



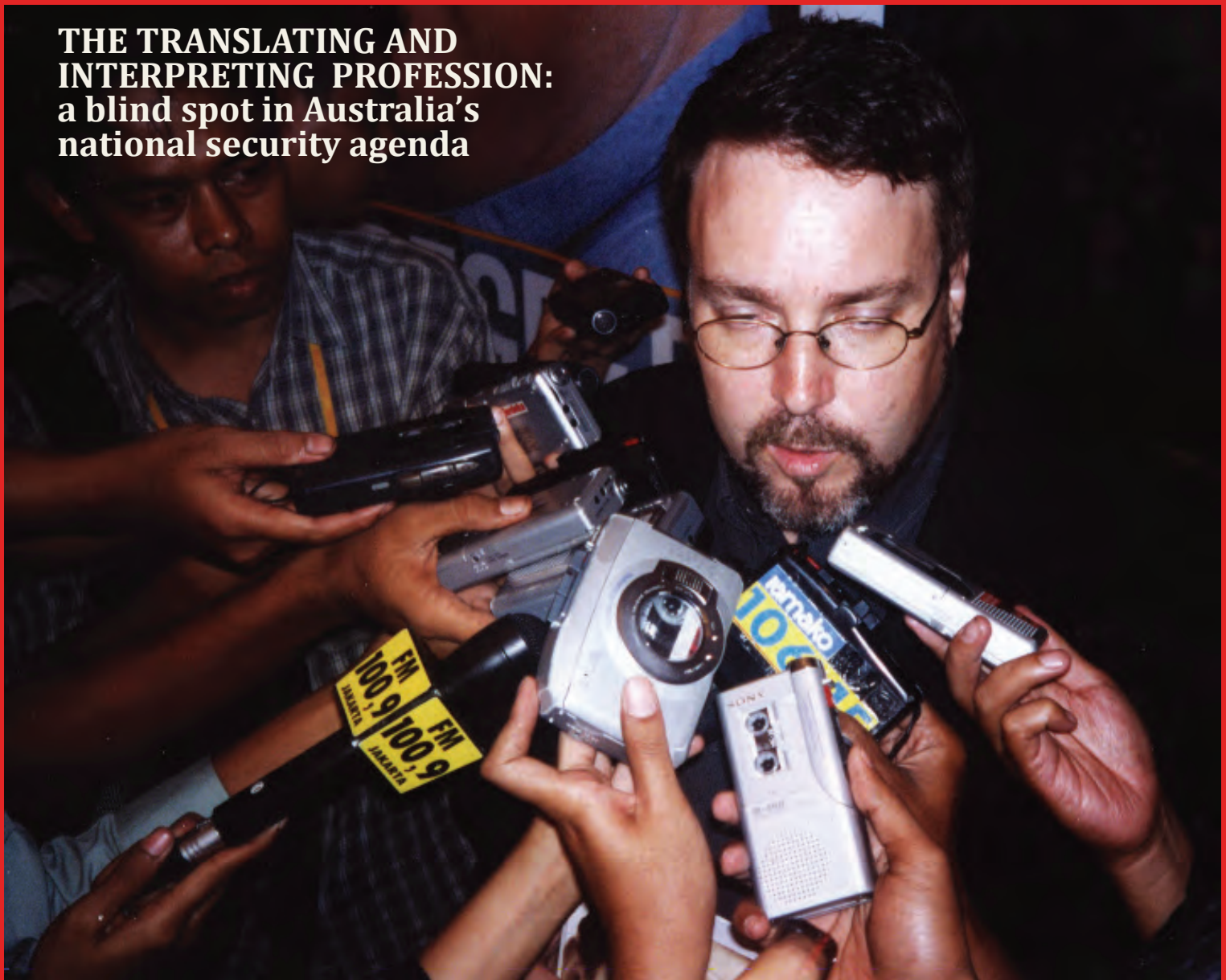
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**THE TRANSLATING AND
INTERPRETING PROFESSION:
a blind spot in Australia's
national security agenda**



**UNPREPARED FOR
TRAUMA:** why
interpreters are
often scarred by their
experiences within
the justice system

**TRANSLATION
OF OFFICIAL
AND LEGAL
DOCUMENTS:**
a new resource

**BRIEFING THE
INTERPRETER:**
police and court
interpreters need
to be briefed before
assignments

In Touch

Autumn 2015
Volume 23 number 1

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New president foreshadows AUSIT overhaul

AUSIT is embarking on a range of new directions. As president, my goal is to make AUSIT a strong, vibrant and credible professional association that represents all practising interpreters and translators. To this end, the national council will be proposing changes to the membership categories. We plan to align the categories with the recommendations of the INT report, which will include a candidate provisional membership, a generalist membership and specialist memberships. In addition, we will continue to have the student membership category, which we hope to grow, and we will create an I&T educational institutional membership. We will give you more details in due course.

Second, we'd like AUSIT to be one unified national association. Although the different state branches will continue to organise their own activities, we'd like to have a more coordinated approach to PD. We will inform you of our initiatives gradually. Third, we will establish specialist committees to look after different aspects of the organisation. Some of these committees will include a PD committee to look after the continuous professional development and PD points, an education committee to be the link with the educational institutions and the students, and an events committee which will look after the national conferences and excellence awards. If anyone is interested in joining any committee, please let me know.

The *In Touch* magazine is also changing. First, we have appointed an editorial committee to work with our current editor, Jeremy Gilling. The committee details appear on the left of this page and on page 16. Please feel free to contact any of the members of the editorial committee regarding future submissions in their relevant areas of responsibility. We will also restructure the magazine into sections that will reflect different perspectives from the different stakeholders and interested



Sandra Hale
AUSIT national president

parties: practitioners, students, researchers and educators, and users of our services. We want to hear about your achievements, so submissions are always welcome. The website will also receive a facelift. I would like you all to make more use of our website. If you have forgotten your user name and password, please go to the website to retrieve them so you can start using it as a resource. We will be adding more useful information and resources there. To start with, I invite you to visit the "about us" page and meet your national council members.

Finally, I want to strengthen our relationships with other T&I-related organisations. It's time to put aside differences, past resentments and rivalries, and to start to look for ways to complement each other to make the T&I profession in Australia a beacon for the rest of the world. This can only be achieved if we work constructively with NAATI, PA, ASLIA, WAITI, the educational institutions and AALC, to name a few. I have started discussions with these organisations. I encourage you all to have a positive attitude towards these other organisations and to help us build bridges.

This is your association. We are open to ideas and suggestions from the members. So please feel free to contact me if you have anything you'd like to suggest or discuss. Email me at s.hale@unsw.edu.au

Best practices for the translation of official and legal documents



Susanne Creak reports on a new resource to guide the translation of official documents.

Various questions posed in AUSIT's e-forums and at networking events – not only from T&I newcomers – have shown that there is a need for some guidance on the handling of written translations of official documents (primarily for Australian purposes).

Discussions among colleagues have ranged from practical questions of how several pages should be bound together and sealed, over the spelling of names with non-English characters, to questions around our profession's obligation to reduce the possibility of fraud. In my role at 2M Language Services, I see various acceptable ways in which NAATI-accredited translators lay out and provide their certified translations.

An AUSIT paper, "Best practices for the translation of official and legal documents", aims to answer this need. It has been developed based on existing NZSTI (New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters) guidelines from 2005; these have been updated and adapted in consultation with experienced Australia-based colleagues to meet today's Australian context. The document provides accredited translators with recommendations and guidance on common and accepted practices in the provision of translations for official purposes in Australia. It was presented at the AUSIT biennial national conference in Brisbane on 1-2 November, and is now available at http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Documents/Best_Practices_2014.pdf

AUSIT and I wish to once again thank the NZSTI and all contributors. While these "best practices" are unlikely to answer every possible question that may come up in the course of a translator's career, we certainly hope they will provide a very useful reference for our translator community and help to maintain high standards in the provision of translations for official purposes.

Susanne Creak has been a NAATI-accredited German-English professional translator and AUSIT member since 2007. After spending 12 years in corporate environments, she has been working as a freelance professional translator and subtitler. She is general manager of 2M Language Services.

Bringing reflective practice to Auslan interpreting



Ryan Gook introduces to Auslan interpreting a program that is familiar in many professions.

Reflective practice, or supervision as it is also known, is not a new concept among professionals in countless domains. Many professions such as nursing employ reflective practice and decision-making opportunities to support and guide practitioners through the demands and controls of their daily practice. The aim for interpreters is that practitioners have a designated forum and framework to debrief and discuss issues encountered in their work and ultimately benefit the community they support.

In the Auslan interpreting industry, formal supervision (reflective practice) is new. Given the youth of the profession, limited opportunities have been afforded to Auslan interpreters. This was until the recent launch and development of Auslan Services' reflective practice programs. There is essentially no difference between the terms "reflective practice" and "supervision". In the Australian context, "reflective practice" has more resonance than "supervision". Reflective practice in this context pertains to discussing decision-making on the job rather than reflecting or evaluating technical linguistic skill.

Since the end of 2013, Auslan Services has successfully guided over 100 Auslan interpreters through its reflective practice programs.

Reflective practice programs ideally have between five and seven participants. This allows for intimate discussions and the development of trust between

colleagues. Typically spread over five sessions, participants will initially be introduced to the demand control schema (DC-S) framework. This framework underpins processes and a shared language to facilitate discussion and reflection. Subsequent sessions involve guided discussions through real-life case studies brought to sessions by participants. The framework facilitator encourages discussion where practitioners are urged to consider their decisions, their consequences and possible alternatives applicable in future practice.

Auslan Services facilitators are coached by Robyn Dean, author of the DC-S, online. This is to ensure a consistent approach by facilitators when working with participants. Facilitators are all experienced interpreter trainers and have years of experience as interpreter practitioners themselves.

'Reflective practice is a highly effective and accessible training tool that is available to interpreters regardless of geographic location.'

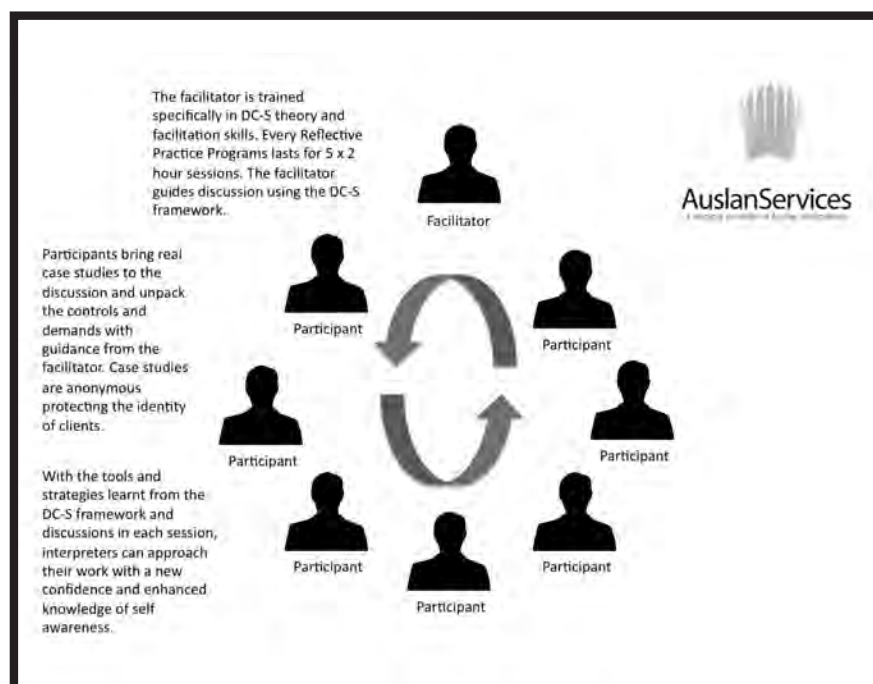
Reflective practice is a highly effective and accessible training tool that is available to interpreters regardless of geographic location. The programs are delivered in both face to face and online formats, ensuring improved accessibility for rural and remote interpreters who may find training difficult to attend in person. Online delivery uses an HD conferencing platform that allows participation remotely, enabling visibility of all participants and the facilitator on the computer screen. There is the facility to share documents, make text comments and record all sessions so that accessing sessions can take place at a later time if required.

Online delivery allows the program to appoint different facilitators at each session giving participants the opportunity to access a diversity of skilled facilitators. Currently, Auslan Services appoints facilitators from Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, and international facilitators from San Francisco, New York and Edinburgh, exposing participants to a diversity of personnel ensures varied perspectives and facilitation styles.

The programs are designed to encourage ongoing pursuit of professional conduct and enable participants to identify interpreting demands and controls (decisions). We have already facilitated follow-up programs for 12 participants, and expect this number to increase markedly in 2015. Participants report that outcomes to date have been overwhelmingly successful. Following are extracts of testimonials provided to Auslan Services from past participants.

“The more practitioners who know and use the same language, the more we can aim towards a really cohesive and collegiate work environment, while knowing that the fellow interpreter on the job really ‘has your back’.

“Many times we as interpreters work in isolation, so getting validity for the decisions and analyzing those decisions are crucial to help push the field forward. As a facilitator I have witnessed the benefits reflective practice has for both seasoned and newer interpreters.”



“Reflective practice allows a professional to learn from their own, situated practice, not from a series of hypotheticals, allowing them to be more reflective in their work.”

To book a place at one of Auslan Services’ reflective practice programs, visit their training portal at www.revalidation.com.au

All participants are given certificates of attendance with reference to NAATI revalidation categories and points.

Ryan Gook is the CEO and co-founder of Auslan Services, a national employer and coordinator of over 250 Auslan Interpreters.

Building bonds across continents



Bob Desiatnik was warmly accepted at the 2014 annual general meeting of AUSIT's French counterpart, the *Société française des traducteurs*.

During a recent stay in France I was fortunate enough to be invited to the December 2014 AGM of our French sister organisation, the *Société française des traducteurs*.

I owed the invitation to our colleague and fellow AUSIT member, Catherine Hodot, who moved back to her native France a few years ago and is a member of both associations. Catherine was present at the AGM, and it was the first time we had actually met in person. Another dual member, Danièle Heinen, who is an active contributor to our French e-forum, was also at the AGM. It was only the previous evening, at a bookshop launch of a new legal dictionary, that we had first met in person. I imagine that the presence of no fewer than three AUSIT members at an AGM may have been a record for the SFT.

There were about 130 people in attendance (though numbers fell away towards the end of the day). I cannot overstate how welcome I was made. It was heartening to see how a "blow-in" from Australia could turn up at a gathering of French T/Is and immediately have the feeling of being among friends. The sense of connection arising from shared interests, activities and challenges was unmistakable and very gratifying.

I didn't attend the morning session, which was given over to the election of a new national committee and the presentation of the *rapport moral* – the overview of the year's activities and issues, membership trends and so on – and of the audit and financial reports, together with the proposed budget for the coming year.

The afternoon session (which followed a generously catered buffet lunch – a great opportunity to chat with many SFT members) included a presentation on the SFT's ties with the *Union nationale des professions libérales* (UNAPL, or National Union of Liberal Professions). It should be borne in mind that SFT, which was created in 1947, has, unlike AUSIT, always seen itself as a union. (Indeed, the "S" in SFT is sometimes shown as standing for "Société" and sometimes for "Syndicat" or union.) It takes its union dimension seriously and was a founding member of UNAPL when the latter was established in 1977.

There was also a presentation on standards – both ISO and AFNOR (the French equivalent of Standards Australia) – relating to T/I activities either already published or in various stages of development. The presentation was made by a representative of AFNOR and focused on standards which SFT has helped or is helping to develop. Examples included ISO 17100 (on translation standards), ISO 13611 (guidelines for community interpreting), ISO 18841 (general requirements and recommendations for interpreters, interpreting service providers and requesters), ISO 2603 (minimum requirements for fixed interpreting booths) and ISO 4043 (minimum requirements for mobile booths).

We also had a presentation on SFT's journal, *Traduire*, which comes out twice a year in hard copy and on line.

There followed an address by Sabine Colombe, who was elected secretary-general of FIT at its August 2014 congress in Berlin.



... SFT, which was created in 1947, has, unlike AUSIT, always seen itself as a union.'

The Pierre-François Caillé prize

The highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of the coveted Pierre-François Caillé prize, which is awarded annually to a young French practitioner who in the course of the year has seen published his or her translation of a significant work of fiction or non-fiction. €2000 is awarded to the winner. The prize is awarded to reward and encourage young translators; to raise public awareness of the T/I profession, and to foster greater recognition of T/Is' contribution to society.

Interestingly (and in contrast to our own practices with regard to our excellence awards), candidates cannot "self-nominate" or even be nominated by fellow SFT members; they must be nominated by publishing houses. (I am not even certain that nominees must be SFT members in order to be considered. I neglected to ask this question; I suspect not.) Publishers whose translators win the Pierre-François Caillé prize typically publicise this fact widely – thus helping to achieve the prize's objectives and (in their own interests, of course) to maximise sales.

Much drama accompanied the presentation of the 2014 prize. To the delight of those in attendance, the Icelandic author, the translation of whose novel earned the practitioner concerned the prize for 2014, had travelled from Reykjavik to be present at the AGM and gave a brief, entertaining address (fortunately in French, not Icelandic) about his work. The young prizewinner (whose identity had not yet been revealed in advance of the AGM) was supposed to be present at the same time – but his arrival (from abroad) was delayed by a "partial railway strike" of the kind often encountered in France.

An approximate arrival time was known to the SFT organisers, who kept dragging out the proceedings to play for time. Finally the young man was spied making his entrance at the back of the hall, pulling his suitcase behind him, wet from the rain and somewhat flustered and dishevelled after the rushed final leg of his journey from the station to the meeting venue. He was escorted to the stage amid enthusiastic applause, and the planned sequence of accolades, questions from the audience and so forth finally got under way. Author and translator also treated the audience to a kind of "performance" in which the former gave a stirring reading of a lengthy passage from his novel – in Icelandic, which few if any members of the audience understood, but which all applauded as if it had been a call to arms – followed by a reading by

the translator of his translation of the same passage (also greeted with wild applause). Two representatives of the publishers of the translation were also present and spoke passionately about their involvement in the translation/publication project.

The SFT has objectives, activities, challenges and preoccupations which clearly are not in every respect identical to AUSIT's. Stepping out into the cold December evening, I nevertheless left the meeting with a warm and deep-seated sense of "the ties that bind".

Bob Desiatnik is an accredited French-English and German-English translator who has recently returned from a three-month stint in France interpreting at a series of international conferences.

Talking like a lawyer: interpreting courtroom questions from English to Chinese



Lucy Xin Liu investigates the linguistic challenges facing trainee interpreters when interpreting courtroom questions from English to Chinese, and the effectiveness of specialised legal interpreter training in improving their ability to render courtroom questions accurately.

In an adversarial courtroom, questions are used differently from those in everyday conversation due to the asymmetrical social and informational relationships between legal professionals and witnesses.

Questions, in their various grammatical forms, thus become powerful tools for lawyers to control witness testimonies. In a bilingual courtroom, whether the subtlety in the use of courtroom questions can be adequately relayed from one language to another is crucial for all participants in court. Failure to do so can affect the effectiveness of courtroom questioning, result in loss of control over the testimony, and therefore potentially affect the outcome of a case. However, achieving such a high level of accuracy is extremely demanding due to the intricacy of courtroom discourse, especially between two linguistically distant languages.

I investigate the most common linguistic challenges for trainee interpreters in achieving accuracy when interpreting courtroom questions from English to Chinese, and the effectiveness of specialised legal interpreter training in improving interpreters' ability to render courtroom questions accurately.

This study consists of two components aimed at answering the two research questions: a discourse analytical study of trainee interpreters' interpreting performance in a moot court exercise and a quasi-experiment with trainee interpreters from the I&T program at UNSW.

This study not only will fill the gap in the knowledge of interpreting courtroom questions from English to Chinese, but also has important implications for interpreter training. The findings of the research will be beneficial to interpreting students and educators, as well as for practising English-Chinese interpreters.

Lucy Xin Liu is a PhD student at UNSW whose research is supervised by Professor Sandra Hale and Associate Professor Ludmila Stern. Email Lucy at liuxindl@gmail.com for further information.

Many postgraduate students around Australia are researching aspects of interpreting and translation that can eventually be put into practice to achieve improvements. In a new feature, *In Touch* will outline some of the more relevant and exciting new research in the field, beginning with Lucy Xin Liu (UNSW) and Keven (Long) Li (Macquarie University).

The influence of political ideology in the translation of English works by Chinese migrant writers



Keven (Long) Li says Chinese migrant writers are recognised for their impressive achievements when writing in English, but often face “a deliberate manipulation of political ideology” when their works are translated back into Chinese.

Various Chinese migrant writers (CMWs) who grew up in Mainland China but migrated to the west as adults, such as Jung Chang (*Wild Swans*) and Li Cunxin (*Mao's Last Dancer*), have achieved success in writing in English. However, little attention has been paid to the translation of their works into Chinese, an unusual situation where source text (ST) authors may contribute to the decision-making for the translation.

“My research seeks to ... provide future translators with insights into the cultural and ideological differences between China and the west.”

An interesting aspect suggested in a previous study of Chang's *Wild Swans* is a deliberate manipulation of political ideology in building stronger reader resentment in the target text towards the Japanese invaders and the Communist Party of China. The overall objective of my research, therefore, is to investigate what one may assume were marked differences in political ideologies between a corpus of English works by CMWs and their Chinese translations. To examine choices with ideological consequences, the research method combines systemic functional linguistics (SFL) with perspectives from critical discourse analysis (CDA).

Since the 1990s, several prominent scholars of translation studies have incorporated approaches of discourse analysis, especially SFL, on transitivity and modality. My research seeks to consolidate the linguistics-oriented translation studies by using SFL and CDA on the overlooked issue of ST-author-assisted translation, focusing on patterns of ideological shifts, and to provide future translators with insights into the cultural and ideological differences between China and the west.

Keven (Long) Li is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University. Email him at klininterpreting@gmail.com for further details.

The translating and interpreting profession: a blind spot in Australia's national security agenda



David Gilbert says Australia has serious deficiencies in language capability upon which law enforcement agencies rely. It needs to learn from the US in this regard.

As the Sydney siege-hostage incident in December 2014 unfolded, intelligence and law enforcement agencies were scrambling to determine the scale of the incident. Was the perpetrator communicating with accomplices in other locations? If so, how would they be communicating and what language would they be speaking? As we now know, the incident was isolated to one perpetrator and one location. Had the incident involved multiple perpetrators communicating in a language other than English (LOTE), resolution of the crisis would have been far more complex for both intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Aside from immediate operational imperatives associated with acts of terror, Australia is struggling to come to terms with the illicit drug epidemic that undermines social order and community wellbeing. It is commonly known that the drug trade accounts for the lion's share of transnational crime in Australia, and that law enforcement operations increasingly rely upon the support provided by community interpreters and translators for surveillance and evidentiary purposes.

Terrorism and illicit drug activity are perhaps the two most notable categories of serious and organised crime which dominate newspaper headlines in Australia. It is commonly known that terrorist cells rely on many forms of funding to procure weapons, explosives and equipment to progress their cause, with heavy reliance on funds obtained from the illicit drug trade. The nexus between the illicit drug market and proceeds used to fund terrorist organisations has been well established.

Serious and organised crime is frequently carried out by speakers of LOTE, therefore it would be reasonable to expect that Australia would have a national language policy designed to improve our ability to combat serious and organised crime within the paradigm of national security. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Neither Australia's National Security Statement 2008 nor the National Security Strategy 2013 mentions the

importance of Australia's language capability to combat serious and organised crime. In contrast, Australia's closest ally, the US, has had a national security language policy in place since 2006.

Translation errors jeopardise law enforcement

Recent research based on data collected from court transcripts and interviews with judges, barristers, interpreters and translators reveals serious deficiencies in Australia's language capability upon which law enforcement agencies rely. Serious deficiencies in the areas of training and competency were identified as key causal factors attributed to errors found in translated transcripts presented as evidence in drug-related trials heard in the County Court of Victoria.

Aside from general and frequent errors of omission and distortion contained in the transcripts, the most serious of errors was the mistranslation of alleged codewords used by the accused. The recordings of telephone calls and listening devices were transcribed by community translators and interpreters for use as evidence in trials. It was revealed that at least one alleged codeword to mean "heroin" was not a codeword at all but an exophoric reference word that simply means "it", "this", or "that". Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources available to the courts, the veracity of translated transcripts is not normally checked by professionally accredited translators before being

presented as evidence. One barrister commented that nobody knows whether the translated transcripts are accurate or not as they are not normally checked.

The primary issue of concern identified in the study is that community interpreters and translators do not receive the specialised training required to quickly process information derived from electronic surveillance operations that require transcription from LOTE. Transcribing LOTE for law enforcement or national security purposes is a specific skill that requires specialised training. The Australian Defence Force has been providing specific training to their “linguists” to intercept and transcribe conversations held in LOTE since early last century.

But while the traditional security sector of the military is well-trained and equipped in this area, law enforcement agencies rely upon community interpreters and translators who have no such training. Operationally, this means that Australia is inadequately prepared to respond to incidents of terrorism where language capability is required to quickly process information for tactical purposes. Strategically, it means that Australia is poorly placed to prevent such incidents from occurring. From a societal perspective, this lack of capability undermines the integrity of the judicial system where translated transcripts are likely to contain significant errors which may result in

‘It would be reasonable to expect that Australia would have a national language policy designed to improve our ability to combat serious and organised crime within the paradigm of national security.’

an innocent person being convicted of a crime they did not commit, or the guilty being set free because the translated transcript does not accurately carry the intended meaning of the original utterance.

Following the events of 9/11, the US recognised that a deficiency in language capability was the country’s biggest shortfall in terms of national security. In 2006, the US introduced the National Security Language Initiative to address the problem. Australia has not taken steps to address the language capability it needs to keep Australians safe from serious and organised crime including terrorism. Hopefully, Australia will not need to experience an incident on the scale of 9/11 before it realises the importance of language capability to the expanded national security agenda in

a contemporary security environment. Australia needs a national security languages policy, however, it appears that the translating and interpreting profession is a blind spot in Australia’s national security agenda.

David Gilbert has operational experience in national security intelligence and law enforcement. He is a nationally accredited professional Vietnamese to English translator in Australia, and is currently a PhD candidate at the school of global, urban, and social studies at RMIT University. He presented on this theme at the AUSIT professional development seminar in Sydney on 28 March.

Thoughts on a long career

Charlie Anderson reflects on her life's work as she retires from managing a health interpreting service in a major hospital.

I have just retired from a position as language services coordinator after 20 years.

When I took up my position I did so with only two qualities. I believed that every patient was entitled to know what was being done to them, by whom and for what reason. English deficit could be overcome by providing an interpreter to convey all this information. Second, I had an extensive interest in language, culture and ethnicity, and above all history.

The language unit has functioned efficiently and served its aims. It has provided a voice for patients from all countries, religions and cultures.

Could it have worked better? Yes, there are areas that I can see need attention.

First, it is naive to propose that every patient could have an interpreter when and where without cost, without input and without regulation.

Second, it is a delusion to presume that every interpreter will do a good job every time and every patient would appreciate every interpreter every time.

Third, the credulity that I still find among people about the reality of refugee status and the antagonism that seem to creep into the debate over and over again.

Perhaps these don't quite fit into the perceived role of a language services coordinator. Perhaps it is not essential to know that, yes, there are Christians in Iraq. That Mosul is the modern name for Nineveh, one of the most ancient of biblical cities. When I meet a patient from Iraq, I like to be able to ask her whether she is from Basra or Nasiriyah. I still believe that newcomers do feel alone; that in a busy outpatient clinic they are just a face, a different face from a different place. I like to feel that when they meet me they become more than that. I have seen many times the smiles that accompany the question and the subtle relaxation that comes with it. It is an overture and a recognition that the patients comes not from "out there, over there or somewhere" but a country they may still feel for and which still holds their memories, friends, and perhaps also their loved ones. A language unit should have the cultural knowledge, sensitivity and interest towards patients that is vital to adequately providing the support that is crucial to their treatment. Along the way I have met many stellar individuals. I have seen gruelling grief and heard horrendous tales; something sadly that I never get use to and frankly I no longer want to hear.

The positives outweigh the negatives

I recall a small Vietnamese boy who has since died. He was the cleverest little boy I ever met. When I first met him he was about four and crying while he held a dinosaur. I asked him the dinosaur's name and he stopped crying, almost threw it at me and said "it's not a dinosaur; it's a plesiosaur". "Oh" I said. "I'm so glad you pointed that out. What is wrong with me? I should know that." "Yes," said the four year old professor gravely, "you should". His fascination with dinosaurs remained and he had quite a collection.

Not every young life is saved, but his journey, like the journey of many children, is the impetus that drives research into childhood cancer.

Of the adults I have encountered, thousands became acquaintances, some the object of my fascination and some the cause of my grey hair, but by and large I met strong, determined individuals with unique perspectives on life, sometimes a scorn for the way of life they met here, an incredulousness at our waste and assumptions of wealth and plenty, as well as a gratitude towards the hospital, its staff, particularly nurses and midwives, and an appreciation of the freedom and opportunity Australia offers them.

Can a hospital language unit operate without a comprehensive understanding of how hospitals operate and a basic knowledge of medical and nursing care? Yes if you concentrate on language, no

if you aim to provide a comprehensive and skilled interpreter. Among our interpreters were doctors, nurses, engineers, very practical people, as well as poets, musicians, and generous and excellent cooks. The knowledge base of hospital-based interpreters is extensive; some pick up on things that may go astray: a wrong drug dose or lack of instruction in certain situations. I have many interpreters who have a fan base; patients and clinicians insist upon them. Unfortunately the scope to undertake additional training in medical terminology and associated areas is quite scant. That interpreters are so skilled is due in part to the repetition of interpreting in, say, diabetes, but it is also an indicator of the acute minds many interpreters possess and the desire to learn and know.

Are interpreters vital to health?

Indisputably so. Are they valued? Yes and no. Do they have a future? Maybe. How do we ensure their longevity and at the same time sustain them emotionally, professionally and personally? Only by working in unison. It will be achieved not by rivalry but by chivalry. Not by competitiveness but by cooperation. Not by vitriol and disparagement but by recognising strengths and buttressing weaknesses. Not by waging war against organisations but by recognising that interpreting is part of a huge structure whose emphasis is on the medical.

‘It is an overture and a recognition that the patients come from ... a country they may still feel for and which still holds their memories, friends, and perhaps also their loved ones.’

I see a dangerous future of armed conflicts and flash points, all of which will generate millions of refugees. Interpreters will face a monumental challenge.

There will be new ways of providing and delivering care. Unforeseen complications will be ever present in the provision of interpreting.

Will it continue to be a free service?

I doubt that it will continue to be a free service. Should it continue to be a free service? Yes as a safety net for children, pregnant women and refugees in the first five years of settlement. Beyond that I am not so sure.

Will interpreters be hospital-based? I will wait and see. Is there an alternative? Yes, we have that already with private companies supplying interpreters.

Community consultation needs to be further trialled and evaluated because there can be distortions and influences that are less relevant in patient care.

My sojourn has been very rewarding. I have ample material comforts, especially music and books. I don't, however, have too much opportunity to give, and so this job went some way towards redressing that imbalance. I have also learned patience (especially on committees) and I have learned something from every person I have met.

I leave with my life's work unfinished. I leave with a heart and mind that yearn to not work. I have had enough. It's nothing personal. It is just how it is. I regret very little and take credit for very little. It is the people I have worked for and with that I will miss.

Charlie Anderson is retiring as a language services coordinator with a state health department.

In-house interpreters and duty of care to patients



Imad Hirmiz explains that in-house interpreters in the health care industry aim to go the extra mile.

In-house interpreters, like all other staff of Northern Health in Melbourne, strive to fulfil their duty of care to patients to the highest possible standard. For many Northern Health staff, it is part of their job to do so as they are directly involved in patients' care, while for interpreters it is a little bit different.

The role of interpreters, generally speaking, is to provide linguistic services: interpreting to help bridge the communication gap between the patient and healthcare professionals, whether verbally when interpreting during consultation or in written form when translating medical and health documents. However, the role of in-house interpreters, being employees of a big health organisation such as Northern Health, is broader than just bridging the communication gap.

In a study conducted by Alexander Bischoff, Elisabeth Kurth and Alix Henley of the University of Basel (AB, EK) and Geneva University Hospitals (AB), "Staying in the middle. A qualitative study of health care interpreters' perceptions of their work" (available at <https://benjamins.com/#catalog/journals/intp.14.1.01bis/fulltext>), interpreters working in health settings described four main roles: "word-for-word interpreting, intercultural explanation, building patient-provider relationships and accompanying immigrant patients".

An additional cross-cutting theme emerged: interpreters facilitating the integration of immigrants.

Only the first of these is generally regarded as their "official" role. The interpreters take on the additional roles as necessary during a consultation, in response to the needs of the patient and the health professionals. Further discussion is needed about whether these additional roles should be recognised and promoted as part of their work since they are important and there is no one else to take them on. Interpreters who take on the additional roles related to integration have the potential to be important actors in health care services whose patient populations are increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse.

With duty of care to patients being the priority, in-house interpreters at Northern Health travel the extra mile for patients by providing services outside consultation rooms, for example, when they take a patient to reception to rebook an appointment, to the x-ray department to organise a scan, to pathology to have a blood test or to other departments, and stay with them until they get their complete treatment at the hospital.

Interpreters commonly encounter patients who have limited English and have no other supports, resources or means including family to communicate their needs. Therefore, in-house interpreters fill in admission health questionnaires for patients and assist when a patient says they have no one else to do it for them.

Frequently in-house interpreters assist with on the spot translations, written pre-procedure instructions or information on medication safety and dosing instructions.

We even sometimes translate dates and times of appointments. We put in the patients' own language instructions on blood tests and scans to help them to remember what to do and save the patient and the hospital time, resources and the need to reschedule appointments, be readmitted or cancel procedures.

Many times, in-house interpreters agree to stay after their shift hours, staying with a patient until they are seen by health professionals, not just to interpret but also to provide support and education to the patient about public health systems by explaining to the affected patient how the public hospital system works and why they had to wait so long.

‘In-house interpreters go above and beyond their normal duties to make sure that their duty of care is met at all levels of care to NESB patients, and to answer any questions and concerns that patient may have, thus also alleviating any anxieties during their hospital experience.’

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Unprepared for trauma

Three academics explain why interpreters are often scarred by their experiences within the justice system.

Police and other emergency service workers are frequently exposed to confronting and often deeply distressing events. Almost inevitably these events and experiences leave severe psychological and emotional scars. But these workers will usually say it is simply part of the job – a job they took on willingly and with their eyes open.

Not so the ancillary workers, such as interpreters, who are typically ill-prepared to deal with the trauma that is so often associated with law enforcement and the justice system. These people are at significant risk of experiencing what has been labelled vicarious trauma.

Last month the host of ABC Radio National's the *Law Report*, Damien Carrick, interviewed three researchers into vicarious trauma suffered by interpreters. Dr Georgina Heydon, Miranda Lai and Sedat Mulayım are academics at RMIT University's School of global, urban and social studies. All three also work as or with interpreters and recounted confronting and damaging experiences they had suffered or witnessed when dealing with crimes involving NESB people.

Lai recalled a Supreme Court case in which she was involved as a novice interpreter: the murder of a young Chinese-Australian woman with a good education and a good job. The young woman advertised for "some company" in a Chinese newspaper. A "local Australian guy" replied and after a while they began a de facto relationship. When fights ensued, she decided to leave him but he took it badly and she disappeared. Her colleagues and her sister in China, with whom she was in almost daily contact, became alarmed and police were alerted. They found her body buried in the backyard of her former lover. She had been stabbed 13 times.

The victim's sister was flown out by the prosecution to testify and brought all her correspondence and history of

communication. Lai's job was not only to interpret the sister's evidence in the witness box, but also to explain the proceedings to her.

"Nothing had ever prepared [me] for such a gruesome case," Lai said. The man eventually pleaded guilty and as he was led out, "that was the first time that the sister ... tears rolled down her face".

Mulayım spoke of the time he was called in by police to interpret for a Turkish migrant with no English who had allegedly murdered his wife. Mulayım and the suspect were together for four or five hours while he interpreted between the suspect – who by this stage was in a jumpsuit, with blood and scratches on his hands – the police and the medical examiner.

"You do it as a job, then you walk out and you go home and just normal life, kids, and have tea, you have to switch to another sort of life," Mulayım said.

Survey reveals extent of anxiety and stress

Heydon, who is a forensic linguist and researcher, undertook a survey of of 271 (mainly Victorian) interpreters. Respondents were asked 10 questions about their experiences with traumatising materials.



... Nothing had ever prepared me for such a gruesome case.'

"It might be medical procedures, it might be physical assaults and violence, but it might also be dealing with death or bereavement in the family. There might also be graphic images. If you think about proceedings in the coroner's court or the forensic medicine institute, they are likely to involve interpreters in interactions with members of the public involving quite graphic images of perhaps a deceased person.

"Overwhelmingly the comments indicated that people were carrying with them quite a high degree of anxiety and stress, and that it affected their life in many different ways. I think a couple of the findings that were most concerning were that around a quarter of respondents said that they continued to feel traumatised for some period after, and that they would choose to avoid those types of assignment in the future," Heydon said.

She said there are two serious public policy issues arising from this problem. First, "the pool of highly qualified and experienced interpreters and translators working in our legal system is already very small ... That leaves us with a much smaller number. In some areas we are struggling to find interpreters for particular languages at all and relying on people who might not be as qualified or as experienced as we would like.

"The other thing that is very concerning is the number of people who reported that they felt that the exposure to the traumatising material affected their capacity to do their job, to interpret effectively at the time of the assignment. Any decrease in the effectiveness of the interpretation in the justice system could well lead to a miscarriage of justice if something is not as accurately translated as it could be."

Heydon said the issue of dispassion or professional distance that is expected from a professional interpreter causes all sorts of stress for interpreters assisting clients, particularly cases before the Refugee Review Tribunal. A high majority of such cases come from "places that have fairly recently experienced some kind of war or internal strife that has caused the flood of asylum seekers. Well, of course, when you get a new wave of asylum seekers coming to a country, interpreters and translators have to be found from somewhere, and very often of course they are from the same pool. And yes, it's extremely traumatising for those people."

Mulayim added that having to provide courts, tribunals or police with literal and graphic accounts of the torture people have endured "impacts on us more" because it is a sporadic experience interwoven with more mundane work like interpreting for a young person who is in trouble at school.

Heydon said that the RMIT University program in which she and her two colleagues are involved aims to address the problem caused by the impossibility for interpreters to manage "the very high cognitive load required by [courtroom] interpreting together with the complexities of legal language" without adequate preparation.

"I think it's critical that people who are engaged in the legal system understand just what the interpreter is trying to do, and that there is no such thing as a word-for-word translation."

Briefing, specialised training needed

Interpreters need to be properly briefed if they are to do their job effectively, Heydon said. "There's a great reluctance in the legal profession to give over a brief. There can be critical contextual details, but it also comes back to our core piece of research around vicarious trauma. If interpreters have the opportunity to prepare themselves and familiarise themselves with a case, they can spot issues before they actually get into that critical situation in the courtroom. So if they identify that the case is going to be in an area that is going to cause them a lot of trauma, they might choose not to take on that case or they might at least be able to prepare themselves adequately."

Lai agreed, adding that "on the interpreter's side, specialised training in police interpreting, court interpreting, and then what we these days call *trauma curriculum*, really should be a top priority. They need to be better prepared when they are confronted with these traumatised client contents, so that they know how to self-care and also have the confidence to ask for help."

Heydon sounded a final warning. "I suspect there are probably going to be some attempts by interpreters to sue institutions who hire them and expose them to trauma without offering any kind of support or ensuring that they are able to access support through their agencies. And I think that there is a danger that if we don't get on top of this it could cause an enormous amount of harm to those institutions."

Go to abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lawreport/intepreters-in-the-justice-system/6061848#transcript for the transcript of the program.

In Touch editorial committee

For this and subsequent issues the editor will be advised and assisted by the following subject experts. He is most grateful for their support.

Academic

Stephen Doherty



Stephen Doherty is a lecturer at UNSW in Sydney. He specialises in translation technologies, including translation memories, machine translation and translation quality assessment. His research explores the cognitive aspects of the translation process and audio-visual translation.

Interpreting practitioner
Tania Bouassi



Tania Bouassi is a NAATI professional interpreter and translator (Arabic/English). She teaches interpreting and translation at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and holds a BA in Journalism from the Lebanese University and a GD, MA and BA (Honours) in interpreting and translation from UWS.

Researcher

Denise Formica



Denise Formica is a NAATI-accredited professional interpreter/translator (English/Italian). She currently teaches as a sessional academic in the Italian studies program at Swinburne University. She also holds an affiliate position at Monash University where she gained her PhD in 2010 with a thesis entitled *Translating Australia: the Case of Australian Literary Fiction in Italian Translation*. Her research interests are directed towards a Bourdieuan approach to translation practice and theory.

Book editor

Melissa McMahon



Melissa McMahon is a French-English translator. Since 2007, she has been working full time as a translator and has over 35 titles published in the cooking, craft and lifestyle areas. She also works in legal and commercial translation and still does some translation in academic areas. Melissa has a BA in French, linguistics and philosophy and a PhD in philosophy from the University of Sydney.

Interpreting practitioner

Michael Cooke



Dr Michael Cooke is a consultant linguist and principal of Intercultural Communications, which provides training for interpreters in Aboriginal languages and training seminars for agencies that use them, particularly in health, legal and judicial domains. He is a NAATI-recognised interpreter/translator in Djarrpuynyu specialising in legal interpreting and forensic linguistics.

Auslan

Christy Filipich



Christy Filipich is an Auslan interpreter and interpreter trainer. She received her NAATI professional accreditation as an Auslan Interpreter in 2007 and is currently completing a postgraduate diploma in Auslan/English interpreting at Macquarie University.

Translation practitioner

Barbara McGilvray



A founder member and fellow of AUSIT, Barbara is an Italian-English translator working mainly in literature and film, with over 30 book translations published. She began her translation career in the film industry in Rome, and has also worked as an editor, proofreader, interpreter, lecturer and researcher. She has a BA in English and French (Melbourne) and an MA in Italian (Sydney).

Postgraduate

Vera Gu



Vera GU is a PhD candidate in translation studies and an interpreting instructor in the Master of Translating and Interpreting program at Monash University. Her primary research interest is in translation and interpreting pedagogy. Her research focus is on improving students' overall translation and interpreting performance by enhancing their meta-cognitive capacity. Vera is also a professional-level translator and interpreter in Chinese/Mandarin and English language pairs and a conference interpreter by training.

Helping professional interpreters and translators understand blood-borne viruses

A new resource for accredited professional interpreters and translators may assist in helping people from a wide range of cultural and language backgrounds better understand medical information provided by their clinician.

While the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM) recognises that there are a large number of different groups and individuals offering translation services, this resource is specifically designed for those formally accredited with NAATI.

The booklet is not intended to be translated to patients, but is for the translator or interpreter's own professional development.

Blood-borne viruses: a resource for professional interpreters and translators aims to give a clear, general understanding of three common blood-borne viruses: hepatitis B and C, and HIV.



ashm

Supporting the HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Workforce

"All three viruses are major public health issues worldwide," said the senior project officer who led the panel that developed the resource, Karen Seager.

"Within Australia, infection rates are higher in some population groups. Some of these groups were born in countries with high rates of virus infection and many don't have strong English language skills."

A needs assessment found that education around these viruses was missing for professional interpreters and translators, and that there was a desire from the interpreting community and the communities they serve to increase the knowledge.

A volunteer expert panel of interpreters and translators from around Australia was involved in guiding the development of the booklet to meet their needs.

"The booklet isn't for any one particular culture or language group, but is designed to be useful for all professional and accredited interpreters, including sign-language interpreters," Seager said.

What it covers

The resource covers key facts; what happens before testing; conveying a test result; contact tracing and partner notification; treatment; prevention; legal rights and responsibilities; stigma and discrimination; and details about the disease prevalence around the world and in Australia.

It is the first of its type in Australia, and has been endorsed by AUSIT and the Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (WAITI).

The resource is available for free download and free copies can be ordered via ASHM's website, www.ashm.org.au/resources. Or contact Ms Seager on 02 8204 0761 or karen.seager@ashm.org.au



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