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ACCREDITATION:
Interpreting
accreditation the
Norwegian way

COURT RULING:
Interpreting need
not be perfect, only
effective

TECHNOLOGY:
New note-taking
technology opens up
exciting possibilities
for interpreters

Fair pay, decent conditions — and a job that makes a difference

In Touch

Winter 2013
Volume 21 number 2

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Contents

1. **We hear what you say.**
Some of the findings of an online survey of subscribers.
2. **New note-taking technology opens up exciting possibilities for interpreters.**
4. **Diana Rodriguez-Losada catches up with Ella Davies, manager of WA Interpreters Pty Ltd.**
6. **In Touch talks to the Lao translator and interpreter who was an integral part of the production of an acclaimed feature film.**
8. **The translator or interpreter must sometimes put the interests of the client before complete neutrality, reports Patricia Cruise.**
10. **John Benson talks about a vital aid program for Africa that makes best use of translators' and interpreters' skills – and pays them fairly.**
12. **Interpreting accreditation the Norwegian way.**
15. **Court says interpreting need not be perfect, only effective.**
16. **A translator's confession.**
Ben Xuan Xu compares the roles of the translator in China and Australia.

COVER PHOTO: African visitors inspect the Abbot Point coal terminal in north Queensland (see pp 10-11)

'We all understand one another'

I AM REPLYING to Dr Jim Hlavac (Correspondence, volume 21, number 1) in support of Will Firth (volume 20, number 4), who argued that Serbo-Croatian is "a single, mutually comprehensible language with multiple names".

If three people from three different nationalities can talk to one another and understand one another without necessarily asking even once for an explanation, surely this would indicate that the languages they are speaking are virtually the same.

Furthermore, if someone from one background asks for an interpreter from a different background because they are afraid of gossip in their community, this suggests that that person fully expects to understand the interpreter requested, regardless of the fact that the nationality is different. Dr Hlavac cites an example where an Arab man requested a French interpreter even though his knowledge of French was poor. I can only assume he imagined he was more proficient than he actually was. In the case of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, all three nationalities would have during their lifetime conversed with the other two without difficulty, and would know exactly what to expect as far as the languages are concerned.

In my experience as an interpreter in Perth, I have often come across people from all three nationalities who, when asked what language they speak, shrug their shoulders and say "nema veza" – it doesn't matter – and when pressed further, say "Serbo-Croatian", by which they mean any of the three languages. Many of them add: "The important thing is that we all understand one another."

I think when Will Firth remarked that Muslims, Croats or Serbians are identifiable by their names, he was implying that otherwise identification would often be difficult; that appearance or language alone would be insufficient for this purpose. What language, for instance, does a Catholic man who grew up in the now Serbian Republic in Bosnia and worked in Serbia and identifies himself as Bosnian speak? I certainly did not

understand Will to be attributing violence and extremism to the opponents of Serbo-Croatian.

Again, speaking from my own experience, people normally refer to the language they speak, when in conversation with one another, as "Serbian", "Croatian" or "Bosnian", and this has always been the case. It was the case 40 years ago in the former Yugoslavia, but this does not mean that they could not fully understand the other two languages, or that they thought their own language unique or superior. Dr Hlavac is correct in saying "on the ground and in private usage, the term 'Serbo-Croatian' remained unused and unloved", but this does not mean very much. I am Australian, for instance, and still say I speak English, but I am sure this is because we are a relatively young country. Of course a Croatian speaks Croatian and so on, and is unlikely to refer to it in normal usage as "Serbo-Croatian", which is a manufactured term which was and remains useful in certain instances.

As far as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague is concerned, the fact that they "chose for pragmatic reasons the designation grouping Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian together" and that "the language a defendant or a witness will receive translations or interpretation in will not necessarily be his or her native language but a language that he understands" once again serves to demonstrate that all three languages are indeed virtually the same. When appearing before a court that is hearing charges of grave crimes which have had and will have major repercussions, it is of vital importance that everyone concerned can understand completely and exactly what is happening.

For all these reasons, and in spite of the minor linguistic differences between the three languages (excluding the alphabet, which of course is very different for Serbian and for Croatian), I firmly believe them to be effectively interchangeable.

Coral Petkovich
Perth, WA

We hear what you say

In Touch readers really appreciate articles on languages and cultures, just ahead of articles on the industry and the people who work in it, stories about workplace issues and interviews with practitioners. You're not so keen on news about conferences and events.

OUR READERS ALSO think the articles are well written and pitched at about the right level for the audience, although they believe the content could be more relevant and useful to their work or studies and doesn't always address the issues and events they want to read about.

These are some of the findings of an online survey of subscribers conducted earlier in the year to determine what people think of the publication and how it could be improved. Responses were received from 62 people – a reasonable response rate for this type of survey, and high enough to draw some fairly firm conclusions about the views of the readership as a whole.

Encouragingly, only a minority of respondents rated **In Touch** as average or below for readability (10 per cent), layout and presentation (24 per cent), interest (29 per cent), usefulness (35 per cent) and comprehensiveness (45 per cent). When asked how they rate different types of articles for interest and usefulness, they also gave a thumbs up for all – articles about AUSIT and its office-holders scored worst, with 29 per cent rating them as average or below.

The survey also indicates that 82 per cent of readers work as translators, with 33 per cent as interpreters – this includes 20 per cent who work in both capacities. A further 5 per cent are not currently working as either.

Most respondents indicated that they work across many different fields of practice, with just under half (48 per cent) nominating business and commerce, 41 per cent legal, 37 per cent health, 35 per cent immigration, and 7 per cent education and public administration.

The vast majority of respondents practise in the four major European languages of French and German (each 25 per cent), Spanish (19 per cent) and Italian (10 per cent). (Several respondents practise in more than one language.) One worrying sign for policy-makers is the relative scarcity, if the survey results are an indication, of practitioners in the main community languages apart from Italian and Spanish – just one practitioner in Arabic, one in Greek, one in Mandarin, three in Indonesian, two in Serbo-Croat and none in Vietnamese.

People are spread across Australia in roughly the same proportions as the population overall, with 42 per cent in NSW and the ACT, 23 per cent in Victoria and 7 per cent mainly working overseas.

Respondents were asked what subjects they'd like to see covered in future editions. The responses were many and varied – far too varied to be accommodated in the short term, although we'll try to meet all your expectations over the long haul. Particularly favoured are self-help-type articles on, for example, running a business, CAT tools, identifying potential clients, translating techniques, using IT and research techniques. Industrial and workplace issues also featured quite strongly.

You also want an outward-looking publication that addresses not just AUSIT members but translators and interpreters as a whole. Just under half want **In Touch** to be aimed at an even broader readership including employers, agencies, academics and other users of our services. Most of you are happy for us to seek more advertising, including "contra deals" such as cheaper professional indemnity insurance in return for space.

A big thank you to all who took the trouble to complete the survey. We'll do all we can to meet your expectations.

New note-taking technology opens up exciting possibilities for interpreters

Dongmei Chen and Denise Formica report on a new course that has gained global recognition, and the advantages offered by digital pen technology.

IT IS SATURDAY AFTERNOON. We are inside a lecture room at Monash University's Caulfield campus 15 minutes into the presentation and all 38 chairs have been taken. The presenter speaks in English with a graceful French accent: words flow from his mouth so effortlessly that one wonders how his cognitive machinery can spin so fast.

We are listening to Marc Orlando, lecturer in translating and interpreting studies at Monash University. Marc is conducting research into digital pen technology and its advantages for those of us who practise as interpreters. However, the first part of his presentation aims to provide an introduction to the new conference interpreting stream of Monash's Master of Interpreting and Translation.

The course, designed in line with cutting-edge international standards, is the only course in conference interpreting accredited by NAATI for five language pairs. Marc notes that this reflects the singular nature of the Australian market in conference interpreting where, in contrast with international workplaces, interpreters have to interpret in an AB-BA language combination.

This new course will initially offer training in five languages – Chinese, French, Indonesian, Japanese and Spanish – paired with English. Marc remarks that when people talk about conference interpreting, they usually conjure up an image of people sitting in booths tucked away at the back of an international conference and interpreting simultaneously. It is easy to forget that interpreting at diplomatic negotiations or court proceedings, for example, is also considered as conference interpreting done either consecutively or simultaneously, and this, as many people know, can sometimes be more challenging than working from a conference booth.

Monash's Translation and Interpreting program, which Marc convenes, last year became the first Australian program to gain membership of *Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI)*. Marc explains that the curriculum of the new stream has been designed to be recognised by both CIUTI and European Master of Conference Interpreting (EMCI) universities, and that the program meets AIIC criteria and is listed in the AIIC directory.

Reactions around the room differ: some participants are delighted at the prospects that such exposure creates for Australian interpreters; others seem a little disappointed, especially those hoping for a course that might help them in their everyday practice here in Melbourne. Perhaps in time, Marc suggests, shorter courses may be available for these interpreters too.

Entry requirements

Marc provides basic information about the content of the new stream and its entry criteria. In a nutshell, international students require a bachelor degree plus IELTS 7 (A: LOTE, B: English); domestic students will require a bachelor degree with a major in the LOTE (A: English, B: LOTE). (The Monash website provides more details.) Prospective students must also contact the course coordinator before commencement of studies to arrange an interview. An aptitude test to go on with conference interpreting training will be set before the second semester starts.

"The good news is that those interpreters who are already accredited will be provided with an opportunity to upskill to the conference level through a mid-year entry, with two conditions," Marc adds.



... The good news is that those interpreters who are already accredited will be provided with an opportunity to upskill to the conference level through a mid-year entry.'

"First, you must be a NAATI-accredited professional interpreter with at least three years of documented practice; second, you must pass the aptitude test, which will be conducted before the second semester in April or May." This means that candidates will be expected to have good powers of concentration, analysis and synthesis, good communication skills, a high degree of motivation, the ability to work under pressure, experience of a wide range of topics and registers, an in-depth knowledge of the working languages, as well as a good overall knowledge of international affairs and of the economic, social and cultural background of the countries in which the working languages are used.

Phew! Those who think conference interpreting courses are a miracle machine that gobbles up raw materials and churns out gold nuggets will have to think again. Marc is swamped by participants who are eager to know more about the course.

Amazing possibilities

The second part of his presentation is on digital pen technology – something that the everyday practitioner considers an "optional" tool in their briefcase. The audience is amazed at the possibilities offered by this latest development.

Marc is careful to stress that he has no connections to any suppliers, and that the technology has actually been around for some time. This means that costs have decreased considerably over the past few years, to the point where a good package is now available for under \$300.

The digital pen **Smartpen** was initially intended for secretaries in meetings to facilitate their subsequent writing of the minutes. It has a microphone, an infrared camera at the tip, a speaker and 3D recorder headsets, but is used as a normal pen, with an ink cartridge to

write on microchipped paper.

The pen allows the simultaneous capture of sound and writing, which offers interesting applications for note-taking in interpreting training once the data is uploaded onto a computer. The latest version has wireless connection capacity that will allow notes taken to be transmitted to any device instantaneously.

CONSEC-SIMUL mode

Marc's research project concerns the "CONSEC-SIMUL" mode of interpreting, also called SIMCONSEC, which follows a pilot study he led in 2012 elaborating on previous work by other practitioners and researchers such as Michele Ferrari (2001).

Several studies led by the University of Vienna's Franz Pöchhacker have since then investigated this mode, which during a consecutive interpreting assignment records the source speech with a digital device and, once the speaker is finished, plays back the recording and interpreting of the speech simultaneously from the second listening. Studies have so far shown that accuracy is highly enhanced with such a mode, although the interaction with the audience is not as good as with traditional consecutive. The pen records all conversations and, as Marc explains, the interpreter will take notes with the pen on the microchipped paper while the speech is delivered for the first time. At the completion of the speech, the interpreter then puts on the earphone that comes with the pen, plays the speech back and interprets simultaneously. Since the interpreter has already heard the speech once and has taken notes about it, they are aware of its content and structure, can anticipate any difficult phrases and will therefore be in a better position to interpret more accurately.

One of the features of the digital pen is that it allows the interpreter to slow down the pace of the recording if necessary, such as during a difficult passage. The main issues with this technology in the workplace centre on questions of privacy, but as Marc comments, "all the interpreter needs to do if necessary is show that the recording has been deleted before leaving the assignment".

This technology offers many advantages from a didactic point of view, but judging by the interest shown by interpreters who work in business, court and similar settings where consecutive interpreting is the norm, it will very likely prove its worth among practitioners too. Marc has received a research grant from OnCall Interpreters & Translators to conduct further research in this field, to be carried out over the next two years, testing the viability of this new mode using the **Smartpen** both with interpreters from around Australia and in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Interpretation at the European Commission.

Further information on the Master of Conference Interpreting course is available at <http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/translation-interpreting>. Marc may be contacted at Marc.Orlando@monash.edu.au

Dongmei Chen is treasurer and Denise Formica is professional development coordinator of AUSIT's Victoria/Tasmania branch.

A success built on compassion and hard work

Diana Rodriguez-Losada catches up with Ella Davies, manager of WA Interpreters Pty Ltd and winner of the Commonwealth Bank Western Australian Business Migrant of the Year award.

IF YOU WERE TO ASK Ella Davies' friends and colleagues to describe her in one word, that word may well be "understated". She has an unassuming demeanour, always friendly and pleasant, even after her regular ten-hour working day. Ella's hard work, easygoing nature and knowledge of the industry are the core of her success.

Ella, who was born in the former Yugoslavia, was accustomed to living in a multicultural society where Serbs, Bosnians and Croats lived together for decades in peace and harmony. But it all changed after the war broke out in 1991. Living in the war zone was grim, but when her son was born it became even more horrifying. Food was scarce and quite often the electricity and water supply were disconnected. It was not until 1994 when the European Union Administration (EUA) arrived in her city of Mostar (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) that the fighting stopped.

Her interpreting career began when she gained employment for the EUA in the media monitoring unit. This involved listening to the news broadcasts by warring parties and translating them for EUA officials – a highly sensitive and challenging job due to the media war, where each side continued to spread hatred in a post-war environment. Each word in these translations was carefully chosen so as to express exactly what was said. This is when she developed a keen interest in the beauty of the English language, with its vast choice of expressions and its capability to convey the same message in so many different ways.

Although the war had officially stopped, it was still very dangerous to live in a country where many people had weapons and post-war trauma was widespread. It became obvious to Ella that in order to have a better life and a future for her son, they had to resettle to another country. This is when she started making enquires with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about the possibility of resettlement in Australia. After a year of hurdles, of health check-ups, interviews and endless paperwork, Ella and her family were granted visas to migrate to Australia in 1995.



Ella Davies

Ella thought of Australia as Noah's Ark: if the rest of the world decided to destroy itself, then all the cultures and races would survive here.

Ella had her first lesson in what being Australian meant when a customs officer at Sydney airport corrected the way she wrote the digit one: "This would be a 'seven' in Australia," he explained. "'One' has to have a little foot or be a straight line." On exiting the airport, she saw a Sikh man with the turban on his head, a woman in a sari, and many other cultures and races that she had never seen in real life before.

Ella thought of Australia as Noah's Ark: if the rest of the world decided to destroy itself, then all the cultures and races would survive here.

Need for local qualifications

Even though she was a qualified accountant and her European qualifications were officially recognised, she understood that she could not find a professional job unless she gained local qualifications. On completing an advanced diploma of accounting, she found work as an accountant for a chartered accountant when she relocated to Perth.

Unfortunately, she discovered that timesheet accounting is among the most boring jobs in the world. While tediously working through the pile of papers at her desk, she fondly remembered her interpreting days – both back in Yugoslavia and, more recently, while working as community interpreter for

TIS during her accounting studies – and realised how much she missed them. After a couple of years working as an accountant, Ella decided to return to community interpreting.

For the next five years she worked as a community interpreter and coordinator in the language services units of two major hospitals in Perth, where she gained first-hand experience in booking interpreters. This prompted her to start her own agency. Being a qualified accountant as well meant she had all the necessary skills and knowledge to run a business.

WA Interpreters was born in 2005, and is now the largest private interpreting agency in the state, employing more than 280 casual interpreters and translators, and providing translating and interpreting services in over 70 languages and dialects to the WA community.

Being a refugee herself, Ella has a good understanding of the issues facing new migrants and the professional staff they deal with, be they doctors, lawyers or teachers. She has overcome many obstacles in achieving her business success. She treats interpreters and translators as colleagues rather than just employees. This is reflected in the number of interpreters and translators retained by her agency, and her growing range of clients. These are

the very people who, recognising her commitment, honesty, work ethic and love of the industry, nominated her for the Commonwealth Bank Business Migrant of the Year.

Ella is an AUSIT WA branch committee member and former national council delegate who has made a valuable contribution to many AUSIT projects. The AUSIT WA team, especially those who, like me, have had the pleasure of working with her, share her pride in this richly deserved award.

Diana Rodriguez-Losada is vice-president of AUSIT and an accredited Spanish-English translator and interpreter.

Coffee morning get-togethers

There will be further AUSIT coffee mornings in Sydney on the following dates:

- Friday 28 June at El Sweetie, 75 South Street, Granville
- Saturday 20 July at My Sweet Memory café, 12 Churchill Avenue, Strathfield.

All commence around 10.30am.

Online resources for interpreters and translators

A reminder that professional development resources for our industry can be accessed and downloaded at the TICPD online repository run by AUSIT in partnership with ASLIA and NAATI. Go to <http://ticpd.com/resources/>



NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS 2013 CONFERENCE

Tauranga Yacht and Power Boat Club, 90 Keith Allen Drive, Tauranga
28-30 June

For registration and other details, including 'early bird' discounts (until 7 June), go to <https://www.etches.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=61777&>

Rocketing to glory



Pauline Phoumindr

In Touch talks to the Lao translator and interpreter who was an integral part of the production of an acclaimed feature film.

Pauline Phayvanh Phoumindr says it was unlike any other interpreting or translating job she has ever undertaken.

Phoumindr is credited as associate producer of the feature film **The Rocket**, an Australian-Lao-Thai joint venture that is winning high praise wherever it screens, from Berlin to Seattle and New York, soon for Sydney and hopefully a general release.

But her role extended far beyond that. She was recruited by director Kim Mordaunt and producer Sylvia Wilczynski – with whom she had worked as a translator on an earlier Mordaunt/Wilczynski film, **Bomb Harvest**, also set in Laos – to be the crew's interpreter, translator, cultural adviser and government liaison officer. (The Lao government and its embassies in Berlin and New York were generous in their support for the venture.)

She also had a substantial role as acting coach with the mainly non-professional cast, many of them children – conveying the director's instructions in their own language and encouraging them to display their emotions as the situation demanded. She was often required to take on childcare responsibilities, particularly when filming took place in the early hours of the morning and the children just wanted to sleep.





There's a world of difference between working in a city like Sydney where everything you need is on hand and being on top of a remote mountain in a poor country for weeks on end."

The Rocket tells the story of a 10-year-old Lao boy, Ahlo, whose family has been displaced from their home by the construction of a dam – an all too familiar circumstance in the developing world. Ahlo leads them, along with Kia, a nine-year-old orphan, and her eccentric uncle Purple, in search of a new home. But Ahlo also wants to prove that he is not, as his family believes, cursed with bad luck. So he builds a giant explosive rocket to enter the most lucrative but dangerous competition of the year, the Rocket Festival.

The Rocket has already won several prestigious awards: best narrative feature, best actor in a narrative feature for star (and former street kid) Sitthiphon Disamoe, and audience award for most popular narrative feature at New York's 2013 Tribeca Film Festival; also, best first feature, winner of the Crystal Bear (for best feature in the generation K-plus program), and winner of the Amnesty International Prize at the 2013 Berlin International Film Festival. Reviews have been exceptional, including a prediction from the **Sydney Morning Herald's** Gary Maddox that "Australia will have its first nomination for best foreign-language film at the Oscars next year".

Phoumindr says her major translating responsibility involved translating Mordaunt's script into Thai – more specifically Esarn, the dialect spoken in the north-eastern region of Thailand of the same name that is home to about a third of the Thai population. Esarn is very similar to Lao, but there are subtle differences.

"Lao people don't make the 'ch' and 'rh' sounds," she says. "These sounds trace back to Sanskrit, but didn't extend into Laos." So she had to instruct the Thai members of the cast – including leading player (and one of the cast's few professional actors) Thep Phongam –

not to make these sounds. "Also, Esarn speakers will make an 'aiee' sound – much as English speakers say 'um' – when they're thinking, and this too is foreign to the Lao."

Phoumindr's role included making sure no out-of-place idiomatic phrases crept into the script. "One expression they were worried about was when Purple says to Ahlo's father that Ahlo is 'the perfect scapegoat'. But surprisingly this expression has an almost exact Lao counterpart." Nonetheless, she had to do quite a bit of paraphrasing of the script to make it authentically Lao.

How different was her experience on the film to the usual fare for a professional translator and interpreter? "For a start, it was far more intense and demanding," she says. "In Australia you might be in court, say, for one or two hours a day over a few days – perhaps up to a week. But with **The Rocket** I was on deck non-stop for four months. And there's a world of difference between working in a city like Sydney where everything you need is on hand and being on top of a remote mountain in a poor country for weeks on end. The Australian crew relied completely on me for all sorts of things at any time of the day. The number of times I would hear someone say 'Pauline, could you come over here please ...'

"Kim [the director] would want the children and the other actors to show their emotions through their eyes, but Lao people are more demonstrative in expressing their emotions. I had to encourage them to be less demonstrative – and show them what Kim was looking for. With an English-speaking cast he would do this himself. I had to build up a lot of trust with the cast, especially the children."

There's also a lot more pressure on the interpreter when the need is to get it right first time. "You can't ask someone to repeat what they just said or explain what they mean, as you might in a courtroom. When the assistant director calls out 'rolling, action!', at that split second it has to be word-perfect. Lots of scenes have to be shot several times because of things like technical problems or people standing in the wrong place, so the last thing you want is to add to the delays because of interpreting problems. Every new shot is a new, challenging, mini-interpreting assignment."

Phoumindr says the experience taught her a lot about how to make language work effectively; how to communicate in such a way as to make sure that everyone gets what they need from the communication. But she had to be discreet on certain matters. "The cast all wanted to know what the others were earning, but that was strictly confidential between the producers and the individual actor. So I had to keep my mouth shut despite repeated requests."

She also had to deal with tricky cultural issues. "For instance, pointing to something with your foot is hard not to do if your two hands are already occupied, but the Thai and Lao crew would not accept that excuse and would consider that as an insult. So if your hands are full, you have to put things down first and point to things with your finger or your hand. However, once people knew that pointing with your foot isn't meant to be an insult from a westerner's point of view, the Thai and Lao people started to tolerate that type of body language. In a sense, I had to interpret and decipher the meaning of certain body language as well."

Phoumindr also paid tribute to her diploma of interpreting students at Granville TAFE, who provided the film's voice-over during post-production.

Sometimes accuracy and impartiality are not appropriate

The translator or interpreter must sometimes put the interests of the client before complete neutrality, reports Patricia Cruise.

ON A BEAUTIFUL autumn afternoon in April, AUSIT members gathered in the Sydney CBD for a professional development session on the revised code of ethics and code of conduct.

Our presenter was Christian Schmidt who, along with Uldis Ozolins, was a principal figure in carrying out the reform.

Christian walked us through the old code, highlighting elements that were found to be outmoded, inappropriate or misguided and needing reconsideration. He compared these items with the corresponding revised versions in the new code. An example was the recognition that interpreting in the first person is not always appropriate, for example with mentally impaired people and in telephone interpreting. Omissions also needed to be addressed.

The new code is far less dictatorial, and informed by a more respectful view of a translator/interpreter as a professional practitioner of their craft, whose judgment invariably influences their work. And so it should.

This contrasts with the old version, which was more black and white about the role of the T/I practitioner, and relegated them as subject to the client user's decisions and judgment.

A simple yet telling example of how total accuracy and impartiality are not always appropriate is the need for Red Cross employees to identify themselves as Red Crescent workers when they enter Islamic lands.

The questions from attendees were probing, and the anecdotal and hypothetical situations posed very appropriate. Animated debate accompanied the discussion on the ethics involved in interpreting in a business situation.

Here you are necessarily partial to your client because they are paying you to advance their interests. Your loyalty is only to them, not to open bilateral discourse or preserving the confidentiality of the other party.

There was much discussion on what could be ethically translated in business settings. For example, if the interpreter overhears something said in the second language when the other party speaks to someone else and this is relevant to the business dealing at hand, then he/she may – indeed should – convey this to their client.

Christian gave an example of when he was interpreting for a German delegation in an African country many years ago.



Get the recognition you or a colleague deserve for that out-of-this-world assignment or work achievement.

AUSIT will be announcing the winners of its excellence awards for 2013 at a gala dinner at the CQ Function Centre, following a day of conference presentations, displays and demonstrations.

Nominations are now open. For further information and to download the nomination form, go to www.ausitawards.org

**CQ Function Centre 113 Queen St, Melbourne
Saturday, 16 November**

Christian Schmidt



If the interpreter overhears something and this is relevant to the business at hand, then he/she may – indeed should – convey this to their client.

The German government was looking into the possibility of funding landmine clearance operations. Christian overheard officials of the African country speaking among themselves about their interest in support for (resource) mines, not landmines (both referred to as “minas” in the official language), and informed his clients of this after the meeting was over.

His clients admonished him and stated that he should have informed them at the time. So eavesdropping on comments not intended for the ears of his clients was appropriate and justified. In this particular situation you could also say it was morally, politically and economically justified.

For my part, I used to be very familiar with the code of ethics when I recruited and managed a team of interpreters, but I had not really looked at it for 15 years. Examining it now in the framework of the new code, it does seem very outmoded, its tenets dictatorial, limiting and sometimes even condescending to practitioners. The new code allows more discretion to the individual practitioner to use their judgment when it comes to practising their craft, because translating and interpreting always takes place within a context.

Patricia Cruise is chair of AUSIT (NSW).

What would you do?

In a recent Mad Men episode on SBS Television, a Japanese delegation, accompanied by their interpreter, was received in the offices of the Madison Avenue advertising agency. They want to negotiate an advertising campaign to launch their new Honda motorcycle in the USA. Joan, the well-endowed, high heels-wearing office manager, steps forward to welcome the delegation. There is an outburst of giggling by the Japanese party.

Japanese delegate (in Japanese):
“How does she not fall over?”

Joan senses her appearance is what is causing the mirth. She remarks, to no one in particular:
“They’re not very subtle, are they?”

Interpreter: “No, they are not.”

Was it appropriate for the interpreter to make this comment?

Possibly not.

Did it do any harm?

Very unlikely.

An Arabic interpreter is interpreting a talk given by a policewoman on domestic violence laws in Australia. The audience is a newly arrived group of young male, mostly Muslim, refugees.

Policewoman: “There are strict laws against domestic violence in Australia. Any physical violence towards your spouse is an offence.”

Interpreter (interprets what was said faithfully, then adds): “Unless, of course, she is unfaithful.”

Was it appropriate for the interpreter to make this comment?

Absolutely not.

Did it do any harm?

Yes.

Fair pay, decent conditions – and a job that makes a difference



John Benson talks about a vital aid program for Africa that makes best use of translators' and interpreters' skills – and pays them fairly.

RECENTLY I FOUND MYSELF standing outside a petrol station in far north Queensland with a young government official from Liberia. As a boy during the civil war he had seen his young cousins killed “like chickens” in front of him. His family fled to Guinea and then to America.

As the sun set in a blaze of tropical glory and mining trucks whizzed by, he told me how he had done his undergraduate degree in Virginia and then a masters in politics at Columbia University in New York. When he graduated, he ignored the well-paid jobs in Manhattan and returned to Liberia. He felt it was his duty to help stop his country once again descending into the heart of darkness.

It was one of the surreal, extraordinary moments that you encounter as an interpreter. It's what makes you want to continue, despite everything.

But this isn't a story about wars in Africa, although that's part of it. This is a story of optimism and hope for all translators and interpreters in Australia negotiating contracts with government.

In late 2011 while on holidays in Paris, I received one of those requests for a quote that you suspect may be an attempted Nigerian scam. I was asked to accompany a bunch of “African ministers” around Western Australia for two weeks. It stated it was an Australian company subcontracted to the “government”.

But during further communication, my correspondent (who appeared to be in Melbourne) started talking about “approvals” which were needed “from Pretoria”. I'm sure you all remember that scam about the African archbishop which hit the e-bulletin a few years ago. Here we go again, I thought – more of the same old same old.

Boy was I wrong. Suddenly this quote had my full attention after I skyped the client and discovered that the entity behind it was a new AusAid fund set up by the Rudd government with a substantial war chest. The double aim of the fund was to curry favour with African governments for the upcoming vote at the UN for Australia's bid to join the Security Council as a temporary member and also deliver effective aid to Africa, building on Australia's strengths in the mining sector.

Negotiation of the initial contract terms was loose but satisfying, and more than acceptable in the end. The crucial factor here was the subcontracting of the proposed study tour's organisation to a private-sector consulting firm. Instead of the usual government rubbish along the lines of “sorry, we have a fixed budget; we can only pay you \$36 an hour”, I found my counterpart happily cutting a deal with me that included a decent day rate, per diems, paid travel days, overtime and expenses as a matter of course.

‘Senior African officials and ministers have remarked that we are the best, most flexible interpreters they have ever encountered during their work with international organisations.’

What a breath of fresh air after receiving so many “offers” from agencies to do a full day’s interpreting in court for a mere \$220 (no travel, super or other expenses included, of course).

I quickly contacted former AUSIT president Yveline Piller, who agreed to partner with me for this “stunt”, taking African officials from 10 countries all over WA to visit mines and talk to stakeholders. We were both surprised by the intensity of the work, which often involved 10 to 12-hour days and thousands of kilometres of travel, and the satisfaction we derived from it over 14 madcap days.

But here’s what will interest professional interpreters and translators all over Australia.

At the end of the trip, the director of the program and his staff told us how much better the trip had worked with “professional” interpreters on board. They had tried running a couple of previous tours using paraprofessionals sourced in Africa and things had not gone smoothly. With Yveline and your author providing accurate, technical interpreting, the French delegates had “come alive” – participating fully in the trip and deriving much more benefit from visits in the field and formal discussions.

AAPF (the AusAid program) asked if Yveline and I would consult to help them set up a panel of reliable, skilled interpreters and translators for future study tours. We produced a 20-page document recommending that they appoint a formal coordinator for the panel and, after researching the market in Africa, setting criteria for recruitment. We also advised them on the best portable interpreting equipment (new lightweight digital models) to use on these diverse and challenging assignments. (Watch for an article in a future issue of **In Touch** on the revolution that these new “tour guide” sets can make to visits in the field.)

Many of you probably saw the ads on the e-bulletin last year calling for applications for the panel. Since that time AAPF has run a dozen more tours here and in Africa, generating excellent income for interpreters and translators on the panel, who translate the accompanying documentation for delegates in both French and Portuguese.

For me, this is a wonderful model of where our industry should set its sights: clients recognising the need for skilled, professional interpreters and willing to pay decent market rates so we can all earn a good living. What was also pleasing was the clear respect these clients and African officials have for our skills. On many occasions since, senior African officials and ministers have remarked that we are the best, most flexible interpreters they have ever encountered during their work with international organisations.

And so we return to that dusty petrol station by the side of a mining road in Queensland, with me and the courageous young Liberian man who had returned to his war-torn country to try and make a difference. We both climbed back into the bus as the sun set, and I settled into my seat with a smile of satisfaction on my face, because for one of the few times in my interpreting career, I could truly say I was happy with my employment and all the marvellous things and people that it allows me to discover.

John Benson is a Sydney-based French translator and conference interpreter.

Interpreting accreditation the Norwegian way



Uldis Ozolins speaks to the head of the Norwegian interpreting certification system about what Australia can learn from their rigorous testing regime.

The ‘improvements to NAATI testing’ project has generated considerable discussion in relation to Australia’s current accreditation testing and ways it could be improved.

Particular concern has been expressed about the effectiveness of the current dialogue interpreting test.

Among the quite radical recommendations in the project report is that a telephone interpreting component be part of interpreting accreditation testing, and that whenever possible interpreting tests be conducted live.

I spoke about these and other issues to Diane Mortensen, who heads the Norwegian interpreting certification system, on her recent visit to Australia. Mortensen has split most of her life between the United States, where she graduated in English literature, and Norway, where she graduated in sociology and pedagogy. Her truly international family has brought her to many places, including Australia and Papua New Guinea, where she has been able to observe interpreting organisation and practice at first hand.

The Norwegian system

Norway, which introduced its own interpreting testing as recently as 1997, had the advantage of observing other testing regimes, particularly those of Sweden and Australia, both of which had had long-established interpreting testing.

“Officially, Norway established a scheme for interpreter accreditation in June 1997 on the basis of a pilot exam that was held twice previously, in 1995 and 1996,” Mortensen explained.

“Interpreters who pass the Norwegian interpreter accreditation exam apply to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity [IMDi] for licensing as a state-accredited interpreter. The directorate is organised under the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.”

Translator accreditation goes back much further – to almost exactly 100 years before the scheme for interpreters.

The exam leading to accreditation as a translator is held at the Norwegian School of Economics in Bergen.

“The group looked primarily to Sweden for a model for the Norwegian [interpreting] scheme and for the exam that the scheme would be based on,” she said. “The first pilot exam in Norway was almost a duplicate of the exam that was being held in Sweden at that time.

“However, there have always been some differences between the Norwegian and Swedish interpreting exams. We wanted to develop a separate system for measuring a candidate’s skills in interpreting techniques and incorporate this measurement into the candidate’s overall result on the test.

“Norway agreed that the exam leading to interpreter accreditation shouldn’t just measure the interpreter’s language skills and their ability to translate [interpret] the content and meaning of an utterance into its linguistic equivalent in the other language. We felt that it was also important to have a system by which we could measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the candidate’s technical skills – such skills as the candidate’s note-taking techniques, techniques for asking clarifying questions, requesting repetitions and the like – as well as their knowledge of professional ethics. We wanted to develop a test that was based on criteria that incorporated both aspects of a professional interpreter’s performance.

“That’s why we expanded our board of examiners to include an examiner in interpreting techniques. This examiner does a separate evaluation of the candidate’s interpreting skills and awards a grade for interpreting techniques which can be transposed into a per cent score along a fixed scale. The candidate’s final result on an interpreting task is then calculated, with transference of linguistic content counting for two thirds and interpreting techniques a third. So it’s possible for a candidate to fail the exam due to a very poor or unacceptable technical performance even though their interpreting performance language-wise is acceptable.”

Responsibility for the Norwegian accreditation system is divided between the government and the higher education system. The system was initiated by the Directorate of Immigration, which until 2006 also financed it and awarded licences (responsibilities that were passed to the newly created IMDi later that year), while the University of Oslo developed and administered the exam. From the start of this year the exam is developed and administered by the university’s College of Applied Sciences, which also runs interpreting courses.

“Interpreter training in Norwegian universities and colleges has historically been quite limited, and the majority of interpreters have still not had the opportunity to complete either a four-year undergraduate or two-year graduate course in interpreting,” Mortensen said. “The accreditation system was established to allow the many interpreters who have learned their trade mainly through practice to document their skills.

“The test itself consists of both a written and an oral part. Candidates must pass the written part, which covers both general language proficiency and content area terminology and realia, to be allowed to take the oral part.

“The oral part is the actual interpreting test. Candidates are tested in the consecutive mode only. They must first interpret two simulated dialogues. If they achieve a sufficient score on dialogue interpreting, they are allowed to take the second part of the oral exam, which consists of interpreting two short monologues of about 200 words both into and from Norwegian. We use written manuscripts for both parts of the oral exam, but the actors follow the interpreter, rather than mechanically keeping to the scripts. Each segment has specific meaningful units that must be appropriately rendered. A candidate must gain 85 per cent on the oral test to pass.

“The oral exam ends with questions that test the candidate’s knowledge of professional ethics and interpreting techniques.”

The failure rate is substantial, with most candidates failing the written section and getting no further. Failure rates in various languages range from 70 to 90 per cent.

The oral part of the Norwegian accreditation test is done live, as in Sweden. The examining board consists of two language examiners, one examiner in interpreting techniques and professional ethics and an administrative head, who can also participate in the evaluation discussion when there are discrepancies between the examiners and in borderline cases. In addition there are two role players who ordinarily don’t have any say in the evaluation of a candidate’s performance. In rare instances, one of the role players may be appointed as an “assistant examiner” in a specific language.

Distance trials

Mortensen said that because of the logistical complications of the Norwegian system, they did trial distance evaluation. The test was held live, but only the examiner in interpreting techniques, the administrative head of the examining board and the two role players were present during the actual exam. Digital recordings were made of the candidate’s interpreting, and these recordings were then sent to the language examiners. “This kind of distance evaluation saved a good deal of time and effort in advance, since it wasn’t necessary for everyone on the board to be physically present during the exam,” she said. “But our experience was that distance evaluation did entail considerably more work afterwards, partly due to an increased number of appeals. And it did not result in any significant monetary savings. We have, however, suggested that the college continue experimenting with distance evaluation, since the oral exam is extremely costly and time-consuming to arrange.”

The accreditation exam has to date been held in 22 languages, with a span of about two to four years before the exam is held again in the same language. The transfer of responsibility for conducting the exam to the college in 2013 was undertaken partly in the hope that it would be able to conduct more frequent exams in more languages than the university. But funding restrictions mean that any such frequency increase would probably require changes in its format, and perhaps also its content and level of difficulty. “But this is something we are trying very hard to resist,” she said. “There is still a strong consensus among experts about what skills should be required of a professional interpreter.”

Candidate demand is strong, with up to 50 people undertaking the exam in some languages. But exams are held even if only one candidate signs up.

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We felt that it was important to have a system by which we could measure, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the candidate's technical skills.'

>> "Getting examiners in certain languages is a great problem, and one of the reasons that the exam is held so infrequently in each language. There are various minimum criteria that an examiner has to meet, and in many languages such persons are difficult to find. This is one reason why we haven't been able to hold the interpreting test in more than 22 languages. Sometimes, if we can't find two examiners that meet all of the criteria, we add an additional examiner to the team. But this adds considerably to costs."

Periodic evaluations

The interpreting test has been subject to periodic evaluations since it was first held in 1995. As a result, changes have been made in both the content and scale of the test, although the actual format and the grading and evaluation system haven't changed much since 1997.

"Full digitalisation of the written part has been suggested and will probably be discussed further in the years to come," said Mortensen.

"Using video films and otherwise digitalising the oral part has also been suggested, although so far there has been a consensus that such a change would threaten the validity of our exam. Although a live exam can never replicate completely an actual interpreting situation, it is certainly a more realistic interpreting setting than the use of a video film. It would be very difficult to assess a full spectrum of the candidate's interpreting techniques if the candidate is interpreting what is being said on film rather than in person."

Use of unaccredited interpreters

Although it is widely accepted that an accredited interpreter is most often more qualified for an interpreting job than one who doesn't have accreditation, many users still rely on the services of unaccredited interpreters. There are fewer than 200 accredited interpreters in Norway, and many more who are unaccredited. "Users tend to like to take the easiest, and sometimes cheapest, way out," she said.

"Until the 1990s it was primarily the local governments [kommuner] that organised language [interpreting] services. However, over the last 10 to 15 years numerous private agencies have popped up all over the country. Not all of these agencies are as concerned with providing professional services as the interpreting services organised by the local governments. And in many municipalities in Norway, the public interpreting agency has been shut down or turned into a private or semi-private organisation."

The Directorate of Immigration organises its own interpreting service to interview asylum seekers and other immigrants. And while IMDi has overall responsibility for interpreting in Norway, it has no authority over local governments as to how they organise or deliver their interpreter services.

"Due to limited resources, the interpreting test is held in Oslo only, and we've usually not been able to offer it in more than four to six languages each year," she said. "This is partly because there have never been more than two full-time-equivalent employees in charge of the test, sometimes fewer, and their work includes both writing a large portion of the test items, both written and oral parts, assembling parts of the test in each language, ensuring test reliability and validity, performing the function of administrative head of the examining board as well as almost all of the other practical tasks involved in administering the test."

"Candidates pay only NOK 1000 [about A\$ 175] to sit the accreditation test, so the test is highly subsidised. Originally it was free of charge, but that didn't work out. Too many people registered and then never showed up. In comparison, we estimate that it costs at least five times that much to run the test. If self-financing should ever be imposed on the test, I doubt that many, if any, interpreters could afford to take it. Nor would they be so interested in doing so, since it's still possible to get a lot of interpreting jobs here without accreditation, and only a few employers offer higher pay to interpreters who are accredited."

Lessons for Australia

Australia can learn from Norway's insistence on having a valid interpreting test, with attention to interpreting skills, how the candidates relate to the other participants and coordinate communication, ask for clarification or repetition, how the actors listen to the interpreter and follow them if they go off at a tangent.

Compare that to NAATI's "dialogue" test which is actually a test of short consecutive interpreting on tape. NAATI-approved university courses can do live exams, though some no longer do so. While Norway wants to see how the candidate handles communication dynamics and asks for clarification or repetition, we penalise candidates who ask for more than two repetitions, while asking for clarification is impossible.

Testing involves many complex issues, and compromises must be made. Validity, practicability and reproducibility all need to be considered. But perhaps Norway has done better than us in striking the right balance.

Go to <http://folk.uio.no/dianem/report1998.pdf> for a more detailed view of the Norwegian system.

Uldis Ozolins is an adjunct associate professor at the University of Western Sydney who also runs his own consultancy company.

Court says interpreting need not be perfect, only effective

‘The inadequacies in the quoted interpretation did not prevent the applicant from placing before the tribunal evidence or arguments on a determinative issue.’

A FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT judge has found that while the interpreters for a Mandarin-speaking applicant for a protection visa on occasion performed “inadequate” interpretations, these were not such as to jeopardise the presentation of the applicant’s case.

In dismissing her appeal against the Refugee Review Tribunal’s affirmation of an earlier rejection of her application, Judge Robert Cameron said in April that “the issue is not whether the interpretation was perfect but whether it was effective”.

The unnamed applicant claimed that when she returned to China from Australia in January 2008, customs officers confiscated books on her religion, Yi Guan Do; that she was detained and questioned by local police a month later and was pushed by police, sustaining a shoulder injury; that other family members were also questioned; and that she feared persecution because the authorities hated her religion.

In appealing against the tribunal’s verdict, she claimed *inter alia* that, in the judge’s paraphrasing, “the interpreting services on both hearing days had been so deficient that the applicant had been denied a real opportunity to put the details of her claim to the tribunal”, and

the interpretations gave rise to the impression that “she often spoke unintelligibly” and “was unable to construct a cogent sentence”.

Judge Cameron noted that the tribunal had addressed and rejected each of these claims. It had listened to the recordings of the hearings and did not accept that either interpreter had had difficulty in interpreting; that the interpreters’ “attitudes” had not prevented her presenting her evidence; and that the interpreters were clearly audible and coherent and it had no difficulty understanding them. Nor did it find the applicant to be unintelligible or unable to construct a cogent sentence.

Both interpreters had NAATI level 3 accreditation.

The judge agreed that section 425 of the Migration Act, which requires that an applicant be invited to appear before the tribunal and give evidence and present arguments relating to the issues under review, is not met if the inadequacy of interpreter services denies the applicant “a real and meaningful opportunity to present his or her case”.

The applicant put over 200 transcript passages, either orally or in writing, to the court which she claimed showed that the interpreters failed to clearly and accurately convey information either to her or to the tribunal.

The judge did not accept the applicant’s claim that she was misled by the interpreter as to the legal test she had to meet in order to qualify as a refugee under the UN convention because no evidence was presented that any such interpreting error had prevented her from presenting pertinent evidence or arguments. Further, the judge noted that she was represented by migration agents who were also solicitors, “and it can be assumed that she was provided with accurate advice on the convention test”.

The judge did accept “that the interpreter’s translation of [part of an] exchange was inadequate”, but found that “the inadequacies in the quoted interpretation did not prevent the applicant from placing before the tribunal evidence or arguments on a determinative issue”.

In relation to other passages, the judge discounted the applicant’s claims that the interpretation was deficient because interpreted passages immediately before or after those cited clarified any potential misunderstandings.

The judge considered 207 transcript references in the applicant’s written submission, and found that none of them constituted a breach of section 425 of the Act. He did highlight one clear error in interpretation “which found its way into the tribunal’s paraphrasing of the evidence in its decision record”. However, he said this “was not a determinative finding and was no more than subsidiary to, and supportive of, a determinative finding”.

A translator's confession



Ben Xuan Xu compares the roles of the translator in China and Australia.

I HAD BEEN a professor of language and translation and a supervisor of master of arts students in scientific translation at universities in China, and had translated five books published by the Chinese People's Press (the titles of which can be found on the website Beidu.com.cn).

After migrating to Australia in 2001, I sat national tests in 2008 and was accredited by NAATI as a professional translator in both directions. I have since translated documents totalling approximately 150,000 words.

In the traditional Chinese view, a grey-haired professor sitting a test with hundreds of youngsters in an auditorium would have been embarrassing. But in Australia, everyone is encouraged to do one's best and it's never too late to learn. So I felt very proud of this accreditation – although I do regret that when the examiner announced "stop and stand up", I stealthily added a few words to my unfinished paper and an assistant rushed to me to cross out my last paragraph as a whole. This may have been the strictest exam I've ever seen.

The first test paper I did was "feline diabetes" (from English into Chinese), which describes what happens to a cat with diabetes and how she is treated by the vet, and then talks about symptoms and treatment of the disease in humans. The other article I translated was "domestic violence" (from Chinese into English), which tells how a husband

cruelly beats up his wife on the rationale "I feed you and you must obey me", and how the law court tried and decided the case. More than six years' experience in Australia has demonstrated to me that this kind of translation is very close to real life, and a great community benefit. By contrast, in China we professionals live in ivory towers, spending a huge amount of time practising translation of Lu Xun (a major 20th century Chinese writer) and other literary classics. What's the point of that?

Two different translation cultures

Through many years practising in both countries, I have gained the impression that both countries pay considerable attention to the industry of translation, but from different motives. As an immigration country, Australia focuses on documents, especially certificates of birth, marriage, police records, bank statements and university diplomas and transcripts – these account for about 90 per cent of the assignments of a professional translator. In China, this kind of translation would hardly happen. Despite its economic achievements, China is constantly afraid of lagging behind others in technology and other cultural matters, and invests a great deal of effort in obtaining overseas information through translation. For instance, a senior lecturer will have to translate a book or some articles, or write a thesis in their own field which resembles extracted or edited

translation from a foreign language, usually English, before being promoted to a professor position.

Australia, like the US and Britain, seems to be incurably arrogant about its own technology, literature, movies and language. Translating from Chinese? No need – notwithstanding all the talk about the "Asian century".

Certificate translation – a professional's profession

In my experience, the translation of certificates, which constitutes the majority of assignments for professional translators, is so formalised and simplified that it can hardly be called translation. Typical translations would look like this:

- Birth certificate: Name, gender, date of birth, weight, mother's name, father's name, delivery facility, issue office (seal)
- Marriage certificate: Man's name, date of birth, ID number, nationality; woman's name, date of birth, ID number, nationality, registration date, registry office(seal)
- Diploma: Name, gender, studied at X from date A to date B, majoring in Y, had completed all courses and was approved for graduation, principal (signature), school (seal), issue date
- Driving licence: Name, gender, date of birth, ID number, address, type, issue date, validity period from date A to date B, issue office (seal).



Despite its economic achievements, China is constantly afraid of lagging behind others in technology and other cultural matters, and invests a great deal of effort in obtaining overseas information through translation.'

What the client cares most about is the spelling of their name, date of birth and especially the seal of the issuing office. The translator cannot be too careful about these things, proofreading them over and over again.

The client can pay the agent as much as \$70 a piece, of which the translator may get \$20 or a bit more. A NSW agent charges \$60 for a simple form of driving licence, \$90 if urgent within a week.

Many clients who know a little English claim they can translate the document by themselves, but the only problem is they don't get a NAATI stamp.

This kind of translation is indispensable because it is required by immigration officials, schools, banks and other organisations who know nothing of the original language. They just need the spelling of the name, date of birth, office stamps and some figures.

But times are changing. An agent told me recently that assignments have dropped from three a week on average to two or fewer a month. He suggested two reasons. First, some training courses have drastically lowered their examination mark threshold, so the number of translators has suddenly boomed. Second, the number of immigrants from China has sharply decreased.

The final judge

Although much of our job feels like dry bread, so simple a schoolkid could do it, some aspects require much greater investment. Advertisements, for example, need polishing instead of word by word exactness. An estate agent seller asked me to translate from English into Chinese an advertisement about an apartment, describing its four spacious bedrooms, and luxurious living room and modern kitchen, with surrounding fresh air and beautiful natural scenery. I translated it literally

without any omission or addition, but the realtor was very disappointed and brought a stack of similar newspaper ads for my reference. Then I changed all "the customers" and "buyers" into "ning" (meaning "your honour") and "ning yi jia ren" (meaning "your respected family"); "canguan" (visit) into "ru zhu he xiangshou" ("welcome to live in and enjoy together"); "luositan" (transliteration of rose beach) into meigui tan" (meaning "rose flower beach"), and so on. After perusing the text, the man happily accepted the translation. Is that disloyal to the original? "No," he confirmed. "You don't have to stick to my original, but must be true to the culture of my Chinese customers so I can sell my product more easily."

Who has the final say about the accuracy of the product? Surely it is the client and the officer who are the recipients. Although neither knows much of the languages in question, they can judge by the results of the product. I remember how a table tennis champion and a young ballet dancer happily texted me that they were finally approved by the Australian government as "young talent" emigrants because I had helped them with their application.

The translation of a student's complaint to the education department about a school principal's rough manner towards her reasonable request for transfer of school used vivid and effective words to recreate the scenario: "While my agent was explaining the reason for transfer, the principal suddenly stood up, pulled the chair out from under my agent, causing her to fall to the ground, then shouted 'get out of my office', throwing away her handbag, swearing 'crazy woman' and other rude words." The rude principal was finally dismissed and the student's wish came true.

NSW driver licences

Translators in NSW should decline client requests to translate driver licences.

The Department of Roads and Maritime Services (formerly the RTA) will only accept translations done by the State government's translation service run by the NSW Community Relations Commission. This measure was introduced to reduce fraud.

Immigration, law or financial agents are the main sources of translations. Some of them know both cultures quite well. A mortgage manager has corrected many an error in my translations which were literally true to Chinese culture but unacceptable or incomprehensible in Australian culture. For example, "xia gong" should not be translated literally as "off-duty worker" but as "laid off or unemployed worker"; "ying fa gong zi" not literally as "wage payable" but as "pre-tax wage"; "mi ma" not literally as "secret code" but as "PIN (personal identity number)", and so on. (All of these literal but incorrect translations were copied from **A Chinese-English Dictionary** (revised edition), published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Beijing.)

Ben Xuan Xu was a professor of English in China, and is now a freelance translator and teacher of English at Overseas Oriental College in Sydney.



ANC 2013

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University of Technology, Sydney
Saturday, 19 October 2013

ASLIA is pleased to announce the ASLIA national conference for 2013 will held on the Saturday immediately following the WFD conference on 16-18 October.

This one-day event will be held in the centrally located University of Technology, Sydney's Aerial Function Centre at 7/235 Jones Street, Sydney.

Further details, including the JW Flynn Orator for 2013 and keynote presenter, will be circulated shortly. In the meantime, please mark your diaries now. Go to www.asliaconference.org.au