NAATI Interpreter Certification: Knowledge, Skills and Attributes

Review Process and Outcomes

February 2016

Dear stakeholder

In 2011, NAATI began a journey to raise our standards for testing and certification. A report on the improvements to NAATI testing, lead by Professor Sandra Hale, has resulted in the formation of the Improvements to NAATI Testing (INT) Project. The INT Project is NAATI's plan for our future and viability of the industry.

The core objective of the INT Project is to improve the integrity and efficiency of the NAATI certification system. It seeks to do this by establishing transparent and reliable criteria for the award of a certification through a valid, rigorous and consistent process supported by innovative technology and best practice.

The publication in December 2015 of the Translator Knowledge, Skills and Attributes (KSA) Paper and the associated stakeholder survey was an important first step in the improvement process.

The second is the publication of this document, the Interpreter KSA Paper. The feedback resulting from this paper, along with the work already completed for translators, will support the formation of our new certification scheme for translators and interpreters including the design of assessment tools.

As with all our work, active engagement of our stakeholders is vital to the establishment of any new process or system. As part of the paper's pre-publication process, NAATI engaged a group of experts across a range of stakeholder groups to provide valuable input. We'd like to thank all of those people who have already been involved.

Myself and Robert Foote, Manager – Development, look forward to your feedback and future involvement.

Sincerely

Mark Painting

CEO

INT

IMPROVEMENTS TO NAATI TESTING PROJECT

1. Background and Context

As already set out in the proposed translator KSAs, in 2012 NAATI commenced the Improvements to NAATI Testing (INT) Project, a broad review of the credentialing system with the following goals.

A. Improved Validity

This includes validity in the relationship between NAATI's standards and the professional roles to which they relate (with a focus on the future) and of the instrument that purports to demonstrate that NAATI's standards have been met.

In particular the aim was to have:

1. Standards and descriptors that are grounded in the role of practitioners, particularly those components of the role that are seen as central to professional success
2. New standards reflecting both the current and emerging characteristics of the workplace
3. Improved and more comprehensive descriptors for NAATI standards
4. Valid demonstration by the certification process that the standards have been achieved
5. NAATI's standards for certification accepted as appropriate by leaders of the profession.

B. Increased Reliability

It was felt that the existing accreditation system could be improved to provide greater consistency, that is, repeated assessments for the same individual would give the same result.

C. Practicality

A number of flow-on benefits from changes to the approach to certification were intended:

1. Increased access to testing, e.g. via new information/communication technology
2. Platform-independent testing methods, i.e. proposed approaches which can be used across a variety of commonly-available technologies
3. Universal applicability of future approaches including 'new and emerging' and Indigenous languages
4. Streamlined testing and assessment processes
5. Revised assessment methods as needed to align with new testing methods.

Other benefits of this will include the potential for providing enhanced certification test preparation materials enabling candidates to be better prepared for certification testing.

Phase 1 of the improvement process was the publication of *Improvements to NAATI testing: Development of a conceptual overview for a new model for NAATI standards, testing and assessment* Report (INT Report) in November 2012.[1] The INT Report provided a number of recommendations for change to the accreditation system based on the assessment of the researchers led by Professor Sandra Hale. After considering the recommendations of the INT Report NAATI provided a framework for the work in its November 2013 response.[2] Phase 2 of the project has commenced with work to establish the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes (KSAs) on which the professions of translator and interpreter are based. This work will form the foundations for the new certification system which NAATI intends to implement from 2018 onwards. The certification scheme will be designed to consider

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[1] http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INTFinalReport.pdf
[2] http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INT%20Project%20Discussion%20Paper%20-%20November%202013.pdf

each of the KSAs - either as a part of the pre-requisites (i.e. eligibility requirements), the certification test or re-certification requirements - and to ensure that a certified individual holds each of the KSAs.

2. Establishing Validity in a Certification Scheme

NAATI has always referred to the types of credential it awards as *accreditations*. However, internationally the term *certification* is used. Within this context *certification* applies to an individual rather than an organisation for a conformity assessment: a demonstration that the individual has fulfilled specified requirements relating to a product, process, system, person, or body. This is also the specific term used within International Organization for Standardization (ISO) definitions. The term *accreditation* is used for organisations that do the certifying – they are usually accredited by some higher standards-setting body. The NAATI credentialing system, to be consistent with the terminology used internationally, will therefore be referred to as a certification scheme.

A certification scheme is designed "to protect the interests of the public by assuring that practitioners hold an agreed-upon level of knowledge and skill, and by filtering out those with substandard levels of knowledge and skill".[3] NAATI is establishing a certification scheme to ensure that translators and interpreters have the competence to engage in professional practice. The ISO 17024 definition of competence is:

> *Ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended result.[4]*

In considering the INT process the NAATI Board started out with very clear goals in relation to improved validity, reliability and practicality of the certification system.

> *Established practice dictates that competence be broken down into knowledge, skills, and abilities. [5,6]*

> *In the case of a professional activity, this breaking down is done using a technique called job analysis. The results of a job analysis are used in establishing examination validity.[7]*

NAATI considers that there are established processes for ensuring validity for a certification scheme, the first step of which involves clearly defining what is intended to be assessed through identification of areas of competency and KSAs.

> *To be considered valid, an assessment tool [in this case this includes prerequisites, the certification test and re-certification] must test skills that are actually required to perform the task in question, and not test irrelevant skills; individuals who can do the job well should pass the test, and those who cannot do so should fail it.[8]*

> *…developing a translator certification examination involves identifying various abilities that are needed by a competent professional translator, along with the knowledge that must be acquired, the skills that must be developed based on those abilities, and any personal attributes that are relevant to the job of being a professional translator. Then it must be shown*

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[3] *Market Disorder Within the Field of Sign Language Interpreting: Professionalization Implications.* Witter-Merithew, Anna; Johnson, Leilani. In: Journal of Interpretation. 2004, p. 28.

[4] *Conformity assessment -- General requirements for bodies operating certification of persons.* International Organization for Standardization ISO/IEC 17024:2012, 3.6.

[5] In this paper, NAATI will use the term "attributes" rather than "abilities".

[6] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA): Establishing Validity of Translator Certification Examinations.* Koby, Geoffrey S.; Melby, Alan K. In: Translation and Interpreting: The International Journal for Translation & Interpreting Research. Vol 5, No 1 (2013), p. 178.

[7] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA).* Koby and Melby, 2013, p. 178.

[8] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA).* Koby and Melby, 2013, p. 69.

that the examination actually measures those abilities, areas of knowledge, skills, and attributes that comprise translation competence.[9]

While these remarks are directed towards translation certification, the points are equally applicable to interpreting and interpreter certification.

2.1 Considerations for Scheme Design

Once NAATI has established and validated the KSAs, there will be further work in designing a new NAATI certification scheme, which is however not covered in this paper. As part of this NAATI will consider how and where the KSAs may be assessed through the following components of the certification scheme:

- prerequisites established for eligibility for testing
- a certification test
- re-certification requirements for an individual

In doing this, NAATI will ensure there is validity in the entire certification process.

The KSAs may be assessed through one or several of the components above. Some KSAs may only be assessed through prerequisite requirements and/or re-certification requirements, i.e. they will not be tested in a certification test.

NAATI will have to undertake further work to determine which KSAs will be assessed through which components of the certification scheme. An example of a competency that could be assessed through all three components is Language competency (see section 5.1 below): Candidates could be required to achieve a minimum level of performance in a language proficiency test for both languages prior to sitting the certification test (prerequisite). The certification test could then assess language proficiency in that candidates must comprehend the source language and be able to transfer meaning into the target language to pass the test. Re-certification could then require the candidate to complete professional development to ensure currency of language usage.

On the other hand, the Attributes (see section 5.9 below) identified in this document may not be directly tested in a certification test, but could be assessed through the re-certification process. NAATI considers that interpreters require attributes, such as being reliable, to successfully function in the interpreting sector. If a practitioner lacks the necessary attributes, the market would not continue to provide work to the practitioner, which would mean they will be unable to meet re-certification requirements.

A previous discussion paper has dealt with the translator KSAs.[10] This paper follows on from the translator KSA paper to consider the interpreter KSAs.

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[9] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA).* Koby and Melby, 2013, p. 177.
[10] *NAATI Translator Certification: Knowledge, Skills and Attributes. Review Process and Outcomes 2015.* NAATI. December 2015. http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/Translator_KSA_Paper.pdf.

3. Producing a Draft Set of KSAs

NAATI has developed a set of draft KSAs interpreters possess when working effectively in the industry. These are presented in this document.

As the starting point for the development of these interpreter KSAs, NAATI considered the recently completed work in relation to translator KSAs. In this work, NAATI mapped the KSAs common to translator competencies in existing published documents and research including job-task analyses from Australia and overseas. This mapping process (more completely described in the translator KSA discussion paper) resulted in a set of draft translator KSAs grouped under the following areas of competency:

- Language competency
- Intercultural competency
- Research competency
- Technological competency
- Thematic competency
- Transfer competency
- Service Provision competency
- Ethical competency.

The next step in developing the proposed interpreter KSAs involved a review of a number of published documents which consider competencies and KSAs for interpreters. These include:

- *PSP 61112 Advanced Diploma of Interpreting*. Industry Skills Councils. Release 1, November 2012 (https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/PSP61112; accessed 23/10/15)
- *PSP Public Sector Training Package*. Industry Skills Councils. November 2015 (http://governm entskills.com.au/usercontent/documents/Training_packages_/Public_Sector/PSP%20Public %20Sector%20Training%20Package%20v1%20November%2027.pdf; accessed 30/11/15)
- *Mind the Gap! A Skills Analysis of Sign Language Interpreter.* Bontempo, Karen; Napier, Jemina. In: The Sign Language Translator and Interpreter. Vol 1, Issue 2 (2007), p. 275 - 299.
- *Summary Report for 27-3091.00 - Interpreters and Translators.* O*Net Online (https://www.onetonline.org/ accessed 24/10/15)
- *Entry-to-practice Competencies for ASL/English Interpreters*. Distance Opportunities for Interpreter Training Center (http://www.unco.edu/doit/resources/Publication_PDFs/Compe tencies_brochure_handout.pdf; accessed 15/10/15)
- *Evolution of Public Service Interpreter Training in the U.S*. Mikkelson, Holly M. In: FITISPos International Journal. Public Service Interpreting and Translation. Vol 1, No 1 (2014), p 9 - 22
- *Interpreting — Guidelines for community interpreting*. International Organization for Standardization ISO 13611:2014
- *Language Interpreter Training Program for Ontario Colleges - Overview, Competencies and Standards.* Burman, Terri; Daban, Rasool; Joyette, Donna; Oda, Melanie; Sauer, Mike; Sedlacek, Alena. CON*NECT Strategic Alliances (2006)
- *National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services Canada: Healthcare Interpretation Network.* Healthcare Interpretation Network (HIN). 1st edition (November 2007)
- *Assessing Legal Interpreter Quality through Testing and Certification: The Qualitas Project.* Giambruno, Cynthia (ed.) (2014).

For each of these documents, NAATI identified areas of knowledge, skill and attributes and mapped them against the areas of competency identified as important for the translator KSA work. The outcome of this work showed that the eight areas of competency listed above could be clearly identified in the interpreting literature.

While there were areas of commonality across translation and interpreting KSAs, there are a significant number of items in the interpreting KSAs that reflect the specificity of interpreting practice, which result in differences within the areas of competency. Factors such as immediacy, interpersonal relations with multiple clients, differing work environments and a greater diversity of ethical considerations, crucially inform the KSAs that underpin interpreting work.

In many situations the documents used different terminology and solutions or approaches to deal with challenges in presenting and identifying the KSAs. In drafting the interpreter KSAs NAATI had to critically assess the relative merits of the approaches used in each system. In doing this NAATI has not given preference to any one approach other than in considering the clarity and simplicity with which they deal with the complex issues.

4. NAATI's Draft KSAs

The result of this work is the draft interpreter KSAs presented in Table 1 overleaf. The sections following provide information defining each of the draft KSAs.

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IMPROVEMENTS TO NAATI TESTING PROJECT

Table 1 – NAATI Draft Interpreter KSAs

	Knowledge	Skills	Attributes
Language Competency (in two languages)	Vocabulary knowledge Grammar knowledge Idiomatic knowledge Language trends knowledge	Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer	Attentive-to-detail Desire-to-excel Reliable Willing-to-learn Objective Respectful Collaborative Self-reflective Problem-solving Confident
Intercultural Competency	Cultural, historical and political knowledge	Sociolinguistic skill	
Research Competency	Research tools and methods knowledge	Terminology and information research skill Create and maintain a knowledge bank	
Technological Competency	Interpreting technology knowledge	Interpreting through communication media Information and communications technology (ICT) skill	
Thematic Competency	General knowledge Current events knowledge Subject-matter specific knowledge Institution-specific knowledge		
Transfer Competency	Interpreting modes knowledge	Discourse analysis skill Discourse management skill Meaning transfer Memory skill Rhetorical skill	
	Interpreting standards knowledge	Self-assessment skill	
Service Provision Competency	Knowledge of the business of interpreting	Interpreting business skill Communication skill Interpersonal skill	
Ethical Competency	Ethics knowledge	Professional Ethics	

5. Scope of Competencies

In this work NAATI presents the KSAs interpreters require. Despite the areas of competency being listed individually, these competencies do not exist in isolation. In completing any interpreting task an interpreter will integrate many or all of these areas of competency in order to accurately interpret from the source language into the target language. Any consideration of assessment tools for the purposes of a certification scheme, which include testing prerequisites, the certification test and re-certification requirements, also needs to consider how the competencies are integrated or interrelated.

5.1 Language Competency

Language competency refers to the knowledge of two languages and skill in using these two languages to interpret effectively. This includes **Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer, Vocabulary knowledge, Grammar knowledge, Idiomatic knowledge** and **Language trends knowledge.** These form the basis for the interpreter's **Rhetorical skill**, which is part of the **Transfer competency** (see section 5.6 below).

Language proficiency enabling meaning transfer must be at a level that enables the interpreter to immediately comprehend the source language - signed, spoken or written - and promptly and accurately reproduce its meaning in the target language within the limits of the language pair. This is in contrast to language competency that enables communication in the relevant languages, which may not be sufficient for meaning transfer. The language proficiency must also enable the interpreter to adequately prepare for an interpreting assignment.

In addition to proficiency in the spoken or signed languages, the interpreter must have proficiency in the written form, where this exists, of the source and target languages in order to perform the task of sight translation in either direction and prepare for assignments.

Language competency builds on **Vocabulary knowledge, Grammar knowledge and Idiomatic knowledge** of the two languages. More specifically, this relates to knowledge of:

- register and style used in the respective languages, such as different levels of formality or informality, and use of language in different institutional settings
- lexis and vocabulary, including idioms, collocations, colloquialisms, vulgar utterances and foreign loan words
- syntax and grammatical structures, including tense, mood, aspect, voice, gender and grammatical number
- discourse and rhetorical devices, such as time referencing, metaphor, conversational organisation
- word and language usage appropriate to audience and context
- pragmatics, that is how utterances or signs are used to achieve particular communicative goals, e.g. gain agreement, express disagreement or avoidance, or signal understanding
- Standard language varieties, regional varieties and dialects (e.g. French spoken in France, Canada and other countries)
- accents.

Language trends knowledge refers to how the interpreter must keep up with changes in language usage and changes that may affect different target audiences in different ways (e.g. in diasporas, or in societies undergoing rapid social and linguistic change). It also includes changes in the use of lexicon and grammar over time and between generations.

These knowledge areas are essential in order to understand the intent of source language, and the way language is used to express meaning. The interpreter must then be able to actively apply the knowledge areas in the use of the language, i.e. reading, listening and speaking or signing.

5.2 Intercultural Competency

Intercultural competency refers to the areas of knowledge and skill required by the interpreter that allows the interpreter to identify culturally-specific information, appropriately reflect these in the target language and deal with clients in a culturally appropriate manner. This includes **Cultural, historical and political knowledge** and **Sociolinguistic skill**.

Cultural, historical and political knowledge refers to knowledge of current and past events, systems, geopolitical and other situations, norms and values that are specific to both the cultures of the source language and the target language. The interpreter must also be familiar with changes and developments in culturally-specific subjects. These knowledge areas are usually acquired through direct experience and/or studies of a culture and allow the interpreter to identify culturally-specific references in the source language and to appropriately express them in the target language.

Sociolinguistic skill refers to the way the interpreter understands how different sections of society interact and vary in their use of language. They allow the interpreter to identify how a culture, its customs, norms and values are reflected and expressed in the source language, and how they can be expressed in the target language to make them appropriate for the relevant culture. Sociolinguistic skills include:

- recognising form, function and meaning in language variations that are characteristic of social categories (e.g. gender, age, class, education-level, occupation, institutional role, ethnic background)
- identifying distinctive linguistic forms from or about social groups that carry some form of meaning
- identifying cultural bias, presuppositions, references, power dynamics and stereotypes.

In the context of interpreting, intercultural competency is typically demonstrated as bicultural competency, that is the interpreter is able to understand *both* clients' cultures. An interpreter is not a representative of any one culture and must have adequate familiarity with both cultures.

There are areas of overlap between **Intercultural competency** and **Thematic competency** (see section 5.5 below). However, **Intercultural competency** is broader and refers to cultures in their entireties, while **Thematic competency** may be general or related to the specific topic of an interpreting assignment. Interpreters may gain expertise in specific topic areas and not others, but they must have a general level of **Intercultural competency**.

5.3 Research Competency

Research competency refers to **Research tools and methods knowledge**, **Terminology and information research skill** as well as the skill needed to **Create and maintain a knowledge bank.** These knowledge and skill areas are essential for the interpreter to prepare for an interpreting assignment, to identify the information needed in a particular situation, and to maintain and develop professional skills, e.g. understanding academic research on interpreting.

Research tools and methods knowledge refers to familiarity with the various tools an interpreter can use to gather information relevant to a specific assignment and how to best use them. This includes online and dictionary searches, consultation with experts in particular fields or professional colleagues. The interpreter must also be aware of the capacities, including the quality and limitations, of specific tools.

The Interpreter must possess **Terminology and information research skill** to obtain information required to prepare for an interpreting assignment and to follow up areas of required knowledge after an assignment. This includes searching for terminology, expressions, or information about a specific area to gain better understanding of the subject and to select appropriate terminology and expressions in the source and target languages. It also includes the ability to apply research findings in interpreting practice.

This skill intersects with **Technological competency** (see section 5.4 below). Technological skills such as Internet use are also a real-time aid for the interpreter, as in many conference situations. However, digital resources are still very unevenly developed across languages, may not be available to interpreters in all languages, and even where they exist access to the Internet is not available in all locations and situations.

Interpreters face many technical or culturally specific situations and themes, and need research skills to deal with these, including the ability to:

- recognise gaps and areas for improvement in **Thematic competency** (see section 5.5 below) and **Transfer competency** (see section 5.6 below)
- efficiently and effectively apply strategies for thematic and terminological research
- know how to extract and process relevant information for a given task (thematic, terminological, phraseological, recorded audio and audio-visual information)
- know how to evaluate the reliability of information and sources of information.

Create and maintain a knowledge bank refers to the skills required to research, collect and store information, and be able to rapidly access it. This includes creating and maintaining information and terminology banks, e.g. glossaries, and organising and updating information. The compiling of knowledge banks may be supplemented with the use of digital resources.

5.4 Technological Competency

Technological competency refers to **Interpreting technology knowledge,** skills in **Interpreting through communication media,** and the range of **Information and Communication technology (ICT) skill** an interpreter must possess to prepare for and provide interpreting services, (i.e. Internet, software and hardware-based).

The Interpreter must have **Interpreting technology knowledge**. They must be aware of information technology and equipment that is relevant for their work, such as software, hardware, the Internet, audio and video equipment. This intersects with **Research competency** (see section 5.3 above) and **Service Provision competency** (see section 5.7 below), which also require knowledge of certain technologies.

Interpreting through communication media is now a standard form of work for many interpreters. This covers working through conference interpreting equipment, telephone interpreting, video or on-screen interpreting, use of portable audio equipment, and emerging areas of interpreting in multimedia contexts. This also refers to the increasing use of technology by the participants in any interpreting encounters, such as the use of PowerPoint and audio-visual aids in spoken or signed presentations, and remote participation by one or multiple parties, e.g. via Skype or Zoom.

ICT skill refers to the use of various technologies to assist in the preparation of interpreting assignments and follow-up evaluation and research, as well as responding to different means of communication and commissioning by employing agencies or clients. This includes Internet, software and hardware use and managing electronic data. **ICT skill** intersects with **Research competency** (see

section 5.3 above) and **Service Provision competency** (see section 5.7 below), which also require knowledge of certain technologies.

5.5 Thematic Competency

Thematic competency refers to the kind of knowledge the interpreter requires to ensure swift and accurate understanding of the context and content of the assignment, the particular terminology and phraseology used, the interpersonal situation they are entering and its anticipated communication dynamics. Included in this are **General knowledge, Current events knowledge, Subject-matter specific knowledge** and **Institution-specific knowledge**, related to the setting, audience and interlocutors of each assignment. It is essential that the interpreter has this knowledge readily available through prior preparation as the nature of most interpreting work may not allow the interpreter to refer to resources during the assignment.

The interpreters must possess a high level of **General knowledge** and **Current events knowledge** across different fields, which provides a basis for comprehending the source language and interpreting its meaning in a variety of subject areas. This is also essential as in any interpreting situation speakers may draw upon and refer to aspects that are not related to the specific professional context of the assignment. The required level of knowledge will differ according to the nature of the interpreting assignments, the mode of interpreting used and whether there is opportunity to stop the speaker to ask for clarifications.

Subject-matter specific knowledge refers to specific areas of knowledge in the professional fields in which interpreters work. Moreover, interpreting assignments often occur in specific institutional settings. Interpreters are required to have **Institution-specific knowledge** to deal with the particular structures, personnel and practices of those institutions. This includes knowledge of specific institutional protocols, terminology and communication dynamics. Institutional settings may vary widely, and include international diplomatic conferences, dialogue situations between individuals or groups in governmental or economic organisations, intimate clinical situations, and a variety of formal situations, such as speeches or document exchange.

Significant areas of interpreting in Australia include health, social administration, legal and business affairs, education, employment and social life more generally. An interpreter may gain expertise in one or more fields in which they have extensive knowledge. This may at times be related to another professional field in which the interpreter has been educated (e.g. law) or has had significant experience.

Interpreters undertake work with varying levels of briefing and preparation. In conference or business contexts interpreters will usually receive briefings and access to relevant materials, enabling research for the particular assignment. In many other contexts briefing can be very limited, placing a larger burden on interpreters' knowledge of the subject-matter, institutional procedures and likely scenarios.

Thematic competency intersects with **Language competency** (see section 5.1 above), **Intercultural competency** (see section 5.2 above) and **Research competency** (see section 5.3 above) to ensure the interpreter can understand context and anticipate the issues that may arise in the assignment.

5.6 Transfer Competency

Transfer competency refers to the knowledge and skills required to reproduce messages using a different language. In the context of interpreting, this usually relates to the transfer of oral or signed language and involves **Interpreting modes knowledge, Discourse analysis skill, Discourse management skill, Meaning transfer, Memory skill** and **Rhetorical skill, Interpreting standards knowledge** and **Self-assessment skill**. The comprehension and reproduction of the message must occur with immediacy, i.e. the source message must be reproduced in the target language with minimal or no delay depending on the mode of interpreting and any limits inherent in the language pair.

Interpreting modes knowledge refers to the awareness and understanding of the different modes of interpreting to be applied to a given situation (refer to Table 2 below).

5.6.1 An interpreter must have **Discourse analysis skill**, first to be able to determine the overall logical flow of what the interlocutors are saying/signing. This understanding is derived from the interpreter's **Thematic competency** and the understanding of the typical discourse features of a particular setting – e.g. in a courtroom, a social security office, a diplomatic, conference or business setting. This also requires understanding of the discourse strategies of participants and their use of language to achieve their goals – winning court battles, pleading their case, announcing authoritative judgments, or persuading clients or the public. This lays the basis for the interpreter to accurately convey meaning intended by all interlocutors.

5.6.2 Discourse management skill refers to the skills required to manage (as opposed to conduct) the interaction in order to facilitate the communication. In liaison interpreting situations this may involve, for example:

- establishing protocols with interlocutors to ensure that the interaction can proceed efficiently, e.g. in telephone interpreting with multiple parties interlocutors should identify themselves when speaking
- altering the physical positioning of the interlocutors (if required or possible)
- selecting the appropriate mode of interpreting
- ensuring that the interlocutors have clear information of the role of the interpreter in the particular exchange
- interrupting the flow of the interaction if required to ensure full capture and comprehension of the chunk to be interpreted
- managing overlapping inputs
- seeking clarification of poorly understood expressions and informing the other party that this is happening
- responding to asides or communication directed at the interpreter rather than the other interlocutor
- preparedness and ability to react to requests which are outside the scope of the interpreter's role
- code-switching, in situations where the interpreter must conduct the message transfer into both directions to facilitate communication between two or more parties. Code-switching must occur promptly and without cross-language interference.

In other settings, such as conference interpreting, other discourse management skills may be required.

Embedded in these activities is total familiarity with the professional ethics underpinning the profession.

5.6.3 Meaning transfer can be regarded as the actualisation and coming together of all of the competencies an interpreter must have. In the process of transferring the meaning from the source language into the target language, the interpreter must use appropriate terminology, grammatical features, style and register, and pay attention to the flow and quality of language in achieving complete transfer. This process is increasingly difficult when source and target languages are typologically different, and when cultural concepts reflected in the source language have no direct equivalent in the target language.

Meaning transfer can be achieved using different modes of interpreting – **Consecutive, Simultaneous** or **Multi-Mode**. The application of the different modes depends upon whether the interpretation is carried out at the same time as the speaker is speaking (simultaneous) or after the speaker has finished speaking or pauses (consecutive). Other modes of interpreting such as interpreting from a written text (sight translation), interpreting a recorded oral source text into a written target text and other variations can be considered multi-mode forms. Similarly, these observations apply to sign language interpreting with particular modifications, especially to deal with the direction of the interpretation. Table 2 below summarises these variants.

Each mode can be delivered face-to-face or remotely. This does not significantly alter the skills required although some specific training may be required to adapt a mode to the medium. Some examples of remote interpreting are telephone interpreting, interpreting where one or all interlocutors are observed through a live video feed, such as in a conference, at the bedside in a hospital or video conferencing in a courtroom to allow parties to appear from a prison facility.

Modes of interpreting can be determined by the technology used, and competence in using this technology cannot be regarded as a specialist skill but a basic skill where **Transfer competency** is adapted to the technological medium employed.

Table 2 – Modes of Interpreting

MODE	COMMON WORK SETTINGS	MECHANISMS	COMMON NAMES	DELIVERY METHOD	EXAMPLES
Simultaneous	Conference settings	From booth	Conference interpreting	Via microphone or receiver	Conferences
		From front of audience (signed)	Interpreting	Sign language	Conferences, speeches
	Group or dialogue settings where only few require interpreting, or multiple interpreters are required for different languages	Near participant(s) requiring interpreting	Chuchotage	Whispered interpreting	Multi-party meetings, court proceedings, psychiatric interviews
	In dialogue situations (mostly Auslan)	Simultaneous in dialogue setting	Interpreting	Sign and spoken language	Interviews, medical assessments
Consecutive	Speeches (in appropriate chunks)	From front of audience (signed and oral)	'Long' consecutive or monologue	Face-to-face, signed or microphone	Presentations, formal speeches
	Dialogues	From specific positions depending on environment (signed and oral)	Dialogue/ community/ public service/lisaison interpreting etc.	Face-to-face, signed or microphone	Consultations, business meetings, police interviews, court proceedings
Multi-Mode	Reference to written text	From specific positions depending on environment (signed and oral)	Sight translation	Face-to-face, signed or microphone	Written instructions and other documents
	Interpretation from a read version of a written document	Situations where the interpreter negotiates an appropriate alternative to sight translation	Sight translation alternative	Face-to-face, signed or microphone	Written instructions and other documents

The above table seeks to identify the typical and most commonly used modes, mechanisms and delivery methods of interpreting. Other variations are possible but these do not alter the overall divisions in the table. The examples provided are not intended to include every possible work situation.

5.6.4 Memory skill refers to the interpreter's ability to store and retain the inputs of an interaction in order for these to be readily recalled and converted into interpreted utterances. Different settings make varying demands on the interpreter's memory. Some short interactions in which the interpreter must instantly grasp meaning and convey this in direct interaction with interlocutors require remembering relatively short utterances. Long monologue interpreting demands the skills of note-taking or other memory techniques to be able to deal with lengthy segments and complex information. Simultaneous interpreters must remember and convey what has just been said while receiving constant new input. In all cases, the interpreter uses appropriate memory retention skills to enable interlocutors to maintain as normal a speech patterns as possible, whether in monologue or dialogue mode. **Memory skill** is reliant upon the interpreter's **Thematic competency** (see section 5.5 above).

5.6.5 Rhetorical skill is necessary for the interpreter to convey their messages using rhetorical and public speaking techniques appropriate to the specific setting, from personal and private to large and public settings. The interpreter must have appropriate productive language skills, i.e. speaking skills, and be able to:

- sustain the use of their voice for long periods
- project their voice
- use clear pronunciation and delivery
- use appropriate tone and volume.

Interpreting standards knowledge is understanding of standards to which an interpreting assignment must be completed to be acceptable for its purpose. It includes a clear recognition of the relationship between culture and language and how these impinge on interpreting. These aspects are critical in dealing with culturally-specific terminology ('Anzac Day', 'sex worker', 'Communion' etc.), the appropriateness of paraphrasing, and in being aware of the distinction between interpreting and summarising. This knowledge is also required to evaluate one's own work against standards in the field.

Self-assessment skill is required to reflect upon, review and evaluate one's own interpreting performance. This is an important aspect of the work of an interpreter as interpreting is often performed in situations where any evaluation of the quality of the performance cannot be made by third parties. Accordingly, the interpreter must develop a self-reflective approach aimed at systematically analysing the recently completed interpreting assignment in terms of whether it constitutes a satisfactory performance in light of the expected standards.

5.7 Service Provision Competency

This competency covers the knowledge and skills enabling the interpreter to provide their service to a client. It covers the gamut of activities from first contact with a potential client, through all stages of preparation and execution of an interpreting assignment, and the completion of formalities after an assignment. This includes **Knowledge of the business of interpreting**, **Interpreting business skill, Communication skill** and **Interpersonal skill**. **Service Provision Competency** is vital to enable the interpreter to function in their industry.

Knowledge of the business of interpreting relates to how the interpreting services sector operates. It refers to the way the interpreter handles the entire interpreting assignment, from initial contact, quoting and briefing, and the interpreting and post-interpreting processes. It includes the ability to effectively relate as an interpreter to all other stakeholders and participants in the interpreting process and satisfy their requirements for appropriate performance, and awareness of the environment in which the service is provided (e.g. safety and organisational guidelines and requirements).

Interpreting business skill relates to the application of administrative processes in line with regulatory requirements as well as marketing, negotiation, networking, time management, contract management, and determining the value of the services provided.

Communication skill and **Interpersonal skill** allow an interpreter to build and maintain business relationships with stakeholders. **Communication skill** refers to the language proficiency required for representation, in particular to:

- understand and clarify the briefing for assignments from clients or agencies
- negotiate the assignment with any parties involved to determine scheduling of assignments, working conditions and contracts
- discuss the interpreting process, outcomes and potential difficulties
- convey decision to accept or decline an assignment in a professional and timely manner
- use client-provided information and establish its key features
- justify one's interpreting choices and decisions
- introduce oneself
- explain one's role as interpreter.

For the purposes of this discussion, 'client' refers to the commissioner of any interpreting assignment, which may most commonly be an agency or interpreting company, or in some cases an end user.

Interpersonal skill refers to the skills required to:

- relate to people from a range of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- where necessary, work effectively as part of a team of interpreters
- maintain ethical practice in the face of opposition, conflict, professional challenges and limited resources.

5.8 Ethical Competency

Ethics knowledge and **Professional Ethics** encompassed in **Ethical competency** refers to both the knowledge of the appropriate codes of ethics and the skills and personal attributes required to apply the relevant codes and act ethically as an interpreter.

For the interpreter, the ability to deal with ethical issues is fundamental because of interpreter's continual involvement in human interaction with multiple parties. **Ethical competency** is an essential part of professionalism in all relationships an interpreter has, including obligations to other participants in an interpreting encounter, to employers or agencies providing work, and to the interpreting profession.

A professional displays **Ethical knowledge**, that is active knowledge and familiarity of the relevant code of ethics (in Australia the codes from the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT) for spoken languages and the Australian Sign Language Interpreters' Association (ASLIA) for signed languages) and abides by it. This means initially interpreters need to be able to recognise ethical challenges and apply the relevant ethical guidelines.

For the interpreter, ethical challenges arise at multiple levels.

1. The Interpreter works in many situations where there may be areas of significant ethical concern for other participants – end of life situations, legally complex or ambiguous situations, emotionally charged family or community situations, high-stakes diplomatic or military negotiations. Part of **Ethical competency** relates to the interpreter not adding to the ethical burdens already inherent in often fraught situations. This also requires recognising when exposure to such situations may lead to vicarious trauma for interpreters and finding means to cope with this.

2. The interpreter often works with participants, whether professionals or lay people, who have little understanding of the interpreter's role and how to work through/with interpreters, and may have varying expectations of interpreters. The interpreter must have the ethical knowledge and personal skills to deflect pressure from other parties to perform duties other than interpreting, and to explain their role where appropriate.

3. While focusing on their own conduct, the interpreter must maintain impartiality and keep within the role of an interpreter. They must adhere to the relevant ethical code in all their professional relationships. This includes not injecting their own opinions or prejudices into the interpreting situation, limiting their role to the conveying of information, recognising conflicts of interest, identifying personal and professional limitations, and not exploiting professional relations for personal gain.

While adherence to ethical codes is fundamental to interpreters' work, no code can encompass all situations. **Ethical competency** entails the ability to use the principles of a code to cover novel situations, and work through ethical dilemmas when principles may seem to clash. The interpreter is guided by their professionalism in making judgments of appropriate behaviour, to weigh up consequences and appropriateness of particular actions or lack of actions. Just as interpreting itself is characterised by immediacy, so too is making ethical judgements.

Ethical competency includes dealing effectively and appropriately with ethical dilemmas and challenges, and also relates to ongoing professional development and engagement with the profession.

5.9 Attributes

Attributes are inherent personal characteristics required to integrate the knowledge and skills previously described in order to be an effective interpreter.

> *Sometimes the boundaries among skills, abilities, and attributes are fuzzy. However, in both definitions it is clear that inherent personal attributes and abilities of a competent professional are the basis for integrating knowledge and skills in a particular context in order to accomplish needed tasks.[11]*

These attributes, or lack of them, are most visible when there is a consideration of ethical behaviour or adequacy of service provision.

In determining the range of attributes that should contribute to these KSAs, NAATI considered the American Translators Association's (ATA) job task analysis validation survey[12] which asked respondents to rate the importance of six attributes, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Training Package qualification[13] and the European Master's in Translation (EMT)[14], which do not specifically consider attributes. The VET qualification, while not referring to attributes specifically, integrates attributes in some of the required knowledge and skills.

In addition to these documents, O*Net Online – a US-based website that has detailed descriptions of the world of work – has a report for Interpreters and Translators (27-3091.00) that lists attributes and descriptors for each of these.

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[11] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA).* Koby and Melby, 2013, pp. 184/5.
[12] *Certification and Job Task Analysis (JTA).* Koby and Melby, 2013, pp. 184/5.
[13] https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/PSP61112; accessed 23/10/15.
[14] *http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/translation/programmes/emt/key_documents/emt_competences_translators_en.pdf.*

While some of these documents specifically deal with translator KSAs, NAATI considered this information and identified that a number of translator **Attributes** are also relevant for interpreters.

NAATI is of the opinion that the attributes of greatest importance in professional interpreting work are:

- **Attentive-to-detail –** careful about detail and thorough when completing work tasks
- **Desire-to-excel –** motivated to improve and perform work tasks consistently to a high level
- **Reliable –** dependable and responsible in fulfilling work tasks
- **Willing-to-learn –** actively and continuously improving knowledge and skills
- **Objective –** able to put aside personal feelings or opinions
- **Respectful –** considerate of the feelings, wishes, and rights of others
- **Collaborative –** able to work effectively and efficiently with others
- **Self-reflective –** aware of your own limitations (knowledge and skills, behaviours and beliefs and the influence these have on the performance of work tasks)
- **Problem-solving** – able to identify and find effective solutions for issues in order to achieve a goal
- **Confident** – self-assurance in one's personal judgment and ability.

Each of these **Attributes** is required in one or more of the areas of competency, and therefore should not be assigned to specific areas. Nevertheless, they are integral to overall professional practice as they determine how an interpreter applies their knowledge and skills.

6. Specialisation

NAATI accreditation has historically been concerned with establishing general levels of accreditation (certification), based upon a view that an interpreter must have a particular demonstrated level of general competence, which they will apply in interpreting work in many different professional areas. This differs from a number of certification systems for interpreting internationally, which have been based upon discipline-specific certification (most commonly court/legal interpreting, in some cases also health interpreting). This is particularly pronounced for example in the USA, and some European countries. Sign language interpreting has also usually been seen as a specialised area, certified in different ways from spoken language interpreting, while in Australia Auslan and Deaf interpreting are integrated in the NAATI system.

Discussion has arisen on whether NAATI should also recognise specialist areas. A NAATI credential is currently predicated on a generalist level of competence in relation to meaning transfer without a guarantee that interpreters are competent in a specific setting, e.g. court interpreting. Significantly, this concern arises not only from interpreters themselves, but from end users.

Several suggestions have been made for specialisation in interpreting, and the INT Report (2012) recommended the legal, health, conference and business areas, with priority given to legal and health.[15] A number of other suggestions have arisen from time-to-time for other areas of specialisations, including education, disability, mental health, domestic violence, immigration and others.

NAATI encourages readers to consider to what extent interpreting work in the aforementioned areas (e.g. legal or health) constitutes specialisation, or only expected variation in the generalist work of interpreters. The discussion of specialisation also raises the question what kind of mechanism would

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[15] http://www.naati.com.au/PDF/INT/INTFinalReport.pdf

be best suited to recognise specialisations, and whether interpreters working in an area of specialisation require additional KSAs.

7. Conclusion

To result in a certification scheme that has improved validity, reliability and practicality establishing a clear and valid set of KSAs is vital. This will underpin the new certification scheme and provide a mechanism for review and ongoing improvement not present in the current accreditation system.

8. Acknowledgements

NAATI thanks Adolfo Gentile, Heather Glass and Uldis Ozolins who provided invaluable insight and expertise that greatly assisted the research for and the compilation of this report.

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