

2006



Report prepared for

AMEP & Language  
Policy

Department of  
Immigration and  
Multicultural Affairs

by

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Cultures and  
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# BASIC INTERPRETING SKILLS TRAINING

Coordination of Basic Interpreting Skills Training for Potential  
Interpreters in Small and Emerging Community Languages

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## ACRONYMS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Adult Multicultural Education Services
AUSIT	Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators Incorporated
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
ESL	English as a Second Language
DIMA	Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
ISLPR	International Second Language Proficiency Ratings
LOTE	Language Other Than English
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NAATI	National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters
NMIT	Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
PPI	Paraprofessional Interpreting
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE NSW	TAFE New South Wales
TAFESA	TAFE South Australia
T&I	Translator and Interpreter (Translation and Interpreting)
VOMA	Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs

## SECTION 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

In the *Report of the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants* (May 2003) both public consultations and submissions to the review suggested targeting the continuing shortage of interpreters in small and emerging languages through subsidies to pay NAATI accreditation or recognition fees for potential interpreters, particularly humanitarian entrants who may otherwise be unable to afford the costs (Recommendation 53). The report made the general comment that interpreters are in short supply or not available in many of the newly arrived people's languages. The report also stated that public consultations and submissions suggested that the level of interpreter training, including training in the field of interpreter-ethics, be increased (DIMA 2003, pp 278-86).

DIMA's National Report on *Settlement Needs of New Arrivals 2006* states that from 2005 to 2006, the offshore Humanitarian Program has focused on resettling people from Africa, the Middle East and South West Asia; a similar focus would be maintained from 2006-07, with a small decrease in numbers from Africa and an increase in numbers from South East Asia. National small and emerging communities identified for the 2005-06 program year were the Afghan, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Somali, Sudanese and Kurdish communities. For the 2006-07 program year, the communities will be the Burundian, Liberian, Sierra Leonean, Congolese, Rwandan and Ethiopian communities. The top ten languages from the Humanitarian Program 2001-05 indicate those for which there is an identifiable demand (current and projected) for interpreters, including:

- Arabic
- Dari
- African languages (excl. Nth African)
- Serbian
- Dinka

- Persian/Farsi/Dari
- Assyrian (incl. Aramaic)
- Bosnian
- English

(DIMA 2006, pp. 8-9)

The report also highlights several issues regarding the settlement needs of these groups, including (but not limited to):

- Limited or no experience of schooling
- Illiteracy in their own language
- Unfamiliarity with modern health practices
- No experience participating in a formal economy
- Unfamiliarity with technology, including in workplaces
- Unfamiliarity with the values and practices of participatory democracy, including rights, responsibilities, and the role of different authorities

(DIMA 2006, pp. 11-12)

## 1.2 RESEARCH TO DATE

In 2005, DIMA contacted Monash University to conduct research under the heading of 'Developing Interpreting Skills Training for Potential Interpreters in Small and Emerging Community Languages'. The final report 'Framework for Delivery of Basic Training and Designation of Training Pathways' identified an urgent need for curriculum development in the area of basic interpreting skills training in small and emerging languages. One of the key recommendations of this report was to establish courses providing foundation skills in interpreting, aimed at speakers of small and emerging languages, most of whom are also new arrivals to Australia. The report recommended the implementation of a pilot training initiative with a view to increasing the number of interpreters providing language services to small and emerging language communities.

In early 2006, DIMA asked Monash University to coordinate a further research phase that would activate the training initiative recommended in Phase 1, ensuring:

- Consistency in the testing and selection process of potential trainees; and
- Quality assurance with regard to course delivery.

Researchers were asked to coordinate courses in basic interpreting skills training for potential interpreters in small and emerging community languages, focusing on three key phases:

1. Test development (testing English and LOTE skills)
2. English language testing
3. Recommendation of training pathways

### 1.3 AIMS OF PROJECT

The aims of the second phase of the research: 'Coordination of Basic Interpreting Skills Training for Potential Interpreters in Small and Emerging Community Languages' were as follows:

a) To coordinate the implementation of the framework, including:

- developing the testing system, instruments and reporting formats
- testing of individuals identified by DIMA as potential trainees
- recommending the appropriate training pathways for individuals based on one of three categories of assessment
- negotiating the delivery of intensive English Language Enhancement Courses (equivalent to Certificate III) and /or Interpreter Foundation Courses (equivalent to Certificate IV) with selected TAFEs or Registered Training Organisations in relevant states and territories

- proposing terms and conditions for contractual arrangements between each TAFE or RTO and DIMA for the delivery of agreed courses
- monitoring the progress of trainees and reporting back to DIMA; and

b) To undertake short and longer term evaluation of the framework model.

#### **1.4 PROPOSAL FOR COURSE DELIVERY**

Preliminary data provided by DIMA, combined with the findings collected in Phase 1 of the project in 2005, suggested that Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia would have sufficient numbers of potential trainees to warrant the delivery of intensive training modules.

Monash University coordinated the selection of potential course providers, based on the following criteria:

- Indicative costings provided by each institution
- Experience in running interpreter-related training programs.
- Location and accessibility of the training institution

It was proposed that institutions be funded by DIMA for the total cost of running the courses based on minimum enrolment figures of 15 students. This would ensure that courses could still run regardless of how many students eventually enrolled.

## SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 SELECTION OF INSTITUTIONS

Monash identified seven institutions, based on the overview of 'Delivery Frameworks Currently in Place' that appeared in the report for Phase 1 (Wilson et al, p.18). The review established the number and nature of translating and interpreting courses offered Australia-wide as delivered by registered training organisations. For the purposes of Phase 2 of the project, Monash compiled a list of providers with the relevant expertise (i.e. prior experience in delivery of basic interpreting training courses) to deliver the proposed pilot course.

**TABLE 1: PRELIMINARY LIST OF COURSE PROVIDERS**

State	Name/s of Course Provider
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kangan Batman TAFE</li><li>• Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT)</li></ul>
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TAFESA</li><li>• LM Training</li></ul>
New South Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TAFE NSW-Sydney Institute</li></ul>
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Central TAFE</li><li>• West Coast College of TAFE</li></ul>

### 2.2 SUBMISSIONS FROM COURSE PROVIDERS

Monash requested written submissions from each course provider outlining proposed training units/modules, length of delivery (including hours per week) and the cost of delivery. A short, intensive course was required, of around 100-150 hours duration, run over 8 to 12 weeks. The course would provide basic training in interpreting and language aide work, including intercultural communication skills and an

understanding of professional and ethical practice, as well as a work experience placement and preparation for the NAATI exam at Paraprofessional Level.

LM Training was excluded from this process as, after further scrutiny, it became evident that their course did not correspond to all of the requirements set out by DIMA. West Coast TAFE did not submit a proposal because they felt that there was insufficient time available to develop a suitable course.

### 2.3 SELECTION OF COURSE PROVIDERS

The submissions were assessed by Monash according to the following criteria:

- Capacity to deliver an intensive module
- Preparation of course materials suitable for an intensive module
- Potential to provide a national model that could be used effectively to train groups of candidates in small and emerging communities
- Cost of course delivery
- Location and accessibility by public transport

Subsequently, Monash selected NMIT (Victoria), TAFESA (South Australia) and TAFE NSW-Sydney Institute (New South Wales). These submissions were deemed the most comprehensive and best aligned to the objectives of the project. The submission from Kangan Batman TAFE was considered unsuitable due to a lack of any prior experience in running an interpreter training course and lack of appropriate teaching staff, while Central TAFE was deemed too costly. DIMA confirmed delivery with the selected RTOs and made the appropriate contractual arrangements with the respective course coordinators.

In Western Australia, it proved impossible to present candidates with a course similar to those offered in other states. After the two main providers, Central TAFE and West Coast TAFE, had to be excluded because of time and cost-related concerns, Monash contacted NAATI WA, who agreed to provide a 'mini-course' based on a series of NAATI workshops on basic interpreting skills and preparation for NAATI examinations. Because of the delayed responses from the Western Australian TAFEs, NAATI was contacted at a much later stage than the course providers in other states. As a result, the course run in WA was noticeably shorter (5 weeks and 36 contact hours) than in other states (9-12 weeks and 144-154 contact hours). However, the focus remained in line with the requirements of the project. Given that one of the desired outcomes of the project was to prepare students for NAATI accreditation/recognition, it was felt that the course proposed by NAATI was a particularly appropriate course model for the pilot.

## SECTION 3: COURSE DELIVERY

### 3.1 COURSE PROVIDERS

The final list of course providers appears below.

**TABLE 2: FINAL LIST OF COURSE PROVIDERS**

City/State	Course Provider	Campus/Location	Course Coordinator/ Head Teacher
<b>Melbourne, Victoria</b>	Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (NMIT)	Collingwood Campus	Anne Giddens
<b>Adelaide, South Australia</b>	TAFESA	Adelaide City Campus	Magdalena Rowan
<b>Sydney, New South Wales</b>	TAFE NSW Sydney Institute	Petersham College, West Street Campus	Bob Webb Toula Markos
<b>Perth, Western Australia</b>	NAATI WA	NAATI WA Head Office, Perth	Valerie van Loggerenberg Dr Wolfgang Frick

### 3.2 COURSE COMPARISON

The following table reflects the main components of courses delivered in all four states, based on information supplied by the course providers. It should be noted that although there is some variation in delivery, the course providers adopted a common approach to content.

**TABLE 3: COURSE COMPARISON OVER ALL FOUR STATES**

Course title	Aims & Objectives	Duration	Module & Course Details	Entry level, Articulation & Credit Transfer
<p><b>NMIT</b> Intensive Interpreter preparation program for New and Emerging Languages</p>	<p>To develop students' English skills to level from which they could access higher-level (Diploma) further education + training opportunities</p>	<p>Full-time 16 hours p/w, 3 days p/w delivered over 9 wks with 2 wk work experience placement. Total 144 hours.</p>	<p>Delivered through Cert IV in ESL Further Study (ESL Frameworks) English for Interpreting &amp; Translating 4 streams: Professional, Further Study, Employment and Access Core modules of Reading, Writing, Listening &amp; Speaking Elective module 'Practical Placement' Students gain knowledge of Australian society, norms, work practices, nature of industry etc. Guest speakers for topics related to work practices in T&amp;I field</p>	<p>Entry level ISLPR 2+.  Recommended that students either access the pathway from Certificate IV to a Diploma course or approach NAATI to sit the PPI accreditation test or apply for NAATI Recognition.</p>
<p><b>TAFE SA</b> Interpreting Preparatory Course- Training for Interpreters in New and Emerging Languages</p>	<p>Course for emerging language speakers.  Strong focus on specialised interpreting situations.</p>	<p>10 weeks; 12 hours p/w. Total 144 hours.</p>	<p>Role of the interpreter &amp; techniques Cultural issues &amp; ethics Interpreting in education Interpreting in law</p>	<p>On completion of course students can apply to sit NAATI test at PPI Level or apply for NAATI Recognition.</p>

<p><b>TAFE NSW</b> Interpreting Preparatory, Paraprofessional Level (African)</p>	<p>To familiarise students with social &amp; cultural aspects and the ethics of interpreting.</p> <p>To prepare students to sit NAATI accreditation test at PPI level or as NAATI language aide.</p> <p>To give students skills to apply for work as bilingual receptionists, language aides or PPIs.</p>	<p>11 weeks; 14 hours p/w (incl. special workshops focusing on LOTE, interpreting &amp; language aide techniques, simulated industrial experience). Total 154 hours.</p> <p>Also includes coaching/mentoring sessions as needed.</p>	<p>Interpreting for work cover Interpreting in health Interpreting in health care</p> <p>Techniques of interpreting (1 LOTE) Ethics in interpreting; apply social &amp; cultural awareness in interpreting Language skills for interpreting Exploring the internet Listening in academic contexts Pronunciation Job seeking skills Assessment &amp; evaluation in interpreting</p>	<p>Entry level is ISLPR 3.</p> <p>On completion of course students can apply to sit NAATI test at PPI Level or apply for NAATI Recognition.</p>
<p><b>NAATI WA</b> Preparation Workshop for the Status of Recognition of Paraprofessional Interpreting</p>	<p>Course based on a series of NAATI preparatory workshops.</p> <p>It aimed to prepare participants to work as either Recognised or Accredited PPIs.</p>	<p>5 weeks (hours vary from week to week). Total 36 hours.</p>	<p>Status of recognition of paraprofessional Interpreting (12 hours) Insight into Interpreting Theory and Practice (15 hours) Ethics and Professional Practice (3hours) Interpreting in the Health Field (3 hours) Interpreting in Courts of Law (3hours)</p>	<p>On completion of course students can apply to sit NAATI test at PPI Level or apply for NAATI Recognition.</p>

### 3.3 DURATION OF COURSES

**TABLE 4: DURATION OF COURSES**

	Start Date	Finish Date	Duration (weeks)	Hours/Week	Total Contact Hours	Total student enrolment at commencement of course
NMIT	1 May	30 June	9	16	144	15
TAFE SA	24 April	30 June	12	12	144	16
TAFE NSW	3 April	23 June	11	14	154	9
NAATI WA	25 May	29 June	5	Variable	36	13

## SECTION 4: SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

Strategies for the development of a successful mode for training interpreters in small and emerging languages were proposed in Phase 1 of the project and included recommendations on how best to publicly promote DIMA's initiatives for interpreter training. One of the key comments made in regard to this recommendation refers to the need for effective communication strategies to pass on information about training opportunities to potential interpreters (Wilson et al, pp.30-31).

The report also recommended that potential trainees be identified from the lower end of the pathways structure; this meant targeting newly arrived immigrants with low levels of English equivalent to ISLPR levels 0 to 2+, as well as newly arrived immigrants with higher levels of English equivalent to ISLPR 3+ (Wilson et al, p.9). It was initially hoped that individuals with lower levels of English would be given the opportunity to complete a Certificate III course as part of the training initiative (**see Figure 1**). While this did not eventuate because of time constraints, the purpose behind developing the training initiative was to view both groups as potential interpreters and, as such, to prepare both groups for interpreter training.

The following flow chart details the various possible training pathways (leading to employment) available to a newly arrived immigrant.

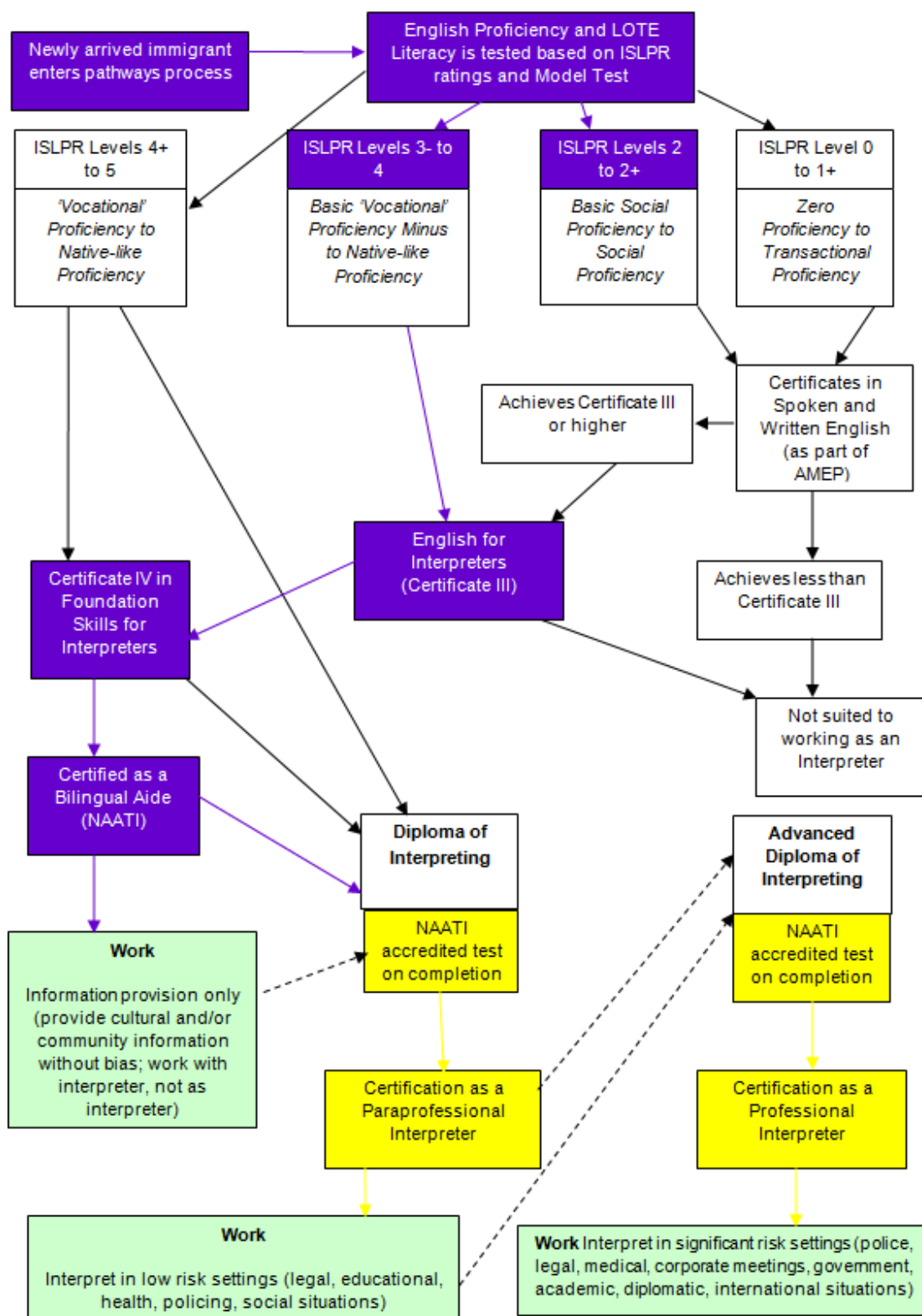


FIGURE 1: PATHWAYS TO INTERPRETING FOR A NEWLY ARRIVED IMMIGRANT (WILSON ET AL. P.17).

In order to recruit a group of newly arrived immigrants with moderate to high levels of English, DIMA cooperated with migrant resource centers and other migrant contact points in all four states, thereby establishing a preliminary list of potential interpreter trainees. Potential candidates were interviewed and screened for suitability. They were questioned about the following:

- First language/s spoken
- Work experience as an interpreter; where and for how long?
- Date of arrival in Australia, current address, contact number and type of visa
- Completed level and number of hours of English language course/s in Australia
- Level of education prior to arrival in Australia
- Undertaking any other studies in Australia
- Assessment of Proficiency in English (excellent – excellent/very good – very good/excellent – very good – very good/good – good/very good – good – poor)

In addition to the above list of requirements, only those deemed to have (a) a genuine interest in becoming an interpreter and (b) the time to participate in an intensive course were recommended to Monash for testing.

#### **4.1 TESTING CANDIDATES**

Monash recruited testers from Kangan Batman TAFE in Victoria to carry out the language testing of potential candidates. Venues were arranged by Monash and potential candidates were contacted individually by telephone, requesting their attendance at a testing day in their respective capital city. Some candidates were accompanied to the test by a family member or friend who had heard about the initiative and asked to be allowed to

sit the test. These people were tested along with those recommended by DIMA and other organisations.

#### 4.2 ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATES

After participating in the test, candidates were grouped into three categories:

- Category 2: the candidate's English language level is sufficient to participate in a preparatory interpreting program.
- Category 3: the candidate has an appropriate English language level and relevant experience to participate in the preparatory interpreting program.
- Category 4: the candidate's English language level is near to a native speaker and the candidate is studying a Diploma or Advanced Diploma in Interpreting or employed as an interpreter or not planning to participate in formal interpreting training.

Some candidates did not arrive for the testing, and were subsequently contacted by Kangan testers. The reasons for non-attendance were recorded to establish whether this was due to a genuine lack of interest or an unforeseeable occurrence that had prevented attendance. This was done in order to ensure that the candidate's name would be kept on file for participation in future training initiatives.

Candidates categorised as 'Category 3' displayed a level of English language proficiency deemed suitable for participation in the course. Prior experience in the interpreting field was another important factor in determining the candidate's suitability. Information gathered during the testing stage indicated that many candidates were employed casually, full-time, and/or studying.

Testing also established that while many candidates displayed a high level of English language skills, there was room for improvement in the following areas:

- socio-cultural communicative norms for Australian society
- understand turn-taking norms and manageable turn lengths for interpreting
- eye contact and body language
- word attack skills
- pronunciation, stress and intonation
- ability to be precise and clear
- listening and note-taking
- relevant terminology

#### 4.3 SUPPORT FOR CATEGORY 4 CANDIDATES

Candidates who achieved very high results did not qualify for participation in the proposed course and were instead encouraged to access other pathways, i.e. to apply for NAATI accreditation or recognition immediately, with a strong recommendation to attend a NAATI preparatory workshop, or to apply for the Diploma or Advanced Diploma of Interpreting.

#### 4.4 SUMMARY OF THE TESTING PROCESS

The following table details the numbers of candidates initially selected for testing, those who attended the test-day, and the break-down of candidates into the three respective categories.

**TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF THE TESTING PROCESS**

Location	No. of potential candidates identified by DIMA (and other organisations)	No. of candidates tested for interpreter training	Category 3	Category 2	Category 4
Melbourne, VIC	24	15	11	2	2
Adelaide, SA	36	22	17	4	1
Sydney, NSW	14	10	10	0	0
Perth, WA	36	23	13	8	2

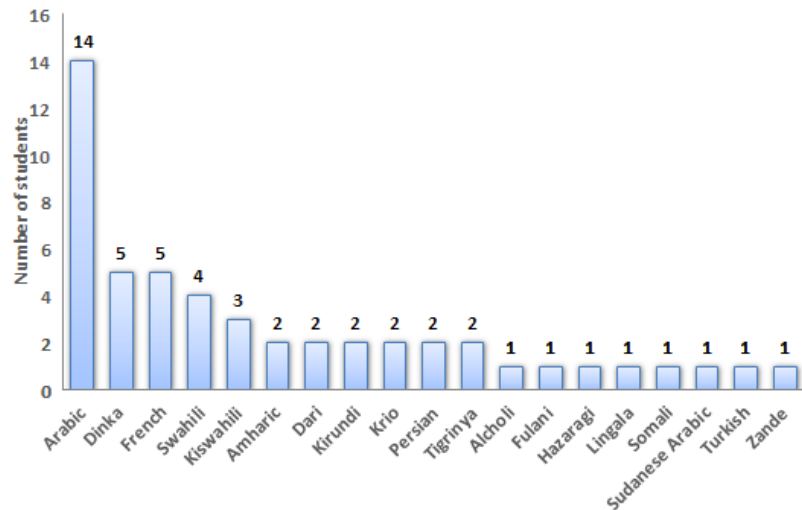
This table shows that, overall, attendance at the testing day was high. This indicates that candidates selected by DIMA had a general, keen interest in accessing interpreter training pathways. Reasons for non attendance ranged from having to attend university or TAFE, prior engagements, looking after children, transport problems etc. Some candidates were unsure about participating in the test, but were strongly encouraged by Monash to attend in any case. Individual needs were accommodated as much as possible; for example, in all states other than NSW, candidates were given the option of attending on two different days and could select a time (morning/afternoon) that suited them best. Some candidates had day-long commitments, in which case testers were flexible and stayed late. Numbers of attendees in Victoria were lower than desired. However, in all states, the number of candidates able to progress directly into a training program (i.e. Category 3) was high, particularly in NSW, where all ten candidates were successful.

Given the high number of successful candidates, DIMA's initial selection and screening of candidates appears to have provided a suitable group of candidates. Additionally, the high number of attendees indicates that the level of interest in accessing interpreter training pathways is, within this cohort, very high.

#### 4.5 INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN COURSE

All candidates were notified about their acceptance/non-acceptance in a letter sent by Monash. If accepted into the course, they were informed of their course provider, location, contact name and start date. From this point onwards their communication point was the course provider. Monash received some phone calls from candidates requesting more detailed information (such as the timetable of the course). They were referred on to the relevant course provider. The language breakdown of students appears below:

**FIGURE 2: LANGUAGE BACKGROUNDS OF COHORT (NATIONAL)**



#### 4.6 ADDITIONAL TESTING AND PRE-ENROLMENT EVENTS

Overall, course providers were able to deliver the course according to their customary standards and modules. In some cases, this included re-testing of the candidates to assess the median proficiency of the group.

Others organised an orientation and information session for potential students. The information session was used to gather information from students, such as checking the

personal and background information, as well as to discuss the program, issue enrolment forms, assist students in filling out the forms, distributing student cards and proposing session times. Because so many students had other commitments, such as study or work, the original day sessions were moved to evenings so that maximum participation could be achieved. Flexibility in course delivery was noted in Phase 1 of the project as a particular area of concern (Wilson et al, p 13) within this cohort: contact hours need to be such that students can organise their class time around work and family commitments.

Mention must be made of the difficulties experienced by the Victorian course provider, after the initial eleven candidates invited to participate in the course withdrew for a number of reasons. Many were simply unable to participate for a variety of reasons (mainly work and study-related). NMIT collaborated with VOMA and RMIT in order to recruit a new batch of candidates. They also produced a flyer, which was distributed through local multicultural networks and their own extensive community networks to promote the course. NMIT then screened participants in a similar way to DIMA; asking about their language background, level of experience etc. Eventually, invitations to an information session were sent to over 30 people. NMIT held two information and assessment sessions in order to assess applicants' suitability and capacity to undertake the course. Sixteen people attended; work and study commitments were discussed and a semi-formal assessment of their language and literacy skills was carried out.

#### 4.7 ENROLMENTS

Mention must be made of the fact that final enrolment numbers as they stood at the commencement of the course (**see Table 4**) do not necessarily represent the actual number of students that participated in the course. Generally, retention rates over the four states were high. One course

provider commented that, compared to past courses made up of students from small and emerging language backgrounds, retention rates were surprisingly good. However, all course providers reported students dropping out at some stage during the course, and/or had low attendance levels (**see 8.4**).

## SECTION 5: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF COURSE DELIVERY

DIMA required course providers to deliver basic interpreting skills training. Courses were also established with a clear intended outcome of preparing students to sit the NAATI paraprofessional interpreting exam or to apply for recognition. There were, however, some differences in the delivery of courses, based on the differing experiences of the respective course providers.

### 5.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF COURSES

NMIT developed a course based on their Certificate IV ESL Access (Further Study). This is a course that aims primarily to develop student's English skills, facilitating access to high-level training opportunities, such as a Diploma-level course. Usually, graduates of this course would either go on to access further training pathways (such as the Diploma of Interpreting) or seek employment as a bilingual worker. For the purpose of this training initiative, NMIT aimed to deliver a course that would focus on the role of professional translators and interpreters and the requirements of the industry etc. This would prepare students to sit the NAATI paraprofessional interpreting exam, or to apply for recognition, thereby preparing students for a vocational pathway. Some of the topics addressed in this course concentrated on broader issues such as Australian society and politics, and on sectors such as government, the health, education and legal systems. The vocational aspect of this course was reflected strongly in the work experience placement, which provided students with vital experience working in an Australian work-environment, as well as solidifying post-course jobs as bilingual workers for some students. There was no LOTE or transfer component in this course.

The objectives of the courses delivered by TAFE SA and TAFE NSW were similar because both were based on the Diploma of Interpreting, which is offered at both institutions. This meant that the courses in NSW and SA aimed to provide students with the relevant social and cultural aspects (and ethics) of interpreting, including bilingual accuracy and transfer skills, as well as preparation for the NAATI paraprofessional interpreting test. Interpreting in different situations (health, legal, education etc) was addressed very specifically.

In WA, the workshop content was based on existing NAATI preparatory workshops for individuals intending to sit for NAATI exams. Therefore, the primary aim of this course was to prepare students for the NAATI testing process, including aspects such as interpreting theory and practice, ethics and interpreting in specific settings, such as health and law.

## 5.2 MODE OF DELIVERY

The different modes of delivery across the four states reflect a range of possible models that can assist with establishing a framework model. Detailing the different kinds of units/modules will assist in evaluating the training pathway piloted through this study, and the suitability of the various different training modules for this group.

Similar across all four states was the mode of face-to-face teaching, including role plays, practical exercises and access to multi-media. Additional components included **excursions, guest speakers and on-site practice**. It is clear from the evaluations provided by the course providers and the students that there are significant benefits in taking students from this particular cohort out of the classroom. In particular, students from this cohort benefit considerably from exposure to real life situations related to the interpreting profession, particularly given their status as new arrivals in

Australia. Exposure to certain aspects of everyday life such as visiting a maternity ward or attending court is a vital element of their training. One of the ways in which such exposure can be achieved is by incorporating excursions into the course structure and/or inviting guest speakers to discuss issues related to interpreting in different fields. Providing mock situations, showing videos etc. allows students to practice their interpreting skills and offers vital experience but also aids assessors in determining the capability of students when faced with a real-life interpreting situation. Inviting a representative from NAATI to speak to students is viewed as a particularly helpful addition to teaching, particularly given the desired outcome of this training initiative. Other guest speakers could be representatives from various public and private sectors, including education, health, Centrelink, police, law, Workcover and mental health.

### 5.3 TIMETABLING

Timetabling for this cohort needed to be flexible to cater for varying degrees of outside commitments. Non-attendance proved to be an ongoing issue across all four states. Reasons for non-attendance were most often linked to the many outside commitments (work, study, family) of many of the participants. In some instances, this was combined with varying travel requirements for the participants to get to the TAFE location. Both of these issues need to be taken into consideration for any future training initiative with this type of cohort.

The most successful solution to this problem is to timetable the course outside normal working hours. In all states except Victoria, classes were scheduled in the evening and/or on Saturdays. Students indicated a strong preference for such timetabling. Classes scheduled at school arrival and pick-up times, for example, must be ruled out for this cohort. The lack of accessibility to nearby child-care facilities was, in some

cases, a problem. Additionally, many participants were students of other courses, either at University or TAFE. This meant that they had to attend classes during the day. The commitments of part/full-time workers must also be considered. Another option is to schedule classes in large, all-day blocks (i.e. every Saturday).

Travel was not a problem for participants in every state, as most course providers were selected because of their central (to the city) location. However, in larger cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, it is an important consideration, as many participants live in outer suburbs and rely solely on public transport to move around. It is unrealistic to expect participants to travel long distances on a daily basis, given their various commitments. Courses should ideally be held in central locations or, if targeting specific CALD groups, research may need to be done into the main area of dwelling for the group so that courses can be delivered at institutions in nearby locations.

## SECTION 6: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF COURSE CONTENT

Based on the initial course comparison as well as the post-course evaluations submitted by the providers, the following analysis takes into consideration the requirements of courses providing interpreter training for small and emerging language groups.

### 6.1 GENERAL LEARNING

General information about writing, computing and job seeking skills was included in all courses. The sum of hours reserved for general learning differed across all states, with some course providers designating a whole teaching unit to an aspect of general learning such as resume writing, job seeking skills and exploring the internet. Others only touched on these areas, or incorporated them into the overall curriculum.

For this cohort, it is important to recognise that their skills-base in relation to writing, computing and job seeking skills is generally low (**see 1.1**). However, these skills are vital to many professions, particularly to practising as an interpreter or bilingual worker. The ability to use email and perform internet-based research, as well as familiarisation with programs such as Word and PowerPoint is central to workplace competence. Helping students to set up their own internet account using accessible providers such as Yahoo, Google Mail or Hotmail as well as pointing out the importance of checking their accounts regularly should be viewed as a vital element of their training.

### 6.2 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS AND ETHICS OF INTERPRETING IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

All courses provided units/modules in this area, one that is deemed particularly important for a group of newly arrived

students to Australia. Although some students had strong community connections and had already worked as volunteer interpreters, or were otherwise engaged in community development activities (thereby gaining some knowledge and understanding of Australian systems), many were largely unfamiliar with the details of many Australian social and cultural contexts.

### 6.3 INTERPRETING TECHNIQUES, LANGUAGE SKILLS FOR INTERPRETING

Because training was not language-specific, no assessment of interpreting could be conducted. In some cases, there were several students within the course-group who spoke the same or multiple languages and could therefore communicate about any linguistic difficulties, strategies for particularly challenging interpreting situations etc. However, those who did not have a common language were somewhat disadvantaged in not being able to access a fellow LOTE speaker.

### 6.4 WORK EXPERIENCE

It was initially hoped that a work experience placement could be included in all the courses. Because of time constraints and difficulties with finding enough placements for the number of students, this was not possible in all states. However, course providers that were successful in coordinating a placement helped to facilitate vital vocational links/opportunities for their students. Students were not only provided with the opportunity to gain relevant work experience in the field, as a bilingual worker, aide or interpreter, but also to access an Australian work environment. For some students, this led to formal employment. Work experience can be carried out, for example, at Centrelink (interpreting), local primary schools (as a Multicultural Education Aide), at AMES or equivalent (as a Community Guide).

## 6.5 ENGLISH LANGUAGE COMPONENT

All participants were invited to participate in the course based on assessment by Kangan of an English language proficiency of ISLPR level 3. Some students within this cohort are highly educated and hold degrees from their country of origin. Others have extremely low levels of literacy in their language of origin, which can contribute to further difficulties with English. Generally, students were found to have higher oral skills and less developed literacy skills (although most students self-assessed as having 'equally good' skills in both). Because levels of proficiency within this cohort tend to vary greatly, it is important that the needs of all students are met.

Therefore, three out of four course providers incorporated an English Language Component into the curriculum. Those that did so commented that improvement was visible, but only because they recognised the issue early on and made concerted attempts to assist with pronunciation, terminology, contextual knowledge, and writing.

## 6.6 COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

Overall, students were very pleased with the content of the course. Comments in the student evaluations included:

- *Full of essential information*
- *Very helpful – I loved it very much*
- *A good chance*
- *Thank you to DIMA for funding the course*
- *I am truly grateful – I will long remember it with appreciation and pleasure*

## SECTION 7: NAATI ACCREDITATION/ RECOGNITION PROCESS

Towards the end of June 2006, DIMA contacted Monash to arrange for students to sit the NAATI PPI test or to apply for recognition upon completion of the course. Funding was supplied by DIMA. As courses had already concluded in all states, Monash and DIMA jointly negotiated with NAATI to arrange for on-demand PPI tests to be held on one day in each city. Candidates were notified by post and asked to contact NAATI if they were interested. There was no limit to the number of languages in which candidates could apply for testing and/or recognition; students were encouraged to do as many as they felt were achievable.

Monash arranged with NAATI for a free preparatory training workshop to be held at NAATI offices in each state in the week prior to the test-day. This was to ensure that students would be presented with a comprehensive overview of the testing process by a NAATI examiner, and to revise units such as Professional Ethics and Professional Practice in order to provide candidates with the best possible chance of success.

Because the cohort was largely made up of speakers of small and emerging languages, many of the students' first languages were not available for testing; thus, a large number applied for recognition.

### 7.1 SUMMARY OF RESULTS NATIONALLY

Almost all students who completed the course sat the PPI test or applied for recognition. There were only 8 students nationally who did not apply for either. Based on information provided by NAATI, a summary of results appears below.

**TABLE 6: NUMBER OF ACCREDITED PARAPROFESSIONAL INTERPRETERS**

State	Total number of applicants who sat the PPI test	Total number of accredited PPIs
VIC	8	0
SA	3	0
NSW	5	3
WA	4	0
TOTAL	20	3

NAATI PPI Accreditation was awarded in the following languages:

- Arabic (2)
- Tigrinya

The total number of accreditations was low, particularly in contrast to the high numbers of recognitions (see Table 7 below). It is difficult to identify the precise reason/s for the lack of accreditations other than to acknowledge the general difficulty of the accreditation process, particularly for students with low levels of literacy and difficulties with English. The impact of low literacy levels on the failure rate of candidates from this cohort is an area that warrants further research.

Particularly pleasing was the overall number of recognitions which, when including the 4 students who were recognised in 2 languages, totals 15 newly recognised interpreters.

NAATI Recognition was awarded in the following languages:

- Hazaragi
- Zande
- Fulani
- Krio
- Kiswahili
- Kirundi (2)
- Swahili (4)
- Dinka (4)

**TABLE 7: TOTAL NUMBER OF NAATI RECOGNITIONS**

State	Total number of applicants for recognition	Total no. recognised in 1 language	Total no. recognised in 2 language	Total no. of recognitions
VIC	2	1	0	1
SA	7	3	1	5
NSW	0	0	0	0
WA	6	3	3	9
TOTAL	15	11	4	15

## SECTION 8: IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEM AREAS

With a view to providing guidance for future initiatives, this section details the 'lessons learnt': aspects of the coordination of basic interpreting skills training that may require modification in view of the possibility of future training initiatives.

### 8.1 RECRUITMENT

The initial recruitment process was successful in producing a large group of potential trainees of the relevant language backgrounds. However, for a variety of reasons, the initial screening process did not adequately identify those candidates who may have been unsuitable for the specific nature of the pilot. In particular, inclusion of candidates who were working or studying full time or already enrolled in a Diploma of Interpreting created difficulties for course providers in retaining a viable group of students.

Therefore, it is suggested that for future courses, an additional screening process is carried out prior to the commencement of courses, in the form of an information session and interview with the course coordinator. This method of screening seemed to work well in states in which it was carried out. It would ascertain whether the candidate was indeed suitable for the proposed course. Many students were attracted to a short course; this was viewed as a 'fast track' to employment. For this cohort, employment outcomes are extremely important and it is understandable that they would prefer to attend a 10 week course than a semester or year-long course.

### 8.2 TESTING

There was a significant gap between the date of testing and the date of course commencement. This was partly due to

the fact that testers from Kangan had to travel to all four states to carry out the testing and subsequently assess each candidate, and partly because the process of negotiation with potential course providers took longer than anticipated.

There was a trend across all four states for additional candidates (i.e. people not included in the initial list of recommended candidates) to be accepted into courses. Within this particular cohort, community links are strong and word of mouth is a legitimate way of advertising the course to others. Course providers reported students passing on information about the course to interested friends or relatives, who subsequently enrolled and interest often continued throughout the duration of the course. Given the significant lack of interpreters with skills in small and emerging languages, course providers were unwilling to turn such people away. Some students took friends or family members to the information session, at which point some were accepted by the course coordinator. Information nights, which were held in some states, attracted another group of potential students who had missed out on the initial English language testing by Kangan.

In order to accommodate these additional candidates, course providers had to arrange for a test of their language proficiency and, in some cases, those accepted had an ISLPR of less than 3.

In Victoria, an entirely new batch of candidates had to be recruited for the course. While this was an unforeseeable circumstance, the candidates still needed to be tested, resulting in an intake of lower level English speakers (ISLPR 2+). In short, the initial testing phase did not account for the possibility (as unlikely as it may be) for re-recruitment.

Course providers reported that most students, including those assessed by Kangan as having an ISLPR rating of 3, still

required some degree of English language learning in a supplementary form (recalling once again the fact that within this cohort levels vary greatly). In one state, supplementary testing was implemented in order to confirm student levels (**see 9.2**)

Neither DIMA nor Monash anticipated that there would be such high levels of interest in the course from the wider community, nor was it foreseeable that an entire group of candidates would withdraw or be deemed unsuitable for a number of reasons. Future courses need to take these issues into consideration and arrange for testing to begin after a scheduled information night, but prior to formal enrolment.

### 8.3 TIME CONSTRAINTS

The main difficulty in providing successful pilot training courses for students was the limited amount of time set aside for the various different stages of the project including recruitment, the coordination of testing, selection of institutions and negotiation of delivery. Students would have benefited from knowing about the course a little earlier; in some cases they had only a few weeks to prepare (organising child care, rearranging work schedules etc). Despite these constraints, the level of assistance provided by a particularly reliable and enthusiastic set of course coordinators, as well as excellent collaboration between DIMA, Monash and the respective institutions, resulted in courses proceeding in all four states and concluding with a range of positive outcomes.

### 8.4 ATTENDANCE

Attendance was a major problem within this cohort of students. Total withdrawal, non-attendance, completion of some competencies but not others were recorded by all course providers. More specific information was provided, including the following:

- The attendance levels of the African language speakers was lower than in other CALD groups and interest in the course waned once they found out that NAATI does not offer employment, and that the African languages are not accredited
- Study and work commitments were the main reasons for non attendance, but some students also experienced illness or a personal crisis
- Some students had to suddenly go overseas
- Some students relocated

This cohort is representative of a group of new arrivals to Australia, whose living situation is often volatile. A number of students had valid study and work commitments that made attendance at all classes difficult. While some practical measures can be taken in order to maximise attendance levels (i.e. scheduling classes in the evenings and on weekends) there are also issues affecting this cohort which are simply not preventable. Extending the length of courses, as suggested by one provider, may only serve to exacerbate this issue.

### 8.5 NAATI TESTING

The opportunity for students to sit the NAATI PPI test or to apply for recognition was one of the key successful outcomes of this pilot. However, some course providers had prepared students for the possibility of sitting the NAATI test at the next round of scheduled testing days (early 2007) and felt that students may have benefited from more time to prepare. Ideally, students and course providers should have been informed earlier.

## SECTION 9: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAINING INITIATIVES

### 9.1 RECRUITMENT AND TESTING

The recruitment process of posting notices, producing flyers and holding information sessions highlights the importance of utilising a range of communication methods and accessing different points of contact. Some of these approaches may be worth incorporating into existing recruitment structures in order to target additional sets of potential candidates.

In addition to the comments made about testing in 8.2 above, mention must be made of the suitability of the testing process in terms of assessment.

In their post-course evaluations, three out of four course providers indicated that the ISLPR level as assessed by the testers did not reflect the actual level of proficiency (in all four macro skills) held by the student. In NSW, students were retested after enrolling and were assessed as having English language proficiency of at least ISLPR 2 in all macro skills. Based on this fact, and other comments made by course providers, it seems likely that the majority of students were in fact below the desired level of ISLPR 3. Given the initial proposal that this training initiative would target speakers of both high and low levels of English, lower-than-desired levels do not present a major problem other than to recognise that future courses may need to be targeted at this level (ISLPR 2 to 2+). It also means that the original recommendation from the report of Phase 1 should be implemented; these students will require supplementary English language testing or be required to complete a Certificate III (or equivalent) course before commencing.

Additionally, future language assessment would be best carried out by the course provider. (On this occasion, this was not possible because course providers had not yet been selected at the time testing was carried out.)

## 9.2 LENGTH OF COURSE

Both course providers and students noted in their evaluations that courses were too short. Paradoxically, many students were also attracted to the intensive aspect of the course (i.e. in comparison to the Diploma course, it was a much shorter time commitment).

From the point of view of the course provider, courses were too short to provide detailed learning and, most importantly, time to practise the skills students were acquiring. The weekly load, which was unmanageable for some students, would have been reduced had the courses been stretched out over a longer period of time. This was exacerbated for students who were juggling other study, work or family commitments.

These views were also reflected by the students. Those who had initially been attracted to the shortness of the course expressed disappointment upon conclusion of the course that they could not continue. For many of students in this cohort, the course represented more than just an opportunity to gain experience in a field of interest: it also provided them with the chance to extend their social and community networks. From a learning perspective, students felt that the course was too short to absorb the information and to adequately cover the materials provided in the course.

Students who had been provided with ESL support as part of the course commented that they had found this aspect extremely useful, and would appreciate a longer course. A

possible solution, therefore, would be to structure a future course with two entry points (**see Table 8**).

### 9.3 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS AND ETHICS OF INTERPRETING IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

As per the findings of DIMA's 2006 National Report (**see 1.1**), it must be acknowledged that this cohort requires a significant degree of background information about levels of government in Australia, non government and other welfare and settlement support organisations. Introduction to specialised areas within the specific context of community interpreting, such as law, education and health, is also important. Additional contextual knowledge may be required in areas such as the role of NAATI, AUSIT, Centrelink and settlement services. Basic orientation of the role of an interpreter within an Australian social and cultural context is also needed, with an emphasis on ethical conduct. This group is also largely unaware of ways to access further interpreting and translating training pathways (60% of students indicated that they had not been informed about further training opportunities in the interpreting industry).

### 9.4 EXTENSION ENGLISH

Supplementary English language learning is vital for this cohort. Course providers should either build an ESL unit into the course structure, provide access to an English Study Centre or resource tuition support from an ESL teacher. Additionally, assistance with pronunciation, listening comprehension and expression of ideas must be viewed as a necessary element of interpreter training within this cohort, in conjunction with contextual knowledge and familiarisation with relevant terminology.

The general consensus of course providers was that the level of English held by some students was too low. There is persuasive evidence that an English language component is

a requirement for preparatory interpreter training. One suggestion is to provide an initial 'bridging' English course for those students below ISLPR 3, before enrolment to an interpreting course. Where this is not feasible, an alternative solution would be to provide an additional module that would extend English language skills (see Section 10).

Course providers should also be encouraged to conduct testing of English proficiency levels post- (as well as pre-) course in order to establish empirical evidence of the course effectiveness in improving English. Not all students would need to be tested: a sample taken from the lower range would be sufficient.

#### 9.5 INCORPORATION OF LOTE

Students felt that they would have benefited from some LOTE component, or feedback from an experienced interpreter in their LOTE. Course providers may also have profited from having access to someone equipped with the ability to assess the students' bilingual accuracy. The learning experience of the student would be greatly enhanced if there were subsets of at least two people speaking the same language. This is an issue that may need to be addressed when creating a future course model.

#### 9.6 WORK EXPERIENCE AND JOB SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Offering students a comprehensive work experience placement opportunity is vital for this cohort and should be integrated into the course structure (**see comments made in 6.4**).

Additionally, a session in Job Seeking Skills Development, including interview techniques may also be worked into the unit delivery, or facilitated through a guest speaker or workshop. Interpreter training must be comprehensive, with

a view to provide training that prepares individuals to obtain employment with a Language Service Provider or other organisation.

Those courses that included work experience or practical placements were evaluated very positively by the participants. Students undertook a range of tasks including proofreading translations, informal interpreting in AMEP classes, visiting courts and sitting in on cases where interpreters were used, working on health program activities. Some students' supervisors agreed to continue to act as mentors after the completion of the course. Not only does this kind of opportunity provide students with hands-on experience in language service-related fields, it also allows them an insight into the 'working culture' of Australia. Experience of this nature should be viewed as an integral part of interpreter training (**see Table 8**).

## SECTION 10: MODEL FOR INTENSIVE COURSE ON BASIC INTERPRETING SKILLS TRAINING

It is hoped that preparatory courses modeled on those delivered as part of this project will continue to be run in Australia. Several course providers have indicated their readiness to offer a similar course in 2007. In view of this possibility, the researchers would like to offer several issues for consideration that may assist in the implementation of an improved course framework, and then to propose a model for an intensive Interpreting Preparatory Course that takes into consideration the particular needs of students from small and emerging language groups.

This section details the various components of the model, including Table 8, which sets out the models and competencies. It is hoped that this model will be followed in the implementation of any future basic interpreting training initiatives.

### COURSE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- i. To familiarise students with social and cultural aspects and the ethics of interpreting
- ii. To improve English language proficiency within the contextual areas of Interpreting (namely: education, immigration, social security, health and law)
- iii. To provide students with the skills necessary to apply for work as bilingual workers or paraprofessional interpreters
- iv. To provide the necessary skills, information and confidence to gain NAATI accreditation or recognition
- v. To ensure that those interpreters who are practicing without qualifications or training acquire skills and

- ethical standards that will enhance the service they provide
- vi. To provide as much practical and simulated relevant experience as possible

### **DURATION**

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The duration of the course will be dependent on the entry level:

- **Option A.** 14 weeks; 10-15 hours p/w (five modules) - ISLPR 2 or 2+
- **Option B.** 10 weeks; 10-15 hours p/w (four modules) - ISLPR 3

This is to allow for the fact that, within the piloted cohort, proficiency levels varied considerably, even within the ISLPR framework. Those with lower levels of English will complete 5 modules, including English Skills Extension (**see below Table 8**).

### **RECRUITMENT, TESTING AND ORIENTATION**

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The recruitment of students may still be carried out in collaboration with MRCs, DIMA etc. Applicants should be tested for English language proficiency by the RTO as a prerequisite for their enrolment. If possible, students should be recruited in language pairs to enable them to have access to at least one other speaker of their main LOTE, to allow for practice in transfer-skills. An orientation session should be incorporated into the model, so that the participants are provided with a clear understanding of the course content, aims and expectations. It may also be necessary to negotiate the course timetable to accommodate work or family commitments.

### **MODE OF DELIVERY**

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Face-to-face delivery should be supplemented by relevant multi-media materials and each session should include role play and/or practical exercises. Wherever possible, work placements / field work should be related to topics discussed in class: e.g. sessions in court where students can either participate in mock trials or observed real court cases. Inclusion of guest speakers from various areas (e.g. education, health, Centrelink, police, law, Workcover, and mental health) is also recommended.

### **TEACHING STAFF**

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Teaching staff should include a qualified ESL teacher(s) to provide ESL support, as well as NAATI-accredited / recognised practitioners.

### **ASSESSMENT**

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Students should be assessed on techniques, role and ethics of interpreting as demonstrated in role play situations. Even if it is not possible to include formal assessment of bilingual accuracy and transfer of meaning (although it is strongly recommended), aspects involved with transfer must still be included in class and group discussions.

**TABLE 8: MODEL FOR INTENSIVE COURSE ON BASIC INTERPRETING SKILLS TRAINING**

**Title:** Interpreting Preparatory Course: Training for Interpreters in Small and Emerging Languages  
**Course structure:** 120 -160 notional hours: flexible structure to allow for two points of entry  
**Five modules:** Entry level English language proficiency at ISLPR 2 or 2+  
**Four modules:** Entry level English language proficiency at ISLPR 3

Aims & Objectives	Duration & Mode of delivery	Modules & Competencies
<p>To develop students' English skills to level from which they could access either higher-level (Diploma) training opportunities.</p> <p>To develop interpreting skills to enable students to take NAATI test at PPI Level or apply for NAATI Recognition.</p> <p>To develop understanding of requirements of professional role of T&amp;Is, including social &amp; cultural aspects and the ethics of interpreting.</p> <p>To get overview of career &amp; career opportunities in T&amp;I, and other language related fields.</p>	<p>Full-time , intensive, face-to-face</p> <p>14 weeks; 10-15 hours p/w (five modules)</p> <p>10 weeks; 10-15 hours p/w (four modules)</p> <p>Allow for 1-2 week break</p> <p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special workshops focusing on job seeking skills, IT training, etc.</li> <li>• Guest speakers for topics related to work practices in T&amp;I field</li> <li>• Work placement / fieldwork component</li> <li>• Language coaching sessions as needed.</li> </ul> <p>Course hours negotiated to fit with students' responsibilities (family, work etc).</p>	<p><b>Module 1</b> (compulsory ISLPR 2 or 2+ )                      English skills extension - Listening and speaking skills, participation, comprehension. Customised for Interpreters within the context of interpreting situations (40 notional hours)</p> <p><b>Module 2</b>                      Role of the interpreter &amp; preparation of interpreting assignments; cultural issues &amp; ethics (30 notional hrs)</p> <p><b>Module 3</b>                      Apply social &amp; cultural knowledge in interpreting. Australian society, norms, work practices, nature of industry etc. Communicate effectively with professionals, clients, colleagues (30 notional hrs)</p> <p><b>Module 4</b>                      Integrate bi-cultural aspects in the behaviour and communication process; Interpret dialogues; apply techniques of interpreting (1 LOTE); solve problems arising from cultural/societal difference; exercise professional judgement to resolve ethical dilemmas (30 notional hrs)</p> <p><b>Module 5</b>                      Work experience / practical placements or simulated industry experience (30 notional hours)</p>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The delivery of intensive courses for basic interpreting skills training successfully highlighted many of the issues relevant to the provision of interpreting training for a cohort of trainees from small and emerging language groups. The individuals who took part in this project were presented with a unique and valuable opportunity to access training pathways in a field of interest. Course providers were able to present students with a constructive and nurturing learning environment which enabled the students to maintain high levels of interest, appreciation and motivation to complete the program. One of the major successes of the program was the high retention rate of participants, which can be attributed to the following key features:

- The type and level of support, guidance and assistance provided to participants by their teachers and co-students
- Funding available to assist participants with tuition and course costs
- The opportunity to participate and develop skills in a constructive and vocationally-focused program

The coordinated effort of this training initiative between DIMA, Monash University, NAATI, NMIT, TAFESA, TAFE NSW, State Government Departments, and other RTOs was another positive outcome of the pilot. The collaborative partnerships formed at different stages of the project strengthen the relationships between RTOs, the national accreditation body and government departments, and assure better quality and delivery of services. These partnerships support the dissemination of information about interpreter training programs to potential trainees as well as to community organisations, language service providers and end-users of interpreting services. They also present opportunities for ongoing exchange of information and the establishment of future partnerships, both research and industry-focused.

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