

AUSIT

Volume 31 < Number 2 > WINTER 2023

# INTouch

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

## Special feature

### Literary translation, part 3:

Translating ideophones –  
after the theory comes the  
practice

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Translating a play based on  
an imagined life

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... including the AUSIT National  
Conference 2023; a win for  
a campaign to make jury  
participation more inclusive; hiring  
T/Is for a mental health service; and  
more recent research

## < In Touch

Winter 2023

Volume 31 number 2

The submission deadline for the  
Spring 2023 issue is 1 August  
Read our Submission Guidelines [here](#)

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Poster for R. Johns's play *Birthday Book of Storms*,  
La Mama theatre, August 2022 (designer: Peter  
Mumford), see article by Cristina Savin and R. Johns  
(see pages ??-??)

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### Access In Touch online

[www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/](http://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 respects to them and their  
cultures, and to Elders past and present.

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## Letter from the editors

We are pleased to announce that after five  
years as a triennial (three issues per year), *In  
Touch* has returned to quarterly publication.

As you probably know if you're reading this,  
we've also overhauled how readers can access  
the magazine: as a 'flipbook' on the AUSIT  
website, with links in the flipbook giving the  
option of reading individual articles in blog  
format, and sharing them on social media.

This second issue of 2023 includes:

- the second 'AUSIT Stalwarts' interview (pages 12–15), with an AUSIT founding member
- the third in a three-part special on literary translation, with a fascinating discussion between a translator and a playwright, and a practical follow-up on translating ideophones
- ... and, as always, plenty more.

Happy reading!

Hayley and Helen

## \*\*\* T&I students and recent graduates \*\*\*

# AUSIT Translation Competition 2023

Entries are invited from:

**AUSIT Student  
Members and  
students at / recent  
graduates of one of  
our Educational  
Affiliate institutions  
(listed [here](#))**



Focus languages:

Arabic  
Chinese  
French  
Japanese  
Korean  
Spanish

Prize: two half-day AUSIT webinars

For more information and to enter, click [here](#) (deadline: 14 July)

\* Please note: NAATI-certified translators and practitioners with over 5 years' experience (even if currently enrolled in / recently graduated from a translation program) are not eligible to participate.

image: [istock.com/mustafahacalaki](https://www.istock.com/mustafahacalaki)

## Assessors wanted

### AUSIT Translation Competition

(see above for languages)

An opportunity for experienced translators to:

- sharpen your skills
- highlight your expertise and knowledge
- network with peers
- demonstrate professional solidarity ...
- ... plus receive two half-day AUSIT webinars.

Click here for more details and to express your  
interest (deadline: 14 July).

## Contributions welcome

Do you have a T&I-related experience, idea or  
tip you'd like to share with your peers, a book  
you'd like to review, or ... whatever it is, get 'in  
touch' and we'll take it from there:

- take a look at our Submission Guidelines \*
- email any questions to the editors or an Editorial Committee member \*
- check the submission date for the next issue \*
- go for it!

\* this page, first column



Member organisation Fédération Internationale des  
Traducteurs International Federation of Translators

# AUSIT



# 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):

**30 Mar:** New project seeks to bring south Asian literature to western readers  
*The Guardian*

**7 Apr:** New Translations Explore Brazil's 'Endless and Unfinished' Character  
*The New York Times*

**7 Apr:** Deaf Australians and those with disabilities push to end exclusion from juries  
*daru.org.au* [see also article, page 7]

**11 Apr:** 'World's most advanced' AI robot speaks several languages in creepy video  
*news.com.au*

**13 Apr:** Fan'TIS'tic - secure jobs for staff  
*homeaffairs.gov.au*

**21 Apr:** SBS translates Ode of Remembrance into 45 languages for Anzac Day  
*SBS News*

**23 Apr:** Chinese literature works gain popularity in BRI countries thanks to translation of masterpieces  
*globaltimes.cn*

**26 Apr:** The Global Digital Library ignites children's dream of reading in more than 100 languages  
*unesco.org*

**3 May:** Machine Translation Used for Cuneiform Tablets  
*Mirage News*

Below: an example of Akkadian language inscription on the obelisk of Manishtushu [image: Louvre Museum, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons]



**5 May:** What if your client doesn't understand the interpreter?  
*lawgazette.co.uk*

**6 May:** Navigating law when English is your second language  
*the-riotact.com*

**9 May:** Meet the translator who got lost in a 'Whale' of a literary world  
*Korea JoongAng Daily*

**10 May:** 'Universal translator' dubs and lip-syncs speakers -- but Google warns against misuse  
*au.finance.yahoo.com*

**11 May:** SLAIT pivots from translating sign language to AI-powered interactive lessons  
*au.news.yahoo.com*

**12 May:** Who killed the EU's translators?  
*politico.eu*

**16 May:** You Don't Need to Speak Another Language to Love a Bilingual Edition  
*The New York Times*

**26 May:** A Greek Australian interpreter's life in Athens  
*The Greek Herald*

**28 May:** For many Asian Americans, medical interpreters are a vital but scarce resource  
*pbs.org/newshour*

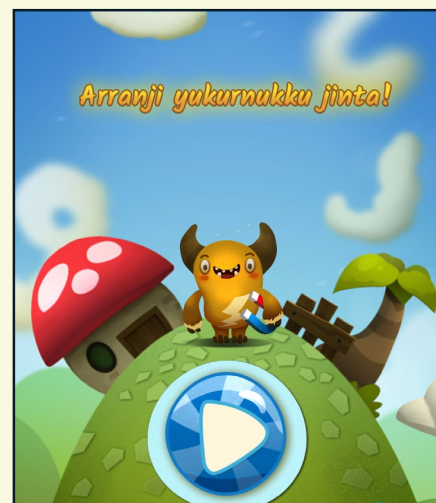


Image from the Warumungu version of the Feed the Monster app [see below] supplied by the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF), © Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation

**3 Jun:** Language app Feed the Monster the latest tool in battle to save endangered Warumungu language  
*ABC News*

**5 Jun:** "Translators" New York Premiere during Tribeca Festival, Tells the Story of Young Interpreters Helping Their Families Navigate and Survive Life in the U.S.  
*prnewswire.com*

**12 Jun:** Nebraska court interpreters call out after more than 10 years of requesting increased pay  
*ketv.com*

**13 June:** Calls on PM to sign treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons

Guest: Karina Lester, Australian First Nations interpreter and Ambassador for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.  
*ABC Radio National 'Drive'*

**21 Jun:** Boost for Australian Literature in International Markets  
*Mirage News*

**26 Jun:** British Museum apologizes for using translator's work without pay or permission  
*ASAmNews.com*

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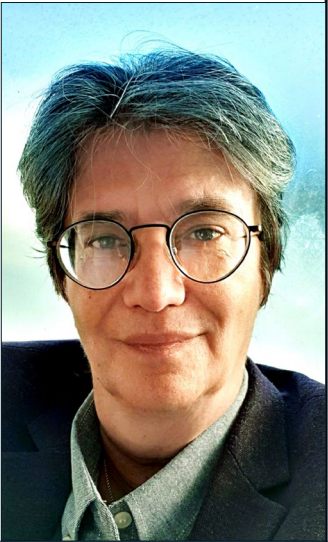
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# Seniority in AUSIT

If you’ve been working in the T&I field for a decade or more, you may be eligible to become an AUSIT Senior Member. With the two new Senior Members featured here swelling the category – introduced late last year – to five, *In Touch* takes a look at the ins and outs of attaining this level of membership.



Karine (left) and Sam

**S**enior membership of AUSIT requires peer endorsement and also National Council approval, is reviewed every three years, and comes with responsibilities.

Senior Members are expected to do some or all of the following over time:

- serve on branch committees and the National Council from time to time
- serve on the Ethics and Professional Practice Committee or a Board of Professional Conduct
- contribute to In Touch magazine and/or AUSIT’s social media and discussion forums
- be available for comment and advice when called upon, and to mentor junior members.

Senior membership recognises contribution to AUSIT and the profession, in addition to hours of practice (on which the Senior Practitioner category, being phased out, is based). Click here to find out more about eligibility, and to apply. Last year **Sandra Hale**, **Yutaka Kawasaki** and **Ron Witton** became AUSIT’s first three Senior Members. This year so far they’ve been joined by two more (opp. page, first column).



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## Congratulations to new Senior Members Karine Bachelier and Sam Berner

**B**oth Karine and Sam (pictured opposite) have wide skillsets and are passionate about both what they do as T&I practitioners, and supporting the next generation and the industry by sharing their experience.

We asked them to tell us a little more about themselves, to help flesh out what qualifies an individual to be made a Senior Member.

**Karine:** *Coming from a multicultural family, I have a strong interest in peoples and cultures. Early in my career I taught translation at the University of New Caledonia, Nouméa. Later, as the official T/I of the local government there, I developed partnerships with several AUSIT professionals in the Pacific region. Since settling in Melbourne in 2017, I freelance for international organisations. Among other volunteering roles I've been an AUSIT mentor, Branch Secretary and Branch Chair (Victoria). Our profession may seem a lonesome path at times, yet it's all about connecting, learning from each other and supporting one another. Our services are crucial in ensuring people from CALD communities are understood and their rights protected, and if I can help my peers in any way, I'm happy to jump in.*

**Sam:** *My ethos throughout my working life has been one of service. I started as an English language teacher and soon got into translation. That was 37 years ago, and I don't regret a single day of the journey. Before coming to Australia I translated for large publishers overseas and for UNHCR and UNICEF, and taught in high schools. Discovering AUSIT about five years after I arrived was the best thing that happened to me as a translator. I was mentored by some of AUSIT's finest, and in 13 years of membership I've always been on some committee or other – mentoring, organising PD events and conferences, representing AUSIT at various organisations, and sharing what I know – because when my peers grow, I grow. Becoming a Senior Member is all about that commitment to service, to giving back, to improving the profession. It isn't a reward, it's a call to action.*

# A member of AUSIT ... living overseas

When translator Ilgin Yildiz took part in our regular Member Profiles feature in 2021, we noticed that she was living in Istanbul. Ilgin has maintained her AUSIT membership since returning to live in Turkey in 2018, and *In Touch* recently asked her why.



**Q1. Are you originally from Turkey?**

*Yes. I'm a Turkish citizen living in Istanbul.*

**Q2. Where did you study T&I?**

*I completed a graduate diploma program in writing and literature at Deakin University in 2015. Before that I earned my master's degree in English language in Istanbul, and this included a unit on translation from English to Turkish.*

**Q3. How long were you in Australia, and did you work as a T/I here?**

*Yes. I moved to Australia in 2015, and at the time I was working as a freelance translator. I moved back to Turkey in 2018.*

**Q4. Were you a member of AUSIT when you were here in Australia?**

*Yes, I joined AUSIT when I moved to Australia and I am still a member.*

**Q5. Does much of your translation work currently come from Australia?**

*No. I am a freelance book translator, subtitler and linguist, so my main work comes from Turkish publishers and foreign subtitling and dubbing companies.*

**Q6. What, for you, are the main benefits of remaining a member of AUSIT despite being based in overseas?**

*AUSIT is a respected and prestigious organisation. I value my AUSIT membership because through it I feel connected to the English-speaking industry and community, and also because it gives me the opportunity to develop professionally via webinars and courses. Plus AUSIT is known and respected in my country among translators, and I value my membership as part of my identity and image as a translator.*

# AUSIT National Council: Statement on the Voice referendum

The **Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators** (AUSIT) is the peak professional body for Australian translators and interpreters, and the author of the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct in place in this sector. Our membership includes practitioners who work with Indigenous languages.

As an association, AUSIT represents professionals whose work inherently entails assisting any members of Australia's many culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are disempowered by a lack of proficiency in English. As such, AUSIT understands and respects the importance of providing mechanisms and processes that enable disempowered peoples to make their voices, both individually and collectively, heard.

The National Council of AUSIT therefore welcomes the aspirations and principles embodied in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and accepts the invitation in that Statement to walk together towards a better future for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and communities in this country.

The National Council acknowledges that the Uluru Statement's call to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Australian Constitution arises out of generations of personal and community struggle by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for justice and political recognition in Australia.

The National Council recognises that there are diverse views – among both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, and non-Indigenous people and communities – about the current plans, based on the Uluru Statement, to constitutionally enshrine a Voice. However, the National Council also recognises that constitutional recognition, and processes for truth-telling and reconciliation, are long overdue.

The National Council of AUSIT therefore urges that all Australians voting in the forthcoming referendum do so with a commitment to redressing injustices, affording constitutional recognition, and bringing about much-needed beneficial change for the First Nations peoples of Australia.

**National Council of the Australian Institute of  
Interpreters and Translators, June 2023**



# AUSIT members involved in making juries more inclusive



In April 2021, the Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) interviewed AUSIT's Immediate Past President **Erika Gonzalez Garcia** and Auslan interpreter **Meredith Bartlett** for their *Inclusive Juries* review. We asked Meredith to tell us about the resulting report, which was released in mid-May.

**T**his report is a major breakthrough, as it recommends 'changes to the law and practice to enable people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision to serve on juries'.

The report found that although Victorian laws are 'generally up to date and reflect the outlook of the community', they effectively exclude 'those who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision' from jury service and are therefore 'out of step with local community expectations [and] inconsistent with international standards'.

It states that 'the law in Victoria lags behind many countries in which inclusive juries have been a reality for many years', and that 'enabling people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision to serve on juries is well overdue.' Its key recommendations are:

1) 'changes to the Juries Act and jury processes to ensure that people get the reasonable adjustments they need to be able to serve – such as Auslan interpreters, speech-to-text translations or screen readers' and

2) limiting the '13th person rule' (which prevents anyone who isn't a juror from entering a jury room) 'so that interpreters and support persons can go in[to] the jury room if they take an oath to maintain confidentiality, not participate personally in deliberations, and interpret truthfully.'

The VLRC's Chair, the Hon. Tony North KC, points out that jury duty is 'an important civic duty, and people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or have low vision should be able to participate like everyone else. This reform will make juries more representative.'

As an Auslan interpreter I thoroughly enjoyed working with spoken language interpreters and translators to achieve some of the changes over time. I can only hope that the slow and steady campaign will continue to achieve change.

The provision of support people with appropriate training to attend the jury room is just common sense, and should not be used as an excuse to pose another barrier to people who face barriers every single day of their lives.

In Australia we believe in the jury system of justice, where 12 ordinary people represent the community and make decisions on the guilt or otherwise of an alleged offender. It is a breach of human rights to exclude anyone from this process only because they have a vision or hearing impairment, or require another person to provide a visual interpretation or an auditory description.

*Taking part ... is one of the highlights of my membership of AUSIT*

Taking part in this review is one of the highlights of my membership of AUSIT, along with chairing the Victorian Branch for a few years.

You can download the full report here: [Inclusive Juries: Access for People Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Blind or Have Low Vision](#), and view an Auslan version of the Executive Summary [here](#).

Another past president of AUSIT, Sandra Hale, and colleagues conducted research that laid the foundation for this change. Read about it [here](#).

*Dr Meredith Bartlett is a practising Auslan interpreter, interpreter educator, and researcher in tactile Auslan at Monash University. She has taught Auslan/English interpreters at RMIT for over 25 years, and has published in the field of linguistics of tactile Auslan as used by deafblind signers in Australia.*

# AUSIT

## 36th National Conference



**23–25 NOVEMBER 2023**  
**UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY**

**Accompanied by the AUSIT Gala Dinner,  
the Jill Blewett Memorial Lecture and the NAGM**

The New South Wales Branch have the pleasure of inviting you to AUSIT's  
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Translation and interpreting in today's connected world'**

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## KEYNOTES and JBML

**THE HON. JUSTICE FRANÇOIS KUNC** ... was appointed to the Supreme Court of NSW in 2013. He sits in the Equity Division, is the General Editor of the Australian Law Journal and an Adjunct Professor in the School of Law and Justice, Southern Cross University, and was on the committee which drafted the Australian National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals. Justice Kunc will deliver a keynote address on conducting proceedings with interpreters.

**ASSOC. PROF. ERIKA GONZALEZ** is an Associate Professor in T&I at RMIT University and a senior fellow of UK-based Advance HE. Erika has taught T&I at both post- and undergraduate level for 20 years, and her research focuses on the professionalisation of community T&I. AUSIT National President from 2019–2022, she is also an active conference interpreter and translator. Erika will deliver a keynote address on community translation protocols and translator tools.

**DEB WILLCOX** is the Deputy Secretary, Health System Strategy and Patient Experience, NSW Ministry of Health. She is responsible for strategic health policy development, inter-jurisdictional negotiations and funding strategies, system-wide planning of capital and health services, setting the direction for aged care, child and family health policy, and patient experience. Deb will deliver a keynote address on interpreting in health care settings.

### JILL BLEWETT MEMORIAL LECTURE

**ROB AURBACH** is a lawyer and a highly experienced regulator and consultant. His survey of NAATI-credentialed interpreters in Queensland, conducted in conjunction with the University of Queensland, documented concerns about the sustainability of the profession. Rob will review the survey (in the context of other studies), and also the procurement of interpreter services and working arrangements across Australia, to provide a perspective on the current situation nationally. Current reform initiatives will be discussed, and the opportunities offered and dangers posed by each.

### REGISTRATION, ACCOMMODATION, ETC.

**\*\* You're not too late to be an Early Bird! \*\***

**\*\* Substantial discounts apply until 31 July \*\***

**\*\* Scholarships to be announced soon \*\***

For the latest information on the program, registration and accommodation, the Welcome Cocktail, Gala Dinner and more, click [here](#).

## VISITING SYDNEY

If you have time, why not arrive a few days early or stay on afterwards to explore the city and its surrounds. Organising Committee member **Marcia Almeida** and student member **Mina Kim** share their top local tips:

- Take your togs down to **Marrinawi Cove**, Sydney's new harbour swimming spot in the regenerated parklands of Barangaroo.
- Explore an eclectic mix of regenerated bushland and objets trouvés in **Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden**, Lavender Bay – perfect for a picnic at sunset.
- Keen walkers can take in both of the above on a long day circumambulating Sydney Harbour: the **Seven Bridges Walk**. Another favourite of Sydneysiders is the **Spit Bridge to Manly Walk**.
- Experience the works of one of Sydney's most famous artists in his former home and workspace, **Brett Whiteley Studio**. Wendy (above) was Brett's wife and muse.

- If you enjoy browsing, head to **Mitchell Road Antique & Design Centre**, a sprawling warehouse packed with preloved homewares, collectables and clothing at affordable prices..
- Take a long day trip to the **Blue Mountains** ... or stay overnight to enjoy sunset views of Jamison Valley, the Three Sisters and the surrounding sandstone cliffs from **Echo Point Lookout** after the tourist buses have gone, then set out on one of the area's range of bushwalks next morning.
- For another fun day trip, take a train south to **Kiama** and check out its famous blowhole, then stroll north along Bombo Beach and into the fantastic rockscapes of the heritage-listed **Bombo Quarry**.

For more to do in and around Sydney, we recommend you visit: [sydney.com](#) and [Destination NSW](#).

Enjoy Sydney!

An aerial view of Sydney Harbour [image: iStock.com/zetter]



Sydney's Luna Park [image: iStock.com/ampueroleonardo]



# *I'll just put you on hold ...*



Periods of time – of varying lengths – spent ‘on hold’ are a consistent feature of telephone interpreting. Whether this downtime is seen as a bane or a blessing depends on how the ‘dead’ minutes are spent. Italian–English interpreter **Robert Newson** shares some simple finger, hand and wrist and drills that he finds reduce work-related stress as well as offering physical benefits.

**I**t's widely accepted that stress compromises both comprehension and expression. So as interpreting assignments are often highly fraught, any expedient that reduces tension will benefit performance.

I find that finger, hand and wrists drills are extremely compatible with telephone interpreting, and offer the ancillary benefit of increasing manual dexterity and strength in daily life. This is my arsenal:

### *Baoding* (Chinese meditation) balls (right)

Traditional Chinese medicine holds that spinning these balls in the hand stimulates the body's energy meridians and promotes health and wellbeing. I'm going to take a more prosaic line and say that coordinating them is distracting, and in times of stress, distraction is a positive. Typically, it's easier to spin them in one direction, so spinning in the opposite direction creates even more distraction, as

greater concentration is required. Personally I find the chimes in *Baoding* balls too noisy, so I use large solid steel ball bearings (5 cm diameter is ideal for my medium-sized male hand).



### *Flex bars* (above)

These rubber rods are for wrist flexion, extension and rotation. You can bend them against the edge of your desk or a nearby wall if using only one hand, or twist and bend them using two hands. I prefer a 4 cm diameter rod, and I recommend the extra-light or light model for anyone of moderate strength (the aim is distraction, not discouragement).



# Translating and Interpreting

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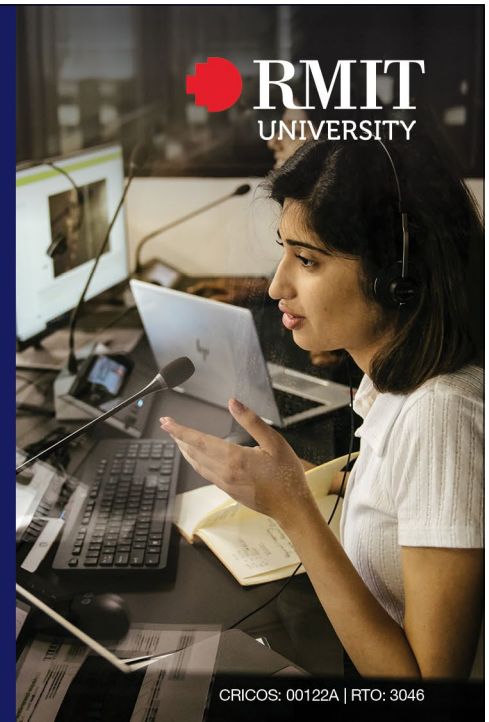
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*... any expedient that reduces tension  
will benefit performance.*

In the same way that doodling or fidgeting is a palliative, these exercises can be made strenuous enough that one is momentarily absorbed, lessening the tendency to needlessly dwell on a stressful interpreting assignment.

*Flex bars, ball bearings and shots are all available online.*

**Robert Newson** is an Italian–English interpreter. Based in Perth, he has lived and worked in Italy, and has since gained over three decades of experience in interpreting – mainly legal, medical and community – for government and private agencies.

## Shot put (below)

The forearm extensor muscles, like their wrist equivalents, are underworked vis-à-vis the flexors, and to counter this I use a shot (the metal ball thrown in the athletics event of ‘shot put’). I recommend using one that weighs 3 kg or less. I hold the shot in one hand, palm facing down, arm stretched out. With the arm of my desk chair serving as support for my elbow I slowly raise and lower the shot, repeat this several times, then do the same with the other hand.

## Rubber bands (above)

For most of us the extensor muscles in our wrists (used to open our hands) tend to get less of a daily workout than the flexors (used for gripping). This imbalance *can* lead to serious tendon problems, but a more benign effect is reduced wrist strength. To counter this asymmetry I use a premium-quality elastic band with high rubber content (80–90%) – the higher the rubber content, the more supple the band and satisfactory the exercise. A 65 x 12 mm band works well for my hand size. I loop it around the intermediate phalanges of my fingers, and repeatedly splay then relax them.





# AUSIT stalwarts: Adolfo Gentile

interviewed by Ludmila Stern

To continue our series of interviews with AUSIT members who have contributed to the organisation and/or the T&I profession in Australia over many years, foundation member **Dr Adolfo Gentile** is interviewed by **Professor Ludmila Stern**.



Adolfo (left)  
and Ludmila



**A**dolfo has played a part in the development of T&I in Australia through a variety of roles and organisations.

**Ludmila:** Adolfo good morning! It gives me great pleasure to interview you for *In Touch* magazine. I think it's correct to say that you are one of the founding fathers of the translating and interpreting profession in Australia, and you've had a very rich career with your involvement in AUSIT, NAATI and other organisations. I'd like to talk to you about your professional life, but let's start with your background. Where were you born? How old were you when you came to Australia, and where were you educated?

**Adolfo:** Well, I was born in Anacapri, a town on the Italian isle of Capri, and came to Australia with my mother and sisters in November 1962, when I was 12, to join my dad, who had migrated four years before. In Italy I'd finished the second year of secondary school, but I didn't know any English, so I was put in what was called Form 1, which is Year 7. So basically I started again, and did my whole secondary education in Australia.

After I finished school I got what was called a Commonwealth Scholarship, and enrolled at Melbourne University. I'd thought I'd do an engineering degree because I'd done all sciences, but at the last minute I changed my mind and enrolled in a languages degree with Italian and

*... like many other children of migrants ...  
I became the interpreter at home.*

French. But in my second year my father became ill and I had to go to work, so I changed to studying part time and finished at the end of 1972.

**Ludmila:** What kind of work did you do? And what led you towards translation, what shaped your professional life?

**Adolfo:** Well, first of all – like many other children of migrants – I became the interpreter at home. I presume it took me three or four months to make myself understood in English, and then I did what many children have done in this country – went with my mother to the doctor, and – you know – got involved in the administration of the household at a much younger age than a child in a monolingual household, dealing with the electricity bills, gas company and what have you, also more complicated issues like real estate. But that wasn't unusual, so it was just part of my existence, and I didn't consider T&I as a career until much later. Then when I was 17 – I don't recall how – I was called to interpret at the Magistrates' Court, and it was then that I realised that people who hadn't the capacity in English were

really disadvantaged, and shouldn't be. This was still at the back of my mind when I had to go from full-time to part-time studies.

My choices were very pragmatic – I went into the public service because it was the only employer I knew of that provided four hours a week of study leave. I did general administrative work at the base grade until I graduated, then I got an opportunity to join the staff at RMIT – not as a language person, but as somebody who had industrial experience in administrative training. They'd just started a graduate diploma in careers education and I was training people in different skills. I worked with a colleague who had experience in schools, and I had the workforce experience.

By coincidence, Dr George Strauss was on the interview panel. George was a French scholar who also had a long career working in T&I. He asked me to teach some French, then invited me to begin the first course in Italian interpreting at RMIT, and after a couple of years I moved to teaching interpreting full time. At that time we also moved institution, first to what was called Prahran College of Advanced

Adolfo (front right) and colleague Patrizia Burley (left) at Victoria College in 1984, monitoring the simultaneous interpreting of students especially prepared for a conference between the Victorian government and the Italian regions – the students behind them are listening to their peers who are in booths

Education, then Victoria College, which became Deakin University. The long and the short of it is that the grants that originally funded the courses at RMIT ran out and weren't renewed, so we had to find another organisation willing to finance them. It was a kind of community effort. At Victoria College we were actually incorporated fully into the teaching program.

**Ludmila:** And how did you become involved with AUSIT?

**Adolfo:** Well, when the program began at RMIT we were running two courses matching the NAATI levels, one at the Technical College and another at the Advanced College. At that time, 1978, a good number of practitioners got together to form the Victorian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, a precursor body to AUSIT in Victoria. Analogous organisations were set up in most other states, and as you know, AUSIT was formed in 1987.

Since the birth of NAATI in 1977, it had been tasked with the creation of a professional body. It was like herding cats, if I can put it that way – even identifying who should be involved was a problem; when NAATI suggested we should have one national body, this threatened the power bases of certain people, so we spent years arguing. I can't remember how many meetings I attended at the Victorian Institute of Interpreters and Translators to try and make the case that it was silly to keep these little splinter units all over the place (of course, Western Australia is still resisting to this day). So in about 1986, heads were knocked together and agreements reached, and NAATI moved to formally create AUSIT in 1987 in Canberra.

I was a member of AUSIT from the beginning and secretary of the Victorian Branch for a while, and in 1990 I went to the triennial congress of FIT in Belgrade with then National President Bob Filipovich, to present AUSIT as a candidate to join FIT. We were successful, and when AUSIT decided to put in a bid for the 1996 FIT Congress, I was asked to present the case at the Brighton Congress in 1993 – and again we were successful, beating Canada to the draw.

When I think back on it, this was quite an achievement for Australia, because most of the European institutions and courses dealing with T&I didn't regard what we were doing here as professional. (Since '84 I'd been running the department and all the professional level T&I



courses in Victoria, and I went on a sabbatical to visit a number of institutions in Europe, but that's another story!) When the FIT Council voted to have the Congress in Australia we said, 'What have we done?' ... but it turned out to be quite a success, and it was very beneficial – to the courses especially, and to the profession, because we actually saw that other people were doing similar things, and I could be proud of what I was doing, because up to then interpreting had been regarded as part of the welfare model, not as a standalone professional activity.

I became Chair of the Congress Organising Committee, so I was asked to join the FIT Council. I was on the Council for nine years: three as a member, three as Vice President, and three as President, from '99 to 2002.

Was the FIT Congress in Australia successful? It's probably best to ask other people, but from my point of view, yes. Even now, when I go to FIT events, people come up to me and recall it. I think it was partly because for many attendees – from Europe especially, but also America and Asia – it was the first time they had been to Australia and it was an eye opener in terms of what we were doing with T&I – it gave them a broader perspective.

**Ludmila:** Well, Adolfo, let's move to the many years you spent as a member of the Migration and Refugee Review tribunals. Could you talk about that period of your career?

**Adolfo:** Yes, I'd left Deakin University – voluntarily, but it was a bit acrimonious. I wasn't going to accept any further cuts and allow them to still call the course a T&I program, so I resigned. I applied for a position on the Refugee Review Tribunal – which was later amalgamated with the Migration Review Tribunal, in 2005 if I'm not mistaken – and got it. So I was no longer a teacher of T&I, but a client. This produced some interesting situations, especially the faces on my ex-students when they walked in and saw me ... so I made a point of talking to them, to allay any fears about me judging their interpreting. They weren't interpreting Italian, the most common languages then were Turkish and Vietnamese, and later on Arabic, which we were teaching at the time at Deakin.

My work on the tribunals, with the pressures that exist in that kind of environment, helped me discern some of the things we could have done better in teaching. For example, I became a fierce advocate of briefing interpreters. I realised

*continued overleaf*



# AUSIT STALWARTS

## (continued)

Adolfo (centre) with colleagues Uldis Ozolins (left) and Mary Vasilakakos, at the launch of their book *Liaison interpreting: a handbook*, published in 1996

*continued from previous page*

how important this is through the quite bizarre interpretations I got at first of the phrase 'UN Refugee Convention' – the Convention was often interpreted as some kind of conference.

The Tribunal already had a handbook for interpreters, but we revised it and I encouraged interpreters to read it before they came in, because it's a fairly specialised area of law, and interpreting in this area – as with any interpreting really – is of utmost importance.

In '97, when I was appointed to the Tribunal, I was Chair of NAATI (I chaired NAATI from '95 to 2002), and also still involved in teaching, *and* I was on the FIT Council, and became its President in '99. So I was fully involved, and I relayed the lessons I learned in my tribunal work to whoever wanted to listen, whether at FIT or within the profession.

Briefing is only obviously one aspect. Although we talk a lot about specialisations, I felt that wasn't the main issue with the quality of the interpreting, it was more general preparation – general education and reading. If an interpreter came to the Tribunal, say, for a client speaking Tamil but knew little about either Tamil culture or Sri Lanka, I might get terrible interpretations when topography, geography or politics came up, because they just weren't well enough prepared for the discussions we were having. It wasn't a matter of word transfer. So that confirmed something in my own mind about our teaching, because when we first started the bachelor's degree we devoted a substantial amount of the course to general development of knowledge.

In the community interpreting sphere, most interpreters are of the same culture as the non-English language. So you would expect their cultural knowledge to be – if not adequate – at least better than the person on the street, but in certain cases it isn't, for a variety of reasons. For example, the interpreter may have left the place when they were little and spent years somewhere else as an asylum seeker.

**Ludmila:** So when you were on the tribunals, were you – consciously or subconsciously – monitoring the interpreters? Or was the focus on what you were doing as a member?

**Adolfo:** My focus was on my role as a member, but subconsciously I *was* looking at what was going on, and some episodes were so glaringly



deplorable they drove issues home to me, and I became a kind of unofficial ambassador and trainer of the tribunal members. Many members recognised that if they couldn't communicate with the applicant there was no fairness, no justice. So they took this very seriously, and came to me if they had a question or an issue. As you know a considerable number of court cases have been overturned due to lack of competence on the part of an interpreter. Although I don't agree – and I say this now quite readily – with the conclusions some judges came to about the role of the interpreter. Within this sphere of influence and prerogative there were decisions that they made which were supported by logic, but they didn't know the ins and outs of interpreting, and expected certain things that were not possible. I'm sure you of all people know that very well.

**Ludmila:** I do, yes. Adolfo, you mentioned being Chair of the NAATI Board, and you've returned to the Board relatively recently, so could you talk a little about your work with NAATI over the years and your return.

**Adolfo:** Well basically, I first got involved with NAATI when I started working on T&I courses at RMIT, because some of us were asked – through the COPQ [Committee on Overseas

Professional Qualifications] – to provide what would become tests – drafts of drafts, if you know what I mean. Then when NAATI was looking to form language panels, I was on its Italian panel from the very beginning, myself and Romano Rubichi from Adelaide. For a number of years he and I ran the tests all over the country. Then I was asked to participate in the state panels, which at the time – you might recall – were tasked with testing. Then I was invited on the precursor of the Qualifications and Assessment Advisory Committee (QAAC) of NAATI. When I finished my period as Chair (which involved chairing the QAAC too) in '02 I think I had a year off, but after that I was asked to go back as Chair of the QAAC, so I did. I stayed on until the QAAC was turned into the Technical Reference Advisory Committee (TRAC), which gave me the pleasure of working with you for a few years. Anyway, basically what I'm trying to say is that it seems like I've been there ever since 1978 in one role or another, and I went back because I was asked to.

**Ludmila:** How does being on the NAATI Board now compare with the previous experience?

**Adolfo:** Well, it's a totally different experience, as it *should* be. One would expect things to have



*... it seems like I've been [at NAATI] ever since  
1978 in one role or another ...*

improved, and they have, especially – and I think I can say this without breaking any confidences – between the members and the Board. This makes it a lot more engaging and interesting, and also rewarding. I think the profession has changed a lot since then, in this country and elsewhere, for the better. There are still problems, of course, but in general it's better. There are more people involved and they have much more nuanced views on what the profession is and what it could be, which I think is good.

**Ludmila:** Yes, it's much more open to the community, isn't it?

**Adolfo:** Yes, and I think technology has provided a lot of opportunities to talk about what we do. A lot of people see this as a negative but I don't, I see it as a positive. That's another topic for another day – it's important that we don't treat technology as an enemy, but engage with it for the better.

So, the Board – I find its remit has, in a sense, expanded. We still deal with the same institutions and the same themes, but the characteristics of the profession have made it necessary for the Board to be more versatile, more flexible and, I think, better informed.

**Ludmila:** A few years ago you became a doctor of philosophy. What motivated you to do a PhD, and how did you choose your topic?

**Adolfo:** My longstanding involvement with NAATI often made me think about what happens to organisations and their cultures – why they invariably reinvent the wheel, you know, and in increasingly short cycles. People seem to forget what happened five years ago and do it all over again, then get the same problems again, without learning. I could see this even in my lived experience because I'd been around so long. And why did a country like Australia set up such a thing when it did? Why did it take the shape that it did, which was a world first? So this is why I chose NAATI as the topic for my PhD. I wanted to look at the organisation's whole history, but my supervisors persuaded me that that was too large a project, so I restricted

my focus to its inception and development as an institution – which was good, as it allowed me to go really to the heart of the questions I posed myself. The full title was: 'A policy-focused examination of the establishment of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in Australia'.

And the first part of your question, why a PhD? I did it when I was semi-retired already, so it was mainly for my own personal satisfaction. In the early '90s I'd started a master's degree in applied linguistics, and after a year I was advised to upgrade to a PhD, but at the time I was head of school and involved with NAATI, with FIT and so on. I did try, but I couldn't continue – I just didn't have the time, even part time – which I kind of regret. So in 2012 I thought, 'Well, it doesn't matter that I don't work in T&I any more, I'm going to do it.'

**Ludmila:** Yes, and you must feel extremely proud, having achieved it.

**Adolfo:** Oh, yes, I do, on a personal and also on an institutional level.

**Ludmila:** My last question is: How has the multicultural and multilingual picture of Australia changed in the past decades, and how do you envisage its future?

**Adolfo:** Well, multicultural and multilingual ought to be kept separate, I think, although of course they're related – because when I was working, multiculturalism meant a certain thing. But I think that particular view of the term has evaporated and it's now basically a synonym for having many cultures living together, whereas then it was much more of a plank in the government's policymaking. A lot of things that are happening now are still echoes of the original '70s policy, but the reasons have turned into more instrumental ones, such as political or commercial reasons. We argue for diversity more on those parameters than we do on other – more ephemeral, if you like, but to me more important – parameters. I think that's how it's changed.

Also, there's been an explosion in the number

of languages spoken in Australia. There always were quite a number, but now we have even more – apart from the Indigenous languages, which deserve their own mention, and Auslan of course, both of which we included in the NAATI system in the mid-'80s.

At first there was some mirroring of languages on the basis of the migration program, which is still there, but the program itself has abandoned all pretence of nation building, it's going towards commercial achievements and productivity and industrial development and so on, so we've got a much broader range of people coming from a much broader range of areas ... just the people from the Indian subcontinent brought in seven, eight or nine different languages. So this is what I think has happened. Anyway, that's my own take on it. Obviously it's a political view as well, because the policies of government have moved forward without fixing the fundamental problems. We still have to find grants in order to be able to test and run courses in Indigenous languages, for example, we don't have an institutionalised approach, and so on.

The fact that diversity is celebrated now is a big improvement, and I think that will continue, even though sometimes it's a bit tokenistic – for example, advertisements on television have compulsory diversity now, but it's sometimes stilted and unhelpful ... but at least we're recognising and talking about it, and it's becoming more mainstream, and this is a more mature response than in the past.

And in Australia the quantum of people who were born overseas, or with parents born overseas has increased. I don't know whether I should even go here, but I will – when I was growing up there was a kind of hegemonic assumption about Anglo-Saxon culture which led to, for example, someone telling me and my mother not to speak Italian on the tram. This attitude is dissipating, we're not over it quite yet but we're in a different place, and in my view we've got to deal with – not deal with, treasure – what we've got.

**Ludmila:** Yes. Adolfo, thank you so much for sharing your very rich life, professional experience and numerous achievements, but also for your analysis and reflection. I'm sure our readers will enjoy this interview very much and learn a lot from it, so thank you again for so much of your time.

**Adolfo:** Not at all, not at all.

# Translating ideophones: after the theory, the practice



Following on from her article on translating ideophones in our April issue, T&I master’s student **Laura Fritch** reports on how she went with her translation of the early twentieth century Japanese author Kenji Miyazawa’s ideophone-laden short story for children, *Kaze no Matasaburo*.

**W**ords is oh such a twitch-tickling problem to me all my life. So you must simply try to be patient and stop squibbling. As I am telling you before, I know exactly what words I am wanting to say, but somehow or other they is always getting squiff-squiddled around.

– a quote from *The BFG* by Roald Dahl, first published in 1982

Ideophones such as ‘squibbling’ are a staple of children’s literature and are known for their evocative ability to ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’ through their form. Linguist Mark Dingemanse formally defines the ideophone as ‘a member of an open lexical class of marked words that depict sensory imagery’\*. In the last issue of *In Touch*, I talked about how this curious category of words is harnessed by Japanese writer Kenji Miyazawa in his writing for children, and argued that we shouldn’t be tempted to see ideophones as ‘untranslatable’ – rather, we should go against the trends of previous translations. If we are to

*The vivid, quasi-synaesthetic quality of ideophones allowed Miyazawa to paint ‘tactile’ landscapes ...*

keep the spirit of Miyazawa in translation, we should endeavour to maintain ideophonicity – perhaps even learning something about the English language as we go. A few months have passed since I wrote that article, and I’m happy to say that I’ve finished my project – undertaken for my Masters of Translation – of translating Miyazawa’s children’s story *Kaze no Matasaburo*. So this time around, I want to take a moment to talk about ideophones not simply from a typological perspective, but from a stylistic one. Miyazawa, although relatively unknown in the Anglosphere, is a celebrated author in Japan, where he is particularly well known for his idiosyncratic use of ideophony and lauded as a ‘master of ideophones’. *Kaze no Matasaburo* is particularly emblematic of Miyazawa’s aptitude for this word form, beginning with a striking soundscape:

どっどど どどうど どどうど どどう  
(doddodo dodōdo dodōdo dodō)

This opening line evokes the bellowing sound of the wind, and invites us into a world animated by rhythm, music, and the poetics of ‘voices’. Indeed, Miyazawa’s use of ideophony is not just a linguistic quirk, but also serves a thematic purpose: literally and metaphorically giving ‘voice’ to nature. Miyazawa, as a devout Buddhist and also a professional agronomist, was someone who cared for the natural world both spiritually and practically. It is, therefore, no surprise that his sensitivities towards nature bleed into his style. The vivid, quasi-synaesthetic quality of ideophones allows Miyazawa to paint ‘tactile’ landscapes: ones in which the reader can not only *envision* the scene, but *feel* at one with the nature it depicts. Ideophony operates in Miyazawa’s work both aesthetically, through creating musicality and



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orality, and also ideologically, by instilling his animistic philosophy in the reader.

However, the translators reading this may be thinking, 'Whether you translate one word as a noun or a verb is generally not something to fret about. Does it really matter if you translate an ideophone as an ideophone?' – to which I say, 'You're not wrong!' Rather than focusing on strict adherence to typological equivalence (i.e. the *use* of ideophony), it is much more fruitful to shift our focus to the stylistic significance and rhetorical effects of ideophones: 'ideophoncity'.

But enough talk about theory. How do we put this into practice? In my translation of *Kaze no*

*Matasaburo*, I found a range of strategies that can help us retain ideophoncity in translation.

Of course, the simplest way would be to translate ideophones using ideophones. A recent corpus study by Eriko Sato analysed seven English translations of another famous story by Miyazawa, *Ginga Tetsudō no Yoru*, and found that 15.61 percent of ideophones were rendered by ideophones. Using the same methodology as Sato, I found that my translation rendered 32.6 percent of ideophones using ideophones. If we include novel ideophones which are not codified by the list Sato used, this figure rises to 39.3 percent. Although my sample size is much smaller than hers, that the figure is double what Sato found seems to suggest that the use of ideophony is not so much a linguistic restriction as it is a translational choice. Perhaps English has more ideophones than we thought!

But what about the other 60 percent? This is where all that talk of ideophoncity comes into play. To render the literary and rhetorical effects of ideophoncity, I relied on figurative language and poetic devices where I was unable to use ideophony itself. For instance, the wind in *Kaze no Matasaburo* has a unique rhythmic quality which I found reminiscent of marching, so I used this metaphor of 'marching' to personify the wind, just as Miyazawa uses ideophony to animate the wind. In total, I translated 26 percent of ideophones using poetic devices such as metaphor, sound symbolism, alliteration, simile, rhythm and repetition, and I'm happy to say that complete omission occurred in only 8.47 percent of instances.

Still, translation and style are complex processes to which statistics cannot do justice. For this reason, I'd like to finish with an excerpt from my translation – one of my favourite scenes, in

which one of the schoolchildren becomes certain that the new kid, Saburo, is no ordinary boy – no, he must be none other than Matasaburo the Wind Imp:

*Before long, Saburo had arrived in front of the school doors yonder. He then turned around and stood there for a while, with his head slightly bent as if calculating something.*

*Naturally, everyone goggled and gawked at him from afar. Looking troubled, Saburo folded his hands behind his back, and started walking past the staffroom over towards the embankment.*

*Thereupon, the wind blew "whoosh!" and the grass on the embankment rustled and bustled; in the centre of the schoolyard too, "swoosh!" a cloud of dust rose, and when it reached the school doors, it whipped and whirled, spiralling into a small whirlwind. The yellowish dust coiled into the shape of an upside-down bottle, and rose above the roof.*

*Then, Kasuke yelled out:*

*"I was right! He really is Matasaburo! He can make the wind blow!"*

**Laura Fritch** is currently studying Japanese > English translation in the Masters of Interpreting and Translation (MITS) program at Monash University. See a fuller biography at the end of her article in our April issue, available [here](#).

\* Dingemanse M. (2019). "Ideophone" as a comparative concept. In: Akita K & Pardeshi P (eds), *Ideophones, Mimetics, Expressives*. John Benjamins Publishing Co, 13–33. [You can read an outline of the article [here](#).]

Portrait of Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933) taken in the 1920s  
Image source: Kamakura Museum of Literature archives, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons





# *Birthday Book of Storms* (*Scrisorile corbului*): a journey across languages



In 2021, playwright **R. Johns** engaged literary translator **Cristina Savin** to translate her play *Birthday Book of Storms* into Romanian. As Cristina familiarised herself with the play's back story – a tragic literary relationship in which R. Johns has a longstanding interest – they found themselves in deep and involved dialogue. Their

conversations traversed the languages scattered around the play's English text, exploring the symbolism of certain words – such as some bird names – in different cultures. Two years on, they discuss the process for *In Touch*:



Cristina (right) and  
R. Johns (above left)

**TRIGGER WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS THEMES  
THAT MAY BE DISTRESSING TO SOME PEOPLE**

TED: (GIRL staring at him) What's she doing at that rock pool?  
ASSIA: Reciting. Nursery rhymes.  
TED: (staring back at GIRL) Strange your daughter.  
ASSIA: Yours.  
TED: Always staring. Why does she stare so?  
ASSIA: She loves you.  
TED: Like she's looking into my soul.

TED: (TÂNĂRA, privindu-l insistent) Ce face-n băltoaca aia dintre stânci?  
ASSIA: Recită. Poezioare pentru copii.  
TED (privind-o pe TÂNĂRĂ insistent): E cam ciudată flică-ta.  
ASSIA: Vrei să spui flică-ta.  
TED: Mă fixează cu privirea. De ce?  
ASSIA: Te iubește.  
TED: Parcă se uită direct în sufletul meu.

**R. Johns:** As a playwright my interest in American poet Sylvia Plath spans decades, and led me on a further journey to Plath's husband (the British Poet Laureate Ted Hughes), Assia Wevill (a refugee of Russian-speaking Latvian, German and Jewish descent), and the tragic triangular relationship between these three in the early 1960s.

My first stop was the archives of Emory University in the United States, where I immersed myself in studying letters from Ted to Assia that document the secret relationship from which their daughter was born: a forgotten child I call the Girl.

The Girl's short life, against which her parents'

conflicted relationship was acted out, inspired me to write my play *Birthday Book of Storms*. This work is my own imagining of Ted and Assia's story against the backdrop of this barely lived life, the Girl's life. An innocent witness to their tragic relationship, this child investigates their lives in a magical surrealist temporality.

**Cristina:** *As I reached the end of the storyline on my first reading of the original play, I was struck by the power of emotions expressed in the final words. It was this moment that set the tone for my subsequent translation. While the play may be described as a love triangle, to me it is a story of love, deception, truth, understanding and*

*narrative as I retold the complex, bittersweet and lyrical tale in Romanian.*

Your translation is lyrical, and this is precisely how I wrote the play – thinking of a story that is both haunting and lyrical. Yet, while there are references to the theme of suicide (as first Sylvia then Assia took their own lives while involved with Ted, with Assia taking Shura's at the same time), these are counteracted by the child's desire to live and deliver a message.

But in this imagined story no one takes care of Shura, the Girl, and at times she is forced into an independent existence. And her wisdom does not arise from life experience, as she didn't have the chance to experience life, but from her supreme sensitivity to relationships and their dynamics.

*The dynamics you mention have deep layers, as the Girl's world is shaped by the psychic space of the parents. But there is more to it, and as a translator I was mesmerised by the rich, sometimes dark dialogues between Sylvia and Ted, and also between Assia and Ted.*

*You occasionally punctuate the dialogues with multilingual lines to mark the richness of Assia's German, Latvian Russian and Jewish background, and for me – as a translator – it wasn't a difficult choice to maintain the presence of three languages in 'my' version: keeping the Russian and German words and phrases, while translating the English into Romanian.*

*And just like you, I immersed myself in reading and research to gain a sense of the poetic encounters between Ted and Sylvia. In fact, the Hughes–Plath relationship is told – from Ted's side – in Birthday Letters, the collection of his poems (written over a period of 25 years) that inspired the title of your play.*

*These readings helped me unlock some mysteries, especially as I worked on my translation of the words 'lastochka' (Russian for the martin, a smaller relative of the swallow) and 'crow'. The latter inspired my choice of the play's title in Romanian, Scrisorile corbului, the English back-translation of which is 'The raven's letters'.*

*I also wanted to reach deeper into the mysteries surrounding the bird itself. In the documentary*

*continued overleaf*



The characters' intertwined destinies and their extreme emotions assume Greek tragic proportions in a story orchestrated by two powerful women, the rivals Sylvia and Assia – a story in which one choice can have catastrophic consequences. The mytho-poetic world of Hughes and Plath, and the obsessions of Assia haunted by her rival Sylvia, are the framework for this play as the text descends into a world of memory.

So, the setting of my play is a magical realist library which transforms into a number of other settings – a beach, a garden in Devon, a flat in London, a park – as traumatic events are brought to the foreground in a narrative that transitions between the real and the fantastical.

*forgiveness through the eyes of the Girl (age uncertain). And it is Girl with a capital 'G' because throughout the play you refer to Ted and Assia's daughter Shura as Girl, enhancing the mystery around this character as we wait until the final lines to find out who she is:*

Meet Alexandra Tatiana Elise.  
Known as Shura-

Know me

The one who finds the truth.

*This is why I decided to translate the play with a sense of innocence, and to keep the focus on the*



*continued from previous page*

*film Seven Crows a Secret, Ted Hughes himself reads from his famous work Crow, and this remarkable piece of footage is followed by a discussion of the bird's mythic history. I obtained further insights into the symbols and beliefs surrounding the crow in my own culture from a comprehensive dictionary of Romanian folklore.*

Hughes's *Crow* was written after Plath's suicide and during his relationship with Assia and their child, and the crow became a central image in the play. I recall our many conversations and reflections around the meaning of the word 'crow' in particular. We delved deep into different cultures, religions, mythologies and folklores to grasp the complexities behind this one word, and this helped us unpack and explore the layers of Hughes's complex personality.

*Yes, our discoveries were quite amazing: in some cultures the crow is associated with good luck and fortune, in others with wisdom, wit or selflessness, and occasionally it is associated with mischief. Interestingly, in Christianity, its relative the raven is sometimes interpreted as untrustworthy (much like Ted?) due to its failure to return. In Romanian folklore the crow symbolises intelligence,*

R. Johns and Cristina in conversation (English and Romanian)  
at La Mama theatre, 20 August 2022 (photograph: Leo Savin)



GIRL: (trepidation, not sure) Is Crow here?

NIGHT LIBRARIAN: I hate crows.

GIRL: If you cross your eyes like a crow you can see the past and future.

NIGHT LIBRARIAN: Don't! Stop those silly mannerisms. If you mention that bird again, I'll throw you out.

GIRL: Is it a lie? The Day Librarian said Ted dedicated "Crow" to Assia and Shura?

NIGHT LIBRARIAN: Dummkopf. Ted was such an idiot. If Assia was a bird she'd be an owl. Only owls can see at night.

GIRL: I'm scared of owls always living in the dark.

NIGHT LIBRARIAN: You can be - lastochka, little swallow. The swallow sees in daylight. You can protect the owl. If crows find owl in daylight they will mob and kill it. But if owl finds crow at night. It will tear its head off.

NIGHT LIBRARIAN AND GIRL: (laughing, together) And suck out its eyes.

TÂNĂRA: (trepidație, nesiguranță) E aici Corbul?

BIBLIOTECARA DE NOAPTE: Urăsc corbii.

TÂNĂRA: Dacă-ți încrucișezi ochii cum face corbul, poți vedea trecutul și viitorul.

BIBLIOTECARA DE NOAPTE: Te rog încetează cu prostiile astea. Dacă pomeniști iar de pasărea aia, te dau afară.

TÂNĂRA: E o minciună? Ea a zis că Ted a dedicat "Corbul" Assiei și Shurei?

BIBLIOTECARA DE NOAPTE: Dummkopf. Ted era atât de idiot. Dacă Assia ar fi fost o pasăre, ar fi fost o bufniță. Doar bufnițele pot vedea noaptea.

TÂNĂRA: Mi-e frică de bufnițe, trăiesc numai în întuneric.

BIBLIOTECARA DE NOAPTE: Tu ai putea fi - lastochka, micuța rândunică. Rândunica vede pe lumină. Poți proteja bufnița. Corbii, dacă găsesc o bufniță în timpul zilei, o încolțesc și o omoară. Dar dacă bufnița găsește un corb noaptea, îi smulge capul.

BIBLIOTECARA DE NOAPTE ȘI TÂNĂRA: (râzând, în același timp) Și-i soarbe ochii.



is believed to be able to steal or provide food (in an altruistic sense), and is thought of as a traveller between worlds who can foretell death.

The crow's symbolism and many faces aside, I was torn between translating 'crow' directly as 'cioară' and choosing a darker, more powerful option – that of the word 'corb' ('raven' in English, a larger member of the corvidae family of birds). In the end, after much consideration and discussion, we both agreed that 'corb' (hence Scrisorile corbului) is more fitting with Ted's profile.

Our reflections around translating the meanings behind words such as 'crow' and 'lastochka' ('little swallow', a lovely Russian word which is carefully preserved in your translation) gave us the idea of staging a Romanian reading of the play.

This idea then became a cultural project. In August 2022, in the same week as it launched the original English version of *Birthday Book of Storms*, Melbourne's La Mama theatre also staged – for the first time in its history – a bilingual discussion (also screened online) of the translated play that catered for multicultural audiences.

Yes, my family and friends in Romania, the UK and Canada were amongst those who watched this! On stage at La Mama, we had the opportunity to introduce to our audience a video of a Romanian reading of excerpts from my translation, filmed in June 2022 at the Vasile Alecsandri Theatre in the city of Iași, Romania with a group of talented actors.

Following its Australian and Romanian adventures, *Birthday Book of Storms* will continue to delight audiences at the Hannah Playhouse in Wellington, New Zealand in a season scheduled for 2 to 10 August 2023, before taking the world by storm (pun intended) later this year and through 2024.

**Cristina Savin** is a French–English / Romanian–English freelance translator and professional editor. She holds a master's degree in translation and a PhD in translation studies from Monash University. Cristina has been working freelance since 2017 and has completed translation projects in various settings including Commonwealth law enforcement, authentication of artwork, health care, medical, education and literature, as well as a subtitling project for the European Union.



*Birthday Book of Storms* (Scrisorile Corbului), poster for La Mama, August 2022 (designer: Peter Mumford)

Born in South Wales, UK, **R. Johns** holds a BA in drama from Manchester University, UK and a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in theatre/acting from the University of California, Riverside. She is a recipient of a grant from the Australian Government's Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund for her play *As Told By The Boys Who Fed Me Apples*, which was also nominated for an Australian Writers Guild Award for excellence (known as an AWGIE),

while *Birthday Book of Storms* was nominated for a Griffin Award. R. Johns's work has been recognised internationally. In 2017 her play *Black Box 149*, translated into German by André Horst Bastian, was performed at the Staatstheater Nürnberg in Germany and also featured in the 'Australia now Germany' program of the federal government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

# Assessing career pathways and the viability of the T&I profession

Researchers: Erika Gonzalez Garcia and Jacqueline Skewes

Institution: RMIT University, funded by Translators and Interpreters Australia\*

As is well known, the translating and interpreting profession is characterised by a high degree of casualisation and contracting through labour hire agencies.

For recently graduated T/Is, the transition from education and training to professional practice is complex due to the insecure work environment. In June 2022 RMIT surveyed recent T&I graduates about their experiences, in research funded by the union Translators and Interpreters Australia.\* The survey was distributed via email and social media, and also sent to AUSIT members via a dedicated eFlash. Of the 243 respondents, 96 were members of AUSIT. Based on the survey results, the following key observations can be made:

- the median graduate is a female in her 30s
- 79% of respondents have gone on to practise in the profession as either translators (24),

interpreters (104) or both (48)

- 55% are earning less than \$20,000 per year
- 70% of those who have entered the profession are underemployed, and are working 22.4 hours a week on average
- 59% of those who took the NAATI certification exams passed on their first attempt.

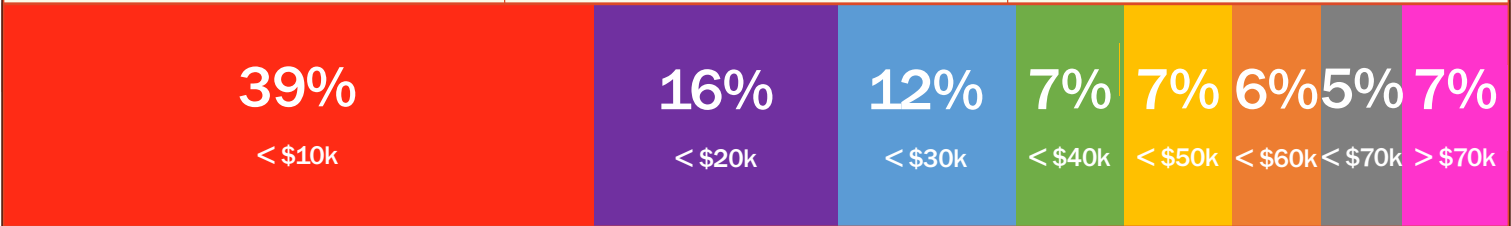
Of those respondents who have gone on to obtain NAATI certification, the majority are still earning less than \$20,000 per year, while for those who have left the profession or not entered it, the greatest obstacles cited were the NAATI exam and the lack of work/income in the industry.

Ninety-seven percent of those who have entered the profession reported working for language services providers, with most working for 3 or more agencies on a frequent basis. Even so, less than a third were content with the number of hours they were working

overall, and 72 percent were seeking additional work. Few were receiving any form of superannuation or annual leave, and 40 percent continue to work in other roles in addition to practising as a T/I. Respondents also provided a number of suggestions regarding what AUSIT could do to better to help the T&I industry. The majority of suggestions were in relation to the provision of greater and more varied professional development opportunities (25), while other suggestions related to advocacy and certification. Based on these results, it appears our industry still has significant work to do to ensure our profession is viable for new graduates.

Read the TIA\* version of the full report [here](#).

\* Translators and Interpreters Australia is a division of Professionals Australia.



ANNUAL INCOME OF RESPONDENTS  
< means less than and > means greater than





# Language for the mind: three quick questions for Maria Cassaniti, manager of a mental health centre with a multicultural clientele

Transcultural Mental Health Centre is located in Parramatta, the heart of Sydney's ethnically diverse western suburbs. We asked TMHC's manager, Maria Cassaniti, a few questions about how and when the centre uses T&I services.

Maria at a NSW Health Multicultural Media Online Conference focused on public health updates and the Transcultural Mental Health Line, a telephone service available to support people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in NSW (February 2023)

### 1. How often and when do you require the services of a T/I (translator or interpreter) at TMHC?

An interpreter is engaged when a bilingual clinician is unavailable to provide service inhouse with a specific language required. In such circumstances a cross-cultural assessment is undertaken between an experienced clinician, an interpreter, and the consumer and/or carer. An interpreter may also need to be engaged when a warm handover is undertaken with a service and a consumer. This may also present as an opportunity to build the skills of the referrer in working with an interpreter. We also engage translators in the development of multilingual mental health resources. TMHC has a culturally diverse and multilingual workforce, therefore we use T/Is in 15 to 20 percent of our work, sourcing practitioners via TIS, HCIS and private language service agencies.

### 2. In the mental health sector, what qualities

### do you value most in an interpreter, and does this differ from what you look for in a translator?

With an interpreter we look for someone who can provide context to not just the words, but any meaning behind what is being said and how it is being communicated – for example, culture-specific gestures which are relevant to understanding what is going on for a consumer as they share their story. I do not want the interpreter to fix, change, clean up or edit the consumer's words. It is not only what is being said, but rather how it is being said that is important, as this helps in understanding what is happening for that individual. The interpreter is a crucial member of the professional team in mental health service delivery. They can assist situations by giving exact renditions of content and of a client's tone, describing aspects of speech that cannot be interpreted into English, helping a clinician to understand distorted speech, speech pace, sentence construction and intelligibility of words. With a translator, I'm looking for someone who

can look at a written text and relay it to the community in such a way that the readers will be able to understand the message we're trying to convey. When we test our resources in the community, it is important that the translator considers the feedback and either incorporates it into the text or provides a clear explanation as to why something should be written in the way proposed. As everywhere, the languages spoken in Australia have evolved differently than in the countries of origin, therefore there are local colloquialisms or terms, including mental health terms, which are more meaningful than a textbook translation.

### 3. What aspects of how a T/I works would encourage you to use them again?

Communication is of paramount importance in any clinical relationship. A T/I working in the mental health space must be approachable, engaging, professional, open to discussing and providing feedback, and comfortable working in this space. They are a key partner in supporting the quality of service a client receives and their recovery over both the short and the longer term.

# 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:

## EMILY PLANK

translator

German, French & Spanish>English

Perth, WA

2006

2012

tourism, marketing, literature

## ISABEL VON PROLLIUS

translator

German<English

Perth, WA

December 2003

December 2014

visa applications, skills assessments, historical documents, personal letters

# 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

I really enjoyed the translation components of my university degree, which was in French, German and linguistics, so after graduating in 2006 I decided to look into translation as a profession. There weren't anywhere near as many resources available then as there are now, but I completed an online Certificate in Translation, created some profiles on a few platforms, sent my CV off to numerous agencies, did lots of test translations ... and ended up landing a few jobs! It just kind of went from there. And I still work with some of my original clients to this day!

## A2

The most interesting project I've completed to date was a literary translation of a book written by German travel journalist and ultramarathon runner Peter Hinze, about his experience of running the entire length of Nepal along its 1,850+ km section of the Great Himalaya Trail (a proposed trekking route across the Himalayas from east to west, following ancient trading routes from Pakistan through India, Nepal and Bhutan and ending in Tibet). That area of the world has always fascinated me, so reading and translating Peter's experiences was a dream job. I was simultaneously educated and captivated by his descriptions of the stunning scenery and the amazing people, cultures and religious traditions – mainly Buddhism, Bön (an indigenous Tibetan religion that predates Buddhism) and the pre-religious animism – but also of the social and environmental issues increasingly being faced in that part of the world. This translation project has made me even more keen to visit the Himalayan region myself.

## A1

I did a few units in translation as part of my degree to become a high school teacher. When I came to Australia, one of the first friends I made was a translator. She talked me into sitting the NAATI exam, and I worked as a high school teacher and translator for several years. The arrival of my third child coincided with me taking over a German language school, and I now translate during the day and teach three nights a week.

## A2

I've been translating a file of love letters and other correspondence from World War II, it's an ongoing project that started a few years ago. The writer was a young German lady who worked as a secretary for the Wehrmacht (the armed forces of Germany's Third Reich) and was posted in Paris for a while. Her letters provide a great insight into what life in Paris was like for the German occupation forces. In Paris, she worked with Ernst Juenger, a highly decorated officer and philosopher. She exchanged a lot of passionate love letters with her husband, a Luftwaffe pilot who died in the war. Her second marriage was to a British officer she met right after the war, and their son is my client. Her later letters describe life in Scotland and the difficulties she faced there as a German so soon after the war. She also expressed her concerns about her son not doing well at university and making poor personal choices. As a mother of teenage boys this touched me greatly, and I'm happy to share that the son – my client – ended up having a great career and has been happily married for many years. A very rewarding project on many fronts.