EITHNE O'CONNELL and JENNIFER PEARSON: PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TRANSLATORS IN IRELAND. A PROFILE OF THE N.I.H.E. APPLIED LANGUAGES DEGREE.

Even as recently as the early 1970's when Ireland joined the EEC, the number of Irish nationals employed as translators and interpreters, both at home and abroad, was surprisingly small. The majority had taken traditional Arts degrees at Irish universities or had been trained abroad. At that time, Ireland did not offer any formal training to degree level for translators and interpreters.

It soon became clear that there was a very real need for a national centre which would offer this type of training. Thus it was that the National Institute for Higher Education, (N.I.H.E.), Dublin, was selected to design and implement a 4 year degree programme.

N.I.H.E. is a new technological university, the second of its kind in Ireland, which was established to respond to the changing needs of Ireland's industrial and commercial sectors. The Institute enrolled its first students in 1980 and now has approximately 1,800 students. N.I.H.E. Dublin currently offers eleven undergraduate degree courses, all of which are designed to reflect current industrial needs.

The School of Applied Languages which enrolled its first students in 1981 offers two degree programmes, both of which are the first of their kind in Ireland(1). The degree in Languages and International Marketing provides a unique combination of language and marketing skills and is designed to equip graduates for a career in international marketing.

The programme for the Degree in Applied Languages (Translating with Interpreting) was designed to train translators who, in addition to receiving general language and LSP training, acquire related expertise in the non-language fields of science and technology and economics. The present structure of the course is the result of lengthy research and close consultation with a large number of experts, international organisations and schools of translation both at home and abroad.

At present, the School of Applied Languages offers French and German to degree level but students can also attend classes in Italian, Spanish and Japanese. It is envisaged that these additional languages will be offered to degree level in coming years.

Broadly speaking, the first two years of the course in Applied Languages can be divided into three areas: language, translation and specialist subjects. This course commenced in 1982. In its present form, the first year syllabus is designed to develop general language skills, both oral and written, and, at the same time, through such courses as contrastive stylistics and text contraction, to lay the foundation for later work in the field of translation theory and practice.

Sections I and II are linked thematically and the lectures are designed to provide the students with a background knowledge of literary/cultural, political/economic aspects of French and German speaking countries.

The second year course builds on the skills and techniques acquired in the first year. Students are introduced at this stage to the translation of semi-specialised texts. Lectures in Economics and Science provide students with theoretical knowledge of the subject matter encountered in the specialised translation courses.

(1) The Letterkenny Regional Technical College and the Dublin College of Technology both offer two year certificate courses in tri-lingual secretarial/translation studies.
In view of the fact that no school of translation can possibly hope to familiarise its students with all aspects of a foreign language and culture, N.I.H.E. includes a compulsory year abroad as an integral feature of the Applied Languages degree.

At present, exchange agreements exist with a total of four universities in France and Germany (Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon III, Mainz/Germersheim, Saarbrucken). This means that students from these institutions can attend N.I.H.E. courses (i.e. not only those offered by the school of Applied Languages but also courses taught by other schools such as Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, Physics etc) for one or two semesters while our students are enrolled abroad. The presence of various nationalities in, for example, a translation class invariably leads to stimulating discussion amongst students. In October 1985, the University of Laval, Quebec, will join the exchange programme.

During their year abroad NIHE students, for their part, are expected to attend lectures and seminars in both major languages at the host institution. At the same time, each student undertakes a major translation project which includes the preparation of a small tri-lingual glossary. In addition to academic pursuits, students are encouraged to avail themselves fully of this unique opportunity to experience a foreign language and culture at first hand.

Students returning from their year abroad pursue their language studies in both French and German to the same level. Year 4 can be subdivided into three main sections: a) general language work and special subject options, b) theory and practice of translation and c) introduction to interpreting.

Courses from section (a) aim to develop general language skills to an advanced level through the systematic analysis and discussion of various aspects of social, cultural and political life in French/German-speaking countries. Students are also required to select one special subject option. The present choice, which reflects the particular research interests of the language staff, includes such diverse topics as: Language in Advertising, Practical Exercises in Terminology, Satire in 20th Century German Literature etc.

Understandably, courses relating specifically to theoretical and/or practical aspects of translation form the largest section in the Year 4 programme. On the very practical side, students tackle advanced specialised translation (economic/legal, scientific/technical) in both major languages.

In 1985/86, courses dealing in detail with various aspects of translation theory and technique as well as the theory and methodology of terminological work will also feature significantly. In coming years, however, a slight shift of emphasis is anticipated, with certain aspects of these courses featuring at an earlier stage, (i.e. Year 2) in order to give students every possible advantage when they embark upon their independent research during the year abroad and to provide the necessary theoretical foundation for the development of the translation project into a major piece of terminological work.

The course in translation technology is designed to familiarise students with recent developments in the field of computer-aided translation and combines theory with practical hands-on experience.

2) An article describing this project in detail is currently in preparation.
The staff of the School of Applied Language is, as already stated, involved in two degree programmes: Applied Languages and Languages and International Marketing. Consequently, the professional experience and research interests of the various members of the teaching staff reflect the range of expertise required. Thus it is that lecturers in the School of Applied Languages are actively involved in research in Terminology, LSP, Applied Linguistics, Literature, Sociology, EFL etc. The bulk of those involved in the Applied Languages degree course have worked as translators and/or interpreters either in Ireland or abroad before joining the N.I.H.E. staff.

Other schools within the college are responsible for non-language specialist subjects: i.e. Economics, Technology Fundamentals, etc., and part-time staff provide optional classes in Spanish, Japanese and Italian for those who wish to acquire a knowledge of an additional language.

As the School of Applied Languages is still relatively new, its staff is always keen to establish new links with overseas colleagues involved in similar aspects of LSP teaching.

Structure of 4 year degree in Applied Languages (N.I.H.E. Dublin)