

Issues brief: Language services

This issues brief provides an overview of what is meant by 'language services'.

Interpreters

Interpreters provide spoken or signed versions that convey, in another language, the content and intentions of the statements by the original speaker.¹

Interpreters act as intermediaries between two parties who speak different languages. Interpreting can take place in person or over the telephone/videolink.

Interpreters are bound by a code of ethics when doing their job. The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) Code of Ethics for Interpreters and Translators is recognised as setting standards for the profession. The Code of Ethics has been endorsed by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (NAATI) and adopted by many organisations.

General principles in the Code include professional conduct, confidentiality, competence, impartiality, accuracy, clarity of role boundaries, maintaining professional relationships, professional development and professional solidarity.

Different types of interpreting

Simultaneous interpreting: A mode of interpreting where speech is translated while it is being spoken...

Consecutive interpreting: A mode of interpreting where the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish an utterance of a reasonable length before translating it.²

Conference interpreting: Usually involves simultaneous interpreting using specialised audio equipment. However, it can also involve other modes of interpreting, such as 'consecutive', where the interpreter takes notes and reproduces a speech, or 'whispered', where the interpreter interpreters in a low voice for a single listener or small group.³

Community interpreting: [Community interpreting] is the interpreting sector that enhances equal access to public and community services for individuals who do not speak the language of service... [This definition] typically refers to interpreting that primarily directly benefits an *individual* rather than an *institution*, and thereby allows that individual to gain access to a service.⁴

Interpreters in the legal system

[T]he NAATI Interpreter examination is generic in nature and passing the NAATI examination does not guarantee competence in legal interpreting; yet once

¹ The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, *Interpreting: Getting it Right*, accessible at: http://ausit.org/AUSIT/Documents/gir_interpreting.pdf

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Marjory A. Bancroft, Lola Bendana, Jean Bruggeman and Lois Feuerle, 'Interpreting in the Gray Zone: Where Community and Legal Interpreting Intersect' *Translating and Interpreting* 5:1 (2013), 95.

accredited at this level, interpreters are deemed qualified to act as interpreter in both courts and tribunals.⁵

Interpreters are not required to receive any specialist legal interpreting training before working in legal contexts, for example in courts and tribunals. Specialist training is available in some formal courts.

The Australasian Institute of Administration Incorporated recommends that:

- all interpreters who work in courts and tribunals complete formal legal interpreting training;
- special legal interpreting training scholarships be established;
- NAATI introduce a specialist legal interpreter accreditation; and
- a national register of qualified legal interpreters be established.⁶

Interpreters in the health system

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health conducted focus groups with CALD consumers to discover how these consumers access and use language services.

Most participants said that using a competent, professional interpreter was the best way to communicate fully with a health professional and that full communication was essential in enabling a participant to both access health services and receive effective, quality health care. Participants also said that without this mutual understanding, health consultations could be ineffective, a waste of practitioner and participant time, or could have dangerous or traumatic consequences. Participants stressed that professional interpreting services were particularly important in a health setting because they enabled the participant to understand and express the complex language used in a health setting...⁷

Translators

Translation means converting written information from one language into another.⁸

Translators are accredited in a similar way to interpreters.

Bilingual workers

Bilingual staff [are] employees who agree to communicate with clients in a language other than English and are not employed as qualified interpreters.⁹

Bilingual workers are workers who do their ordinary job in two languages. These workers are not accredited. While bilingual workers are not subject to the interpreters' Code of Ethics,

⁵ Professor Sandra Hale, University of New South Wales, *Interpreter Policies, Practices and Protocols in Australian Courts and Tribunals: A National Survey* (2011: The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration Incorporated), 13.

⁶ *Ibid*, 20 – 22.

⁷ Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, *Language Services in Victoria's Health System: Perspectives on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Consumers* (2006), 13.

⁸ Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, *Translation: An Introduction*, accessible at:

http://www.ceh.org.au/downloads/languageservices2014/LS6_Translation_an_introduction.pdf

⁹ Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health, *Language Services: Better practice in Victorian health services and local government* (2014), accessible at:

http://www.ceh.org.au/downloads/languageservices2014/Language_Services_Guide_2014.pdf

they may be governed by relevant professional standards and legislative requirements for their profession.¹⁰

Staff who use English and another language in their work are employed in a range of occupations such as receptionists, nurses, attendant carers, financial counsellors, multicultural education aides, community health educators, social workers, case managers, and settlement support workers.¹¹

The Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health highlights the value that bilingual staff can offer to organisations, including the ability to promptly fill simple communication gaps and provide general cultural information and understanding for the organisation.¹² Bilingual workers are important in building long term relationships with CALD communities and facilitate access to language services in rural and regional areas.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid, 10.

¹¹ Centre for Cultural, Ethnicity and Health, *Bilingual Staff Research Project Report* (2008), 4.

¹² Ibid, 5.

¹³ Futures Upfront, 'Everyone counts – Why language services matter' (May 2015), 17.

Accreditation by NAATI

NAATI is the body responsible for setting and monitoring the standards for the Australian translating and interpreting profession. NAATI accreditation is the only credential officially accepted by Australian employers for the profession of translating and interpreting.

NAATI has a number of different levels of credentials depending on the individual translator or interpreter's skills and competence.

Outlines of NAATI Credentials (as of October 2010)

Conference Interpreter (Senior) / Advanced Translator (Senior) (formerly known as Level 5): This is the highest level of NAATI interpreting/translating accreditation. It reflects a level of excellence in conference interpreting/specialised translating, recognised through demonstrated extensive experience and international leadership. It encompasses and builds on the competencies of Conference Interpreter/Advanced Translator accreditation.

Conference Interpreter/Advanced Translator (formerly known as Level 4): This represents the level of competence required to handle complex, technical and sophisticated interpreting in both consecutive and simultaneous modes/sophisticated translations in line with recognised international practice. Conference Interpreters operate in diverse situations, including at conferences, high-level negotiations, and court proceedings and may choose to specialise in a particular area(s). Advanced Translators operate in diverse situations, and may choose to specialise in a particular area(s), including translating technical manuals, research papers, providing translations for conferences, high-level negotiations and court proceedings.

Professional Interpreter/Translator (formerly known as Level 3): This represents the minimum level of competence for professional interpreting/translating and is the minimum level recommended by NAATI for work in most settings, including banking, law, health, and social and community services. Professional Interpreters are capable of interpreting across a wide range of semi-specialised situations and are capable of using the consecutive mode to interpret speeches or presentations. Translators at this level work across a wide range of subjects involving documents with specialised content.

Paraprofessional Interpreter/Translator (formerly known as Level 2): This represents a level of competence in interpreting for the purpose of general conversations, or enabling the production of a translation of non-specialised information (for example a birth certificate). Paraprofessional Interpreters generally undertake the interpretation of non-specialist dialogues. Practitioners at this level are encouraged to obtain Professional-Level accreditation.

Interpreter/Translator Recognition: This credential is an acknowledgement that at the time of the award the applicant has had recent and regular work experience as an interpreter/translator, but no level of proficiency is specified. In order to be granted NAATI Recognition, the applicant must provide proof of English proficiency and complete an introductory NAATI workshop or related activity. There is no NAATI testing of a Recognition applicant. Recognised interpreters/translators are encouraged to obtain accreditation as it becomes available.

Language Aide: This credential is awarded based on success in a NAATI test. The test assesses the candidate's bilingual skills in a 'customer service' scenario. This is not a credential in interpreting or translating and should not be construed as such.

There are five ways to obtain NAATI accreditation:

- passing a NAATI accreditation test;
- successfully completing course of studies in translation and/or interpreting at an Australian institution as approved by NAATI;
- providing evidence of a specialised tertiary qualification in translation and/or interpreting obtained from an educational institution overseas'
- providing evidence of a membership of a recognised international translating and/or interpreting professional association; or
- providing evidence of advanced standing in translating or interpreting.

NAATI Approved Australian Courses (as of 4 September 2015)

Courses approved from 1 January 2016

State	Institution	Accreditation Type and Level	Approved Languages
SA	University of Adelaide	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese

Courses currently approved

State	Institution	Accreditation Type and Level	Approved Languages
NSW	Abbey College Australia	Professional Translator (into LOTE)	Chinese, Hindi
NSW	Australian Ideal College	Professional Interpreter	Mandarin
NSW	Deaf Society of NSW	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Auslan
NSW	Macquarie University	Professional Interpreter	Auslan
NSW	Macquarie University	Professional Interpreter and Professional Translator (both directions)	Auslan, Chinese (translation only), Japanese, Korean, Mandarin (interpreting only), Spanish
NSW	Macquarie University	Professional Interpreter	Auslan
NSW	Multilink Academy of Interpreting and Translating	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese
NSW	Sydney Institute of Interpreting and Translating	Professional Interpreter	Mandarin
NSW	Sydney Institute of Interpreting and Translating	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese, Hindi (into LOTE only), Korean (into LOTE only)
NSW	Sydney Institute of Interpreting and Translating	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Arabic, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, Nepali, Punjabi
NSW	Sydney TAFE	Professional Interpreter	Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese
NSW	Sydney TAFE	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Auslan, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Vietnamese
NSW	Sydney TAFE	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese
NSW	TAFE NSW – Northern Sydney Institute	Professional Interpreter	Japanese, Mandarin

NSW	TAFE Northern Institute NSW – Sydney	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese, Japanese
NSW	TAFE Northern Institute NSW – Sydney	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Japanese, Mandarin
NSW	TAFE Western Institute NSW – Sydney	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Vietnamese, Arabic, Lao
NSW	University of NSW	Conference Interpreter (both directions)	French, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish
NSW	University of NSW	Professional Interpreter	French, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish
NSW	University of NSW	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese, French, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Mandarin, Russian
NSW	University of Western Sydney	Professional Interpreter	Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish
NSW	University of Western Sydney	Professional Translator (both directions)	Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish
QLD	Harvest Education Technical College	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Korean, Mandarin
QLD	Sydney Institute of Interpreting and Translating (QLD campus)	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese
QLD	Sydney Institute of Interpreting and Translating (QLD campus)	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Mandarin
QLD	University of Queensland	Professional Interpreter	Mandarin
QLD	University of Queensland	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese
QLD	University of Queensland	Advanced Translator (both directions) and Conference Interpreter (both directions)	Japanese
SA	Australian Institute of Translation and Interpretation	Professional Translator	Chinese (into LOTE)
SA	Australian Institute of Translation and Interpretation	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Mandarin
SA	TAFESA	Professional Translator (both directions)	Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Japanese, Nepali, Persian, Spanish, Vietnamese

SA	TAFESA	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Anmatyerr, Arabic, Auslan, Bunuba, Cantonese, Dari, Dinka, Hazaragi, Italian, Japanese, Jaru, Korean, Kriol, Kukatja, Lurtja, Mandarin, Nepali, Ngaanyatjarra, Nyikina, Persian, Pintupi-Luritja, Pitjantjatjara, Spanish, Swahili, Vietnamese, Walmajarri, Warlpiri, Western Arrernte, Yankunytjatjara
VIC	Australian institute of Translation and Interpretation	Professional Translator	Chinese (into LOTE)
VIC	Australian institute of Translation and Interpretation	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Mandarin, Nepali, Vietnamese
VIC	Australian institute of Translation and Interpretation	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Mandarin, Vietnamese
VIC	Cambridge International College	Professional Translator	Chinese (into LOTE)
VIC	Monash University	Professional Interpreter	Arabic, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish
VIC	Monash University	Professional Translator (both directions)	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish
VIC	Monash University	Conference Interpreter (both directions)	French, Indonesian, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish
VIC	RMIT University	Professional Interpreter	Amharic, Arabic, Auslan, Burmese, Cantonese, Dari, Dinka, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer, Korean, Macedonian, Malay, Mandarin, Nuer, Oromo, Persian, Polish, Pushto, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish, Vietnamese

VIC	RMIT University	Professional Translator (both directions)	Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Dinka, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Persian, Polish, Spanish, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese
VIC	RMIT University	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Auslan, Bangla, Bosnian, Burmese, Cantonese, Chin (Haka), Chin (Tedim), Dari, Dinka, Hakka, Hazaragi, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer, Kirundi, Korean, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Kurdish (Sorani), Kurdish Southern (Feyli), Malay, Mandarin, Nepali, Nuer, Oromo, Punjabi, Pushto, Rohingya, Samoan, Somali, Swahili, Tamil, Thai, Tigrinya, Turkish
WA	Central Institute of Technology	Paraprofessional Interpreter	Auslan
WA	University of Western Australia	Professional Translator (both directions)	Chinese, French, German, Italian