

Notes on the History of the Italian Section of the Department of European Languages

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The Department of European Languages (DEL) of the University of the Philippines Diliman has the distinction of being the country's Center of Excellence in Foreign Languages, conferred by the Commission on Higher Education in 1999. One of the factors that led to making the Department a Center of Excellence is its contribution to the development of foreign language education in the Philippines. It is the only institution that offers a four-year academic program leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts in European Languages (BAEL).

The BAEL program allows a student to study one European language as major specialization (French, German, Spanish and Italian). These languages can also be taken as a minor; or the student may opt to take another field.

A Brief Look at the History of the Italian Section

Looking back at the history of the DEL Department of European Languages or the DEL, one can admire the dynamism that the Italian section has manifested in the last eight years.

Italian is the latest addition to the BAEL major language offerings since the program's launching in 1977. Until 1989, Italian was just a minor option. With increasing requests from the students and the eventual development of faculty reinforced by the presence of the Italian embassy's cultural attaché who concurrently serves as adjunct faculty, Italian was elevated to a major language option.

Carmina Maria Veronica Llorente (now Bautista) graduated in 1990 as the BAEL graduate with an Italian major. She joined the DEL faculty and served as Italian section coordinator for over 15 years. She left the university a few years back, but has since returned as a non-tenure faculty. She currently sits as the Executive Director of the *Società Dante Alighieri*.

In 2008, the year U.P. marked its centennial, six regular faculty members comprise the Italian section. Among them is Jerome Sanchez, who graduated *summa cum laude* early that year, the fourth BAEL graduate and the second Italian major to do so; and Chris Evonne Leyritana-Javier, the first Filipino to obtain a Master's degree in the teaching of Italian. She earned her degree at the Università per Stranieri in Perugia, Italy with the highest possible grade.

The regular faculty is complemented by several non-tenure track faculty, most of them graduates of the BAEL program. One retired professor, Edgardo Tiamson, a

former chair of the DEL, was asked to return from retirement to serve as professorial lecturer. In the 1970s, he was the first DEL faculty to go on an Italian government scholarship to the Università per Stranieri to study Italian language and culture.

Scholarship Grants

Scholarship Grants through the Italian Embassy

The Italian section steadily grew from a one-faculty section in 1978 to its present 13-member faculty. The first faculty member to teach the language was Prof. Anthony Juan, a noted Philippine theater director and now retired U.P. faculty, who was on loan to the DEL from the Department of Speech Communication and Theater Arts. He was followed by Prof. Edgardo Tiamson, who at that time just returned from Italy after obtaining his *Diploma in Abilitazione per l'Insegnamento della lingua italiana all'estero* from the *Università per stranieri di Perugia*. This was through a scholarship grant from the Italian embassy. After Tiamson came Prof. Sylvia Zaballero, who was also sent to Italy by the Italian embassy in 1979. The first students who took Italian as a minor specialization trained under these two regular faculty members.

While there was interest for Italian among students, the lack of teachers prevented the DEL from offering additional courses. The university made representations at the Italian embassy for visiting professors, but the process of identifying a qualified and willing teacher was tedious.

In 1989, Dr. Alessandra Carpano, wife of the embassy's then program coordinator for agriculture, volunteered to lecture for one academic year. Beginning 1993, the DEL had for visiting professor Dr. Ubaldo Stecconi, who taught upper division courses in literature and translation for more than a year. The Italian section grew the most following the arrival in 1997 of Dr. Maria Grazia Anelli, who was also the Italian embassy's cultural attaché.

Anelli lost no time in identifying scholarship programs for graduates and faculty members. In 1999 the first set of scholars, composed of three Italian majors and one faculty member, went to Italy for a three-month summer course on language. Annual grants have since been offered to faculty members of the section.

In 2004, Giancarla Vanoli, visiting professor and also cultural attaché, envisioned that the Italian section would in the future be able to offer a Master's Degree. To provide the Italian section with qualified professors to teach higher courses, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs offered scholarships towards attaining a *laurea italiana* (Italian university degree). Thanks to this grant, one of the department's faculty members, Prof. Chris Evonne Leyritana-Javier obtained her *Laurea in Insegnamento della lingua e cultura italiana a stranieri* at the *Università per stranieri di Perugia* in 2006. In 2007, she obtained her *Master universitario di primo livello in Didattica dell'italiano lingua non materna* from the same institution, the first Filipino to earn a master's degree in the teaching of Italian. On top of that, she finished with the highest possible grade.

The following table shows the list of DEL faculty members sent on scholarship to Italy, most of them for short-term courses:

Faculty	Year
Edgardo Tiamson	1976, 1982
Daisy Lopez	1990, 2009
Ariadne Morta	1999
Lucille Armovit-Torres	2000
Joseph Martin Yan	2000
Carmina Ma. Veronica Bautista	2002
Chris Evonne Leyritana-Javier	2003, 2004-2006, 2007
Anna Rossini Parcerro	2003
Michelle Macutay	2008
Jerome Sanchez	2009
Laurence Laroza	2009

Scholarship Grants from other Institutions

In 2003 the DEL began its involvement in the scholarship project under the Program of Culture and Cooperation between the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and the Council for Culture of Regione Calabria. To date, several Italian majors and non-majors and three faculty members of the Department have availed of this scholarship grant and were able to take a three-month course on Italian language at the *Dante Alighieri Università per Stranieri di Reggio Calabria*.

Enrolment Trend

The effect of these scholarships is far-reaching not only in terms of faculty development but also in making Italian a popular choice among students either as a European language elective or as a major. The enrollment trend in Italian courses is shown in the following table:

Academic Year	Enrollees
1996-1997	234
1997-1998	421
1998-1999	341
1999-2000	613
2000-2001	830
2001-2002	831
2002-2003	742
2003-2004	299 (1 st sem)
2004-2005	578
2005-2006	473
2006-2007	237 (1 st sem)

The B.A. European Languages Program (Major in Italian)

In the B.A. European Languages (B.A.E.L.) curriculum revised in 2002, an Italian major is required to finish 54 units of Italian or 18 3-unit courses in language, culture, literature and translation. These are as follows:

Italian 10	Elementary Course I
Italian 11	Elementary Course II
Italian 12	Intermediate Course I
Italian 13	Intermediate Course II
Italian 14	Advanced Language Course I
Italian 15	Advanced Language Course II
Italian 30	Advanced Spoken Italian I
Italian 31	Advanced Spoken Italian II
Italian 40	Advanced Grammar
Italian 45	Introduction to Italian Phonetics and Phonology
Italian 60	Composition
Italian 80	Introduction to Italian Stylistics
Italian 100	Italian Culture and Civilization
Italian 101	Contemporary Italian Culture and Civilization
Italian 110	Survey of Italian Literature
Italian 140	Technical Italian
EL 170	Techniques of Translation
EL 180	Directed Language Activities: Theory

This curriculum aims to provide the Italian major a well-rounded academic preparation and training that is focused not only on learning the language but in acquiring knowledge that the student will be able to make use of in the practice of other skills such as translation and teaching.

Students in the B.A.E.L. program may also pursue Italian as a minor language of specialization. A minor specialization in Italian requires nine courses equivalent to 27 units. This will give the student the proficiency in the language and written communication skills.

Italian majors are also required to write their undergraduate thesis in the language. Topics could range from the areas of literature, culture, education, and translation analysis. All courses in these areas are conducted in Italian, maximizing the students' exposure to the language.

**Collaboration with other Institutions:
Lectures, Seminars and Cultural Activities**

Much recognition is given by different institutions, both foreign and local, to the DEL's important role in the promotion of higher Italian language and culture learning. It has consistently been tapped as a partner in significant lectures, seminars and noteworthy cultural events.

In 2004, the University of the Philippines became the venue for a seminar on Italian language and literature and *calabrese* literature by Prof. Pasquino Crupi, vice rector of the *Dante Alighieri Università per stranieri di Reggio Calabria*.

The steady growth of the Italian section and the yearly increase in the number of enrollees, the Italian section faculty, with the support of Vanoli, the Italian embassy and the *Società Dante Alighieri*, the Italian language and culture institution, thought it opportune to organize a conference on the teaching of Italian teaching in the

country. On September 1, 2006, the First National Refresher Conference on the Didactics of Italian in the Philippines was held at the University of the Philippines Diliman.

Aside from lectures and seminars, the DEL is also actively involved in Italian cultural events. In November 2006, it took part for the very first time in the international celebration of the *Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo* (Week of the Italian Language in the World). Dr. Francesca Fedele of the Italian embassy delivered a lecture on *La lingua e il pane d'Italia* (The language and the Italian bread) at the Faculty Center's Claro M. Recto Hall.

The embassy tapped the department in succeeding editions of the *Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo* on the themes *l'italiano e il mare* (The Italian Language and the Sea) and *l'italiano e la piazza* (The Italian language and the Square) under the supervision of the current visiting professor and cultural attaché, Dr. Emanuela Adesini. The University of the Philippines became host to culturally enriching activities such as poetry reading, film showings, lectures on the theme, essay writing contests and song festivals. Both editions of the Italian week were very well received by both students and faculty members of other departments as well.

The *Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo* likewise became an opportunity to showcase the excellence of students in Italian: for two consecutive years, 2007 and 2008, stories written by two different Italian majors were adjudged as one of the ten best compositions in the world (2007 and 2008 respectively). One of these students, Jerome Sanchez, headed the CAL's graduating class as *summa cum laude* on the year the university celebrated its centennial. He has since joined the DEL faculty.

The Student Organization *Piccola Italia*

In 2000, Italian language students formed the organization *Piccola Italia*. The *Piccola Italia* serves as a venue to gather not only for students but also all other members of the UP community who are Italian language and culture enthusiasts. As one of the regular activities of this student club, an Italian week is celebrated in February every year. Activities such as Italian cooking demonstrations, quiz shows, cultural exhibits, Italian mass, and Italian poetry reading are usually held during the week-long celebration.

Extension Service in Italian

Aside from the regular academic course offerings, the DEL renders extension service in the form of Italian Extramural classes. These classes are offered four times a year to non-UP constituents. A 30-hour basic course on the language serves as an introduction for appreciation of the language, the culture, and the people. This program has been going on since 2000.

Aside from classes, DEL faculty also render translation services in Italian for private and government institutions needing this expertise.

Recommendations and Plans

With the increasing interest in Italian and the demand for quality education in foreign languages, the DEL further commits itself in the development of its BAEL program major in Italian. As the country's Center of Excellence in Foreign Languages, it cannot afford to be complacent in performing its task in providing Filipino students quality language education.

The important role played by institutional partners such as the Italian Embassy and the *Società Dante Alighieri* cannot be overemphasized. In the last five years, the Italian section has experienced dynamic and steady growth largely because of the support from these partners. The relationship that we have with Italy is one that we would like to further strengthen for this also translates into the strengthening of our academic program, thus assuring the training of teachers who would be responsible for imparting instruction on Italian language, culture, literature and humanism in general.

The development of our faculty through constant studies could be advanced and intensified through grants and scholarships offered by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Italian universities and schools. One of the medium-term goals of the department is to develop other faculty with Master's degrees in Italian. To date, we have produced only one faculty member with a solid graduate degree in Italian language teaching. The investment that we put in this academic endeavor will pave the way for the institution of a graduate program in Italian in the University of the Philippines. Now that we have an MA program in French, German, and Spanish, one in Italian should be in order in the long term.

One of the challenges that the Italian Section presently faces concerns the fast turnover of faculty members and lack of tenured faculty in Italian. The rise of the business process outsource industry has given graduates and faculty other career options. Thus many full-time faculty have opted to teach part-time. Moreover, since there is no MA degree in Italian offered in the country, most teachers need to go abroad on a scholarship to a master's degree, and this makes the tenureship process difficult for them as well.

To conclude, the history of the Italian section of the Department of European Languages is a testimony to the combined work, effort and dedication of the department, its faculty, students and the Italian government. Furthermore, the University of the Philippines has been playing a major role in the propagation and diffusion of Italian language, culture, and literature in the Philippines despite the frequent and numerous economic constraints that have besieged the University for many years. The university has contributed much in making Italy closer to the Filipinos, or the Filipinos closer to Italy. It also hopes that Italian will soon attain the popularity and success of other languages that have a long history of teaching in the country. The data presented here show that this goal is definitely not far-fetched. With the continued help of its institutional partners, the future of the Italian Section looks very promising.