INTERPRETER CREDENTIALING, TESTING AND TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA: PAST, CONTEMPORARY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS. / CERTIFICACIÓN DE INTÉRPRETES, EXÁMENES Y CAPACITACIÓN EN AUSTRALIA: DIRECCIONES PASADAS, PRESENTES, Y FUTURAS.

Jim Hlavac
Monash University, Australia
jim.hlavac@monash.edu

Abstract: This paper focuses on public service interpreting in Australia, which, like many predominantly Anglophone countries, had policies and practices that openly discouraged bi- and multi-lingualism and that marginalised translation and interpreting. A change to this occurred in the mid-1970s when social policy caught up with post-WWII reality and *multiculturalism* became a cornerstone of public policy at all levels. Virtually overnight, national policy required the establishment of a national body that registered suitably attributed interpreters and translators to service the needs of non-English-speaking residents. This has led to the development of T&I infrastructure that is responsive to larger and smaller, older and newer linguistic groups, but which encounters attendant difficulties in the harmonisation of standards of practice amongst interpreters across different languages. The relationship of testing to training is examined and this paper concludes with data on those currently entering the sector: statistics are provided from a sample of 50 trainees, attending an introductory, 40-hour course entitled 'Entry-level Interpreting' on their motivational and career-aspirational features, and on their views and experiences of interpreting practice.

Keywords: public service interpreting, government language services policies, trainee interpreters, pedagogy of interpreting

Resumen: Este artículo se centra en los servicios públicos de interpretación en Australia, y provee información general sobre elementos sociales e históricos de Australia. Australia, como muchos otros países angloparlantes, tenía políticas y procedimientos diseñados para desalentar el bilingüismo y poliglotismo, lo cual consecuentemente marginalizó la traducción e interpretación. Esto comenzó a cambiar a mediados de los años setenta, cuando la política social se puso al corriente de las realidades de la posguerra y el *multiculturalismo* se volvió una pieza clave de la política pública a todos niveles.

Prácticamente de un día a otro, la política nacional requirió el establecimiento de una entidad que registrara intérpretes y traductores adecuadamente acreditados para satisfacer los servicios requeridos por aquellos residentes que no hablaban inglés. Esto llevo al desarrollo de una infraestructura de intérpretes y traductores capaz de responder a las necesidades de grupos lingüísticos grandes y pequeños, nuevos y viejos, pero que a la vez se encuentra con la constante dificultad de asegurar que sus intérpretes en diferentes idiomas mantengan los mismos estándares profesionales.

Este artículo examina la relación entre capacitación y examen, y concluye con información sobre estudiantes que se encuentran a punto de unirse a la industria. Las estadísticas provistas son de una muestra de cincuenta estudiantes, los cuales estudiaron un curso de introducción de cuarenta horas llamado "Curso de interpretación de nivel básico". Así mismo, este artículo provee información sobre la motivación de los estudiantes, sus ambiciones profesionales, y sus opiniones y experiencias sobre la práctica de interpretación.

Palabras clave: servicio público de interpretación, políticas gubernamentales de servicios de idiomas, estudiantes de interpretación, pedagogía de interpretación.

1. Introduction

This paper looks back further than ten years in the retrospective view of public service translation and interpreting, in light of the fact that the focus is on developments in Australia, where public service (or 'community') interpreting was established as a feature of national social policy and multiculturalism in the mid-1970s. Public service interpreting is here understood as referring to interpreting in the following sectors: public service (i.e. interactions with government employed personnel and others in areas of public administration such as housing, welfare, counselling etc.); education; medical; legal (court and police) and faith-based organizations. Public service interpreting functions as a hypernym that includes all forms of interpreting other than conference, business, media and diplomatic interpreting (cf. Hlavac 2015: 24). This paper examines interpreting only, and mainly that relating to spoken languages, and is structured in the following way: a brief overview of historical events and demographic characteristics of Australian residents is provided to contextualise a situation that may differ from that in other countries; the establishment of the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) is discussed, as a catalyst event and as an official form of government infrastructure that sought to establish and then regulate a nascent Translation and Interpreting (hereafter: T&I) sector; section 4 talks about the 'rise' of the (community) interpreter, ie. the institutionalisation and emerging professionalisation of public service interpreting; section 5 outlines the mechanisms through which standards and skill levels of certified (or 'accredited' as is the equivalent term in Australia) interpreters are ascertained and gives a brief description of the relationship between training and testing; section 6 presents data on 50 trainees who attended an introductory 40-hour short course entitled 'Entry-level (Community) Interpreting' and this section sheds light on educational, occupational, motivational and career-aspirational features of trainee interpreters. This paper concludes by re-visiting key developments of public service interpreting and matching these with the attributes of the sample trainees in providing an insight into the educational, occupational and skill-based profiles of tomorrow's interpreters.

2. Australia and its mono-, bi- and multilingual residents

For most of the approx. 60,000 years that humans have inhabited Australia, multilingualism, inter-lingual comprehension (or 'lingua receptiva') and linguistic mediation/interpreting have been the order of the day: the linguistic repertoires of indigenous Australians almost invariably included multiple codes, not least due to patterns of exogamy that led to bi- and multi-lingualism not only as a feature of inter-group communications, but also intra-group and even intra-family communication (cf Brandl & Walsh, 1982). Throughout this time, inter-lingual transfer and spoken-language interpreting can be considered to have been commonplace, unremarkable and socially unmarked phenomena. Such a situation is reminiscent of what Harris (1992) refers to as 'natural translation', a term that he and others popularised when observing any form of lay, spontaneous or informal interpreting (or translation). With the arrival of groups of Europeans since the late 18th century, amongst whom British monolinguals were the largest group, the language of that group – English – wielded power in the same way that the new co-residents – or colonisers, invaders, convicts, appropriators, adventurers, call them what you will – wielded power. One single language, and at that, a non-indigenous and transposed one, was the socially-dominant code in interactions amongst white residents, and in interactions between white and indigenous Australians.

The *laissez faire* and common law tradition of British colonies meant that an official language was not spelt out in laws, statutes or constitutions. But to be sure, on the ground English monolingualism prevailed in most areas that became slowly occupied by European settlers. A legacy of Anglo-centrism and post-WWI policies that prohibited or severely limited the use of languages other than English in public life (and which continued long after WWII) led to their marginalisation in the Australian school system for a great number of years. (It goes without saying that while instruction in the languages of others is not an absolute pre-requisite for the development of T&I services, a lack of instruction presents a clear impediment for Australian schoolchildren to one day have the linguistic skills to become T&I practitioners.) Accompanying this, translation and interpreting remained haphazard practices, usually performed for the most recently arrived, so that they could understand some of the things that were going on around them. Once acquisition of English had occurred, the need for T&I (referring here to informal, unpaid and impromptu inter-lingual transfer usually performed by family members and friends) ceased.

By the early 1970s, large numbers of migrant and Australian-born activists began to lobby for changes in social policy to address inequalities in education, welfare provision and the workplace. T&I services were a prominent demand amongst these. For example, in the early 1970s, the federal Australian government's 'Committee on Community Relations' recommended the following:

> - the employment of interpreters in offices, hospitals, law courts, prisons and interpreter facilities at driving tests
> - the translation of forms and information on social security in migrant languages (Clyne, 2005: 149)

The establishment of a telephone interpreter service in Australia in 1973 was a 'world-first'. In part this was evidence of the success of activists, and also a pragmatic way to address the problem of interpreter-availability across a large geographical area. The Australian National Policy on Language, written later in 1987 by Joseph Lo Bianco, was the first multilingual national language policy in an English-speaking country, and policy directives on T&I are prominent:

> Interpreting and translating ought to be regarded as an aspect of service provision in Australia rather than a welfarist program from the disadvantaged. To this end, the continued professionalization of the field is urgently required. It is important that this extend to the development of control of entry mechanisms and registration of interpreters/translators so that professional, accredited personnel only are used." (LoBianco, 1987: 14)

What is important to note in these changes in the 1970s, is that they were long overdue and momentous. Multilingualism was now no longer a liability but an aspirational outcome of school instruction. The cornerstone of social policy was 'access and equity' that replaced assimilationist and restrictive immigration policies and covert (and overt) discrimination against migrants and indigenous Australians with programs that encouraged them to enter higher education, the public service and all sectors of Australian society. In fact, multiculturalism in theory went even further: it was not only non-English-speaking residents who were conceived of as the beneficiaries of services that would facilitate their interaction with English-speakers, it was the *nation* that was enriched by the presence and contribution of allophone speakers (cf. Ozolins, 1993; Inghilleri, 2006). The provision of T&I services was therefore not established as a way to merely ameliorate linguistic deficits that some migrants may have, but as an institution that provided both inter-lingual mediation and a public recognition that the Australian population was and is multilingual. The symbolic importance of such a policy cannot be understated.

3. The establishment of NAATI and the development of the T&I sector in Australia

The certifying body for T&I practitioners in Australia, NAATI was established in 1977, as a public statute authority owned jointly by the Commonwealth, and State and Territory governments. This was advantageous as the certifying authority was a central government authority with representative offices in all states that would later test all forms of inter-lingual transfer: translation, spoken-language and sign-language interpretation; 'migrant' as well as indigenous languages. It thus avoided the kind of particularism that has occurred in other countries where testing is available in certain states or provinces only, or only spoken-language and not sign-language interpreting. NAATI was also not allied to a particular section of the T&I market, in the way that commercial companies usually are, and nor was it a professional association [1]. Reflecting the time of its inception, NAATI still today is perceived as not only a credentialing authority, but as an institution that advances social cohesion:

> NAATI's primary purpose is to strengthen inclusion and participation in Australian society by assisting in meeting its diverse and changing communication needs and expectations, through:
>
> - setting, maintaining and promoting high national standards in translating and interpreting, and
> - implementing a national quality-assurance system for credentialing practitioners who meet those standards. (NAATI, 2015a)

From its inception, NAATI was understood of as an institution to address language needs, which included not only migrants, but other areas of Australian life, such as trade, diplomacy, and tourism as well (cf. Martin, 1978; Ozolins, 1993: 148). The comprehensive and 'universalist' approach that NAATI adopted to the provision of language services applied also to the number of languages that would be certified. There has always been a commitment to offer formal certification in not only major world languages, but for as many groups as possible who speak a language other than English (LOTE) that are resident in Australia.

As an organisation NAATI currently tests in 61 languages, and has, since its establishment, accredited practitioners in 117 languages (NAATI, 2015b: 26). This has required the formation of examiner panels for each language group, and the application of equivalent test content design and test marking conventions across a large number of different languages. While inter-rater reliability is a structural feature of all marking systems that include two or three examiners, the challenges are multiplied across such a large number of languages, and the skill-sets of test-takers across language groups can vary greatly as well. This is a

[1] The establishment of a professional association for T&I practitioners in Australia, followed in 1987 with the formation of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators, AUSIT.

challenge for an authority that must apply uniform standards to all language groups (cf. Bell, 1997). The number of languages that NAATI certifies therefore makes it, worldwide, the authority that credentials the largest number of languages. In the UK, the Diploma in Public Service Interpreting test is provided for 52 languages (CIoL, 2015), and in Canada the Community Interpreter Language and Interpreting Skills Assessment Tool (CILISAT) claims to evaluate the interpreting proficiency for certification 'in any 50 high-demand languages' (CISOC, n.d.: 3), but later only specifies 17 languages for which a certification course is available (CISOC, n.d.: 4). In Australia, for those languages that are not formally certified through testing or an approved training course, there is the chance to gain 'recognition' (not 'accreditation').

NAATI proposed several modes of gaining accreditation: direct testing; recognition of overseas qualifications; approved-courses in T&I that conform to NAATI's standards such that an equivalent test is administered at the end of the course (cf. Chrystello, 2002). By 1979, NAATI had commenced its own direct testing, and initially, this was the most frequent and likely means for potential T&I practitioners to enter the profession (Ozolins, 1993). The format of the professional level interpreting test comprises the following: two sets of dialogue interpreting; two consecutively interpreted speeches (one in each language direction); two sight translations (one in each language direction) and questions on ethics that test candidates' knowledge of the AUSIT Code of Ethics and Conduct [2]. The numerical majority of those gaining accreditation now do so through NAATI-approved courses, but this is due to a large number of courses servicing one language pair only (Chinese-English) and a majority of other T&I practitioners across most other languages gain accreditation through direct testing. Direct testing remains NAATI's largest area of work.

4. The rise and rise of the (community) interpreter (and the decline in his/her level of income)

The establishment of NAATI and the formalisation of T&I standards for practice hastened the introduction at the post-secondary level (advanced institutes of vocational education and universities) of diploma (1-year length), advanced diploma (a further 1-year length) and postgraduate master degree (1.5 year length) courses in T&I. The relationship between these courses and NAATI testing was the following: NAATI was interested in supporting (and providing NAATI approval to) sufficiently resourced educational institutions that were able to offer training, particular in 'larger languages' that conformed to NAATI's requirements of skill-level demonstration: this usually meant that such a test, with a minimum pass mark of 70%, was administered by the training provider itself. Within five years, a high demand existed for accredited interpreters in hospitals, courts, social welfare settings etc. and the number of people who supported themselves solely or mostly through T&I work expanded greatly. It was a period before privatisation, economic 'rationalisation' and the casualisation and out-sourcing of large sectors of the workforce, so that many now gained secured employment as in-house interpreters, while others working as freelancers enjoyed an hourly rate of pay of approx. A$40 (≈ €30), paid travel time to assignments and other reimbursements. The 1980s were a decade of expansion, with a nascent professionalisation of the T&I sector and elevation in the status of T&I practitioners.

[2] For further details on NAATI professional level interpreter tests in a comparative, cross-national sense, see Hlavac and Orlando (2015) and in relation to the ISO Guidelines on Community Interpreting see Hlavac (2015).

An increase in the number of advanced institutes of education and universities with T&I programs led to a larger number of trained (and usually accredited) T&I practitioners, but was also driven by the marketing of T&I courses to international, usually Asian students, to come to study in Australia as fee-paying students. In some languages such as Mandarin and Japanese, this led to a large number of accredited T&I practitioners who were too numerous for the needs of the local Australian T&I market. Combined with policies of the privatisation of 'ancillary' government services, and the attendant casualisation of many of those who once worked in them, there has been a sharp drop (in real terms) in the pay rates for T&I work and a removal of other conditions such as travel time allowances. In a survey of 860 T&I practitioners conducted in 2012, APESMA, an organisation representing professionals for the protection of their rates of pay and work conditions, summarised the trend in the following way:

> Since the 1980s when many of services were contracted out by public sector agencies, Translators and Interpreters have generally experienced a decline in their pay and conditions in real terms . . . The profession is marked by low rates of pay that have not kept pace with the cost of living. Notice periods, minimum terms of engagement and cancellation fees provide no offset for the income insecurity which marks the industry. (APESMA, 2012: 2)

The developments in the T&I sector have been paradoxical: the lowering of pay rates and conditions has led to a departure of many trained and accredited practitioners, to a more 'itinerant' sector that has high turnover – many entering and many leaving the sector – and to a return, in many cases, of less qualified and unaccredited interpreters being employed; the diversification of service industries has led to the need for highly trained, specialised practitioners in translation, and to the need for business and conference interpreters as Australia assumes an increasingly prominent place in the economic powerhouse of the 21st century, the Asia-Pacific Rim. The latter phenomenon, when it occurs in concert with standard-setting (eg. governmental regulations, pre-requisites and conditions in order to practice) is known as 'professionalisation'. But the former phenomenon is something that is heading in the opposite direction: 'deprofessionalisation', ie. ". . . a process which occurs in a workplace or industry when non-qualified or less qualified individuals are used to perform work which is more properly performed by appropriately qualified/accredited individuals" (APESMA, 2012: 28). The issue of addressing training and qualifications as a means to tackle the problem of 'deprofessionalisation' is explored in the following section.

The role of training and the way it is offered and taken up by potential interpreters is important in a discussion on the professionalisation of interpreting in Australia. While Australia is acknowledged by many (eg. Bell, 1997; Chrystello, 2002) as a model for the provision of interpreting services, together with a credentialing authority that is responsive to a wide range of languages spoken (and signed) in Australia, a challenge in Australia has been to facilitate training opportunities in interpreter education to not only international students in a small group of 'world languages', but to local residents across a broader number of languages spoken by immigrant and indigenous groups that make up the largest part of language services sector. Therefore, it is important to gain data from one of the 'coalfaces' of admission to the field of practising interpreters, namely from trainees who are part of an introductory course in community interpreting. It is instructive to gain data from a cross-section of trainee interpreters in relation to not only their (self-reported) linguistic skills (cf. Timarová and Ungoed-Thomas, 2008), but also their educational and occupational pathways to interpreting (cf. D'Hayer, 2013), and also their motivations (cf. Timarová and Salaets, 2011). Data on these features can provide an indication of the profiles of potential interpreters This paper features a data sample of trainee interpreters that is presented in Section 7 below. The following section contextualises the data sample with a description of the provision of training and testing in Australia as complementary and as combined means to becoming a certified interpreter.

5. Testing and/or training: credentialing through testing and credentialing through training, and reaching the limits of what tests can do.

This section does not seek to suggest that testing and training are mutually exclusive and that there is a dichotomy between the two. However, in the absence of *any* benchmarking of potential practitioners, public or semi-public authorities are faced with making choices in regard to the instruments available to assess potential practitioners' attributes, and often at short notice and with limited resources. In many New World countries without a tradition or infrastructure of educational institutions to train interpreters, tests were the obvious way to do this.

There is now a growing body of literature on testing for interpreters (eg. Moser-Mercer, 1994; Clifford, 2005; Stansfield and Hewitt, 2005; Chen, 2009; Angelelli and Jacobson, 2009), and this body is being extended from the initial focus on entrance tests for conference interpreters, to descriptions of course-completion tests, stand-alone tests, and tests that elicit not only linguistic but other aspects of performance from test-takers.

Turning to training, there are handbooks available (eg. Gentile et al., 1996; Nolan, 2005; Valero-Garcés, 2014), developed pedagogical approaches and models (Seleskovitch, 1978; Gile, 1995), discussions on the further potential and structure of interpreter pedagogy (Valero-Garcés and Taibi, 2004; Niska, 2005; van den Bogaerde, 2013; Bontempo, 2013) and lastly the capacity for technology to augment and extend both pedagogy and trainees' skill sets (eg. Gorm Hansen and Shlesinger, 2007; Ko and Chen, 2011). Some of these, and not only those from authors based in the New World, look at (milestone or credentialing) testing as an element of training.

In a variety of countries, credentialing through testing alone remains a widely-used instrument for government authorities, professional associations or other certifying institutions, at least for a minimum or threshold level of credentialing. To a great extent, the testing consists of a formal examination, sometimes recorded, usually with a generalist and specialist component, but very often there are no sample practice materials for test-takers to familiarise themselves with the format and degree of difficulty of the test format. Training also occupies a peripheral place: Hlavac (2012: 38) found that amongst 21 sample interpreting (and translation) certifying organisations worldwide only one of them had accompanying training as a *compulsory* attribute.

Elsewhere, in continental European countries and increasingly in East Asia, training (usually at university level) has been the yardstick of entry into the profession, at least in specific areas such as conference and court interpreting, and T&I professional associations usually list a formal T&I qualification as a pre-requisite for admission. But the situation is changing. The establishment of public-service interpreting in Europe and elsewhere has led to both stand-alone testing as a form of credentialing (eg. the Diploma of Public Service Interpreting in the UK) or testing as a hurdle requirement in conjunction with training to gain certification (eg. Social Interpreting Certification in Flanders, cf. Vermeiren et al., 2009; Kruispunt). Looking across to translation, it is possible to see that in the European Union there are now initiatives for the testing of non-trained *but also* university-trained translators (with recognition of prior training) towards a unified and common certifying system. TransCert, the Trans-European Voluntary Certification for Translators initiative undertaken from 2013 to 2015 is an example of this.

While the incidence of and need for testing of interpreters may not decline due to the need to comply with industry-imposed benchmarks or cross-national standards (eg. ISO guidelines), the evidence from studies is that the acquisition of skills is best verified through a formal process of skill-transfer, ie. training. As Niska (2005: 39) puts it, “I don’t think any test can be a substitute for proper training, nor is testing *per se* a remedy for a lack of interpreters. Tests don’t produce interpreters; proper education does”. Formal instruction, even that of a short-length course (cf. Lotriet, 2002) is beneficial to performance-level verification. With this in mind, NAATI, in 2012, launched the *Improvements to NAATI Testing Project* (INT Project) that commissioned T&I university trainers, with input from industry and professional association stakeholders, to provide a conceptual overview of NAATI’s standards, testing and assessment procedures. One of the recommendations from the first stage of the project has been for test candidates to first complete a form of compulsory education and training prior to sitting for certification tests (NAATI, 2012). In addition to this, another recommendation was that the minimum level of education of those seeking accreditation should be a post-secondary qualification of at least two years length, and a Bachelor degree of three years for candidates for proposed specialist accreditation (NAATI, 2012: 7). Training, even that of a basic nature, is now widely recognised as a highly aspirational attribute for those entering the T&I sector in Australia, even if the recommendations from the INT Project are yet to be implemented. The following section looks at potential interpreters who have chosen a pathway of (voluntary) short course training as a first step to becoming sufficiently skilled to work as an interpreter. Most of these potential interpreters seek later to attempt a NAATI accreditation test, at least at a lower, paraprofessional level, together with further training.

6. Who will be tomorrow’s public-service interpreters? Data and discussion of demographic, motivational and career-aspirational features of trainee interpreters.

This paper now moves its focus from a retrospective one to one that looks at trainees who may enter the T&I sector in the near future. This section presents a sample of 50 trainees who completed a short course (40 hours in length) in early 2015 at Monash University entitled *Entry-level (Community) Interpreting,* which intended to provide high-proficiency bi- or multi-linguals with basic interpreter training in the following: roles, ethics, settings of interpreting in Australia, role-plays of dialogue interpreting, sight translation, research skills in locating texts, speeches and terms in English and in languages other English (LOTE) as self-study resources beyond the course [3]. The short course is language neutral (cf. Hale and Ozolins, 2014) in the sense that there are no controlled language-transfer activities and appraisal of source or target speech in languages other than English (hereafter LOTE). However, in reality, nearly 90% of trainees had a classmate with a common LOTE, with whom they could practise and monitor interpreting into LOTE. The short course is an introductory one and makes no claim to upskilling trainees to even the lowest level of interpreter accreditation in Australia, paraprofessional accreditation. The course does seek to teach trainees how they can

[3] Permission to gather data from the trainee participants was granted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee, Project No. CF14/3791 – 2014001987.

independently, through self-instruction and practice, or with others informally, advance their interpreting skills for eventual testing.

This section firstly presents general demographic and linguistic data on these trainees, and their level of interest and belief that they wish to work as interpreters one day. This is followed by a brief description of their educational and occupational profiles. The main areas of interest from this sample of 50 trainees are: linguistic proficiency; motivations for wanting to become an interpreter; perceived requirements to become an interpreter. Linguistic proficiency is focused on as the one that is commonly used for initial (self-)assessments of a candidate's aptitude to become an interpreter (cf. Skaaden, 2001), but self-reported motivations and perceptions of the desirable attributes that an interpreter should possess are also very instructive (cf. Albl-Mikasa, 2013). These are likely to represent contemporary and semi-informed opinions about interpreting from those who have made the first step of moving from 'outside' the profession to entering it. All data are self-ascribed and given by the trainees themselves.

The average age of the trainees was 37, with the youngest aged 19 and the oldest 67. All trainees were from non-Anglophone backgrounds, with 47 born outside Australia. Of these, the average year of arrival in Australia was 2006 (ie. average period of residence in Australia was 9 nine years to 2015) with the earliest arrival being from the year 1969 and the most recent in 2014. Ten trainees were Australian citizens; 28 had a permanent residence visa, 10 were on a temporary 'bridging' visa with a high chance of gaining permanent residence, while two did not provide information on their residence status. A majority of the trainees stated that they viewed interpreting as a future occupation, with the following numbers showing aspirations of future employment: full-time – 18; part-time – 17; occasionally, up to part-time – 6; not interested in working as an interpreter – 2; unsure/don't know/no answer – 9. The majority of trainees also wish to gain NAATI accreditation: credentialing through testing – 36; upgrade paraprofessional level of accreditation to professional – 2; not interested in accreditation – 1; unsure/don't know/no answer – 11. Amongst the 50 trainees, 18 languages together with English were nominated as languages in which they sought to later work, with the following five languages the most common: Dari – 10; Tamil – 8; Hazaragi – 7; Nepali – 7; Farsi/Persian – 5. These personal, demographic and linguistic details of the trainees are congruent to those reported in other studies on trainees of elementary short courses for interpreters (cf. Lai and Mulayim, 2010; Hlavac, Orlando & Tobias, 2012; Valero-Garcés, 2012; Hale and Ozolins, 2014).

6.1 Education and occupational profiles of interpreter trainees

This section presents data on trainees' stated levels of education and occupational profiles. As foregrounded in Section 5 above, an advisory body to NAATI recommended that candidates for accreditation have an overall minimum level of education of at least two years of post-secondary study or training in *any* area, before they are allowed to attempt an accreditation examination. Table 1 below shows trainees' place of education and levels of education completed, for both secondary and tertiary education.

Place of secondary and tertiary education and level achieved	No. of trainee informants	
	Secondary education	Tertiary education

Undertaken outside Australia only	40	23
Undertaken outside and in Australia	6	4
Undertaken in Australia only	4	5
Education / degree or diploma completed	31	27
Education / degree or diploma uncompleted	4	4
Currently still studying (in Australia)	5	2
Unclear / No answer	2	8
No tertiary education undertaken	N/A	9

Table 1. Place and level of completion of secondary and tertiary education

Table 1 above shows that most have completed their secondary education outside Australia and over half had completed a course of study at tertiary (post-secondary) level, usually outside Australia. In general, the level of education of the trainees is high, and certainly higher than the average level of education of the general Australian population, amongst whom only 16% have completed a diploma or degree at tertiary level (ABS, 2012). The overall high level of education that this sample of trainees possesses is in line with an observation that the author has made for many iterations of this introductory course that the trainees who enrol in the course are often highly educated members of their immigrant communities. For many of them, their high educational level is an enabling factor that assists and perhaps even compels them to make the decision to seek a credential to become an interpreter in Australia. (Motivational factors are discussed below in Section 6.2.)

The reported high level of education from this sample is in line with other studies that record a high level of education amongst T&I practitioners (cf. Badalotti, 2011:125 who records that 94% of a sample of 65 professional T&Is were university-educated, with 64% even possessing a post-graduate degree). Education level is a strong determinant of attitudes towards self-development through further training, and this is found to apply strongly to T&Is too (cf. Katan, 2009: 205). The focus now turns to trainees' occupational profiles.

Details of employment	Skill level of current employment and length of employment at current job.	No. of informants
Type of current employment	Professional employed (secondary school teacher, clinical psychologist)	5
	Skilled employed (eg. desktop support engineer, nurse)	12
	Semi-skilled employed (eg. electro-plater, case manager Red Cross)	17
	Unskilled employed (eg. public transport customer service officer, painter)	11
	Currently unemployed	3
	Never been employed	2
Length of time in current employment	> 6 years	10
	3-6 years	14
	1-3 years	11
	< 1 year	10

	N/A	5

Table 2: Skill level of current employment status and length of time at current place of employment

Table 2 above shows that the trainee informants are generally currently employed at a level lower than expected. Based on their level of education shown in Table 1 above, 27 are recorded to have a tertiary qualification level which is usually a pathway to employment as a professional or in a skilled occupation. A total of only 17 trainee informants report that their current employment is at this level. The largest group is employed in semi-skilled jobs. This circumstance is perhaps a result of qualifications gained outside Australia not always being recognised at an equivalent level in Australia, and lack of strong proficiency in English as a barrier to gaining employment in areas commensurate to skill-level (cf. Colic-Peisker, 2011). Dissatisfication with current level and nature of employment is also a motivating cause in undertaking training in an area different from one's current place of employment. The length of time that trainees have been at their current place of employment is similar to general patterns of job mobility and change of employment type: the sample is not suggestive of a group of trainees who are seeking a change of employment as 'itinerant job-hunters' who readily change their place or type of employment. The general profile of the trainees suggests that most have substantial and on-going experience in the Australian workforce and are making an informed and considered decision to enter the T&I sector. The following section looks more closely at their motivations.

6.2 Linguistic and motivational features of trainee informants and their notions of what is required to become an interpreter

This section examines trainee informants' linguistic skills, more precisely, aspects of their current proficiency in English and areas for improvement. Linguistic skills are axiomatic in interpreter training and it is instructive to examine how trainees view their own skills, and where they may perceive gaps in their skills to be. In addition, this section looks at trainees' personal motivations, that is, trainees' nominated reasons for wishing to become an interpreter and the requirements for this to happen.

All data presented in the tables below are responses to open-ended questions, ie. informants did not select pre-given options, but provided their responses in their own words. Informants often mentioned multiple features, and these were numbered individually, meaning that the total number of responses is greater than 50.

In Table 3 below, trainee informants responded to the question, "What do you find easy to do in English?" (ie. 'strengths in English'). This question does not specify acquisition of particular forms or structures in English, but seeks to elicit the trainee's estimation of his/her *functional* capabilities, although trainees were, of course, free to answer in any way they liked. The following question "What do you need to work on most in English?" (ie. 'weaknesses in English') was intended to elicit trainees' feelings on where their gaps lie. Responses were firstly collated into thematically congruent themes and then separated into larger groups.

	Strengths in English	Weaknesses in English

Listening	9	5
Speaking	16	5
Reading	15	1
Writing	11	16
Communication Skills	5	5
Business/Occupational English	4	0
General Comprehension Skills	3	6
Mentality of English-speakers	3	0
Interactional Skills/Pragmatics	2	7
Colloquial Language/Slang	2	1
Researching/Studying in English	2	4
Translation/Interpreting	1	2
(Specialist) Vocabulary	1	13
Grammar	0	5
Spelling	0	4
General Knowledge	0	2
Memory skills	0	1
Understanding Long/Complex Sentences	0	2
Unsure	2	1
Everything (sic)	5	5
No answer	13	6

Table 3: Trainee informants' self-perceived strengths and weaknesses in English

Table 3 above shows in the first place that trainees more readily identify their strengths according to the well-known categorisations of four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is interesting that overall, reading and writing skills are rated higher than the aural/oral ones, and yet it is these latter two macro-skills that are critical for interpreting. Beyond the macro-skills, many trainees report that general types of communication and interactions are things that they accomplish easily in English. Fewer trainee informants reported weaknesses in the aural/oral skills, while writing and (specialist) vocabulary were identified as the areas that the largest numbers of trainees felt that they had weaknesses in. While writing is a skill that many, and not only second-language users of English report shortcomings in, the category 'vocabulary' is a cover term to refer to individual gaps in trainees' English lexicons, and in the need to acquire specialist terminology. (It would have been instructive to see if a similar number reported also needing to acquire specialist technology in their L1.)

Generally, a higher number indicated that they needed to work on 'general comprehension skills', 'interactional skills/pragmatics', and 'communication skills' than the number who reported that this was easy for them. There are many trainees who are cognisant of the fact that communicative/interactional skills are an area of functional competence that require attention, no doubt influenced by the trainees' realisation of the skills that are required of interpreters at the end of the short course.

The following table presents trainees' responses to the question, "Why do you want to work as an interpreter?". In Table 4 below, the first column relates to the higher level 'source' that I have identified that appears to be responsible for the trainee interpreter's stated reason for wanting to become an interpreter. For example, when a trainee informant states "Society needs interpreters", or "I want our society to be a better place for everyone" then the main motivation nominated by that trainee is a 'society-based' one, ie. the primary desire stated by the trainee is that '(Australian) society lacks interpreters and it would be a good thing for me to become an interpreter to address this need'. This kind of stated motivation, I argue, is an ideological one: the trainee wishes to uphold a particular value – that of access and equity for all. And this motivation is, in my assessment a *positive* one, ie. the trainee recognises that there can be a lack of equality of opportunity in society and wishes to ameliorate this by being employed in a capacity that is able to address this. The value-estimations are *my* estimations, not those of the trainee (whose value-estimations of interpreting and the place of interpreting were not overtly elicited anyway). But more importantly, I allocate a positive value-estimation to this type of response because such a stated motivation is, in my opinion, evidence not only of a 'social conscience' but it is usually aligned to the type of personal- and group-based attributes that interpreter trainers list as desirable amongst their trainees: awareness of social and group dynamics; knowledge of power-relations; the importance of inter-lingual transfer and communication between allophone speakers as a social good.

The allocation of a particular value-estimation is based on my own interpretation of the trainees' responses and I make this value-estimation on the basis of the following:

- indication of the awareness of the linguistic, interactional and professional skills that are required for good interpreting (even if these skills have not been acquired, the *awareness* that these are desirable is positive, hence the rating 'positive');
- indication that the reason would at least not hinder the practice of interpreting, that is optimal inter-lingual transfer, good interactional skills and a sense of professional practice, therefore, a 'neutral' rating;
- indication that the reason serves a motivation that is not related to interpreting and that it is probable that the trainee does not have an understanding of the skills that are desirable for interpreters to acquire or to further develop, here allocated a negative rating.

In some cases, the nominated reasons were very similar and could be separated only by a value-estimation. For instance, the two informants who replied that "There is a need for interpreters" are invoking a primarily *labour-market based* source as their reason for wishing to become interpreters, ie. there is a gap and we are able to fill it. I consider this type of response neutral, ie. this reason alone does not compel me to believe that the trainee possesses or has proficiency in particular skills-sets in an overtly positive or negative way to influence his/her ability to one day work as a competent interpreter. However, when another trainee informant stated that "Someone has to do it", the same reason – a shortage in the labour-market for interpreters and it is a necessary service to provide – is presented in a *negative* way. In other words, the trainee's response contains no affirmative positioning to any particular feature of becoming an interpreter and contains only the information that 'a gap exists, and someone has to fill the gap, it might as well be me'. Gap-filling is not a very principled or virtuous approach to adopt when seeking a change of job. This does not inspire my confidence that this trainee will be able to later on develop his/her skills in a way to become a good interpreter. But my allocations of value-estimations are subjective and are open to dispute.

Source of desire to	Specific attribute	Example quoted responses	Value-estimation	No. of trainees

become an interpreter				
Group-based	Ideological	Community activism. I want to help my community.	Pos.	14
Group-based + Personal-based	Ideological	Was once reliant on interpreters, want to empower others	Pos.	1
Personal-based	Linguistic skill-base	Wish to improve my English skills (and/or my LOTE skills)	Neg.	12
		Wish to work with languages	Pos.	4
	Cognitive Stimulation	Stimulating, pleasurable job	Pos.	11
	Ideological	Altruism. I want to help other people.	Pos.	10
	People-centredness	People-centred job / I like working with people	Pos.	6
	Idealism	My dream job	Pos.	5
	Occupational / Previous skill set	Previous experience in interpreting	Neut.	5
	Instrumental	Flexibility of work hours	Pos., Neut.	3
		Easy kind of employment	Neut., Neg.	3
		I am restricted from working in other areas	Pos., Neut., Neg.	2
	Gender	Suitable for women, mothers	Neut.	2
Society-based	Ideological	Interpreting is a form of social justice	Pos.	5
Labour-market based	Shortage / Necessary Service	There is a need for interpreters	Neut.	2
		Someone has to do it	Neg.	1
Total number of motivations nominated			86	
Trainee interpreters who provided no response			3	

Table 4: Presentation and analysis of trainee informants' reasons for wishing to become an interpreter

The single most common response is a group-based one, ie. identification with one's own (ethno-linguistic) community and the desire to help it. The attribute here is ideological – the desire to change and improve the situation of others, and is an example of activism. I allocate a positive value-estimation to this motivation, as in general, it suggests a knowledge of needs, socio-cultural mores and a desire to advance the position of others [4]. The second most common

[4] The aspect of social desirability bias as a cause for many informants nominating the reason "I want to help my community" cannot be discounted, but I will not further look at this factor here.

response was the desire to improve English language skills (and/or LOTE skills). This is a personal-based motivation ('it is my language skills that need improving') and I allocate this motivation a negative value-estimation. The reason for this is that, as known to interpreter educators, training and practice do *not* exist to further extend trainees' or practitioners' language skills. Rather, high-level linguistic skills are a pre-requisite for practice, not a desired consequence of it. Although a further improvement in linguistic proficiency is a consequence of interpreting practice, those who enter interpreting should not do so with this as a *motivating* factor. The third-most common motivation is that interpreting is a "stimulating and pleasurable job". This is also a personal-based motivation, this time listing the cognitive (and affective) satisfaction that trainees believe are available to interpreters. This is, I believe, a positive reason, as it shows that these trainees are knowledgeable of the cognitive investment and rewards that come with interpreting, and this is evidence of a positive-affective view towards occupational duties.

Overall, the largest number of nominated motivations are personal-based ones. This is unsurprising – many trainees would know that they are likely to experience a decline in income and possibly also working conditions, in comparison to their current place of employment. This finding is also in line with Herzberg et al.'s (1959) analysis of workplace motivations and their category of 'satisfiers', ie. motivating factors that are personally-generated and which spur people on to invest themselves in their work, including other options to perform at another level or workplace. For those who may eventually experience a drop in income, the compensation that is to be gained in working as an interpreter is the satisfaction of a personal preference or desire to work in the T&I sector. To be sure, interpreting is not a 'lifestyle' profession, but certainly one that can afford some measure of personal fulfilment. Motivations that focus on benefits provided to a group are the second most commonly mentioned group, while the reasons based on the categories 'society' and 'labour-market' are less commonly represented. In sum, personal-based motivations and a widespread sense of activism/altruism account for why a large number of the trainee interpreters wish to become interpreters. This is not unusual and congruent to the motivations reported from students in other, comparable disciplines. For example, in a sample of 163 social work students across four universities, the top motivation for doing the course, expressed by 84% of respondents, was altruism: "I want to help people" (Hackett et al., 2003: 170).

The focus now shifts to trainee interpreters' responses to the question, "What do you need to do to become an interpreter, and what do you see as the hard things about being an interpreter?". Informants were free to list their own answers to this and multiple answers have been counted and categorised separately below in Table 5.

Source of requirement	Specific attribute	Example quoted responses	No. of trainees
Occupational	Procedural	Pass the NAATI interpreting test	11
	T&I skill level – general	Repeated, general practice	9
		Understand terminology	9
	T&I skill level – specific	Consecutive interpreting	4
		Sight translation	2
	T&I skill level – evaluative	Improve accuracy	1
	Procedural, skill-acquisition	Attend further PD training	5
		Understanding workplace dynamics	1

	Procedural, norm-acquisition, interactional	Knowledge of ethics	3
	Interactional, pragmatics	Understand roles	1
	Interactional, self-care	Emotional detachment	1
Occupational + Personal	Cognitive + T&I skill level	Improve memory skills	7
	Linguistic + T&I skill level	Increase knowledge of vocabulary and assemble glossaries	5
	General knowledge, T&I skill level	Understanding the work of the courts/police	1
	Management, personal organisational	Time management skills	1
	General knowledge	Keep up to date with news, current affairs	1
Personal	Attitudinal	Willingness to keep learning	7
		Confidence	3
	Linguistic	Improve listening/speaking skills	8
		Improve language in general	5
		Improve English	3
		Improve writing skills	2
		Work on pronunciation	1
		General communication skills	1
Group + Occupational	Interactional, networking, activism	Connecting with and keeping up to date with my community	2
Total number of requirements to become an interpreter nominated			93
Trainee interpreters who provided no response			3

Table 5: Presentation and analysis of trainee informants' beliefs on attributes that are required for one to become an interpreter.

The responses above show that trainee interpreters perceive that requirements to become an interpreter are very often related to occupation-specific features. Half or 47 of the 94 responses are 'occupational-only' responses, meaning that characteristics of interpreting itself or of the T&I sector impose these requirements. The single-largest response is 'passing the NAATI interpreting test', which is a requirement that is based on Australian government policies to preferentially employ accredited T&I practitioners. Having to pass the test is a requirement according to public policy and it is an activity that is, in a hierarchical sense, one of many *procedures* that a T&I practitioner must follow. There are other procedural requirements to work as a T&I practitioner: PD training for practitioners who require revalidation of their accreditation; knowledge of ethics is a procedural part of the NAATI test, and it is an attribute that is of relevance to T&I practice in general, and for interpreters in a real sense as orientation in real-life situations. There are other predictable attributes such as "repeated practice as an interpreter" and "general practice as an interpreter", as well as "understand terminology", followed by demonstration of specific T&I skills. The two skills listed are "consecutive interpreting" and "sight translation" that are both skills recently introduced to trainees who were previously familiar with dialogue interpreting only.

The second most common source of requirements for trainee interpreters' personal attributes are not related to specific T&I work practices. For example, a "willingness to keep learning" is a general, individually-imposed requirement, not one that the T&I sector or T&I work enforces. Improvements in aural/oral skills, language skills in general, or English etc, are also not requirements from T&I, but ones that an individual interpreter should possess or acquire independently.

The third group of nominated requirements encompasses both occupational and personal attributes. This group refers to attributes that are advantageous to interpreting practice, but not ones that are formally listed either in formal testing or other descriptions of essential criteria. The decision to view these as requirements for T&I practice is a personal one of the trainee interpreters, and the benefits of gaining these attributes in many ways extend beyond T&I practice. For example, improving memory skills is a very good attribute to have, but one which is determined by a practitioner's personal motivation and investment, not by testing or quality control systems of the T&I sector. Lastly, two trainee interpreters listed "connecting with and keeping up to date with my community" as a requirement. This perceived requirement relates to 'in-group' networking and relates to updating trainees' local knowledge of groups now resident in Australia, and to outreach work in publicising the work of and need for T&I practitioners in various communities.

The elicitation of responses about motivations and perceived requirements for T&I practice inform us that personal-based attributes and to a lesser extent activism are the driving forces for why these trainees wish to become interpreters, while occupation-related attributes are nominated most frequently amongst the qualities that are required for T&I practice. This last finding is perhaps predictable, with procedural and T&I skill-level requirements the most prominent ones. But the high frequency of personal-based motivations is perhaps of more interest as it is a finding that addresses trainers' and others' beliefs about why trainees attend courses. Trainers are not often in the position to systematically elicit this kind of data from trainees and the findings may confirm some trainers' views about trainees' motivations, and they may surprise others who may have believed that labour-market forces determine trainees' movements. It may be easier for trainees to openly talk about workforce gaps in public or classroom settings, while their own personal motivations for wanting to become a T&I practitioner may be less readily expressed. In a private and anonymous response-elicitation procedure, it was possible to uncover how frequent 'personal-based' motivations are, at least in this sample. The data touch on a wide number of other issues such as activism, altruism and involvement at many levels – personal, group, social and profession-specific – that are now starting to attract more attention in T&I research (cf. the 'social turn' in interpreting – Pöchhacker, 2009).

7. Conclusion

Australia has been at the vanguard in the establishment and further development of public service interpreting, with support coming from government policies, infrastructure and the community. Clear national and state policies and a spirit of innovation and activism in the 1970s allowed for a national testing authority to be put into place that set skill-level benchmarks and that kick-started the establishment of other vital pieces of infrastructure – T&I training centres and a professional association. Increases in service demand facilitated the employment of an expanding number of public service interpreters in the 1980s and the process of benchmarking (through testing) has been extended to a wider range of languages, used by residents in Australia. Over time, demand for more specialised T&I practitioners has increased, leading to a demand for more training, partly to also service overseas student markets. There has also been a decline in pay rates and deterioration of conditions, precipitated largely by macro-level economic policies (privatisation, casualisation of sectors of the workforce) that has led to other changes. Further, there are now large numbers of highly specialised practitioners in the T&I sector in Australia which is now more varied and diverse, but it is also still characterised by a large number of untrained and perhaps 'itinerant' practitioners with mixed outcomes for industry stakeholders.

Testing as the sole benchmark for a national credential is being called into question as training is an attribute that is now a pre-requisite for work in all fields, from semi-skilled to professional. The consequence of 30 years or so of T&I training at Australian universities and post-secondary vocational institutions is that a T&I training infrastructure now exists that can service not only larger language groups, but smaller ones as well. This includes basic level training in 'language-neutral' groups for potential practitioners whose languages are not commonly provided for, or not provided for at all in established T&I courses.

A sample of 50 trainee interpreters that attended a language-neutral, introductory short course offers the opportunity for an examination of those *now* seeking to enter the T&I profession. Data show that the applicants are, on average, highly educated, currently employed in skilled or semi-skilled jobs, with reasonable confidence in their English (B-language) aural/oral skills, with writing (!) and proficiency in specialised terminology identified as areas that require improvement. To an extent, many trainees may belong to the educated 'elite' (used here as a descriptive, not normative term) of their ethnolinguistic community, and a high standard of education, in concert with other factors, accounts for their participation in a training course. Trainees' occupational profiles indicate that many work at a level that is typical of a cross-section of those engaged in the Australian labour market: those in semi-skilled occupations are most numerous, followed by those in skilled employment, with further numbers still at 'opposite' ends of the spectrum as unskilled or professionally skilled workers. Only a small percentage (10%) is unemployed. The current employment status of the sample of trainees is at a level that is generally below that which would be expected from a group amongst whom over half have a university degree. Those employed have been in their current employment for periods of time that are similar to others in the Australian labour market. This means that a lack of employment is not a primary motivation for these trainees to seek employment as interpreters. Instead, interpreting represents for them a *change* from their current form of employment or an *addition* to it.

Section 4 of this paper reported on the expansion of public service interpreting in Australia in the 1980s with a stagnation in remuneration for interpreters since the 1990s. What can be seen amongst these trainee interpreters is that the (Australian) notion of the public service or community interpreter is a well-known and desirable goal for many, with the perceived 'need' amongst co-nationals for interpreting services nominated as the single most common motivation. Community-based activism has always been a feature of the interpreter profession in Australia and appears to be so also for these more recent trainees. Altruism, a 'close-cousin' of activism, is also frequently nominated. A more 'distant cousin' of activism, but still in some way 'related to' it is job satisfaction derived from being employed in a field that is stimulating and pleasurable. Less pleasing is the statistic that nearly a quarter believes that their English skills will be advanced through such work, while around an eighth nominate the people-centred and interactive nature of interpreting as an attraction. Thus, macro- and micro-level ideological motivations (ie. activism, altruism) are prominent, which foregrounds the 'social welfare' aspect of interpreting. This is perhaps to be expected in Australia where the provision of interpreting services has been strongly tied, at a national political level, to the portfolios of immigration and settlement, and from all governmental levels to healthcare, justice and education, which are all 'socially-focused' areas of public life.

When it comes to the attributes that a person needs to become an interpreter, in the first place administrative-procedural ones are nominated first, followed by on-going practice ('practice makes perfect'), followed by acquisition of specialist terminology, improved oracy/auracy (in all languages), improved memory skills and a willingness to keep learning. Along with the obvious skill of ability to perform inter-lingual transfer, it is procedural, linguistic, cognitive and attitudinal attributes that are listed as the most desirable ones to be possessed by future interpreters. It is understandable that procedural attributes are nominated as these are logistic requirements of the Australian situation, and it is understandable that linguistic proficiency remains a concern amongst many trainee interpreters as this is an immediate and oft-reported gap in many trainees' skills-sets. But the nominated attributes match only partially with the focus on cognitive (cf. the 'Effort Models of Interpreting', Gile, 2009) and interactional capacities (cf. Wadensjö, 1998; Llewellyn-Jones & Lee, 2014) that are foregrounded in much contemporary (university-level) training of interpreters.

The concept of further training, which today is encompassed by the concept of 'life-long learning' and the strong encouragement or even compulsion in many professions to engage in 'continuous professional development', is recognised by a segment of the trainees. A challenge for these trainees, as well as training institutions, professional associations and accrediting authorities is to ensure that further training programs exist for and are taken up by newcomers. While Australia has gained a positive reputation through national policies that require the provision of interpreting services for *all* languages used by residents in Australia and also through attracting entrants to the field of interpreting for a wide variety of languages (and accrediting many of these languages for interpreter testing) the skill-sets of in-coming interpreters who may initially work mainly in social-welfare settings need to be furthered and extended. Further training opportunities are needed not only to assure the professionalisation of the interpreting profession, but to ensure that today's interpreters are able to meet the situational and societal changes that will occur in their work in coming years. This extends to interpreters' skills-sets as inter-cultural and inter-lingual mediators for them to be well-positioned locally *and* globally, as demand for inter-lingual transfer diversifies in both the number of languages now sought after, and in the type of spoken, signed and textual interactions that tomorrow's T&Is will be engaged in.

Skill-sets motivations and their perceived requirements for professional interpreting are also elicited. These data provide an instructive and revealing picture of tomorrow's public service interpreters as they transition to testing and eventually to formal employment.

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