

## Modern Language Teacher Education in the Knowledge Society

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the visions of changes in language teacher education. Teacher education institutions must be future orientated because they are training teachers for the next 10 or 20 years to teach the language users of the future. As the information revolution is bringing changes in the language use, the jobs language educators do are becoming more complex and more varied. Present approaches to teacher education frequently do not reflect these transformations, besides in many countries language teachers have undervalued professional and social status.

Taking into account the changes in language use, teacher education should concentrate on social and collaboration skills, knowledge of languages and new technologies, assessment theory and practice, management, communication and presentation skills, multilingual and multicultural competencies.

If we want our teachers to be able to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to start already today by establishing a framework for curriculum design in teacher education.

### Introduction

The world is developing and rapidly changing and asking for flexibility and openness towards the new things. Also education should be following the new inventions in order to implement them in the life of future community. Education should be at least one step ahead of the changes. So important place should be given to visions and predictions. The possible changes should be planned a considerable time ahead so by the time they see the daylight or reach the community they are not already out of date, so that people can use the possibilities offered by the century in the right time.

New century requires a new paradigm for language education. However, many institutions dealing with teacher education are still training and developing their students – the would-be language teachers according to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century model (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Adapted from Heyworth (2003). A New Paradigm for Language Education.

<i>Existing (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) model</i>	<i>New model</i>
Focus on national language as a source of identity	Emphasis on linguistic diversity
Multilingualism is a problem for society	Multilingualism enriches society
Start from monolingual base	Diverse language experience outside the classroom
Learning another language is difficult	Learning another language is natural
Near native speaker competence is the ultimate goal	Even low levels of competence are valuable
Language teaching focuses mainly on linguistic goals	Language teaching has strong cultural element and includes intercultural awareness
Language learning tends to become elitist and is problematic for the majority	Language learning can be successful for everyone

*The research problem* – what do the changes in the language use and the new jobs of language teachers mean for teacher education? A key question in this research on future needs for teacher education is the exploration of the need for innovation. Will teachers continue broadly to do what they have always done or will the nature of the job of language educators change? If it stays the same, then future needs will be organisational and logistic, making better provision within the existing parameters. If it changes, a new paradigm for the profession will be required.

*The aim* – to clarify the priorities and recommend strategies for modern language teacher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thus promoting a possible new paradigm for language teacher education and reflecting on how this broader view of the objectives of language teacher education could be put into practice. One can obtain a personalised, living description of the variety of jobs language teachers do, the roles they fulfil, the knowledge and skills they need, and the issues they face now. Besides, one can predict how all this might change in the next 10 to 20 years. Finally, the article strives to promote discussion and debate on the implications of the above for teacher education programmes and for language education policies in general.

### Research Method

In order to solve the research problem and reach the aim, a needs-based evaluation and decision-making evaluation were chosen. According to Robson, (1993: 176) a needs-based evaluation examines the extent to which actual client needs are being met and decision-making evaluation is structured by the decisions to be made. So the research began with needs assessment – one of enquiry methods for designing evaluations. It is usually carried out before the programme. In this case before a framework for curriculum design in teacher education is set up. Needs assessment is the process whereby needs are identified and priorities among them established (Robson, 1993: 184).

The first step involves collecting, as comprehensive set of potential objectives as is possible by reviewing literature and studying the available investigations up to now. The second step deals with selecting groups of participants and assessing what is currently available to meet the objectives. At last, the selection of final objectives.

The method of data collection was a *Think-Tank* where participants brought their experience and ideas reflected on future needs and recommended future priorities.

The following research questions were put forward:

*What are all the different jobs language teachers are called upon to do?*

*How does English teacher training equip them to do these jobs?*

*What changes can we forecast in teachers' roles in ten years?*

The data were collected during an international *Think-Tank* in year 2000 from the participants representing 29 countries and a national *Think-Tank* in year 2002 from 22 practising language specialists in Latvia. Main strategies of both *Think-Tanks* were brainstorming and reflection.

## Theoretical Background

Society is experiencing rapid changes in all the spheres of life – economical, social, political and many others; the demands for education are changing, too. The demand for computer literacy, language skills, mobility and innovation is increasing year by year in every country and on every continent. In order to outline the priorities in modern language teacher education, one should be aware of the possible changes in language use.

According to D. Crystal, J. Goodlad, B. Joyce, M. Weil, R. Oxford, T. Rodgers and 51 participant of *Think-Tanks*, language use and learning can be influenced by four things: first, it is the expansion of English, second – modern information technologies, then – plurilingualism and finally learning to learn skills.

While English is becoming a world language and the common language of global business, communications, media and politics, our students have to enter an ongoing process of negotiating a range of linguistic and conceptual knowledge and skills with international audiences.

The expansion of English is changing the focus of activities in the jobs teachers do. Already in year 1995 the report of the European Commission on language learning in the European Union wrote:

“Between today’s generation of young people (aged 15-24) and that of their parents (aged 55 and over), the proportion of individuals having studied foreign languages has doubled” (Heyworth, 2003: 9).

In Central and Eastern Europe, this trend has been particularly evident due to liberalisation that has taken place since 1990. Especially it can be seen in Eastern Europe where the spread of English has increased considerably. It is not difficult to meet people who are able to communicate at the social level, even more, for many

English has become a must in order to execute transactions. If some 40 years ago people in Latvia or some other former Soviet Union country didn’t evaluate the importance of English, then now without it is impossible to compete in the labour market. Almost in every job advertisement the demand of English knowledge is obligatory.

At the same time, the expansion of English for specific purposes in science (genome studies, space exploration), medicine (cancer curing), business (tourism, hotel management, and logistics), technology (computers), and politics (diplomacy) will make technical vocabulary more accessible R. Oxford (1995).

Modern Information Technologies – computers will have advantages and drawbacks in language use. One of the advantages is computer communication that will increase impact on written communication, the other is reading downloading from Internet or the e-book revolution that will open more possibilities for technologically delivered distance learning. Already now there are about 900 e-book novels for reading on Internet. However, people can experience the lack of personal contacts and in a way neglect human knowledge, for example, by using computer interpreters.

The tendency to learn more languages will lead to plurilingualism, but at the same time it could lead to partial understanding and knowing more languages at receptive level or efficiency without formality – shift towards less formal language use or even more “new” languages. Every language is unbelievably and immensely democratising institution – as soon as you learn it you start changing it.

“When a country adopts the language it adapts it to its needs!” D. Crystal (1997).

Speaking about partial understanding – on one hand, all linguistic competence is partial, even if it comes close to native speaker’s competence. This applies not only to the command of the vocabulary, but also to the skills of comprehension and written and oral expression where it is rare for one individual to attain a high level of competence in every area. On the other hand, the acquisition even of partial competence, such as ability to understand the specialised texts in foreign language, can be usefully transferred to the learning of other skills in other contexts. In this way, learning one foreign language may make it easier to learn others, particularly if they belong to the same language family. Or the existing similarities between the languages may allow to understand or to be understood without ever having learnt the language.

Discussing the future of anything is always challenging, especially the future of language use and learning. The conservative assumption is that things will carry on much as they have in the past. After all, classrooms have maintained their familiar organisation for a thousand years. Why then should methodology alter radically if classrooms stay the same? The positive assumption is that people’s minds as well as the doors of schools are opening for the changes from other spheres of life to enter the schools. Besides, the schools are not the only places of learning any more. The learners prefer to get the information from



Internet facilities, media, discovery channels and other authentic sources (radio, TV, native speakers). Autonomy and responsibility are desirable goals in everyone's education.

New teachers are expected to possess many competencies: knowledge of subject matter, flexibility in thinking, positive attitude to self-directed and continuous learning, creativity, good communication skills, ability to work in a team, risk management and ability to make initiatives, among others (OECD, 1992)

These skills include those important targets for an autonomous learner, and to reach these aims, a new orientation in teaching is needed and learning to learn skills developed.

## Results and Discussion

In year 2000 European Centre for Modern Languages organised *Think-Tank* on Teacher Education where the changes in the purposes of using languages were defined. In year 2002 a similar *Think-Tank* was organised with language teachers in Latvia. During the reflections and discussions several priorities in language learning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century were agreed upon. Besides, they should also be changing the way of teaching languages and knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes required for the various future jobs of language educators. Analysing the visions on language use and learning in future allows concluding on the priorities in modern language teacher education in the knowledge society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Taking into account the changes in language use, modern language teacher education can be influenced by (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Rodgers (2000: 11) "The Seven A's" Chart

ASPECTS OF LANGUAGE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION (THE SEVEN A'S)	
Aspect	Instructional factors
Language as abilities	Tool skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking
Language as art	Literature, creative writing
Language as artefact	Structure of English, history of English
Language as analysis	Problem solving, critical linguistics
Language as acculturation	Interpersonal/intercultural understanding/communication
Language as affect	Intrapersonal understanding, humanistic, self-awareness
Language as activation	Communication competence, persuasion to action

- the expansion of English;

In teacher education it will mean *changing categories of learner*. Life-long learning suits to very young learners and senior citizens. Global English impacts the age at which learners need to start learning the language. More and more often English is started in kindergarten and continued at senile age. This tendency requires a new type of

syllabus. Besides, the educational curriculum is not limited to school and does not end with it. It means that students must be able to take responsibility for the learning process, with a concern for coherence and continuity. Besides, they must take advantage of all the resources of family and professional life, travel, the media and means of communication, both computerised and conventional, in order to perfect their multicultural education.

The expansion of English for specific purposes will ask *new jobs for future teachers that are not covered by present training* – e.g. ESP specialist, distance learning teacher, resource manager, conflict moderator.

- modern information technologies;

Concerning teacher education, it is *development in the ways the languages are used* – all the skills required for electronic communication and other communication at a distance and *new technologies that need to be mastered* – e.g. use of the Internet, teaching by video conferencing.

- Pluri-lingualism will lead to *additional and changing objectives* for language teacher education – e.g. teaching intercultural competence, partial competencies or reading and writing for electronic communication;
- learning to learn skills can have several important priorities in teacher education and can be grouped according to the strategies of learning and teaching or the so-called *models of teaching families*. Joyce and Weil (1986) had classified them according to its theoretical base, intended purposes and learning outcomes into four main *families* – *the information processing, personal, social, and behavioural family*. Although mastery of those strategies is one small part of teaching, the effective use of a variety of strategies would provide educators with alternative approaches to meet the needs of students. As a result teacher pre- and in-service education should concentrate on the development of the following skills:

1. **Cognitive language skills** – language of education across cultures i.e. awareness raising about cultural backgrounds. Several aspects to consider:

1.1. *corpus linguistics* – the study of a body of a language. As every word has its semantic, pragmatic and cultural meaning, our students should be faced with all three of them in order to communicate effectively. Recent developments try to reassess the role of context in language studying and teaching to suit the learners needs. Context becomes a precondition on making pedagogic proposals for teaching communication.

1.2. *the aspects of language* can be helpful in language learning. More comprehensive view of language helps the language learner in understanding what language is and what the broadest goals of language learning are. T. Rodgers (7: 11) calls it O-zone whole language and has incorporated it in "The Seven A's" chart. It will also lead to *new features in the educational environment* – e.g. the Common European

Framework of Reference, the European Language Portfolio, increased emphasis on assessment, quality control, accountability.

## 2. Behavioural skills

2.1. *efficiency at communication* – new different modes of communication including all aspects of human communicative capacities – expression, gesture, tone and so forth – in support of language learning.

2.2. *multi-intelligencia* – basing instruction on ten multiple intelligences where different approaches play to different learner talents and especially the need to develop English learners' emotional, spiritual and interpersonal intelligences for the goal of better communication across cultures.

New approaches to specific areas of teaching – e.g. portfolio assessment, content based language teaching, teaching languages through other subjects.

3. *Personal skills* and changing attitudes: reconciling theory with practical reality, integrating reflective practice, accepting learner autonomy, accepting a more service orientated role.

3.1. *self-discovery through languages* – the need for understanding language learning styles (reflective, impulsive, extravert, introvert, visuals, auditory, hands-on learners).

3.2. *strategopedia* – teaching learners the strategies they need so that they can learn on their own (cognitive, social, affective, compensation of missing knowledge, metacognitive strategies).

4. *Social skills* solving teacher survival issues: dealing with disciplinary problems; coping with stress and avoiding professional burnout and skills not covered in many present-day programmes – e.g. management and organisational skills, interpersonal communication skills and project management.

4.1. *learning environment*. The role of school in society is changing – school stops being the only place for learning. Learners will be more exposed to foreign languages outside school, giving stronger motivation and their requirements will be fairly authentic uses. Computers will make working and learning from home possible.

4.2. *the integration of tools or methods' synergy* – crossbreeding elements of various methods to find those practices which best support effective learning.

**Table 3.** The Impact of Language Use on the Priorities in Teacher Education

LANGUAGE USE			
The expansion of English and English for specific purposes	Modern information technologies	Multilingualism	Learning to learn skills
INFLUENCE			
New jobs for teachers and more accessible technical vocabulary	Computer communication and written communication, distance learning	Partial understanding, less formal language use, "new" languages	Autonomy and responsibility
MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION			
Different learners and new jobs	Development in the ways languages are used and new technologies mastered	Additional and changing objectives	New features in educational environment, new approaches to specific areas of teaching, changing attitudes, teacher survival issues
PRIORITY			
ES P specialist education	Distance education: electronic communication, use of the Internet, video conferencing	Intercultural, multicultural and bilingual education	Development of cognitive, behavioural, personal and social skills

## Conclusions

Taking into account the changes in language use, teacher education should concentrate on the following issues:

1. **Social skills** – including intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Social skills have to do also with teacher isolation, the status of teachers, adaptation skills, professional and social identity of language teacher, teacher survival skills (coping with stress, dealing with disciplinary problems, professional burnout);
2. **Collaboration skills** – community building at all levels, solving communication problems, changing attitudes – accepting learner autonomy, reflective practice;

3. **Knowledge of languages** – language of education across cultures (awareness raising about cultural backgrounds);

4. **New technologies** that need to be mastered – e.g. teaching by video conference, methods of distance learning, internet forums, chat rooms;

5. **Assessment** theory and practice – teacher portfolio, carrying out classroom action research;

6. **Management, communication and presentation skills**;

7. **Multi lingual/multicultural competencies**, bilingual education.



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## Šiuolaikinių kalbų mokytojų rengimas žinių visuomenėje

### Santrauka

Straipsnyje apžvelgiamos kalbos mokytojų ruošimo pakitimų vizijos. Mokytojų ugdymo institucijų programos turi būti nukreiptos į ateitį, nes mokytojai ateinančius dešimtmečius mokys būsimuosius kalbos vartotojus. Kadangi informacinė revoliucija keičia kalbos vartoseną, tai darbai, kuriuos atlieka kalbos ugdytojai tampa sudėtingesni ir įvairesni. Dabartinis požiūris į mokytojų ugdymą dažnai neatspindi šių pasikeitimų, o be to daugelyje šalių yra nepakankamai įvertintas kalbų mokytojų profesinis ir socialinis prestižas.

Atsižvelgiant į kalbos vartosenos pakitimus, mokytojų ugdymas turėtų remtis socialiniais ir bendradarbiavimo principais, kalbų mokėjimu ir naujų technologijų įsisavinimu, vertinimo teorija ir praktika, jautrumu santykiuose su žmonėmis, bendravimo ir prezentacijų pristatymo įgūdžiais, daugiakalbystės ir bendrakultūriniais sugebėjimais.

Jei mes norime, kad mūsų mokytojai būtų pasiruošę sutikti XXI amžiaus išbandymus, mes turime pradėti dirbti jau šiandien, sukurdami struktūrą, įgalinančią sudaryti mokymo programų planą mokytojų ugdymui.

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