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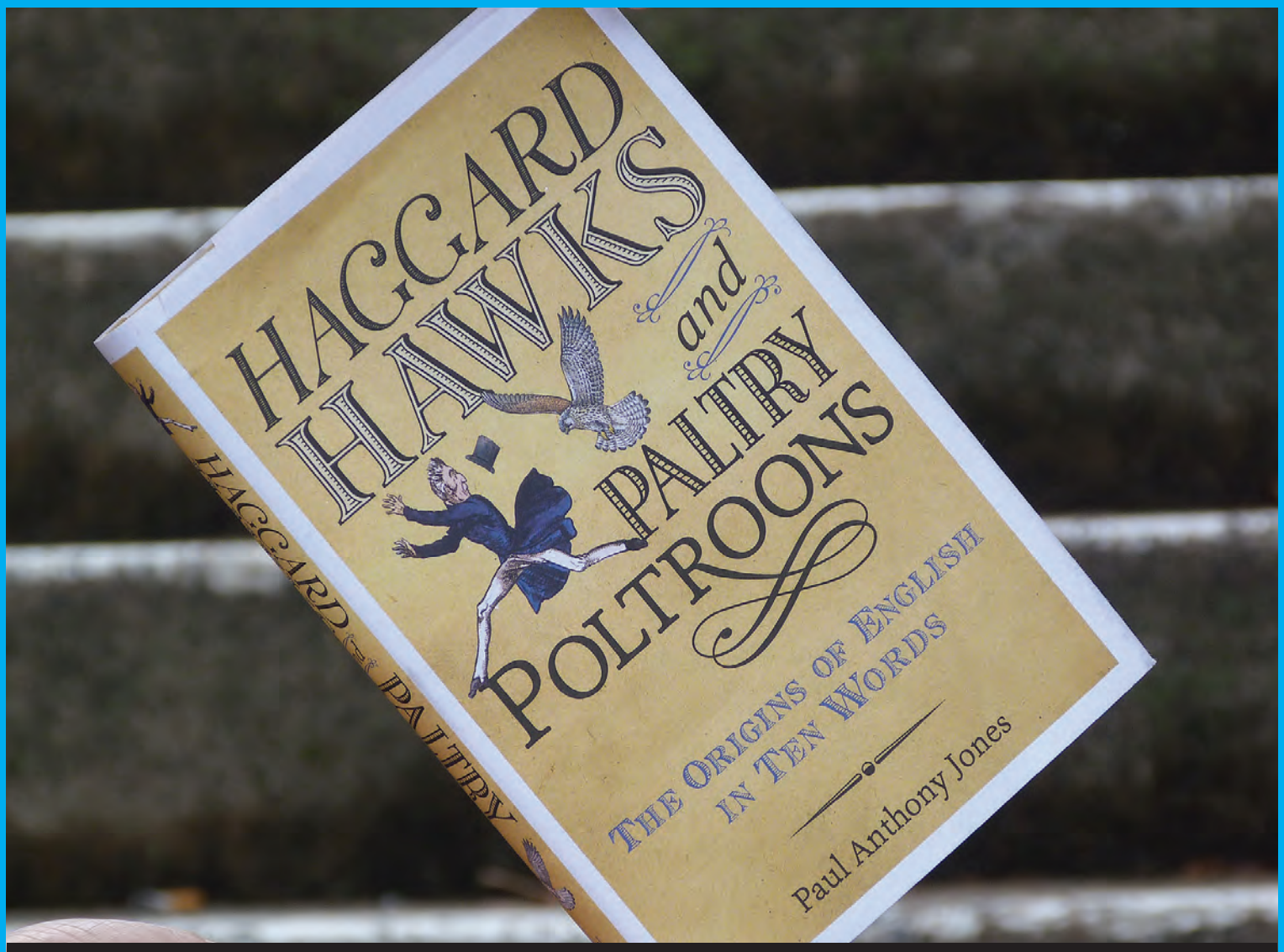

ON LANGUAGES AND DIALECTS: dialects do not perform broader functions of a standard language

STANDARDS MUST BE ENFORCED: key issues facing the interpreting industry

A NEW BREED OF INTERPRETER? new technologies to liberate interpreters

In Touch

Autumn 2014
Volume 22 number 1

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Get the most out of your membership

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

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

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

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Who is number one?

When I came to Australia in early 1970 to work with the German embassy in Canberra, every state had its own independent interpreting and translating interest group. I soon joined the Association of Translators and Interpreters in the ACT (ATIACT), which operated from Canberra's multicultural centre under the chairmanship of the late Klaus Hermes. I was appointed secretary and continued as an officeholder for many years.

In the beginning ATIACT had quite a few members, but the ranks got thinner over the years. Soon we were down to just three, but we kept the organisation alive. I diligently continued sending out the minutes, which I typed after office hours at work on an early computer.

After a few years our three loyal ACT "tea party" members thought seriously about letting ATIACT lapse once and for all. As a last resort, we invited the ACT's first chief minister, Rosemary Follett, to address us. Her advice worked: we received so many new members that it was difficult to fit them all into one hall. AUSIT was established soon after and we became part of a nationwide organisation. I worked in many positions in the newly established ACT branch, including secretary, treasurer and chair for three years. The then ACT chief minister Kate Carnell awarded me a certificate of appreciation in 1999 for outstanding services to AUSIT.

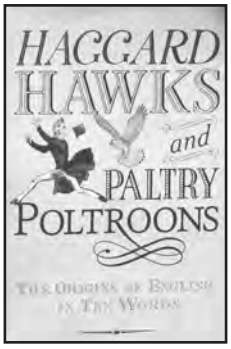
Teamwork was a big part of my job as a long-term public servant. I also preferred to work in an office rather than from home. So the transition from work to freelancing was not easy; I often found myself unsupported and isolated in my duties as a translator, and have only recently come to terms with this. I find it rewarding to stay in touch with my colleagues via the internet, where we can sort out language problems as they arise. I enjoy the professional development seminars where I have acquired quite a bit of knowledge that I share with new and long-term colleagues alike.

With my wide-ranging experience as an interpreter and especially as a translator, I have come to the view that AUSIT should be supported at all costs. I am happy to see that the organisation, which has come a long way since its humble beginnings, has developed into a highly professional body. Professionalism requires maintenance of and adherence to high standards, especially where the relationship between client and practitioner is not always easy. Once problems are resolved, the practitioner will gain more experience when dealing with and resolving future conflicts. There are always hurdles to overcome, but doing so makes us stronger and more skilful. The learning experience never ends.

Back in February 1981 the immigration department conducted written language tests. I gained accreditation as a bilingual professional translator (formerly level 3) soon after. I have been issued with NAATI accreditation number 20. This low number is an indication of how long I have been practising my German language activities. I often wonder who has been given accreditation number one? Does anyone know?

Ursula ("Angie") Hoffmann
NAATI-accredited
German-English translator
Canberra ACT

There is a word for that



I have always had a thing about abbreviations like %, & and eg. So I find myself slightly chastened to learn that the ampersand began life as a letter in its own right: the 27th letter, after Z, to be precise.

by **Jeremy Gilling,** Editor

Right up until the early 1900s the alphabet would be sounded as "A, B, C ... X, Y, Z, and *per se* [Latin for by itself] &". In time the words after Z ("and *per se* and") became shortened to the single word ampersand.

This is one of many such intriguing facts about words to be found in the new book by Paul Anthony Jones, *Haggard Hawks and Paltry Poltroons* (Constable, 2014, about $17), which delivers hundreds of surprising and generally little known histories and etymologies of English words, assembled in fifty batches of ten. (The title alludes to two of a group of ten mostly familiar words – the others are mews, codger, arouse, musket, gorge, allure, pounce and turn-tail – that trace back to falconry.)

Here are a few more. A freelance originally was, as the name suggests, an unattached mercenary knight whose service (his "lance") was available for hire. It was coined in 1819 by Sir Walter Scott in *Ivanhoe*, and appears to have first been given its more general modern use in 1899.

The word deadline entered the language as a 19th century American military term describing the line drawn on the ground inside or around a military prison, the crossing of which rendered the prisoner liable to be shot. A Confederate army major, the Swiss-born Henry Mirz, employed it brutally during his command of Camp Sumter in Georgia (more than a quarter of the camp's 45,000 PoWs died under his watch), and the term became widely known following his trial and execution.

Few people (and precious few journalists, especially those working to a deadline) are aware that protagonist is not – or certainly should not be – used to describe any participant in a conflict or disagreement. It is an ancient Greek compound of protos (first) and agonistes (competitor) which referred to the lead in a theatrical production (the second and third most important actors were the deuteragonist and the tritagonist), and can legitimately be extended to the leader of – but not any rank and file participant in – a cause or campaign. Note that there can only be one protagonist in any such cause.

A pariah – used since the 18th century in English to describe an outcast or recluse – was borrowed from the Tamil word for drum, and described the ceremonial drummer at rituals among the Indian lower castes. (The British colonisers extended it to all members of the lower castes.) Another Tamil to English word is catamaran.

Here are a few words derived from people's names: chauvinism (Nicolas Chauvin); dunce (John Duns Scotus); epicure (Epicurus); praline (César, comte du Pressis-Praslin); and saxophone (Adolphe Sax).

Jones has a chapter devoted to "things you didn't know had names". My favourite is acnestis, the part of the back that cannot be easily reached to scratch. There's also lalochezia (a compound of the ancient Greek words for speech and to defecate), which can be used to describe any unpremeditated profanity, such as caused by sudden pain. Those with the medical condition that causes them to swear involuntarily suffer from the related word coprolalia, coined by Georges Giles de la Tourette, after whom the syndrome is named. We're all familiar with the pleasant odour the earth emits after a sudden downpour following a prolonged period of dryness: that's petrichor, from the ancient Greek petra (stone – giving rise to the name Peter), and ichor (the liquid that was said to flow through the veins of the Greek gods). The smell comes from the oil produced by leaves in dry weather that the rain releases from the soil and rocks. Finally, I'm dying to describe the first person I meet on my next outing as a quaaltagh, originally a Manx word; the Manx attached special importance to that person as a portent, particularly on significant days such as 1 January.

Haggard Hawks is one of those thoroughly enjoyable bedside books that can be opened and thumbed through more or less at random. Readers will find it hard to resist showing off their newly acquired quirky learning at parties and family gatherings.

And yes, notwithstanding the above, *In Touch*'s editor will continue to spell out abbreviations, including &, in future issues.

Standards must be enforced

Professionals Australia CEO Chris Walton outlines what the association sees as the key issues facing the interpreting industry.

Professionals Australia recognises that in the contemporary context, the imperatives for the provision of quality and quantity of interpreters often work against each other. These imperatives operate in the context of a market that demands the provision of both at the lowest possible cost, and this presents a complex and fundamental barrier to the provision of high-quality interpreting services for end-users.

Market problems

The interpreting industry is currently characterised by what Witter-Merithew and Johnson (2004) refer to as "market disorder":

> "… the current state of the interpreting market that reflects ... the ... lack of consistent and reliable professional control over the variables impacting the effective delivery of interpreting services (such as induction into the field, working conditions, job descriptions, role and responsibility, wages) …"[1].

Professionals Australia believes insecure work and the widespread engagement of casuals and contractors are fundamental aspects of the market disorder characterising the Australian interpreting industry.[2] Market disorder and lack of control over the variables impacting quality in service delivery are significant barriers to the effective shifting of consumers away from non-accredited to accredited practitioners and ensuring high-quality interpreting services for end users.

Lack of enforcement of standards

A significant contributor to the problems characterising much of the industry is lack of enforcement of standards. Even where the use of NAATI-accredited practitioners is set out in guidelines, enforcement is often non-existent or sidestepped via loopholes. Enforcement of standards is as important as the standards themselves.

Mikkelson (2013) suggests of government agencies:

> "… the main thing they can do to support the interpreting profession is to enforce existing laws and regulations requiring the use of certified interpreters. Public sector entities (healthcare institutions, law enforcement agencies, school districts, court systems, and so on) that contract out for interpreting services should heed guidelines …"[3]

> **The widespread use of interpreters who are not NAATI-accredited or accredited to an inappropriate level results in risk to government and the community.'**

Lack of informed purchasing

The trade-offs between price, turnaround time and quality, and the issue of competence in language services, are poorly understood, and this lack of understanding by clients can often mean that many select on the basis of price regardless of qualifications.

Status, reward and continuing professional development

It is clear that qualifications and taking on further training must be considered in conjunction with appropriate reward mechanisms, with little incentive for upgrading and improving skill levels as arrangements currently stand.

Low pay and lack of appropriate linkages between pay and training currently operate as disincentives for interpreters to enter and remain in the profession or to take on further training.

Risk

Professionals Australia is critically concerned about the widespread use of interpreters who are not NAATI-accredited or accredited to an inappropriate level, resulting in risk to government and the community. In the medical/health setting, lives may be endangered and the quality of care significantly impacted. In the legal context, miscarriages of justice in the form of aborted trials, wrongful convictions, inappropriate sentencing, and misunderstood bail conditions, community orders and charges, all result in potential exposure to liability. The stories we are aware of in refugee detention centres are potentially explosive and could result in legitimate refugees wrongly refused protection visas or in some cases inappropriately receiving them, leaving the government open to serious litigation.

As the European Commission put it in its report, *Studies on translation and multilingualism*, "Investment in quality is indispensable for reducing the risk of providing poor quality".[4]

In summary

Clearly these problems are complex and it will take time to develop industry-based solutions. Professionals Australia will continue to play an active and considered role in identifying and responding to the challenges facing the profession and industry – challenges that can only be tackled with the cooperation and commitment of major stakeholder groups and interpreters themselves.

1 Witter-Merithew, A. and Johnson, L. (2004). Market Disorder within the Field of Sign Language Interpreting: Professionalization Implications. *Journal of Interpretation*, vol. 14, p.20

2 Translators and interpreters sourcing their work in the open market where the government is not the ultimate buyer of their services may face different challenges and different approaches to ensuring quality, and NAATI is not involved in those processes. Also, translators, while they may be involved in the community sector, may have a more diverse source of income, and issues around market disorder may be different in type or degree to those outlined for community interpreters.

3 Mikkelson, H. (2013). *Translation and Interpreting*, vol. 5, No. 1, p.72

4 European Commission, Directorate-General for Translation (2012). *Quantifying quality costs and the cost of poor quality in translation*, p.49.

A new breed of interpreter?

John Benson explores the potential of new technologies to liberate interpreters from the confines of the conference booth.

I was sitting in a Perth hotel recently waiting to interpret for feedback sessions between AusAid and francophone African officials. I was all alone after two weeks touring with colleagues as these interviews were only going to last 30 minutes and there was no good reason to keep other interpreters for an entire extra day.

I wasn't looking forward to it, though – taking high-speed consecutive notes is laborious and it makes my hand and head hurt. But then I had a crazy idea.

I had with me the cases of portable tour-guide-style transmitters and receivers we had been using to provide portable simultaneous interpreting onsite. So I pulled out two over-the-ear microphones and arranged them on each side of my mouth. Then I got out two transmitters, set them on separate channels and did some testing with the receivers. To my amazement it all worked comfortably and clearly.

During the interviews, I distributed receivers on each side of the table set to the different channels. Then, with a transmitter in each hand, I proceeded to provide full two-way simultaneous interpreting all on my own. When the Australians spoke I flicked on the transmitter in the hand closest to them and interpreted into French. Then when the Africans responded I simply flicked the first transmitter off and the second on to interpret into English.

It worked flawlessly (obviously I could only do this on my own for short periods of up to 30 minutes or so without my head exploding). And for the clients it made the interview much more spontaneous and natural (including taking less than half the time).

It also gave me a bit of a thrill because I had that lovely moment where you think to yourself, "Wow, I wonder if anyone else has ever done this before?"

But I tell this story mainly to illustrate the revolution under way in the way interpreters work because of the advent of new, small, digital tour-guide systems. With a case of these tiny new transmitters and receivers, interpreters are now liberated from the Lilliputian confines of conference booths and can wander the wild, wondrous world offering simultaneous interpreting in a vast new array of situations.

Over the past two years, I've had the delightful opportunity to work with a panel of French and Portuguese colleagues on a series of AusAID study tours bringing African officials from 40 countries to Australia to learn about our mining industry. We've taken them the length and breadth of the continent, from training colleges to underground mines, from government offices to coal loading terminals. They've travelled in planes, trains, buses, farm utilities, boats and helicopters. And throughout all these travels, we've used this new portable interpreting equipment to provide clear and instantaneous interpreting so they can derive the maximum benefit from these experiences and dialogues.

As AusAID officials remarked enthusiastically after the first tour a little over two years ago, the foreign language-speaking delegates had "come alive" compared with the usual experience of foreign officials on such tours.

But what I've discovered with my colleagues is that interpreters need to acquire a whole new range of skills to be effective with this equipment in addition to what is required for the refined world of conference booths.

‘I tell this story mainly to illustrate the revolution under way in the way interpreters work because of the advent of new, small, digital tour-guide systems.’

New skills

First of all, interpreters need to learn how to use and troubleshoot this new equipment. There is no (highly paid) conference technician there with you onsite in the coal mine to fix a transmitter that suddenly stops working, or receivers that start emitting a high-pitched squeal in the ears of 30 delegates. We have to take the time to fully familiarise ourselves with the equipment: how to set the correct channels, avoid interference, recognise low battery states, understand maximum range and remember to charge units every evening. If there are multiple languages and directions in play at the same time (and even liaison interpreting which is possible with these systems as well), then interpreters have to coordinate as a team to organise channel assignment and avoid transmitter interference.

Most crucially of all, interpreters have to make sure they have spare units, microphones and batteries with them – particularly if you’re touring through the Pilbara for three days thousands of kilometres from the nearest technical support and where the entire success of a very expensive trip depends on your ability to continue delivering simultaneous interpreting.

And on that point, I can tell you that I’ve finally understood the reason that cargo pants have all those extra pockets.

Second, the mode of working and skills required are significantly more complicated than normal conference work. In a conference booth, clear audio is usually provided to you and you can twiddle your volume knob to exactly the right level so as to allow yourself to listen and talk simultaneously (where your own voice does not drown out the incoming audio). It is a controlled environment.

Working in the field with portable equipment is another matter entirely. The advantages of providing this portable simultaneous interpreting are obvious for the client. But there are clear disadvantages for interpreters, particularly regarding acoustics and sound quality.

As a team, the AusAID (AAPF) interpreters quickly became skilled at “bumping into” five to ten different locations (indoor and outdoor, office and industrial environments) each day. We had to assess each location quickly and decide where to place ourselves. Often we had to move around the room constantly in order to adjust to different speakers and changing environmental levels of noise (doors opening, side conversations starting up, air-conditioning turning on or off and so on). The stress level for interpreters is definitely higher.

But then again, who wants to sit in a boring old conference booth all day long?

Which brings me back to that Perth hotel a couple of weeks ago, having “invented” a new one-man simultaneous technique. At the end of the interview, one of the AusAID officials remarked to me: “I didn’t know interpreters could do that”. “Neither did I,” I replied.

The use of this portable equipment is quite widespread already in Europe. And I’m convinced that this represents an exciting new field of work for interpreters as soon as clients understand the enormous advantages it offers.

And for this new work, we’re going to need a new breed of interpreters ready to adapt their skills and be prepared to become more hands-on than the traditional image of an aloof and cerebral conference interpreter.

John Benson is an accredited French-English interpreter.

On languages and dialects

by **Jim Hlavac**

Recent contributions to *In Touch* have canvassed issues surrounding dialects and standard languages*, mutual comprehensibility across languages and the provision of T&I services.

There is a large body of literature on dialects and standard languages. The distinguishing feature between the two is that when a speech community requires a code to serve its purposes beyond that of a local vernacular (for school instruction, scientific or technical purposes or literary and cultural expression), it develops or codifies a dialect to do this.

This codification involves the choosing of words, forms, pronunciations, grammatical and orthographical features to be part of a standard language, and is otherwise known as corpus planning.

Such a language is able to serve the purposes of all its speakers in most areas of life. A dialect cannot do this; speakers of dialects don't enjoy school instruction, extensive literature and technical jargon in their dialect, and need to rely on a standard language to perform these functions for them.

In the case of some languages spoken in the former Yugoslavia, for example Bosnian, corpus planning commenced at the end of 19th century, was interrupted, and was completed at the end of the 20th century. For Croatian, corpus planning had been completed by the end of the 19th century, and for Serbian by the start of the 20th century. The languages function as standard languages and are not reliant on each other in the way that a dialect is reliant on a standard to perform further functions for it. Transmigration and access to others' mass media (written and electronic) within the former Yugoslavia led to very high levels of mutual intelligibility among speakers of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian.

Corpus planning is the process that elevates and augments a dialect to perform the function of a national standard, not mutual intelligibility.

There are many standard languages that share a high degree of mutual intelligibility. Historically, some have attempted to characterise these as dialects of another language: Malay and Bahasa Indonesia; Danish, Swedish and Norwegian; Lao and Thai; Persian, Dari and Tajik; Belarusian and Russian; Czech and Slovak. No serious linguist now suggests that any of these are dialects of each other or of another language.

Some *In Touch* contributors have noted that speakers of different varieties of English accept that they speak a common language. This is because English had already completed corpus planning by the mid-16th century (hence the term Modern English to refer to the language of Shakespeare and the King James Bible), and as the British Empire expanded, there was a single, established standard language that was spread to all areas of the world that the British colonised. The same applies to Spanish and Arabic, both of which had originated from a single area (Castile and the Arabian peninsula respectively) before their spread to other areas of the world. The existence of a codified standard, and especially in the case of Arabic a common orthography, had a conserving effect on the unity of the language despite later diversification of various Arabic vernaculars.

While national varieties of standard English now have their own dictionaries that list the forms that are used in these varieties (Webster for the US, Oxford for British English, Macquarie for Australia), the important point is that despite the passage of time and geographical distance, there are very few differences in the words listed in these various dictionaries, and a user in any one country can use another country's dictionary for reference and instruction in their own usage. This is not the case with Croatian and Serbian. There are differences not just in the vocabularies of both languages, but in orthography, prosody, morpho-syntax, stylistics, phraseology and the standard alphabet. They have largely separate literary traditions and different patterns of creating neologisms.

> **‘… Dialects or vernaculars can be used only in a limited number of settings or functions, and do not perform broader functions and reach out to all speakers … as a standard language does.’**

Apart from the standard, national varieties of English, there is further geographically and sometimes ethnically based diversity at the dialect level. These dialects or vernaculars can be used only in a limited number of settings or functions, and do not perform broader functions and reach out to all speakers of English as a standard language does. Yet their speakers still acknowledge a single linguistic heritage.

Despite their proximity, Czech and Slovak for example, or Estonian and Finnish, do not have an identical linguistic heritage. Despite many similarities, the lack of a common standard means that communication through interpreters, where a standard language is usually used, can be risk-laden. This has been reported to me also by Malay-speakers who were allocated interpreters speaking Bahasa Indonesia*. Users of T&I services who are allocated an interpreter who is not a speaker of the language that they requested can justifiably feel that the quality of client-interpreter communication and interlingual transfer is jeopardised.

Speakers feel this way not, I argue, because of national parochialism, but for linguistic and sociolinguistic reasons. These include affective feelings towards one’s “own” language, feelings of linguistic allegiance, and shared cultural-linguistic heritage within one’s own group

Over the years I have interpreted for dozens of Bosnian and Serbian-speakers who were, usually by mistake, allocated the services of a Croatian interpreter. When this happens, I can usually pick this up quickly through the name and/or the language that they’re speaking. If the client is happy to proceed, I speak Croatian, and usually we both accommodate to the other’s language by avoiding words, forms or structures that each believes to be distinct to our own language and employing words, forms or structures that we believe are common or more easily understood by the other party. There is now much research on this phenomenon between speakers of Scandinavian languages, between Czech and Slovak after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, Turkish and Azerbaijani, Finnish and Estonian, and so on*. The phenomenon of accommodation is not evidence of speakers being speakers of the ‘same language’, but of the strategies that speakers employ to speak to others across linguistic borders. When speakers of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian practise accommodation among themselves, they do so knowing that they are using a strategy to maximise understanding of each other, but without making claims on each other’s languages.

This occurs where interlocutors are able to do so and are motivated to cross linguistic boundaries. But not all can or want to do this. This can lead to a breakdown in communication and the ability to provide interlingual transfer. If a client requests T&I services in a particular language, I believe that the T&I agency should be guided by this request. Accommodation is a makeshift strategy, not a practice that should become a guideline for T&I services*.

I am sympathetic to the difficulties that T&I agencies have in attracting trained and competent interpreters for a wide number of languages. But I am unsure that these difficulties can justify a move for an agency to allocate interpreters on the basis of what the agency deems to be a language that a client can be expected to understand, and not necessarily the language that a client requests.

ABS census data on language spoken at home and immigration department settlement data on recent arrivals provide much of the information needed to determine which languages should be the focus of T&I services. Major healthcare providers also keep their own statistics. Residents in Australia who complete the census form and who use interpreting services report their language as such – either Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian. NAATI, like ATA in the US, the CIoL in the UK and the provincial branches of CTTIC in Canada, classify the languages separately. So does the European Union. There are separate ISO 639 codes for libraries and bibliographic classifications of the languages. T&I certifying authorities, T&I professional organisations and terminology authorities classify the languages as separate and distinct.

It is perhaps regrettable that terms such as “ethnic councils” and “ethnic politics” still figure in discussions of T&I services in this country.

The use of these terms to suggest that some language communities are campaigning for T&I services in their languages primarily as a means to advance parochial or particularistic interests is unfortunate. These terms devalue and marginalise the hard work of activists who fought for the provision of T&I services not as a means to promote their ethnic or linguistic group but as services to promote social access and equity and to allow others without proficiency in English to participate more fully in Australian society.

*Jim Hlavac is an accredited interpreter and translator who teaches at Monash University. *Email the author at jim.hlavac@monash.edu for detailed references for this article.*

Second-class interpreting

Erika Gonzalez says we need to get interpreters´ education, competence and professionalism to a level where they deserve to be paid professional rates.

An interpreter has just finished her work. She has spent five hours in a police station interpreting for an asylum seeker. She gets back to her car. Great – she´s got a fine. She will get 65 euros for her job. After paying the fine she´s got 25 euros left.

She takes the train next time. She goes to a local court and on this occasion she is done in 10 minutes. She will get 2.10 euros for her job. They won´t even pay her for the whole hour (13 euros). The remuneration won´t even cover the cost of public transport.

Same interpreter, same brain, same suit, same pen, same notebook. A council meeting. All the participants speak the same language, but some of them do not want to use that language, and therefore they use the other official language. The interpreter gets in the booth. She is 15 minutes early. Someone knocks on the booth door and brings her a freshly baked croissant and a latte. She spends three hours in the booth. She gets about 400 euros for the job.

That interpreter was me, seven years ago, before I moved to Australia. I could not believe the gap between conference and community interpreting, and realised that the difference between them was not due to the requirements of the job, the label or setting, but rather to the type of clients. While some were politicians, academics, doctors, engineers or the like, the others were migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Even in court, a category which falls within the community umbrella term, it made a difference whether you were interpreting for local citizens who decided to use "the other" official language or for an asylum seeker. There were permanent court interpreters in "the other" official language who were earning fairly good wages.

As I am writing these words, another AUSIT e-bulletin message on whether community interpreting should be rebranded has landed in my in box.

Of course we could rebrand it, pick a fancy name and hope for the best. As some members already stated, unless there are some deeper changes, I do not think our situation will improve by just changing the label of the activity. Stakeholders, service providers and we ourselves need to understand what the professional practice implies, the kind of training and expertise it requires. No doctor or judge is going to wake up one day and say: "Oh, I think these interpreters deserve better."

It takes time. They need to be trained and taught how to work with interpreters, and to understand the level of specialisation required to interpret. Professionalism is gained through self-recognition and internal regulation as well. The so-called "control professions", notably the law and medicine, regulate and control the entry of new professionals and establish high standards for new members. I would have been petrified if they had told me that the surgeon who removed

‘The difference between conference and community interpreting was not due to the requirements of the job, the label or setting, but rather to the type of clients.’

my thyroid tumour a couple of months ago got his credentials through the National Accreditation Authority for Thyroid Inspectors just by sitting for a test that involved dissecting a chubby doll and removing a fabric thyroid. We need compulsory training, and yes, research that contributes to the design of quality training programs. Little will change until every single interpreter understands this. Nobody is going to fight the battle for us.

As one contributor to the debate has commented, the term community is associated with community centres, cake stalls, welfare, close family, safety, nurturing and the like – all lovely things that come at little perceived financial cost. It is our responsibility to raise the bar and demonstrate that this is not right.

Community interpreting in Australia (I´ll stick to this term until we find a better one) is no longer an occupation.

We have much to improve, but fortunately we are among the leading nations in the field. At least judges do not rush out of their offices to grab the chef in the restaurant across the road to get an interpreter, and nobody receives insulting fees (even if some agencies and institutions are pretty tight) that do not even cover the interpreter’s commuting costs. It is a profession, and a profession is an activity that is practised by specialists who gain their expertise through training and practice, and abide by the code of ethics that regulates the activity.

Professionalism in community interpreting is built upon four pillars: technical competence (interpreting skills, linguistic skills, communication management skills and the ability to adopt a pragmatic approach when interpreting); knowledge of the code of ethics and how to apply it; knowledge of the role and its limitations; and knowledge of the work environment, protocols and politics involved in each setting. If any of these pillars starts eroding, the structure will begin to crack.

Continuous learning will provide us with the materials to fight erosion and rust. At the same time, those who didn´t build their pillars solidly enough or who engaged in the project with no guidance will end up compromising the balance of the structure. Quality is a shared responsibility, and quality means good, well-respected practitioners who are paid according to their level of expertise and performance.

As Spanish academic Abril Martí has observed, “training in conference interpreting is a given”. Hopefully in a not too distant future we might be able to say the same about community interpreting. Then when we go to court, we may have a waiting room with the materials to prepare for the case, and a dedicated desk in the court with a jug of water and connection to the internet – and maybe we’ll even be welcomed with a freshly baked croissant and a latte. Then people will get the same high-quality service whether they be lawyers, engineers, unskilled workers or citizens who have been contributing to our society for years but lack fluency in the official language.

We need to get interpreters´ education, competence and professionalism to a level where they deserve to be paid professional rates. We need to get to a point where nobody will question the professionalism of interpreters, and therefore the rates they charge. The journey won´t be an easy one, but I am heartened that there are interpreters and academics working hard to win the profession the status it deserves.

Erika Gonzalez is an accredited Spanish-English translator and teaches at the University of NSW.

Translators and interpreters, the PSI rules and the results test

Translators and interpreters often conduct their translating operations as microbusinesses, making them subject to the *Alienation of Personal Services Income (PSI)* rules. This article explains some of the basics, including how to avoid being caught by the rules when running a genuine personal services business.

The PSI legislation was enacted on 1 July 2000 in response to recommendations set out in the 1999 review of business taxation (the Ralph report).

The legislation is intended to prevent individuals who generate income from their personal services from reducing their liability to taxation by diverting income through a company, partnership or trust, and to limit and clarify the work-related deductions available to the individual and the interposed entity. The tax office issued taxation rulings detailing a range of personal services business tests to determine how contractor status would be applied. Those who did not satisfy these tests would not be regarded as personal services businesses (PSBs) and many of the business deductions formerly available would no longer be allowable.

Translators and interpreters are subject to the PSI rules.

The rules

The rules were designed to improve the integrity of the tax system by addressing

- the capacity of individuals and interposed entities providing the personal services of an individual to claim higher deductions than employees providing the same or similar services, and
- the alienation of personal services income through an interposed entity.

They apply both to individuals earning income from their own exertions and to companies, trusts, partnerships and other trading entities that earn income from the efforts of their individual employees or consultants.

Entities and individuals

- If an "entity" earns personal services income (as defined), that income will be attributed to the individual who does the work.
- The individual who does the work will have to pay income tax on the attributed income at personal rates.
- The entity will not be able to claim many normal business deductions.
- If an individual earns personal services income personally, rather than through an entity, that individual will not be able to claim many normal business deductions.

What is a PSB?

The four tests to determine PSB status are:

- the results test
- the unrelated clients test
- the employment test and
- the business premises test.

The rules do not apply to PSI earned through a PSB. Normal business tax rules apply to such income.

... Translators and interpreters are subject to the Personal Services Income rules.'

If 80 per cent or more of the PSI comes from one source, the results test must be passed. Otherwise, the business is not a PSB and the PSI rules will apply.

If less than 80 per cent of the PSI comes from one source, the business will be a PSB (and the PSI rules will not apply to that income) if the business can pass any one of the four tests.

Do you meet the PSB criteria?

You can use this checklist to self-assess against the results test. If your answers agree with those set out in the table, provided your terms of engagement reflect the reality and intent of the commercial relationship, you will satisfy the three conditions of the results test.

Where the word 'indicator' follows the question, the contractor will not necessarily fail the results test if the answer is other than that stated in this table. If the words 'determining factor' appear after the question and if your answer is other than that set out in the checklist, it is very likely that you will not satisfy a condition of the results test and therefore the results test overall.

This article is an extract from a Professionals Australia guide to *Deciding your PSI status with certainty.* If you're interested in joining and to gain access to the full text version of the guide, visit https://www.professionalsaustralia.org.au/join/

How the ATO assesses the character of the relationship between a contractor and an acquirer of business services in relation to the results test

	Answer should be:
Does the contract set out the result to be achieved rather than the scope of work or typical tasks to be performed?	Yes
Is payment based on specified outcomes or results set out under the contract? (determining factor)	Yes
Is payment conditional upon achieving these outcomes rather than for work performed? (determining factor)	Yes
Does the contract state that you have a high level of discretion and flexibility as to how the work is performed? (indicator)	Yes
Does the contract state that you have the right to subcontract the work? (indicator)	Yes
Does the contract state that you will provide all necessary tools and equipment required taking into account industry custom and practice and convenience? (determining factor)	Yes
Where the client provides tools and equipment, are they incidental rather than necessary to the achievement of the result or outcome taking into account industry custom and practice and convenience? (indicator)	Yes
Does the contract state that you are liable for the cost of rectifying any defects in the work performed? (determining factor)	Yes
Does the contract state that you will carry PI and PL insurance? (indicator)	Yes
If a daily/hourly rate or progress payments are specified in the contract, is payment tied to achievement of milestones or results set out within the terms of engagement and reimbursed if outcomes are not achieved? (indicator)	Yes
Does the contract contain provision for leave entitlements, expenses or any other disbursements or work-related outgoings? (indicator)	No
Can the contract be terminated without or with limited penalty? (determining factor)	No
Are you exposed to the commercial risk of making a loss under the performance of the contract?	Yes
Does the contract contain a mutual termination clause? (indicator)	No
If the contract is for a specified period, is there provision for the contract to be rolled over? (indicator)	No

Accuracy or approximation

Translation in my eyes is an art, not a science. It can hardly be as accurate as science, but is only as approximate to its original as a painting to the landscape it depicts.

For this reason, I agree with Patricia Cruise's opinion (*In Touch*, Winter 2013) that total accuracy and impartiality are not always appropriate. Accuracy in the sense of "not alter, make addition to or omit anything from their assigned work" (old version of our code) seems absurd in theory and unfeasible in practice. In a recent translation of an application for a PR visa to Australia by a couple who once divorced and just got married again, there are various reasons that I had no choice but to alter, add, and omit in many places to help my clients to achieve their goal. Following are a few examples picked out from both the word-for-word accurate translation of the original and the approximate translation of the finished product.

Alteration for comprehensibility in Australian culture

Word for word: We came to Australia together to start a business in 2001. We had loved each other for long. Unfortunately, during a visit to China, my wife was detected and then diagnosed as having breast cancer and was hospitalised to undergo an operation of carcinectomy. It was so sudden that I had no ideological preparation. Ten days later I made some urgent arrangement for business and hurried to China to take care of my wife at her sickbed. But again on account of business needs, I had to return to Australia soon and since then I'd never been back to China, leaving her alone in helpless situation. So my wife hated me very much.
Final translation: That was like a bolt from the blue to me. I had no time for any arrangement until ten days later. A hatred for me had grown in her heart day by day.
Comment: Nobody could be prepared for such a disease, and ideological preparation is incomprehensible in Australia. In view of the long development of the story, the hatred is unlikely to have been present from the outset.

Omission due to redundancy in target language culture

Word for word: In order to prevent cancer from spreading, it is necessary to do chemotherapy. About where to do that therapy, we quarrelled over and again.
Final translation: About where to receive chemotherapy – in China or in Australia – we quarrelled over and again.
Comment: Some information important to the original readers but seems naïve to the target readers.

Addition of specific and effective words to make the same message more effective

Word for word: Since then we quarrelled more and more, spoke loudly to each other and we always got angry to each other.
Final translation: … yelled at each other… pissed each other off
Comment: Perhaps the original lacks words to express the same idea. Translators are supposed to be more rhetorically artistic than ordinary writers.

Alteration with effective words

Word for word: After my daughter's persuasion once and again, I came to realise my fault that in order to make money very hard, I didn't pay attention to my wife's health.
Final translation: … hunting for money at all cost, I didn't give a damn for her health.

Addition for emotional effect of the message

Word for word: I can regain our lost old feelings if only I persist in my sincerity to her.
Final translation: I can ignite the flame of lost feelings in her heart if only I persist in using my love to awaken her love.

Alteration for comprehensibility in target culture

Word for word: I wish we can be grateful to each other and love each other and live together until grey-hairs.
Final translation: I wish we would love each other until the end of our lives.
Comment: This expression (transliterated as " en en ai ai, bai tou xie lao") is a very popular wedding greeting in China, but combining "grateful" with "love" seems unacceptable to Australians and "love until grey-hairs" seems incomprehensible.

Ben Xuan Xu
Sydney

Lost in translation

The Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA) is recognised as one of the most independent and responsible news organisations in Iran and is a favourite source for western media. But obstacles remain, reports Hajar Khanmohammad.

With an emerging trend of social and cultural liberalisation in Iran under new president Hassan Rouhani, there is a hunger in the west for news from Iran.

But obstacles remain. According to two academics at Islamic Azad University in Tehran, ISNA, despite its forthrightness, is prone to misrepresenting news through additions or omissions when translating into or from Persian.

Hajar Khanmohammad of the university's faculty of foreign languages and Ali Aminzad of the faculty of Persian literature and foreign languages acknowledge in their paper, "A study of the additions and omissions in English translations of Persian-based social, cultural and political news headlines: a case study of the ISNA news agency", that "additions and omissions in translation are common phenomena translators ... have recourse to in order to make a way out of the labyrinth of lexical equivalents and pragmatics". However, they argue that during the 31-day period they studied during their six-month investigation, ISNA "manipulated" political news translated from Persian into English by omitting around three quarters of the words in the original headlines, inadequately compensated by a 20 per cent addition to the original words.

The authors collected their data in three stages. First, items in both English and Persian were located on ISNA's website over the month of May 2012. An identical search was conducted over the same period of two Iranian newspapers, *Iran News* and *Tehran Times*, plus Iran's English-language television station, Press TV, and its English-language radio station, IRIB. Finally, the authors searched for matching items from the websites of the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and *The Independent* (UK), as well as three western English-language news agencies.

The headlines of political news stories, when translated from Persian into English, were considerably more likely than social or cultural news stories to suffer omissions.

The authors examined about 6500 items in total, from which they identified 27 ISNA news headlines in Persian that were matched to 19 equivalent translated ISNA headlines, 24 translated headlines from other Iranian sources and 19 headlines from overseas sources.

These selected items were then subdivided into political, social and cultural news to see if the patterns of addition, omission and modification varied across the categories. It emerged that the headlines of political news stories, when translated from Persian into English, were considerably more likely to suffer omissions than the other two categories (76 per cent of original words deleted versus 55 per cent and 35 per cent respectively), and only slightly more likely to experience additions (24 per cent versus 19 per cent and 17 per cent respectively), with the result that translated political headlines were much shorter relative to the originals than the other two categories.

Interestingly, the reverse seemed to apply in translations of political news headlines from English into Persian, with a modest excess of additions over omissions.

The authors also investigated the extent to which headlines had been modified in other respects. They concluded that "changes in grammatical structures including tense and voice modifications, nominalisations and omissions of articles had been acceptable based on global media translation norms". However, they were critical of ISNA for engaging in covert translation from Persian to English of political news headlines, describing it as "a kind of domestication [that] diminishes cultural and linguistic differences of the two languages under the pretext of clarity".

In short, they detect across the headlines they studied "a hint of manipulation" and raise the possibility that this reflects "a deliberate strategy linked to centralised censorship".

Email Ms Khanmohammad at fer987295kia@yahoo.com for a copy of the authors' original article.

Agency's online comments 'inaccurate and likely to confuse'

AUSIT has responded to an interpreting and translating agency website's summary of the revised code of ethics, labelling the summary "distorted", "simplistic" and "incorrect".

AUSIT national vice-president Christian Schmidt says agencies "have a particular responsibility to represent, uphold and demand professional standards and ethical conduct in our profession". Misrepresentation has "the potential to confuse and irritate practitioners," he adds. He draws attention to seven instances of alleged misrepresentation on the website.

Under "professional conduct", the agency says "this will include allowing time to prepare for assignments. Any assignments accepted must be completed to the predetermined deadline."

Schmidt responds that the principle of professional conduct includes much more than preparation time or adherence to deadlines. In particular, it does not contain the word "predetermined", acknowledging that in practice deadlines can change in particular circumstances. The code does mention that practitioners "advise clients promptly of any hindrance" which may also be caused by various external factors, including an agency or client (unrealistic expectations, inaccurate description of an assignment such as degree of technicality, volume of text and so on). Oversimplified rendering of this passage has the potential to confuse practitioners and misrepresents the intention and spirit of the code.

Under "impartiality", the website says "professionals will maintain a complete level of neutrality in all situations. If personal beliefs are an issue, a professional will not accept such assignments, or if concerns are learned later, will offer to withdraw."

But nowhere does the code read "a complete level of neutrality", says Schmidt. The wording can be misunderstood in many ways and misrepresents the reality of professional practice, which includes the complex aspect of emotion, for example, in common interpreting settings. Furthermore, the code also does not read "if concerns are learned later will offer to withdraw". Rewording the concept in this way and adding the verb "will" suggests that practitioners are required to offer to withdraw from an assignment in any case, which is not what is meant. The expression "if concerns are learned later" is not contained anywhere in the revised code.

Under "accuracy", it says that "interpreters and translators will provide accurate translations of all material without distortion or omission, keeping the original content of the source material intact".

This, says Schmidt, is a serious distortion and oversimplification of the meaning of this very important principle. Nowhere does the code mention "all material". It very clearly states "preserving the content and intent of the original message or text", which has a completely different meaning to the agency's interpretation.

Under "clarity of role boundaries", the agency notes that "while on their assignment they will not take on the roles of other professionals by giving guidance or advice and will respect other professionals in their fields at all times".

But the code reads "in the course of their interpreting or translation duties", not "while on their assignment", which is not what is meant. While on assignment an interpreter may, for example, give professional advice to a speaker or speakers, meaning advice in their capacity as a professional interpreter, to speak more slowly or more clearly, or various other practice-specific recommendations that facilitate communication. This distinction should not be blurred but must be explained to practitioners who are at the beginning of their career, as should other details relating to professional practice that cannot be exhaustively covered by the code.

The agency states under the heading "maintaining professional relationships" that "professionals will request background information and a briefing before they begin work. They will secure the optimum physical environment to allow them to effectively communicate their services to the client."

But nowhere does the code require professionals to secure an optimum physical environment themselves, instead encouraging them to endeavour to secure such optimal conditions, which obviously means collaboration with the facilitator, client or agency, who are ultimately responsible for securing those conditions for the practitioner. The distortion, he says, "places an onus on professionals to proactively change the environment in which they are assigned to work, which clearly is neither meant nor practicable".

Under the heading "competence", the website says "a practitioner will not accept any assignment they are not qualified for. Knowledge of the specific subject, terminology and various genres are a requirement before accepting any assignment".

Schmidt says that contrary to this summary, the wording in the code – that "interpreters and translators only undertake work they are competent to perform in the languages for which they are professionally qualified through training and credentials" – generally describes professional conduct in positive terms "in order to promote the understanding, value and growth of the profession, instead of issuing dictates, restrictions and prohibitions". Nor is "knowledge of the specific subject, terminology and various genres" a requirement for accepting an assignment; rather, it is expected that professionals will be "familiar with the varied contexts, institutional structures, terminology and genres of the areas in which they accept work".

Finally, the agency states that "the final section of the code ... covers issues that are likely to only be addressed in specific fields".

This observation, says Schmidt, "is entirely incorrect and reveals a complete misunderstanding of the conduct issues specific to interpreters and translators". The section covers critical aspects that were missing in the previous version and reflects increasingly important features of current professional practice – a far cry from "issues that are likely to only be addressed in specific fields".

"The revised code of ethics and code of conduct uses the prescriptive verb 'will' in only two instances to describe professional conduct, while the much briefer website summary uses 'will' 15 times," Schmidt says. "Avoiding it was the authors' well-considered choice." He urges this and other agencies to contact AUSIT before producing their own paraphrases or summaries of the code.

Out of Africa

Life often holds surprises. Dorothy Prentice reflects on an extraordinary career and the transition from missionary and doctor to community interpreter.

Born in Melbourne of third-generation Australians of Anglo-Saxon heritage, I initially trained in medicine at Melbourne University in the 1960s and went on to practise first in Australia and then in Tanzania (East Africa) for two periods totalling 25 years.

My days in Africa were spent in all sorts of ways – treating tropical ailments, sewing lacerations, delivering babies, combating malnutrition and eye diseases as well as driving Land Rovers, overseeing building projects, teaching English as a second language, teaching church history, and home-schooling my three children from time to time. Of course most work in Tanzania was carried out in the national language of Swahili (also known as Kiswahili) which is spoken by nearly everyone, so I became fluent in that language. I was grateful to learn later on that Swahili is one of the world's five easiest languages to learn, and always thankful that the mission organisation had not sent us to Japan!

On returning to Melbourne at the end of 2007, I took some time to readjust and think about a new career, as I had ceased to practice in 2002 when work took us to Namibia and a job as administrator of a theological seminary.

I relinquished my Victorian medical registration in 2006 after 30 years as a doctor. My husband quips that "Dorothy had to give up her medical career as she had made everybody better". I also felt that returning to life as a GP would involve too much effort, time and expense for the ageing brain.

So, at the age of 63, what was around the corner? A chance encounter with another former missionary who is now a community interpreter in another emerging language prompted me to investigate some of the contacts she had given me and start to look for work as an interpreter. She failed to tell me about the need for NAATI accreditation, so contemplating having to do an exam was a bit of a shock. Thankfully I managed to pass and have been working part-time since 2009 for various agencies and in many and varied places, as is the practice with community interpreters. I can fit jobs around my busy involvement with nine grandchildren, church and other commitments.

My husband quips that “Dorothy had to give up her medical career as she had made everybody better”.

My African non-English speakers are a bit taken aback on first seeing me and realising that I am the interpreter booked for them, but are delighted to discover that we can communicate in Swahili. They often say “You know what it’s like in Africa”, assuming accurately that I do know from where they have come. The professionals are also slightly nonplussed; sometimes their gaze passes over me, as they are expecting someone black.

Many people do not realize that there are three main “types” (not quite dialects) of Swahili – the pure “BBC” Tanzanian Swahili that I learnt and speak; Kenyan Swahili, which is a bit less “pure”; and Congolese Swahili, with some more distinct differences, poorer grammar and the admixing of French words. A return visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2010 was a help with this strain of Swahili, as most of the clientele in Australia are refugees from DRC. Also, most people do not realise that Swahili is the second-most spoken language in Africa after Arabic and is known by around 80 million people. Many of my interpreting colleagues, as well as the professionals in hospitals and elsewhere, had never heard of Swahili before they met me.

I’ve become involved with AUSIT and have appreciated the help that AUSIT gives to me professionally and socially. I’ve also joined Professionals Australia as I see the industry in need of support and acknowledgement and would hope for better recognition and pay. A large translation project kept me busy in 2013 and was a help in improving my Swahili. I also give lessons as need arises for gap students, career missionaries and others doing mission trips to East Africa.

I don’t regret the transition I made to interpreting as it is always interesting and challenging, and I hope to continue for a while yet.

Dorothy Prentice is a Melbourne-based community interpreter for Swahili-speakers who also runs classes for people wanting to learn the beautiful language of Swahili. Email her at dorothy@prentices.com for details.

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