The National Languages Project: Sri Lanka

A Study Report on Translation and Interpretation Training and Services

carried out December 2-23, 2011 and

Recommendations to Support the Implementation of the Official Languages Policy in Sri Lanka through the Training of Translators and Interpreters

The meetings that served as the basis for this report were undertaken with the following issues in mind:

*the lack of qualified translators and interpreters in Sri Lanka which too contributes to the failure of government institutions to regularly provide communication, documents, and services in both national languages,*

and with the following purposes:

*to carry out a needs analysis to determine the need for an undergraduate degree program, or other university program, in translation methods/techniques and to identify an appropriate university or universities that the project can assist to develop such a program;*

*and to provide recommendations on how the NLP might support the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to provide translation and interpretation in the official languages and thereby promote communication and social integration.*

NOTE: This needs analysis and assessment was undertaken from a Canadian point of view, and with Canadian expertise, standards, and expectations in regard to translation and interpretation and the training of translators and interpreters. This perspective follows international norms that expect a translator or interpreter to have expertise in only ONE target language for text production – normally called the A-language – and be well-versed in one or more source languages – normally called B, C or D-languages – from which they translate into their A-language. It is noted that the practice in Sri Lanka has been to expect
a translator/interpreter to be able to translate/interpret from one language to another and vice versa. This is a very exacting requirement and expectation which is not what is followed in international arena.

Applying the international norm will mean something different from what is being practised in Sri Lanka. In the Sri Lankan context, this means training those whose A-language is Tamil to produce good texts from English and/or Sinhala, and for those whose A-language is Sinhala to produce good translations from English and/or Tamil; similarly those whose A-language is English to produce good translations from Sinhala and/or Tamil.

One has to take into consideration the ground reality of paucity of persons with equal ability in two languages in the country. In this respect one cannot deny the fact that adopting the international practice is not only an efficient way of proceeding since it allows teachers and students to focus on the perfection of one language for text production, it is also realistic. Many studies have shown that translators tend to be proficient, reliable and effective primarily in their A-language. The focus on one A-language ensures the production of high quality texts in a cost-efficient and time-efficient manner. This will be the immediate and crying need of the hour in the country.

This needs assessment report as well as the recommendations and template for a translation program made at the end is therefore based on this international standard.

Further, this report will make difference between training translators and interpreters (BA in Translation/Interpretation Methods/Techniques or Diploma in Translation/Interpretation Methods/Techniques) and more academic study of translations (usually done at postgraduate level as an MA or PhD in Translation Studies.)

**Problems Encountered**

A. Throughout the meetings and discussions held in ministries, departments, agencies and universities, and in different parts of the country it was confirmed again and again that translation and interpretation services are very necessary, and very lacking. To give just a few examples:
- Parliamentary interpreters, who are highly experienced professionals and carry out exhausting jobs, are required to produce translations of parliamentary documents during their rest times (i.e. between 30 minute sessions in the booth). This is due to the lack of translators. Their rest periods are therefore filled with high professional demands.

- A High Court judge in Jaffna has to resort to the services of the court registrar in order to deal with any case that involves Sinhala (the registrar happens to speak Sinhala and Tamil.) There is no interpreter available from Sinhala to Tamil. Since many of the cases before court are prepared in Sinhala, by Sinhala-speaking policemen, the registrar is in high demand as a court interpreter.

- Seventy per cent of the official correspondence from the central government that the Mayor of Jaffna has to handle is in Sinhala. She does not have sufficient knowledge of the language to do so. Her repeated requests for a translator have not been fulfilled. She managed to recruit a 70 year old retired Parliamentary Interpreter to work as a translator in her office.

- The Legal Draftsman Department in Colombo has positions for 26 (14 Sinhala positions and 12 Tamil positions) translators of legal and legislative documents. Three of these Sinhala positions are filled, but none of the Tamil positions are filled yet, though two Tamil translators (who are not legal translators) were seconded from the Department of Official Languages and another two Tamil translators work as freelancers. There is a huge backlog in the work of the Legal Draftsman Department due to lack of translators.
B. Similarly, neither the training of new translators nor the in-service training of translators already working in the civil service is very developed. A few examples may suffice:

- At the University of Kelaniya, a few translation courses are available as part of the BA in Linguistics; classes are given as though students had 3 A-languages. It is obvious from many of our meetings that few students even have a functional B-language;

- The UGC-approved Diploma at the University of Kelaniya, which is meant for in-service translators and the general public, is also run as though participants had 3 A-languages;

- A new BA program in Translation Studies at the University of Jaffna has not yet been approved by the UGC, but is already operating; it does not have suitably qualified permanent lecturers in place, and is therefore unstable;

- NILET offers a 10-day translation diploma as in-house training for translators already in government service. The diploma courses focus more on theory and less on practice. They seem to be of little practical use to working translators (as was confirmed by several I spoke to.)

C. Further, the status, pay, and working conditions of translators employed in the public/government service seem to be quite unattractive. This perception makes it difficult to recruit high-quality personnel, or attract good students into the new BA programs. Perhaps this would have been one of the reasons why the government is not in a position to recruit adequate number of translators/graduate translators to its respective services though there is an urgent need to have qualified translators in the government service!
D. There is little if any access to resources (such as manuals and exercise books, glossaries, dictionaries, updated reference materials) or technological aids for translators working in the government service or for students training at the universities. The most recent glossary of legal terms dates from 1975. Many translators work by hand and require the assistance of typists to produce texts; students do not have regular access to computers, translation software, or other technological support.

E. The agencies and universities that use and train translators do not agree on accreditation requirements: NILET does not recognize university degrees in Translation, nor does the Ministry of Public Administration. There are no standards in place for translator-training. This is a serious issue in the face of the need to train translators, and it is important that these agencies, ministries and educational authorities decide and agree on standards for training and certification.

All in all, the situation of translators and translation training is very difficult in Sri Lanka: translators are underpaid, overworked and have low status. There is much room for improvement. My recommendations will however be focused on only three areas: promotion of translation as a professional skill, whose practitioners meet specific standards that both training and hiring agencies agree upon; curriculum development and teaching/learning at university or college level, and curriculum development and teaching/learning at in-service or further education level.
Specific Observations and Assessments:

Universities:

Two universities currently have translation courses or programs:

1. **University of Kelaniya** offers a BA in Linguistics, one-third of which comprises translation courses as an option. This has been the case since 1972. The translation section of the BA consists of 11 courses in the following areas: 3 theoretical courses on language and translation, 4 language-proficiency courses: 1 in Sinhala, 1 in English and 2 in Tamil, 4 translation courses in science, technical, legal and literary translation, a practicum of several weeks and a required ‘translation project’ at the end. It aims to train students in 3 A-languages.

**Assessment:** The program is weak, with far too few “language transfer”/translation courses. Further, it is impossible to train students to any level of proficiency in three languages with so few practical courses. The work students do here can only be seen as introductory. It is evident that this program is viewed as an ‘academic’ program rather than a ‘professional’ one! Programs of study on translation methods and techniques should be designed as professional courses with practice/action oriented learning and imparting.

2. **University of Kelaniya** has been offering a UGC-approved Diploma in Translation and Interpretation since 2011 – for any member of the public. This consists of 6 courses, of which 2 seem to be largely theoretical and 4 are practical translation courses (including one in Interpretation). All three languages appear to be considered A-languages.

**Assessment:** This Diploma may serve the needs of some members of the general public in acquiring an understanding of translation or for more general adult education purposes. It cannot turn out highly functional translators. It could offer specialized training for in-service translators who wish to update their capabilities and know-how if it selects students through an admission exam, and divides them into linguistic
groups: A-language Tamil, and A-language Sinhala. For the moment, however, it is unfocused and far too general to be useful as a training tool.

3. **University of Kelaniya** has submitted a proposal for a 4-year BA program in Translation Methods for approval by UGC. It is due to commence in 2012. Again, all three languages are considered A-languages. The program consists of 21 translation-related courses plus a number of electives. Of these 21 courses, 9 courses are in language acquisition or proficiency, 3 are in theory, 2 in computers and computer-aided translation, 7 in translation praxis including 1 in interpretation, one practicum and one final ‘translation project.’

**Assessment:** This program has a better chance of training translators, though it is desirable if it is named as Bachelor of Translation Methods, instead of Bachelor of Arts in Translation Methods. Much depends on the quality of student admitted, and their language proficiency: students should pass admissions exams testing their abilities in at least 2 languages. In its current condition, the syllabus seems to spend too much time on language-learning (9 courses out of 21) and not enough on language transfer/translation. Again, a major problem is trying to train people to have 3 A-languages. This is impossible, or so time-consuming that it is neither cost effective nor an efficient use of time.

4. **University of Jaffna** has begun to offer a 4-year BA program in Translation Studies. Twenty students have been enrolled for the last 2 semesters. The program is not yet approved by the UGC. It does, however, have the full support of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Jaffna. It is currently coordinated by Dr. Saravanapava Iyer, a senior lecturer in English Language Teaching, and is housed at the English Language Teaching Centre of University of Jaffna.

The program consists of 25 translation-related courses and one dissertation. No practicum is planned. It also appears to want to train students in 3 A-languages. One third of the courses (8) are largely theoretical; 2 are in language proficiency –
English and Tamil; 13 are in language transfer/translation (including 1 in interpretation) and 1 deals with glossaries, documentation, lexica.

Assessment: This program also has a good chance of training translators, depending on the quality of student admitted, and the numbers of languages involved. Currently, it has too many theoretical courses (8 of 25), and too few language-proficiency courses (only 2). Also, the preamble to the UGC proposal, reads as follows “to be a translator a professional needs the talent to write and express him/herself competently in the target language, usually in our context Tamil language, and a good knowledge of the source languages, generally Sinhala or English languages in our situation. Fluency in the source languages Sinhala or English is not essential ...." This statement corresponds to international norms, making Tamil the A-language and Sinhala and English the B- and C-languages. This is reasonable. However, the proposal then goes on to claim that "participants are expected to achieve supreme level professional skill in translating English into Tamil, Sinhala and vice versa," thus completely undermining this norm, and proposing the impossible.

Currently, 20 students have completed the second semester of this program. Their English is weak to middling. They have no or little knowledge of Sinhala. I could not judge their Tamil. They need computers, access to glossaries and term-banks, and software, as well as access to contemporary English reading/listening materials such as news magazines and broadcasts as well as regular and sustained access to the Internet.

Further, and very urgently, this program requires at least two qualified full-time and permanent staff to be its mainstays, and take responsibility for the English to Tamil and Sinhala to Tamil translation portions of the program. The program is currently lodged with the Department of English as a Second Language, and solicits professors from other departments such as Linguistics or Sinhalese to teach occasional courses. While useful courses are available in these other departments, such short-term, stop-gap planning threatens to undermine or damage the sustainability of the program. It needs the full support of the Ministry of Higher Education. It may also be suggested that the name shall be Bachelor of Translation Methods, instead of BA in Translation Studies.
5. **University of Peradeniya:** This University had a Diploma program in Translation that was funded by development money from CIDA. When the funding stopped two years ago, the program was abandoned.

**Assessment:** There does not seem to be any immediate interest in starting a new program, nor are there trained-in-translation teaching personnel available. The university does have separate BA programs in all 3 languages as well as in Linguistics, and the professors I met felt that a Translation Diploma program could be rekindled from the remains of the previous one. I think it would be a rather large undertaking to rekindle such a Diploma, especially as teaching staff is scarce and it might be difficult to attract senior translators to travel from Colombo to teach in it. (Travel is difficult and payment for teaching low.) In this location and given the existing solid programs in the three languages of Sri Lanka, it might be worthwhile to set up another Bachelor of Translation (perhaps with reference to the attached template.)

**Government Training Institutions:**

1. **NILET:** has been assigned the responsibility of in-service translation training for government translators, or those who have passed the first set of government recruitment exams. It runs 10-day training programs to do so. These programs appear to be largely devised and taught by university professors who offer topics such as “Introduction to Language Study”, “Discourse Analysis”, Semantics and Pragmatics.” Some more practical courses are offered in “Simultaneous Interpretation,” “Science and Medical Translation,” and “Literature.” However, practical, praxis-oriented translation courses do not predominate.
Assessment: It is important to provide continuing education and in-service translator training, but the NILET courses need a lot of improvement and reshaping to serve that objective. They are far too academic, and not praxis-oriented.

At the meeting with NILET, I discovered that the institute had just been assigned the training of 87 newly-recruited translators (who had passed the recruitment exam with grades as low as 25%). There were very few trainers available for this task, and given the low quality of the recruits, I cannot imagine courses in “Text and Intertextuality” or “Creative Writing” which are listed as part of the typical NILET curriculum being very useful for training these particular translation recruits.

In other words, given the responsibilities that NILET has been assigned – to provide in-service language training for translators and translation recruits - it requires massive support of various kinds: curriculum design and building with the praxis-oriented requirements firmly in mind, the identification and hiring of senior translators from the civil service or the private sector who are interested in teaching intensive courses, support with documentation and glossary development, support with high-tech aspects of translation (Translation memories, machine-aided translation, and the like), as well as rethinking on HOW to train translators: in separate language groups, focusing on one A-language, or all together as though there were 3 A-languages.

In the Recommendations I will suggest that NILET participate in and help develop Diploma courses at universities, that will serve both in-service translators and the general linguistically-able public as well as university students.

2. Parliamentary Interpretation Service: this unit provides minimal training for newly recruited interpreters (who are often former English teachers). The training is limited to newly-hired interpreters observing how the work is done, and then learning on-the-job at the side of a senior interpreter in the booth.

Assessment: It is noteworthy that the Parliamentary interpreters work into their A-language only, and are strictly assigned to either the English booth, the Tamil booth, or the Sinhala booth. The in-house training they receive is minimal, but may be all that is
possible under the circumstances. They also suffer from a lack of glossaries and up-to-date documentation and materials as well as technological aids. As noted above, they are also used as translators during their rest periods, required to fill in where actual translators should be working.

In general, training for interpreting could be described as non-existent in Sri Lanka. The university programs discussed above offer one course each. So does NILET. This is just barely an introduction to interpreting.

As interpreter-training is quite different from translator-training and requires an interpretation lab – with booths, recording and playback facilities, a computer console for teachers, and knowledgeable teaching staff to mobilize all this, it may be rather premature to embark on a project in this direction. In the recommendations, I will suggest that ‘community interpreting’ be developed instead for a broader, more immediate impact.

**Confirmed Need for Translators and Interpreters, and for Program Support:**

There is no doubt that the training of translators and interpreters of various kinds, *to function at different levels of competence*, is an urgent matter in the climate of social integration in Sri Lanka. As shown in the examples in the introductory section and as corroborated by every administrator and translator I met, translation or interpretation needs to occur in many different places - every day, and throughout the country. However, the serious dearth of trained and professional translators seriously hampers this activity and the activity of communication across ethnic and language barriers. Moreover, due to years of non-communication and educational policies that promoted separation rather than integration the public service finds it very difficult to recruit qualified personnel. This difficulty is evident in the universities as well where students with good linguistic abilities in two or three languages are not only rare but heading into other fields than translation, given the low status and pay accorded to translators. There are therefore many different problems that need to be addressed – first and foremost the recognition of translation as a
highly-skilled professional activity that has an impact on governmental activity at every level – from the discussions in Parliament to the drafting and implementation of legislation to the work of the courts, the police, the local mayor’s office, and the provision of government services, including those relating to medical health etc..

**Students** seem less willing to enter the field than one might hope. Those I spoke to in Jaffna were not aiming to work in the public service. They want higher salaries and better working conditions than those offered in the public service. Given the fact that they will graduate with very desirable and saleable skills, they will doubtless find lucrative employment in the private sector.

Promotion and marketing of translation service might improve this situation for several reasons: there are apparently numerous unemployed graduates in Sri Lanka. They could recycle as translators if they realize that this is a qualification which will immediately translate into a job. Secondly, there is a large group of young people who are never admitted to university and which could be tapped as a potential source of language professionals. An informative marketing campaign could be useful to attract them into translator-training at universities, SLIATE (technical colleges) to be discussed in the recommendations, or to Diploma programs.

**Teachers and Instructors** are available, but not numerous. At the universities, there are often bilingual or trilingual professors and lecturers who might be persuaded to teach an occasional *practical* course in translating in their particular field (this is the case at the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo.) Similarly, translation programs can draw upon specialists in adjacent Sinhala or Tamil departments for specific courses or assistance from lecturers. However, such ad hoc arrangements do not make for a strong, sustainable program since they are far too dependent upon individuals who may or may not cooperate. This is a longer-term problem that needs to be addressed.

I do not know what kind of staff might be available at the level of SLIATE (technical colleges). This would have to be determined, and is worth exploring.
Finally, very few senior translators seem to be used as teachers for university or diploma courses. These experienced language professionals are a very valuable resource for expertise and up to date translation training. They need to be invited, paid well, and if necessary, given some training in pedagogy (though this is often superfluous.) Also, universities need to become flexible in recognizing the enormous value that these senior translators represent, and allow them – no, BEG them to come and teach – rather than exclude them on the grounds of insufficient academic training. (There has been NO academic training available for them in the past – which is one good reason why they don’t have it!)

**Ministry of Higher Education and University Grants Commission:**

These funding and certifying bodies are very aware of the language problems and the need to produce and train translators and interpreters. Prof. Samaranayake, Chairman of the University Grants Commission, is keen on promoting translation training, as is evident in his dealings with the University of Jaffna, where the new BA has been running without formal approval for the past year. He is also interested in promoting translation programs at the University of Peradeniya (where a recent diploma program folded after CIDA funding stopped) and at the Eastern University (which I could not visit.)

Dr. Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne, Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, has fully endorsed the NLP activities in promoting translator and interpreter training with a letter dated December 23, 2011. He also is very concerned about the situation in Sri Lanka, and interested in helping implement the President’s plan to find ways to promote the country’s three languages in the next year.
Universities Suitable for Translator-Training Programs

Both the University of Kelaniya and the University of Jaffna have active BA programs in translation training. While these programs have weaknesses that need to be addressed, there is some qualified staff available, some resources exist, courses and syllabi have been devised and approved, and the leadership - **Prof. Rajapakse, Head of Linguistics at Kelaniya and Prof. N. Gnanakumaran, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Jaffna** - are very committed.

Other universities, such as the University of Peradeniya, the University of Colombo and the Eastern University may be interested in and appropriate for developing translator and interpreter-training programs. However, it is wise to consider the requirements in terms of teaching personnel and student numbers before embarking on new programs: they are time-consuming to set up. To simplify matters, I am attaching a *template for a syllabus in translator training* that might be circulated to interested universities for consideration and adaptation.

Pre-Service and In-Service Training

Pre-service and in-service training sessions for translators are very valuable. They can include

- practica and internships for students, who work closely with in-service translators that supervise and revise their work,

- a variety of specialized courses or training sessions for in-service translators;

- courses for educated members of the general public who pass the necessary entrance exams). In such a case, general language competencies (for instance of educated retirees) can be turned into professional expertise in particular fields such as financial or medical or legal texts and terminologies, in computer-aided translation, in areas of terminology and lexicology, in the creation of glossaries, term banks, concordances, etc., and in many other areas.
At the moment, such training sessions are not particularly available or very good. Nor are there any links between the university programs and the in-service translators. These should be created.

Internships for students, in-service courses for working translators and Diploma or Certificate courses open to the general public need to be strengthened. Senior in-service translators need to be solicited as excellent, specialized teachers. They could be seconded from their positions in the public service to help train younger translators – preferably at universities with NILET accreditation.

**Gender Issues** are rarely an issue in translation and interpretation – or to be more correct, they are paradoxical. Women traditionally predominate in translation – apparently in Sri Lanka as well. Of 20 students in the Jaffna BA program, 18 are women. At more prestigious and well-paid levels (such as simultaneous interpreting NOT community interpreting) the sexes are usually equally represented. This seemed to be the case at the Sri Lankan Parliament Interpreters’ Centre as well, though no statistics were requested. More statistics will be available at NLP once the list of ‘sworn translators’ eligible to work for the Ministry of Justice has been assessed in this regard.

If translation acquires a higher standing in the Sri Lankan public service, gender issues may arise. For the moment, I doubt they constitute a problem.
Recommendations: on how the NLP might support the Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration to provide translation and interpretation in the official languages and thereby promote communication and social integration.

A. Longer term projects

1. Marketing/Promotion of Translation as a Profession

- No training program can be successful without good students. Attracting good students is paramount. However, good students are not interested in working in poorly paid or unrecognized jobs.

- A marketing campaign directed at the heads of Public Administration on the topic of translation and interpretation as a highly-skilled professional activity is necessary. It would help lobby for more appropriate pay and benefits scales for the services that translators can provide and that the government sorely needs. In addition, serious lobbying should earnestly be undertaken to revive and revitalize the Translators’ Service and the Graduate Translators’ Service in the Government Sector.

- A similar campaign prepared for the Ministry of Higher Education might help free-up some funds to hire full-time, permanent professorial staff that can invest in developing and maintaining programs. The Ministry of National Languages and Social Integration should also receive such campaign/info material and help disseminate it.

- A similar campaign directed at current university students as well as the numerous unemployed arts graduates in Sri Lanka and explaining the high employability rate for translators and interpreters would be of great value.
Similarly, a campaign promoting translation and translation programs to secondary school graduates might sensitize them and their teachers and parents to an area of studies that is especially attractive for students interested in languages, and that contrary to most arts programs, provides immediate employment afterwards. (It is revealed that in the years gone by - during the 1950s and 1960s -, one of the English Language papers, viz., B Syllabus Paper, at the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) Examination contained two paragraphs – one to be translated from English to Sinhala/Tamil and the other to be translated from Sinhala/Tamil to English. This ceased after the 1970s.)

Such a campaign should insist on the A-language aspect of translation: which makes training more efficient and possible, and allows students to develop high skills in the production of one language, while they understand and translate from one or two more.

This campaign could announce translation as a ‘moral imperative’ that will promote social integration until the time all Sri Lankans are tri-lingual.

2. Provide support for both existing university Bachelor’s programs in Translation – Kelaniya and Jaffna – in as many ways as possible:

Lobby Ministry of Higher Education for full-time teaching positions in translator training at the University of Jaffn and at the University of Kelaniya;

Impress upon both the Universities to make the Degree Program a professional course rather than an academic course. In this respect, it would be desirable to rename the program as the Bachelor of Translation (or Bachelor of Translation Methods/Techniques) instead of calling it as the Bachelor of Arts in Translation Studies or Bachelor of Arts in Translation. If the Faculty of Arts/Department of Linguistics is interested in running or continuing with an academic program of
Bachelor of Arts in Translation Studies, it should not be a bar to the professional degree program that is being promoted here.

- Promote the international norm of translation training in one A-language. I suggest that the Jaffna program specialize in Tamil translation and the Kelaniya program in Sinhala translation, at least until these programs have sufficient impetus and student numbers to develop a second stream;

- Provide immediate help with revision of curricula at both universities (see attached template);

- Organize meetings with the Public Administration recruitment people (Management Services Department of the Treasury, Salaries & Cadre Commission and the Public Service Commission), UGC and NILET so that everyone agrees on the value of the Bachelor in Translation and accredits it). Similar meetings and encouragements must be made with regard to the Judicial Service Commission and the Ministry of Justice as the services of translators and interpreters are very critical and essential in the Judicial Sector as well;

- Develop resources: a manual and student exercise book on translation between Sinhala and Tamil is an urgent requirement; normally called a manual of “comparative stylistics;”

- Help with computer-aided translation: locate terminologists/teachers, procure computers, help with access to Internet, access to and development of term banks, glossaries, and translation software of Tamil-Sinhala;

- Consider developing contacts to universities in Tamil Nadu in this regard; Tamil University in Thanjavur, India may be very useful for procurement of Tamil glossaries, lexica, and English-Tamil translation manuals; and Tamil
University has graduate degrees in Computational Linguistics where such computer skills mesh with language needs;

- Seek out and promote strong practica/internship positions for students at both universities: senior translators and interpreters have declared themselves willing to take on interns – notably, the GA’s head translator in Jaffna (P. Chandababa), and the deputy chief interpreter at Parliament, Mr. W.M.U. Bandara, upali_b@parliament.lk (Tel: 071-5356680) as well as the interpreter Mr. Priynakara Perera. Others need to be found, and arrangements made.

- Provide funding so that students can participate in these practica: travel, lunch money, etc.

- Seek out senior translators to work as specialized teachers; lobby and persuade universities to hire such personnel for a number of its courses; make these courses available for in-service training and/or diplomas; lobby the Ministry of Higher Education to pay these teachers well.

3. **Explore possibilities of developing translator training at SLIATE colleges, and if appropriate, help with curricula**

- The possibility of organizing translator-training at these tertiary-level colleges came up late in my visit, and was not explored further due to time constraints. **Dr. Nimal Goonatilake**, a representative of the Ministry of Higher Education and **Prof. K. Kapila C. K. Perera, Director General of Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education (SLIATE)** seemed very interested in this possibility, and I think that two-year programs in translation and **community-interpreting** at such institutions could be very effective in quickly producing quite competent graduates to fill some of the many positions
available. Many European countries (Belgium, Germany, Austria, Italy, France, UK) train translators in such technical colleges while translation studies – the academic analyses of translations and work on translation history or theory - is done at universities.

(Community-interpreting) differs from conference interpreting in that it is not simultaneous or carried out in a highly technologized booth. Instead, it deals with citizens who require oral language support in everyday situations: at the police station, at the municipal offices, in other government offices, at medical institutions, in the courts, and so on. Community interpreters need translation training as well as training in specialized vocabulary and situations. They also benefit from training in handling the public under stress. They could work all through the north and east of Sri Lanka, in the police stations, the courts, the hospitals, in government offices of all kinds – and doubtless throughout the southern part of the country too.

- A very propitious aspect of the SLIATE colleges is their reputedly strong background in English. They train English teachers in their English programs, and such students (who probably have either Sinhala or Tamil as their first languages) could also be interested in translation. Further, these are quality students, who have just missed out on university admission which is very competitive, yet are perfectly able to become professionals in other areas. In fact, they may be more interested in translation as a profession than the actual university students, who can be expected to aim ‘higher,’ given the current low status of translation in this country.

- An important consideration is the question of the A-language, i.e. selecting colleges where the student population has strong Tamil or strong Sinhala for the purposes of producing high-quality texts.
o Another consideration is the availability of teachers. It is probably wise to develop no more than two programs at first (one focussed on Tamil, the other on Sinhala), soliciting help from senior translators, and seeking out appropriate staff from within the colleges or hiring new people specifically for these programs.

o Curriculum development would be an important component. Also the access to practica and internships.

B. Shorter Term Project:

4. Develop specialized courses and in-service training support for/with NILET and a number of Universities

o Establish a basic template for a Diploma or Certificate in Translation – for example, six praxis-oriented courses with 36 contact hours, and an entrance examination testing linguistic competence required for admission - so that some agreement can be reached (with Public Administration, NILET, UGC, and relevant universities) about what a Diploma means and is worth;

o Improve the Diploma course at University of Kelaniya (described above) and make it applicable for NILET in-service training for working translators. This means revising the course contents (with a focus on A-languages), seeking out senior translators to teach the courses, making agreements between the university and NILET that are mutually acceptable – so that these courses can serve both in-service translators and other qualified members of the community;

o Explore the possibility of establishing other Diploma courses: at University of Colombo Law School, for example, where Prof. N. Selvakkumaran, the Dean, is very supportive, and where Law students as well as in-service translators
could benefit from such specialized training in the translation of contracts, court documents, human rights legislation, official languages legislation, property law, legislative texts, etc.)

- Support NILET by lobbying government departments to release senior translators to work periodically as trainers; by helping with curricula design and updating; by promoting collaboration with universities and SLIATE institutions (if appropriate) so that in-service translator training and diploma programs coincide. In this way the expertise of the small number of available trainers is focused in well-planned and accredited programs with a double mission: to provide a Diploma in Translation to linguistically competent adults (university students, members of the general public, etc.) AND at the same time offer in-service training for translators.

A Study Report by:

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Annex:

I. Template for a 4 year BA in Translation
Template for a 4-year BA in Translation to train competent junior translators
working into one A-language from one B-language

Applicants must pass an admissions exam that tests their writing and grammar skills in their A-language, and their comprehension and reading skills in their B-language.

This BA program consists of 4 years or 8 semesters of study. Students take about 5 courses per semester, for a total of 40 courses. Each course has approximately 36 contact hours in class. Students must take at least 20 specific translation-related courses of which one is a practicum that they must complete successfully.) The other 20 courses of the BA are optional and students should be encouraged to focus these in a particular area: social sciences, or sciences, or law, or literary studies, or another language in order to acquire competency in specific fields.

Overview of program:

Year One: Improving A-language abilities and B-language breadth, and beginning translation

Year Two: Practising translation, comparative stylistics, improving A-language production and B-language understanding, terminology and technology;

Year Three: Practising translation, translation theories, terminology and technology, writing administrative/legal texts in A-language;

Year Four: Practising different types of translation (audiovisual translation, community interpreting, legal translation, science translation, technical translation, etc.). Practicum.

Specific Courses: each course meets for twelve weeks and has three contact hours per week: 36 hours total plus exam
**Year One:**

**Semester One:**
- Reading and understanding the B-language
- Grammar and Stylistics of the A-language

**Semester Two:**
- Recognizing and understanding different text-types in B-language
- Recognizing, understanding and producing different text-types in A-language

**Year Two:**

**Semester One:**
- General Translation I
- Comparative Stylistics
- Terminology I

**Semester Two**
- General Translation II
- Translation technologies I

**Year Three**

**Semester One**
- Specialized Translation (medical or legal or science texts, depending on teacher available)
- Terminology II
- Translation theories and ethics
Semester Two

Technical Translation

Translation technologies II

Writing Techniques in A-language I (advanced grammar, structure, style for different text types)

Year Four

Semester One

Community Interpreting

Specialized Translation

Semester Two

Writing Techniques in A-Language II

Specialized Translation

Practicum

Various optional courses could be designed: in literary translation, subtitling, translation of the hard-of-hearing, pragmatics for community interpreting – depending on teachers available and students competencies/interests, and on funding.