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This Issue

LDC was recently commissioned to facilitate a symposium of stakeholders to discuss the future development of interpreting practice.

The symposium raised a number of key issues that impact service delivery to Victorians and indeed Australians who are not proficient in the English language, and so we have decided to dedicate this third issue of the LDC newsletter to a discussion about interpreting and translation services.

As we all appreciate, poor communication and misunderstandings between professionals and people who are not proficient English language speakers can result sometimes in dire consequences and more broadly, can contribute to unsatisfactory service delivery. Increasing verbal and documented evidence indicates the important role that interpreters can play in the health and well-being of Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

For those of us who have worked in health and community services over many years, the importance of working with competent interpreters has by now been demonstrated. Further, the difficulties and potential compromises in professional practice associated with relying on informal or unaccredited interpreters should also have been understood. Importantly, organisations working with Victorians who are not proficient English language speakers should by now have policies and procedures in place to ensure all staff know how to access interpreters and translators, and how to work effectively with them.

LDC encourages all organisations to include working with interpreters and translators in their policies and procedures and to ensure that new workers are provided, as part of their induction and training, information and resources that facilitate communication with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In 2001

- 21.0% of all Victorians spoke a language other than English at home.
- Victoria's top 10 languages spoken at home were Italian (149,999), Greek (122,699), Vietnamese (63,919), Cantonese (60,632), Arabic (47,190), Mandarin (38,863), Macedonian (32,670), Turkish (28,496), Croatian (25,638) and Spanish (22,878)
- 13.6% of overseas-born Victorians either spoke English not well or not at all.

The current situation in interpreting and translating services

The Victorian system of interpreting and translating services includes:

- Private (for profit) and government funded interpreting and translating services.
- NAATI- the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
- The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) which is the national

association for the translating and interpreting profession.

- Educational institutions that provide training for interpreters and translators

Systems developed for government departments and their funded agencies to access interpreting and translating services include:

- Interpreting and translating services provided by *VITS Language Link* on behalf of the Department of Human Services which are delivered through a number of program-specific credit lines
- Australia's only national service, TIS – the Telephone Interpreting Service – provided by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

In 2003 VITS Language Link commissioned a survey of interpreting practitioners as part of its Good Corporate Citizen Program. The survey identified the current situation in the provision of interpreting services including a profile of interpreters, allocation of assignments to the respective categories of interpreters, training and professional development needs; and described responses to a number of survey questions addressing issues such as possible preferences for the accreditation of practitioners, remuneration, control of the profession and satisfaction with the current situation. The survey report included recommendations for research, action and policy for addressing key issues confronting the interpreting services network.

In September 2004 the survey report was distributed to key stakeholders

including other interpreting services, relevant government departments, purchasers of interpreting services, relevant educational institutions and professional bodies; and interpreters. The survey report identified the need to address some fundamental issues impacting the purchase and provision of interpreting services, and ultimately the accessibility and quality of interpreting services provided to Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The report is available from VITS Language Link.

The difference between an interpreter and translator

Interpreter

The primary role of an interpreter is to render verbally one language into another and vice versa, thus facilitating spoken communication between parties who speak two different languages.

Translator

The primary role of the translator is to render written material from one language into another.

Sight Translations

Interpreters in the course of their work may be engaged in what is commonly referred to as a sight translation. This task is not to be confused with standard translation, as the interpreter merely renders verbally, an interpretation of the document's content in a relaxed manner, not necessarily maintaining the same level of complexity of communication, style and language register.

Interpreting Styles

Consecutive Interpreting – is the most common style of interpreting where the speaker and the interpreter speak one after the other in a consecutive manner. The interpreter listens to a few sentences or messages at a time and then delivers the sentences or messages into the other language.

Simultaneous Interpreting – is most commonly used in conference proceedings where the interpreter listens to the first words uttered by the speaker, then proceeds to interpret the speaker's speech or concepts immediately and continuously as they are expressed, so that the speaker and the interpreter are speaking simultaneously.

Chucotage Interpreting (whispering interpreting) – is commonly used in court proceedings where the interpreter keeps the culturally and linguistically diverse client informed of discussion taking place within the body of the court, such as legal deliberations between the parties, evidence of other witnesses etc.

When an interpreter is required

- The client exhibits no understanding or effective use of English.
- The client is able to communicate in English but in a limited capacity.
- Where the client is able to communicate in English but is more comfortable with his/her own language.

- The client is under stress, which may hinder their ability to communicate adequately in English.
- When communicating important information affecting the client, e.g. information about the health of the client, including information about prescribed drugs or hospital admission.
- When providing clients with information about entitlements, rights and responsibilities.
- When conducting any formal interview.

References

Victorian Interpreting and Translation Services: *We speak your language. A guide to cross-cultural communication*

Useful Links

VITS Language Link – www.vits.com.au

TIS – www.immi.gov.au/tis/

AUSIT – www.ausit.org

NAATI – www.naati.com.au

Current Projects

LDC current major projects include:

Cardinia Shire Council

- The Municipal Public Drug Strategy
- The Municipal Public Health Plan
- The Municipal Early Years Plan

Wyndham City Council

- Aged & Disability Services Strategy