

INTOUCH

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

Special feature

T&I in times of crisis:

Lobbying for visual communication

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Balancing professional and personal concerns

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In the eye of the storm

A routine assignment turns into a medical emergency

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A passion for language

An Aboriginal language trainee shares her experience

< pages 20–22

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Who, why, how?

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Plus more ...

... including a thought-provoking colloquium, a resource for legal translators, and combining two language-based careers

< In Touch

Autumn 2020

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Winter 2020 issue is 1 June

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[ausit.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/
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www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/

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.

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Letter from the editors

We usually have most of each issue's content wrapped up a month before publication—so, for this one, early March. By then, however, our main 'topical' story—the crucial role of Auslan interpreters during the disastrous bushfires—was fast being overtaken by the new disaster of the COVID-19 pandemic, so we've expanded the article into a feature incorporating recent developments (see Erika's letter below, and pages 10–13).

The virus situation is having a significant impact on T/Is, halting much on-site LOTE interpreting work and leaving all freelancers especially vulnerable, while also increasing community translation needs and making further demands on Auslan interpreters.

It's hard to find a segue between COVID-talk and ... well, just about anything, but there are—and have been—changes afoot at *In Touch* that we'd like to share. As many of you know, the magazine received a makeover in 2017 at the hands of a new production team—ourselves (Helen Sturgess and Melissa McMahan: publication and T&I editors respectively), and Mine Konakci (design and production).

The December 2019 issue was Mine's last; we are grateful for the new style standard she set for *In Touch*, and wish her well in the fulltime design position she now holds. Meanwhile, this (April) issue will be Melissa's last, as she in turn focuses on a new fulltime position.

Melissa has really enjoyed shaping the content of the magazine over the last few years, and hopes to have left it in a better state than when she arrived. Helen has taken on design and production for now, and will strive to keep the magazine's visual appearance up to the high standards Mine set, while a new T&I editor and chair of the Editorial Committee will be carefully selected—watch this space.

Over more than three and a half years we've worked hard to encourage members and other stakeholders to come forward and contribute. The last three issues have seen articles by around twenty newbies (new to *In Touch* and, in many cases, to writing itself). On that note:

Contributions welcome!

Just read our Submission Guidelines, email any questions to Helen / an Editorial Committee member, check the submission date (see first column for all of the above), then ... go for it!

A letter from our national president

Hello all,

The decisively named year 2020 is setting us an immense challenge, and although we're only in April, we can already label it *annus horribilis*—first drought then devastating bushfires, followed by flooding, and now a worldwide pandemic.

These events have revealed the best and worst of us as humans. While our generosity and will to help reached unprecedented levels in response to the bushfires, a couple of months later we were fighting each other in supermarket aisles over toilet paper, and panic buying essential items when there were more vulnerable Australians who needed those products more than we did.

It isn't easy to find a positive note or a ray of sunshine in such dark times. Our means of living has been compromised, our freedom has been axed, and we will most likely be confined to our homes for the foreseeable future. However, with luck we'll each find something to be grateful for in all this. I find I'm learning to cherish the warmth of my home, to slow down, to enjoy the company of my family, to connect with myself, and to live with less.

Meanwhile Mother Earth is aching, and this hiatus may offer an opportunity for her to heal.



With pollution levels plummeting and humanity staying home, wildlife is venturing into areas normally barred to them by the presence of people. For once, other species are able to live alongside us and claim their right to a safe space on this planet.

This is a time to appreciate the small but important things in life—that video chat with a colleague or friend overseas, that movie we can watch from our comfy couch, that home-cooked meal—and also to check in on that elderly neighbour (from 1.5m away!)

Of course, T/Is continue to play a pivotal role in these times, by making it possible for communities to access information in their own languages, by facilitating communication, and by providing a lifeline to society.

Look after yourselves and your loved ones,
Erika Gonzalez



Member organisation Fédération Internationale des
Traducteurs International Federation of Translators

AUSIT

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* WARNING for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers: this article contains the name of a deceased person (page 20)

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):

9 Dec: Bedtime story 'Sleep Tight, Little Wolf' translated into Klingon

Klingon expert and teacher Lieven L Litaer has added Klingon (created by linguist Dr Marc Okrand for *Star Trek*) to the list of languages in which Ulrich Renz's heartwarming bedtime story can be read. [7NEWS.com.au](https://www.7news.com.au)



Image: Cristiano Betta from London, UK / CC BY (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)

11 Dec: Sun Yang verdict delayed because of translation troubles

Lawyers and judges struggle to understand the proceedings in the case of the Chinese Olympic swimmer accused of breaking World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) rules. Yang's translator is replaced by a WADA staff member, and an 'agreed-upon written transcript' of the hearing is being prepared to help the judging panel. [news.com.au/sport](https://www.news.com.au/sport)

15 Jan: McDonald's Japan mocked over awkward dessert translation

Directly translated into English, the name of a new dessert by the international fast food giant—'adult cream pie'—has an 'unfortunate sexual connotation'. [1news.com.au/finance/business/](https://www.1news.com.au/finance/business/)

18 Jan: Facebook apologises after Xi Jinping's name appears as offensive insult in Burmese-to-English translation

Facebook's Burmese-to-English translation tool woes continue, with the Chinese President's name appearing as 'Mr Shithole' on Aung San Suu Kyi's official page during his visit to Myanmar. [abc.net.au/news/25](https://www.abc.net.au/news/25)

Jan: Noongar language reborn in Hecate, an Aboriginal translation of Shakespeare's Macbeth at Perth Festival

Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company collaborates with Bell Shakespeare to celebrate this ancient WA language with a translation of 'the Scottish play'. [abc.net.au/news/](https://www.abc.net.au/news/)

11 Feb: The interpreter for the 'Parasite' team has become an unexpected star

Sharon Choi, Korean interpreter for the Oscar-winning film director Bong Joon Ho and his team, wins widespread social media admiration for her 'unflappable', 'deadpan' and 'awesome' performance. [sbs.com.au](https://www.sbs.com.au)

13 Feb: Found in translation: Tandsmør

This new segment on David Aistle's *Evenings* program shares words that have no direct translation in English, such as the above, which means 'a lover of lots of butter' in Danish. [ABC Radio Melbourne](https://www.abc.com.au/radio/melbourne)

22 Feb: 'The only one who made it out': Incredible Manus Island escape revealed

A Rohingya refugee from Myanmar who escaped from one of Australia's offshore detention centres by posing as an interpreter has ended up (via PNG and the Solomon Islands) in Canada, where he has been granted refugee status. [smh.com.au/world](https://www.smh.com.au/world)

3 Mar: Ben Richardson: Tasmanian Auslan interpreter comedian

This CODA (child of a Deaf adult) interpreter and comedian whose first language was Auslan explains how jokes work differently when they are signed. [ABC Radio Hobart](https://www.abc.com.au/radio/hobart)

9 Mar: DSS issues Family Safety Pack in 46 languages to support families experiencing violence

Designed for new arrivals from overseas, the pack includes information on Australian laws regarding 'domestic and family violence, sexual assault and forced marriage, and a woman's right to be safe', and a storyboard for those with low literacy. [thissector.com.au/](https://www.thissector.com.au/)

13 Mar: GPs 'critical' in coronavirus response for CALD communities

With over 33% of Australians over 65 born overseas, this GP news hub stresses the importance of getting information on COVID-19 out to CALD communities, and the critical role GPs play as trusted sources of information. www.1racgp.org.au/news/gp

1 Apr: NLC releases COVID-19 video series in 18 Aboriginal languages

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service and Northern Land Council have released the first 4 videos of the series. [Katherine Times](https://www.katherine.com.au)

Marika Bisas OAM: a commitment to community

Marika Bisas was one of the first fully NAATI-accredited T/Is in Australia, and a crucial player in the development of T&I services for Australia's NESB migrant communities. In the early to mid-1970s, support services for these growing communities were still either non-existent or in their formative stages. Marika took on a strong advocacy role for the creation of appropriate language services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, to ensure equitable access to services, and this led to her training as an interpreter.

In 2017 Marika's son George Bisas—director of Language Services at Multicultural NSW—approached *In Touch* with the idea of interviewing his mother (by then in her late eighties) for an article on her life's achievements. We jumped at the opportunity, but sadly Marika's health began to deteriorate, and the planned article was not to be. Marika passed away in October 2019, and George has worked with us to put together this tribute to a life committed to community and T&I services.

Marika Bisas (nee Koutsoukis) was born in 1929 in Port Said, Egypt. She was the youngest of four children in a Greek family which emigrated to Australia when she was three or four. They eventually settled in Melbourne, where she was educated in Catholic schools.

Marika met her husband-to-be, Jack Bisas, while working in her father's café, The Lyric. They married in 1953, and had two sets of twins: Eula and Ian first, then Jim and George a couple of years later. Jack, who was also awarded an OAM, supported Marika's career choices throughout their sixty-one-year marriage, until he passed away in 2015.



RMIT (Advanced College) interpreter course, 1976 Greek cohort, from left to right, sitting: Efy Constantinides, Angela Wyatt, Marika Bisas, D Tsoukalas, Dimitra Psyrras, and standing: Mark Dymiotis, Christina Keramaris, I Cironis, Alekos Anthopoulos, C Sardelis, Stella Leonidas, A Tousimis, E Vardalahakis, George Keramas (absent: C Tsapogas, P Tsapogas, Denise Kladis)

Throughout her adult life, Marika had two main passions: family and community, and she supported the Greek and wider communities through many volunteer and professional activities.

In the early 1970s, while volunteering as a welfare worker for Pronia (now the Australian Greek Welfare Society), Marika began to develop what became a passionate interest in addressing the needs of Victoria's Greek community, in particular its older members. Realising that elderly men and women from the first wave of Greek migration were finding themselves increasingly isolated—either living alone or in aged care homes where they couldn't communicate their needs, feelings or interests—she set out to establish Victoria's first Greek senior citizens' clubs, in Oakleigh, Richmond and Box Hill.

Marika's concerns in this area saw her take a leadership role in the Australian Greek Society for the Care of the Elderly—Froniditha—from when it was founded in 1977. During the following seven years, while she was secretary, Froniditha established the first Greek nursing home in Australia—a model of aged care support for people from non-English-speaking backgrounds that has been replicated across Australia.

In those days Marika began to advocate more generally for the establishment of quality T&I services, and this led to her taking on another major challenge. One evening in 1976, she came home and told the family that she wanted to enrol in a Diploma of Interpreting and Translating at RMIT, as a mature-age student. It was the first year that the course was offered, and in 1977, at the age of forty-seven, Marika graduated to become one of the first fully NAATI-accredited T/Is in Australia. The whole family were very proud of this achievement, particularly given her migrant background and age.



Marika working with a Greek–Australian student at Ashwood Special School in the late 1970s

One evening in 1976, she came home and told the family that she wanted to enrol in a Diploma of Interpreting and Translating at RMIT ...

Deciding not to accept an offer to study further at the University of Melbourne, Marika instead set out—both professionally and also through continuing her volunteer work—to dedicate a significant amount of her time to ensuring that quality T&I services were made available to Victorians from CALD backgrounds.

Marika's many volunteer roles included being elected president of the Victorian Interpreters and Translators Association (VITA), and serving as a member of: the Ministerial Advisory Committee of Multicultural and Migrant Education; NAATI Victoria's examiner panel for

T/Is; the Victorian Working Party for the Structure and Coordination of Victorian Interpreter Services; and the Greek Language Program Advisory Committee for Radio 3EA (now SBS Radio Melbourne—in which capacity she successfully pushed for the introduction of religious segments in the Greek programs).

Professionally, Marika was employed as an interpreter working with Greek families and children with special needs, within the

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OBITUARY

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Victorian Government's Ashwood Counselling Guidance and Clinical Services. During this time she was appointed to the Eastern Metropolitan Regional Board of Education, and was eventually appointed as acting co-ordinator for Interpreter Services for the Victorian Ministry of Education, representing the work of thirty-four interpreters across fifteen languages.

Together with many of her colleagues, Marika worked hard to have the professionalism of T/Is recognised. She spoke regularly at forums and meetings, making other professionals aware that when interpreting was required, it was scandalous that unqualified volunteers and even children were being used.

Language services were Marika's passion, but she still found time to work voluntarily in a number of related areas. As a first-generation member of one of Australia's growing new migrant communities, she was particularly proud of promoting the role that Greek women could play in volunteering within the Greek and wider communities.

Marika was actively involved in the Greek Women's Cultural Association; the first President of the Kastellorizian Ladies Society; a proud member of the Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, serving as president of Penelope's Division (the women's branch) for two years; and appointed Honorary Life Governor for the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne in recognition of her fundraising efforts.

In 2010 Marika's lifetime commitment to community and language services resulted in her being awarded an Order of Australia Medal, which she was proud to receive. She often said, though, that 'volunteering is not so much about the wins and rewards, but the wonderful other volunteers you meet along the way to achieving your goals'.

Marika passed away on 26 October 2019, aged ninety, after a long battle with cancer. She will be dearly missed by her children, grandchildren, family, friends and community.



Marika and George in February 2019

'... volunteering is not so much about the wins and rewards, but the wonderful other volunteers you meet along the way ...'

George Bisas has more than three decades of senior management experience in Australia and overseas. He has held key positions across a variety of government, private and non-government sectors, in disciplines including change management, public relations, adult education and training, media and marketing. Currently the director of Language Services for Multicultural NSW, George is establishing initiatives to ensure the sustainability of the industry in NSW. Before joining Multicultural NSW he was CEO of the Victorian Interpreting and Translating Service (VITS), where he managed a major change process which resulted in significant commercial success for the organisation.

Gender & Translation: Feminism(s) and/in Translation

In October 2019, the third Valencia/Napoli Colloquium on Gender & Translation: *Feminism(s) and/in Translation*—organised jointly by the universities of Valencia (Spain) and Naples L’Orientale (Italy)—was held in Valencia. Sydney-based T/I **Jacqueline Buswell** had always taken it for granted that translation is key to the transfer of ideas between societies and in creating social change. However, the colloquium brought home to her how difficult it is to translate and transfer feminist ideas in societies that are inherently anti-feminist, such as Franco’s Spain, or Turkey in the 1980s.



The opening address on ‘the personal is political’—by Pilar Godayol from the University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC)—took me right back to the 1970s. Translations of contemporary feminist books rarely managed to find their way to Spain until after the death of the dictator Generalissimo Franco, and those that did were smuggled in from Mexico and Argentina, as permission to translate and publish in Spain was regularly denied by the Franco regime.

For instance, an application to publish Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) was rejected because censors found it to be ‘*un ataque furibundo a la familia*’ (‘a frenzied attack on the family’), while Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* (1970) was classed as pornography, and therefore illegal.

Franco died in November 1975, and Firestone’s book was published in Spanish in Barcelona the following year, so translators must have been working on it! (The Franco regime’s censorship was mentioned by several other speakers, and the second day of the

... ‘activist translation’ ... includes both choice of text itself and paratextual commentary.

conference entered Spanish history as the day Franco’s remains were disinterred from the Valley of the Fallen and transferred to a cemetery in Madrid.)

Sinem Bozkurt of Hacettepe University (Ankara, Turkey) discussed the concept of ‘activist translation’ and told how feminists in Turkey used the interpreter role to express new ideas. She said that Turkey’s ‘second wave’ of feminism during the 1980s and ’90s took place in spite of the patriarchal and military orientation of the country’s power structures at the time.

Turkish feminist Sirin Tekeli was to speak at a conference in 1982 but didn’t feel free to take up the microphone and speak in her own name, so she acted as interpreter for another feminist speaker, Tunisian Gisele Halimi. In this way Tekeli was able to pronounce a feminist discourse that she didn’t feel free to express in her own voice.

The Turkish organisation Kadın Çevresi Anonim Derneği (Women’s Circle), established

in 1984, translated and published feminist writers, thereby introducing new ideas and ideologies to Turkish readers, said Bozkurt. She quoted Maria Tymoczko—co-editor of *Translation and Power* (2002)—on ‘activist translation’, which includes both choice of text itself and paratextual commentary.

Another interesting story from Turkey was that of Nihal Yeginobali, a female author and translator who, not daring to publish erotic novels in her own name, presented them to the world as translations (dubbed ‘pseudo-translations’ by Aysenaz Cengiz of Bogasici University, Istanbul). Having published *Genç Kızlar* (Young Girls) in 1950 as a translation of a (non-existent) work by a (fictitious) American writer Vincent Ewing, Yeginobali kept up this pretence until the 1980s. In 2003 the book was republished in Turkish under her own name, with ‘Vincent Ewing’ in parentheses.

Several speakers came from Naples L’Orientale University, including Giuseppe Balirano, the

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CONFERENCE

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director of I-LanD, Centro di Ricerca Interuniversitario. This inter-university research association of Italian and foreign academics has a specific focus on the concepts of linguistic, cultural and gender identity and diversity.

Balirano studies what he calls the ‘dark side of emancipation’: the representation of female criminals in television crime series. He has found that these series generally present female stereotypes in both original and translated versions, with a ‘total absence of unprejudiced representations of female criminal characters’. This, he says, is ‘nothing but the reflection of the culture such images are shaped from or into’.

Selby Wynn Schwartz of Stanford University examined Frances Frenaye’s 1952 translation into English of *Dalla parte di lei* (1949), a novel by Cuban-Italian writer Alba de Céspedes.

Wynn Schwartz considers the English title—*The Best of Husbands*—‘misguided’, given that the Italian title means ‘from her perspective’ or ‘on her side’, and she calls Frenaye’s translation an ‘oversimplified and far less daring book’. In the original novel, for example, the main character Alessandra identifies also as her deceased brother Alessandro, yet Frenaye ‘treats gender as if it were always solid and singular’. Wynn Schwartz would like to see a re-translation in which, as contemporary author Emily Rose puts it, ‘the “trans” is kept in the translation with all the feminist, queer, and transgender dimensions of the character’.

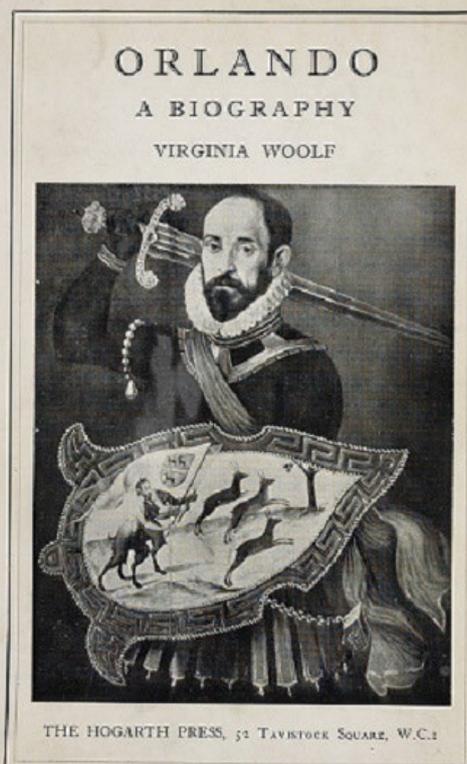
Talking of re-translation, Ninet Gora Zaragoza of Valencia University told us that there are eight translations into Spanish of Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*. Each new translation, she said, by no means cancels the pre-existing ones, but rather adds to them. (She would know, as she has a bookshelf full of Woolf editions in both English and translation.)

Gora Zaragoza examined reasons for re-translation, using as her example Jorge Luis Borges’s translations of Woolf into Spanish.

Cover of the first edition of *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf (London: Hogarth Press, 1928) Worthing Art Gallery, public domain

She criticised his version of *A Room of One’s Own* for denying the female authorship, while his rendering of *Orlando* has been termed ‘patriarchal’.

Gora Zaragoza described texts censored during Franco’s regime as ‘hijacked’, pointing out that although translations appeared later in Spanish, Spaniards had been denied the opportunity to read the texts in their own times and contexts. A 1929 book published today, she said, is just not the same. But at least researchers have access to documentation of the censorship processes.



Spanish academic Lupe Romero of Barcelona Autonomous University presented her study on the novel *La Bastarda* (2016), written by Equatorial Guinean author Trifonia Milebea Obono. What fascinated Romero—having read the book in its original Spanish and also an English rendition published in 2018—was not the translation of words, but the transfer of cultural expression. She examined this via terms

used in the patriarchal marriage contracts described in the novel—such as polygamy, dowry and bride price—which can mean different things in different cultures.

María Luisa Rodríguez Muñoz of Cordoba University presented a paper, prepared with Pilar Castillo Bernal of the Complutense University of Madrid, which explored the interpretation of legal terms—in courtrooms and in society—via the internationally reported ‘*la manada*’ (‘wolf pack’) gang rape case (2016–19).

An initial verdict of ‘sexual abuse’ (not ‘rape’) sparked widespread protest in Spain, with debate raging around the definitions of the two terms in Spanish law, and in a retrial all five defendants were convicted of rape.

Rodríguez Muñoz and Castillo Bernal cited Spanish judge and feminist activist Victoria Rosell’s declaration—in an article she wrote on the case—that ‘Spanish law is mired in misogyny’. They compared differences in English, German and Spanish criminal law on sexual violence, and examined translations into English and German of Spanish news items on the case.

Apart from the plenary sessions, there were four discussions happening at any one time during the conference. These were led by translators, feminists and gender theorists from countries as far apart as the Czech Republic and Brazil, all of whom we had a chance to meet over coffee, lunch and dinner, topping off a fascinating two days.

Jacqueline Buswell is a freelance Spanish > English translator and Spanish–English interpreter. She is also a poet, and has worked as a translation project manager, journalist, librarian, and English as a second language (ESL) teacher. Her first book of poems, *Song of a Journey-woman*, was published in 2013.

The next Valencia/Napoli Colloquium on Gender & Translation is scheduled to be held in Bergamo, Italy, June 25–27 2020.

For a full reference list, email: editor@ausit.org

Interpreting through an emergency

When a planned health care interpreting assignment turned into a medical emergency, practitioner **Mary Skarpetis** found her professional training had prepared her for this unexpected turn of events.

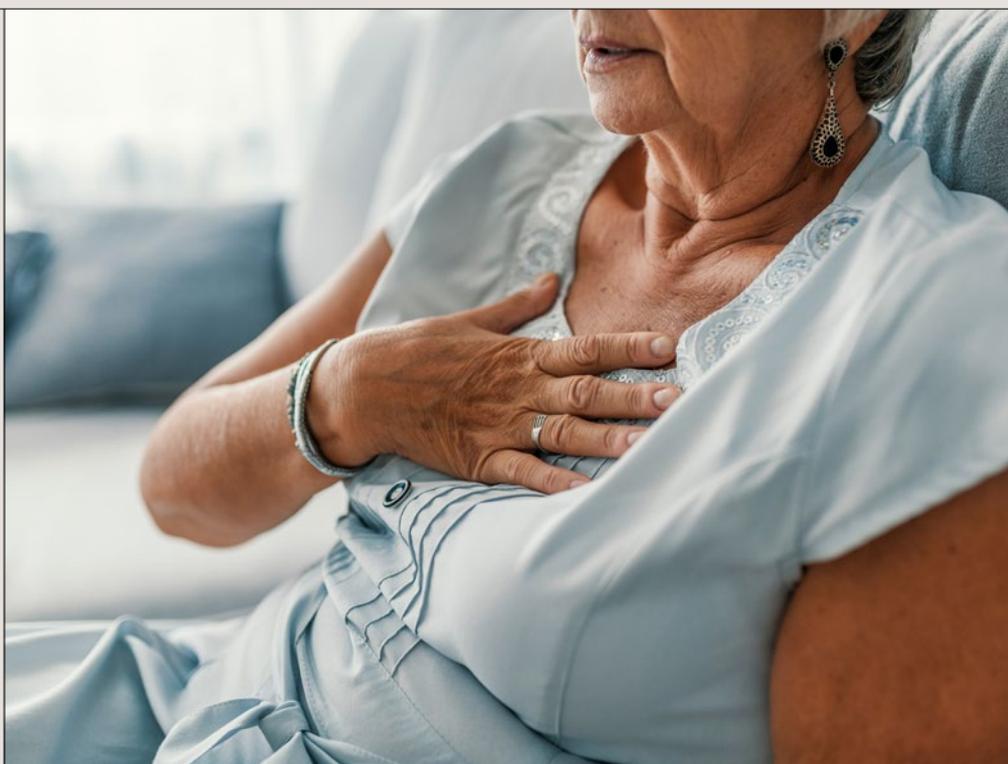


I've been interpreting since 2015, mainly in health care settings, and in recent years I've been working in the cancer environment a lot.

Although this can be quite challenging, I also find it very interesting. I particularly enjoy interpreting during chemotherapy education sessions, bone marrow biopsies and clinical trial consents, as each of these processes presents its own technical challenges.

During one routine oncology consultation the elderly female patient became increasingly short of breath, then started complaining of chest pain. As a result, a MET call* was activated.

In other words, I suddenly and unexpectedly found myself interpreting for the person at the centre of a medical emergency.



The patient was struggling to speak ...

Within minutes the room filled up, with around ten medical staff (nurses, doctors) and lots of equipment. It was hard to know where to stand, as the patient was being connected to a range of monitors, and at any one moment several of the medical staff were calling out instructions or information to others.

The senior physician demanded that I stand next to her—squeezing in amongst equipment and cords—to interpret both her questions and the patient's replies.

The patient was struggling to speak, so I had to get up very close to her to be able to hear what she was saying. It was all very tense and noisy until the patient was stabilised and staff had made their assessments.

No interpreter expects to find themselves in such an emergency situation, but I believe our professional training enables us to rise to the demands of the occasion. One of the joys of interpreting is the variety of work we can undertake, and this can sometimes lead to working in unique situations.

*Growing up in a Greek–Australian family, **Mary Skarpetis** attended primary school in Australia and secondary school in Greece. She worked in accounting for over two decades before deciding to make a career change that utilised her language skills, and is now a NAATI-certified Greek–English interpreter.*

** A MET (Medical Emergency Team) call is a hospital-based rapid response system designed to be used by a nurse or other staff member to alert colleagues when a patient's vital signs have fallen outside set criteria. It allows them to access the emergency assistance or advice they need in order to manage a patient's deteriorating health and prevent serious injury or cardiac or respiratory arrest.*

Signs of the times: utilising social media to lobby for access to critical information



Shirley Liu is a Sydney-based member of the Australian Deaf community who is active in grassroots movements supporting young Deaf people, here and around the world. An academic background in communication and interpreting has given Shirley a unique and comprehensive understanding of the needs of the Deaf community, particularly regarding accessible information. She has made the most of these skills during the recent and ongoing spate of natural disasters, which have highlighted the power of social media as a communication and lobbying tool alongside more traditional methods.

Since October last year, Australia has attracted a huge amount of global attention due to the widespread, catastrophic bush fires. As dozens of fires took hold in New South Wales, the media was flooded with emergency announcements and press conference broadcasts from the RFS (Rural Fire Service), updating the public on what quickly became the worst fire season in a decade.

During natural disasters, people in high-risk areas need to access information in real time in order to make life-or-death decisions, and the media plays a central role. Sometimes, however, the obvious is overlooked: for

example, rural and remote communities rely heavily on radio services for news updates that most Deaf people are unable to access; so for us, full accessibility of TV news broadcasts becomes even more important at such times.

For the many members of the Deaf community whose first language is not English, captioning isn't always accessible. Furthermore, it often has typing mistakes or missing text, and is delayed; whereas Auslan is clear, understandable and in real time. For these reasons, a professional Auslan interpreter clearly broadcast alongside the presenter is beyond measure the natural and preferred choice—there is no substitute.

The start of the social media campaign

In October and November last year, when the situation was already quite dire, important news conferences broadcast via most major television networks in NSW did not seem to include live Auslan interpreting. Many

members of the Deaf community turned to social media for accessing news, and recent past president of the World Federation of the Deaf Colin Allen began posting commentary on Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness of this issue. There seemed to be no immediate effect, however, so I felt another strategy was needed. I used my design skills to mock up a visual for a solution, and used the handle #auslanonscreennow to promote this concept.

After two weeks of negotiation we thought we'd made a breakthrough ... only to be disappointed: an interpreter was provided at a Rural Fire Service news conference, yet cut out of shot by narrow framing on several major commercial networks. ABC and SBS broadcasts took a wider shot to include the Auslan interpreter on screen, but the larger viewing audience of networks Seven, Nine and Ten were not reached. The community was encouraged to post comments on social media, but again there didn't seem to be any effect.

Stepping things up

As the situation worsened, with bushfires breaking out through South Australia, Queensland and Victoria over Christmas and New Year, I noticed that commercial broadcasts from these states nearly always included the Auslan interpreter on screen. What was happening in NSW? The situation was in equal parts puzzling and frustrating.

It was time to take the social media campaign to the next level, so I set up the Facebook page Auslan Media Access and posted a video asking people to join me in campaigning for better access to information for the Deaf community in these times of need.

I anticipated garnering a membership base of a few hundred, but in the first day over two thousand people joined the group. A whole-community approach started to take shape, with group members asked to post video and screenshots of good and not-so-good broadcast practices.

The Facebook group developed a simple message: 'Can you see the interpreter? Interpreters save lives', and the campaign video went viral via Facebook and Twitter. Finally, our voices were being heard. Channels Seven, Nine and Ten reluctantly began including the Auslan interpreter on screen, although it was still clear to us that they didn't fully understand the issues.

I also began contacting local MPs, without much success until I reached out to Penny Sharpe, the NSW Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services and Disability. Penny became fully invested in our campaign, and supported us by writing a letter to the Prime Minister. Yet even with such support and the more general attention of international media, at the time of writing Auslan interpreting isn't provided during the Prime Minister's press conferences, so they remain inaccessible to the Deaf community, and that is our current point for pressure.

Screenshots of 'good' and 'bad' broadcast practices sent in to the Auslan Media Access page

Foundations and the future

Solid improvements are visible in the coverage of the disasters that have followed on the heels of the bushfires: first flooding, and now the coronavirus outbreak. During press conferences for these events, an Auslan interpreter has been provided alongside the presenter, and channels

Seven, Nine and Ten have included the interpreter on screen much more regularly. (However, when they don't do so, we get the old excuse of technical issues—come on, they only have to pan the camera out!—or the easy promise that the feedback will be passed on to the producer.)

continued overleaf



Solid improvements are visible in the coverage of the disasters that have followed ...



continued

It's through this constant pressure from the Deaf community via a variety of channels that the networks have become aware of the accessibility issues we face, and the importance of the role being played by the Auslan Media Access group cannot be overstated. We hope that the recent groundwork has been laid well, but the future still holds questions regarding the regularity of Auslan interpreting for emergency service announcements.

The group's aim is to ensure that the inclusion of an Auslan interpreter in frame during all broadcasts of state and national announcements becomes the norm—initially during emergencies, and eventually on all topics—and as soon as possible. Our progress this summer demonstrates the effectiveness of combining multiple avenues of action in order to bring about change: lobbying both the television networks and government officials, and making the most of the relatively new tool of social media.

Shirley Liu is an active member of the Australian Deaf Community. She divides her working life between a large Auslan interpreting agency, freelance digital media interests, training and mentoring, and volunteering for the World Federation of the Deaf Youth Section, currently as vice president. She holds a BA in Visual Communication, a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and a Diploma of Interpreting.

Neil Ray initially edited Shirley's submission. Neil is an Auslan interpreter with thirty years' experience, now working as a freelance ghost writer, editor and consultant. Originally from Melbourne, he now lives in Boston, Massachusetts and is pursuing certification as an ASL-English interpreter.

NOTE: *before going to press we contacted Shirley to ask whether there had been any improvement in provision and/or coverage of Auslan interpreting since she wrote this article. She replied:*

'Yes, re Coronavirus, I'm pleased to say that the Federal Government is now providing an Auslan interpreter for the PM's press conferences, and they are being included onscreen in all media channels' broadcasts.

It's positive, how they're framing the interpreter in a box in the bottom corner of the screen—a technological initiative for a solution.

Both Federal and State governments and also health officials have become more aware of Auslan interpreters and more willing to work with interpreter agencies to provide them.

We, the Deaf community, really appreciate the various Deaf societies, interpreter agencies and advocates who've worked hard on the issues to ensure full accessibility and prevent a re-run of the bushfire situation.

Once the Coronavirus has eased the legal acts may need to be reviewed again, but in the meantime there has definitely been progress.'

A public education opportunity

At the height of the recent bushfires, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* Column 8 readers received a little lesson in what T/Is are and what they do.

On 5 January, one Michael Milston of Orange 'professed his "great admiration for the Auslan interpreters translating the media pronouncements during the regular fire media updates" while suspecting the translators are being somewhat economical with their words.' He mused whether there was '... a lesson in this for the speakers ...' and asked '... can any Column 8er verify my suspicions?'

On 6 January, interpreter Gary Logan of Bardia set him straight:

One interprets the spoken language. A translator translates a written piece of work. Two different skill sets. Best not to confuse them. As for Auslan being economical in the choice of words, it must be understood that sign language does not interpret words by other words but by signed concepts. It may appear to be more economical but the meaning is always conveyed. In fact, no language, be it oral or sign, can be interpreted verbatim.



Screenshots of the Facebook campaign video made by Shirley Liu and Marnie Kerridge and featuring the president of Deaf Youth Australia, Vanessa Alford (left) and an appreciative Tweet (above)



Balancing the personal and the professional in the pandemic

Between late nights translating and re-translating COVID-19 material and on-site assignments that she committed to before the virus outbreak became a pandemic, translator and interpreter **Sarina Phan** took a few moments to reflect on how she's juggling her personal needs, concerns and commitments with the shifting demands of her professional roles in these troubling times.

Hope everyone is well and keeping safe. Just want to share what's happening for me with work as a Vietnamese–English T/I.

Like many of you I've been following this coronavirus epidemic-turned-pandemic since January. Certainly, in my translation practice both the work and clients' expectations have changed as this crisis has unfolded.

There hasn't been an increase in workload—in fact this time last year my translation workload was three times higher than it is currently—it's the turnaround time that's become a bit of a challenge.

Last week I received translation projects totalling about 5000 words on COVID-19. While this isn't a huge volume, some clients wanted the work done overnight, and others expected it in 24 or 48 hours.

I normally charge a loading fee of up to 50% (depending on volume and clients) for urgent translation, but I'm waiving it for work related to COVID-19.

Another difference is that because this situation is so dynamic, content changes again before the

information in LOTE has been distributed, so clients have been having to ask me to update, and quickly. Of course I've complied, even though I've had to stay up late.

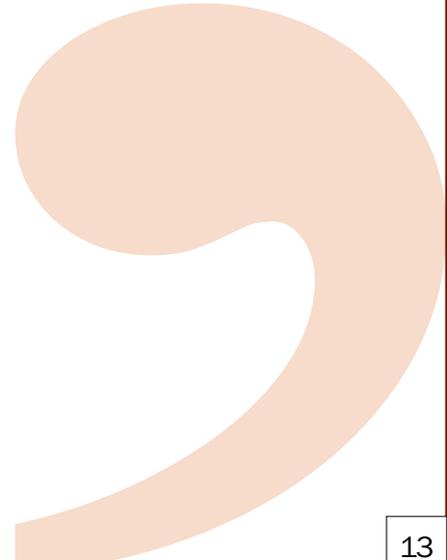
I can cope with all this, though—it's the interpreting work that I'm worried about. I live with and care for my eighty-year-old mother, who's on haemodialysis, so I'm always cautious about what interpreting work I accept, but I can't help feeling more anxious these days when I'm out on assignments.

Last week I started getting myself ready for more online interpreting (telephone & video conferencing), and will phase out on-site work next week. In the meantime I'm using hand sanitiser at the start and end of every on-site assignment—and with sign-offs nowadays done by smartphone, that's become another occupational health hazard! Mine had been getting a dose of the gel too, til I heard the alcohol base needed to combat COVID-19 could damage it, so now I'm sanitising carefully before getting it out.

I take my hat off to all our Auslan and hospital interpreters.

Adapt and keep safe everyone!

Sarina Phan is a NAATI-accredited T/I (Vietnamese–English) who began her interpreting career in 1990. Having developed a preference for interpreting in the legal domain, she has worked extensively in this area for more than twenty years. Sarina was an active member of AUSIT from 2001 to 2010, including as national president (2007–09). Nowadays she also translates, and enjoys sharing her experience with colleagues at the occasional PD seminar.





Mentoring? What's that all about?

Like many professional organisations nowadays, AUSIT runs a structured mentorship program (see inset box opposite). Having taken part in a similar program run by ASLIA, experienced sign language interpreter **Trish Townsend** explores the benefits of doing so.

Mentoring ... what even is that? Where do I find a mentor? Why would I need one? What are the benefits? And what is a mentor? Is it some green, wispy-haired, weird-talking figure imparting their wisdom, or is this something I could do?

There isn't really one single definition of mentoring, but the one that sits best with me is that it's a dialogue between two colleagues, focused on self-reflective and problem-solving skill development.

The majority of us spend most of our time working in isolation. I remember that, as a newbie, negative thoughts raced through my head after many assignments: 'I should have ...', 'I forgot to ...', 'I shouldn't have ...'. If I'd had a mentor who was able to help me develop ways of short-circuiting those thoughts, I could have avoided much self-doubt and strengthened my confidence.

I've been fortunate to have had access to some wonderful mentors in my career, and even

now that I've been interpreting for a while, having someone to help me recognise my own shortfalls and strengths is invaluable.

But where can we find these mythical 'mentors', and how do we even start a mentor-mentee relationship? This is where a mentor program can be useful.

Formal, structured programs define the roles of both mentor and mentee. They offer guidance and training for the mentor in how to foster a supportive relationship with the mentee, to help them engage in reflective practice and develop problem-solving skills, while also teaching the mentee what is expected of them and what their role is in the relationship.

Some people assume that in order to be a mentor, they need to be an expert, but this is a misconception. Mentoring is more about the skills of listening and supporting the mentee to find their own solutions. We, as mentors, don't have to have all the answers!

And for mentees, it isn't about sitting back and passively receiving wisdom from your professional idols. It's about being open and responsive to your mentor, while both asking and answering probing questions regarding what's been

happening, how you felt, triggers, your reactions to what has occurred, and what you feel you could do to resolve a similar situation in the future. All that fluffy stuff: journalising thoughts, feelings and solutions ... it actually works!

I feel the initial training is highly beneficial. It may appear to be 'easier' to be a mentee than a

MUCH TO LEARN



WE ALL STILL HAVE

mentor, but the training helps clarify the roles and responsibilities of both parties, and how best to develop a mutual, comfortable and profitable relationship.

Many people assume the mentoring relationship is hierarchical—one who has expertise and experience: the mentor; and one who is looking for that knowledge: the mentee—but this isn't so. It isn't about mentors with years of interpreting experience

... mentoring can ensure this knowledge and experience don't go to waste ...

saying 'you should'; it's about guiding the mentee to take control and to identify possible solutions and strategies themselves.

Open-minded mentors often find they learn from their more recently trained mentees too; we can all learn from each other, no matter how much interpreting experience we have. In my opinion, mentoring programs that endorse this type of 'two-way street' approach are particularly effective.

From an industry perspective, mentoring is a way of ensuring that effective strategies in T&I—and in coping with the demands of the roles—are passed on to future practitioners. When people leave the profession, so does their wisdom and experience, and mentoring can ensure this knowledge and experience don't go to waste. More than this, fostering supportive relationships in the context of mentoring creates a workforce that—despite many members working in isolation—has a sense of collegiality, that we are *not* alone. Feeling

AUSIT Mentoring Program

The program is offered in two valid terms per year, pairing T&I student members in the final semester of their degree/diploma with experienced practitioner members.

Minimum grade (mentee): credit average

Minimum experience (mentor): 5 years

Duration: 30 hours over 5 months

Terms dates: 1 Feb to 30 Jun (Term 1)

1 Aug to 24 Dec (Term 2)

(Mentor–mentee pairs must start and finish their program within one valid term.)

Application dates: 1 Jun to 29 Aug (mentees)

(Term 2, 2020) before 29 Aug (mentors)

(Mentor applications received after 29 Aug will be considered for Term 1, 2021.)

PD points (mentors): 20 per student + a free PD day (maximum 2 students per year)

Application forms and more information on the program can be found on AUSIT's website under 'PD & Education'.

supported can also improve mental wellbeing, which in turn prevents burnout and improves career longevity and workforce retention.

Having participated in ASLIA's mentoring course twice, I'm glad to have had the opportunity to pay forward my own experience of being mentored to other interpreters, and I'm determined to continue to share in the professional community that I love.

If you've never been a mentor or mentee, why not give it a try (see inset box for information on AUSIT's mentoring program)? And if you have another way of supporting colleagues and sharing knowledge, why not write about it for *In Touch*?

Trish Townsend is a WA-based NAATI-certified provisional Auslan interpreter who has been interpreting since 1993. She loves her job, is passionate about the community within which she works, and loves learning and assisting others to reach their potential. Trish works across the education sector from kindy to university, and also as a community interpreter. She particularly enjoys working in the health sector and, in more recent times, theatre interpreting.

NOTE: this article was originally published on ASLIA's blog The Debrief on 19 August 2019. It has been adapted and lightly edited for publication in In Touch.



Legal Translation Explained

by Enrique Alcaraz and Brian Hughes (London and New York: Routledge, 2014)

reviewed by Dakshayani Shankar Sthipam

... legal translation requires a balance between innovation and precedence.

In this textbook/manual, Universidad de Alicante professors Alcaraz and Hughes serve up a wealth of information for translation students and practitioners alike.

Covering translations from English into French, Spanish and German, they nudge readers past elaborate abstraction to teach them how to translate the English ‘legalese’ of the Anglo-American system of law used here in Australia and New Zealand (as well as throughout most of North America and the British Isles).

Translation
Practices
Explained

LEGAL
TRANSLATION
EXPLAINED

Enrique Alcaraz
Brian Hughes



Although the book hasn’t been updated since 2014, the authors’ styling of chapters—whereby each builds upon those that come before it—allows translators to gather that legal translation requires a balance between innovation and precedence. It is this precise, gem-like quality of the book that continues to sustain its presence in the industry.

The authors strategically divide the book into eight chapters within four thematic blocks, ranging from the linguistics of legal English to translation methods suitable for this context, with little reminders of how the legal system operates.

In Chapters 1 and 2, the oscillation between technical, semi-technical and everyday language demonstrates how tricky it can be to locate the most suitable sense for a legal context. For example, the ‘breaking’ of a law can represent both ‘breach’—concerning contracts—and ‘infringement’—failure to abide by a local bylaw (page 34).

Some readers may be confounded by the authors’ meticulousness in exploring what are often only slight variations in the meaning of a term. However, as Chapters 3 and 4 ease readers into the cultural background of the British and American legal systems, it becomes clear that in order to understand

them, translators first have to grasp the complexity of legal English.

The authors discourage translators from being overly hasty in assuming all legal systems are composed of the same or similar powers and can be translated as such. For example, they describe how the British Supreme Court, the country’s final court of appeal, possesses different powers from the American Supreme Court (page 58).

This is where the authors’ talent for deconstruction dots the pages, as they stress the necessity for students and practitioners to develop cultural awareness. Despite giving English-to-target language translations, they point out that ‘localised’ equivalents can continue to change over time, so we need to keep up with the evolution of terminology in order to avoid making serious mistakes during assignments.

This innate sense of prudence slithers into Chapters 5 and 6, as the authors decode an array of genres such as deeds, powers of attorney, insurance policies and certificates. They don’t hold back here at all; they emphasise how to approach a university degree translation in comparison to a statute, how to preserve the genre conventions, and what happens when the target and source languages’ genre conventions don’t match up.

At times, the introduction of genre after genre—followed by expert analysis—can seem daunting, particularly for novices to the industry like myself. However, it enables us to

Cover of *Legal Translation Explained*, Alcaraz and Hughes, copyright 2014, Routledge, reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books UK

deduce that sticking to a genre's conventions is but one aspect of the larger task of locating a compromise between the imperfectly matched genre conventions of two cultures.

Although I found each chapter relevant to the T&I industry, I would pinpoint the final two as the most beneficial to practitioners. In these chapters the authors step back from analysing the legal system to put forward the idea of dynamic equivalence and 'indirect translation', advising translators to 'subvert' an original's 'syntactic' into a new version (page 191). 'The essence of the method is to produce on the target reader an equivalent effect to that produced by the source text ... the translator should, as Hamlet puts it, "by indirections find directions out"' (page 180). This emphasis on cultural mediation prepares translators to rely more on their intuition

than expected. If the publisher considers further editions, I believe this concept could be accentuated earlier in the book.

As I look towards incorporating legal translation into my career, I can see that this textbook will continue to help me cut through the jargon. While it is restricted to the Anglo-American legal system and three European languages, the layout of the terms may help practitioners working with other languages solidify their knowledge of the legal world. A treasure trove of a textbook, it is one that students and practitioners will find useful for decades to come.

Legal Translation Explained is one of the Translation Practices Explained series of twenty-five T&I-related books.

Dakshayani Shankar Sthipam is pursuing a Master of Translation Studies degree at the University of Western Australia while working in communications. Born in Kuala Lumpur, Dakshayani has been moving between languages (Tamil, Malay, Mandarin and English) from a young age. Her family migrated to Perth, and she developed a passion for French in high school. She holds a BA in journalism, French and German (New York University) and has reported for the ABC, NBC and CNN. Working as a journalist after returning to Perth Dakshayani missed studying languages, so she enrolled at UWA. She works primarily in French, German and English, but aims to add Tamil and Malay into the mix soon, and to commence a PhD in French and translation studies on completion of her MA.



PATRICIA JAWORSKI | AAL DIRECTOR

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We are currently looking to engage NAATI certified/recognised interpreters and translators. If you are interested to work with us, please visit our contact page on our website at

www.allaboutlanguages.com.au

interpreting | translating | training | community

From academia to freelance translation, and back again

T&I practitioners enter the profession via a myriad of different routes. Academic and Japanese> English translator **Alexander Brown** describes how he became an academic translator, and how joining the profession is helping him to navigate the precarious world of academic employment.



In 2015 I was in the final stages of writing my PhD in Japanese Studies, with my first child on the way, when I began to wonder what would become of our fledgling family when the scholarship money ran out and I found myself facing a ruthless academic job market.

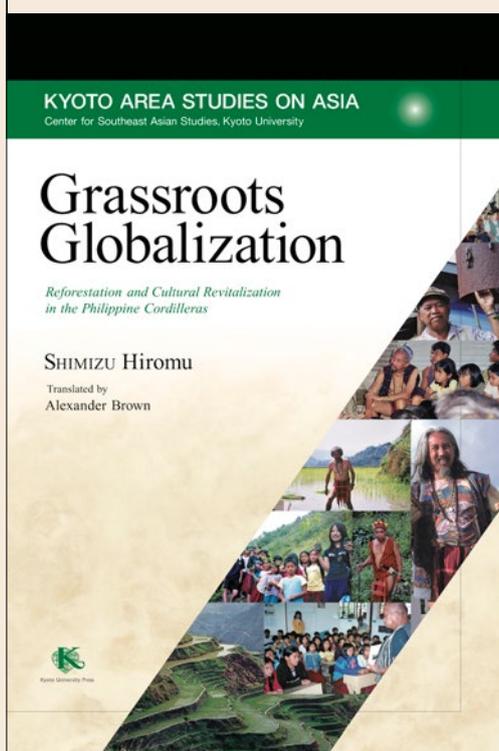
Learning Japanese had already taken me a long way from Year 7 at Albury High School two decades earlier, including high school and university exchanges to Japan, and working there as an English teacher.

Now back in Wollongong, I wondered whether I could turn my linguistic skills into a career in translation. Being an incorrigible academic, I naturally headed for the university library, where Douglas Robinson's *Becoming a Translator* offered some sage but encouraging advice:

... the translator is in many ways a pretender: s/he pretends first of all, early in her or his career, to be a translator, and then, all through his or her career, to be the kind of source reader the source author was writing for and he kind of author that the target reader will trust ...

Cover reproduced courtesy of
Trans Pacific Press

After five years of postgraduate study I decided to embrace the challenge and 'pretend' I could make it as a translator. Having successfully completed a scholarly translation project in my research field a few years earlier, I was confident I had at least some basis on which to sell my skills.



Furthermore, I knew that scholars in Japan were facing increasing pressure to publish their work in English. It was time to see whether the market that I hoped was out there did, in fact, exist.

With the Japanese Studies Association of Australia (JSAA) conference fast approaching, I ordered a new business card via express delivery and raced to Melbourne, where I introduced myself as a translator for the first time.

My boldness paid off when I was introduced to Yoshio Sugimoto of Trans Pacific Press, a specialist publisher of Japanese academic monographs in English translation. A year later I began working regularly for Trans Pacific, earning my stripes translating several chapters of an academic book before being offered the chance to tackle my first monograph as a named translator in 2017.

Not only would this bring professional satisfaction and keep the wolf from the door of my growing family (baby number two was soon on the way); it would be a great selling point for future clients.

I laboured long and hard on the translation of Hiromu Shimizu's ethnography of globalisation in the indigenous Ifugao communities of the Philippines. It's often said that a translator is a writer's closest reader, and by the time I was done I could almost feel myself hiding in the jungle from the advancing Japanese army or harvesting rice in the Ifugao's World Heritage-listed rice terraces.

When freshly printed copies of Grassroots Globalization arrived in my mailbox ... I felt an enormous sense of pride.

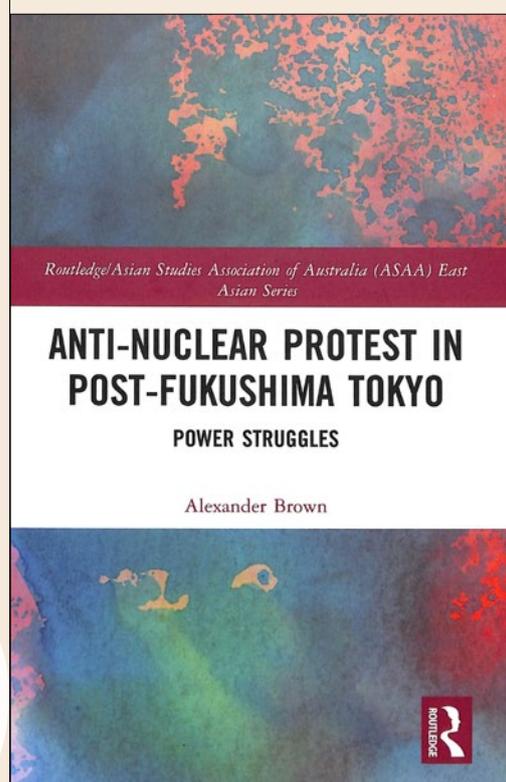
When freshly printed copies of *Grassroots Globalization: Reforestation and Cultural Revitalization in the Philippine Cordilleras* arrived in my mailbox early last year, I felt an enormous sense of pride.

I couldn't have built a translation career out of postgraduate training in Japanese Studies without the wonderful online resources available to budding translators, particularly Tess Whitty's *Marketing Tips for Translators*. Tess interviews translators from an amazing array of backgrounds and language pairs to find out how they got into the industry, how they work, and how they market their services. I admit I never quite got around to developing the detailed marketing plan Tess recommends, but the real-life stories of people who become translators from such diverse life experiences gave me the confidence to turn my existing skillset into a new career.

However, just as I began to earn a living outside of formal academia, I found myself drawn back into the academy. An offer of employment lecturing on contemporary Japan at the University of Technology Sydney was too good to refuse; and from there I was able to obtain a postdoctoral research fellowship at Japan Women's University in Tokyo, to

continue my research on the history of the anti-nuclear movement in Australia and Japan. While I love doing research, I'm finding that I miss the discipline and rhythm of translation. Given the precarious academic employment market, I'm glad to have established myself in a second career that utilises my academic skills in a different way. I'm sure it won't be long before I'm back in the saddle, head spinning with words and phrases that dance from one language to the other. While I can't be sure what opportunities will come my way and where I will be in another five years, I can imagine myself continuing to move fluidly between these two roles, honing my skills in both, for a long time to come.

Alexander Brown holds a BA and a PhD from the University of Wollongong. He is the author of Anti-nuclear Protest in Post-Fukushima Tokyo: Power Struggles (Routledge 2018), a book based on his doctoral research. Alexander is currently a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science International Research Fellow at Japan Women's University, Tokyo, and continues to translate academic texts alongside his research activities.



Cover reproduced courtesy of Routledge Publishing



Literary translation awards

Australian Academy of the Humanities Medal for Excellence in Translation 2020

Recognising the considerable disruptions to work and personal life caused by COVID-19, AAH have extended their nomination deadline to 5 June. See their website for details:

humanities.org.au/opportunities/excellence-in-translation/

The AALITRA Translation Awards 2020

Greek-to-English translators have until 28 May to enter. In 2020, for the first time, there will be two awards in each section—Winner and Honourable Mention. Visit AALITRA's website for more information and to download the selected texts in the two categories, prose and poetry:

aalitra.org.au/aalitra-translation-awards

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned that this page contains the name and an image of a deceased person.

Language on Country: transforming marks on paper into a tangible experience

For our last (December 2019) issue, to acknowledge the UNESCO-designated International Year of Indigenous Languages, we reached out to our members and other contacts working in First Nations T&I. We received more material than we could fit in, and decided to publish the report below—by **Lakota Milera-Weetra**, an Arabana language trainee with the Mobile Language Team (MLT), South Australia—in this issue rather than cut it down.

The overarching aim of the MLT is 'to maintain and preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage and language via a community-first approach'. Based at Adelaide University, it works with forty-four First Languages and communities throughout the state via a wide range of programs and projects. Lakota Milera-Weetra shares her experience of participating in the organisation's Aboriginal Language Trainee Program, and underlines the importance of learning 'on Country'.

My passion for Arabana language was sparked by my Nana, Veronica Milera—who passed away during the International Year of Indigenous Languages—and continues to be fuelled by my family's support. Through my traineeship with the MLT, I'm connected to an abundance of resources and networks that I previously didn't know existed.

In the office, I have access to linguists who have deepened my understanding of language structure and patterns. I have the space and time to study my language, with fluency the end goal, while also creating teaching and learning resources for the Arabana community. I've also been lucky to

have the opportunity to use some existing resources—such as a bilingual children's book, *Wamparla Apira* by Aunty Kathy Arbon—in practice, in on-Country camps facilitated by the MLT and Arabana Aboriginal Corporation, as well as freelance sessions with family.



The three-way symbiosis between Aboriginal peoples' languages, health and wellbeing is common knowledge ...



Working within a language organisation has connected me with sister organisations throughout Australia. I've received support and mentoring via the Young Champions program run by First Languages Australia (FLA), taken part in a PD course with Living Languages and FLA, and attended *Puliima* conference in Darwin last year. Networking and sharing of knowledge is vital to the language work that will allow us to rise together with the full power of Indigenous ingenuity, as our Ancestors did before us.

These networks have also provided great opportunities for me to get knowledge of language out into the wider communities, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike—*ABC Kids' Little Yarns* podcast being a prime example. Each episode of this project is an eight-minute auditory transportation to Country, and in September 2019 I took the young listeners out into the Arabana desert and told them all about the stars and the stories of the night's sky:

www.abc.net.au/kidslisten/little-yarns/

Working with my language has taught me that two interconnected factors are absolutely vital to our language revival hopes: on-Country learning and sustained funding.

Arabana language camp participants on Country in 2019 (Lakota is centre left), and (overleaf) Lakota presenting at *Puliima* (images courtesy of the MLT)

The three-way symbiosis between Aboriginal peoples' languages, health and wellbeing is common knowledge, so if Australia is truly committed to Reconciliation and 'Closing the Gap', we need to see consistent and long-term funding put into Indigenous language programs. Rebuilding language in community requires time and ongoing support, as the learning and teaching required are no easy feat.

If Indigenous language programs were to receive this funding, we would have the opportunity to implement consistent on-Country language learning. In my short time as a language worker, I have found this method to be the most engaging, as the content being delivered is relevant to the environment.

As most Australians are aware, being on Country has, in and of itself, a fundamental impact on Aboriginal people, as our sense of identity is intrinsically connected to our Country. We belong to Country.

When on Country, we're not only in the most ideal classroom, we're also able to share other aspects of our culture between generations.

Our Elders share their stories, and the stories of our Ancestors, and we visit sacred sites, carve, cook—all of these activities play important roles in delivering language to our young ones, by creating context and transforming language from marks on a page into tangible experiences.

Language is an ever-morphing mode of communication, and although we have established methods of creating words to grow our language into the twenty-first century, Country is where our language was born and it remains the best place for us to reclaim this knowledge.

In this age we face multiple challenges in engaging our young ones. On-Country learning removes many distractions and creates the perfect platform for them to learn and connect with Elders, for family to come together and share knowledge as we've been doing for thousands of years.

On-Country learning alone isn't viable, though: we also need to see language being offered in schools and communities on a consistent basis. We need funding for programs that support Aboriginal people who can and want to teach their languages. Regardless of their fluency, we need to be putting more trust in the master-apprentice method, as we are losing Elders too fast, and we need to empower young people in the community.

I will be forever grateful for the vital role the MLT is playing in revitalising my language and culture, and when my traineeship ends, I intend to continue the language work I've started.

continued overleaf

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

continued

Next year I hope to enrol in a Diploma of Indigenous Language Work, at Batchelor Institute, NT and Charles Darwin University. This isn't just a job, it's my culture and who I am, until my last breath. The strength and empowerment it has already brought into my life is something I want for all of my family: the ones already here, and the ones who haven't been born yet. I want to see my people and culture empowered and celebrated, as they should be. We have so much knowledge and beauty to share with the world, and the time is now.

I've already embarked on some exciting freelance language projects, and there are plenty more on the back burner. This long and strenuous journey has already been very challenging, but also incredibly rewarding, and I know this is the path I'm meant to walk, guided by my Ancestors and my Nana. She started me on this journey, and the life she led will always inspire and drive me to do all that I can to better the lives of First Nations people and to trust in my strength and power as an Aboriginal woman.

Lakota Milera-Weetra is a proud young Arabana woman who is undergoing a two-year traineeship with the MLT. Selected to take part in First Languages Australia's Young Champions program, Lakota gave a presentation on Arabana language at Pulliima Indigenous Language and Technology Conference 2019 in Darwin. She also recently completed a five-day intensive course in Indigenous linguistics at Charles Darwin University, through the Australian Indigenous Languages Institute.

... being on Country has, in and of itself, a fundamental impact on Aboriginal people, as our sense of identity is intrinsically connected to our Country ...



To find out more about the MLT, SA visit:
mobilelanguageteam.com.au or
www.facebook.com/mobilelanguageteam/

The role of the interpreter in transferring meaning



Interpreter Oleg Petrenko completed his master's degree with a thesis that explored doctor–patient miscommunication and its consequences. Factors he examined included professional–client miscommunications in general and the language barrier. Oleg reflects here on such miscommunications, and explores the extent of an interpreter's responsibility in the health care setting, if and when they believe a misunderstanding has taken place between a health care professional and a LOTE patient.

Interpreters play a unique role in the interactions between their clients, and not only because they understand what a professional says while a LOTE client doesn't. It's also important that interpreters are not emotionally involved in the matter, so they react to perceived messages in a different way than their clients, which may result in them drawing a different or more objective conclusion from what is said. While an interpreter's involvement may serve as an enormous help to the client, the extent of that involvement causes significant ethical debate.

Determining that extent by sticking to 'pure interpreting' may seem easy. However, does this mean that the interpreter's job consists of no more than translating what is said, without taking responsibility for delivering the message, then leaving it to the clients to decide whether they understand each other or not? This appears to be a safe option for interpreters.

However, this approach to interpreting may not only leave the clients dissatisfied, but also be less safe than it appears. Why? Any practising interpreter knows that if a LOTE client and a

professional misunderstand each other and it leads to a problem, the interpreter is likely to be held responsible. For anyone who is unaware of the underlying complexity of such communication, this sounds like a fair approach. If everything was interpreted correctly then how come two grown adults have misunderstood each other?!

During my master's research I was surprised to learn that miscommunications often occur during professional–client interactions. In one study conducted in the health care setting, patients were interviewed after medical consultations. Their responses revealed that more than half of them hadn't understood the information presented to them by doctors.¹

For the purpose of this article I will focus on health care interpreting (although I'm aware that similar issues exist in the legal and other spheres). What do we know about communication in this area?

Research shows that one ongoing and pressing issue is patients' adherence to prescribed courses of treatment (compliance), with the blame for noncompliance often placed on low health literacy.²

Low health literacy in patients has been associated with several factors. These include depression on the part of the patient, and also ineffective physician-to-patient communication, particularly failure by doctors to 'assess recall

and comprehension of new concepts with their patients'.³

The last may appear easy to resolve—just bring the concerning data to the professionals and ask them to explain things better. However, the same research also shows that attempts to

Let's imagine a case in which something goes wrong ...

improve patients' health literacy are disturbingly ineffective. Bear in mind, too, that this research covered the general population; therefore, most interactions were between doctors and patients who spoke the same language.

When communication is mediated by an interpreter, an issue of responsibility for the outcome has to be addressed. Let's imagine a case in which something goes wrong, or the outcome is simply not what the client was

continued overleaf

continued

expecting. Will they uncomplainingly accept that they knew what they were agreeing to? I doubt it. What can the interpreter do to protect themselves from a potential accusation of not conveying the message? Adherence to correct interpreting protocols, such as triangular setting (which allows clients to communicate directly with each other, rather than with the interpreter), interpreting in appropriate chunk lengths (to avoid concerns regarding adding, summarising, etc.)—we all know the rules. Bear in mind, however, that even in ideal conditions (the clients communicate directly, remaining reasonable, calm and focused, and our involvement is minimised), misunderstanding is a common phenomenon.

In another assignment, the doctor mentioned ‘the injection that you’ve been taking for the last six months’, gave the LOTE patient another prescription for it, and asked whether she’d had any side effects. The patient’s face flushed red and she didn’t answer the question. The doctor was writing her notes and didn’t seem to notice the patient’s discomfort or lack of response, so I asked if I could clarify something with the patient. The doctor’s eyebrows went up and she reluctantly agreed. It soon became clear that the patient had not been taking the injections for at least three months.

AUSIT’s Code of Conduct states that while interpreters should ‘testify to their qualifications

The request for confirmation usually takes place after the assignment has been completed, via a consent form. I personally believe that as an interpreter I should not be required to declare, after the fact, that the client understood what the professional said.

However, I do think I have a responsibility to bring to the professional’s attention—and on the spot—any sign that indicates misunderstanding or miscommunication is taking place. Of course, professionals should be trained to notice such signs and respond accordingly; but I believe there is still an onus on the interpreter to notice and flag them. Why? Because in the end, they may be held responsible if something goes wrong.

***Oleg Petrenko** is a Russian–English interpreter who has experience in many areas and was on staff at The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne for eight years (2011–19). He holds an MA in applied science (statistics) from Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne. Oleg is currently developing a workshop that will train interpreters to notice signs that a LOTE client is not understanding the professional client, and convey this effectively to the professional.*

... interpreters have a ‘duty of care’ which ... includes ‘clarifying misunderstandings’ ...

The ethical principles of our profession give clear directions regarding what to say if a non-English-speaking client asks us for advice. However, it’s not so clear what we should do if it looks like they haven’t understood, and also like the professional hasn’t noticed this. Evidence of this could include not only what a patient says but also signs of confusion and other non-verbal cues, including how the patient responds to statements and questions.

For example, in one interpreting assignment, the doctor prescribed a cream for the LOTE patient to apply to a skin lesion for six weeks. While interpreting the relatively complex instructions she gave verbally, I noticed the patient wasn’t taking notes. When I brought this to the doctor’s attention she said that her job was to recommend the treatment, not to force it on the patient, and when I asked if I could check whether the patient had understood by asking him to repeat the instructions in his own words, she said that if he didn’t understand, he could ask questions. Needless to say, six weeks later the patient came back with the same lesion and an unused tub of cream.

and the accuracy of their interpreting and ... explain their linguistic choices’, they shouldn’t ‘testify to participants’ understanding of messages’. However, the Code goes on to say that ‘this remains an issue for participants’, and it certainly does in health care interpreting, where miscommunication could have serious consequences for the patient.

NSW Health Care Interpreter Services (HCIS) address this in their *Guidelines for interpreters*—the most practical and progressive guidelines I’ve encountered.⁴ They state that interpreters have a ‘duty of care’ which ‘lies with communication facilitation and the responsibility to convey messages accurately’ and includes ‘clarifying misunderstandings’, as I did in the second example above.

Having worked full time in health care interpreting for eight years until recently, I found I was increasingly required to confirm that the message has been not only interpreted, but also understood by the client. Again, can we—as interpreters—guarantee this? There are various opinions on the matter.

If you would like further information about Oleg’s research or workshop, please contact him at:
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Disclaimer: AUSIT welcomes reflections on ethical issues in the T&I profession, and on the application of its Code of Ethics. However, the publication of these reflections in In Touch does not imply AUSIT’s endorsement of any particular author’s opinion.

¹ A Atreja, N Bellam and S Levy, ‘Strategies to enhance patient adherence: Making it simple’, *Medscape General Medicine* 7(1), 2005.

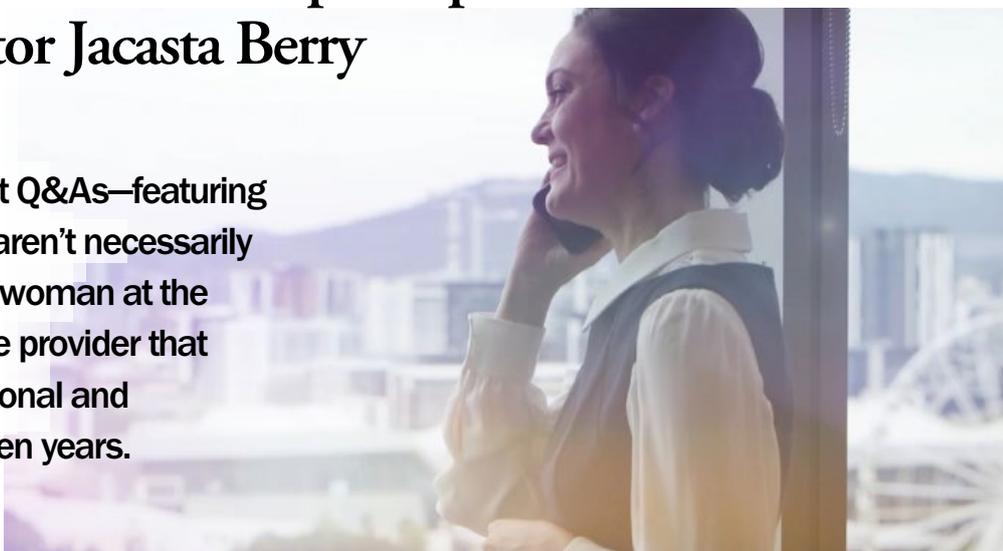
² LR Martin et al., ‘The challenge of patient adherence’, *Therapeutic and Clinical Risk Management* 1(3), 2005: 189–99, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18360559>

³ Martin et al.

⁴ www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/Health-Care-Interpreter-Service-/HCIS-Publications

Language service providers: three quick questions for Australian Multilingual’s Director Jacasta Berry

For the third in our series of short Q&As—featuring people who work with T/Is, but aren’t necessarily T/Is themselves—we turn to the woman at the helm of a nationwide T&I service provider that has been working with both national and international clients for over fifteen years.



1. What do you value most in a practitioner?

Our clients range from government agencies, corporations, SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) and not-for-profit companies to micro-businesses, educational organisations and also the general public. The following qualities are essential for us when engaging T/Is:

- A professional work ethic and presentation.
- Engagement in research and dialogue with the project manager, to ensure the best final product (translation) or service (interpreting).
- Industry expertise. Parallel professional expertise in a technical subject area is of enormous value, as our work often demands fluency in specialist industry jargon across a wide range of subjects: mining technology, biomedical, fintech, etc.
- Intelligent use of CAT and MT (computer-assisted and machine translation) support, combined with careful reviewing and proofreading. (On too many occasions we receive work from a translator which reads as a machine translation that hasn’t been checked over.)
- Strict confidentiality.
- ICT security. We exchange a high volume of emails with practitioners, so it’s essential that they maintain tight security with their ICT (information communication technology) tools, just as a large company would.

2. What’s your perception of how the T&I market is evolving?

A number of converging digital trends are rapidly transforming the language services market. One of the more unsettling and harmful trends I see is driven by digital platforms that auction T&I services. These have the disruptive effect of driving down the value of these services, resulting in inexperienced T/Is winning jobs over more experienced practitioners because they will accept below-market pay rates.

We also see an aggressive push into the Australian market by a number of American and other global companies who assign work overseas at lower costs, and we’re concerned that this will further destabilise the market value for Australian practitioners.

We actively educate our clients around this trend to ensure an understanding that high quality language services command a certain price.

On a positive note, the increasing sophistication of CAT and MT tools enables translation memories for large projects and repetitive work, which is of enormous benefit in a market where time and budget are under constant pressure.

3. What are your greatest challenges as the ‘middleperson’ between practitioner and client?

For our private clients, who live all around the nation, we experience a high degree of frustration with many translation deliveries being lost or delayed in the postal service.

When it comes to enterprise translation work, the biggest issue we face is managing client expectations for project completion around the busy schedules of our preferred T/Is.

And lastly, we take many years to develop strong working relationships with trusted linguists, as we find that simple accreditation is not sufficient proof of the quality of their work. It is of great benefit to our company that Australia is developing a more detailed qualification system, one that tests linguists in advanced and specialist language skills, and will present a more accurate representation of ability in T&I.

Above: Jacasta at work, looking out over Luna Park, Sydney

MEMBER PROFILES



NAME:

Translator or interpreter (or both):

Language(s) and direction(s):

Location:

Practising as a T/I since:

Member of AUSIT since:

Main area(s) of practice:

MARTIN UDALL

translator

Czech> and Slovak>English

Perth, WA

2014

2015

all

CENGIZ EROL

both

Turkish–English

Perth, WA

1994

2020

immigration, health, legal, science, training, employment, schools

Q&A

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).

A1

In addition to my translation work I'm a lawyer specialising in migration law, and I've owned my own legal practice since 2008. My Czechoslovak parents migrated to Australia when I was four, and I grew up bilingual. Perth (and WA for that matter) had been without the services of a Czech>English translator for some years when I decided to help out the local community by adding translation to the services that I provide, and in 2016 I gained accreditation as a Slovak>English translator. To this date I'm the only Czech>English translator in WA and also, to the best of my knowledge, the first ever NAATI-accredited Slovak>English translator. My clients have all welcomed having access to a locally-based language service again.

A2

Last year, an elderly Czechoslovakia-born client contacted me. She explained that she'd been orphaned during WWII as a young child. After the war she'd grown up with adoptive parents in another country, and she'd led a successful, fulfilling life. Now in retirement, she finally had time to do some research on her biological parents. Following a very thin paper trail and information passed on from other family, she'd managed to track down her mother's birth certificate at a registry in modern-day Slovakia. It dated back to 1917, and was written in Slovak. My translation was the first time she'd been able to understand the document, and she said it was as though 'her mother had come alive again'. This made it a very satisfying assignment.

A1

In Turkey I studied science, then worked for the Ministry of Agriculture on agricultural training and research projects with consultants from the World Bank. I had good English skills so I was made coordinator, facilitating communication between the consultants and the senior ministerial staff. During ten years in that position I developed some T&I skills, and improved my English in the areas of science and training. I migrated to Australia in 1990, where I got a job with Victoria's Department of Agriculture, and while I was employed there I studied T&I part time at RMIT. I gained NAATI certification in 1994, and since then I've been working part time in both interpreting and translation for government and also private organisations.

A2

In the early 1990s, as a project officer for the Department of Agriculture and Ethnic Council in Shepparton, I worked on their Ethnic Access Salinity Project. About 80% of the area's population are from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and the project aimed to educate NESB horticulturalists about irrigation and salinity management. I organised education materials and methods—including scientific documents, surveys, workshops, technical notes, training and onsite video recording—in several languages, including Italian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian and Macedonian. The project, which was quite a challenge for me, was very successful. It was featured on ABC and SBS TV and in national print media, and has been presented at national and international conferences.

