AUSIT
IN TOUCH
Volume 27 < Number 2 > WINTER 2019
MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

Special features:

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PLUS MORE … including: questions for a publisher; a fictional interpreter takes the wrong path; and our award-winning students

< In Touch

Winter 2019

Volume 27 number 2

The submission deadline for the Summer 2019–20 issue is 1 October

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August is Women in Translation Month!

Launched in 2014, the WIT project is focused on addressing the lack of women writers whose work is translated worldwide.

https://twitter.com/Read_WIT
https://womenintranslation.com

A letter from the editors

Our new 'practitioner stories' section got off to a great start in the April issue, with reflections on maintaining an ethical position in the face of a client's requests, the importance of presenting a professional appearance, building resilience through interpreting for abuse survivors, and subtitling for the ancient Japanese performing art of kabuki. In this issue practitioners share their reflections on amateur community translation, interpreting in a crisis, the perils of transliteration, and how a series of personal letters resonated with the translator's own family history. Also in this issue, we launch a new question-and-answer series—see next column.

Your questions please

The T&I industry has many other 'players' besides practitioners: agencies, publishers, government organisations and, of course, a wide variety of end users. Are you ever curious about how another cog in this vast system works? If you could ask just three questions, who would you ask and what would you ask them?

In Touch is running a series of short reader-generated Q&As titled 'Three quick questions' in upcoming issues. Turn to page 22 to read the first in the series and to find out how to participate.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Contributions welcome

A quick flick through any issue of *In Touch* is enough to see that there are many ways AUSIT members (from students to Senior Practitioners) and other T&I stakeholders can contribute. If you have an idea, whether for an article on a particular topic or a reflection from your own experience; a cartoon, poem or … whatever it is, get 'in touch': we'd like to hear about it, and can help you shape your idea into an interesting read. To contribute:

- **please read the Submission Guidelines: ausit.org/AUSIT/Documents/intouch_Submission_Guidelines.pdf**
- if you have any questions, email the editor or an Editorial Committee member*
- check the submission date*
- go for it!

* this page, first column

Short & sweet

One of the biggest problems we have with submissions is length: we only have so many pages, and would like to include as many voices and as much variety as possible. If your piece is over 1000 words, it may need to be cut down. Our standard guideline for articles is 500 to 700 words, and even shorter pieces are welcome. If you're unsure about the length of your article, please contact us ahead of the submission deadline.

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Correction

In the article 'Is there a translator in the house?' in our last (April) issue, by Moira Nolan and myself (publication editor Helen Sturgess), we named Kathleen Olive as the translator of the *codex rustici* presented to Pope Francis. However, it's been brought to our attention that Kathleen co-translated the *codex* with Emeritus Professor Nerida Newbigin. Our apologies to Professor Newbigin for this oversight.

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News in brief

(a review of T&I-related items that have appeared in the media since the last issue of *In Touch* went to press):

book cover courtesy of Brow Books

6 Apr: Lack of Indigenous ... translations intensified community panic during ... Cyclone Trevor

Community panic as Cyclone Trevor approached a remote southern Arnhem Land community was fuelled by a lack of information in the local Kriol language. ***ABC News***

Apr: Duanwad Pimwana and Mui Poopoksakul …

The author of *Bright*—the first novel by a Thai woman to be published in English outside of Thailand (including by Melbourne-based Brow Books)—and her American-Thai translator are interviewed together. ***The Brooklyn Rail***

8 May: History made as NT politician speaks in Parliament with an interpreter

Three years after a First Nations politician was warned over 'disorderly conduct' for speaking in Warlpiri during an NT parliamentary debate, her colleague is granted permission to address the Parliament in his First Language via an interpreter. ***PM, ABC Radio***

20 May: In Cannes, making sure cinema isn't lost in translation

Interpreters are hailed as the lifeblood of the international film festival, connecting audiences, filmmakers and media from around the world. ***AP News***

22 May: Oman author Jokha Alharthi wins Booker International Prize

The prize is shared between Omani author Jokha Alharthi—the first Omani woman to be translated into English—and American translator Marilyn Booth for Booth's translation of Alharthi's novel *Celestial Bodies*. ***The Sydney Morning Herald***

27 May: Giving credit to literary translators

Trend to credit translators on book covers reflects a recognition of the instrumental role they play in making literature more widely accessible. Melbourne-based translator Alice Whitmore talks with Argentinian author Mariana Dimópulos. ***The Book Show, ABC Radio***

3 Jun: The Very Hungry Caterpillar turns 50 and gets its own Indigenous language translation

The iconic children's book is translated into Yuwi, an Australian First Language considered practically extinct 3 years ago, but being revived by a small but determined group of First Nations volunteers who now intend to translate several local First Nations stories into children's books. ***ABC Tropical North***

14 Jun: Hong Kongers alarmed by Google translation gaffe

Hong Kong Google Translate users spooked to find 'sad'—in 'I am sad to see Hong Kong become part of China'—converted to 'happy' in both Simplified and Traditional Chinese, as well as other languages—merely a glitch in an automated system, according to a Google spokesman. ***AFP***

26 Jun: Reports that Iran's president called Trump administration 'afflicted with mental retardation' … based on a mistranslation

According to experts, a closer translation of Rouhani's words would be that the administration is stricken with 'mental incapability/disability'. ***Business Insider Australia***

1 Jul: Machine learning has been used to … translate long-lost languages

Researchers used knowledge of how languages evolve over time to develop a machine-learning system that can decipher lost languages. ***MIT technology review***

2 Jul: Sign of the grimes: Stormzy's Glastonbury interpreter on how to translate rap

A British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter's version of the headline set draws attention to the work of the festival's 20 BSL interpreters. ***theguardian.com***

11 Jul: Auslan interpreter shortage 'getting worse with NDIS rollout'

SA's Deaf community frustrated by a worsening shortage causing frequent cancellation of medical appointments, delays in court hearings, missed work meetings and social isolation. ***ABC News***

AUSIT's annual Student Excellence Awards

The winners of AUSIT's Students Excellence Awards 2019 were announced in July. Each year, two nominations based on academic achievement are invited from each of AUSIT's affiliates in the VET and Higher Education sectors: state government-funded tertiary educational institutions which offer NAATI-approved T&I programs.

Each nominee is asked to state, in 50 words or less, the most valuable lesson they learned as a student. This year's answers from tomorrow's T&I professionals are varied and instructive:

Kwun-Bond Rayleigh Lau

"You are never the smartest person in the room, and that is an amazing thing. Only from learning from each other and sharing our ideas can we continuously develop ourselves to become better translators and better people."

Hiroko Kobayashi

"Through MAJIT [MA in Japanese I&T], I have learned that interpreting and translation are more about communication where people are connected regardless of their linguistic and cultural back-grounds and that interpreters and translators (T/Is) are the catalysts. I have also learned that tenacity and resilience are the prerequisites to becoming a successful T/I."

Ulrike Krenz-Fisher

"From Luther's bible to Shakespeare's plays, from scientific discoveries to human rights laws, translation enables the exchange of ideas and knowledge across language and cultural boundaries. The translator's skills and integrity are critical for producing a target text that is not only accurate but also fit for purpose. Therefore, translation is ultimately an exercise in ethics."

Shanshan Lin

"The most valuable lesson I learned at Monash is that preparation almost always plays a much more important role than talent in determining my performance on a specific interpreting or translation task."

New AUSIT Fellows 2018

At AUSIT's National Annual General Meeting (NAGM) last November two new AUSIT Fellows, both nominated by the SA–NT branch, were announced:

- **Ludmila Berkis**, translator (Russian>English) and interpreter (Russian–English)
- **Magdalena Rowan**, translator (Spanish–English) and interpreter (Spanish–English and Polish–English)

Opposite is the branch citation for Magdalena, a well-known and highly respected educator with TAFE SA who initiated the idea of Student Excellence Awards (see this page). Magdalena is also an ex-chair of AUSIT's SA/NT branch committee and a past representative of AUSIT on the NAATI Regional Advisory Committee.

Congratulations, Magdalena!

(Ludmila's citation was published in the April issue of *In Touch*.)

Branch	Institution	Nominated students and their courses	
NSW	University of New South Wales	**Kwun-Bond Rayleigh Lau** Master of Translation	**Tianyu Wang** Master of T&I
	Macquarie University	**Lin Liu** Master of Conference Interpreting	**Yaoyuan Ren** Master of Advanced T&I Studies
	TAFE NSW	—————— *not yet finalised* ——————	
	Western Sydney University	**Lai Jiang** Master of T&I	
VIC/TAS	Monash University	**Shanshan Lin** Master of T&I Studies (combined)	**Ulrike Krenz-Fisher** Master of T&I Studies (translation-only)
	RMIT University	**Luisa Conte** Master of T&I	**Sylvia Di Stefano Job** Advanced Diploma of Interpreting
QLD	University of Queensland	**Yang Xu** MA in Chinese T&I (MACTI)	**Hiroko Kobayashi** MA in Japanese I&T (MAJIT)
WA	University of Western Australia	**Chengcheng Liao** Translation	**Qin Zhong** Master of Translation Studies
SA/NT	TAFE SA	—————— *not yet finalised* ——————	

Award of AUSIT Fellowship to: Magdalena Rowan

Magdalena (right) with fellow interpreter Mary Gurgone: Magdalena and Mary also received Certificates of Appreciation for 30 years of loyal AUSIT membership

CITATION

The National Council of AUSIT has approved the award of a Fellowship to Magdalena Rowan, agreeing with those members who nominated her that she is a very worthy recipient of that award because of her contributions to the profession in a wide variety of areas over many years.

As a **practitioner** over many years, in fact an AUSIT Senior Practitioner, Magdalena has successfully operated her own business while at the same time being well spoken of by many more junior colleagues for her willingness to share her experience with them and act as a role model.

She is particularly well known and respected as a **teacher and educator**, having taught at TAFE SA since 1996 and now being a senior lecturer there. In that capacity, she has started the professional careers of a whole generation of translators and interpreters in South Australia. As well as being recognised as an excellent teacher, she has also been a notable innovator, having developed special programs for AUSLAN, new and emerging languages (at a time when there was great unmet demand in that area) and Indigenous languages. Her groundbreaking course for the latter earned an AUSIT Excellence Award.

As an **AUSIT member** (and now Senior Practitioner) Magdalena has also made major contributions to our professional association since its early days: at the local branch level, she chaired the South Australia/ Northern Territory branch committee for a number of years, represented AUSIT on the NAATI Regional Advisory Committee, and initiated the idea of Student Excellence Awards, which have now been adopted across all branches. At the national level, she has long been a thoughtful and helpful participant in discussions on the eBulletin, while always being willing to argue passionately for measures that would be in the best interests of the profession.

Among Magdalena's most notable contributions to the profession has been her lengthy **involvement with NAATI**. For many years she put her experience and teaching ability to good use by conducting test preparation workshops for candidates; she has for many years been an effective member of NAATI's Spanish examiner panel; and she was also a long-standing member of their Qualifications and Assessment Committee. More recently she has continued the latter involvement as one of the initial members of NAATI's Technical Reference Advisory Committee. However, perhaps her most notable contribution in this area has been her work to help implement the Improvements to NAATI Testing report, in particular by playing a major role in the design of new test formats and new marking rubrics, and then in training examiners in how to use those formats and rubrics.

Finally, Magdalena has made a significant contribution to the profession as a **member of the working group** convened by the Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity, in which role she was a co-author of a landmark document, the Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals.

National Council commends Magdalena Rowan for her dedication to the profession, especially in South Australia, her tireless energy, and her high level of professionalism.

16 November 2018

Shouldering the learning burden: enhancing specialised legal vocabulary training for Aboriginal interpreters

Arriving on Mparntwe Country (Alice Springs) 22 years ago, **Jodie Clarkson** felt—in her own words—'a profound sense of arriving home to a place I'd only ever visited in my imagination', and she has lived and worked there ever since. Working closely with Mparntwe Apmereke-artweye and Kwertengerle—Central Arrernte peoples with traditional responsibility for the lands on which Alice Springs is built—on the development of a face-to-face cultural interpretation program at the Alice Springs Desert Park, Jodie was motivated to learn conversational Arrernte in order to communicate directly with the most senior woman in the group at that time, who spoke little English.

Nowadays Jodie works as a trainer for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service in Alice Springs, preparing professionals in the legal, health and human services sectors to work with Aboriginal interpreters, as well as working with the interpreters to navigate the processes and specialised vocabulary within these sectors. For a recent research paper Jodie identified language-related factors that commonly impact Aboriginal interpreters in the court system, and examined a corpus of related literature. She has now embarked on incorporating what she learnt into her own training practices.

The vast expanse of Central Australia is home to a wide diversity of Aboriginal social and language groups. In the Northern Territory, around 65% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents speak one or more First Languages at home[1] and understand English, with varying degrees of fluency, as a subsequent language. Although no data is available on how many defendants, victims and witnesses appearing in court speak an Aboriginal language as their primary language, we do know that 84% of the Territory's adult prisoners identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander,[2] so it must be a significant percentage.

THE ISSUES

Aboriginal interpreters working in NT courts—a high pressure, high stakes environment—face multiple language-based (as well as intercultural, intracultural and emotional) challenges. Court interpreters, expected to accurately convey meaning from source to target language, must understand complex legal concepts and processes—often incommensurable between English and First Languages, and between Australian and local Aboriginal Englishes (LAEs)—and the related specialised vocabulary.

Language ignorance, polysemy, 'false friends' and negative transfer (described below) are just some of the many challenges they routinely encounter in their work, and their high 'learning burden' further complicates matters.

- Institutionalised **language ignorance** hit an all-time low in NT in 1999, when the then chief minister, Denis Burke, likened 'providing Aborigines with interpreters' to 'giving a wheelchair to someone who should be walking'.[3] Over the intervening two decades attitudes *have* changed, and there is generally wider understanding that someone whose first language is not English may need the assistance of an interpreter in court. However, it is often wrongly assumed that if an Aboriginal Australian speaks some English, they have the proficiency that is necessary to participate in police or lawyer interviews, or to answer questions in court.[4]

Aboriginal interpreters working in NT courts … face multiple language-based (as well as intercultural, intracultural and emotional) challenges.

It takes years to develop competence and confidence in court interpreting …

- **Polysemy** is the existence of multiple meanings for a word or phrase. The word 'guilty', for example, has two meanings in Australian English: responsible for an offence ('You are guilty'—a key legal concept), and also having a sense of guilt ('A guilty conscience'), but no direct translation in the First Languages of Central Australia. My colleague David Moore cites a client at the Alcohol Assessment Service who, when asked 'Do you sometimes feel guilty?' answered 'I was guilty in the Watch House'. The client was clearly referring to having been *pronounced* guilty in a past court case, whereas what the social worker wanted to know was whether he ever *felt* guilty for neglecting his family.[5]
- '**False friends**'—words that sound the same in different languages or dialects, and usually have a common origin, but have different meanings—can lead to serious miscommunication in a legal context, if a listener incorrectly assumes the word is being used to mean what it does in their own language or dialect.[6] One example Moore gives is 'force'. A defendant may say they acted—for example, committed a crime—because someone 'forced' them to do so, when there's no obvious element of coercion. What they actually mean is that someone with cultural influence—such as a senior relative—*encouraged* them to commit the crime.
- In Australia, English accent, grammar and meaning have been Aboriginalised[7] to establish many LAE dialects. **Negative transfer**—errors created by interference from a learner's first language[8]—is frequently caused by the lexical and phonological similarities of LAEs to English.[9] Even a highly experienced interpreter may not be able to explain why a misunderstanding has occurred, because their understanding of a particular word is that of an LAE rather than of Australian English.[10]
- The '**learning burden**' of a word or term—the amount of effort required to learn it—is heavier when the source language is not related to the target language.[11] English and Aboriginal languages come from vastly different language families and cultural bases, and have completely different lexical, phonological and grammatical structures. This makes interpreting English legal terms into Aboriginal languages a much more complex exercise than transferring them into other European languages with more similar vocabularies and conceptual backgrounds,[12] so Aboriginal interpreters learning specialised legal vocabulary shoulder a heavy learning burden.

Jodie (third from left) with Top End friends at the Fitzgerald Awards last year (see Jodie's biography paragraph overleaf)

The Plain English Legal Dictionary

Northern Territory Criminal Law

A resource for Judicial Officers, Aboriginal Interpreters and Legal Professionals working with speakers of Aboriginal languages

Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS)
North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)
Aboriginal Interpreter Service, Northern Territory Government (AIS)

2015

Book cover reproduced courtesy of Derek Lika Hunt (© artwork) and Ben Grimes for ARDS, NAAJA and AIS

FINDING SOLUTIONS

In 2012 the Darwin Supreme Court held a 'Language and the Law' conference which kick-started dialogue and collective learning between legal and T&I professionals. Teaching and learning resources subsequently developed—including *The Plain English Legal Dictionary*,[13] Indigenous protocols for lawyers, First Language reverse role-plays and First Language police cautions—have improved awareness of language differences and difficulties such as polysemy and false friends, and have repositioned the interpreter as an essential player in a fair trial. As a result, experienced First Language interpreters have reported feeling more confident and valued, and better supported in carrying out their role in court.

As a trainer I can further this progress by tailoring my role in interpreters' preparation for court, i.e. vocabulary instruction, to specifically combat the issues identified. I have drafted a series of group learning activities which aim to build skills and confidence in understanding and shuttling between English speech communities while increasing legal vocabulary.

I use The Plain English Legal Dictionary *as a focal point for exploring legal terms and usage ...*

Initial lessons focus on learners as multi-dialectal in their English language use. I will support their understanding of the differences between Australian and Aboriginal English meanings and cultural factors, building awareness of false friends and polysemy, and together we will explore strategies for the most appropriate interpretation to fit the context.

I am designing activities that will enable interpreters to get to know each legal word deeply: its form (written, spoken and word parts), meaning (form and meaning, concept, referents and associations) and use (grammatical functions, collocations and constraints). Learners will develop a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and rule-based competence, and implicit and explicit knowledge of legal English; and they will be assessed on free as well as controlled production.[14]

I use *The Plain English Legal Dictionary* as a focal point for exploring legal terms and usage, with interpreters writing Plain English definitions of vocabulary items into their own legal glossaries. Then, working in L1 groups or with their L1 dictionaries, they interpret (and/or translate) the new word/term into L1, then interpret (and translate) these L1 definitions back into English to ensure meaning has been preserved. Both English and L1 definitions are recorded on audio devices, and accuracy, impartiality, fluency and naturalness are assessed by experienced L1 court interpreters.

Interpreters are now understood to play a crucial role in bridging the huge communication gap between the players in the legal system. Judicial officers, legal professionals, interpreters and their trainers, therefore, have a joint responsibility to continue our collective learning journey. It takes years to develop competence and confidence in court interpreting, and my part in this process is to offer effective vocabulary instruction, both initial and ongoing.

Before joining the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, ***Jodie Clarkson*** *worked at Alice Springs Desert Park for 17 years, gaining experience across a wide range of disciplines ranging from zookeeping and guiding to management and developing and delivering bilingual education programs. She holds a bachelor's degree in applied science (parks, recreation and heritage) and a master's in education. Jodie is passionate about language rights and bilingual education, and in 2018 she was awarded the Fitzgerald Human Rights Award for Supporting Diverse NT Communities.*

1 ARDS et al (2015)
2 ABS (2015)
3 Blundell (2000)
4 Eades (2015)
5 Moore (2014a)
6 Moore (2014)
7 Eades
8 Wang (2009)
9 Siegel (1997)
10 Moore (2014a)
11 Nation (2001)
12 ARDS
13 Available online
14 Ellis (2005)

NOTE: Please email Jodie if you would like her to send you a copy of her research paper, which includes a complete reference list:
Jodie.Clarkson@nt.gov.au

Utilising technology ethically—is it rocket science?

A few weeks ago, AUSIT Senior Practitioner Sam Berner received an email from a bemused colleague overseas, a professional translator of nearly a decade who, like most professionals working full time on large projects, uses specialised software tools.

Recently, my colleague wrote, she'd signed up to a course in order to obtain further credentials in translation. She was surprised to find that the academic delivering the course not only lacked any understanding of the differences between computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and machine translation (MT), but insisted that both are unethical.

Such incidents are not anomalous, although they should be. After all, we're well into the twenty-first century. Pen and paper are relics of times when people used their brains for many tasks that are automated nowadays (and had the time to do so), and any translator intending to earn a living today utilises CAT tools. OK—I hear that course presenter begrudgingly say—but even if we've granted CAT tools a place in the world of translation, we can't possibly allow MT in.

Much as I understand and share this concern, we need to approach MT, too, from a factual basis and acknowledge its ubiquitous presence. The majority of practitioners use it in some form—to mine terminology, prompt translation solutions, and/or find potential collocations. It's been a while since we dared make fun of MT software, or were asked by agencies to 'please avoid using MemoQ/Trados/similar'. Like any tool, it's neither ethical nor unethical: just as a screwdriver can be put to good use (for example, for fixing broken objects) or bad (as a weapon to harm someone), MT can be used for good or ill.

I strongly believe that T&I practitioners in positions of responsibility, such as those mentoring or teaching, should actively seek to help others see our current reality through a prism of utilitarian pragmatism, rather than idealistic or wishful thinking. Translators newly entering the market should be assured that technology is a tool—one of many—in their 'translation toolbox', not some sort of unethical anathema to be avoided like the plague. In fact, I believe it's utterly unethical to allow them to enter the market unprepared for the demands and lacking competitive advantage.

The current working environment expects us translators to produce five thousand words a day, five days a week, and preferably at the cost of half that volume. Lack of space prevents me from discussing the socio-economic reasons for this, but they are what they are. Translators have the option of working slowly and earning little, or carving out a 'niche' market in which speed and volume of output aren't important—although I'm hard pressed to tell you what such a niche would be.

The logical conclusion is that speed and technical skills are now as crucial for success in the translation market as linguistic skills. These technical skills include—but aren't limited to—mastery of CAT tools and intelligent utilisation of MT plugins.

Attitudes like the one above should not be acceptable in training institutions, as we can see by referring to the 'NAATI Translator Certification: Knowledge, Skills and Attributes' paper (2015). This paper, which underpins NAATI recognition of registered training organisations (RTOs), names technological competency (and specifically computer-assisted technology) as one of the eight pillars of the certified translator's KSA, alongside ethical competency.

MT isn't going to disappear if we translators don't use it. It will continue to improve, ever more closely approximating human translation … but never matching it. Being inanimate, it will remain void of what makes language human: idiom, humour, play on words, creativity, grasp of context. Since it's here, and as long as it makes our work easier, not using it will impede rather than improve our practice. It's the translator who needs to be ethical, and to understand how to make the best use of MT without undermining the status of the profession. Instead of scaremongering, we need to teach translators ethics.

Not really rocket science.

Sam Berner *is a Queensland-based Arabic>English legal translator, a mentor and a passionate advocate for the profession. She was AUSIT's national president from 2009 to 2010, and is currently chair of the QLD branch.*

AUSIT National Conference 2019

18–19 OCTOBER 2019
BEST WESTERN HOTEL, HOBART

Accompanied by the annual AUSIT Awards presentation and Gala Dinner, the Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture and the NAGM

The Victorian branch and newly created Tasmanian sub-branch have the pleasure of inviting you to AUSIT's 2019 National Conference. This year's theme is: **'The world of interpreters and translators and interpreters and translators in the world.'** Translators and interpreters exist in an increasingly globalised society, both shaping and being shaped by cultural, political and technological shifts. The rise of computers and near-instantaneous communications have transformed both the T&I industry and the broader work environment.

How have these phenomena changed—and how will they change—how T/Is work, how our roles are perceived and what status we're accorded? What ethical considerations accompany these new modes of T&I, and new roles? How is our teaching and training affected? This conference aims to bring together professionals and researchers in the T&I field to discuss these and more questions about translators and interpreters in today's world and the world of the future.

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KEYNOTES and JBML

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR MARC ORLANDO

Dr Marc Orlando is a senior lecturer on the Translation and Interpreting Studies program at Monash University. His research explores the training of T/Is and the synergies between practice, research and training.

Marc is particularly interested in pedagogy and teaching methods, the didactics of T&I programs and academic and professional course curriculum design, the different roles of translators and interpreters, and T&I evaluation methodologies.

In his address, Marc will explore the conference theme from a regional and a global perspective, using insights gained from his participation in international forums such as CIUTI (in English, the International Association of University Institutes for Translators and Interpreters), the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and the European Language Council.

JILL BLEWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE

The **Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture** (JBML) has been held since 1992 in honour of the late Jill Blewett, who played an important role in the early development of the T&I profession in Australia. From the mid-1970s she held senior positions in community languages and T&I in SA's tertiary education sector, on the state's accreditation panel, and on the NAATI Board of Directors. Jill fought for the establishment of high standards and for regulation of the profession, and it is largely through her efforts that Australia has been recognised internationally as a leader in the field of community-based interpreting.

This year's JBML speaker will be announced soon on the conference website (see below).

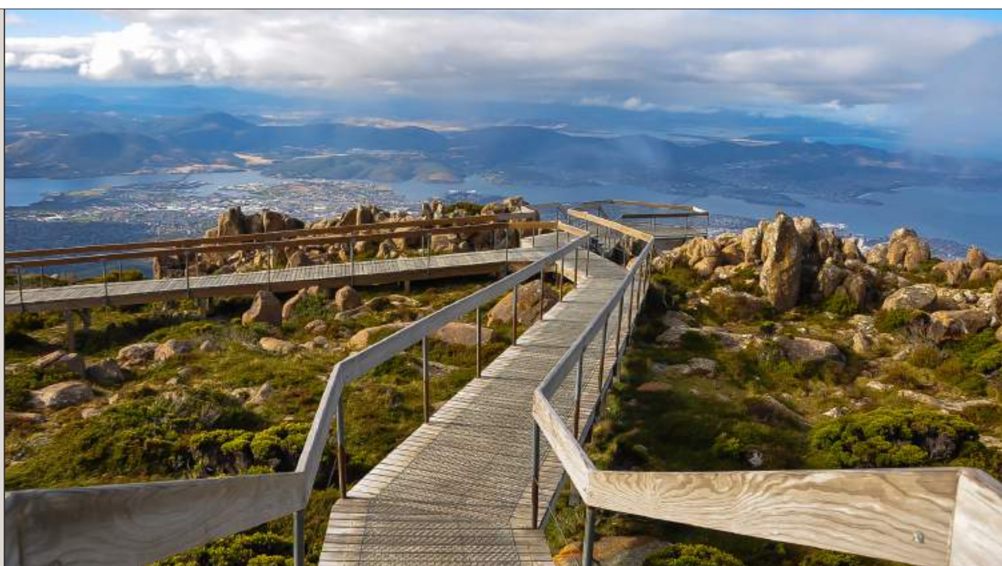
CONFERENCE WEBSITE:

For registration, accommodation and program information, visit: ausit.org/AUSIT/Conference/National_Conference_2019.aspx

Conference and dinner registration closes two days prior to the conference.

You're not too late to be an early bird! Special group discounts apply until 19 September. Grab 2 or more colleagues and book together!

You can also contact the conference managers:
lucys@theassociationspecialists.com.au
catherine@theassociationspecialists.com.au



VISITING HOBART

One of Australia's oldest European settlements, Hobart is a prime destination for lovers of food, art, history and nature. Here are some local tips from Despina Amanatidou, co-chairing the organising committee:

- The largest privately funded museum in the southern hemisphere, **MONA** (the Museum of Old and New Art) is a 'destination' museum with a large permanent collection. During the conference, catch artist Simon Denny's temporary exhibition *Mine*: an exploration of physical mining, data collection and augmented reality. The museum site also boasts a restaurant, winery and craft brewery, and the ferry trip downriver to get there is a treat in itself. mona.net.au
- **Mount Wellington** (officially Kunanyi/Mount Wellington)—looking down on the city from a height of 1271m—is often capped with snow, and **Wellington Park**, a natural reserve on Hobart's doorstep, offers a wide range of bushwalks, from 30 minutes to 7 hours. wellingtonpark.org.au
- For a more urban stroll, head for the historical precincts around the waterfront, **Salamanca Place** and **Battery Point**. There are guided and self-guided walking tours, but even a random wander will reward you with unique heritage sights.
- For café life and international cuisine head to the city's bohemian quarter, **North Hobart** (known as **NoHo**). Catch some live music at the Republic Bar & Café, or check out what's on at the arthouse State Cinema.

For more ideas see: discovertasmania.com.au

above: Mount Wellington boardwalk

below: MONA (the Museum of Old and New Art)

Vicarious trauma and help-seeking: a summary of research results

Our Winter 2018 issue featured a pair of articles on vicarious trauma in T&I by practitioners Majida Toma and Michael Grunwald. Michael was then working on his master's in counselling and applied psychotherapy, which culminated in a research project into whether—and how—spoken-language interpreters seek help after traumatically stressful assignments. Michael's summary of his findings (here) is followed (overleaf) by Vesna Cvjeticanin's account of just such an assignment.

Vicarious trauma (VT, aka secondary traumatic stress) is emotional distress resulting from indirect exposure to aversive details of trauma experienced by others. As Majida and I reported a year ago and numerous research studies show, many interpreters work in settings that expose them to the risk of vicarious traumatisation. As with chronic PTSD, VT is characterised by a range of both short- and long-term cognitive, emotional and behavioural symptoms that impact on a person's wellbeing, mental health and ability to competently perform their work.

In 2018, I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with six highly experienced female community interpreters—each working in a different language—to investigate how they dealt with the challenges they faced in demanding situations, and in particular what sources of support they turned to and why. Notably, all six were immediately able to vividly recall multiple community interpreting assignments that had involved clients—or even themselves—in serious, potentially life-threatening situations.

… my small sample seems to indicate that interpreters do not often seek formal support …

Although the main focus of my research was to examine why interpreters seek or do not seek psychological support in dealing with the impact of such experiences, it also uncovered five other major related themes which I may report on at a later date: stressors, impact, strategies, Code of Ethics and post-traumatic growth.

I categorised the sources of psychological support sought as *formal* (counsellors, psychologists, EAP staff, their employer/agency) and *informal* (colleagues, partners, family, friends).

In terms of help-seeking, my small sample seems to indicate that interpreters do not often seek formal support. The most common reasons given for not doing so were:

- being too busy
- feeling the distress was manageable
- feeling the distress was a personal issue rather than work-related
- lacking specific information on how to find and/or access such support
- doubting the usefulness of such support
- delayed onset of vicarious trauma symptoms

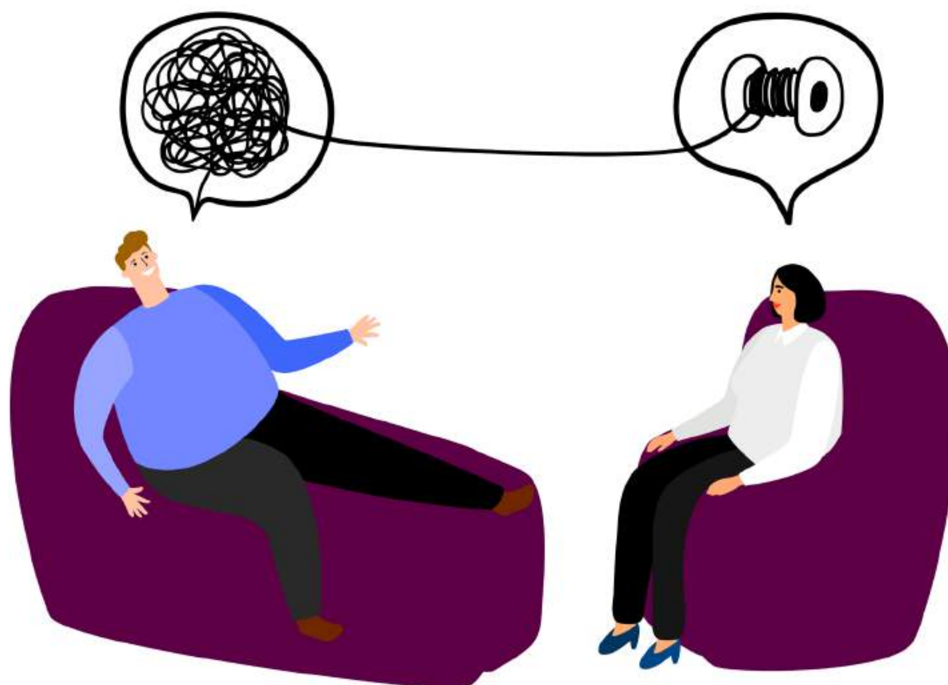
and last but not least:

- a lack (whether perceived or real) of acknowledgement of the impact—and of formal support offered—by employers, client organisations or agencies.

However, although the majority of my interviewees gave at least one reason for not seeking formal support, they *had* all actually made use of such assistance on occasions. The reasons they gave for having done so then included:

- the opportunity to offload
- the pragmatic value (e.g. specific coping skills)
- feeling that using formal (rather than informal) support would safeguard client confidentiality

... all six [could] vividly recall multiple community interpreting assignments that had involved clients—or even themselves—in serious, potentially life-threatening situations.



- needing a way of debriefing appropriately, given the imperative that they remain impartial while with clients
- the Medicare subsidy for psychological services
- having been offered workplace debriefing/counselling (either on site or through external providers).

In terms of informal support, the hectic and sporadic nature of the work undertaken by many community interpreters appears to be a major factor preventing them from seeking the support of their (same-language) colleagues. Given the booking systems in use and the individual nature of interpreting, many interpreters are travelling hurriedly from one assignment to the next with little opportunity to foster supportive collegial relationships.

Such relationships are proven to facilitate wellbeing in the workplace, and the interviewees were all eager to share when opportunities to engage with peers *did* present themselves, for example at workshops or while waiting for an assignment to begin. However, there appeared to be some confusion around confidentiality guidelines within the Code of Ethics.

Furthermore, while some interpreters indicated that they offloaded or debriefed with their partners or other family members, others felt this was inappropriate and/or detrimental, either to their relationship or to the wellbeing of their listener.

Another occasional informal source of support mentioned was from non-T&I professional colleagues, such as medical staff.

Importantly, the widespread lack of indirect informal support (including from booking agencies) was given as a major source of stress by several interviewees.

Considering the extensive industry experience of the interviewees providing this data, it can reasonably be assumed that novice interpreters would be even less inclined and able to seek and find the support which research indicates they desperately need in order to maintain their wellbeing and sustain their performance in this challenging profession. Research is therefore desperately needed to investigate the level of attrition amongst recently accredited interpreters and its potential causes.

Possible support solutions mentioned by the interviewees include the establishment of formal, dedicated mental health helplines for frontline interpreters, group counselling/debriefing sessions, and organised peer-support programs.

***Michael Grunwald** is a Sydney-based registered psychologist and an AUSIT Senior Practitioner (translating German>English). After completing an arts degree at Sydney University (majoring in human geography) he taught English and translation in Münster, Germany, for over a decade. Michael teaches leadership and teamwork at the University of Sydney Business School, and recently completed his master's in counselling and applied psychotherapy through Torrens University Australia.*

If you would like to know more about Michael's research, please contact him on: 0414 400 508 *or* michael@work-in-progress.net.au

Action stations: interpreting in the eye of a storm

A situation in which an interpreter is called on to perform a critical, even life-saving role can arise at any time, even on a quiet Sunday afternoon …

Vesna Cvjeticanin tells the vivid story of her first such assignment, and how it has underpinned her career.

It was a Sunday in April, a fair few years ago. Back then I was working relief shifts at a Canberra-based women's refuge, and that afternoon I was enjoying some time at home with my young family. My children had asked me to bake their favourite cake for dessert that evening, and I was right in the middle of it.

However, it wasn't going to go according to plan! My phone rang, and the voice at the other end said, 'Vesna, I'm calling from TIS. There's a crisis happening in Queanbeyan. Police are in attendance, and they need a Serbian interpreter. Are you available?'

'When do you need me?'

'Straight away. And I need to stress: this is a highly sensitive case involving a stand-off between the police and an elderly person with a weapon.'

'Oh … OK. Where do I go?' I asked, not thinking twice. If someone in a crisis needed me, I was ready to help.

I left the instructions for finishing off the cake with my husband, packed my notebook and phone, put on my most comfy shoes, and off I went. Before driving off I did my standard quick check:

- Address? – In my phone.
- Petrol? – enough to get there and back.
- A couple of muesli bars, just in case.
- A bottle of water – yep.

Halfway to the address I'd been given, my phone rang: 'Vesna, the Serbian interpreter? Queanbeyan Police here. We've resolved the stand-off. The person is being taken to Canberra Hospital Emergency. How soon can you get there?'

'Five minutes. I'm on Hindmarsh Drive. The hospital is on my left at the next lights.'

'OK, thank you. We're on our way too, behind the ambulance. My name's Michael. I'll see you there.'

When I arrived, the emergency room staff were rushing a patient into the ward. Upon showing my interpreter card, I was immediately taken to his bedside. There was blood all over him and his clothes.

The next four hours were tough, and felt very long. The patient, an older man—over eighty years of age I soon learnt—had seriously injured his wife with a knife in a domestic violence incident. During the following stand-off with the police he had also stabbed himself, in the neck. An emergency medical team got to work quickly and professionally to stabilise him, while his wife was taken care of separately.

The man didn't speak any English. He was in pain, confused and very angry. He kept trying to get away, so the staff had to fasten his arms to the bed. He was making unintelligible sounds, interspersed with hardly recognisable words in Serbian. The police officers were trying to get some basic information from him, and they needed my help.

My heart was beating fast and hard. I was scared, and totally unprepared for an event like this, my first experience of interpreting in a crisis situation of this type. I went into my 'auto-mode'—interpreting without thinking.

> *'There's a crisis happening … Are you available?'*

Over those four hours, my first task was to ensure the medical team's questions and the patient's responses were interpreted accurately and fully. Correctly conveying the medical terminology, the names and uses of medical equipment and the various medicines administered required particular focus and care.

Little by little, as the patient was stabilised, the police also started asking questions through me. After verifying his name and so on, they asked what had happened in the couple's home, and I made sure I interpreted every detail of the old man's account of the incident (from his point of view of course).

The man eventually went to sleep, exhausted and I suppose also sedated, and my services were no longer needed. Both the medical staff and the police expressed their appreciation and gratitude for my attendance and assistance, and I headed home.

It was late Sunday evening as I drove down my familiar Canberra streets … scenes were jumping in front of my eyes … I was *tired.*

During that drive home I realised—truly realised—how important our role is. I'd been able to facilitate important communication, assisting all three parties in the event: the person in crisis, the police and the hospital staff.

Got home. The house was quiet. The kids were in bed. My husband served me some dinner … I was not in a mood to talk. I had a piece of cake—it was delicious!—and went to bed.

From that day on I've always been aware of how critical interpreting is. Enabling clear communication in any situation, with well-interpreted phrases and instructions, can save lives and empower all involved, giving them confidence that their sensitive messages are conveyed fully, accurately and professionally, with care and without bias.

This experience made me a stronger, more confident, truly professional interpreter.

Vesna Cvjeticanin has been a NAATI-accredited Serbian–English interpreter since 1995 and acquired NAATI certification last year. She is also a qualified lawyer, and practises in the areas of medical and legal interpreting. After working in a number of community sector organisations Vesna held senior management positions in both the Commonwealth and ACT governments, and currently runs her own private mediation and alternative dispute resolution business.

Vesna can be contacted on 0438 482 303 *or* vesnaflower@gmail.com

Book review: *La Daronne*

by Hannelore Cayre
reviewed by Moira Nolan

***La Daronne* means 'the boss' or 'bossy mother' in French North-African slang, but is best translated here as 'The Godmother', as you will see. It's the fascinating tale of Patience, a jaded Parisian court T/I who has been employed to transcribe and translate some telephone intercepts (phone taps).**

Patience's work for the courts is paid 'under the table', without social benefits or taxation. She feels the judiciary are contemptuous both of her professional needs and of the accused in the hearings over which they preside, and it's this commonality which leads Patience to 'cross the line' and become a player in the drug scene around which the assignment revolves.

Through many hours spent working on their conversations, Patience gets to 'know' the subjects of the telephone intercepts, petty thieves and drug couriers of North-African origin. Although she initially views them as pathetic and inept, her sympathy is evinced by the contrast between the legal professionals, able to buy their own grown children out of their drug 'mishaps', and the second- or third-generation Arabic French drug dealers who she comes to see as victims of the French justice system.

Some of them seem to be nice young folk—downright upstanding, with tight family structures and good work ethics—who, finding themselves excluded from gainful employment, are just trying to make an (albeit not honest) dollar (well, euro) growing good quality dope in Tunisia and moving it into France.

> La Daronne *is based on the author's own experiences working as a criminal lawyer …*

Patience takes her first step across the line when she uses information she is privy to via the telephone intercepts in order to help prevent a drug shipment and its couriers making it into the hands of the police; and from this initial transgression we read on, shocked, as Patience morphs big-time into the matriarch of a drug syndicate!

Book cover reproduced courtesy of Editions Métailié, Paris

Although this story appealed to me as a translator, I do find it sad that Patience is shown crossing that line—can't anyone spin a good detective story in which our profession is shown as dignified and worthy, and our skills showcased? That concern aside, though, *La Daronne* does examine several ethical dilemmas familiar to T/Is the world over.

Firstly, readers are made aware of the murkiness of achieving accuracy when a judge speaks 'legalese' so fast Patience can barely catch what he's saying, in contrast with her Arabic-speaking client who is barely literate.

Other ethical issues touched on include the power imbalances between representatives of the legal system, T/Is and their clients; the 'cultural ambassador' responsibilities—and power, or lack of it—of T/Is; and the challenges to impartiality when one can't help seeing the inequities of 'the system'. These all rang true with my own experiences of interpreting at a local magistrates' court.

La Daronne is based on the author's own experiences working as a criminal lawyer—including working with T/Is—and her depictions of the crims and their drug networks, lives and prospects; of Patience's role; and of the justice personnel largely ring true. The criminals' dialogue is fresh, direct and very believable, the protagonist's eye is relentless, perspicacious and cynical, and overall the book is quite funny.

***Moira Nolan** has been a member of AUSIT for 25 years. A NAATI-certified freelance French> and Italian>English translator, she has served on the committee of the VIC/TAS branch; been principal of her own multilingual T&I agency; and been a manager of NAATI Tasmania, during which time she instigated and ran many NAATI and New Interpreter workshops. In recent years Moira has developed a passion for literature, and* La Daronne *is one of the books discussed this year by the French book group that she has set up in Coffs Harbour NSW, where she now lives.*

La Daronne, *published by Éditions Métailié in 2017, won both the French* Grand Prix de Littérature Policière *(Grand Prize for Crime Fiction) and the* Prix du Polar Européen *(European Prize for Crime Fiction) that year.*

For those of us who don't read French, The Godmother*—a translation into English by Stephanie Smee—will be released by Black Inc. in September; and a film adaptation billed as a crime/comedy and starring Isabelle Huppert is due out in March 2020.*

When is a translation not a translation?

NAATI-certified Chinese> English translator Thomas McConochie noticed the two signs to the right propped in the window of the podiatry clinic in Ashfield, Sydney that he attends. Examining the amateur translation led him to muse on whether T&I professionals are obliged to call out examples of poor or inaccurate translation that they come across in their community.

As professional translators, we aim to produce accurate translations that are faithful to source texts and fit for the purposes of target audiences. However, community-level translation is often undertaken by well-intentioned people who are not professional translators and are not necessarily aware of ethical and competence aspects of translation.

It appears that the author of the right-hand sign has taken an English source text (the left-hand sign) and translated it into Mandarin Chinese using only Hanyu Pinyin romanisation, the official system for converting Chinese characters to Roman script. *Hànyǔ* is the spoken language of the Han ethnic group, who make up over 90% of China's population, and *Pīnyīn* translates as 'spelled sounds'.

However, Chinese people are used to reading Chinese characters and see 'pinyin' (a common abbreviation) mainly as a pedagogical tool for teaching Mandarin to children and foreigners. Thus, using pinyin gives the target text a non-Chinese look and makes it difficult for the intended audience (predominantly elderly Chinese podiatry clients) to understand.

As pinyin was developed in China in the 1950s, people who grew up there before the '70s aren't usually familiar with it. Furthermore, pinyin represents the phonics of modern standard Mandarin, but most of the elderly Chinese people living around Ashfield are native speakers of Shanghainese and other Chinese dialects. Hence it's unlikely the intended audience would understand that this sign is supposed to make sense in Chinese; indeed, they probably wouldn't even attempt to read it because it doesn't *look like* Chinese text.

I found that to understand the sign I had to analyse the text based on context, make educated guesses about intended meaning (with the advantage of having the English original), then translate it into Chinese characters; but would an elderly Chinese person who isn't very familiar with pinyin go to the same effort?

Moreover, when mentally translating the pinyin sign into Chinese characters, I noticed several issues with the translation beyond aesthetics and writing system conventions, specifically problems with target text accuracy and faithfulness to source text.

Do we, as professional T/Is, have a responsibility to try and educate people in the community about translation issues we come across?

Firstly, typographical issues that affect the accuracy of the translation, making it harder to understand: 'jing ru' for '*jinrù*' (进入) which means 'enter', and 'kan bin' for '*kanbing*' (看病), which means 'see a doctor'. Again, I was only able to infer the intended meanings by analysing the typos in context and translating them into Chinese characters—something the average Mandarin-speaking passerby isn't likely to do.

Secondly, the target text contains extra information not present in the source text: the sentence in brackets, which tells the reader 'The new clinic is bigger and easier to get to. You can enter the clinic without going up any steps', and an addition to the map which states 'Underground carpark with three hours free parking and elevator up to the street.'

Inserting additional content is, of course, ethically unacceptable in a professional translation, but this isn't the first time I've seen this in English>Chinese amateur translation. Here, the intention seems to be an enthusiastic attempt to provide as much useful information as possible, rather than to render an accurate translation of the source text. Perhaps the compiler of the pinyin version was told—or knew—that the clinic's Chinese clients would appreciate this kind of extra information; or maybe they just felt that the information was missing and saw no problem with adding it.

I mentioned the main issues with the pinyin sign to the podiatrist I usually see. He was unaware of them, and said he would take them up with management.

This exchange left me musing whether we, as professional T/Is, have a responsibility to try and educate people in the community about translation issues we come across. In the case of this sign, I'm actually part of the target audience—Mandarin-speaking clients—so I felt it was okay to point out the odd attempt at translation his clinic had made. However, I wouldn't just go into a shop to discuss issues with a translation if I had no business with them; I feel that would be intrusive.

Dr Thomas McConochie (馬常思博士) *completed a BA in Asian studies (Chinese) at the Australian National University (2006). He lived in Taiwan for three years (2009–12), teaching English and studying Mandarin, and also taught Mandarin Chinese at ANU while doing an MA in Asian studies there (2012). Thomas has been working as a translator since 2012, and was awarded a PhD by the University of New South Wales (2017) for his dissertation on mysticism in the* Zhuangzi *(a Daoist philosophical text written in classical Chinese).*

Precious letters: deciphering family histories

Ilke Brueckner-Klein, a freelance German–English translator, specialises in personal, legal and medical texts. She enjoys the variety of work that comes her way, but a recent assignment—translating a collection of personal letters—stands out for her as a compelling experience.

A few months ago, a client asked me to translate thirteen personal letters handwritten by his grandparents to his father (their son) during 1939, the year the Second World War broke out. The son, a young man at that time, had fled Nazi Germany and was en route to Australia, where he intended to settle. His parents, meanwhile, were trying to obtain travel and migration papers so they could join him. The young man eventually made it safely to Australia, but his parents both perished in the Holocaust; and 80 years later their grandson (my client) wanted to read the letters that his father had carefully kept.

This assignment was certainly very different from the informational texts, personal and legal documents, medical reports and scientific texts that I usually translate. Of course, every job is important in its own way, but in this case I feel I was entrusted with a very special task, and one with particular challenges.

The main challenge was deciphering the handwriting. The father's hand was fairly legible, but some of the copies were faint, which made reading them time consuming; and the mother had written in Sütterlin script (see inset box).

In my twenty-plus years as a full-time translator I've often been asked to translate material containing Sütterlin. To the untrained eye it looks very mysterious; even a trained eye can find it tricky; and after 1941, people who were used to using Sütterlin tended to mix it with *Normalschrift*, making its decryption even more complicated. Sometimes I get stuck and need outside help, which for many years came from my dad.

Sütterlinschrift (Sütterlin script) is a German handwriting script named after the graphic artist who designed it. In 1911, Ludwig Sütterlin was commissioned by the Prussian government to design a modern version of the cursive *Kurrentschrift*, which dated back to the sixteenth century.

Sütterlin, with its simplified letters and vertical strokes, was taught in all German schools from 1915 until 1941, when it was banned by the Nazi regime—along with all other non-Latinate scripts, which they considered 'chaotic'—and replaced with *deutsche Normalschrift* (normal German handwriting).

To find out how difficult it is to read today, try writing your own name in Sütterlin. Go to: www.suetterlinschrift.de/Englisch/Write_your_name.htm

Although Sütterlin had been banned when my dad was only five, one of his schoolteachers realised that at least another two generations would have documents and letters written in Sütterlin that they needed to read or refer to, so he continued teaching students to read it. Many years later, I began to benefit from this teacher's foresight: when presented with particularly tricky Sütterlin handwriting I would—with the client's permission of course—email a copy to my dad for transcription.

After my dad passed away in 2011, a neighbour of my parents (now in his late 80s) kindly offered his assistance with Sütterlin. I do have one colleague here who's very experienced in deciphering Sütterlin and fills in when my parents' neighbour isn't available (including during this assignment), but I'm afraid that once the older generation is gone, there will be very few people who can readily decipher this historical script. Perhaps, though, all the modern interest in genealogy will encourage a new generation to learn.

The main challenge was deciphering the handwriting.

Other challenges of this assignment included getting used to the register of the language, as it had to be read in the context of a bygone era, and also wartime. There were terms for workshop equipment that no longer exists, leaving only context to help deduce its purpose. References to places sometimes depended on local knowledge shared by the author and recipient, and I had to research online to find the correct names. Occasionally I still couldn't make sense of a word, or it couldn't be deciphered, in which case I would make a careful translator's note.

During the assignment I had to remain professionally detached, of course, and push

aside my own feelings about the desperate situation this family was in. Yet their fate—shared by millions of families—has a personal resonance: when my maternal grandmother died, my parents found letters that her husband (my grandfather) had written to her, in Sütterlin, in the months before the Second World War ended.

As my mother can't read Sütterlin, my father read those letters out to her—a heartfelt and personal experience for both of them. My grandfather didn't survive the war, and my mother—a few months shy of three when it ended—has no direct memory of him, yet his letters gave her a precious glimpse into who he was. She learned from his own words how deeply he'd loved his wife, how desperately he'd wanted to come home, how sad he was that they'd lost two children, and that he took comfort in the fact that they still had the youngest—my mother.

After reading all his grandparents' letters, my client thanked me. He said he felt he'd gained a much better picture of what his father and grandparents had experienced, and what life was like at the time; that I'd brought them to life. That made me feel I'd hit the mark, as throughout the translation process I'd tried to do exactly that, i.e. bring across the love, care, advice and humour that these parents expressed in their letters, and make the personal correspondence sound natural for the client.

Working on these letters has made me appreciate my good fortune: migrating here was a matter of choice for me. I can go back and visit my family anytime I want to, and I know they are happy and safe. For so many people back then, migrating to Australia was a matter of life and death; they didn't know if they'd ever be able to go back, and even once they could, for many there was nothing and no-one left—still the case for many people arriving here today.

top: *Kurrentschrift* (left), Sütterlin and *deutsche Normalschrift* (right)

Deutsche_Kurrentschrift.jpg: Andreas Praefcke derivative work: Martin Kozák [Public domain] / Anhang zu RdErl. d. RMfWEV v. 1.9.1941 (Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung) [Public domain] / Der Barbar [Public domain]

above: *Bäckerei* (bakery) written in Sütterlin script (Wismar, northern Germany)

image courtesy of Sönsvall [CC BY-SA 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)]

I'd tried to … bring across the love, care, advice and humour that these parents expressed in their letters …

Ilke Brueckner-Klein *trained in T&I in her native Germany and worked in several language-related positions before migrating to Australia in 1997. She made contact with AUSIT before even arriving, and immediately established herself as a freelance translator. Ilke soon became a very active member of AUSIT, and her contributions have included: organising networking sessions and compiling email updates for the VIC/TAS branch; helping with the overhaul of AUSIT's website; taking on several major roles at both national and branch level (both VIC/TAS and QLD); and serving on the Organising Committee for the 2008 National Conference. In 2016, Ilke was made an AUSIT Fellow.*

What time is tomorrow? The role of cultural understanding in effective translation and interpreting

While living in Indonesia—she was there for around twenty years—Indonesian>English translator Christine Berry learnt by experience that literal translation can lead to confusion and reinforce negative cultural stereotypes if it isn't underpinned by cultural understanding.

I recently heard an Indonesian exchange student in Melbourne being asked for her impressions of the cultural differences between Australia and Indonesia. I'm quite familiar with the student's cultural background, having lived in her home town for several years, and I was interested to hear what she would say.

Her response focused on the Indonesian phrase '*jam karet*', which translates directly as 'rubber time'. She explained that in Indonesia people are often late, whereas Melbournians are always in a rush, walk quickly, and always arrive on time.

Thinking about her answer, I realised that she'd identified an important difference between the cultures of Australia and South East Asia. In her world the concept of time is fluid and imprecise, but in Australia and most other Western countries it is much more exact.

Precision is also an important element of translation, and literal translation is considered by some to be 'more accurate', 'better' or 'more precise'. As I reflected on the student's observation, however, I realised that translation into a target language is often influenced by the translator's own cultural interpretation, and when this differs from that of the source language, the result is actually *less* accurate.

… there is a constant interplay between cultural practices and perspectives and language …

A good case in point is translation of the Indonesian word '*besok*' as 'tomorrow' in English. For most people whose first language is English the word 'tomorrow' means 'the day following today', i.e. a specific future time that starts at midnight and ends the following midnight.

However, when living in Indonesia I quickly realised that although 'tomorrow' is usually translated as '*besok*' in Indonesian, '*besok*' may not actually refer to the next day (or even, as you will see, to an indefinite future time).

During a meal I was invited to in a family home, I overheard a heated discussion in Eastern Indonesian dialect. One family member, asked by a relative when he was going to complete a particular task, answered '*Besok.*' The angry response that followed, 'B*esok? Besok apa? Kapan ko bikin itu?*' translates roughly as 'Tomorrow? *Which* tomorrow? When are you going to do it?'

As time went by I began to have my doubts about the response '*Besok*' to requests that I made—for example, when I asked our landlord when the leaking roof would be fixed, and when a boat owner agreed that we could charter his boat '*besok*'.

In the case of the boat charter, the whole family turned up at the harbour early the next morning with bags packed, ready to depart for the nearest city … but the boat was nowhere to be seen. Asking around, we were shocked to discover that the owner had chartered it to someone else, and they'd left earlier that morning. The roof, meanwhile, remained in a bad way until torrential rain caused an ankle-deep flood in the living room.

... translation into a target language is often influenced by the translator's own cultural interpretation.

The landlord's frequent answer of '*Besok*', I realised, had been either total avoidance or procrastination, and certainly never referred to the following day. As for the boat owner, I never really understood why he indicated that we could charter the boat '*besok*' when in fact he'd already promised it to someone else; perhaps he was embarrassed to refuse a foreigner's request.

In such real-life situations, I learnt not to hear '*besok*' as 'tomorrow', but as either 'maybe' or a polite refusal. It's interesting to note that although English–Indonesian dictionaries give the translation of 'maybe' as '*barangkali*' or '*boleh jadi*', I never heard these terms used in real life.

The cultural difference in how precisely time is understood is one reason that a literal translation of '*besok*' could be incorrect. However, there is also another cultural divergence in regard to its usage and meaning, when given in response to a request or query, as in my examples: it's important, in Indonesian culture, not to reply with a negative. Saying 'No, I can't do that' would be offensive, so instead an answer is given which doesn't, to a non-native speaker, sound like a refusal or rejection.

When translating text from Indonesian to English, it could actually be inaccurate to translate '*besok*' as 'tomorrow'. If, on the other hand, the translation was from English to Indonesian it would be preferable to use a more precise expression for 'tomorrow'—such as '*esok hari*', which means 'tomorrow, the next day'—rather than '*besok*'.

Usage of the word '*nanti*', another adverb of time, follows a similar pattern. '*Nanti*' means 'later'; but just like '*besok*', to translate it literally as 'at an unspecified future time' could be an error: in response to a query or request, '*Nanti*' could actually mean 'Not at all' or 'No, thank you'.

My experiences led me to examine whether, in my own (Australian) culture, it is also difficult to say 'No' or to refuse a request. I realised that it is, but the culturally accepted norms that we use to get around this don't involve using adverbs of time such as 'tomorrow' or 'later', which would be understood literally.

In Australia a refusal of a request is usually prefaced by a polite expression such as 'I'm sorry' followed by 'but' coupled with an excuse. Excuses such as 'I'm too busy this week' or 'I have another appointment then' appear to be completely factual, although—just like '*Besok*'—they are not always truthful.

Generally speaking, Westerners consider it important to be clear about their intentions, so if a refusal is necessary it is usually communicated, even if this involves using the word 'no'. To answer with an adverb of time—such as 'tomorrow' or 'later'—without having any intention of doing something in the future would cause at the least confusion, and possibly also offence.

As my experiences show, there is a constant interplay between cultural practices and perspectives and language, so it cannot be assumed that a literal translation or looking up a word in a dictionary will convey the correct meaning in every context. The role of culture in understanding language can never be underestimated, and must be taken into account if one wants to achieve accurate translations.

Christine Berry *is a NAATI-certified Indonesian>English translator based in Melbourne and currently working freelance. She holds a master's degree in linguistics from La Trobe University, and has also worked as a linguist, in women's literacy and health in remote communities, and as a TESOL teacher and a teacher of translation principles. Christine loves Indonesian food, and also her grandchildren.*

The translator and the publisher: three quick questions for Text Publishing's Senior Editor Penny Hueston

In Touch is running a series of short Q&As titled 'Three quick questions' in upcoming issues. See the last column for how to participate. Translator, AUSIT member and Chair of the magazine's Editorial Committee Melissa McMahon kicks the series off below.

Text Publishing is an independent Australian publisher of literary and commercial fiction and non-fiction with a strong record of publishing translated works. I was curious about the process involved, so I asked the following three questions of Senior Editor (and translator) Penny Hueston.

1. How do you pay your translators? Do they receive a flat fee or a percentage of sales? Do the funds come from sales revenue, licencing fees, grants and subsidies, all of the above? Does an element of 'working for love' come into this area of translation?

Yes, we do pay all our translators—a flat fee. We pay them because it is important work. If we manage to get a grant, that is a bonus, but it is not a determining factor in deciding to commission a translation. Yes, most translators love their work. Not all manage to earn a living from their translations alone, but many do.

2. How do book translation projects come about? Do translators 'pitch' book translations in the same way that authors pitch books, or do you start with a book and then look for a translator? How would an interested translator 'get in' to the literary translation field?

Translations on our list come to us in a variety of ways: a few are pitched to us; many are commissioned by us; for some we buy World English rights, some UK/ANZ rights, some ANZ rights. Translators network with other translators, enter into mentoring relationships, pitch their works to agents and publishers, attend book fairs and literary festivals, and translate samples for a range of institutions and publishers.

3. Does Text Publishing have a particular philosophy of translating? For example, a 'foreignising' philosophy where the reader is taken towards the author's world or a 'domesticating' policy where the author's words are brought home to the reader? Is this something you would discuss with a translator?

At Text Publishing, we don't impose translation strategies on our translators, whether they be foreignising or domesticating, originalist or activist, literal or interpretive, etc. We edit all our translations to the highest level.

See more of Penny's thoughts on translation on Text Publishing's blog: textpublishing.com.au/blog/better-than-three-percent-translating-new-voices

Your questions?

The T&I industry has many other 'players' besides practitioners: agencies, publishers, government organisations and, of course, a wide variety of end users. Are you ever curious about how another cog in this vast system works? If you could ask just three quick questions, who would you pick and what would you ask them?

AUSIT members: send your 'Three quick questions' ideas (i.e. who you'd like to ask and what you'd like to ask them) to In Touch*'s T&I Editor Melissa McMahon:* intouch@ausit.org *and/or Publication Editor Helen Sturgess:* editor@ausit.org *and we'll take it from there.*

text publishing

Working with interpreters: a law student's perspective

During the course of their studies, legal interpreting students generally spend some time observing court proceedings, as well as studying the legal system and its terminology—but what about law students? Are they introduced to the practical experience of working with interpreters? Oma Murad is studying law at Curtin University. Last trimester she chose to take the Legal Clinic unit offered through the John Curtin Law Clinic, and she offers her observations from this learning experience here.

At the Law Clinic I had the opportunity to work on a case in which both parties were native Mandarin speakers and neither could understand or speak English. This led to a new experience for me: conducting an interview with the assistance of an interpreter.

I grew up speaking three languages, so I know that languages are not directly interchangeable or replaceable, but I didn't initially consider that the need for an interpreter could affect the outcomes of the interview. However, when my supervisor gave me pointers on how to ensure that the interpreter-mediated interview ran as effectively as possible I realised that there could be issues.

We discussed, for example, that I should speak in plain English, make eye contact with the client (rather than the interpreter), and take extra care in checking that the client understood the information. My supervisor also helped me to apply the new Judicial Council on Cultural Diversity's 'Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals' as far as was possible in this context.

Through this experience, I've come to appreciate the levels of professionalism and skill that are required of an interpreter in a legal environment, tasked with conveying all aspects of the dialogue—including complex legal concepts and information—as accurately as possible.

As our client's matter progressed I had the opportunity to observe three different interpreters in the context of a conciliation conference, and came to appreciate the importance of their different approaches and styles.

It appeared to me that the interpreter's style—which in these three cases could be broadly characterised as 'unobtrusive', 'flamboyant' and 'at times interrupting'—can impact on both the accuracy of the information being conveyed to the client and the effectiveness of explanation of concepts.

To me the unobtrusive style appeared the most effective. This interpreter took the time to allow the client to finish speaking, then relayed what she'd said back to me. She occasionally flagged that she needed to clarify a certain point with the client or myself, which I felt indicated a higher level of attention to ensuring that the dialogue was being conveyed as accurately as possible.

The three interpreters seemed to have quite different levels of training as well as interpersonal approaches, and I felt this factor could also have a significant impact on their effectiveness.

Given the nature of the services and the context in which they are utilised—in communications between lawyers and clients—I can see that it's imperative that they are as professional and accurate as possible, to avoid providing unintentionally misleading or incorrect information to clients.

As I understand it, the principle of access to justice—one of the fundamental concepts underpinning law—means that no-one in our community should face obstacles in obtaining legal assistance or access to the court system. Interpreters perform a vital service, and can be seen as vehicles for providing access to those facing language barriers, to ensure they aren't precluded from seeking assistance.

The availability of support services such as interpreting solidifies public confidence in our judicial system, and the presence of interpreters during court proceedings or in other legal matters ensures not only that justice is done, but also that it is seen to be done.

To conclude, I found this a very valuable experience for a law student. Finding yourself in a courtroom can be a daunting experience, especially if you're not familiar with the court process. The addition of a language barrier no doubt makes it even more daunting, and can obstruct access to justice. To ensure that non-English-speaking people actually understand the court process and what is happening—thereby upholding the principle of access to justice for all—it's essential that lawyers apply the new Recommended Standards and support highly skilled and qualified interpreters within our judicial system.

***Oma Murad** is a final year law student at Curtin Law School and intends to pursue a career in corporate or commercial law after completing her honours degree next year.*

Member profiles

Q&A

MARTA BARANY

Marta Barany, BEM, OAM is a Sydney-based Hungarian–English interpreter and translator. She's been a T/I since 1978 and a member of AUSIT since its inception in 1987. Over more than four decades, Marta has worked across a wide variety of fields and held some of AUSIT's highest official positions at both branch and national level. In 2001 Marta was made an AUSIT Fellow.

KHALED ELASMAR

Khaled Elasmar is an Arabic–English interpreter based in Sydney. He's been interpreting since 1994 and a member of AUSIT on and off since 1996. Khaled's main areas of practice are legal and medical.

Q1

How did you come to be a translator and/or interpreter?

Q2

Tell us about a project you have worked on that was especially interesting or challenging (within the bounds of confidentiality of course).

Marta Barany

A1

I have a natural aptitude for languages, grew up speaking both my native Hungarian and German, and learned French and English at high school. I arrived in Australia in 1951, and when refugees began arriving here after the Hungarian Revolution (1956) I helped them with informal T&I. I went on to work in various federal government T&I services, including EAC and TIS, and I sat on various committees—including the Ethnic Communities Council—to establish the Community Interpreting Service, and later NAATI. I worked for TIS for some fifteen years, and since my compulsory retirement in 1997 I've been working as a freelance professional.

A2

I've interpreted and translated in all possible fields. One of the most memorable assignments was a three-month drug trial in Adelaide. I flew down from Sydney every Monday morning and returned on Friday afternoon. It was a multicultural affair, as some of the accused were Hungarian and some Romanian, so we had two interpreters. We also had two trials—the first was aborted just before the end, as a juror was seen talking to a prosecution witness at the nearby markets. In both trials the defendants all pleaded not guilty, but they were all found guilty. By chance some years later I interpreted over the phone for one of my trial 'clients' who had served his time and been released. He recognised my voice, greeted me warmly, and assured me he would never have anything to do with drugs again.

Khaled Elasmar

A1

I've been interested in languages, literature and art ever since I was in school in Lebanon. After I left school I received a scholarship to study in France, where the communication studies course opened up my horizons to the world of cross-cultural communication and linguistics; and later, when my parents migrated to Australia and I found myself acting as a pseudo-interpreter for my family, I realised that I really enjoy interpreting.

A2

In one court interpreting assignment a Lebanese CALD client said to the other party: 'God destroy your house' and also 'You put my name in mud'. In translating both of these utterances I had to be extremely accurate, as they could influence the magistrate's decision. I interpreted the first as 'May you be cursed.' The second was more tricky: in Arabic cultures the notion of a family's honour is very important, so to create the same depth and register I interpreted it as 'You dishonoured my reputation'. The magistrate then questioned the client further about the concept of honour as it related to the matter in hand. Such instances remind me of the huge responsibility an interpreter bears, moderating for dialect variations, formal vs informal speech, idiomatic expressions and intercultural communication issues while instantly and simultaneously processing speech, to convert it into an accurate rendition of the original without hesitation. However, completing each job to the best of one's ability is also, of course, very enjoyable.