

IN TOUCH

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS

Special feature:

AI in T&I, Part 3

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Past President awarded medal

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Lawyer / interpreter / author

A past Vice President of AUSIT wins ACT Literary Award 2025
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AUSIT's social get-togethers

A report on their value
< pages 10-11 & 13

Plus more ...

... including inspiring insights into the role played by T&I in strengthening minority languages; a tribute to a dedicated member and humanitarian advocate; recent research into ensuring effective interpreted communication in courts; and much more ...



< In Touch

Autumn 2026

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The submission deadline for the Winter 2026 issue is 10 May
Read our [Submission Guidelines here](#)

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Cover image

Indonesian-born and -based AUSIT member Ira Susana snaps a group shot during a NSW Branch social get-together in Bankstown (see Lama Al-Akhras's article, pages 10–11 & 13 – Lama is near the back, in black with a red belt)

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www.ausit.org/in-touch-magazine/

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

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

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AUSIT past president awarded a NSW Premier's Multicultural Community Medal 2026

Márta Bárány BEM OAM, AUSIT past president (1997–99), has been awarded the NSW Premier's Interpreters and Translators Medal 2026.

The annual NSW Premier's Multicultural Community Medals 'pay tribute to the many outstanding people who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to promote social cohesion and harmony across our state,' and Márta qualifies – as we say in her adopted country – in spades.

Born in Hungary in 1932, Márta's family fled the arrival of Russian forces in 1945, and migrated to Australia under the United Nations Displaced Persons Scheme in 1951. She's been working as an interpreter and translator for over



photo by Salty Dingo, courtesy of Multicultural NSW

50 years (and at 93 has no plans to stop soon), and was involved in the establishment of both the Telephone Interpreting Service (TIS) in 1972 and NAATI.

We're hoping to interview Márta for our AUSIT Stalwarts series in a future issue, if she can fit us into her busy schedule. Meanwhile you can read more about her [here](#).

Congratulations Márta!

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

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[image: iStock.com/gustavofraza0]

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News in brief

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

11 Dec: Lost in translation: Deloitte puts cost of interpreter shortfall at \$2bn
themandarin.com.au

22 Dec: AI translation is replacing interpreters in GP care – here's why that's troubling
theconversation.com

2 Jan: GPs warned against relying on Google Translate amid lack of interpreters
pulsetoday.co.uk

17 Jan: Supreme Court case continues despite more than 200 interpreter errors
abc.net.au/news

15 Feb: What French Romance Novels Could Tell Us About A.I. and Translation Jobs
nytimes.com

24 Feb: Witches, Nazi collaborators and banned books: International Booker prize announces 2026 longlist
theguardian.com/news

1 Mar: Accessibility in courts remains a challenge, says lawyer
thehindu.com/news

8 Mar: Trump goes off about interpreter in front of Latin American leaders in Doral
yahoo.com/news

12 Mar: London Book Fair 2026: At the LBF's Literary Translation Center, Panels Address Ongoing Concerns for Translators
publishingperspectives.com

16 Mar: AI Can Translate for Hospital Patients. Should It?
aimmediahouse.com

17 Mar: Have you considered a career in translating and interpreting?
sbs.com.au (podcast)

18 Mar: Sign language interpreter shortage excludes people with hearing impairments – PDM
namibian.com.na

19 Mar: Lost in Translation
abc.net.au/listen

19 Mar: Doctors missed Gia's UTI after childbirth. The Vietnamese Australian woman's death was preventable, coroner finds
theguardian.com/australia-news

22 Mar: 4 books that changed completely during translation
msn.com/en-us/news/

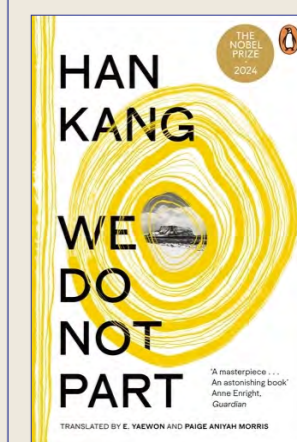
[image: cover of one of the 4 books, *Cobalt Blue* – English translation by Jerry Pinto]

22 Mar: Bizarre moment UFC boss Dana White needs interpreter to translate ENGLISH question: 'I'm really screwed'
dailymail.co.uk/sport

24 Mar: Advocates blast PMH after deaf patient is denied interpreter
tribune242.com/news

26 Mar: Ex-Trump interpreter recalls US-North Korea summits, translation challenges in delicate diplomacy
koreatimes.co.kr

26 Mar: Hearing Impaired Community Challenged by Low Sign Language Support in Cambodia
kiripost.com



27 Mar: Han Kang's NBCC win again spotlights art of translation
kdnworld.com/news

[image: cover of *We Do Not Part* – English translation by E. Yaewon & Paige Aniyah Morris]

31 Mar: 'Hope, insight and burning humanity': 2026 International Booker prize shortlist announced
theguardian.com/books

[image: cover of shortlisted *The Witch* by Marie Ndiaye – English translation by Jordan Stump]

6 Apr: The 93yo interpreter defying dementia: her secret to a sharp brain
thesenior.com.au



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AUSIT



From lawyer to award-winning author: navigating an 'unexpected life' in Australia

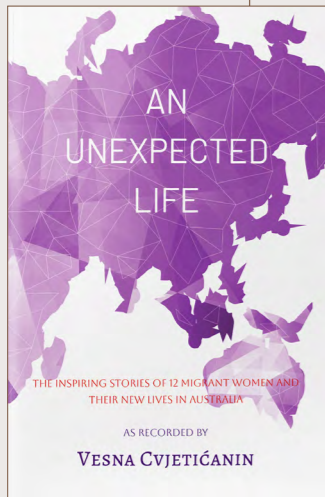
Serbian-English interpreter **Vesna Cvjetičanin** is also a lawyer and a mediator. She was AUSIT's Vice President (Communications & PR, 2020-23), and last year she added award-winning author to her achievements. Vesna won the 2025 ACT Literary Award (Non-Fiction category) for her book *An Unexpected Life*, which explores the experiences of 12 female migrants to Australia, including Vesna herself. **Meri Dragičević**, former president of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of the ACT, recently interviewed Vesna about the book, the award and the women's migrant experiences.



Above: Vesna (left) and Meri

Meri Dragičević (MD): Vesna, thanks for agreeing to come to this interview for AUSIT's *In Touch* magazine.

I was lucky to be at the promotion of your book, and I've read it. Let's start from the book's title, *An Unexpected Life*. The word 'unexpected', in essence, means something that we didn't plan, that can surprise us – in either a positive or a negative way. Is this what you expected to reveal when you selected your 11 protagonists?



Vesna Cvjetičanin (VC): Yes, I knew about those women's stories, and I knew that whatever they had been through actually was in a way unexpected, a surprise – either for them, for their families, or for the new friends they met in Australia. That was something I wanted the book to demonstrate. We consulted – the 12 of us – and agreed on the title *An Unexpected Life* because there were differences amongst us as to how we came to Australia and why – it was for many, many different reasons – but none of us could have actually known what to expect. Many aspects of our lives have been unexpected.

MD: All your protagonists are bilingual as they came to Australia after their formative years. So, which other languages do they speak?

VC: Oh, I could start with my own, which I call Serbo-Croatian. And then

we have a number of languages represented: Chinese, Afghani, two women speak Romanian. Then we have one of the languages that is spoken in Ghana, then Macedonian and Spanish. Many different languages, because women come from all over the world.

MD: Arrival in another country can be love at first sight ... or it can be a trauma. Did you – in your conversations with your protagonists – find out how their first encounters with Australia were?

VC: There are 11 chapters, one for each woman, and my story weaves through theirs, and every story has something special and different to say. All of us were migrants who arrived in Australia as adults. Some came as single mothers, some came with partners or husbands, some came with families. For some of us, migrating to Australia was very challenging, with many obstacles and

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... we came ... for many, many reasons ... none of us could have actually known what to expect.

difficulties. For others, it was a bit easier. Regardless of the initial experiences, it was a new life, new experiences, new ways of life we all had to learn not only to cope with, but to thrive in. And we all managed to do that.

MD: What were the common traits you discovered among these women that made the hardships of migration bearable?

VC: The mere fact that they were able and willing and happy to talk to me about the often very personal experiences shows the strength of character. There needs to be a certain resilience – a high level of resilience – and also adaptability. They are really positive individuals; they have positive personalities and strong characters. What is also important is that they have self-belief and self-respect, and a tolerance of other people and other cultures. One of the key threads is not being afraid of the new.

MD: How critical was the role of professional associations like AUSIT and NAATI for these migrants arriving in Australia?

VC: Language support was really critical. AUSIT has always been a backbone of this service. What AUSIT actually ensures is that the level and the quality of services is top-notch, because members need to hold certain certifications and qualifications provided by NAATI. AUSIT members do a lot of good-hearted volunteer work towards ensuring that there is capacity in Australia to actually deliver

those language services. It's capacity building for the country.

MD: As a writer, you mentioned a dilemma regarding which language to use for your future books. Could you explain that?

VC: Yes, I'm faced with a dilemma, and that's whether to write about my interesting experiences from Serbia – the first 30 years of my life – in English, and if it's going to be interesting for our Australian audience. Also, whether some of my experiences since the age of 30 in this 'unexpected life' should be described in Serbian. My gut feeling is that each specific experience needs to be placed in the language that it occurred in.

MD: Congratulations on your recent success! How does it feel to have your work recognised with a literary award?

VC: Receiving the ACT Literary Award 2025 for non-fiction was really a very humbling experience – another unexpected event in my life. People quote the Bible as saying 'Don't be proud', but I do have that feeling in my heart for my book achieving the award.

Vesna's book can be purchased online, or directly from her – you can email Vesna here.

continued from page 9

And then there was a moment I did not see coming: the final chapter, on ergonomics and accessibility, references an article I wrote for *In Touch* in 2021* – a practitioner's piece, cited in a Routledge handbook alongside peer-reviewed research from around the world. It was a reminder that what we contribute to professional conversations matters, even beyond the audiences we originally write for. Thoroughly researched, carefully edited and rigorously referenced, this handbook offers practitioners a comprehensive refresher on the history of technology in interpreting settings, from the tools we have used for decades to those currently emerging. More importantly, it addresses the questions that matter most to our daily practice: quality, working conditions, professional standards and the ethical use of technology and AI. It is also well worth reading if you are interested in exploring computer-assisted interpreting: the volume includes a comprehensive, research-based overview of tools and apps, from terminology management and notetaking applications to CAI tools and ASR-assisted workflows.

If a practitioner's article written for an Australian audience can find its way into a Routledge Handbook, this book was written for us too.

** You can find Nancy's article here (scroll down to the Summer 2021 issue, pages 16-17).*

Spanish translator, interpreter and live subtitler Nancy Guevara has specialised training in speech-to-text interpreting from the University of Vigo, Spain and a Master of Accessibility to Media, Arts and Culture from the University of Macerata, Italy. She is a seasoned NAATI practitioner with solid experience providing live subtitling services for high-profile international clients and public institutions.

Vale Marion Gevers



In early February AUSIT lost a dedicated member whose volunteer efforts as a NSW Branch Committee member, National Conference Organising Committee member (2023), abstract reviewer and mentor will be greatly missed.

Marion recognised multilingualism as a gift ... and also as an instrument of power.

Marion inherited her love of languages from her mother, who spoke six languages, as well as from her experiences growing up as a native French-speaking Fleming in post-war Antwerp.

She completed her primary schooling in French and her high school years in Dutch, and also studied Spanish, Italian, German, Latin and Ancient Greek, as well as developing a proficiency in English greater than many native speakers. An avid traveller, she put effort into learning the local language before visiting a country out of a sense of both respect and curiosity for the diversity of cultures.

After studying stenography in Brussels, where the headquarters of the European Union brought many cultures together, Marion went on to study psychology at the 540-year-old Catholic University of Louvain, at a time of unrest which was due in part to the uneven status of Belgium's linguistic communities, and in part to the growing Flemish secessionist

movement. When visiting her native Antwerp after migrating to Australia in 1985, Marion was disappointed to find she had to speak English in shops to avoid the risk of being refused service if her French accent was detected when speaking Dutch.

Marion recognised multilingualism as a gift, an insight into other ways of understanding the world, and also as an instrument of power. Her dedication to translating and interpreting came from not only her love of language, but also a desire to even the scales, particularly for people who needed to inform and advocate for themselves in institutions such as the healthcare and legal systems. She was a NAATI-certified translator and interpreter (French-English) for Hunter New England Health with expertise in medical terminology. Marion also translated other material, from official documents to novels and biographies, and once worked on material for a case in the Federal Court of Australia.

Her dedication to the profession included supporting colleagues, and she poured voluntary effort into AUSIT, NAATI and the Alliance Française, as well as ensuring she passed on her French to her children and grandchildren.

While maintaining a strong commitment to professional ethics, including the duty of neutrality, Marion's dedication to clients went beyond interpreting. Her colleagues at Hunter New England Health's Multicultural Health Unit will not forget the letter of thanks they received from the mother of a young Swiss man who had lost the use of his legs in a tragic accident while visiting Australia. When his mother – who barely spoke English – flew out to Australia, Marion not only translated for her but helped her navigate the health system, provided both practical advice about the local area and emotional support, and remained in contact with her after she returned to Switzerland.

Having been one of the first AUSIT members from the Newcastle region, Marion was a committed member of the NSW Branch Committee for many years, and the only member from beyond Sydney attending monthly meetings. She brought insightful contributions to ensure the branch's work was pertinent and accessible not only to those in major cities, but across New South Wales, and was a member of the Organising Committee

for the AUSIT National Conference held in Sydney in 2023.

Marion's sense of global citizenship, interest in the world's many cultures, and sense of empathy led naturally to humanitarian advocacy. Beyond her interpreting and translation work, she was deeply engaged in the community. A fierce advocate for refugees and asylum seekers, she coordinated Newcastle & Lake Macquarie Grandmothers for Refugees, leading the group on weekly vigils in Newcastle for seven years, and monthly vigils for the past three years – commitment and inspiration that was recognised with an award from the City of Newcastle in 2025.

Marion's generosity, wisdom and energy touched many lives, and her unexpected departure at the age of just 75 will be a loss not only to the interpreting and translation profession, but to the many organisations that she involved herself in right to the end of her life. While many will sorely miss her energy, enthusiasm and determination, she will leave behind the support and guidance she gave to others, and the legacy



Clockwise from below: Marion with her parents and five siblings in 1955 (Marion is leaning against her father's knee); at her daughter Melanie's wedding to Ben in 2010 (in purple); with her granddaughters Josie (in red) and Eleanor in 2020; and leading a Grandmothers for Refugees vigil in 2025, with fellow activists Jude Conway, Anne Too and Wendy Goffet



of her work for AUSIT and the profession more broadly. Marion is survived by her children Melanie and Jonathan and two grandchildren.

This tribute to Marion Gevers was compiled from contributions made by Marion's son Jonathan and daughter Melanie, her colleague Vesna Dragoje, AUSIT NSW Branch Chair Silvia Martinez and ex-Chair Camille Lapierre, and Sue Outram from the Newcastle & Lake Macquarie Grandmothers for Refugees group.

Celebrating women at the ECCQ International Women's Week Breakfast

'When women thrive, the whole community thrives' – these are the wise words of the Honourable Fiona Simpson MP, Speaker of the House of the Queensland Parliament, during her keynote address at the ECCQ* International Women's Week Breakfast, hosted by the Women's Ethnic Network (WEN) on Saturday 14 March as part of Queensland Women's Week – Shaping tomorrow together. AUSIT QLD is a member of ECCQ,* and its PD Coordinator **Nancy Guevara**, along with our national Advocacy Committee Chair **Patricia Argüello de Avila**, had the privilege of hearing Fiona's speech in person. Patti reports on the inspiring event here.



Above: Patti (left) and Nancy at the event

* Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland

More than 300 attendees enjoyed the delicious breakfast provided by the Greek Club, but even more importantly than food for the body, we were all privileged to enjoy food for the soul that morning.

Heaven knows I like to sleep in on Saturdays, but getting up earlyish to have a shower and get going proved a great idea last Saturday. I'd do it again!

The learning opportunities at this amazing gathering of around 300 women, many of them migrants and humanitarian entrants like me, were – as my grandchildren would say – awesome!

And the networking opportunity was amazing. I met many exceptional women who will no doubt make an impression on both my working and my personal life into the future; I also encountered past acquaintances with whom – having shared the inspiring talks and presentations – friendships have been renewed and reinvigorated, as we found so much common ground.

Heaven knows I like to sleep in on Saturdays, but ... I'd do it again!

The statements I quickly scrawled in my notebook during the event included:

- Shaping tomorrow together**
- Women don't realise we've got the goods**
- Women sometimes doubt ourselves**
- We all need to unlock our leadership potential to inspire and elevate**
- Nobody is too small to make a difference**

As a professional interpreter and translator with decades of experience and a passionate advocate for professionalism in T&I services, the advice to 'Be unapologetically fearless in your essence' resonated with me, and as an educator, so did 'Keep listening to achieve full understanding of where "the other" is', and

also 'State your message with confidence, compassion and clarity' – the battle cry of the host of the event, speaker extraordinaire Shiv Martin.

I'm still buzzing from the optimism and verve that surrounded me in that big room, and I congratulate AUSIT QLD on being a member of ECCQ, where wonderful things are happening for migrant and refugee communities, our wonderful stakeholders.

I'd like to encourage more AUSIT members to take part in this type of community gathering, where we can spread the good word about our profession.

You can read Patti's bio in our last (December 2025) issue, available [here](#) (page 13).

The Routledge Handbook of Interpreting, Technology and AI (2025)

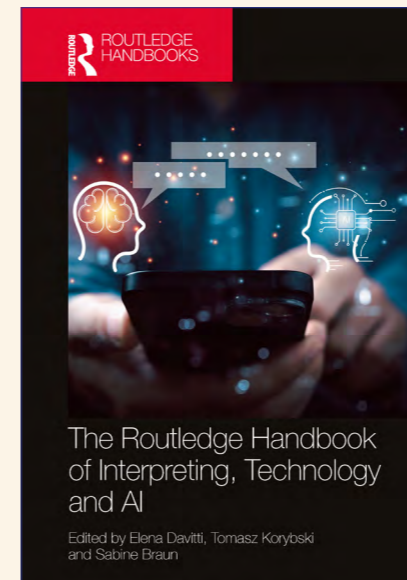
edited by Elena Davitti, Tomasz Korybski & Sabine Braun
reviewed by Nancy Guevara



Cover reproduced courtesy of Taylor & Francis Group

I'll be honest: when I first picked up the *Routledge Handbook of Interpreting, Technology and AI*, I expected to struggle.

Routledge handbooks have a reputation for being weighty, dense, and written *by* academics, *for* academics. Plus it ran to twenty-two chapters in five parts, with contributors from across the globe ... but what I found surprised me. This is a book about *us*. It's about the platforms we log into, the tools we experiment with, the conditions we navigate,



and the questions we ask ourselves about where the profession is heading.

The volume covers an impressive amount of ground. Part I maps the landscape of technology-enabled interpreting, from telephone and video-mediated interpreting to remote simultaneous interpreting, video relay service, portable equipment, consecutive interpreting and tablets. Parts II and III address training and automation, while Part IV covers the professional settings where we work: conference, healthcare, legal, immigration and refugee contexts. Part V tackles the bigger questions of quality, ethics, cognition, professional standards, workflows, and ergonomics.

Reading across all five parts, the same themes emerge consistently. Almost every chapter navigates the tension between the genuine promise of technology and the real risks of cognitive overload, declining working conditions and erosion of quality. Human expertise, the authors argue, remains irreplaceable in determining when and how technology should be used. The book also provides a thorough exploration of ethics: corporate influence over tool design, data privacy and ownership, the risk of AI limiting linguistic diversity, and the need for responsible use of AI-based automated interpreting in high-stakes settings.

One concept that immediately caught my attention is 'practisearcher' (a practising interpreter/translator who also conducts research). For those of us interested in research,

This book is about us.

this is an inspiring call to action. As one of the authors highlights, evidence-based research is urgently needed to give clients, institutions and policymakers an accurate picture of what technology can and cannot do. Practitioners are well placed to contribute to that evidence, whether by becoming practisearchers themselves, or by participating in academic studies. Many technological developments in interpreting were pioneered by practitioners long before academia studied them, which is a reason not to fear what is coming next, but to engage critically with new tools. The book also makes a strong case for embedding technology and digital proficiency into interpreter training programs, arguing that equipping the next generation with these skills is no longer optional.

To my delight, the chapter on hybrid modalities and live interlingual subtitling covers a research project I participated in, and speech-to-text interpreting is featured in several places. It was also a pleasure to find a chapter by our very own Marc Orlando on digital pens for interpreter training, a reminder of the excellent experimentation and research being done right here in Australia. In fact, several Australian-based researchers are referenced in the book.

continued on page 5, last column

Learning from Euskal Herria: the role played by translation and interpreting in strengthening minority languages

Lauren Campbell (a project officer with NAATI's Indigenous Interpreting Project) and **Sylvia Tkac** (an interpreter for Anindilyakwa, the community language of the Groote Eylandt Archipelago, working for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service NT) recently visited the Euskal Herria (Basque-speaking country) in Spain and France, to find out how translation and interpreting has contributed to the revitalisation of Euskera (the Basque language). They report here on the experience, and reflect on what learnings they can apply in Australia.

Above: Lauren (left) and Sylvia visiting an *ikastola* (Basque language immersion school)



From Groote Eylandt and Melbourne to Euskal Herria

In September and October 2025, we were lucky to be chosen to spend two and a half weeks in the Basque Country as guest participants in the Aditu ('expert') program on minority language activism run by Garabide, a Basque non-governmental development organisation that promotes the revitalisation of endangered languages worldwide. The course – designed to share the Basque experience and create opportunities for knowledge exchange between indigenous language speakers and advocates – brought us together with other participants from Mexico, Ecuador, Bolivia, Morocco, Equatorial Guinea and Haiti. Just being in a room with such a group was energising, and they were all very interested to hear from Sylvia about the Anindilyakwa language community from Groote Eylandt, Northern Territory.

We visited immersion schools, government offices, media outlets and cultural organisations – and we were blown away. They were everywhere:

They were everywhere: Language lovers! Language professionals! And lots of translators and interpreters!

Language lovers! Language professionals! And lots of translators and interpreters!

A language revitalisation success story in the face of a colonial language

Basque speakers have similar stories to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the other indigenous participants on the course. For many years their language, Euskera, was banned in the public domain and kids were punished if they spoke it at school. They told us about running illegal language schools in their homes to hide from police, and shared the huge pride they feel now that all children go to immersion schools, where Spanish language is only introduced in Grade 3. As a result, they

can now boast that 75% of 16-to-24-year-olds in the autonomous Basque region in Spain are fluent speakers. This significant outcome results from a huge collective effort which transformed a strong grassroots movement into a network of organisations and sectors that are well organised, funded and supported. Many impressive initiatives make up a whole ecosystem that sustains the language and its speakers.

Viewing the 'language tree' that the Aditu program is based on showed us everything a language needs to stay strong. It's complex!

While translators and interpreters don't have their own branch on the tree, their work is important to all the branches, as they make possible the

Garabide co-founder Jon Sarasua presents the Aditu program's 'language tree' (English translation added), and (below) the fishmonger labels in Euskera

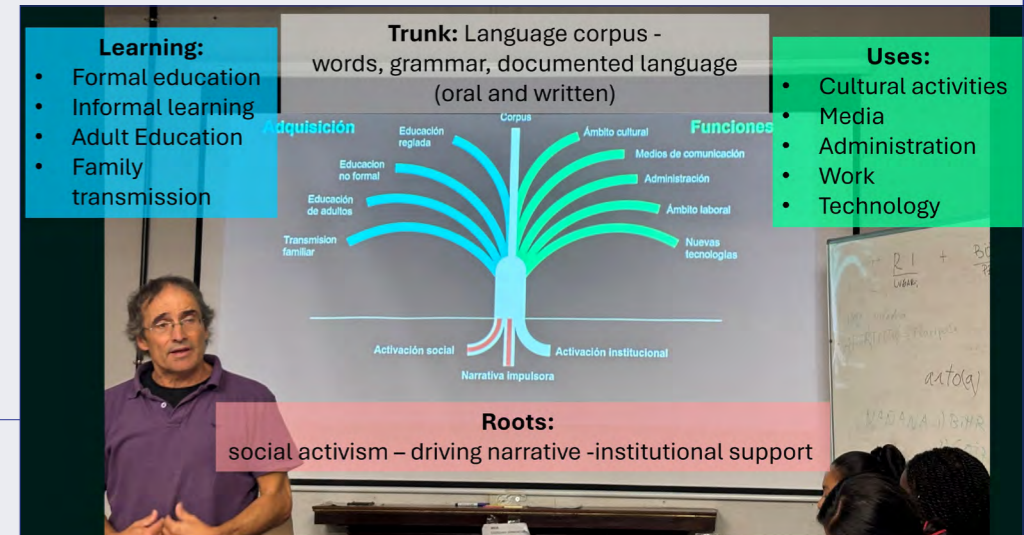
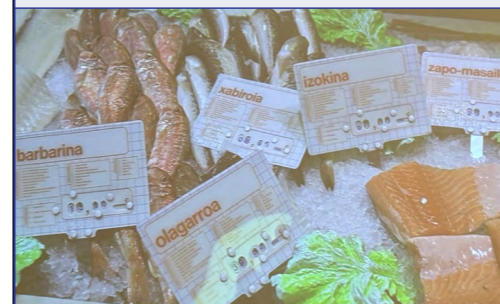
catch phrase '*Euskaraz bizi nahi dugu!*' ('I want to live in Euskera [the Basque language]!')

Translators: access, resources and visibility

Translators have now been employed in Basque Country for decades, to ensure not only that information is available in Euskera for those who speak it, but also that it's *seen* in public by all. Translators work in all levels of government, in the media and education, in publishing resources, translating apps and online platforms, and in cultural organisations. We heard about a great project last year that helped all fishmongers to get price labels produced with the fish names in Basque, and this year's project is focusing on bakeries.

In Australia, translation requests for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are increasing. For many Australian Indigenous languages, including Anindilyakwa, not all speakers are confident readers of their language, but having good translations and signs in Language will raise its profile by pushing it into the everyday landscape and giving people the opportunity to learn and be proud.

Translators are often the first to grapple with an official language version of new terms and concepts. In Basque Country, we saw how those working in media outlets fed into the



UZEI terminology centre's database to continually update their corpus. In Australia, every document – whether it's a new Centrelink policy or a mining contract – is full of translation challenges, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Rarely are there easy conceptual equivalents! Translating them is tough, but such an important part of a language staying relevant and growing with the times. We have a long way to go in Anindilyakwa before we are as coordinated in building a connected database and terminology bank for language workers and the community to share.

Interpreters: access, freedom to choose to stay 'living in language'

We've always known that interpreters play a massive role in enabling language rights and access to services and justice. Some people don't realise, though, that interpreters are in an amazing position to learn and go broad and deep into our languages, working across many topics and listening to a wide variety of speakers. This kind of knowledge is a great resource for a language.

In Basque Country, interpreters don't do as much day-to-day health and legal service work as on Groote Eylandt, as fewer people face a language barrier. A lot of government services are delivered in Euskera, and everyone there becomes fluent in Spanish (or French in the northern part of Basque Country). Instead, interpreters are often engaged to make sure that Basque speakers can choose to speak Basque, particularly in public forums. They do more interpreting at meetings and conferences,

making sure that more speakers can continue in Basque, even when non-speakers are present. One guest speaker on the Aditu program made the point that if we all switched to the dominant language as soon as one non-speaker joined a group, our personal language spaces where we can use our minority/Indigenous language very quickly disappear. It may feel like the polite thing to do, but maybe we need more workarounds. They encouraged more use of casual interpreting in social settings, and simultaneous interpreting (SI) set-ups in formal/structured settings. They also showed us you don't necessarily need SI radio equipment, you can also achieve this with Telegram or WhatsApp channels. It's also OK for a Spanish- or English-speaker to listen and try to learn!

We discussed how this could happen with more of the meetings on Groote Eylandt that quickly switch to English. Few non-Indigenous people learn to speak Anindilyakwa fluently, and hearing the language more also gives them more opportunities to learn. Both Anindilyakwa and Basque have the reputation among non-native speakers of being 'hard' languages to learn, but the Basques are changing that narrative. It's just different! Give people the education, the motivation and opportunities to use a language and they will!

Be proud of your contribution to your language!

Translators and interpreters in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages sometimes forget to look up from the current assignment and see the impact of our work on the strength of our languages. We don't just transfer

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AUSIT social get-togethers: their value, both professional and personal

Arabic-English interpreter **Lama Al-Akhras** is based in Sydney. She has been an AUSIT member since 2015 (on and off), and recently attended one of the monthly social gatherings that the NSW Branch has been hosting since early 2025.



I attended my first AUSIT social gathering in Bankstown in November 2025, and it proved to be a refreshing and important experience for me.

I had never realised how important professional social contact was ...

Since I began working from home in 2019, I'd rarely met other interpreters in person, and barely knew anyone in the profession outside my immediate networks. Remote work can feel quite isolating, so meeting colleagues face to face offered a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences, share stories and laughs, and learn from one another. That sense of social connection with like-minded professionals has been incredibly important for my mental health, and has given me the boost I needed to continue my work with renewed motivation.

During that meeting, I also connected with an international AUSIT member whose warm, dynamic personality made her immediately approachable. She willingly shared her knowledge about LinkedIn to help me improve my professional profile, which directly led to new job opportunities. We have stayed in touch, and a couple of weeks later we met again for dinner, over which we exchanged a wide range of professional and personal experiences – altogether, this has proved an enriching and uplifting connection.

I witnessed another moment at that social gathering that highlights the value of such gatherings. A colleague who interprets for a minority language community met another interpreter from the same background who had recently arrived in Australia and had limited access to work. They exchanged numbers, and my colleague later referred the recently arrived



The NSW Branch social gathering in Bankstown, November 2025 – Lama is near the back, in a black top

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You'll complete professionally endorsed translation training between English and one of ten languages at the largest language hub in WA. Our course is approved by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI), making you eligible to apply for the prestigious NAATI certification as a Certified Translator.



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... a long-held dream of mine ... began to take shape unexpectedly.

practitioner to several interpreting agencies. Witnessing that sense of support and community reinforced how essential these events are for professional solidarity and growth. I had never realised how important professional social contact was until this meeting. Since then, I have continued to engage, including attending the AUSIT National Conference in Canberra, where I met many more professionals and received three new work opportunities.

Most significantly, a long-held dream of mine – to become a conference interpreter – began to take shape unexpectedly. In a casual conversation, I mentioned my strong interest in conference interpreting to a practising conference interpreter who is also a university professor. She immediately introduced me to the academic responsible for enrolments, and I submitted my application two weeks later. I am now enrolled and will commence the course in March 2026 – just before this article is published. It feels as though a dream I have nurtured for many years has finally materialised.

I have learned firsthand that professional connections are essential for both career development and ongoing skill growth. For these reasons, I firmly believe AUSIT social meetings are of significant professional – as well as personal – value, and fully deserving of the PD points that attendees can claim.

The Victoria and NSW Branches both currently hold monthly social/networking events, so if you're in Melbourne or Sydney and haven't attended one yet, why not try to get along to the next one? You can find dates and times on the Events calendar on the AUSIT website, or the carousel on the homepage. And if you're based in another area that has many T&I practitioners, do consider volunteering to help organise regular get-togethers. The Victoria and NSW Branches are happy to answer any questions you have about how to do so, you can contact them here: NSW Branch / VIC Branch.

Syrian-born Arabic-English interpreter Lama Al-Akhras holds a BA in commerce and economics from the University of Damascus. With a lifelong love of languages inspired by her multilingual father, a scholarship to study in France led to an experience she describes as transformative. Upon returning to Syria Lama embarked on a career in interpreting; since migrating to Australia in 2000 she has combined further study, training and hands-on experience to achieve NAATI Certified Interpreter status, and in 2024 was awarded a scholarship to study legal interpreting at Monash University. Graduating with High Distinction in 2025, she is now awaiting the results of her NAATI Legal Interpreting certification exam. Lama sees interpreting as more than a profession – for her it is a calling. She is dedicated to access and equity, and has also learned some Auslan.

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messages into another language, we grow the language, support all the other branches, raise the profile, and make our languages seen and heard!

We would like to thank Erika Gonzalez (RMIT), NAATI, Aboriginal Interpreting Service NT and Garabide for the opportunity and support to attend the Aditu program. We hope it paves the way for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander T&I practitioners to engage in this kind of experience and learning, and grow in confidence as language activists!

Lauren Campbell works in NAATI's IIP team, running certification testing for interpreters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Prior to that, she was a trainer and then training manager at the NT Aboriginal Interpreter Service, where she met and worked with Sylvia. With a background in linguistics and adult education, she has worked in language documentation and language-learning programs with Gurindji and Bilinarra language groups from the NT. Lauren also speaks Spanish, and interpreted for Sylvia during the trip to Basque Country.

Sylvia Tkac is an Anindilyakwa woman from Bickerton Island, NT, and a NAATI-certified interpreter (CPI) in Anindilyakwa. Based on Groote Eylandt, she works for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service NT, regularly interpreting for courts, police and health assignments, and recruiting and supporting new interpreters. Sylvia also does translation work, and has worked at the Groote Eylandt Language Centre.

AUSIT stalwarts: Annamaria Arnall

interviewed by Michele Miller

For our tenth interview in this series, AUSIT Fellow and past president **Annamaria Arnall** is interviewed by her friend and colleague **Michele Miller**.



Annamaria (top)
and Michele

Language professionals were respected and paid very well then, equal to or better than lawyers.

Michele: Annamaria, on behalf of AUSIT, I'd like to thank you for agreeing to this interview. It's important to capture your story and your thoughts and special memories as a language professional, and to share these with our members.

Let's start with when and where you were born, what education path you followed, and when and why you came to Australia?

Annamaria: I was born in Hungary, in a very old – over 2,500 years old – medium-sized town called Győr, which is halfway between Vienna and Budapest. The history of my birthplace made me realise that Hungarians are merely the latest custodians of that land previously peopled by Slavs, Romans, Celts and other tribes, one after another.

My father's mother was born in Vienna, and he often spoke German with her. I heard Slovakian spoken on the streets, as the border was nearby. Russian language was a compulsory subject from fifth-grade primary. I studied French in high school, and excelled in it, yet I didn't see my future career in languages.

After school I completed an intensive science and engineering course at the then Horticultural University of Budapest, which was aimed at training future agrobusiness managers.

Afterwards I moved to Poland, and given the

enormous demand for translators and interpreters between Hungarian and Polish, I started to freelance in this field. When I first entered the profession, I had no formal training but was guided by generous mentors. I was fortunate to learn from the best.

Language professionals were respected and paid very well then, equal to or better than lawyers. Being exposed to many languages, people in Europe appreciated the skill and art involved. Many were multilingual, and knew the difference between merely speaking a language and being able to translate or interpret it.

I came to Australia in 1981 as a refugee from Poland, where the anti-socialist Solidarity movement was about to be quashed. As I was working for the media of the day and had knowledge of sensitive political details, I feared for my personal safety and escaped to Austria. I could have settled there, but the idea of multiculturalism, which was something new then and promoted in Australia, attracted me.

Michele: With such an enviable background in languages, how did you begin your career as a practitioner in Australia? For example, did you

start with translation or interpreting qualifications or did you learn on the job?

Annamaria: The culture shock on arrival was unexpected and rather painful, but thanks to some kind neighbours and workplace colleagues who soon became new friends, it didn't last long. My English was rather elementary on arrival, so I was looking for employment in which speaking well was not crucial, and became a laboratory assistant thanks to the Commonwealth Employment Service job-seek agency.

My CES interview was eventually helpful, yet so shocking! They asked me what my work was back home. I proudly replied, 'Translator and interpreter'. 'That's very nice, my dear' they remarked – in such a condescending tone, it profoundly wounded my ego. You see, only the year before I'd been accepted into a top Polish-Hungarian conference interpreting team, which was a pinnacle of achievement for me.

Because my languages and T&I skills were in demand by TIS – the Telephone Interpreting Service – back then, I soon became a contractor and continued my career as a practitioner in Australia. I also enrolled at the

Annamaria interpreting in chuchotage mode to Hungarian delegates at an international conference in Poznań, Poland in 1978

University of Western Australia, majoring in linguistics and anthropology.

Michele: I can certainly identify with that experience, Annamaria. Starting as a technical translator in 1978, I remember how people's eyes used to glaze over when I mentioned the words 'Japanese' and 'translation' together in the one sentence. Now, moving on, tell me how and when you first became involved with AUSIT?

Annamaria: I was a new mother working part time and studying part time; I didn't have time to contribute to my profession. At first, I joined WAITI [the Western Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters] but then let my membership lapse, so I was only very vaguely aware of the fact that a new national body was being formed.

It was in 2002 when I received a leaflet about a T&I conference taking place in Perth – *vini, vidi, vici!* AUSIT came to me, I saw it, and it won my heart! I joined then and there. By then I had more free time and was able to contribute.

In 2004 I was elected to the National Council as vice president, and served in various positions for about 10 years, including as president from 2011 to 2014.

Someone once asked me how was it that I ended up representing AUSIT, and I had to reply: because there was no one else. I felt bad about hanging around for so long, 'Why do we always see the same people?' ... but truly, at that time there was nobody else both willing and able. Over the years I stepped in at least twice to take on the presidency when the original office bearer had to resign for health reasons.

Having to not only carry the policy side of leading an organisation but also take care of the day-to-day management tasks demands enormous effort, which we can give freely for only so long. I felt I was fortunate that I was in a position to support AUSIT. I felt humbled and honoured when, in return, my peers awarded me the AUSIT Fellow title.

During my time on the National Council we finally established a paid secretariat to look after the routine practicalities. For a while we had a (poorly) paid professional executive officer whose expertise was instrumental to the success of the



years to come. Even after his time, membership numbers continued to increase thanks to the measures he'd introduced, which enabled the organisation to engage more professional hands.

Michele: Moving on to your professional practice, you've worked across translation, editing, website localisation, subtitling, and post-editing of machine translation. I am curious to know which area gave you the most work, and to maybe hear an example of a project that was especially challenging, or especially rewarding or fun?

Annamaria: Oh, Michele, it's not easy to calculate, but if I measure the efforts by the hours spent on it across the decades, translation will claim first place. As to the area, well, it's more difficult to calculate. I started translating technical articles as part of my job on graduating from the Horticultural Uni, and not much later I was also delivering pieces of literary translation as well. I dealt with a huge diversity of topics and genres, and each job came with its own peculiar challenges. And rewards. And the fun I had whilst dealing with the text. I love variety!

Michele: Did you do both certificate and text translation?

Annamaria: Yes, I did all the time and still do, albeit only a couple of hours in a typical working week. What's more, most weeks are non-working weeks for me these days. I'm basically retired now.

Michele: Before we hear more about your life in retirement, can I ask if you've ever refused to

undertake an assignment on the grounds of your own personal ethics?

Annamaria: Yes, I have. It was online correspondence between two people. I undertook work like that from lawyers or law enforcement agencies because they needed to investigate those private matters, but, in this case, the request came from a third party – another private individual. I could not engage in breaching the privacy of that correspondence just for the sake of someone's apparent curiosity.

Michele: Have you often had to refer to the AUSIT Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct, and is there anything about these Codes that you would change?*

Annamaria: Yes, I often refer to it, and yes, I'd like to add two topics to the Code of Conduct, in connection with the principle of professional conduct.

The first refers to the use of MT and specifically of artificial intelligence, particularly in terms of the need to maintain privacy.

The second relates to certification. Members seem to believe that they can only certify a translation if it was prepared by them. I question this approach because I believe that by being a certified professional, I have the right to make a judgement on someone else's translation. I'm an expert, if you will. Consequently, if I carefully assess – and maybe correct – a translation and eventually find it acceptable, I have the right to make a statement about this

continued overleaf

INTERVIEW SERIES: AUSIT STALWARTS (continued)

On a Warsaw cinema stage at the launch of a movie by Hungarian director István Gál – most likely *Cserepek*, 1980, in which a Polish actor played the lead role. Annamaria interpreted the words of István Gál (second from left) to the audience.

continued from previous page

fact. I can certify that I've read this text, compared it with the original and found the translation to be complete and accurate. I'm happy to put my seal to a statement like that.

Michele: You were also a 'cultural and linguistic advisor'. What did that involve in practice?

Annamaria: Your question about a particularly rewarding experience brought to mind a job I can describe as an example. An academic needed to access the content of very old handwritten Hungarian family correspondence in her work. Translating all the letters and postcards in longhand would have taken quite a long time, and the cost would have exceeded

about as a member of the National Council.

To me, learning new tricks of the trade and pondering theoretical nuances are just two of the obvious benefits. We may enrich our knowledge online too, and from reading books and magazines; we don't need to attend conferences for that. But we can't really establish meaningful personal contacts unless we interact with our colleagues! Meeting so many of our peers in the foyers during the breaks and at the gala dinner, comparing notes, and exchanging some (mostly innocent) gossip all lead to a better understanding of the state of the profession. We can observe job market trends,



To me, learning new tricks of the trade and pondering theoretical nuances are just two of the obvious benefits.

the available funds several times over. I suggested oral translation. We organised face-to-face work sessions, during which I read out each piece in English and she made notes of the content, the tone, or any other characteristic she found important. Translation was frequently suspended and the session augmented with explanations when a word or expression had to be put into a historical or cultural context to be fully understood.

Michele: Have you attended many conferences during your career, and how did you benefit from them?

Annamaria: Since that first conference in Perth in 2002, I attended all AUSIT conferences until 2019. I was in Berlin at the FIT Congress too, in 2014, when AUSIT narrowly won the right to organise the next congress for Brisbane 2017.

I very much enjoyed each and every conference, particularly those I helped to bring

and we can put faces to the names of those significant personalities and players in the T&I industry. The more clearly we see, the better are the chances to orient ourselves and present our skills. We can form professional alliances, gain mentors, get recommendations. Even just talking to people who understand us and our workplace joys and frustrations is precious.

Michele: Do you participate in International Translation Day events, and do you think ITD has made a difference to our profession – as opposed to, say, how International Women's Day provides a platform for celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and raises awareness of issues such as gender inequality and pay gaps?

Annamaria: What an excellent question! Unfortunately, I don't think ITD makes a visible difference. Though, the comparison is imbalanced. Women, as 50 % of the community, comprise all sorts of talents, effective marketers, media personalities, celebs

and influencers among them, so both in terms of the scale and the punching power, T/Is are at a disadvantage. I wish we, as a profession, were more creative, outgoing, boisterous! The potential is there in these celebrations, and the profession should be grabbing the headlines, but it's not happening. Maybe because most of us are people who prefer standing beside our clients or back in the shadows, or even better, pounding away at our keyboards and being true to other people's words.

Michele: I'm sure there are many who would agree with you. Now, looking back, what have been the most significant changes you've seen during your career?

Annamaria: The rapid growth of technology. I started on a portable typewriter and for some select jobs, I used to hire a typist to produce a clear final copy. Being a typist was once a job in its own right, back before everyone could access their own computer and use their own keyboard. I recall the awe I felt when I sat down in front of our Apple II for the first time, around 1990. And, oh, what a joy it was when I first accessed an online dictionary!

Later I observed with interest the emergence of computer-assisted translation tools and worked with Wordfast and Trados. I found I would use them only for technical texts that involved

Annamaria during the AUSIT Silver Jubilee National Conference 'JubilaTion 25' held in Sydney, NSW in 2012, with (left) AUSIT Fellow Yveline Piller (national president when Annamaria became vice-president), and (right) award-winning literary translator David Colmer, whose presentation attracted a huge audience, and past national secretary and AUSIT Fellow Barbara McGilvray



many repetitions – user manuals come to mind – but then I began moving away from jobs of that type and no longer needed these tools.

I instead started to do translation jobs for agencies directly on their online platforms. I liked that quite a lot. These days I use AI for the occasional segment with special terminology or overly complicated sentence structures, but I found I need to check the output for hallucination or misunderstanding.

Michele: In that connection, what do you think of the 2024 Microsoft study (not yet peer reviewed) that places translation and interpreting at the very top of a list of occupations most likely to be impacted by LLMs in terms of AI applicability (meaning a measure of their crossover with AI and how well AI's current abilities support T&I tasks)?

Annamaria: I can only agree and suggest that AI is less a job-killer and more a powerful new tool. Those who master and incorporate AI into their workflow will increase their productivity and efficiency. Artificial intelligence is built and designed by people. Its output must be checked and verified by people. If a translator or interpreter feels they are becoming redundant, I would encourage them to focus more on specialisation, diversification and marketing. Look, we still have painters and graphic artists among us despite the invention and general availability of photography.

Michele: You've been a translator and interpreter working with the Hungarian and Polish languages throughout your working life. You have served on various AUSIT committees with

state, national and international involvement for nearly two decades. What has been the most rewarding aspect of observing the successes of the new generation of T&I professionals?

Annamaria: I recalled at the beginning of our conversation the condescending attitude of the employment agency officer when I told him I was a translator and interpreter. Later, when I learned some more Australian history, I understood the reasons. Back then, translation and interpreting was not recognised as a profession by the average monolingual citizen of Oz. Everybody was meant to know English; if you were a newcomer, you were expected to learn it instantly. If you were a bit slow to acquire a new language, your children acted as interpreters or if unavailable, the nurse in the hospital asked the Yugoslav kitchenhand to help out because she spoke 'foreign'.

Thankfully, training of language professionals commenced in the '70s, but it took long decades before the public at large started to appreciate what is involved. Considering the available resources and the need in so many languages, it is little wonder. The kind of regulations that provided safeguards in most other sectors proved impossible for many reasons. The current NAATI credentialing system emerged as a workable solution after many years of difficult trials and controversies. Lifelong learning may not be universally popular just yet, but ever more affordable access to ever more relevant professional development brings benefits not only to translators and interpreters, but to the entire community. Today, when all practical aspects

of multiculturalism are so commonly experienced by society in general, I think the profession is much better respected. This is an achievement that I attribute in no small measure to the new generation of professionals. After receiving excellent training, whether at university, or – for languages of lesser distribution – from the agencies that employ them, the work by which my colleagues contribute to overcome language barriers makes me so very proud to be a translator in Australia today.

Michele: After such a rewarding career, how are you spending your retirement?

Annamaria: My family has increased and I'm lucky enough to be close to my grandchildren and spend many joy-filled hours with them. I'm also busy writing down the history of their ancestry. The genealogical research involved in this undertaking fascinates me with never-ending discoveries.

Michele: That's excellent to hear Annamaria. We thank you for your contribution to AUSIT and to the world of T&I, and wish you many happy years in retirement.

** Editor's note: Annamaria was able to submit her ideas when AUSIT's Working Group for the Revision of the AUSIT Code of Ethics & Code of Conduct recently invited submissions on the topic.*

Do you know a longstanding member who has made significant contributions to AUSIT and/or the T&I profession? Would you like to interview them for this series? Just get 'in touch' with one of our editors or an Editorial Committee member (see page 2), and we'll take it from there.

How do judicial officers ensure effective interpreted communication in domestic proceedings? Implications for access to justice (ARC Research Project, Report 1)

Researchers: Ludmila Stern, Sandra Hale, Stephen Doherty, Mel Schwartz, Julie Lim

Institutions: UNSW Sydney, (external) UTS Sydney

Hobart Magistrates Court

During courtroom proceedings, the judge or magistrate is the key figure responsible for monitoring the flow of communication.

In bilingual cases the interpreter has historically been held accountable for the quality of communication, and blamed for any miscommunication or misunderstanding. In our study *How do judicial officers ensure effective interpreted communication in domestic proceedings? Implications for access to justice* we have used a framework in which the responsibility for effective interpreted communication is shared between interpreters and interpreting service users.

Our research team – supported and funded by the Australian Research Council and eight key industry stakeholders (AIJA, AIS, All Graduates, AUSIT, JCDI, Multicultural NSW, NAATI and TIS National) – has conducted a major study into the ways Australian judges and magistrates conducted interpreted criminal proceedings in Australian courts during 2020–22.

In Part 1 of this project we have examined how 25 judges communicated when an interpreter was present, comparing court observations in 44 criminal cases with the judges’ perceptions of their communication strategies (obtained via post-observation interviews) and interviews with 34 interpreters in mostly migrant (NSW, VIC, TAS, QLD) and some Indigenous (WA, QLD) languages.

The results revealed that despite the judges’ inconsistent practices in working with interpreters and poor familiarity with the *Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals*, most aim to use some strategies to accommodate interpreting (e.g., slowing down, pausing,



... the interpreter has historically been held accountable for the quality of communication ...

rephrasing, explaining terminology, controlling other speakers), although their aspirations mostly exceed their actual practices.

The majority of the interviewees – judges and interpreters alike – acknowledged that – despite recent improvements in how judges treat interpreters – much more needs to be done before it can be said that interpreters are treated as professionals, especially in local courts. Communication must be adapted to meet interpreters’ professional requirements, to enable them to interpret accurately and completely, so as to ensure equal access to justice for participants who do not speak the language of the court.

It was noted that not only judges but other participants – mainly lawyers – play an important role in implementing ‘good practice’ communication strategies.

On a positive note, most judges acknowledge that their communication practices in interpreted proceedings are insufficient, and that they would benefit from regular training on working with interpreters.

Further reports on this project will focus on judicial officers in NT courts, working with interpreters in Aboriginal languages (Report 2), and those working in international criminal courts and tribunals (Report 3).

NAATI examiner panels: three quick questions for Melissa McMahon on selecting T&I practitioners to become examiners

A past editor of *In Touch*, French > English translator **Melissa McMahon**, left both the magazine and full-time freelancing in 2020 to take up the position of Development and Training Officer at NAATI. Her role involves overseeing the recruitment and training of T&I practitioners to sit on about half of NAATI’s 67 examiner panels. We asked Melissa three quick questions about the selection process.



Melissa at work

1. What does the role of NAATI examiner entail?

The core activities of NAATI examiners are developing test materials and/or assessing test candidates. We provide training for these activities, and also support examiners in applying the test specifications and assessment rubrics. Examiners might also find themselves called on to take part in related activities such as screening role players, assisting in the creation and recording of test materials, assessing intercultural competency, and giving feedback on new training resources. NAATI examiners are motivated by a desire to support the profession and their language communities in a very concrete way. We recently expanded the information about the examiner role that is available on the NAATI website, and it now includes testimonials from existing examiners – you can find the information [here](#).

2. What advice would you give to someone hoping to work as a NAATI examiner?

Ideally NAATI examiners are experienced practitioners who have tertiary qualifications in translation and/or interpreting – or a related field – and also experience in teaching or assessment, but in practice this isn’t always possible. We have screening tasks that are modelled on setting and marking activities, to allow applicants to show their concrete skills in the areas they will be engaged in. When researching the practitioner pool for potential new examiners, one of the things we also look for is industry engagement – AUSIT membership is a plus!

3. Is there a myth about

NAATI assessments that you wish more people knew the truth about?

I am not sure what myths are out there, but it’s important to realise that NAATI’s Certification System is an active and ongoing project that we are always monitoring and looking for ways to improve and refine. In 2021 we implemented a **Continuous Improvement Program** – to ensure the Certification System remains fit for purpose, and gives appropriate support to examiners, candidates and the industry – and to date we have successfully implemented 17 out of its 20 recommendations. One of these is a systematic evaluation of the performance of examiner panels using quantitative and qualitative methods. Fairness is always the top priority for NAATI, and ensuring fairness is the end goal of every part of my work on a day-to-day basis.

**** TRIGGER WARNING ****

Avril Janks's answer A2 covers themes which may upset some readers:

violent death of a child, torture



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:

AIDA OYE GOMEZ

interpreter

Spanish-English

Perth, WA

2019

2021

health, legal, welfare, education, mental health, insurance, work compensation, immigration

AVRIL JANKS

translator

German/Afrikaans>English, previously also Italian
Sydney, NSW

1984 in South Africa, 1989 in Australia

2020

migration, legal, medical material (to be used for evidence), reports, emails/WhatsApp messages

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

Born in Cuba, to a Cuban mother and Japanese father, I spoke Spanish at home and in school, but the CALD element was always there. At university, studying chemical engineering, I had to use an American textbook. I enjoyed reading it, and without realising I was sight translating, I loved it. I have a passion for culture, dancing and Cuban folk music, but what really made me tick back then was English language pop music. I tried to mimic the lyrics, pronouncing them as I heard them, while dancing of course – it was a bit off from the real lyrics, but intense fun! In 2004, TAFE was advertising a Spanish-English diploma in interpreting. I graduated in 2005, and have been working solely as an interpreter since the end of 2019.

A2

I really enjoy challenges and variety, and it gives me a sense of gratification when I can give back to the industry. I've worked on various projects that I've found fascinating and enjoyable. Working for NAATI – as a 'mock (interpreter) candidate,' for roleplayers rehearsing the live roleplays used in interpreter certification testing – can be daunting, as I have to think fast to make sure I challenge the roleplayers. The sessions are really well planned, and it's a delight to deal with the like-minded NAATI staff. I also enjoyed working for Babel International College as an interpreter trainer on the Spanish Diploma of Interpreting course, developing expertise in teaching and education. I had to gather all my previous experience to present the course content to the students and impart training.

A1

My grandmother migrated from Latvia to South Africa in the time of the pogroms against Jews. She was fluent in seven languages, and as one of my primary caregivers she had a huge influence on my life. I was an inquisitive child and wanted to know what she was saying when she spoke to someone in a language I didn't understand, so I decided – before I even knew what the word really meant – that I was going to be a translator. I did a degree in languages and then a master's degree in translation, studied more languages after that, and continue to do so.

A2

I work mainly on translations for migration applications, but I've also completed many where the content has centred on violence, including reports, logbooks, emails, social media messaging, police-sourced recordings, and audio and video files containing some very confronting text. It's good to be able to do work that supports the pursuit of justice for vulnerable people, but at the same time it's a terrible load. I am still dwelling several years later on a horrifying confession from someone who murdered their own baby, and on the accompanying inventory of types of torture inflicted on various parts of the baby's body. CPD from AUSIT has helped me to identify the effects of my exposure to traumatic material and to understand vicarious trauma, but commissioning agencies offer little or no warning about translation tasks containing such material, and it's difficult to access support once the task is completed. My love of languages has led me on a very complex journey!