



Industrial Language Training

THE INDUSTRIAL LANGUAGE TRAINING  
SERVICE

- ITS ORIGINS, DEVELOPMENT, AND  
FUTURE, WITH PARTICULAR REFER-  
ENCE TO ITS CURRENT AND FUTURE  
FUNDING

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APPENDIX I: NCILT Information Sheet No. 27  
Aims and objectives of Industrial  
Language Training in the Workplace.

## 1.0 THE BEGINNINGS OF ILT

1.1 The Industrial Language Training Service was first established as a national service in 1974 when Government funds were made available to Local Authorities (under the Urban Programme, and Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966) 'with a view to their establishing further units which will provide language training at the employer's establishment geared to the needs of the work situation, on the lines of the Pathway Centre at Ealing'. 1

1.2 In a memorandum in July 1974 the Department of Employment described the purpose of the proposed scheme in the following way:-

'..... up to about 100,000 immigrant workers, the majority of whom were Asians, were unable to develop their skills and abilities because of language difficulties, and would benefit from training. Where language training had already been introduced it had improved communications and standards of safety, and increased productivity. Relations between immigrants and indigenous workers had also improved. Language training could also have important social consequences, enabling immigrants to participate more fully in the life of the community .....'. 2

1.3 The general background, within which the decision to establish the scheme was taken, was Government concern over the issues of racial disadvantage, as it had been explored and defined during the early 1970s by the Home Affairs Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, and P.E.P. (now P.S.I.) studies in this field.

In the 10 years since the service was established discussions at parliamentary policy-making level have always taken place within this broad context: the context of racial disadvantage in Britain, and the means by which it might be combatted. This had been explicitly stated, for example, by Mr John Grant in 1978 when Central Government took over the full funding of the service:

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1. Report of Home Affairs Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Session 1973-4, Vol. II: Memorandum of 13 December 1973 by Department of Employment, para. 10.
2. *ibid*: Memorandum of 11 July 1974 by Department of Employment, para. 2.

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'These decisions reflect the importance the Government attached to the improvement of the Industrial Language Training Service, and its recognition of the contribution the service makes to racial equality policies .....' 3. The Fifth Report of the Home Affairs Select Committee Session 1980-1 also located language issues clearly within a whole context of racial disadvantage. 4

## 1.0 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ILT

While one of the primary foci of the service when it started and indeed since had been the provision of in-company language training for E2L speakers, the broader issues of improved communications and relationships in multi-racial working contexts, and of wider social consequences and concerns, have increasingly figured in the developmental thinking within ILT. The service has always been flexible and responsive, and in the 10 years since its inception it has responded creatively to changes in the social and economic climate to academic developments in the field of linguistics, and not least to changes in the analysis of race relations issues.

1.2 Some of these changes are reflected in statements made about ILT to the Home Affairs Select Committee in 1980-81. For example, the MSC describes the service's remit in this way:-

'Industrial Language Training is aimed at improving communication in multi-racial workplaces. The main elements are:-

- a) improving the language and communication skills in English of workers from overseas in ways relevant to their work and workplaces; and
- b) providing supervisors, trade unionists and others with skills and information relevant to effective communication across the barriers of language and culture.' 5

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- 3. Mr John Grant, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment, in a written reply to a Parliamentary Question from Mr George Rodgers, MP (Chorley).
- 4. Racial Disadvantage: 5th Report of Home Affairs Select Committee, Session 1980-1, Vol. I: Introduction.
- 5. Op. cit: Vol. II Minutes of evidence: Memorandum of 19 July 1980 submitted by MSC.



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This perception - that successful communication is a two-way process which involves factors of language and culture - is an important recognition of a holistic approach which is central to ILT as it is to-day.

- 2.3 The complexity of the inter-relationship between language and disadvantage is explored in some detail and with greater sophistication than it had been previously in a paper submitted in evidence by Tom Jupp, then Director of NCILT (the National Centre for Industrial Language Training), who introduces the subject of his paper in this way:-

'Language is central to human interaction and plays a unique role in the transmission and formation of the values, identity and culture which make up an individual's and a group's social reality. Because language has this role it cannot in reality be separated from other matters affecting ethnic minority people who speak English as a second language such as race discrimination, cultural differences, sheer lack of information and understanding about many aspects of life in Britain.' 6

- 2.4 In effect, since its inception, ILT has not stood still but as its understanding of the complexity of issues around language, communication and disadvantage has increased so its provision has been adapted to meet newly defined needs. These developments within the service led to the issue in June 1981 of a statement of aims and objectives for ILT, (see Appendix I). This statement has not been superseded and perhaps has no need to be since it explicitly recognises that development and change within the service is a crucial aspect of its function.

'We cannot define permanently the type of training course we provide, or where and how it is provided. These things develop in response to change in the employment context - particularly at the present time. The quality of our work has to be continually developed and strengthened in order for us to respond to these changing needs.' 7

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6. Op. cit: Vol. III Minutes of evidence: Language, Disadvantage and Ethnic Minorities, submitted by Tom Jupp, Director of NCILT, 1981.

7. NCILT Information Sheet No. 27.

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2.5 Since 1981 the accelerated increase in unemployment, (particularly amongst minority ethnic communities), and the accompanying polarisation of attitudes within society have required a response from the ILT service. This has led to the development of courses with a more explicit anti-racist focus and to an increased emphasis on assisting workplaces to institute and implement Equal Opportunity practices and procedures.

### 3.0 ILT TO-DAY

3.1 A national network of thirty ILT units provides a consultancy and training service of high quality to both the private and public sector, where issues of language, culture, and racial disadvantage surface in working contexts in organisations. The quality of the service, and the dissemination of new developments and good practice is assured by the role of the National Centre (NCILT) which provides a national resource centre holding (amongst many other resources) the best of local developments and materials; a high-calibre programme of in-service training, developmental working groups, and the frequent dissemination of information etc. The resource centre attracts large numbers of visitors and enquiries every year, including several hundred from overseas. NCILT is a highly regarded resource internationally and has been consulted where ILT type services have been established in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

3.2 ILT methodology when working in an organisation is, as it always has been, an in-depth analysis of communication systems within the organisation, using techniques of observation, participant observation and interview. The involvement and commitment of all interested parties - workers, managers, employers and trade unions - is sought. The survey is followed by a (usually written) report on findings with recommendations for training. If these recommendations are accepted the training is carried out in courses designed uniquely for the particular context involved. These are then evaluated against criteria agreed to both by the organisation concerned, and by the course-participants.

3.3 Whilst ILT has constantly refined and developed its thinking expertise, and hence the services it provides, the aim of those services remains constant: to work to shift the

balance of the disadvantage faced by ethnic minority persons in the workplace or as consumers of services provided by white institutions. The types of training required in any particular workplace/organisation, however, will vary widely depending on the particular factors identified as combining to produce that disadvantage. This may involve training for either ethnic minority or indigenous persons, or indeed for ethnically mixed groups.

### 3.3.1 Communications Training for E2L Speakers

This includes basic training in the English language needed for job-processes in manufacturing, for fuller participation in the culture of the workplace, and towards the fuller realization of individual and group skills. It also covers advanced communications training for bilinguals - for example, in customer-relations in the transport industry; in pre-shop steward training for shop-stewards; or in supporting the full competence of bilinguals in the Civil Service where it can enhance the chances of promotion. An important purpose of training of this type wherever it occurs is to enable ethnic minority workers to better represent themselves and their views in the context of their work.

### 3.3.2 Cross-cultural Training for Multi-Racial Workplaces/ Organisations

This training examines cross-cultural issues and their expression in communication and considers their effects not only on working relationships between native and non-native speakers of English but also on the safety, efficiency, participation and advancement of ethnic minority workers. Such training can be provided for indigenous groups, e.g. managers, supervisors, admin. staff or shop stewards, or for ethnically mixed groups, e.g. departmental teams, shop stewards' committees, health and safety representatives, etc.

### 3.3.3 Cross-cultural Communication and Anti-Racism Training for Agencies with a Multi-Racial Clientele

In the last four or five years there has been an increasing demand for ILT services in this field from Local Authority departments, Housing Federations, Citizens Advice Bureaux, DHSS, Banks and Building Societies, and other agencies who wish to ensure fair and equal provision to all their clients.



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The training involves promoting awareness of the ways in which racism can inform the conception and delivery of the service, and involves developing the procedures and skills to operate the service in a non-discriminatory manner.

#### 3.3.4 Equal Opportunity Training

Consultancy and training is given to employers and key staff in companies/organisations with an Equal Opportunities Policy, to help with reviews of procedures and practices, and to contribute appropriate training at the crucial points where inadvertent discrimination may take place. A great deal of work has been done on recruitment and promotion selection where course participants can be made aware of the highly (British) culture specific nature of, for example, the recruitment selection interview, and can develop new procedures and approaches to minimise its discriminatory effects.

- 3.4 ILT to-day is a unique service working as it does within a coherent national framework, adapted to local conditions and needs. It operates in the context of race, ethnicity, language and culture in the world of work, both responding to perceived need but also in a creative capacity to raise awareness about aspects of working in a multi-racial society that many organisations and people are not clear about. Its existence is a crucial indication of the seriousness of Government commitment to principles of equal opportunity and the active combatting of racial disadvantage.

#### 4.0 FUNDING OF ILT

- 4.1 During the period 1974-1978 the Industrial Language Training Service was funded mainly through Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. Under this section local authorities could set up ILTUs and be reimbursed by Central Government up to 75% of their costs. Some limited assistance for running expenses and overheads was also made available under Urban Aid Programme (Local Government Grants (Social Needs) Act 1969). In addition, the Manpower Services Commission undertook the financing of NCILT (National Centre for Industrial Language Training) which was set up to service and support local units and to provide training for ILT staff.



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4.2 This method of funding the scheme was, however, problematic. Many Local Authorities were reluctant to devote scarce resources to work they regarded as being on the margin of their activities, and units were often obliged to work strictly within LEA boundaries even though these boundaries were not necessarily relevant in the context of ILT needs.

4.3 As from October 1978 the then Training Services Division of MSC took over full responsibility for the funding of ILTUs and NCILT for the period up to 1987. At this time Mr John Grant said:-

'This would provide a more stable system of finance and enable the Commission to plan ahead, and train staff of the necessary quality.' 8

Units are administered by their respective Local Education Authorities and development plans and budgets are agreed annually with MSC Head Office in Sheffield. Units are expected to recover a proportion of their funds by charging fees and this proportion is at present 15%.

4.4 The ILT service has long recognised the need for language training for second language speakers who have been made redundant and/or those on work preparation courses. Unfortunately training of this nature falls outside the remit of the scheme and units wishing to work in this area have had to take on extra staff by applying for funds from regional MSC (TOPs). Many new training courses for the unemployed have been pioneered by the ILT scheme - notably CET (Communication for Employment and Training). LOPs (Language for Opportunities) and WOC (Wider Opportunities Course). However, the vagaries of local funding (courses not posts are funded) has meant that both the consistency and quality of training provided are difficult to maintain.

#### 5.0 FUNDING OF ILT POST 1987: IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT MSC THINKING

5.1 MSC is currently reviewing its funding of the ILT service as from April 1987. These deliberations are in their early stages and as yet no concrete proposals have been made to the Commission. However, initial MSC thinking

8. Mr John Grant: op. cit.

indicates a desire to tailor ILT funding to that of other initiatives planned under the Adult Training Strategy which is to operate largely by making funds available to industry to buy in training of a kind it deems appropriate to its particular concerns and current issues.

- 5.2 In practice the procedure for funding ILT within this particular philosophical and bureaucratic strategy would mean the following: a company/organisation considering the provision of ILT training would apply with specific training proposals to MSC Training Division Area Office for grant aid approval and, this having been obtained, the company/organisation would buy in ILT staff to deliver the agreed training. This practice would replace existing MSC funding of the ILT service, i.e. MSC would cease underwriting units' general operating costs.
- 5.3 It is likely that this early thinking may be modified before any proposals are placed before the Commission. However, unless substantial representations are made to the contrary it is also likely that any revised funding proposals will still retain the intention of channelling a significant part of the allotted ILT budget through industry. Such a change in funding arrangements would have major effects on the purpose, content, quality and consistency of the work of the ILT service and indeed on the workability of the scheme as a whole.
- 5.4 As outlined at 1.0 - 1.3, the ILT scheme was established as a resource and a service for ethnic minority workers in response to overwhelming evidence of racial disadvantage at work. These resources were to be deployed in the workplace, that being the arena where this disadvantage was played out. The focal point of these resources was always, however, the ethnic minority workers and their needs (see 1.2).
- MSC's future funding proposals, in channelling funds through the employer, effectively makes the workplace the focus of the resource rather than the ethnic minority workers. The result of such a shift in emphasis would be to deny ethnic minority workers primacy of importance in one of the very few resources allocated to reduce racial disadvantage in employment.
- 5.5 It is recognised by Government policy that the securing of good race relations and equality of opportunity cannot be assumed to follow naturally from the demands of the marketplace and that legislation, regulation and intervention are

necessary if workplaces are to be assisted in achieving these important objectives. It is unlikely, therefore, that employers, without the stimulus of the promotional and educational work currently carried out by ILT units, will of their own volition identify inequalities within their workplace or within the services they provide and undertake a complicated process of seeking remedial training. Under the projected funding proposals ILT's interventionist and educative role would be no longer possible.

- 5.6 Under current MSC funding once ILT's intervention has stimulated interest within a company/organisation in issues relating to racial disadvantage the unit concerned carries out a detailed survey (see 3.2) to establish the variety of training need and to delineate the type of action, training and follow-up necessary to meet those needs. These proposals are then discussed and agreed with all parties involved. To hand this process (i.e. of disclosing and describing training needs) to the employer, as the current MSC proposal intends, is to deny the professionalism and knowledge required to carry out this difficult and detailed process and to invalidate the well recognised level of expertise ILT units have gained in this regard.
- 5.7 As unit costs are now covered by MSC, ILT units are perceived by employers, trade unions and community organisation as being apart from vested industrial interests. ILT units are respected as independent professional bodies whose observations, proposals and training courses are based solely on a concern for improved communications and the development of equality of opportunity in multi-racial workplaces. Funding ILT via grant aid to employers would remove this independence from ILT units and would result in the withdrawal of support for the service from trade unions, community groups and in some instances the workforce itself.
- 5.8 As outlined in 2.0 - 2.4 the ILT service has continuously refined and developed the service it offers both in response to economic, social and industrial change, local circumstances and increased demand, and by incorporating new developments in understanding of cross-cultural communication and race awareness training. This continuing creativity has been rendered possible by the fact that the ILT scheme is funded in terms of staff rather than courses (thereby enabling units to be flexible as to the amount of



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time required for any specific project) and by the fact that the national network of ILT units has the capacity to rapidly share new ideas and approaches via a national information exchange and a national internal staff development programme. This is ultimately a cost effective way of operating, avoiding the constant re-invention of the wheel in a number of different parts of the country and ensuring that the quality of the training provided is such that it will create its own demand. Under the proposed fragmentary funding, linked to courses rather than to staffing, this creative and developmental capacity would be lost and the national network impossible to maintain. This would quickly erode the originality, quality and hence effectiveness of ILT training, which has been its hallmark, and which has ensured its continued success and marketability throughout changing and difficult economic circumstances.

- 5.9 A further and crucial benefit of the existing mechanism of the funding of staff rather than courses has been that ILT has been able to offer potential recruits to the scheme relatively long term employment. This, combined with the pioneering and committing nature of the work, has enabled the scheme to attract staff of a high calibre and to retain them over a number of years. In turn, this has allowed the service to accumulate rather than dissipate knowledge and experience, and to remain in the forefront of developments in the field. ILT experience of developing work with the unemployed, which is funded regionally by MSC TD area offices on a course by course basis (see 4.4), has shown both that the short term contracts one can offer under such funding arrangements are, for obvious reasons, often unattractive to experienced and highly qualified applicants and also that, unless any staff employed have the back-up of existing experienced colleagues supplemented by a staff development programme, the quality of the training that can be mounted is extremely difficult to ensure. Cross-cultural communications training was and remains a new and developing field. The body of knowledge and expertise that has been developed is largely located in the persons who make up the ILT service. To lose the services of those persons, an outcome to which the highly unstable nature of the projected funding arrangements would inevitably lead, would be to lose the ILT service, to effectively terminate developments in cross-cultural communications training for the workplace, and to waste the fruits of the resources MSC has invested in the scheme since 1978.



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- 5.10 The projected funding arrangements, whereby a company/organisation would buy in the services of an ILT unit, presupposes that the ILT unit would exist to be bought in. Unless, however, MSC head office continues to underwrite the running costs of the units the units will be broken up (by staff being made redundant or re-deployed by the Local Authority in question), and will not be in existence to be called upon by employers.
- 5.11 It is clear that MSC thinking on future funding of ILT as it stands would lead to a grave diminution in the purpose, capacity and quality of the ILT service, and hence to a rapid dissolution of demand, and in a relatively short space of time to the destruction of the scheme. The ILT service makes up less than 1% of the projected monies the Government is to allocate to ATS and is the only national training service it funds with the specific brief of working in the field of race and equality of opportunity in employment. The retention of the service via a funding mechanism which can genuinely support it is a significant measure of the Government's seriousness in combatting racial disadvantage and in promoting equality of opportunity at work.