of higher education.

One of the first laws adopted upon the restoration of independence was Law on Education (1991). The most important change introduced by this law was providing autonomy to institutions at all levels.

The Law on Higher Education Establishments (1995) sets a difference between academic and professional institutions of higher education and programmes rather than between university and non-university type of institutions or programmes.

Academic higher education programmes are based upon fundamental and/or applied science. They usually comprise a thesis at the end of each stage (Bachelor, Master). Duration of Bachelor's programmes at most institutions of higher education is 4 years, now there is a tendency to pass over to 3 years programmes. The requirement is that at least 90 credit points have to be obtained in a given subject whatever the total duration of the programme is. After the completion of the Bachelor's studies the students have a choice of further studies in a professional programme or towards Master's degree.

The duration of Master's degree programmes is one or two years, but may be up to 3 years.

Professional higher education programme provides knowledge and skills for professional activities. There are two types of professional education in Latvia:

- Professional higher education based upon or integrating a standard of an academic degree (university-type professional qualification which includes a substantial component of academic studies which is designed to meet Bachelor's standard.
- Professional higher education programmes not based upon an academic degree and not including a standard for the academic degree.

The credit point system applied in Latvia is similar to the one in Scandinavian countries. A credit point is defined as a one-week full-time study workload. An average workload in most cases is 40 credit points.

The number of universities has grown from 10 universities in 1980 to 19 state universities and 15 private universities in 1998.

There have developed private higher education institutions that offer good quality programmes. These institutions are ready to compete with the state financed universities as to the quality of education.

There have been founded several regional higher education institutions was necessary to be closer to the needs of the regions.

The new law on higher education (2000) introduces professional bachelor's and master's degrees.

During the years of regained independence rather crucial shift of paradigms is taking place also in higher education the basic characteristics being:

- The shift from the authoritarian system to academic freedom, decentralization, democracy;
- Higher independence status of universities;
- The shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred approach;
- Greater opportunities of selective courses;
- Greater student involvement in decision making

1.1.2. The Impact of the Bologna Declaration.

- There is a strong tendency in Latvia to work out and introduce changes in higher education to meet the basic principles of the Bologna Declaration working towards diploma and qualifications recognition, implementation of the ECTS, lifelong education, promotion of mobility, joint research and education quality insurance. In the area of foreign languages curricula it means that there are basic or first degree studies, second and third degree studies, the two latter being post-diploma studies.

The first degree studies in foreign languages are of various goals and length:

- Bachelor programmes that are focussing on academic studies in language theories and literature. Acquiring an additional professional programme it is possible to receive the teacher's certificate.
- Professional programmes in teacher education with the content of an academic bachelor programme in foreign or an academic bachelor programme in education included. Both variants offer the opportunity to receive the teacher's certificate and to continue post diploma studies.
- Post-diploma studies: on the master's degree level and the doctoral level.

- The latest amendments in the Law of Higher Education have introduced two new kinds of programmes: the professional bachelor, the professional master degree programmes and also two levels of higher education.
- Official agreements have been achieved on mutual diploma recognition in the Baltic countries. Work has been started on recognition of various courses in other universities and also outside the context of the higher education.
- There are positive changes in Latvia in the number of people who have foreign language skills good enough to participate in student and lecturer mobilities, in conferences, in research work. E.g. 95% adults speak the Russian language which is a foreign language in Latvia, 12, 5% - English, 10% German. There are about 25% of people who know two foreign languages: Russian and English or German or French. Traditionally in Latvia the Russian, English, German and French languages were taught. Now there are also other languages taught both at school and in higher education in addition to the above mentioned languages. Especially popular have become the Nordic languages – Swedish, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian. There is also an opportunity to study Japanese. Also Russian as a foreign language has a certain status.

The mobility opportunities, access to IT and literature in foreign languages in general help develop motivation for language learning.

Special role in Latvia belongs to joint research, mobility and development projects. On the one hand these projects promote the speed of changes and development of education, on the other hand – creates motivation and necessity to learn languages.

It is in all universities that lecturers prepare their courses in foreign languages for exchange visits purposes and for work with foreign students studying in Latvia.

- There is a change in the principles of cooperation too, and namely, from projects of help to participatory projects.
- The demands of the labour market also influence the curricula, e.g. the Law on higher education adopted in November, 2000 includes the statement that there should be a possibility to join the labour market after each level of higher education, college system development being a good example.

1.2. Identification of relevant changes in the social, political, cultural, professional and economic environments.

Education has a new role in the economic and social development of Latvia, and namely, the people should be able to compete in Europe's labour market. This influences education policy which is to be directed towards education of qualified specialists able to meet the needs of the domestic market and requirements of the broader labour market.

The main objectives of education is promotion of development of social values, raising the level of science and technology.

The main results of reforms are demonopolising, depoliticising and decentralising not only in economic and social fields, but also in the education system.

Still there are hardships in the realm of education such as not too high prestige of pedagogues, low salaries, not enough financial support to practical reforms in the teaching/learning process, obvious lack of teachers in some subjects, especially in foreign languages.

Latvia is situated between the states communicating in Russian and the western countries communicating in English, German, French, Spanish and other languages. Therefore there is a crucial need for specialists with a high competence level not only of one but of two and even three foreign languages.

The most important change influencing on the social, political, cultural, professional and economic environment of languages also in higher education is the introduction of the English language as the first foreign language and the opportunity to acquire a second and even a third foreign language in the secondary school. A foreign language is a core subject at all schools.

1.3. The democracy and decentralization developing there are greater opportunities for diversity creativity, independence also in education.

- The diversity of higher education establishments is growing:
 - Regional higher education institutions have been founded to be closer to the needs of the labour market;
 - Private higher education institutions are appearing, thus developing a situation when each institution is paying greater attention to quality and quality compatibility.

- Closer links with foreign countries help develop more many sided curricula, add flexibility to the process of developing new curricula and new courses.

There are 2 institutions offering academic linguistic/philological curricula in Latvia, 4 institutions offering curricula for training translators/ interpreters (3 state, 1 private), 3 institutions offering foreign language teacher education curricula.

Language Degree Programmes.

2. Innovations in language degree programmes offered by universities.

2.1. Traditional language programmes.

Undergraduate degree programmes usually last 4 years (academic Bachelor's programme). Now there is a tendency to develop 3 years academic Bachelor programmes. So far, not every student can afford to spend some time abroad in a country where the language is being spoken.

Traditional language programmes are associated with the University of Latvia in Riga.

The other institutions are rather flexible and have adapted the programmes to the needs of the regions and the job market.

In all institutions there is a tendency to offer various options to the students. The programme courses are divided into three parts:

Part A: Compulsory courses

Part B: Elective courses

Part C: Free choice courses

There are two institutions offering degree programmes in philology–

1) offered by the Faculty of Modern languages of the University of Latvia (www.lu.lv)

Bachelor in Humanities (Philology)

Aims: to acquire a foreign language – English, German or French, linguistics, literature and background studies of the countries of their origin. This is achieved by delivering all the courses in the corresponding foreign language, by working out term papers and bachelor papers in the foreign languages.

English.

Content: the programme consist of three parts.

Part A – compulsory courses include introduction into linguistics, literature, systemic functional grammar, introduction into academic, professional studies and research, functional and applied linguistics a.o.

Part B – compulsory electives – contrastive studies: English–German; English– Scandinavian including various courses; classical philology, theoretical linguistics; history of the language, theoretical grammar (English, French or German), stylistics, lexicology, theoretical phonetics, applied linguistics, history of foreign literature, culture studies. Background studies.

Part C – free selective courses. The students can select courses from any programme in any faculty. Positive developments– in all language programmes:

– the number of languages studied have increased;

- there is balance between linguistic courses and literature;
- classical languages Greek and Latin are studied more seriously;
- applied linguistics has a wider content – including teaching/learning methods helping the students to understand the process of learning better;
- the content of literature and culture studies is wider;
- a lot of new selective courses are offered;
- students develop experiences in community learning (e.g. through helping fellow students learn a second foreign language).

German

Positive developments:

- language teaching and learning is more linked with real life;
- the students learn skills for acting in intercultural environment;
- IT is integrated in foreign language learning;
- academic writing by teleconferencing with other universities (e.g. Bremen) thus creating authentic environment;
- attention is paid not only to language acquisition but also personality development.

Similar activities are characteristic for the French and the English programmes.

There are two very innovative BA programmes:

- 1) Multinational linguistics with English as the teaching medium. It is oriented to the systemic clarification of essential things in anglophonic linguistic and literature and acquisition of knowledge in these fields:
 - a. the level of skills should be equal with corresponding skills in the mother tongue, the knowledge of the corresponding philology, literature and background studies, by delivering all the courses in the corresponding foreign language, by working out term papers and bachelor papers in the foreign languages (English, Danish, Swedish, etc.)
 - b. teaching of a second foreign language (German) on the equal difficulty basis with the language of the chosen speciality (English);
 - c. combined foreign language studies are also carried out in the Scandinavian language study (English-Danish, English-Swedish, English-Norwegian) where essential subjects are delivered in both languages. These studies prepare specialists in Danish, Swedish, Norwegian philologies with qualitative knowledge of English philology. By fulfilling this objective a new type of specialists are educated with rich (not only

functionally smooth) foreign language level and skills to carry out cultural contacts and state policy of the government.

Within the framework of the programme the unique and valuable role of the Faculty of Modern Languages in Latvia as a bearer of the long standing tradition of foreign language teaching/learning is kept alive.

The students may accomplish one or more tasks:

- cover and acquire a four year BA study programme obtaining BA degree in English philology;
- in the 2 following years cover the MA study programme obtaining MA degree in English philology;
- after obtaining of MA degree studies continue studies as a postgraduate for PhD.

2) Finnish–Ugrian:

Includes studies of languages and regional studies:

The Liv language – this is the only place in the world where the language is studied and there are still live speaking people; the Estonian and the Finnish languages.

Great attention is paid to practical studies of these languages, ethnography, archaeology, history of arts, cultural aspects.

New books have been written in these languages, dictionaries must be developed.

It is possible to continue this education for two semesters to become a teacher of foreign languages.

Another kind of programme is a degree programme in philology with an orientation to the teacher's profession with an additional training for the translator's profession. This programme is offered in Daugavpils pedagogical university (www.dau.lv/post/). The programme envisages a thorough acquisition of foreign languages for academic and professional purposes as well as the development of communicative and linguistic competence. All the courses are taught in the corresponding foreign language, also Bachelor's and Master's degree papers are written in the foreign language studied. On the academic basis of the BA (English/German) programme it is possible to follow studies in professional programmes: foreign languages teacher or foreign languages teacher with the additional speciality "translator".

The aim and objectives: to provide academic education as well as to prepare students for independent research work, giving them the opportunity to continue their studies, to encourage students' aspiration for self-education, promoting continuing education.

It is important to form the system of views in liberal arts, based on literature and cultural studies of the corresponding country, to ensure the development of communicative and linguistic competence, to acquire research experience in applied linguistics.

The programme consists of two parts:

- Major – English / German,
- Minor – Swedish, French or German.

The content of the programmes includes theoretical linguistic courses, such as sociolinguistics, semantics, lexicography, phraseology, theory of literature, philosophy of languages, theory of meanings and courses like: academic writing, cross-cultural communication, communicative grammar. Each programme consists of three parts:

- Part A – compulsory,
- Part B – compulsory choice and free choice courses.

The programmes have become flexible, there are better opportunities for individual choice.

Literature is studied as cultural value.

The programme integrates four clusters of subjects: pragmatic aspects of the foreign language, country studies, foreign literature and theory of the foreign language.

2.1.2. The programmes have been developed in relevance to regional needs:

- The choice of the variety of languages;
- The orientation of the programmes to the teacher's or translator's professions.

So far all the graduates find well- paid jobs. Many specialists work in various international organizations and institutions in Latvia, European Union, other countries.

2.1.3. In fact, both degree programmes have been created recently – 5 years ago.

The change in comparison with the old programmes:

- 1) the content of the programmes and the courses is professionally oriented.
- 2) great attention is paid to giving each student opportunities to learn several languages:
 - Faculty of Modern Languages, University of Latvia (www.lu.lv) ;
 - Department of Methodology of Teaching/Learning Foreign Languages, Faculty of Education and Psychology, University of Latvia (www.lu.lv)
 - www.ru.lv
 - www.venta.lv

- Daugavpils Pedagogical University (www.dau.lv/post/)

2.1.4. *The programmes are organized so that there is equally much focus on fluency and accuracy.*

This is reflected in the selection of courses e.g. analytical reading, theoretical phonetics, functional grammar.

To achieve it the role of the learners' mother tongue is used, e.g. studying the comparative grammar and phonetics of the mother language and the foreign language, helps to prevent errors, promotes accuracy and fluency.

Example of good practice

Within the framework of cooperating between two universities: the University of Bremen and the University of Latvia, the Faculty of Modern Languages (the University of Latvia) has got involved into online simulation of the Project IDEELS (Intercultural Dynamics in European Education through on-Line simulation) piloted by the University of Bremen.

The project IDEELS simulations are an inter-institutional virtual lab in which participants (educators and students) from institutions throughout Europe are linked via collaborative learning.

The Faculty of Modern Languages first experienced the intensive simulation of the Project IDEELS in November 2000. The objectives of the Faculty were as follows:

1. to provide students with intensive practice in writing summaries, reports and letters;
2. to develop reading skills (skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading);
3. to develop computer skills of the students;
4. to test students adaptability to the simulation as well as to tailor the simulation to the curriculum;
5. to develop the students' intercultural competence.

The integration of online simulations in academic writing course is another example. This innovative approach enabled our students to carry on real correspondence with other learners of the English language throughout Europe. bankava@hotmail.com; zigvin@lanet.lv

2.1.5. *The reasons for the above mentioned tendencies are:*

- The need to learn foreign languages on a professionally high level;
- The need in people knowing several foreign languages, the selection of languages is relevant to regional development needs;
- Understanding and experience of the great opportunities of professionally oriented programmes and courses to achieve good quality of professional education.

2.1.6. There will be need to learn other languages, too.

Need to focus on university lecturers for new foreign languages and new courses.

Greater flexibility in programme and course design and introduction should be maintained.

The flexibility problems and difficulties in introduction of new programmes are due to the existence of traditional classification of sciences and branches of sciences and the strong influence of the leading scientists and academicians in natural sciences. The degrees are supposed to be in those long ago established sciences. It interferes with developing new programmes, especially combined programmes as they do not correspond to the traditional classification.

It is also difficult for many scientists to accept integrated programmes, consisting of a “major” and a “minor”.

2.2. So far, there are no alternative programmes.

It could be possible to include here the professional teacher education programme with a bachelor’s programme in education and foreign languages. It will be discussed in point 3.

Programmes for Language and Language Related Professions

3. Innovation in the training of language teachers.

3.1. Language teaching and learning in primary and secondary school education.

In Latvia foreign language teaching and learning in primary schools is compulsory beginning with grade 3. The first foreign language taught is the English language.

If the parents want then a foreign language can be taught also in grade 1 and even in the kindergarten. This situation is quite popular in cities, less widely spread in the rural schools.

There are also schools in the larger cities that include a foreign language in their school curricula with a greater amount of teaching/learning time and a wider syllabus.

Thus, in Riga, the capital of the country there are 3 schools specialising in English, 1 school – in German, 1 school – in French, 1 school – in Nordic languages. Such schools are also in other larger cities in Latvia.

It is also compulsory that the students learn a second foreign language beginning with grade 6. It depends on the time when the students have started to learn the first foreign language. In many school the students can learn also a

third foreign language – beginning with grade 10. At the same time the students can choose additional supplementary programme if they want to study foreign languages deeper.

The most popular foreign languages are English, German, French, Russian. In some schools also Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Danish or Finnish languages are taught.

It must be stressed that foreign language teaching and learning is becoming very popular in all levels of education, in formal and non-formal education.

Though the English language officially is the first foreign language taught at school the German language is also popular. Lately interest towards the French language is significantly growing.

3.2. Initial training

3.2.1. Institutions responsible for training.

There are three institutions responsible for foreign language teacher education: two universities and one regional higher education institution. There are also three different approaches to the foreign language teacher education and three different professional curricula.

3.2.2. Content, objectives and structures of programmes.

- One of the foreign language teacher education opportunities is **the model 4+1**, i.e. the students study for 4 years in the bachelor's degree programme in one foreign language. The Bachelor's programme is offered in the Faculty of Modern Languages at the University of Latvia (see 2.1.). The professional year programme is offered by the Faculty of Education and Psychology.

If the students want then after completing the bachelor's programme they can study professional pedagogical courses in a one year programme. After completing this programme students get the professional teacher's certificate and they can work at schools. These teachers are supposed to work in senior forms in gymnasiums.

There are several variants of integrated curricula:

- **bachelor's programme in education** – 10 semesters with an integrated 2 foreign languages part in it (offered by Rēzekne Higher Education Institution (www.ru.lv)). This curriculum has been worked out to meet the needs of the region and is offered in the regional higher education institution. The students are acquiring 2 foreign languages – English as a major, German – as a minor.

The main aspects in the curriculum content are:

- strengthening humanistic approaches and the identity of learners;
- emotional environment and emotional intelligence;
- learning environment in general psychological and interpersonal aspects;
- introduction to special education and adult education, school management;
- links with schools and teachers as assistants and resource to improve student's professional qualities and qualifications;
- students as researchers, students as future reflective teachers.

The authors of this programme especially highly evaluate the balance between both languages, and the professional teachers education and research skills, between theory and practice; the emotional contacts between students and the staff. One of the main focuses of the institution staff and the students is to maintain humanness as a value.

The schools are satisfied with the teachers that acquire professional education at this institution.

- The **integrated bachelor's programme in Modern languages and the professional pedagogical education** (offered by Daugavpils University).

The *aim* of the programme: to give students the opportunity to acquire the professional qualification of a foreign language teacher, which includes foreign language knowledge and skills, knowledge in linguistics, literature, pedagogics and psychology, ability to organize and supervise pupil's studies and research work, creative attitude to pedagogical work and respect for pupils' individuality.

Objectives:

- to provide theoretical knowledge, equip with appropriate methodological techniques and develop professional skills for the teacher's job;
- to encourage the development of students aspiration for self-education, promoting continuing education; finding an individual teaching style.

The programme consists of

- Part A – English as a major gives the students the right to work till grade 12.
- Part B – Swedish, French or German gives the students the right to work till grade 9.

It is a combination of academic knowledge in philology for professional foreign language teachers.

The philological part includes courses: linguistics, sociolinguistics, semantics, introduction into British and American thought, academic writing, cross cultural communication, communicative grammar, etc. The special theoretical courses in the Bachelor's programme are replaced by professional courses: didactics and methodology, teaching techniques and teaching materials, psychology and pedagogics, teaching practice.

- **Professional Foreign Language** teacher education programme (with B Ed in the Compulsory part) – 10 semesters offered in the Faculty of Education and psychology University of Latvia.

Aims: to offer opportunities for acquiring academic pedagogic and teacher's professional education, to promote development of a harmonious personality, to learn further develop creativity.

Objectives:

to offer opportunities for

- acquiring academic basic knowledge and learn to use it in teacher's professional pedagogical activity;
- development of positive and active attitude to education and pedagogical activity;
- development of openness to innovations, change, new challenges.

The programme consists of three parts:

- *Part A* Compulsory courses – pedagogy, psychology, introduction to school management and to these fields related courses, introduction into research methodology and research work; total number of credits – 80. There are also general education courses – philosophy, IT and others.
- *Part B* Foreign language courses (English or German) Practical language skills, introduction into various linguistic courses – history of the language, lexicology, stylistics, etc., to ensure the theoretical background of the foreign language, literature and background studies, methods of teaching/learning foreign languages, IT in teaching/learning foreign languages. The students can choose a second foreign language between English, French or German. There are a lot of topical selective courses, such as group work, project work, pedagogical pluralism, classroom management.
- It is possible also learn basics of translation.
- There is continuous professional training practice from I – X semester with tasks for each year, beginning with observation practice in junior courses and continuing teaching practice in senior courses.

3.2.3. Career prospects for graduates.

Foreign language learning in Latvia is very popular in schools, in universities, in adult education, in various professional programmes.

Accordingly, the teachers are needed and there is no unemployment for teachers of foreign languages. It is just the opposite - as the well-educated people in foreign languages find jobs easily in various companies and institutions there is shortage of teachers, especially in schools.

3.2.4. Recent changes in content, objectives, and / or structure of programmes.

In fact, everything described in 3.2.3. is innovation. It was introduced gradually after the collapse of the Soviet Union to develop new curricula based on Western experiences at the same time preserving the positive aspects proved by the experience.

3.2.5. Balance between academic and professional competence in the teacher education.

There are some positive guidelines that the universities are happy about:

- The great attention to cultural aspects, both focussing on the learners' identity, cross cultural and multicultural aspects;
- Change of concepts: *from* teacher *training* *to* teacher education underlining the creative, reflective, active aspects in the teacher education process as well as involvement of students' personality development and the activity of the learner. In fact, this change of the terminology is not simply a play of words but a change of the concept, of the whole philosophy of teacher education.

The five years concurrent FL teacher education programme has been worked out in the Faculty of Education and Psychology in the University of Latvia. The programme is state financed.

The main goal of the programme is to offer the students opportunities to learn and develop competencies necessary for teacher's professional activities.

Great attention is paid to continuous improvement of the programme by:

- implementing the principle of professionally oriented studies of each and every course in the programme, e.g. language courses, linguistic courses, literature and culture, educational theories, etc.;
- implementing student-centred teaching/learning methods in the study process;
- working out and implementing continuous observation and teaching practice integrated in the process of acquiring educational theories and methodology of teaching/learning foreign languages,

The latest example of integrity of teaching/learning methodologies and observation and teaching practice was introduced in 2001 by the Department of FL teaching/learning methodology. The programme of continuous observation and teaching practice was worked out integrating theories of education, psychology of learning, applied linguistics, methodology of FL teaching/learning.

Planning of implementation of the programme included the pattern of sequence of lectures and seminars followed by observation practice at school under the guidance of mentors after each theoretically discussed group of issues.

At seminars and practical classes students practised also micro-teaching with their peers.

Every week there was a lecture, a seminar, students observed 2 lessons delivered by mentors at schools. The plan of observation was based on the material of the week's lecture and seminar. Observation was followed by a practical class during which evaluation of the observations and group discussions took place. University lecturers participated in the discussions.

The organisation of observation within the framework of the FL teaching/learning methodology course helps to bridge the gap between theoretical courses at the university and active teaching practice at school and between the university and school in general.

It helps the students to get ready for their active teaching practice at school, to develop their professional critical thinking and reflective approach to teaching/learning languages.

Schools have an opportunity to learn innovations in theories, approaches and FL teaching/learning practice.

Problems and Issues

It must be admitted that there are some difficulties in organising the above-mentioned process. It is rather time taking as:

- mentors need to be prepared,
- the programme and the tasks must be prepared by a team of university lecturers,
- there must be time for the team to follow and reflect all through the period and, if necessary, changes must be introduced,
- the university lecturers need additional time to learn what is going on at schools.

The teachers have additional duties and this demand additional financial assistance, wider applicability. It can be adopted by any teacher education institution.

Source of information

3.2.6. Reasons underlying these changes.

After the collapse of the Soviet education system there was a need to develop everything from beginning to create a system equal to those of other countries in the world and to meet the demands of the labour market.

3.2.7. Identification of needs.

3.2.7.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies:

- to activate IT use in the learning process;
- to develop new books for learning foreign languages that correspond to the needs of learners in Latvia (for schools, for higher education, for adult education).

3.3. Teachers education – Latvian as a second language.

After gaining independence the Latvian acquired its official status as the state language. Accordingly, there was a great need for teachers who could teach Latvian as a second language to non-Latvian population who did not know the Latvian language to participate and communicate in social and professional life.

The term : “a second language is a language which is not a native language in a country but which is widely used as a medium of communication” (Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistic (1992) Longman, UK).

3.3.1. Institutions responsible for training

The professional programme for teaching Latvian as a second language has been developed and is implemented in the Faculty of Education and Psychology in the University of Latvia.

3.3.2. Content, objectives and structures of programmes.

These programmes were introduced only 10 years ago. Before that only teachers who knew the Latvian language could teach it at school. There are various models how teachers are educated:

- Teachers in a bilingual programme “The Russian and the Latvian languages and literature”.

The positive experiences of this model was that the teacher knowing both languages and literature could use contrastive grammar to prevent

errors in learning both languages, the teachers was a bridge between two cultures. Teacher education programme “Teacher of Latvian for schools where the teaching/learning takes place in another language”: This programme included the Latvian language courses and literature, contrastive grammar, methods of teaching Latvian to speakers of others languages.

– The programme “Teacher of Latvian as a second language” (LAT2).

The programme includes 3 clusters – part A (courses on pedagogy, psychology), part B (The Latvian language and literature, methods of teaching/learning, LAT2, contrastive grammar, contrastive phonetics, Cross-cultural aspects). This programme is based on learner – centred approach, interactive methods, competence-based teaching/learning process. A positive aspect is that the students are from both communities – those whose native language is Latvian and those for whom Latvian is a second language.

- it is possible for the students who have acquired the Bachelor’s degree in the Latvian language and literature to continue studies in the 1-year professional programme.
- the programme “The teacher of Latvian as a second language” can be acquired as a second subject to teach at school. These students themselves usually know Latvian as a second language. In this case the teacher is a good example that both languages can be successfully mastered on a high competence level.

3.3.3. Career prospects for graduates.

It is possible to work in schools where teaching/learning is carried out in other languages, in various courses and companies, teaching private students.

3.3.4. Examples of good practice.

A seminar model within the framework of the project “Reading and writing for development of critical thinking” which foresees acquiring theoretical understanding through practical activities, step by step learning and experiencing, returning regularly to seminar, sharing the experience, planning the next step. Thus the teacher gets used to the process: planning – implementing-reflection.

- Summer semesters organized by teacher education institutions. There the participants are from various regions and schools thus creating wider network and exchange of richer experiences.
- There is strong influence of the Association of LAT2 teachers.

3.3.5. Recent changes in content, objectives and / or structure of programmes and reasons for changes.

Changes in teacher education are due to the changes in the education system in Latvia. There is a new standard of basic education where the status of the Latvian language in schools of other nationalities where the teaching/learning is in other languages (Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, Polish etc.). Communicative approach, use of real life situation, links with social, cultural environment, getting acquainted with literature, traditions are basic principles of teaching/learning. The language becomes an instrument of understanding social and cultural life. The new standard brings into the teaching/learning process such phenomena as student-centred approach, cooperative learning competence, multicultural understanding. It demands from the teachers new skills, new teaching/learning philosophy.

3.3.6. Identification of needs.

The experience and the situation in Latvia show that the teacher who teaches Latvian in schools where the teaching/learning is in another language the teacher needs some special additional knowledge and competencies knowledge in contrastive grammar and phonetics, intercultural knowledge, traditions, understanding of intercultural education. The teachers need to develop wish to self-education, orientation towards lifelong education because integration in the society and continuation of education in Latvia depends on the level of the language competence.

Successful learning of a second language depends on the students opportunities:

- to learn in relevant communicative situations;
- to continuously improve the language competences;
- to improve understanding the second culture in the context in other cultures by developing sociocultural competence;
- to use a second language in many-sided situations by using various information sources and modern technologies.

3.4 Continuing education of LAT2.

3.4.1. Institutions responsible for training and

3.4.2. Content, objectives and structure of programmes.

3.4.3. Changes.

- Basically great help was offered by the UNDP programme: multipliers were trained. There are also courses for teachers, a handbook for teachers: almost all teachers of LAT2 have been involved in in-service education.

- Courses are offered by the non-governmental organization “Association of LAT2 teachers”;
- Teachers education support centre is a state financed institutions that offers courses.
- Very important are international cooperation projects e.g. Nordic-Baltic project “Curriculum development and teachers’ qualification” Soros foundation projects “Changes in education” “Open school” , a.o. Most positive aspects of the projects – the teachers develop their professional skills, communication and cooperation skills, openness to share ideas and experiences.

3.5. Continuing education – in-service education of teachers.

3.5.1. Institutions responsible for training foreign language teachers to join in-service activities as there is no centralized institution nor special structures.

There are many institutions offering various in-service activities:

- Universities
 - offering studies for foreign languages as a second subject for teachers of other subjects with a professional diploma giving the right to work at schools till grade 9;
 - offering longer or shorter courses on topical issues according to the developments in education in the country and to the teachers’ needs in summer and also all through the year.
 - Master’s degree programmes in teacher education as a longitudinal process of in-service education.
- Teacher education resource centres in the districts and bigger cities
 - offering various courses to meet the developments of education in the country and the teachers’ needs;
 - as the centres are supported financially by local municipalities there are many-sided projects – local and international that are highly evaluated by teachers as a kind of in-service education;
 - exchange visits;
- The Central Teacher education Support Centre: organizes and offers various length teacher in-service education opportunities – courses, projects, exchange visits, job-swoop.
- International institutions: the British Council, Goethe Institute, the UNDP, the Danish Culture Institute, Embassies of several countries especially those the languages of which are thought – Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, France, UK, America – by promoting study , experience exchange visits, joint projects.

3.5.2. Content, objectives and structure of programmes.

The objectives and content of activities and programmes are influenced by:

- the new developments in the education system, such as – curriculum development, introduction of a new evaluation system, of new standards of new methods and approaches e.g. the project work, interactive methods;
- the needs of the teachers which are revealed by questionnaires and other research activities;
- new approaches and theoretical conceptions.

3.5.3. Recent changes in content, objectives and/or structure of programmes.

The greatest change in comparison with the Soviet time is the use of adult education principles and approaches in designing in-service education courses, in organization and methods of work, of relations between the educators and the teachers, the learning environment.

- The change in objectives:
From fulfilling demands from the “top-down” to opening creative, reflective forces in participants, promoting openness to change, sense of freedom, independence.
- There is also a change of general guidelines in the content of in-service education:
 - from teacher-centredness
 - book - centredness
 - subject - centredness to student centredness
 - from teaching teachers to involving them in the process of learning, thinking, reflecting;
 - holistic approach – integrity of learning and personality development; by using interactive methods, creative thinking, cooperative learning;
 - focus from the subject as an aim for itself to the subject as a means for students’ development and growth;
 - from “plans” to curriculum.

3.5.4. Examples of good practice.

The teachers have been very active participants in various international in-service education organized by many institutions. As a result of this there are many teachers who have developed as multipliers, trainers, consultants who are assisting city and district teachers’ resource centres to organize courses for their colleagues, there are schools that organize and coordinate local projects, teachers write schools books, books for in-service education of teachers sharing

their experiences (e.g. theories on multiple intelligences, cooperative learning, interactive methods, student – centred approach, etc.).

3.5.5. Reasons underlying these changes.

The change of the social system in the country.

3.5.6. Identification of needs.

3.5.6.1. Seen in relation to the development of language studies.

The opportunity for every foreign language student, every teacher, every university lecturer involved in foreign language teacher education to spend some time in the country of the language origin. It is not always possible due to financial difficulties.

4. Innovations in the training of translators and interpreters.

4.1. Description and analysis of the current spectrum of professional activities.

During the last 10 years the professions of translators and interpreters have become very important and popular. The translators and interpreters work not only in Latvia but also in various institutions in other countries: councils, international organizations, embassies, tourism, etc. Though the number of people being able to communicate in foreign languages is constantly growing, the translators and interpreters are needed in urban and also remote rural region: in companies, trade, tourism (e.g. rural tourism is rapidly growing), farms etc.

There is also a great number of translators needed for translating official documents, literature, programmes, projects etc.

Alongside with training professional translators and interpreters, there is a great number of specialists in various fields and spheres who are able to translate when the need is.

4.2. Institutions responsible for training.

A purposeful professional programme for training translators and interpreters have been developed only during the last 10 years. There are 4 state institutions offering relevant study programmes and one private institution.

4.3. Content, objectives and structures of programmes.

4.3.1. At first degree level.

There are 3 institutions offering studies at first degree level:

- Daugavpils pedagogical university: offers an opportunity as an additional speciality to the foreign languages teachers. This part of the programme carries 24 credit points. The languages are those which are

important for the region: English, German, French, Swedish. The programme contains theoretical courses and translation practice – both for written translating and oral interpreting.

– *Ventspils Higher Education institution* (www.venta.lv)

The programme is being implemented in Ventspils University College in Latvia. The goal of the programme is training of translators and interpreters of the first degree.

Training is focussed on three languages simultaneously:

- -English-Latvian-Russian
- -German –Latvian-Russian

The programmes were developed to meet the regional needs, therefore the basic characteristic feature of these programmes is blending of the language acquisition, acquisition of translation/interpreting skills and obtaining adequate competence in economics, management, legal aspects specific for business activities, as well as of transportation and technological processes.

The aims of the programme have been worked out taking into consideration the regional market peculiarities, i.e. there will be no need for narrow specification in the near future therefore it is necessary to train highly qualified interpreters/translators:

- for the local and central government institutions of Latvia;
- for private economic structures in Latvia and abroad including the EU member countries;
- for providing translation and interpreting services to the EU institutions.

The whole study process is organised so that there is maintained the closest relationship possible between the study process and the reality of translators and interpreters work by establishing contacts with the potential employers, familiarising the students with the specific character of providing translation/interpreting at concrete companies and institutions and encouraging students to do translation or interpreting parallel to their studies.

The students are also doing research work in those branches of applied linguistics related to translation studies.

The programmes consist of three parts:

- the compulsory (A) part comprises subjects of translatology and linguistics, subjects of English, Russian, French or German at the required professional level; background studies; subjects of economics, law a.o. which will create the necessary informative basis for professionally adequate translation.
- The compulsory choice (B) part comprising practical translation subjects in written translation and consecutive and simultaneous

interpreting with the view to acquire professional skills in all the three languages of specialisation.

- The optional (C) part offers a more profound acquisition of the business aspects of the second foreign language, as well as the subjects: social psychology, the history of culture, fundamental problems of modern natural sciences, the history of foreign literature, introduction into economy, fundamentals of law, a course on elocution etc.

The programme was designed in 1996. Ventspils Higher Education Institution is the only institution which has opened the Department of Translation studies with full-length studies (8 semesters) which is in line with the development trends and the future of the region and Latvia. The programmes offered in Ventspils differ from others in quantitative aspect, namely, by the number and combination of languages included in the programme (English/German-Russian-Latvian) and by the number of types of translation (written, consecutive, simultaneous).

The programmes are broad and at the same time intensive.

During the studies students must have a translation (pre-diploma) internship of four months. The internship is organized in the most important companies and organisations on the regional and country levels.

There is a need to include a greater number of languages as electives. It is necessary to develop distance education. International contacts, especially in regard to internship, must be broadened.

– International institute of practice psychology. The programme has been developed only recently. There is good practice psychological basis for training translators / interpreters. Studies are based on using authentic materials, there is wide network of cooperation not only with Western countries – France, Italy, but also with Russia. There is good balance between theoretical and practical preparation, face to face classes and students' autonomous work.. The aims and objectives are focused on training translators mainly in areas related to psychology. In future there will be focus also on economic, business, political sciences.

Source of information

www.venta.lv

e-mail: juris.bal@venta.lv

4.3.2. At postgraduate level.

Training of translators and interpreters at post-graduate level is offered in the Faculty of Modern languages in the University of Latvia. These are Master's degree level programmes.

The objectives:

- to instruct students in the techniques of descriptive translation research and in its underlying theoretical and methodological presuppositions;
- to impart to students the insights and skills that will allow them to autonomously carry out original descriptive research into translation and its cultural functions;
- within the context of increasing internationalisation of economics and cultures, to prepare students to work as professional translators and interpreters in trade and industry, government departments and agencies, scientific institutions and the media.

Those students who want to become translators and interpreters can study introductory courses in translation and the fields of interest (economics, business, law, etc.)

The course structure – it is a full time four semester programme with the MA paper. Students acquire the following subjects:

Translation theory, modern terminologies, Latvian as a target Language, contrastive linguistics, advanced French– Latvian, Latvian– French , English– Latvian, Latvian– English translation covering texts in economics, business, law, politics, science, technology, consecutive interpreting and simultaneous interpreting and literary translation seminars in the above mentioned language.
izaube@lanet.lv

A similar programme is also on Latvian – English – Russian languages and on Latvian – Danish – English languages. karsten@acad.lanet.lv

4.4. The translators and interpreters have the best job opportunities and financial situation.

There is shortage of high-skilled professional translators and interpreters.

4.5. All the programmes are new.

Provision for students of other disciplines.

5. Innovations in language provision for students of other disciplines.

5.1.

It has always been a good tradition in Latvia that each student has to learn at least one foreign language. Therefore in all higher education establishments foreign languages for special purposes are taught.

- The content, objectives and structures of the programmes are designed to give students an opportunity to acquire at least one foreign language at a good professional level, i.e. the ability to communicate on the profession or science the students are acquiring.
- More attention is paid to students' autonomous work and learning.
- Good example.

ESP teaching at Venstpils College.

ESP is taught as:

- a basic foreign language continuing the course started at the secondary schools
 - as a second or third foreign language.
- The students learn the foreign language for 4 semesters. There are 12-17 students in the group. The groups include students of equal level of knowledge.

Students:

- Majority of them are high school graduates and that means they do not have relevant work experience.
- Their language skills are between intermediate and upper-intermediate levels and some students have already taken a course in Business English at their high schools.
- Despite of students' approving language knowledge, the analysis of students' needs points out the most essential need for them - speaking (communication) skills, leaving reading, listening, writing skills far behind.
- Students are motivated as, firstly, they have managed to get through the high competition in entrance examinations and, secondly, students are aware of studying facilities and opportunities the college offers.

The content of the course includes topics chosen on the basis of students' needs analysis. The teachers choose the necessary functions, structures, vocabulary according to the students' level.

There are good resources for learning:

- Wide choice of materials for learning: dictionaries, course books, CD-ROM's;
- The materials are accessible to each student;
- The students can use Internet freely;
- There is a language lab;
- There is satellite TV.

The many-sided resources allow to use various forms of autonomous work:

- Extensive reading (periodicals, research papers, case studies, etc)
- Preparation of short presentations (product presentation, presentation on one ethical problem, culture, etc)

- Individual work with CD-ROM on Business English;
- Independent work with literature, dictionaries, the internet, reference literature, etc;
- Preparation of course assignments (assigned by a lecturer).

Great was the value of the ESPELL project supported by the British Council.

Another good example is “English for Special Purposes” in Latvia Sports Academy.

The objectives of the course:

- To enrich the special vocabulary;
- To acquire skills of reading special literature;
- To develop communication skills based on the field of studies;
- To acquire skills of public speech, business writing.

The course content is linked with other courses in the programme: pedagogy, psychology, anatomy, sports history and field of sports the students are studying (www.lspa.lanet.lv)

Similar attitude to studies of foreign languages is in other universities of Latvia:

- Latvia University of Agriculture (www.cs.llu.lv)
- Riga Technical University (rtu@adm.rtu.lv)
- Medical Academy of Latvia (rsu@adm.aml.lv)
- Liepaja Pedagogical Academy (www.cs.lpu.lv)
- Police Academy of Latvia (www.159.148.141.33)
- National Defence Academy of the Republic of Latvia (post@naa.mil.lv)
- Latvian Academy of Culture: (lka@acad.latnet.lv)
- Riga Higher School of Pedagogics and School Management (rpiva@acad.latnet.lv)

5.3. Language provision and support for mobile students.

5.3.1. Incoming students have an opportunity to participate in the study process in English or in German, i.e. short-period students.

Students who join the full programmes, e.g. medicine, start learning the state language, i.e. Latvian. During the junior courses students work in English, in senior courses they have mixed groups, working also in Latvian. Latvian is being learnt according to a specially developed programme.

5.3.2. Outgoing students are selected from those who know English or German or another corresponding language of studies in the country to which the students are going.

The knowledge of foreign languages of secondary school leavers is constantly growing and the students language level is good enough to join the study process abroad for those students who have this aim.

Opportunities to study abroad is a strong motivating force for the students to improve their language knowledge and skills.

At the same time in all higher educational institutions foreign languages for special purposes are taught.

5.4. Disciplines involved.

There are programmes which are taught in foreign languages:

- Interinstitutional, e.g. Eurofaculty at the University of Latvia, where the students study economics, political sciences, law. The students are from three Baltic countries: Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia. Studies are in English. There are several lecturers from other countries.
- Latvia Agricultural University – the programme in agrobusiness – was developed in cooperation with specialists from Norway. The lecturers also are from Norway. The studies are in English.
- Technical University – the Business institute offers the programme in which several courses are in English.
- The University of Latvia offers a master's degree programme – the Baltic studies. All the courses are offered in English.

There are many visiting lecturers from other countries in all universities.

Good example is set by Stockholm School of Economics in Riga (www.sseriga.edu.lv) in which all courses are taught in English.

The programme offers theoretical basis in all main subject areas concerning business and industry. Students acquire theoretical and practical skills both in entrepreneurship and business administration. Graduates are involved in setting up new business as well as they participate in restructuring of existing business and other organizations.

The study language is English. Strong emphasis is places on team work, case studies and problem solving.

The programme also covers study trips to different companies and organizations in Latvia and other countries. Students have to complete internship in companies.

The programme gives a broad basis in Business Administration and Economics both theoretically and practically.

The first part of this programme covers the following subjects: business administration, accounting and finance, marketing, economics, economic statistic, commercial law, business English, management and organization theory, international business, small business management, services, computer and information processing, business simulation.

Students have to prepare Bachelors thesis which covers both knowledge and practical skills they acquired during their studies at SSE Riga.

5.4.2. Levels at which (parts of) programmes are taught.

There are all the first, second and third levels at which courses in foreign languages are taught, still more are offered on the second and third levels.

5.4.3. Languages used.

As the first foreign language in the state is English, then English is more often used.

5.4.4. Target groups.

They are mainly home students. But there are also mobile students groups. Often the mobile students join the home students.

5.4.5. The basic policy and objectives are to ensure the quality of education and to give the students a chance to become competitive in the international trade market, to be prepared to develop the home country on economically, culturally high level and to create good quality life for themselves.

5.4.6. The language knowledge and skills should be acquired in two, three or more foreign languages. For small countries it is the only opportunity to develop and for individuals to have good chances and life quality.

Continuing education

6. Innovations in language studies in continuing education.

6.1. Target groups.

Practically in all universities there are continuing education programmes in foreign languages for all who are willing to learn.

6.2. Content, objectives and structures of programmes and courses is designed according to the aims of the groups, e.g. business, political activities, tourism etc.

The courses are developed based on principles of foreign languages for special purposes. Great attention is paid to balance between fluency and accuracy.

6.3. Recent developments.

Such programmes and courses appeared only during the last 5-7 years.

6.4. Identification of new needs.

Specialists in other languages besides English, German, French.
Books and materials for local specifications and aims.
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