



PAM Lingua: Quality Issues summer 2002

Introduction

I was asked by Rod Dowling to write a brief piece for this edition of OPE on the subject of quality in language services. I would like to tell you about the experiences of our school, Kielikanava, in Turku, have had in joining the pan-European quality accreditation scheme called EAQUALS. EAQUALS stands for the European Association of Quality Language Services and is a body set up originally in 1991 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. It is open to all language schools in Europe, no matter what their size and its goals are centred around improving the quality of private sector language schools.

Why join?

For a long time in Finland the language teaching business has been improving, certainly since the 'wild-west' days of the 1980s. However, unlike most other industries, there has never been a 'watchdog' or an organization that language schools could join that would show they could

guarantee certain services and standards. It was this kind of body that I looked for in vain in the 1990s. Then, acting on a tip from Peter Shaw I found information about EAQUALS and their inspection/accreditation scheme and realized that this would be ideal.

What does EAQUALS do?

EAQUALS has a staff and student charter which sets out exactly how both teachers and clients should be treated. Additionally they have published a detailed handbook of all they expect a language school to offer. It is not prescriptive, there is no 'one way' of doing things, but standards are laid out clearly. Once a school feels it is ready to join, two inspectors are sent to visit the school for a two day period. The inspectors are experienced language trainers and they delve in to every aspect of a school's operations: they observe all teachers in the classroom, they interview the DoS and manager, they inspect financial records, social payments, teacher contracts, they talk to clients, they interview students, they meet with the teachers away from their

bosses, they look at copyright compliance – in short they cover all possible ground.

Finally, there is a de-briefing meeting where the inspectors give feedback. This is followed up by a detailed written report outlining their findings, both positive and negative. We passed our first inspection in 1999 and again in 2002 – each school is re-inspected every three years. On both occasions the inspection was rigorous but fair and friendly.

What do you get?

In joining EAQUALS you get the satisfaction of knowing you are good school. You get a very good marketing tool – only the best schools are accepted – and you join a network of like-minded schools across Europe who are committed to quality. Finally, you get an expert outsider's view of your own school, which leads to new ideas and improvements. We have improved several aspects of our school since the last inspection as a direct result of their very constructive feedback.

Mike Nelson

Are you ready to get serious about quality? Visit the EAQUALS website at www.eaquals.org and take the first step.

Tekeri Language Teachers Annual General Meeting 06.04.2002 at 14:15

Säästöpankinrantatie 4 C 21

Minutes

1. Election of chairperson
Gordon Watson was elected.
2. Election of recorder
Daryl Taylor was elected.
3. Minutes of the last AGM
Approved.
4. Matters arising
Rod Dowling has put an article on membership benefits on the website.
Re. Item 6: Daryl Taylor explained the operation of the union strike fund and relationship to PAM-Lingua's assets
5. Review of operations
Rod Dowling explained that there were more parties than usual during the year, and parties were held outside of Helsinki. Mike Nelson ran a workshop in January. The intended seminar was cancelled at the last minute and no alternative event was arranged. We co-organised a French language seminar at the Lycée Francophone Finlandais on using the Internet as a teaching resource. One Ope was released (the summer issue). The website is now up and running. A new logo was designed for the section, following the transfer to PAM. Three members gave interviews for an article in the PAM newspaper. A unique process was launched with a view to making one of our shop stewards a shop steward for the OAJ as well. Rod Dowling has represented PAM-Lingua at the PAM delegate conference and presented a motion to the SAK General Assembly on behalf of mi-

grant workers. Rod Dowling was appointed to the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations to represent English language speakers.

6. Accounts and auditors' report

Roy Casey presented the accounts, which were compiled in both EUR and FIM. The accounts had not been audited. Daryl Taylor recommended the following motion, which was seconded by Neil MacLavery:

That the accounts for the period 01.01.2001 – 31.12.2001 be approved as presented by the Treasurer subject to an auditor's report recommending said approval.

This was approved unanimously.

Daryl Taylor recommended the following motion, which was seconded by Neil MacLavery:

That the Board of 2001 be discharged from liability for the accounts for the period 01.01.2001 – 31.12.2001 as presented by the Treasurer, subject to an auditor's report recommending said discharge.

This was approved unanimously.

7. Financial resolution

Daryl Taylor recommended the following motion, which was seconded by Neil MacLavery:

That the sum of EUR 2000 be set aside as a hardship fund in lieu of the hardship bank account that has been closed, and that the remainder of Pam-Lingua's assets

be carried forward for use in 2002.

This was approved unanimously.

The discussion of finances also entertained the idea of finding and interest-earning bank account or at least negotiating free banking, not necessarily with our present banker. It was the general opinion of the meeting that this would be a desirable thing to do.

8. Election of the Board for 2002-2003: The following were elected nem. con.

Chairperson: Rod Dowling.
Vice chairperson: Daryl Taylor

Other members: Roy Casey, Dianne Ward, Paul Whybrow, Peter Shaw, Juan-Luis Moreno, Neil MacLavery, Michael Möbius.

9. Election of auditors:

Pirkko Reijonen and Marja Lindblöm approved nem. con.

10. Announcement and other business:

OAJ will help Dianne Ward in the area of shop steward training. Dianne needs support from PAM in the same area, e.g. in reading the collective agreement.

SAK, Akava and STTK are producing a booklet for newly arrived migrant workers. PAM-Lingua has offered EUR 1000 towards this endeavour, provided that the project reflects our experience in this area.

11. Close of meeting at 16:35

YOUR CHAIRMAN SPEAKS

As you will see from the minutes of the AGM, yours truly, Rod Dowling, was elected to carry the torch for another year. It is a pity that someone with more time and energy was not elected in my place. I must commence this issue of Ope with an apology. I think this is the first time during my tenure as chairman, and maybe during the whole history of the section TLT and PAM Lingua that a spring party has not been held. It certainly was not my intention when I arranged a Christmas party that it would be in lieu of a spring party. Things just turned out that way. Family and work commitments have left me with no free time to organise a spring party. But an autumn one will be organised for sure!

I attended a spring do organised by the Helsinki Summer University. Champagne and salad and live music (trio – piano, flute and basso) from 17.00 – 19.00. Very civilised indeed! Perhaps I should organise something like that instead of the booze-ups we normally have.

While I am on the subject of apologising, a Christmas Ope did not come out last December. No doubt the editor will present his own apologies on that score. In all probability the Ope in future will be produced by Michael Möbius, the webmaster for our website.

Remember to visit it www.dlc.fi/~michi/pam and why not do so regularly? I participate in a news group which discusses matters of interest education and otherwise in Australia. It would be good if you would leave your thoughts on Pam Lingua's website to get a conversation going about matters of interest to us here in Finland.

While I am meandering, another thought that has just entered my head is that I went to the theatre the other day and saw *The Full Monte* at the City Theatre. I am a noun, verb and adjective guy with a bit of business English thrown in. Culture and literature hardly ever enter my classroom. Those of you who try to stimulate your students in that way, I wonder whether you can put pen to paper and tell us Plebians of your experiences.

A bit of news on the immigrant front. The sub-committee I sit on under the auspices of The Ministry of Labour is in the throes of producing a guide for foreigners wishing to (or working) in Finland. The Finnish version would actually be for shop stewards. When we are satisfied with this version, we will give it to Daryl Taylor for translation into English. It will definitely be translated into Russian as well. Other languages I do not know about. Our section has contributed 1000 Euro towards the publication of this guide, and Daryl is doing the trans-

lation gratis. What a heart of gold he has!

A bit of news on the industrial front. Dianne Ward has been elected Shop Steward for both OAJ and PAM Lingua members at ISH (the International School of Helsinki). That is certainly a first to represent workers from two different unions in disputes with a common employer. It indicates that at the moment we have a good working relationship with OAJ. I understand also that Dianne has been getting good assistance from Mikko Vartiainen – a lawyer from PAM's central legal unit.

I am writing the first page of this issue of Ope. At this point I do not know how thick it will be. If it is on the thin side, then I promise you a bumper one in December. Remember you can also read Ope in electronic form on the web site. And contributions are always welcome.

HAVE A GOOD SUMMER ! PAM DELEGATE CONFERENCE

22-23.05.2002

I attended this conference as a delegate of the old TEKERI. My nomination was for a two-year transition period which is now coming to an end. The next conference will be attended by delegates elected in a general election. Because there are only 150 odd members in our section I do not hold out any hope of being elected. I first thought I wouldn't even bother standing

for election, but I have now reconsidered my position. I have now decided to stand for election and to form an electoral alliance with as many small sections as possible. In that way votes for me would not be lost, but go to the candidate in the alliance with the biggest personal vote.

To make a comparison with the EU, small countries like Finland have to band together to stop the big countries like Germany and France from riding roughshod over them. In similar fashion small sections inside PAM have to cooperate in order to get their voice heard. I will be calling an extraordinary general meeting on **6.9.2002** to seek nomination from PAM Lingua as a delegate candidate. The meeting in all probability will convene at Yleisradio's or PAM's offices in Helsinki and be held conjointly with the general meetings of sections representing security guards, concierges, machinists and croupiers. These small sections have agreed to work together to get a candidate through to represent some of the smaller sections of PAM. We hope before 6.9 other small sections will join us in an electoral alliance. You will be told more later in the summer and early autumn when we begin our election campaign.

To quote you some figures, some 60 sections have over 1000 members, 90 odd sections over 500. 222 sections (

we are one of them) have over 100 members, whereas 72 sections have less than one hundred members.

Let me now, however, give you some feedback about the delegate conference.

The outgoing chairperson, Maj-Len Remahl, expressed concern about the rise of the extreme right throughout Europe. She thought that this was due to the fact that for many citizens the EU and its institutions were rather remote entities. People feel that their voice and concerns can not be heard in this behemoth, and so there is a retreat into the safety of ethnocentric nationalism. To counter this she thought that PAM should be doing more to inform shop stewards and rank and file members of the democratic processes of the EU, and that members should be attending public forums of the EU convention to put forward their views in order to participate in the shaping of a bigger and hopefully better EU. She also foresaw the need for cooperation at union level with unions of workers in the applicant member states to achieve comparability of benefits thereby ensuring a level playing field across the single market.

With regard to the union Mrs Remahl said that PAM had a membership of 201,479 persons at the end of April, 2002. To expand or even to hold the existing level we needed to be

more active in recruiting young people into the union. The main reason why young people did not join a union was ignorance about the activities of the union. There was a need to be more active in approaching young people in the field and in the workplace.

With respect to wage developments the average wage of PAM members rose 4.4% in 2001 as opposed to 4.7% for industrial workers. This reflects the reality of the market place that competitive employers have the capacity to pay more, and strong unions the muscle to demand their share of the cake. There is, however, a school of thought that taxes ought to be lowered for low-income workers as an employment measure. This might indeed have a positive boost on employment in sectors where there is a labour shortage like cleaning. However, when the wage of a cleaner is already only slightly over 50% of the average working wage, do we really want this relative figure to fall any further? No, the answer is not tax cuts for people on low incomes, but wage solidarity. The wages of low-income earners should be raised so that they get a decent salary – one they can live on and which allows them to hold their head up high.

Mrs Remahl also reported on a joint project by PAM and the Service Sector Employers Association into the benefits

and drawbacks of part-time work. When the project is completed and the results are clear, cooperative measures will be taken to redress the worst problems.

The next item on the agenda was PAM's operational report for 2001. I won't go into too much detail about this except to say that unions do what they are supposed to do i.e. negotiate collective agreements. PAM negotiated agreements for the period 1.2.2001-31.1.2003, guaranteeing an average pay rise starting 1.2.2001 of 3.1% and a further 2.2% on 1.3.2002. As I mentioned earlier nominal wage levels for service workers in fact rose 4.4% in 2001. The average wage for all salaried workers in 2000 was 12108mk a month. Sales clerks earned 8378, hotel and restaurant workers 8673, security guards over 9000 and cleaners under 7000mk. What about you?

Another thing unions do is to represent its members in disputes with employers. If issues are not resolved through negotiation, they are taken to court. Of the cases taken to court on which a decision has been rendered, PAM won 38 cases and lost 20.

One aspect of the union's operations that particularly interested me was its holiday activities. It seems that the 4 unions which merged two years ago were rather wealthy and have invested surplus

capital in commercial and holiday real estate. For instance, PAM is part-owner of Hotel Levitunturi in Kittilä. Members are entitled to a 50% discount on accommodation in the peak season and a flat special discount in the off season. The union also owns 8 four-six person holiday apartments in Punkaharju. The occupancy rate has been about 40 holidaymakers a week. It also owns two cottages in Kuusamo. Through its subsidiaries it owns Hotel Petäys in Tyrvääntö, cottages in Ivalo and Rovaniemi, Manor Hotel Radansuu, and commercial real estate in Helsinki and Tallinn.

Members (and the general public) can rent holiday accommodation at the going rate. If, however, you are impoverished, you may be entitled to a subsidised holiday. In 2001 the union got 896 applications for holiday support, of which 297 applications were rejected.

Other aspects of union operations I would also like to mention (for which funding has been provided and projects started) are human resource development, promotion of sexual equality in the workplace, struggle against the marginalisation of the unemployed, multi-culturalism and international activities. As part of Human Resource Development PAM is trying to upgrade the professional skills of its staff in its head and re-

gional offices, and in the field by subsidising training in polytechnics with a humanities focus, in particular the polytechnic in Nurmijärvi, where 13 PAM members are currently enrolled. The course takes 3.5 years and consists of 140 study weeks. If successfully completed, students will graduate with the degree of Tradenomi. Also included in Human Resource Development is language training. Daryl Taylor has done some of this. If you feel more needs to be done in this area, give some feedback.

With respect to international activities PAM operated either under the SAK umbrella or in cooperation with international organisations, of which it was a member. Financial support for these activities was provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Projects were varied in nature ranging from the strengthening of union activity in developing countries or emerging economies to the improvement of female literacy and vocational skills. Countries in which projects were commenced were Haiti, M o s a m b i k , Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Bosnia, Russia and Estonia

The Financial Statements were the next item on the agenda to be handled. The actual figures were very similar to the budgeted figures. The union ended up with a surplus of 172,889.65mk,

which the Executive Board proposed be carried forward as working capital, which the auditors also recommended. The Delegate Conference approved this, and released the Executive Board from responsibility for the 2001 accounts.

PAM collected 23,223,514,45mk in union dues, of which it returned 2,554,910,25mk to the sections. The Chief Accountant said that PAM had a heavier cost structure than its two main competitors The Public Sector Workers Union and The Metal Workers Union, because it had more regional offices than they did. This was in line with union strategy, and so it was not foreseen that PAM would be able to lower costs. On the contrary, costs were predicted to rise, whereas revenues would remain flat, unless we can recruit new members.

The next item to be discussed was the Annual Report of PAM's Unemployment Fund. The Fund paid out benefits to 39,148 members in 2001. 46,857 applications for benefits were rejected on the grounds of ineligibility. There were 674 appeals arising from the decisions of the Unemployment Fund. The Appeals Board settled 357 of the cases, and the competent court 27. Decisions in the other cases are still pending.

The Unemployment Fund for

its part asked the police to investigate 41 cases of suspected fraudulent claims. In one case the investigation was discontinued, in 15 cases the police decided not to press charges, three applicants were convicted of violations of the Unemployment Insurance Act, two of minor fraud, and two of fraud. Investigation is still continuing in the remaining cases.

The membership fee for participation in the Unemployment Fund in 2001 was 0.5% of taxable salaried income. The Fund collected 58,420,158.23mk in membership fees resulting in a operational surplus for the year of 18,404,771.70mk. The responsible Board proposed that the surplus be transferred to an Equalisation Fund. This motion was supported by the auditors and consequently approved by the Delegate Conference.

After the transfer the balance in the Equalisation Fund now stands at 129,747,811.86mk. The Solvency Ratio of the Unemployment Fund now stands at 178.22%. In other words the Unemployment Fund is highly solvent, and the possibility exists that the membership fee may be lowered in the next couple of years.

We then went on to discuss how the implementation of decisions of the Autumn 2001 Delegate Conference was

proceeding. That was rather routine, so I won't bore you with that. Next came the motions from delegates at the Spring 2002 Delegate Conference. All the motions were approved. They tended to be section-specific of little relevance to PAM Lingua so I will not say any more about them. My only comment is that I felt guilty not making a proposal myself. If I am present at the Autumn 2002 Delegate Conference I will harangue the union for not doing anything (more?) to recruit self-employed persons into the fold, and for not developing and spelling out tailor-made services for this group. Fine words were said two years ago when PAM was created, but I see little concrete evidence that anything has been done.

We then went on to discuss the skeleton operational and framework plan for 2003. There was not much new here, as the points had been touched on earlier in Mai-Len Remahl's opening address. The union is planning to move more and more into the virtual world. I do not know if you are inundated by paper. I am. I think it is a good idea. There is also a project called " Työssä jaksaminen " (anti-burnout project), designed to keep people from leaving the workforce on a disability or early retirement pension. The preparation work takes place in 2002 and the implementation phase in 2003. The main

activity in 2003, however, will be negotiating collective agreements. The 26 national agreements and the 28 company-level agreements which the union negotiated in 2001 will be up for renegotiation in 2003 after the framework agreements have been negotiated by the central employer/employee associations.

To this end Pam is proposing a six-point statement of principles to be the basis of its (SAK's) negotiations with its employer counterparties.

- (1) equitable income distribution and improved purchasing power
- (2) job and income security
- (3) development of the welfare state and social security
- (4) improvement in employer/employee cooperation and the position of worker representatives
- (5) further training for the less skilled members of the workforce
- (6) pan-European monitoring of terms of employment

Under principle two is the concern for the livelihood of persons receiving adjusted unemployment benefits. Part-time, lowly-paid workers are eligible for these benefits which came into effect on 1.4.2000 for a maximum period of 36 months. In spring 2003 some recipients will no longer be eligible for these benefits, and PAM fears that their standard of living will fall and that there will be other undesirable consequences as

well. PAM is urging SAK is put pressure on the government to have this 36-month maximum clause removed from the relevant act.

To go from one thing to another, not only do the delegates have to stand for re-election but the three chairpersons of the Executive Committee have to as well. The new chairpersons will be elected by the incoming 160-man Delegate Conference in November. Some of the present delegates no doubt will be elected to the new delegate conference so the chair candidates wanted to make themselves known to the delegates and to make some election pitches. However, as these persons are probably unknown to PAM Lingua's rank and file, and you won't be involved in electing them, I won't tell you any more about them, except to say that there are 8 candidates for three positions.

All that remained now at the delegate conference was to approve the official statement released to the press at the end of the conference. It had a five-point message:

- (1) PAM supports the negotiation of a new framework agreement between central employer/employee associations when the present agreement expires
- (2) PAM deplores the proliferation of part-time employment contracts
- (3) The job security and work-

ing conditions of shop students should be strengthened and improved.

- (4) PAM does not want the writing of sick-leave certificates to be delegated to health centre nurses until a negotiated agreement upon the matter has been reached between employer and employee bodies
- (5) PAM condemns the rise of right-wing sentiment throughout Europe.

When the final wording of the press release was finally accepted, the conference was formally closed and we each went our respective ways.

Rod Dowling#####

SUMMER IS COMING

Perhaps you are being laid off during the summer and are entitled to earnings-related unemployment benefits from the PAM unemployment fund to which you belong. Go along to your local unemployment office and fill in the application form they will give you to claim from the PAM unemployment fund. Benefits are always claimed in arrears in periods of 4 weeks, but you can send your first application after an unemployment period of 2-3 weeks. The fund will take into account the waiting period of seven days and other possible days with no compensation (periods of holiday compensation).

You are eligible for earnings-

related unemployment benefits if you have been a member of an unemployment fund for ten months and if you can produce evidence that you have had paid, insured employment for 43 weeks within a 24-month period with at least 18 hours of work per week and an income of at least 910 EURO a month.

At the request of the claimant a period of 4 calendar weeks with at least a total of 80 hours of work can also be taken into account.

You will need to submit with your application:

- 1) the original employer's certificate of salary for a minimum of 43 weeks. Holiday pay and other possible compensation must be separately listed on the certificate.
- 2) a copy of the notice of lay-off or work reference if the termination is permanent.
- 3) a copy of your current tax card.
- 4) a ruling or receipt if you receive any kind of social welfare payments.
- 5) an extract from the register of occupants, if you claim for a child support payment for the children of your married or common-law spouse.
- 6) a salary certificate for part-time or secondary employment or for any other income. Sounds complicated, doesn't it? And bureaucratic. Thank God I don't have to apply for unemployment benefits my-

self! The daily earnings-related benefit is equal to 45% of the difference between what the unemployment fund calculates your daily wage to be less 22.75 EURO. In addition there is a child support supplement of 4.31 EURO for one child under 18, 6.33 EURO for two, and 8.16 EURO for three or more.

Hope that explanation helps rather than confuses you. Rod Dowling #####

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TEACHER?

While I was browsing the web I came across these musings of a guy calling himself Don H. A good teacher:

- 1) knows more than the pupil
- 2) desires to communicate knowledge, and is capable of doing so
- 3) starts with the simplest, and leads to the complex
- 4) can understand each pupil's degree of knowledge
- 5) is proud if each generation knows more than its predecessor
- 6) stimulates curiosity, does not crush it.

Perhaps you would like to dispute this guy's list, or contribute one of your own. If so, please send your thoughts to:

www.dlc.fi/~michi/pam

Rod Dowling #####

AND NOW FOR SOME LIGHT RELIEF

Ze EU Language

The European Commission has announced an agreement whereby English spelling would be revised, creating a new language *Euro-English*, which would become the official language of the EC and be phased in over 5 years.

In year 1, *s* would replace soft *c*. Certainly this will make sivil servants happy. *K* will replace hard *c* which should klear up some konfusion.

In year 2, *f* will replace *ph* making words like *fotograf* 20% shorter, thereby generating publik enthusiasm.

In year 3, publik akseptanse can be expekted to allow more komplikated changes such as removal of double letters which have always ben a deterrent to akurate spelling. Also, *al* wil agre that the horrible mes of the silent *e* is disgrasful.

In year 4, peopl wil be reseptiv to replasing *th* with *z* and *w* with *v*.

During year 5, ze unesesary *o* kan be dropd from vords kontaining *ou* and similar changes vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After zis fifz yer, ve vil hav a reli sensibl riten styl. Zer vil be no mor trubls or difikultis and everivun vil find it ezi to understand ech ozer. ZE DREM VIL FINALI COM TRU !

Herr Schmidt