



Member organisation
 Fédération Internationale
 des Traducteurs
 International Federation of
 Translators

Quarterly publication of the
 Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators

in TOUCH

Volume 22, number 3 — Summer 2014

Personalausweis.

Inhaber dieses ausweises ist Paul Gerk geboren 14-1- 1902 zu Josepftal Deutsches Wolgagebiet Russland. Gerk befindet sich im hiesigen Lager seit dem 10-12- 1922 seine führung war eine einwandfreie nachteiliges ist ^{nicht} uns bekannt gegen eine ausreise nach Ameroka bestehen keinerlei bedenken

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RECOGNITION:
 interpreters need better recognition for their training and qualifications

ORIENTALISM:
 the evolution of Western approaches to the culture of the Orient

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

TRANSLATING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS: civil registry as a social institution.

In Touch

Summer 2014
Volume 22 number 3

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The deadline for the Autumn 2015 issue is **17 January 2015**.

The editor reserves the right to edit or not publish any item submitted for publication. Opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the editor or those of AUSIT and its executive.

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Get the most out of your membership

AUSIT maintains several Yahoo discussion groups for members, which offer great potential for professional development in various key areas.

Log in to the members' area of the website to get a full picture of what's available. There's the e-bulletin, which is the main discussion group on general topics (nearly 300 subscribers), but also separate ones on pay and conditions, translating and interpreting as a business, medical translating and interpreting, literary translation and translation technology.

There are also 17 email groups devoted to specific languages or language groups. Check them out and write to me if you need any help getting onto them.

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Translating into action

Patricia Cruise shines a light on one of the less recognised contributions of the Whitlam government to equality of access and opportunity during its three-year term.

In the many tributes to Gough Whitlam that flowed following his death, most emphasised the enormous reforms that his government introduced covering all areas of public policy.

Multiculturalism and the death blows dealt to the "White Australia" policy were among the reforms that most Australians today accept as necessary and highly beneficial to the nation.

The Whitlam government, under then immigration minister Al Grassby, established the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) in 1973 after language communication problems had been highlighted in various life-threatening incidents.

First of its kind in the world

This 24-hour national interpreting service was the first of its kind in the world, and has been a model for several other countries wanting to establish their own services. It has grown exponentially since its inception in both its output and its coverage of languages, with access to over 2800 contracted interpreters speaking more than 170 languages and dialects across Australia.



Not only has it provided interpreting help on hundreds of thousands of occasions; it has provided work for thousands of interpreters.

The establishment of TIS was undoubtedly the biggest boost in the history of the interpreting and translating industry in Australia, and one of the great lasting achievements of the Whitlam government.

Patricia Cruise was a language services policy officer for the Department of Immigration from 1991 to 1993 and a professional officer and acting manager at TIS (NSW) from 1995 to 1997.

To change or not to change



Ben Xuan Xu asks whether translating from Chinese to English can become an endless spiral. Where should it stop?

In a sense, translation is an alteration. It alters one language into another. To be true to its original, not only is alteration necessary; it often seems interminable. Recently I translated a letter from a father accusing a person he had trusted before of cheating his son, who is studying in Australia, of money and girlfriend. In that letter the father used a lot of Chinese idioms to warn off the swindler and vow to sue him. During the translation, I dug out from the NSW State Library some well-known English writers who are or were also Chinese literature translators. I discovered that one author altered the other and, in turn, the other altered another other or altered himself. It seems unending. How can I alter them? I'll just pick up a few as follows. (I use transliteration instead of Chinese characters to add some sound feeling.)

EXAMPLE 1: ni (you) shi (are) gou (dog) yao (bite) Li Dong-Bin (an immortal), bu (not) shi (know) hao (nice) ren (person) xin (heart).

VERSION A: You are like the dog that bit Lu Dong-bin; You don't know a friend when you see one (David Hawkes, *The Story of Stone*, USA, 1979).

VERSION B: That's what I get for being good to you, the dog that would bite Lu Tung Pin that you are (Hsian-yi & Gladys Yang, *A Dream of Red Mansion*, Beijing, 1980).

VERSION C: Like the dog that bit Lu Tung-bin, you bite the hand that feeds you (same authors, later edition).

EXAMPLE 2: ni (you) guo (crossed) he (river) chai (destroy) qiao (bridge).

VERSION A: Burn the bridge when you are safely over the river (David Hawkes).

VERSION B: As soon as the river's crossed, you pull down the bridge (Yang).

EXAMPLE 3: ni (you) chi (eat) bu (not) le (finished), dou zhe (carry) zou (away).

VERSION A: I'll be in real trouble – more than just a bellyful (David Hawkes).

VERSION B: (I'd be) in serious trouble (Yang).

EXAMPLE 4: yuan (injustice) ge (each) you (has) tou (head), zhai (debt) ge (each) you (has) Zhu (debtor).

VERSION A: A wrong has its instigator, and a debt has its lender (JH Jackson, *Water Margin*, USA, 1976).

VERSION B: If a crime is committed there is one who commits it and if there is a debt there is a debtor (Pearl S Buck, *All men are brothers*, USA, 1957).

VERSION C: The culprit must pay for his wrong, the debtor for his debt (Sidney Shapiro, *Outlaws of the Marsh*, Beijing, 1988).

EXAMPLE 5: ni (you) deng (lamp) e (moth) pu (attack) huo (fire), re (invite) yan (flame) shao (burn) shen (body).

VERSION A: Like the moth that flies into fire flame only to get yourself burnt to death (JH Jackson).

VERSION B: Like a moth flying into the flame to burn his own body (Pearl S Buck).

VERSION C: The moth seeks the flame. Well, he's brought it to himself (Sidney Shapiro).

EXAMPLE 6: wo men (we) weng (jar) zhao (catch) bie (turtle), shou (hand) dao (reach) na lai (take).

VERSION A: A turtle in a wine jar is easy to catch (JH Jackson).

VERSION B: It is not hard to catch a turtle in a jar (Pearl S Buck).

VERSION C: Easy as catching turtles in a jar. Just stretch out your hand (Sidney Shapiro).

From the above, we can see even those master writers might leave much to be desired; for example, before/after "Lu Tung-bin" (example 1, version A), can we add some words like "one of the legendary nine immortals" in order to make it easier for English readers to understand? Or are words like "the hands that feed you" (example 1, version C) necessary to add to the original? How do you know Lu Tung-bin's hand has fed the dog? Can the sentence "more than just a bellyful" be altered to "you're so greedy that you bite more than you can chew" (example 2, version A)?

Community translation comes of age

Mustapha Taibi says last month's conference on community translation was an important step towards ensuring recognition of community translation as a sub-discipline, a professional practice and a community service.

The University of Western Sydney held the international conference on community translation from 11 to 13 September 2014. The conference is the first major event on this under-researched and under-recognised aspect of translation. It has provided an excellent opportunity to "enhance the visibility of this subfield of study in current scholarly debate as well as among policymakers in areas related to language services, multiculturalism and human (communicative) rights".

The conference was opened by Hakan Harman, CEO of the Community Relations Commission, and UWS Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development) Scott Holmes. Four plenary speakers – Dorothy Kelly (Granada University, Spain), Alan Melby (Brigham Young University, USA; American Translators Association), Uldis Ozolins (University of Western Sydney); and Harold Lesch (Stellenbosch University, South Africa) – gave thought-provoking presentations.

The conference included a special address by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Social Services, Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, a presentation by NAATI CEO John Beever, and several papers and practical sessions by Australian and international scholars.

International researchers came from Malaysia, Oman, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.

The audience included university and TAFE trainers, NAATI staff, translation and interpreting agencies, government employees, professional translators and interpreters, as well as students from different Australian universities.

Professional community agenda

Among the topics were community translation training, quality standards, translation of official documents, translation in healthcare, community translation and ideology, community translators between accuracy and effective transcreation, and improvements to NAATI certification.

Harold Lesch talked about the South African context and the wide gap between different social groups in terms of power and educational levels. He argued that the mission of community translators is to make texts accessible to community members. According to the speaker, simplification of original texts is a legitimate option for community translators, not only those working between languages but also those who "translate" within the same language (intralingual translation; plain language).

The Australian Catholic University's Jean Burke provided an overview of the ethnic, educational and sociolinguistic diversity of Swahili-speakers in Australia and discussed the implications of this diversity for translation services.

Raquel Lázaro (University of Alcalá, Spain) argued "that health promotion materials are more successful among foreign populations if they are developed in video format". She discussed ways in which these audiovisual materials can be made more appropriate, both linguistically and culturally.



Victoria Tuzlukova (Sultan Qaboos University, Oman) gave an engaging presentation about the translation of signs in the city of Muscat. The speaker explained that “community translation of Muscat’s public, commercial and road signage has formed the city’s unique linguistic landscape, and much of the insights about its community’s socio-cultural diversity can be gained from it”. However, she identified various inaccuracies and inconsistencies “leading to defective public communication and problems with navigation around the city”. She made it clear how community translation can be empowering and how poor quality assurance can make language services counterproductive or less effective.

Leong Ko of the University of Queensland compared the contents and textual features of Chinese and English certificates, identified common issues and challenges facing translators working with these documents, and discussed practical translation strategies, “taking into account linguistic, pragmatic, cultural and communicative factors”.

Mira Kim of the University of New South Wales presented meaning-based assessment criteria as an alternative for the current NAATI testing model, which, she argues, focuses too much on the linguistic level. “The alternative criteria are based on an empirical analysis of translation errors/issues into different modes of meaning, using

‘This conference managed to place community translation on the discussion table of academics, professionals and policymakers’

a framework of systemic functional text analysis,” the author said, arguing that meaning-based criteria (inspired by the work of Halliday) have proved to be pedagogically effective.

Alan Melby discussed quality standards and certification systems, focusing on the question “What makes one certification system more sound and defensible than another?” The answer, according to the speaker, is whether a system has clearly formulated specifications and standards based on the actual tasks translators are expected to undertake and skills they are expected to demonstrate in the workplace. For Melby, ISO standards are the way to go to ensure international reliability of certification systems.

In conclusion, this conference managed to place community translation on the discussion table of academics, professionals and policymakers. Hakan Harman described it as a “wonderful initiative” and added that he was

looking forward to feedback relating to policymaking. Senator Fierravanti-Wells advised that she is organising a roundtable on interpreting and translation and that the roundtable would be “enlightened by the discussions in this conference”. The participants were unanimous that this should only be the first step towards further work to ensure recognition of community translation as a sub-discipline, a professional practice and a community service, to increase training opportunities available in the field and to improve quality standards.

Dr Mustapha Taibi is chair of the conference organising committee, Director of Academic Program (Languages, Interpreting and Translation) at UWS, and leader of the International Community Translation Research Group (see www.communitytranslation.net).

The trap of Orientalism



Hootan Dehbonei examines the evolution of Western approaches to the culture of the Orient from colonial to post-colonial eras.

Orientalism is a controversial topic in cross-cultural study directly related to the T&I industry. Our approach to a culture defines our level of professionalism and understanding of others. This essay investigates whether there is hegemony in Western culture and its civil encounters towards the East, or whether the hegemony is in politics and defines the border between civil and political. There is an ancient, essential cultural exchange between West and East which is bi-dimensional. This exchange has benefited both sides of the civil encounter over the history of mankind. However political hegemony has another definition and perspective.

Orientalism is a method of cultural identification which is used to define the Orient.

Edward Said was a scholar who studied and criticised the attitude of Europeans toward Oriental people. Michel Le Bris dismisses Said's analysis of European writings on the Orient in *Orientalism* as "the hystericisation of all thought, the refusal of any complexity or nuance". In this critique, the most significant factor is that Said's writings have the attitude of absolutism or dogmatism; that they are broad and generalising.

Segalen is another scholar who attempted to find differences and similarities between Europeans and non-Europeans. This critique criticises the article written by Edward Said, named "Orientalism", and compares Segalen's theory and thoughts regarding the context of "Europeans and Others". It is believed that Said and Segalen use the same approach; however, they have different points of view. Said believed that Oriental culture showed weaknesses in European culture; however, Segalen believed that European culture was superior.

Said believed that to study European culture, it was necessary to realise that the Orient had a special place in the history of Europe's civilisation from two different perspectives, cultural and economic. He believed that Oriental culture was the best instrument for Europeans to realise their differences and understand themselves better. In addition, Orientalism was used by Europeans to dominate and restructure the Orient.

Said stated that there was a distinction between civil and political society. The role of political society is direct domination. In comparison, culture, which operates within civil society, works not by direct domination but by consent. Said wrote that the best way to understand cultural life in the industrial West was to understand its hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work, which gave Orientalism its durability and strength. It is the central idea of cultural superiority, which Europeans have, that gave them power over other cultures outside of Europe.

Here Said appears to contradict himself. On the one hand, he stated that there was a difference between civil and political society, namely that the role of political society is dominating and civil society works by consent. On the other hand, he believed that "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony". Said stated that the hegemony which Europeans had over the Orient was actually a cultural hegemony. However, his definition of culture was that it operates by consent. Therefore, Said was not studying the cultural but the political hegemony of Western countries. Therefore, his writing is about political, not cultural, research.

Segalen's theory in regard to the Orient was called exoticism. The basic idea was that "everything that lies outside the sum total of current, conscious everyday events, everything that does not belong to our usual 'mental tonality', is exoticism. Exoticism, which is nothing



... Post-colonialism follows the roots of colonialism to revitalise the Western political hegemony to the Orient.'

other than the notion of difference, the perception of diversity, the knowledge that something is other than one's self ... Exoticism is therefore not an adaptation to something; it is not the perfect comprehension of something outside one's self that one has managed to embrace fully, but the keen and immediate perception of an eternal incomprehensibility ..."

This theory shows the same basic ideas that exist in Said's theory. Segalen wrote that everything which does not belong to our usual "mental tonality" is exoticism, and he stated that this exoticism was not comprehensible. Therefore, he denied the Orient's cultural influence on European culture, although the reality was that there existed a historical cultural relationship between the Occident and the Orient, and that both sides benefited from this relationship. Although Segalen attempted to develop a cultural theory, it seems that he developed a racist political theory, which was a broad generalisation about non-Europeans. These show that Said's and Segalen's theories have not considered the nuances between civil and political society, nor the complexity of the relationship between the Occident and the Orient.

Another scholar and politician, Count JA Gobineau, explains his idea about non-Europeans: "... two facts seem to me clearly established: first, that there are branches of the human family incapable of spontaneous civilisation so long as they remain unmixed; and, second, that this innate incapacity cannot be overcome by external agencies, however powerful in their nature. If some races are so vastly inferior in all respects, can they comprehend the truth of the gospel, or are they forever to be debarred from the blessing of salvation? In answer, I unhesitatingly declare my firm conviction that the pale of salvation is open to them all, and that all are

endowed with equal capacity to enter it. There is a vast difference between mechanically practising handicrafts and arts, the products of an advanced civilisation, and that civilisation itself."

This extract shows the attitude of the majority of politicians in Europe, who believed that non-Europeans were not able to become civilised like Europeans. This shows that Said's writings about political hegemony were right, but he used the wrong references to cultural hegemony.

As this critique has discussed, Said repeats the mistake of some European scholars (such as Segalen), which is to make broad generalisations. As a result, his writings are absolutist and dogmatic. Neither Said's nor Segalen's theories have considered the nuances between civil and political society, nor the complexity of the relationship between the Occident and the Orient.

Portraying the East-West encounter from the historical point of view, to change the Orient from barbarism "from the Western point of view" to modern civilised society – in other words, to instruct (for Westerners' benefit) the Orient – Europeans used various instruments for their (political) cultural hegemony over the Orient. To be productive, it was essential to use all the knowledge collected by colonial forces to reach their goal of "contributing to modern learning". The role of travellers and tourists as colonial and post-colonial forces is to collect the Orient's knowledge, to build a new structure of the Orient based on the West's political hegemony.

To understand the meaning of post-colonialism, it is necessary to study the transition era between colonialism and the current time. Charles Forsdick believed exoticism's "colonial philosophical background" was a kind of imagination of a quality or essence of

difference (mystery, savagery, eroticism, cruelty) to describe the Orient's culture by Europeans' one. This instrument was used to domesticate a foreign culture to make it comprehensible.

Forsdick criticised colonial cultures as divided, hybrid, unevenly developed, combining with colonial forces to fulfil their "civilising mission", although they were restricted. He believed one of their restrictions was their inability "to recognise or to understand the anti-colonial sentiment existing not only outside the gate but also in embryo".

He believed Western people needed to be wise because they needed first to keep political hegemony, and second to avoid creating resistance in the Orient. A new movement, post-colonialism, was created.

Post-colonialism follows the roots of colonialism to revitalise the Western political hegemony to the Orient. This hegemony worked through a complex and productive instrument named "contribution to modern learning", in other words, a "civilising mission": the collection of the Orient's knowledge to create a political hegemony to the Orient. The instruments and tools of this philosophy are the Western travellers in the colonial era and Western tourists in our current post-colonial era.

Hootan Dehbonei is CEO of Everlasting Fairytale, a Perth-based family company active in the entertainment industry, media and contemporary literature. Email him at dehbonei@gmail.com for an extended copy of this paper including bibliography, footnotes and sources.

Interpreters deserve better recognition for their training and qualifications



Tania Bouassi laments the industry's failure to accord proper recognition to interpreter training and qualifications.

Interpreting services all over Australia assist the government in its commitment to the provision of equal, client-centred access to services, regardless of English language proficiency. Qualifications and training in interpreting are crucial in order to provide good-quality interpreting that facilitates communication between service providers and non-English speaking clients or patients; hence, in putting non-English speaking persons on an equal footing with English-speakers. Qualified and trained interpreters invest their time, effort and money in the expectation of better employment and promotion opportunities, and remuneration. However, the lack of proper recognition for training and qualifications has been apparent in recruiting, promoting to higher office, and proper remuneration of many interpreters.

'One might think that, unlike any other profession, qualifications and training have been deemed not essential nor even desirable to perform appropriately as an interpreter.'

Recruitment of interpreters

Qualifications and training in interpreting are often not included as either essential or desirable recruitment criteria. Hence, one might think that, unlike any other profession, qualifications and training have been deemed not essential nor even desirable to perform appropriately as an interpreter. This also might indicate that neither qualifications nor training have to be taken into consideration in the short-listing, interviewing and recruiting processes.

Remuneration

There is a near-total lack of recognition of qualifications and training in determining appropriate remuneration for interpreters. Salary has often been based solely on the NAATI recognition or accreditation levels.

Promotion to higher office

Higher office duties in interpreting often involve identifying the training needs of interpreters, providing training and in-house services for both interpreters

and service providers, and coaching and responding to feedback and complaints related to interpreting. The selection criteria for many management or leadership positions, however, often include neither qualifications nor training.

Every industry strives to provide the best service for its clients; hence, to recruit the best employees based solely and purely on merit. Since training and qualifications are essential to provide a good-quality interpreting service, they must be included in the essential selection criteria of recruitment for both interpreting and interpreting management positions. Highly qualified and well-trained interpreters should, like in any other industry in Australia, be attracted and retained through proper remuneration.

Tania Bouassi is a freelance Arabic interpreter and translator who works as a part-time healthcare interpreter and teaches I&T at the University of Western Sydney.

Community interpreter program addresses ACT shortage of paraprofessional interpreters

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) has identified a shortage in the ACT of interpreters speaking languages of new and emerging communities, and has therefore made funds available to overcome that shortage.

OMA has been working together with the CMCF (Canberra Multicultural Community Forum), CIT Solutions and the ACT branch of AUSIT to organise a program to increase the number of paraprofessional interpreters in the ACT.

The course will prepare participants to take the NAATI paraprofessional interpreter test and thus become accredited interpreters. Once participants have received accreditation, they will register with OMA so that their services can be called upon by ACT government departments.

There was significant community interest in this program, with over 50 people attending the information sessions held in late July and early August 2014, of whom 44 subsequently submitted an application for the program, so that interviews had to be conducted to select 25 suitable candidates.

During the interviews candidates had an opportunity to introduce themselves and talk about their community commitment. The interviewers also



The successful applicants speak a wide range of languages, including Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Creole, Dari, Farsi, Italian, Khmer, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil and Vietnamese.

considered the strength of their English skills, educational background and previous interpreting experience. The successful applicants speak a wide range of languages, including Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Cantonese, Creole, Dari, Farsi, Italian, Khmer, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tamil and Vietnamese.

The course commenced with a one-hour introductory session on Monday 15 September 2014, followed by two hourly sessions every three weeks from Monday 22 September to Monday 23 March 2015. The Canberra Institute of Technology generously provided a room free of charge for the course to support the local community. The course development team, including Mandy Scott (CMCF), Gaye Campbell (Centre for International Language Training at CIT Solutions), Mécia Freire (AUSIT), Roberto Corrielli (AUSIT) and Elaine Flynn (linguist and trainer), are currently designing a comprehensive program to prepare participants for their future as paraprofessional interpreters. A main focus of the program is to prepare participants to sit the NAATI test.

The program will cover topics such as ethics and professionalism, health and aged care, social security and community services as well as police work and law enforcement. Guest speakers, including specialists from different government departments, will be invited to provide insights, knowledge and background information. Participants will be provided with a workbook and a logbook to record their practice and preparation activities, as well as voice recorders. Between each session they will be set homework exercises to complete, with one key ongoing exercise being the compilation of their own topic-specific dictionaries. We expect and hope that many will be able to take advantage of the ACT government-sponsored scholarships to successfully complete their NAATI paraprofessional accreditation.

Go to www.cmc.org.au/2014/07/interested-in-gaining-naati-accreditation-as-a-community-interpreter/ for more information.

Paper weight, or a very civil romance



Melissa McMahon reads between the lines of the civil registry.

Some people enjoy looking at strangers on public transport or in a café and making up stories about them – what they do, where they come from, what their situation is. As a translator, I play the opposite game. I am handed a document, for example a birth or marriage certificate, which contains a lot of bald facts – names, places, dates, occupations – and my imagination is free to fill in the gaps. I know the visions are about as reliable as the stories made up about the strangers on a train and I treat them as such, but my imagination has no respect for professional boundaries. It's an involuntary, unreflective response, my mind adding colour to what can be a fairly colourless task of transcription.

The details of the parents on birth certificates, which on French certificates include their occupation, are especially suggestive. Classic couples present an instant soap opera: the doctor and the nurse, the manager and the secretary, the chef and the waitress. Or stories of shared interests or workplaces: the social worker and the legal counsellor, the chemical engineer and the science teacher, the psychologist and “the director of a centre for the maladjusted”. And then the random combinations, intriguing in themselves: the accountant and the hairdresser, the artist and the logistician, the peace officer and the dietician. We can see if they were born in the same tiny rural village or at opposite ends of the earth. How did they meet? When did they know? If the parents are unmarried, I instantly picture a drama or scandal, which is nonsense in this day and age. If they are unmarried and both “students”, I feel maternal concern and hope they're all right, even though the event took place 30 years ago.

Primacy of ‘civil’ status

The treatment of unmarried parents in France shows how seriously the French take the notion of “civil” status over any “natural” state of affairs. Parentage is established by birth within wedlock, not by biology. Until 2006, unmarried mothers had to formally “recognise” their children, even if already named on the certificate as the mother, this recognition often taking place in late pregnancy (the so-called “declaration on the belly”). Conversely, any man can walk into a town hall and recognise a child as their own, even if not the natural father (assuming no one else has recognised the child first). Here I see Mary and Joseph trudging up to the town hall where Mary, heavy with child, points to her belly before the bespectacled municipal clerk and says “This is mine”, and Joseph duly signs his name alongside.

Translators and transcribers needed. A research and education unit within the University of Queensland invites expressions of interest for the transcription and/or translation of filmed stories. The unit is developing the first international EDx X-series of courses about the health of people with intellectual and developmental disability. EDx is an international collaboration of universities to provide free tertiary courses to anyone who wants to take them. <https://www.edx.org>.

The unit needs quotations for transcription then translation into English from languages spoken in Bulgaria, Panama, India and Lebanon. Transcription: hourly rate GST incl. Translation: Rate per word or per 100 words GST incl. For further details and with your quotation please contact Miriam Taylor, m.taylor3@uq.edu.au, 07 31632446.

Civil status in France is also distinct from any “supernatural” order of things: religious marriage ceremonies haven’t carried any legal weight in France since 1791. All marriages must be celebrated civilly to be recognised, leading to many couples having two ceremonies. The date religious marriage was divested of its legal status gives a clue to the impetus behind it. It’s part of the “esprit républicain” coinciding with the Revolution, where one’s status as a citizen takes precedence over any other affiliations, and identity is not about what is given by birth or ordained by a god but what one is prepared to stand up for and commit to as an adult.

Define us as individuals

As colourless as the names and dates on a registry certificate appear, the coordinates of our “vital events” define us as individuals. No one on the planet or in history shares the precise circumstances of our birth, death or marriage (where applicable – we’ll get to that later). Each entry of a contingent set of spatial and temporal coordinates is a little window into the piece of the world we occupy, a snapshot that combines with all the others to tell the story of a population. Births, deaths and marriages, the three great leaps into the unknown. A life begins, a life ends, and two lives intersect and form a bond: each miraculous and improbable in their own way. Marriage stands out in this group. We have no control over the circumstances of our birth and little over those of our death, but a marriage only exists if it is entered into willingly. It is the most “civil” of the civil statuses in this respect, a conscious commitment to something we believe in. It may be followed by another set of coordinates representing a divorce; no matter, that’s just one more twist in the civil tale.

There’s a lot of life, history, science and politics behind the “piece of paper”, both the playful product of imagination, and the more serious legacy of the civil registry as a social institution.

Barring natural disaster, our entries in the civil register are the only form of posterity we are guaranteed. It is our literally vital legacy to the historian, the genealogist, the statistician, the simply interested. Surely there have been enough episodes of *Who Do You Think You Are?* to convince anyone of the life the civil registry gives us after death and the gift it represents to those who come after us.

A new perspective on marriage

Thinking about the civil registry has given me a new perspective on the continuing relevance of marriage in this day and age in the West, when few legal and social prejudices remain against de facto couples. Many unmarried couples echo Joni Mitchell’s refrain (from *My old man*): we don’t need no piece of paper from the City Hall keeping us tied and true. This is certainly true – a piece of paper won’t keep a couple together. But that piece of paper has a twin in the civil registry, which is part of the public record and the story of a population. If you are unmoved by the alleged romance of this, think of the statistician. Do it for science.

There are many other reasons couples choose not to marry, and this is their personal right, choice and prerogative. Unless of course you are a same-sex couple, in Australia, in which case not marrying is none of these things, it is dictated by law.

Thinking about the civil registry has given me a new perspective on exactly what we are denying same-sex couples when we deny them the right to marry: namely, a place in our history and our vital statistics, a chance to record their story. A separate “civil union” category strikes me as a form of segregation. When religious principles and a connection to procreation are invoked against same-sex marriage, I think of what I have learned from the French, namely that civil status is distinct from the dictates of nature or religion, but concerns what we are prepared to stand up and be counted for as adults.

Beyond the mundane

Translating official documents such as birth and marriage certificates is one of the more mundane tasks in a translator’s working life, which stands in contrast to the importance of this service and the life-changing events these documents record. There’s a lot of life, history, science and politics behind the “piece of paper”, both the playful product of imagination, and the more serious legacy of the civil registry as a social institution.

Melissa McMahon is a full-time French-to-English translator based in Sydney.

Vic-Tas branch leads the way on member PD

Italian-English translator and interpreter and AUSIT Victoria-Tasmania branch professional development coordinator **Denise Formica** reports on a big year for AUSIT's composite southern branch

The past year has been extremely busy for the Victoria-Tasmania branch as we have dug deep into our resources to try to deliver interesting social and professional development opportunities for our members. We have been rewarded with increasing attendances at all our functions, as well as those we have hosted together with our colleagues in ASLIA Victoria.

We began the new AUSIT year in **October 2013** with a mental health seminar led by our chairperson, Dr Meredith Bartlett. The content was based on the work of leading US psychiatrist Dr Robert Pollard of the University of Rochester Medical Centre. The discussion highlighted both linguistic and ethical issues, and provided many points for reflection. The Saturday morning session was well-attended and ended with a lunch in a restaurant in nearby Fitzroy. In **November**, along with our ASLIA colleagues, we journeyed to Hobart to take a two-day PD roadshow to our Tasmanian members. Some of the issues covered included telephone interpreting, working with clients with complex needs, ethics and best practices, as well as a Q&A on revalidation. It was a fantastic event and we received great feedback and support from our Tasmanian colleagues.

Our final event for 2013 was our **Christmas** social which we held in the John Michael Lovett Centre at Vicdeaf in East Melbourne, on the balcony overlooking the beautiful Treasury Gardens. A spit roast was organised, the weather was warm and about 40 members and their partners enjoyed the meal and a glass of wine to celebrate the end of another year.

Our 2014 PD calendar began with a very simple event to welcome all existing and new members on 28 **February** at the Vicdeaf premises in East Melbourne. The committee's intention was to provide an opportunity for members interested in discussing future directions for our profession which, along with others in the community, finds itself involved in changes in working conditions and career prospects. The wonderful food was supplied by Dorothy (African dishes), Denise (Italian), Dongmei and BiYi (Chinese specialities) and, last but not least, delicious Romanian desserts provided by Anca Pinte.

Our panel for the evening was drawn from different areas of the profession. We were very grateful to be able to welcome Bisa Surla, interpreter/translator; Sarina Phan, agency owner and AUSIT senior practitioner; Adrienne Meakin, secretary of AALC; and Bede Payne from Professionals Australia. There was an interesting and lively discussion centring on the maintenance of a viable industry and the creation of valid career paths for young practitioners, as well as how to widen the membership base with Professionals Australia. We also heard how Professionals Australia is working to achieve these ends. The evening closed with some fun – and difficult – trivia questions organised by our wonderful secretary, Dorothy Prentice.

Our **March** social gathering was a fantastic lunch which was held beachside in St Kilda. The weather was once again good and the food excellent. On 2 **April**, our next PD session was the joint ASLIA Victoria and AUSIT Victoria-Tasmania forum, "putting your code of ethics into practice", held in ASLIA's East Melbourne premises. There was great interest in this event after the success of the 2013 session, and the 60 places soon filled with an interesting variety of students, newly accredited practitioners and old hands from professional organisations, representing spoken language, Auslan and deaf interpreters. Our leaders this year were Dr Meredith Bartlett and Dorothy Prentice, MD, respectively chair and secretary of AUSIT Victoria-Tasmania. Following the presentation, discussion groups were formed to explore various common medical and legal ethical issues that arise in our everyday practice. Later we were able to listen to the personal story of Yu Lipski, the courageous interpreter who went public on the death of a Chinese national following his arrest and subsequent discharge from the Dandenong police station in 2013. Her account was very moving and provoked considerable discussion among all participants, as each one of those present thought about how they might have reacted had they found themselves in such a dramatic situation. Some months after our event, Lipski received the 2014 Voltaire Award (see *In Touch*, Spring 2014), presented by Liberty Victoria for a distinguished contribution to free speech. She described her work as being the impartial voice of people without a voice, and gave us all an inspiring story about how the ethical responsibilities of the interpreter may go far beyond the everyday.

Laying down the law

'I want to be a translator when I grow up', said no child, ever.

Well, there may be a few exceptions, like some of our *In Touch* readers and Jerome, whose parents – both translation and interpreting professionals – had aptly named him after the patron saint of translators. We crossed paths a few times back in Venezuela and even worked together on a couple of projects. Being around him, however, always made me reflect on how I had ended up becoming a translator in the first place. Was it by choice or chance?

When I figured out that I was not going to be an astronaut or firefighter (my fear of fires made that career choice problematic), it dawned on me that my career path would end up being something much closer to home. Growing up in a household in which both parents were lawyers, I believed early on I would follow suit.

In the end, I did and I did not.

Accounts of translators and interpreters who started out in this industry by accident, circumstance or necessity abound. My story, in principle, is not very different from theirs. After my parents divorced, my mother and I moved to an English-speaking country. I witnessed first-hand how communication barriers affected everyday life and watched her struggle for the first few years as she, now a migrant, had little choice but to reinvent herself professionally.

Years later, I returned to my country on holidays. The tourism industry was booming at the time, and the fact that I spoke English landed me a job on a little tropical island as a tour guide. The money was good, the lure of independence too strong to resist, and youthful exuberance too hard to control. My holidays turned into relocation. My academic plans took a back seat – on a tour bus.

So a few years went by. Political struggles, corruption, deficient infrastructure and high crime rates were just a few of the issues that practically did away with the foreign-tourism industry in my country. I moved to the capital city in search of new opportunities, or maybe to pursue that

career in the legal field that as a child I believed I was destined for.

I had my eyes set on studying at a particular law school but was not accepted. While I waited for the next intake, I opted to take a short, introductory vocational course at a small translation institute. I still remember that literary translation class in which we were asked to go home and read Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself* and come back with possible Spanish translations for the title, and my classmates and I returned with nine very different renderings. After completing more translation programs there, I joined the institute's academic staff and soon thereafter began working as a translator, but in the back of my mind, I still felt my law career beckoned.

When I finally enrolled at the university, I quickly developed an interest in Roman history, the philosophy of law, constitutional law and many other courses with a high theoretical content. Those first couple of years of law school were also doing wonders for my translation work and allowed me to venture out on my own as a freelancer.

As my law studies progressed into more practical, real-world aspects, however, I began to disconnect. The growing inflow of translation work, the satisfaction I got from it and the harsh reality of the Venezuelan legal system left me at a crossroads. I kept finding myself studying law from a translator's perspective and not as someone who would eventually become a legal practitioner. On my law books written in Spanish, I made all sorts of annotations, possible equivalences and translations in English. In my head, I practised interpretation during lectures on contract law and civil procedural law. I came to speak the language of lawyers, but I no longer wanted to be one myself.

Over the years, I withdrew from law school a couple of times as motivation got low and my translation practice kept growing, but I finally graduated way behind schedule. I never did develop an interest in practising law in my home country, nor did I ever fly into outer space. And I am still terrified of fires.

I did, however, embark on a fulfilling and fascinating journey: By chance or choice, I had specialised in legal translation.

Felix Rojas
Brisbane, Queensland

In **June and July** the social secretary and the committee took a break, but in **May**, a coffee morning was held in Blackburn and about 14 interpreters joined us on the day.

Our last PD for the AUSIT calendar year was held on Saturday, 28 **June**, when AUSIT Victoria-Tasmania members were challenged by Sarina Phan's wonderful presentation on "working in legal settings". Unfortunately, flooding of our arranged premises led to a last-minute change of venue; in the subsequent confusion many people were unable to make the event, but still nearly 30 people attended. Sarina and her husband led us through many of the pitfalls in police and law enforcement interviews, and challenged us with a great deal of new information about how these agencies work and what they expect from interpreters and translators. We did not complete all of the material in the time available, so a second session was requested by all present for a date in 2015.

It has been a busy, eventful year for the Victoria-Tasmania branch, and we would like to thank our loyal member base which continues to support and inspire us. The committee has recently welcomed new members David Deck, Nicola Savage, Genevieve Fahey and Jessica Trevitt to its ranks. We thus have a welcome combination of experience and youth, which augurs well for further growth and development.

Non-accredited interpreters: a lose-lose situation



Imad Hirmiz laments the intrusion of non-professional interpreters to meet excess demand in some languages.

Demand for interpreting services for Arabic and Assyrian/Chaldean languages has rapidly increased recently, fuelled by political unrest in the Arab world and the arrival of new refugees from Syria and Iraq.

This high demand led to shortages in these languages. Economics says high demand means higher prices, in this case higher rates for interpreting and translation assignments.

In light of these shortages and the likelihood of rate increases for interpreters in the two languages, agencies acted quickly to cover these anticipated shortages.

But not all agencies were completely professional and ethical in their approach. Instead of investing in the industry by running courses to encourage bilinguals to consider doing interpreting courses to cover the shortages, these agencies looked to maximise their profits by injecting raw bilinguals into the industry to do some interpreting jobs at the cost of interpreting and translating professions, putting their clients at risk. In so doing, agencies breached both the AUSIT code of ethics and, I believe, their business ethics and code of conduct.

Because of this high demand and pressure on agencies, we, the accredited professional interpreters, have witnessed a phenomenon of increasing numbers of non-accredited interpreters providing interpreting services to the Assyrian-Chaldean and Arabic communities.

This creeping invasion of non-accredited interpreters casts a dark shadow on our profession, degrading us from professional interpreters to bilingual persons. It undermines our fight to get the recognition we deserve as professionals linguists. Service recipients are starting to complain about the quality of interpreting received from some non-accredited interpreters.

The motives of non-professionals for accepting interpreting assignments from agencies varied from one person to another. Unfortunately, for most of them, interpreting was not their preferred career path. For some the motive is financial; for others the easy access to a casual job and the ego boost it involves. Interestingly, for some it was the flexibility it offers for an unemployed person or for a mother after her youngest child started attending school. For some it was a good source of extra income to top up the money they receive from Centrelink.

For all these reasons, an unprecedented number of bilinguals with limited English are rushing to register with agencies for a piece of the cake.

I do my part by discussing the issue with the unqualified interpreters, informing them of the consequences and risks involved to our profession, their future profession and the clients.

I have been explaining to them how bad interpreting can easily, in the environment we work in, jeopardise the reputation of all interpreters of that language or dialect, or even the whole TI community. Meanwhile, I have always encouraged them to either do a TI course at RMIT or undertake a test with NAATI, for by doing this they can, at least, call themselves qualified interpreters. A few of them took it personally and felt that I was trying to keep them away from the industry to protect my interests.

Finally, I came up with another idea that I hoped would convince them of the importance of having a qualification or accreditation. I started talking about the notion of a “lose-lose” situation, which involved some mathematical skills. The idea was to convince them that continuing as an unqualified interpreter would encourage other bilinguals, with limited English, to also register with agencies. This means competing with them, which means fewer assignments for them in the future.

The second “lose” is for the industry

Having many non-accredited interpreters working in the industry would result in many ethical problems, particularly surrounding competency, which is at the heart of AUSIT’s code of ethics. This would further anchor the widespread belief that other professions hold against our profession that “an interpreter is merely a bilingual person who happened to speak two language” – a long way short of recognising the skills, linguistic or interpersonal, that this profession requires.

It’s unrealistic to expect agencies to eschew easy profits, so we should expect them to continue using non-accredited interpreters, even though in so doing they are killing the profession. To stop this unethical business behaviour requires the government through associations such as AUSIT and Professionals Australia to enforce measures and policies, possibly leading to industry regulation. This would be a further loss for the industry and its practitioners through the imposition of more restrictions and monitoring.

Professionals Australia (previously known as APESMA) have suggested including a provision in the tender contract restricting the agency (who win the contract) from using non-accredited practitioners.

But how we can make sure that agencies would adhere to this? I asked this of the delegate for Professionals Australia, Daniel Frances. He suggested that the funding bodies establish a monitoring mechanism to check agencies’ behaviour against this provision, including a reporting mechanism whereby the agencies would report their usage of interpreters, which would be compared to a national registry of accredited interpreters.

Imad Hirmiz is a professional translator and interpreter in Arabic, with NAATI recognition in Assyrian and Chaldean (Syriac) languages. He is a professional Arabic writer, a weekly columnist at two major Iraqi newspapers published in Sydney and Melbourne, and writes at Arabic and Assyrian-Chaldean websites and blogs. He is also a weekly reporter for the Iraqi program at 3zzz radio in Melbourne.

Briefing the interpreter



Muhammad Gamal told an international conference of judges and court administrators in Sydney in September that interpreters in any field need to be briefed before an assignment.

For many years Australia's practising police and court interpreters have been calling for better working conditions including professional pay, treatment and appreciation of their role in maintaining communication between people from different languages and cultures. One of the major issues is that of briefing police and court interpreters.

Such briefing, Gamal argues, assists them in developing the right frame of mind to facilitate the choice of words and terms, appreciate the relevant context of the assignment and ultimately eliminate unnecessary errors made by interpreters due to a lack of context. Language can only function in a context and can only be meaningful with a purpose. Without such context, interpreters will either interpret literally or search for a context during their interpreting. In either case, the result is not optimal. In the former, the translation will be awkward, and in the latter it will often be embarrassingly meaningless.

Gamal challenges the prevailing court opinion that "the best guarantee of impartiality is to have fresh interpreters with no prior knowledge of the case", which means interpreters are not briefed before taking on a court assignment. Most court administrators, the legal profession and the judiciary believe that any previous knowledge of the case may "cloud the interpreter's mind". Gamal gave the example where police interpreters spend hours and days assisting police in their investigations, and by the time the police file a charge and the matter goes to court, the police interpreter is not allowed to continue interpreting. Another "fresh interpreter", who has no idea of the case

A message from the editor

In Touch aims to be as open and collaborative as time and other constraints permit.

The editor generally – if time allows – seeks the author's approval of any edits before publication. This is not just because it's fair and respectful; it also forestalls many post-publication disagreements between author and editor, especially when the editor is not a subject expert.

Unfortunately, it is occasionally necessary to pull an article,

sometimes at the last minute, as occurred with this issue. It may be because the information is wrong or outdated (*In Touch's* editorial committee provides invaluable advice in this regard), or because it's too politically inflammatory. AUSIT is a small organisation with limited funds and resources, and needs to tread carefully. Every editor confronts this situation from time to time; we can only ask our contributors to see it from our perspective, and not be discouraged from future contributions.

and its details, is assigned. The fresh interpreter begins interpreting in court with no knowledge of the terminology, the details or the chronology of the events, which tends to undermine their interpreting and denies a witness or defendant full linguistic presence during their trial.

Gamal says that his 25-year experience in court interpreting shows that the principle of linguistic presence is severely compromised by the current practice of not briefing court interpreters. He argues that the notion of using fresh interpreters is outmoded and that the time has come for the police, the legal profession and the judiciary to re-examine their position. A lot has happened since the days when some judges deemed it admissible to allow a non-English-speaking person to try speaking in English because they have been in this country for 15 or 20 years. As our justice system has gained more experience, so has our profession. Our court interpreting industry has matured over the years and has become one of the most robust in the world.

'The principle of linguistic presence is severely compromised by the current practice of not briefing court interpreters.'

Gamal points out that community interpreters in Australia are bound by a well-developed code of ethics that respects their professionalism and enables them to exercise their discretion. The code has been updated a couple of years ago and perhaps needs to be promoted more extensively to language service users including the courts and the police. His talk highlights the need to explain not just the importance of community interpreting but how it functions; surprisingly, many people wrongly believe that interpreting and translating is a mechanical skill that interpreters and translators do effortlessly.

Go to www.IACAsydney.com for more information.

***Muhammad Y Gamal** is an Arabic interpreter with more than 25 years experience in a broad range of police and court interpreting. He has worked on some of the most complex police operations and has interpreted in a large number of full trials in all courts in Australia. He is an adjunct associate professor in Arabic translation studies at the University of Canberra's faculty of business, government and law, and provides diplomatic interpreting to the federal government in Canberra. His research interests include forensic linguistics, CSI: crime scene interpreting, police interpreting, professional ethics and court interpreting.*

There are a few points of style that can help writers and make the editor's task a bit easier.

- The optimum length is 500-1000 words (one to two pages). Shorter items are welcome as fillers; longer articles (up to four pages) can be accepted if the subject warrants it, but sustaining reader interest is paramount.
- We run edited academic articles from time to time, but we can't include references and footnotes. However, we're happy to include the author's email address so

interested people can request the full annotated version. Length is especially important for these sorts of articles – most academic articles are far too long in their unedited form.

- Images add greatly to an article's appeal. A head and shoulders of the author (minimum 0.5 MB) can be augmented by photos or graphics (at least 1 MB) illustrating the article. The best such image will often be used on the front cover.
- Avoid American spelling (verbs should end in -ise, not -ize). We

suggest you set your language in *Word* to English (United Kingdom) – not English (Australia), which often tolerates American spelling.

- You've probably noticed that *In Touch* is parsimonious with initial capitals. In this we follow the style of most daily newspapers – even the tabloids! (We also tend to avoid exclamation marks.) A good rule of thumb is if in doubt, use lower case.

We hope to add a more exhaustive style guide to the AUSIT website in the near future.

Tribunal says translator ‘very competent’

The Administrative Appeals Tribunal has said that an Arabic interpreter appointed by the tribunal to assist an applicant against a ministerial decision to deny him citizenship was “very competent”.

AAT senior member Geri Ettinger also noted that the applicant, who expressed concerns about his original interpreter’s religion (he is a Christian; she isn’t) and the quality of her interpreting, obtained the services of a replacement interpreter. Ms Ettinger asked the applicant if he was satisfied with the evidence as interpreted by the replacement interpreter and was told he “was happy to proceed to submissions”.

The applicant, Abu Abdalla, was granted a permanent visa in March 2009 but was refused citizenship by the minister as a result of a conviction in a local court in March 2010 that resulted in an 18-month good behaviour bond. The minister relied on a provision in the *Australian Citizenship Act 2007* which requires that the applicant be “a person of good character”. Because Mr Abdalla did not disclose his conviction when applying for citizenship, the minister held that he failed the criterion that he “be truthful and not practise deception in dealing with the government”.

Mr Abdalla argued before the AAT that, *inter alia*, he wrongly assumed that when his interpreter informed him that the magistrate had reserved his decision, he took this to mean that no conviction had been entered. But Ms Ettinger observed that Mr Abdalla was represented by a lawyer, answered some questions in English, and had an interpreter throughout the proceedings.

The AAT supplied an interpreter, Nadine Hallak, whom Ms Ettinger described as “very competent” and “interpreted everything that was said quite fluently”. Ms Ettinger was critical of Mr Abdalla for, as she understood it, during the adjournment, “questioning [Ms Hallak] as to religion, accusing her of not being a Christian, and not interpreting well”, and suggested to Ms Hallak, who was “quite upset”, that she considered lodging a complaint. The hearing was adjourned while a replacement interpreter was found. Mr Abdalla made no further complaints about the replacement interpreter.

Ms Ettinger found that the minister was on solid ground in finding Mr Abdalla not to be a person of good character and upheld the minister’s decision.

Catherine Manning Muir, 1943-2014



NAATI CEO John Beever (holding a copy of the translated work) presents the 2013 AUSIT excellence in translating award to Muir.

It is with sadness that AUSIT reports the death last month of award-winning Anglo-Dutch translator Catherine Manning Muir.

Muir, who was born in Philadelphia in 1943 and earned a BA from Temple University in 1973 and a BEd from QUT in 2005, won last year's AUSIT excellence in translating award for the translation of one of the earliest examples of pre-independence Indonesian literature, *Hikayat Siti Mariah* (*The Saga of Siti Mariah*), originally written in Dutch in the late 19th century, but published only in Malay lingua franca in serialised form in 1910-12 (never in Dutch).

The translation is based on the version edited by Pramoedya Ananata Toer, published in 1987 by Hasta Mitra, Jakarta, now out of print.

Muir's task was complicated further first by the fact that the language of the book is non-standard Malay or Indonesian, a vernacular in use over 100 years ago, and in fact more Malay than Indonesian; second, that several significant sections of the original text were missing; third, that the book was peppered also with non-standard Dutch; and finally, that the text included rhyming poetry which needed to rhyme in translation.

The judging panel was impressed that Muir "was willing to tackle a huge project, demonstrating it can be done by others", that the text was "historical, [with a] level of difficulty regarding historical moment and regional reach", and that she "would predominately have worked by herself, consulting only a few people".

She lived and travelled widely in Australasia and the Asia-Pacific region for over 25 years, studying Indonesian at Australian and West Sumatran universities, and since 1997 worked as a professional translator and interpreter in Indonesian and Malay.

Limited copies of Muir's award-winning book are available through AUSIT for \$38 (including postage), with the proceeds going to a brain cancer charity. Contact admin@ausit.org. The Amazon reviewer describes it as "a riveting read: full of adventure, love and intrigue – a fascinating glimpse into the far-away, long-ago world of forced cultivation imposed in the Dutch East Indies from 1830 until 1870 ... the lives of Dutch sugar barons, indigenous elite, European officials, and Chinese middlemen who were enriched under the system intersect with those of Javanese peasants who suffered under its yoke and the Javanese women who were bedded by the Dutch masters and administrators, fit only to be concubines, never wives."

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