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# Projecting Soft Power Through English Language Training

By  
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I have taken pains to ensure that the facts in this article are accurate. If there are any factual errors, it is entirely my fault. The opinions and suggestions are my own and do not necessarily represent the thinking of the Air Force or the Defense Language Institute English Language Center.

## Introduction

A sagacious, cynical friend of mine, whose candid, acerbic insights more often prove right than wrong, told me that the proposal below would be dead on arrival. He said, “Your pet rabbit is a cuddly little ball of fur to you, but every bureaucrat in the U.S. government is nurturing his own pet rabbit. Your little cutie is an ugly hair ball to these guys.” He added that to harried, monolingual bureaucrats, attempting to conceptualize ELT as Soft Power would seem to be a prodigious waste of brain cells. He added, “Soft Power is an amorphous, mushy blob” and “ELT is touchy-feely, cultural flotsam.” I hope my caustic friend is wrong.

The purpose of this article is fourfold: First, to proclaim the enormous Soft Power potential of ELT; second, to propose that the United States exploit this enormous potential by launching a veritable worldwide ELT Blitzkrieg, third to suggest that the Department of State assume responsibility for this initiative with the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLI) in an advisory role; and fourth to offer broad guidelines for implementation of the initiative.

## Soft Power

In his seminal book *Soft Power*, Joseph, Nye Jr. answers the question “What is Soft Power?” as follows: “It is the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals and policies.” Throughout the book he gives additional insights into the nature and applications of the Soft Power concept.

Anyone who has traveled abroad has observed the ubiquitous artifacts of American culture. On the streets you see the more banal artifacts: NBA Jerseys, ads for American films, Coca-Cola, icons of Pamela Anderson, skateboards, fast food, etc. In less conspicuous surroundings, foreign scholars examine the more sublime artifacts of our culture such as our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and American football. Or, they read the works of Steinbeck, Faulkner, Poe, Hemingway, Thoreau, Frost etc. Or, they marvel at the brilliance of Dr. King’s triumphant leadership of the civil rights movement. With respect to understanding the legacy of the United States, the magnitude of the Soft Power of ELT is directly proportional to the number of people who strive to learn English to better understand this legacy. However, the potential Soft Power of ELT does not just derive solely from the attractive features of our culture. As we will see below, English language proficiency (ELP) has become a sine qua non for countries to function as members of the global economy. Around the globe, young officials aspiring to corporate or government leadership positions must possess a high degree of ELP to achieve their goal. This constitutes an absolute requirement for ELP, no matter what one thinks of American institutions and values. This absolute requirement exponentially magnifies the Soft Power potential of ELT.

## Summary of Recommendations to Project English Language Training Soft Power

- The U.S. government should open English Language Training Centers (ELTCs) in major cities around the world.

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- The ELTCs should provide ELT to individuals who are either now influential or who are likely to be influential. That is to say, ELT should be offered to the “shakers and the movers.”
  - The U.S. Department of State should manage this ELT initiative.
  - The ELTCs should employ the Defense Language Institute English Language Center (DLI) ELT system.
  - DLI should serve in an advisory capacity until the ELTC program is firmly established.

### **Background Information**

In the Summer 2003 edition of this Journal, there appeared an article authored by me and entitled English Language Training as a Projection of Soft Power. The basic premise of this article was that the United States could project an enormous amount of soft power by exercising the leverage inherent in the worldwide demand for ELT. The article alleged that the security assistance training community (SATC) generally fails to realize the immense importance of ELT to friends and allies around the world. The article posited that, even though the SATC did sponsor ELT for international military students (IMS), it viewed ELT more as an obstacle to be overcome in order to attend follow-on training (FOT) than as a good in its own right. Many IMSs regard ELT itself, not FOT, as the most significant element of U.S.-sponsored training. FOT gives them professional knowledge, but unless the IMSs can discuss this knowledge in fluent English, their career prospects are limited.

### **Status of the English Language**

English is, de facto, the world’s lingua franca. Governments and corporations need a cadre of key personnel with a high level of ELP to be players on the world stage. The trend is that government and corporate officials without a high level of ELP are fated to be spectators in the cheap seats. In Ministry of Defense (MoD) circles, ELP is the ticket to participation in peacekeeping missions and joint military exercises; to participation in international conferences and attend U.S. military schools; to effective use of the Internet; to instant access to developments in the scientific, business, economic, and military spheres. Many members of the SATC seem unaware of the enormous importance of ELP to the IMSs. Just as the dollar is the world’s currency, so ELP is the universal currency of international discourse. To mix metaphors, “You can not leave home without it.”

With respect to Soft Power, it is hard to overstate the attractiveness of ELT. It is the perfect projection of soft power. It is, if you will, a “weapon of mass attraction.” In short, the U.S. government has a commodity (ELT) that many millions of international friends, potential friends, and even enemies ardently desire. We are in the enviable position of not having to employ marketing experts to create a demand for our product; there is already more demand than we can ever accommodate. The U.S. government’s ability to bestow ELT gives it the power to positively influence lives and reap a bonanza of good will. To be sure, in every country there are indigenous commercial and government-run ELT programs. Frequently, only a few select individuals are able to attend the government-run programs. Often these individuals have the same last names as prominent members of the government establishment. Most commercial ELT programs are expensive and too few of these mostly non-intensive programs lead to a high ELP level. The worldwide demand for quality ELT far outstrips the supply.

### **The Key to this Initiative Excellence Anonymous**

The adage, “No one is a prophet in his own land.” Certainly holds true for DLI. Very few Americans know of its existence, including (believe it or not) some high level DoD officials. In contrast, the DLI logo is as familiar to many foreign military personnel as the Coca Cola logo. DLI, founded in 1954, is now training the sons and daughters of alumni. The MoDs in more than sixty countries, after a great deal of comparison shopping, have adopted the DLI American Language

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Course (ALC) instructional materials. Most of these MoDs have little money to spend on training of any kind. Nevertheless, they consistently choose to spend a disproportionate amount of money on ELT. Bringing DLI teams to their countries in order to assist them in transitioning to the DLI system is a heavy financial burden. Yet, the demand for the deployment of DLI teams continues to grow, indicating that DLI clients realize the value they are getting for their money. DLI has a track record of transforming moribund ELT programs into dynamic, productive learning centers. Most security assistance officers (SAOs) actively encourage the deployment of DLI teams to their country. Yet, there are a few SAOs who vigorously oppose the deployment because they regard it as too expensive. They try to convince host-country officials to spend their money on “more worthy” items. In spite of such fitful opposition, the growth in demand is occurring. Unfortunately, some members of the SATC seem oblivious of DLI’s mission, let alone its preeminence.

I use the word “preeminence” advisedly. The reason that I wish to establish DLI’s preeminence is that I am proposing that the DLI system be used to implement the proposal to project ELT as Soft Power. You will note that I am not proposing that DLI be in charge of this initiative. The scope of this proposal goes well beyond the bounds of DLI’s charter. For this reason, I am suggesting that DLI serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of State.

### **Three Fatal Flaws**

Establishing ELT programs is not rocket science, but, for one reason or another, the world is littered with aborted ELT start ups. In performing post mortems on dead ELT programs around the world, I discovered the three most common causes of premature death. These fatal flaws result from the inexperience of MoD managers in running ELT programs. Any one of these same three flaws could precipitate a management crisis in launching the ELTC initiative. These flaws are:

- Failure to get professional help in establishing the ELT program. Many MoD managers underestimate the amount of planning, coordination, and hands-on management required; consequently, they fail to hire the necessary expertise. “Do-it-yourself” ELT programs rarely succeed.
- Seeking professional help from the helpless. Many MoD managers uncritically heed the pedagogical advice of assorted academics, self-styled experts, none of whom has ever managed an intensive ELT program and some of whom are pushing a pet pedagogical fad with evangelical fervor. Incompatible fads cause classroom chaos and managerial gridlock. In the ESL field, just as in the field of education, most new fads lead to dismal results. ELT managers are well advised to shun fads and those who espouse them. It is best to follow tried and true methods. Of course, this entails a very slight risk. Someday there may actually be an ESL pedagogical breakthrough and one might be late in adopting it. However, given that, in my opinion, there hasn’t been a real breakthrough in hundreds of years, I think the odds are on one’s side. Do not mistake the burgeoning cornucopia of new terminology for demonstrable improvement in methodology.
- Relying on Unpaid Volunteers (UVs). Employing UVs appears to be an attractive option. With respect to cost, it is by far the most attractive way of staffing an ELTP. The fly in the ointment is the difficulty in managing ELTPs staffed by UVs. In a sense, they control ELTP management, which is totally beholden to their generosity. Moreover, employee turnover tends to be unacceptably high among UVs. Although UVs can be a useful source of supplementary assistance to an ELTP, management should never permit dependence on them. ELTP success or failure should never be a function of the role of UVs. Management simply does not exercise sufficient control over UVs to place the fate of the ELTP in their hands.

### **Defense Language Institute Expertise**

Those individuals responsible for implementing the ELT Soft Power initiative should understand that DLI has “been there, done that.” Given the resources, DLI professionals could set up an effective ELT program in a relatively short period of time on a sand bar in the middle of the ocean. The hand-

picked teams that DLI deploys to evaluate ELT programs consist of highly intelligent, thoroughly knowledgeable, superbly competent professionals. They are the Overseas Program Managers (OPMs), DLI's Special Forces. They evaluate in-country ELTPs and brief their findings before departing the country. It is axiomatic that the measure of the significance of a briefing is the rank of the attendees. Attendees at DLI briefings typically include ministers of defense and other ministers of state as well as chiefs of armed services. That is to say that MoDs consider ELT to be a matter of utmost importance. DLI is justifiably proud of its OPMs, who dare to stand before these imposing potentates and tactfully, but forcefully, enumerate the deficiencies of their ELT programs. This might be considered "hazardous" duty, but time and time again they pull it off and receive the gratitude of the MoDs. The increasing demand for DLI expertise at overseas locations is testimony to the effectiveness of the OPMs. They know the ELT business, obviating the need for guesswork and experimentation. If the ELTC initiative falls into the clutches of academics, the likelihood is that practical experience will be rejected in favor of unproven pedagogical fads. A great deal of effort will be expended in a futile effort to reinvent the wheel.

### **Laboratory or Production Line?**

DLIELC trainers tend to view the teaching of English differently than educators do. The differences spring from the inherent dichotomy between trainers and educators. It is sometimes difficult to verbalize the differences education and training, but the differences are real and significantly affect the implementation of ELTP programs. A colleague summed up the difference nicely by saying that she felt a sense of uneasiness when she got a note from her daughter's school that her daughter was now enrolled in "Sex Education." She said, had the note said her daughter was enrolled in "Sex Training," she would have immediately withdrawn her from school. Below are some principal differences between ELT and English Language Education (ELE). In the real world these characteristics form part of a continuum that yields hybrids. Nevertheless, ELT programs contain more "genes" from the left side and ELE programs more from the right side of the table below.

#### **English Language Training vs English Language Education**

Rigidly defines objectives	Loosely defines objectives
Standardized achievement tests	Instructor-made achievement tests
Prescribed curriculum, little instructor discretion	Instructor has considerable discretion in selecting course materials.
Course duration depends on student proficiency level	Fixed course duration
Top priority is language acquisition	Top priority is cultural appreciation
Instructor classroom performance is paramount	Instructor academic qualifications are paramount
Culture is a means to language acquisition	Language is a means to learn the culture
Little emphasis on pedagogical research	Emphasis on pedagogical research

Academics may tend to view ELT or ELE classes as laboratories in which they can conduct pedagogical research. They seek the recognition that comes with publishing a "research" piece in one of the ubiquitous, obscure educational journals. In my opinion, most of the articles published on language teaching methodology are frivolous and don't contribute one iota to the bank of knowledge. Furthermore, some of the experimentation is to the detriment of the students, who serve as lab rats. Academics may seize every opportunity to try out the latest fad, irrespective of the fact that most ELT fads quickly morph into yesterday's bad ideas. In contrast, DLIELC trainers look at ELTP as a production line. The raw material enters the production line, is processed, and emerges as a finished product manufactured according to specifications. Failure to meet production schedules or to meet

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quality standards is not tolerated. DLIELC customers expect production of graduates who meet specifications.

### **Preeminence of Defense Language Institute**

Because I am proposing that DLI serve in an advisory capacity to the Department of State in launching the ELTC initiative, it is incumbent upon me to establish that DLI has the necessary expertise and experience. In fact, DLI is the preeminent ELT institute in the world. Its preeminence is manifest in the following:

- American Language Course (ALC). The most evident manifestation of DLI's preeminence is the ALC, the most comprehensive, well organized ESL course to be found anywhere. The ALC consists of thirty-four sequenced instructional packages, each composed of a student text, an instructor text, and a language laboratory workbook. The latter is for use in audio language labs, which, on the resident campus, have all been replaced by interactive computer software. Each package takes from one to two weeks to teach. As far as I know, there is no commercial equivalent to the ALC, nor is there likely to be. In the 1970's, several international customers, who found aspects of American culture reflected in the ALC offensive (e.g., women in the workplace, dating, readings on democratic institutions etc.) or who wanted to introduce Specialized English Training (SET) in the ALC from day one (folly of amateurs), hired major corporations to produce an alternative curriculum. The corporations used a tried-and-true formula. They went out and hired experts with big names in the ESL curriculum business. These experts had earned their reputations by publishing text books on curriculum development and critiquing the work of others. Lamentably, none of them had ever managed a major curriculum project. They grossly underestimated the time, resources, level of expertise and scope of planning required to complete this massive curriculum effort. After spending lavishly, the corporations and their customers, much to their chagrin, discovered that they had produced nothing of value. In two instances I performed the postmortem for the client countries. If any of these projects succeeded, I am unaware of it. Today, when awarded ELT contracts, corporations tend to opt to use the ALC rather than let themselves get sucked into the quagmire of developing a new curriculum.

- Interactive Courseware. DLI also produces the finest computer-assisted interactive courseware. This software is designed specifically to support ALC objectives, although it can be and is used independently of the ALC. As far as I know, there is no commercial ELT software on the market that comes even close to the sophistication of DLI's.

### **Proficiency Testing English Comprehension Level Test**

Part of the DLI mission is to develop, administer and manage the DoD-wide ECL tests. ECL tests are primarily used to screen IMSs for entry into CONUS FOT. It takes about 70 minutes to administer the pencil-and-paper version, administered at some 220 locations worldwide. This multiple-choice test has two parts: listening comprehension and reading comprehension. These two scores are combined and the test yields one score, the ECL score. There is an admission standard, stated in terms of ECL scores, for virtually all FOT courses attended by IMSs. DLI has created a computer-adaptive version of the ECL for use on its resident campus. For most organizations, computer-adaptive tests are a long-range goal; at DLI they are a reality. Compared to the pencil-and-paper versions of the ECL, the average student completes the ECL in about one third of the time with no loss in test reliability.

### **Oral Proficiency Interview**

DLI also develops, administers and manages the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI, a test that is given to individuals scheduled to attend a potentially hazardous FOT (e.g., flight training) and to those who are to attend FOT that is exceptionally linguistically challenging (e.g., English language instructor). Only certified DLI raters are authorized to give the OPI. It is an expensive test to administer. It takes two highly trained raters between 15 minutes and an hour to administer the OPI to one student. It is also necessary to maintain a costly, elaborate system to monitor and maintain

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the reliability of this test. The OPI is given telephonically to CONUS training candidates all over the world. Because of time differences, at any hour of the day or night, one might find DLI OPI raters conducting telephonic interviews.

### **American Language Course Placement Test**

Except for the lack of a computer-adaptive version, this test has essentially the same characteristics as the ECL and correlates very highly with it. DLI does not use this test on the resident campus. It is available for use by recognized ELT institutes to measure proficiency and to place students on the appropriate level of the ALC. In order to help thwart test compromise, DLI has developed and maintains 35 alternate forms.

### **Reliability of Proficiency Tests**

The high reliability of DLI's global proficiency testing network is generally taken for granted—as if it were a naturally occurring phenomenon. Yet, those DLI experts responsible for the proficiency tests know that maintenance of reliability requires continuous, meticulous, intense, almost obsessive, management. Few people in the SATP community pause to contemplate the chaos that would ensue from a loss of proficiency test reliability. This doomsday scenario is ever present in the minds of the DLI custodians of these tests. No one understands better than they do that the reliability of the English language proficiency testing is the foundation of the SATP. It is essential that the OPI or ECL score achieved by IMSs before departure for CONU.S. be an accurate measure of ELP. Based on this in-country score, they are programmed for a certain number of weeks of ELT at DLI or for direct entry into FOT. If these scores prove to be inaccurate, the whole training pipeline feels the repercussions. The DLI goal is just-in-time training. That is, IMSs are tested in country; are programmed, based on their scores, for a specific number of weeks of DLI ELT; achieve their required ELP level in the allotted time, and seamlessly move on to FOT. In fact, this is the profile of the typical IMS. Without this high degree of reliability, the SAT pipeline would be chaotic and a lot of money would be wasted. If there were frequent, significant discrepancies between in-country scores and entry scores, it would often not be possible to reschedule FOT slots. Many of these slots would be lost to the country. DLI does all in its power, short of lowering standards, to graduate IMSs on time to attend their FOT. It is a tragic occurrence when IMSs fail to achieve their required ELP level. The IMS suffers the ignominy of failing and the country loses the benefit of the training, sometimes even having to pay a penalty to boot. Such incidents leave a bad taste in everyone's mouth. The reliability of the proficiency testing system is a testimony to the knowledge and dedication of a small cadre of DLI professionals.

### **Explosion of Anti-American Sentiment and the English Language Training Antidote**

It is apparent to Americans who deal with foreigners or who read the foreign press that the reservoir of international good will toward the United States has been depleted in recent years. It's not only the usual suspects, the old, die-hard, "let's-do-it-right-next-time Marxists", who are vilifying the U.S. The "respectable" mainstream press of our "allies" has joined in and is engaged in bashing us with reckless abandon. Anti-U.S. sentiments and comments have not only become acceptable; they are de rigueur. It has become unfashionable for young people around the world to speak favorably about the U.S. I suggest that the cumulative effect of this massive propaganda barrage and the resulting hatred of America are potentially just as destructive to the interests of the U.S. as any weapons of mass destruction.

It does not strain my credulity to imagine a hypothetical intelligence officer from an allied country receiving reliable information concerning when and where a nuclear weapon is going to be detonated in New York City. Because he, like many of his colleagues, wants to see the U.S.A get its comeuppance, he sits on this information. Implausible? I do not think so. Have you talked to any of our "allies" lately? Have you heard the anger in their voices? Have you read the editorials in their newspapers?

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Being an American and believing that we do a lot more good than harm in this world, I find it hard to understand how our image has become so tarnished. Yet, the fact remains that many now regard killing Americans as an act of piety that will earn eternal bliss.

The awesome economic and military power of the U.S. cannot vanquish the virulent anti-Americanism that prevails around the globe. Perversely, any hint that we will use our economic and military power to “influence” our detractors fans the embers of hatred into roaring flames. Economic sanctions and bombs, effective as they might be in some circumstances, don’t reduce hatred; they magnify it.

### **Proposal to Project English Language Training Soft Power**

The U.S. government has at its disposal a powerful Weapon of Mass Attraction called ELT. It should launch a massive soft power blitzkrieg to bring ELT to influential people around the world. I make no claim that this blitzkrieg would be a panacea, but, based on my ELT experience, I would venture to say that it would significantly reduce the goodwill deficit. Over the years, the U.S. government has conducted ELT programs in foreign countries. The old USIS programs come to mind. These programs were immensely popular. Unfortunately, when budget cuts were made, these programs were among the first to be eliminated. Lamentably, few high level civilian or military officials seem to realize the power of ELT when it is not a stepping stone to FOT. Many regard it as a touchy-feely, cultural program on a par with flower arranging and knitting techniques. Because they haven’t experienced the ELT phenomenon, they just do not get it.

DLI employees continuously witness the awesome power of ELT to influence IMSs. Typical DLI instructors are awash in the outpouring of gratitude from their students. Instructors who spend several years at DLI can literally travel around the world and not spend a penny for food or lodging because their former students welcome them. DLI takes pride in the outpouring of IMS gratitude. Indeed, it is this very gratitude that is one of the most fulfilling aspects of working at DLI. Many IMSs forge life-long friendships with their instructors and sponsors. Language instructors and their students share an intimacy that is not found among other instructors or students of other subjects because language is at the very core of an individual’s humanity. Learning a foreign language is a humbling experience. The learner feels like a child, struggling to express the most basic concepts. For high ranking officers accustomed to expressing themselves clearly and decisively, the initial phase of learning a foreign language is especially stressful. DLI instructors share the pain and humiliation of these language learners. Instructors have to be tactful, empathetic and wise to bolster the morale of these students.

Many IMSs come to DLI with uninformed, but deeply-rooted, opinions about America. A few are openly hostile and many come with varying degrees of uneasiness about American values. Newly arrived IMSs will often tell you that money is the be-all and end-all for Americans; American women are promiscuous; Americans do not love their families; Americans abandon their aging parents; Americans are racists etc. During their stay at DLI, most of them learn that these preconceived notions about Americans do not seem to reflect the values of the Americans they meet. In fact, most seem to depart DLI with the realization that Americans are people with concerns, desires, and feelings similar to their own. Many of them become apologists for America and Americans when they return home.

DLI makes no attempt to brainwash IMSs while they are at DLI. They are given the opportunity to visit American institutions such as courts, elementary and secondary schools, shopping malls, universities, libraries, museums, cultural events, etc. DLI instructors are forbidden to discuss religious, political or controversial topics in class. The transformation in IMSs’ attitudes takes place, because as they become more proficient in English, they are better able to interact with Americans and to comprehend the media. America tends to sell itself.

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## **Implementation of Proposal**

Given the resources to deliver ELT worldwide to thousands of prominent international individuals, the U.S. government could effect a major change in attitude about America, its people, and its intentions. For the cost of one bomber, we could deploy a multitude of ELT instructors. The U.S. government should:

- Establish ELTCs in major cities around the world. These ELTCs should provide ELT to people who either now exercise or are likely to exercise significant influence on the military, economic, educational, cultural, or political establishments of their country.
- Establish admission standards for the ELTCs in each country.
- Negotiate ELTC admission quotas for officials of various government ministries as well as educational institutes, corporations, student organizations, labor unions, churches, charitable and fraternal organizations, and other worthy non-government organizations.
- Provide host-country officials with guidelines for selecting individuals for admission into the ELTCs.
- Monitor host-country adherence to the guidelines.
- Directly select only about 20 percent of the candidates admitted to the ELTC, allowing host country officials the prerogative of selecting the remaining 80 percent for admission.

## **English Language Training Courses**

The ELTC should offer General ELT, Specialized English Terminology (SET) courses, and courses on American civilization and literature.

- General ELT. The goal of General ELT is to enhance performance in the four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. The target ELP level as measured by the Oral Proficiency Interview should be 2+/2.
- Specialized English Training. The goal of SET is to familiarize students with the technical jargon of a particular field in order to enhance their linguistic performance in that field. Some of the SET courses in common demand are military, medical, accounting, scientific, computer, and business terminology.
- Courses on American Civilization and Literature. The goal of these courses is to familiarize the students with American core values. These courses would be offered to individuals with an OPI level of 2+/2 or higher.

## **Intensive vs Non-Intensive English Language Training.**

Intensive ELT is generally defined as 25 to 30 academic hours per week. At DLI/ELC, in addition to class attendance, students are typically assigned two or more hours of homework per day. Non-intensive ELT programs generally offer three to six academic hours per week. Non-intensive courses are sometimes used to raise ELP to a given ECL score required for admission into intensive ELT.

## **Proposed Curriculum**

General English. DLI's American Language Course (ALC) should be the core curriculum for the general English course. The intensive version of the ALC consists of 34 instructional packages. Each package in turn consists of an instructor text, a student text, a book of homework exercises, and a language laboratory workbook. The ALC also has a strong audiovisual component consisting of audio tapes, video tapes, and interactive CD's. The audio-visual materials are designed to reinforce ALC lesson objectives. Students who complete the intensive ALC are able to function at the high intermediate to low advanced level of ELP. There is also a non-intensive version of the ALC consisting



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of four instructional packages. Students who complete the non-intensive ALC typically function on the high beginning to low intermediate level of ELP.

SET: Commercially available materials should be used to provide SET.

## **English Language Training Course Standards**

### **Admission Standards**

Intensive ELT. In order to gain admission into the intensive ELTC [c36] program, candidates should achieve an American Language Course Placement Test (ALCPT) score of 40 or higher. DLI's experience has shown that students who achieve an ALCPT score of 40 generally possess the aptitude and/or motivation to achieve a significant level of ELP in a reasonable period of time.

Non-Intensive ELT. Entering students should be given the ALCPT to determine their level of ELP so they can be placed on the appropriate level of the ALC.

### **Course Completion Standards**

Students must pass achievement tests, attend classes regularly, behave decorously, and complete assignments. Upon course completion, they must also have achieved the required ELP level.

### **Enforcement of Standards**

It is imperative that ELTC graduation certificates have value. In order to give them value, standards must be rigorously enforced. Students failing to meet the standards must never be given a graduation certificate; rather, they must be eliminated from the ELTC. Prospective employers should be able to look at an ELTC graduation certificate and make assumptions about the graduate's ability to function in English. It should be noted that the fallout from failure to enforce standard is [c39] ruinous to any training program. At times it may seem politically advisable to waive standards for a VIP's son or daughter. I submit that waiving standards for these VIPs, while enforcing standards for other students is a form of corruption. Complicity in corruption, no matter how trivial or politically expedient it may seem, is still corruption and is almost never the right choice.

### **Attrition**

Academic Attrition. As stated above, it is necessary to eliminate from the ELTC students failing to make satisfactory progress. Retention of such students undermines the seriousness of purpose of the ELTC. Non-learners pollute the academic environment to the detriment of instructors and students alike. In a well managed ELT program at an overseas location, the rate of academic attrition runs between 10 percent and 20 percent. Since the population of an ELTC is expected to be composed in large measure of the cognitive elite, a somewhat lower rate of attrition is anticipated.

Non-academic Attrition. In addition to academic attrition, it can be anticipated that some number of students will leave training for medical or personal reasons.

### **Formation of Classes**

Homogeneous Grouping of Students. Classes should be grouped homogeneously. That is to say, that the students in a given class should be on roughly the same ELP level. Students whose ELP level lags behind or surges ahead of that of others in the class should be transferred to a class more commensurate with their ELP. Some trendy educationists, purportedly in the interests of egalitarianism, advocate heterogeneous grouping. It offends their sensibilities that some students progress faster than others. Allegedly, the weaker students suffer irreparable harm to their self-image if stronger students progress at a faster rate. Measured in these terms, heterogeneous grouping certainly succeeds in retarding progress of the best students. Only an avowed educationist could think that retarding the learning of anyone is a positive thing. [c41]

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Student/Instructor Ratio. Class size should not exceed 10 students.

English Language Training Duration. Course duration should not be fixed. There are a number of variables that affect the duration of ELT. The two most salient are the student entry ELP level and the desired/required ELP level. It would often be necessary to negotiate the duration of ELT with the ministries or agencies of students who are government employees. It is anticipated that some students would require a year or more to attain the required ELP.

Expectations. It is essential that the ELTC managers and the customers, be they ministries, individuals or non-government organizations, share the same expectations of rate of ELP growth. Customers should not be surprised that it takes a long time to achieve a high ELP level. Typically, superiors, despite their recognition of the importance of ELP, are reluctant to release their subordinates for extended periods of ELT because they suffer from chronic manpower shortages. For example, the MoD may want to send a given officer on a peacekeeping mission. ELTC management determines that 25 weeks of intensive ELT will be required to meet the required ELP level, but the MoD might request that the ELTC get the student to the appropriate ELP level in 10 weeks. The ELTC response has to be, "We do not do miracles."

Achievements Testing. The ALC materials already include achievement tests designed to measure student achievement of each block of instruction. A DLI student must achieve a score of 70 percent in order to pass a block of instruction. Depending on circumstances, students achieving less than a 70 are counseled, brought before an academic board, washed back or provisionally advanced to the next block of instruction.

Tuition. The ELTCs should charge a nominal, nonrefundable tuition fee. This would motivate institutions to hold their ELTC students accountable for their performance and serve to deter individuals who are not serious about learning from seeking admission. [c48]

Staffing. There are several alternative ways to staff the ELTCs. To cite just three:

- Option 1. Hire a small cadre of experienced professionals to manage the ELTCs and recruit paid volunteers (a la the Peace Corps) who, after a suitable training period, would form the cadre of ELT instructors. The Peace Corps has been highly successful in using volunteer to teach ESL/EFL abroad. Following the Peace Corps model, terms of service could be two years. Instructors who perform in an exemplary manner should have the option of a two-year extension.
- Option 2. Staff the ELTCs with a cadre of career federal employees.
- Option 3. Set the standards and contract out ELTC management and instruction.

There are any number of permutations and combinations of these three alternatives. I am not going to discuss the pros and cons of each of these options. This would be a multi-faceted, lengthy discussion and this is not the forum for it. It is also a discussion that should not take place until at least tentative ELTC concept approval has been given

### **Factors in Choosing a Staffing Option**

Here I would just like to set a context within which a discussion of staffing options should take place. The ELTC instructor is the tip of the soft power spear. EFL instructors form unique bonds with their students. As pointed out above, they observe their students at their most vulnerable. They are privy to the embarrassment of high ranking students trying to overcome their inhibitions to learn a new language. It is a humbling experience for these VIPs, accustomed to being in control, to find themselves in such a situation. [c52] In order for this fragile relationship between instructor and student to take root, there has to be mutual respect. The instructor must be tactful, personable and empathetic. In the eyes of the student, the ELT instructor is America. A single ELTC instructor can

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do a great deal to enhance the image of the U.S., but one aberrant ECL instructor can undo the good done by ten good ones.

### **Comments on Instructor Qualifications**

Current qualifications for DLI instructors are found at the following web site [dlielc.org](http://dlielc.org) would generally serve the needs of the ELTCs. I would, however, recommend two changes:

- First, the ELTCs should not accept education degrees. DLI is now compelled to accept these as bona fide qualification. These degrees do not guarantee even basic literacy.
- Second, I would weight the selection process in favor of candidates who are proficient in a foreign language or who majored in English. Having conducted many evaluations of instructor classroom performance, I have formed the opinion that individuals who love language tend to be effective ESL and EFL language teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Young foreign public servants, both civilian and military, find that their governments are establishing rigorous ELP standards for career advancement. ELP has become virtually essential for them to rise to positions of prominence in their respective hierarchies. They strive to improve their ELP often without the opportunity to take formal courses. Many feel a sense of desperation because at a certain point in their careers they will be required to demonstrate a high level of ELP or be shunted off the career track. It doesn't take much imagination to comprehend the gratitude they would feel if the U.S. government offered them the opportunity to achieve a high level of ELP.

### **About the Author**

Mr. Molloy is a retired Department of Air Force Civilian. He spent almost 38 years at the Defense Language Institute English Language Center. During his tenure, he served as Chief of the General English Branch, Chief of the Evaluation Division, chief of Institutional Relations and Chief of the Programs Division. He spent some twenty years overseas as an English Language Training instructor, advisor, or manager. In addition, he did ELT consulting work on twenty countries and for several major corporations.