

# Glossary of translation and interpreting terminology

## Introduction

In working to improve the standing and standards of the profession, practitioners in Australia (and elsewhere perhaps) are handicapped by the lack of a uniform and consistent set of terms with which we can describe the very complex thing we do. Not only does it mean that individuals are sometimes lost for words, it also means that two individuals who are enthusiastic ambassadors of T&I may yet be presenting images that seem quite different because of the idiosyncratic terminology used, but which are, at heart, the same message.

This glossary has been developed to remedy this problem.

As far as possible the definitions reflect current usage within the industry, but only where that usage is well established and consistent between people, or consistent between sets of terms that seek to describe the whole of a particular thing or concept, in analytical terms. In other words in such a way that every part of the whole is accounted for, but where there is no overlap in the individual terms.

There are many colloquial usages amongst T&I practitioners that fail these tests and so this document attempts to tidy up these areas of overlap or contradiction and to propose stricter conventions of usage. (Especially sets of words like “Domain”, “Profession”, “Community”, “Business”, or “check”, “edit” and “proofread” etc).

A number of references have been relied on to ensure that wheels are not being reinvented, and have found that even in the literature there are many terminological issues still open, and have in places taken the liberty of attempting closure. (The reader is especially advised to see “translation” before looking up anything else in this glossary).

A further point is that the established reference works that exist, still seem to be oriented more towards those teaching or theorising about T&I, rather than those purely concerned with making a living from it. So this terminology is presented also as another step towards the voice of the profession attaining the prominence it warrants.

Some of these terms are well established, and some are proposed names for things that have never been named before. Many of these comments include value judgements of the author and are noted as such, but the ultimate aim is to compile a glossary of terms and concepts that are generally accepted and useful to all T&I practitioners as they discuss professional issues amongst themselves and explain their profession to the world. It is a work in progress and all helpful comments and valid criticisms are invited and will be incorporated into future updates of the glossary.

Chris Poole 2003

Revised in 2026 with the following new entries: “CALD”, “Certification” (replacing “Accreditation”), “Formal” and “Functional equivalence”, “Fraternal Twin Problem”, “Localisation”, “Semantic sets” and “Transcreation”

Entries are set out in the following fashion. Words italicised (in the first instance per entry only) will be found elsewhere in the terminology. The user may be directed to them if they are highly relevant.

**[term]** ([**nouns that are modified by an adjective**]) [*type of word*] [definition][*(number of reference relied on or consulted)*] [Alternative terms if any] [opposite if relevant][Further reading] *words appearing elsewhere in terminology are italicised*. “More” [this link leads to more detailed comments]

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**accreditation** *n.* From its establishment until 2018 this was the name of the credential awarded by *NAATI* to people who have demonstrated a certain level of ability to *interpret* or *translate*, and an understanding of socio-cultural and ethical issues.

This ability and understanding could be demonstrated by either passing an exam set by NAATI, completing a course in Australia that was approved by NAATI, or completing a translation and interpreting course overseas that was accepted by NAATI. There were three levels of accreditation commonly awarded: “Professional”, “Paraprofessional”, which is a lower level of skill than Professional and is also awarded by exam or course completion, and “Recognition”, which is awarded as an interim measure to *rare* or *emerging* language speakers for which no exams have been set, on the basis of evidence of experience as a translator or interpreter. (7)

**accuracy** *n.* Property of a translation where all, and no more than, the *information* contained in the SL text, speech or sign, has been reproduced in the TL text, speech or sign.

**addition** *n.* defect of translation where *information* not present in SL text, sign or speech appears in TL text, sign or speech.

**ad hoc** *adj.* This modifies the nouns “*interpreting*” and “*translation*” and thereby describes work carried out by people who are employed as something other than translator or interpreter, or indeed who are not being paid at all.

(Other interpretations of this term have it describing someone who is carrying out T&I work with being accredited, certified or qualified. But this rests on an over-estimation of the current regulatory effects of credentials).

Ad hoc work generally arises out of a failure, on the part of those whose interests may be adversely affected by poor T&I, to safeguard their interests adequately by establishing a commercial relationship within which the provider of the service may be properly held to account for the quality of the service. (This may include of course the situation where such risks are insignificant or said parties non-existent, for example where an individual is translating for their own pleasure or at their own risk, or where students are translating as part of their studies). This in turn is often due to the lack of awareness, in both parties, of the existence of credentials that would otherwise indicate the willingness and ability of a person to enter into such a relationship, with the associated fact that people providing ad hoc T&I services are *less likely* to have training, qualifications or ability.

**agency** *n.* Coll. A company, whether owned privately or by the government, or dedicated section of government body, that coordinates the provision of translation services to the market by drawing on a *panel* or pool of *freelance* T&I practitioners.

The word also has wide currency, especially in the *Community Domain*, meaning “arm of the government” and pertinently, purchaser of T&I services, which can cause confusion.

Use of the more generic and official “LSP” (Language Services Provider) began around the turn of the century and though yet to displace “agency” is becoming more widespread.

**area** *n.* See *field*.

This is another of the very poorly or undefined terms that otherwise overlap with terms like *domain* or *sector*, meaning variously; the industry in which the *practitioner’s* clients work such as law, health, media, education and so on; or the subject of the *speech* or *text* to be translated.

**AUSIT** Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators. The national professional association for *practitioners*.

There is one other national association: ASLITA (previously “ASLIA”), Australian Sign Language Interpreters and Translators Association, and several other State based organisations.

**back translation** *n.* A *translation* ( $T^2$ ) of another translation ( $T^1$ ) into the SL of  $T^1$ , by a *translator* who does not have access to the  $T^1$ SL text or speech.

This is a method sometimes used to check the quality of a translation, and sometimes to check the quality of a translation process (such as machine translation, or the work of a particular translator). As a method of checking anything it completely lacks effect or credibility and can often be highly misleading, to the detriment and damage of both client and translator. It is however perceived by many clients to be effective and many practitioners are not aware of the defects in the methodology and carry out this work at the request of clients.

**bilingual** *adj.* Describes a person *fluent* in two languages, but not necessarily having any ability to *interpret* or *translate*. Employed, they may be known as “language aides” (7). See *ad hoc*.

**business (domain, interpreting, translation)** *adj.* A *Domain* of the *Market* or type of work. This is a domain where it is assumed that an economic agent such as an individual or company has freely chosen to purchase translation services, from another economic agent such as an individual or company, on the basis of their own judgment regarding the benefit versus the cost.

The purchaser may be involved in import or export; they may be involved in marketing, or the fulfillment of an existing contractual obligation, or in civil or commercial legal proceedings. They may also be involved in a non-profit activity such as a study tour or international conference, or even simply individuals wishing to correspond with other individuals.

That most of these activities are supported by industries that are ultimately sustained by the free exchange of goods or services for money (colloquially called “business”), does not preclude this last instance, which is still a choice to purchase the service for the perceived benefit, where this benefit is defined at the discretion of the individual rather than the state.

This domain is characterised by the clearly commercial relationship that will exist between the purchaser of the service and the translator. This will lead to a much sharper definition of the service being purchased with the associated criteria for judging quality and delivery being stricter, often including specific business outcomes. This is in sharp contrast to the *Community Domain* where the definition of the service being purchased rarely includes anything other than acceptable standards of *translation* ability and performance, and ethical conduct. The adjective “business” does not meaningfully modify the nouns “interpreter”, “translator” or “language”.

**briefing** *n.* Provision of *contextual* or background information to an *interpreter* or *translator* prior to the commencement of a job.

**CALD** *acronym* “Culturally and Linguistically Diverse”. This term was introduced after the 1996 Census and had gradually replaced the term NESB “Non English Speaking Background”.

**calque** *n.* an expression in one language formed by the translation of an expression in another.

**certification** *n.* This is the current name of the credential awarded to individuals by NAATI after demonstrating a level of ability and understanding of ethics and cultural issues. Previously “accreditation” but NAATI also saw that practitioners were handicapped by the lack of a globally uniform and consistent set of terms. The different levels of Certification may be found on [NAATI's website](#).

**checking** *n.* A stage of written *translation* where the *draft* is compared to the SL text and all *information* is confirmed as having been *accurately* reproduced.

Checking is normally dealing with problems arising out of poor SL comprehension skills, poor TL production skills and carelessness, such as mistranslation, additions and omissions. Most

effectively carried out by an experienced translator though not necessarily a TL native speaker. Checking is not “*editing*” nor is it “*proof-reading*”.

**chuchotage** *n.* *Simultaneous interpreting* in a whisper for the benefit of a person who is listening to speech or observing a discussion between others in a language in which they are not fluent. Also “whispering”, “whispered interpreting”, and “chucotage” (*Ital.*)

**client** *n.* The party purchasing translation services.

By convention in the Community Domain in Australia the CALD person is referred to by some people as “The client”. This is a hangover from the days when an interpreter with an CALD person on one side and “the professional” (doctor, lawyer etc.) on the other, sitting in a triangle, was regarded as the setting primarily representative of the industry. Calling someone who has no part in choosing the service or managing payment and therefore has no power to influence quality the “client” is very idiosyncratic and leaves people in this occupation ill-equipped to discuss the industrial relations and business aspects of their work.

**code-mixing** *n.* the inclusion of words and phrases from one language in sentences constructed in another. (3)

**code-switching** *n.* the completion of a sentence or dialogue in one language that was started in another. (3)

**collocation** *n.* “Collocation is the relationship between two words or groups of words that often go together and form a common expression.”

The word “often” here makes this definition lifted from the web (12) less useful. Errors of collocation are common in language produced by non-native speakers. The concept is useful to translators therefore as enabling them to pinpoint problems in a translation such as collocations that are not permissible or not preferable.

**colloquial** *adj.* Of usage. Use of a word or expression without necessarily conforming to the *strict* meaning of the word.

**common grave problem** *n.* The rendering of two different words in SL as the same word in the TL. (See “fraternal twin problem”)

This term is not established.

**community (domain, interpreting, translation)** *adj.* A *Domain* of the *Market* or type of work. Where interpreting or written translation is being provided in order to facilitate the operation of the government or community-oriented, domestically-based, non-profit NGOs, in respect of individuals, or groups of individuals, or particular language groups within the care or jurisdiction of that government and who are not fluent in the official language of that government.

Typically, though not definitively (in Victoria, Australia) this includes all clinical medicine (even where patient is paying their own costs) police, courts (criminal jurisdictions only) Centrelink, DHS, education etc.

This domain is characterised by the following things. The responsibility to provide effective translation is entirely the government’s, and the obligation that drives that responsibility is publicly stated and expressed in terms of public policy. It is assumed (though not always the case in practice) that the individuals neither intend, nor know how, to arrange for this service to be provided, nor have any capacity to judge the quality or effectiveness of that service. Under this assumption (and often in practice) the CALD individuals consequently have no choice in who they must rely on for these services, no say in the allocation of resources, and very little mechanisms of accountability that would take into account the views of the individuals

regarding the quality of the service. The individuals may also have very poorly formed expectations with regard to the definition of quality in translation services. All of these factors restrict the operation of market forces.

There are several other terms which vie for application to this activity but which do not enjoy wide acceptance nor are they useful as a system of analysis. These include “Community Based Interpreting”, and “Public Service Interpreting”, and these terms themselves have led people inadvertently to speak of “the profession of Community interpreter”.

It is argued here that this is meaningless. “Community interpreting” can be required in any language and be performed by any competent interpreter, (in various *modes* and *settings*), so the adjective “community” adds nothing to understanding of the world when applied to the nouns “interpreter” or “language”. See “Domain”, “specialisation” etc.

Recognition of the importance of T&I services to the functioning of a fair and equitable society has come slowly. Along the way certain groups of practitioners, notably practitioners who have specialised for commercial reasons in the mode and setting of simultaneous interpreting at conferences, or in the setting of courts, have established politically and commercially advantageous public constructions of their occupations that link the words “conference” and “court” to the name of their occupation which is “interpreter”. This has become a de facto method of analysis, of extremely limited utility.

“Community” has therefore been used to construct a type of interpreter that is “neither Conference nor court”, the importance of which has, and the ability of the practitioners working in this domain to assert their right to social recognition have been perceived and achieved more recently than the so-called “conference” or “court” interpreters.

This glossary rejects this as absurd. See *domain*, *mode*, *setting*, *sector*, *area* etc. for the many confusions created by mixing politics and personal interest with rational analysis of this industry.

**complex** *adj.* (**text, language etc.**) See “linguistic complexity”

This word is often used in an attempt to categorise *SL* text or speech for translation, as justification for charging certain prices or allocating work to certain *practitioners*. Where it is defined at all, it is usually only by oblique reference to the *area* or *sector* or the work of the *client*, with little thought given to whether it is actually linguistically complex.

**complexity, linguistic** *n.* all *SL texts* and *utterances* exhibit attributes such as average word and sentence length, and, at varying frequencies, ellipsis, self-reference, abbreviations, conditional and relative clauses, suppositions, complex tense arrangements, terms and concepts of limited currency, errors, typos, mispronunciations, infelicities (and so on) which, in varying degrees determined by the TL, govern either

- the accuracy and faithfulness achievable in a fixed period of time and with fixed resources, or
- time and resources required to achieve the same degree of accuracy and faithfulness.

Linguistic complexity is the sum of these attributes and is the most reliable analogue to the colloquial term “difficulty” in the context of T&I.

**consecutive (interpreting)** *adj.* Mode of interpreting where the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish an *utterance* of reasonable length (given the interpreter’s memory and or note taking skills) before they translate it. Generally requires that interlocutors are aware of the presence of the interpreter and are responsive to the needs of the interpreters re timing of pauses. Opp. *Simultaneous interpreting*

**context** *n.* 1. “The linguistic environment of a lexeme that contributes to its relevant meaning in order to extract its sense” (5) 2. This word is also often used colloquially to describe *settings*, *modes*, *areas* etc. The first sense given here is more useful for this exercise.

**contextual information** *n.* Any information other than the text or speech that is to be translated, but which determines the relevant meaning and sense of that text or speech or any part thereof, and which therefore enables the translator to translate accurately and faithfully. Also “background knowledge”.

This is a very common and important topic of discussion amongst practitioners as they are keenly aware of its importance to their work, but clients are notorious for not appreciating this. NOTE: In T&I training and education either this, or “Contextual studies” are often taught. These are in turn much broader subjects, that might be more appropriately called “general knowledge”, when compared to the specific knowledge that a person must have in order to translate.

**credential** *n.* anything that purports to be evidence of competence or proficiency in general (e.g. Qualifications, experience, resumes, accreditation, certificates, reputation etc.).

**credentialism** *n.* reliance on *credentials* as a proxy for quality of T&I work, in place of direct evidence that the specific work in question is *accurate* and *faithful* and otherwise meets the requirements of the *client*.

**currency** *n.* attribute of a term, set phrase or other linguistic unit of being understood correctly by an interlocutor or reader without supporting explanation, definition or paraphrasing.

Therefore a term may be said to be “current” amongst a defined group of interlocutors or readers. Currency of all linguistic units is always limited, if only to the speakers of a given language. Where the limitation is aligned with people involved in some industry, occupation, field of technology or enquiry, the terms and set phrases to which this limitation applies are colloquially known as “specialised terminology”, “technical terminology”, “jargon” etc. See *terminology*.

**dialogue interpreting** *n.* obsolete categorisation of interpreting that assumed the majority of interpreting settings conform to a stereotypical three-way situation, and relied on a vague definition of length of utterance to distinguish it from “*consecutive interpreting*”. (7)

**diplomatic** *adj.* *Domain of the Market.* Any translation work carried out in order to facilitate the relationship between one sovereign state or international NGO and another.

As well as government delegations and treaty negotiations, may also include activities such as trade missions where the objective is clearly to improve the business prospects of one or both nations, aid organisations’ activities and development projects in developing countries, or any interpreting and translation activities that take place in military or intelligence gathering activities. The power structures, mechanisms of accountability, definitions of success etc. in this domain will be significantly different from those in the Business and Community Domains.

**domain** *n.* A subdivision of the *market for translation* that is characterised by

- the power structure that exists between the translator, and the representatives of the two or more languages which are being translated, if present;
- the mechanisms by which the services of the translator are sought, offered, retained, delivered, measured, accounted and paid for;

It may also be further loosely characterised, but not defined, by the numbers of intermediaries involved in the marketing and generation of work, the type of work available and the market price for translation. There are three domains: “Community”, “Business” and “Diplomatic”.

(See *ad hoc*) which account for all paying work for translators and interpreters. The domain in which T&I work takes place has absolutely no bearing on the *mode* or *setting* in which the work is being carried out, or *field*, *subject* or *topic* of the speech or text that is being translated.

It can be safely asserted that an individual person can possess the attribute known as “transfer competence” (see glossary) in a specific language pair and perhaps further qualified in terms of direction. It can further be safely asserted that there are describable tasks, the successful completion of which depend on the contribution by at least one such individual, of work based on this attribute (or of the skill set to which this attribute is central).

The person with that attribute making that contribution is called a “translator” (includes interpreting), and these tasks must represent, colloquially, the totality of translation work that is actually carried out. It could more conveniently be called the “market”, and shall be so called hereafter. This is without regard to whether the amounts actually paid for this work are considered reasonable by any party.

Understanding a market is important to anyone who seeks to sell to it, and the translation market is no exception. Understanding anything usually begins with analysing it. “Analysing” means dividing into constituent parts. Things can be analysed according to many different criteria, but the usefulness of the analysis per se depends on the analysed parts accounting for everything, while at the same time not overlapping.

The degree of usefulness will be high when the analysis reveals patterns or new information that enable better characterisation and prediction of the thing being analysed.

To date there have been no useful analyses of the translation market, as it is defined above, even though there are many possibly useful criteria by which it could be analysed such as “mode” or “setting”.

One key criterion by which the translation market may be analysed is “by power relationship” and the parts into which the market is so divided shall be called here “Domains”. This is a key criterion because it reveals the most information useful to anyone attempting to understand the economic model within which T&I services are provided, and other related issues such as quality and regulation.

The word “domain” is in itself problematic in that apart from its use for example in “domain name” and “public domain” (two of numerous instances regularly tackled by translators) it already has loose currency in the field of translation studies<sup>1</sup>. I say loose because all the purported translation “domains”, if added together, would not account for all translation work, and in some places would overlap. Clearly this word has yet to be decisively appropriated for use, and just as clearly this criterion of analysis has yet to be effectively applied.

I adopt the word for this application a little fearful of the risk of opposition from those who are comfortable with their *ad hoc* interpretation of its meaning. If challenged though I will happily trade labels; the usefulness of the method of analysis I am proposing here is little influenced by what it is ultimately called.

I propose a criterion of analysis that looks for natural division of the translation market according to the types of relationships between the participants.

I assume that in any translation task there exist, and may be present or party to the work being done, some or all of the following participants:

the creator/s of the (source) text, sign or utterance in one language

the reader/s or listener/s of the (target) text, sign or utterance

and at least one of the following;

the sender of that source text, sign or utterance

the receiver of the target text, sign or utterance

The sender and or the receiver may be thought of as the party/ies initiating or commissioning the translation work, paying for it if it is to be paid for, and this whole process in turn may be affected by other parties through a number of levels of agency<sup>ii</sup>.

There are obviously a high number of combinations and permutations possible when all these participants are considered, but they necessarily involve participants who have an interest in, or are exposed to the risk of, successful and unsuccessful translation respectively. This gives rise to the questions of the duty of care and accountability. To whom and by whom are these things owed? By what mechanism and to what degree may they be made to deliver them? These are questions that have been asked and answered effectively, with strong legislative and regulatory measures, or with conventional and customary economic behaviour, for most of the professions alongside which translators would like to take their place, as well as for most transactions that take place in our economy.

What players are present? What sort of entity are they? And, what motive and mechanism exists, or ought to exist, for one to account to the other, for the *successful* completion of translation tasks?

These are questions of power and are therefore central to the issue of regulation, which is, in essence, a system whereby the state imposes power relationships on individuals that serve interests other than those of the individual.

An examination of a wide range of work environments both from personal experience and anecdotal evidence suggests to this writer that all possible translation work cleaves naturally into three groups, or “domains”, (notwithstanding further and more specific analysis at lower levels, and of course analyses by other criteria, which would take place in parallel with this one) according to the type of power relationship between the various players set out above, and they are tentatively named here “Community”, “Business” and “Diplomatic”.

No specific particular instance of T&I can take place in more than one of these domains simultaneously. Rather every conceivable particular instance of T&I may be categorised as taking place in one of these three domains, by identifying the process that is being made possible by the contribution of the translator, and then by identifying the parties that have an interest in that process taking place, and, where only one party has an expressed interest in the process, which party dictates the nature of the process.

Categorisation is then determined by the combination of parties shown below. If only one party has an interest and that party is the state it is “Community” or “Diplomatic” depending on who the other party is involved in the process. If it is an individual it is Business. These latter conditions thereby account for unilateral Diplomatic activities (warfare, espionage etc.) and unilateral Community (police investigation).

In summary:

Community: The state and an individual

Business: An individual or company and another individual or company

Diplomatic: A state and another state

“Ad hoc” work can take place in any of these Domains. (See glossary)

**draft** *n. adj.* Any, or descriptive of, written *translation* at a stage of partial completion, i.e. before *checking, editing or proof-reading*.

**editing** *n.* Changes made to a draft translation in order that it meets any of a number of criteria including but not limited to: conformity with existing precedents, internal consistency, *naturalness*, appropriate *register*, grammatical correctness, etc. insofar as those attributes existed in the SL text. A translation that meets those criteria is generally regarded as being “*faithful*” or more technically, “*dynamically*” or “*functionally equivalent*” (4 esp. Nida & Taber 1969/1982:200, and de Waard & Nida 1986).

Editing is normally dealing with problems that arise out of poor TL production skills of the draft translator and inadequate contextual information, and relies less on reference to SL for guidance than does the process of *checking*. Most effectively carried out by an experienced translator who is a TL native speaker. NOTE: This is a strict meaning applicable to T&I, which excludes the broader meaning of editing for length, or to create attributes of the TL text *not* present in the SL..

**emerging language** *n.* Language (in a given geographical area) for which there is a growing demand that is not matched by supply of accredited interpreters. See “Rare language”.

**faithful** *adj.* A faithful *translation*, apart from conveying the *information* contained with the SL speech or text, also reproduces the *style* of, and functions the same way as the SL speech or text, including having the same effect on the receptors of the translation as would be experienced by the receptors of the SL speech or text, by reproducing all the *pragmatic features* of the SL. (4)

**false friend (also faux amis)** *n.* A *loan word* the meaning of which has been changed since it was borrowed, that is incorrectly assumed to mean the same thing it meant in the language from which it was borrowed.

**field** *n.* If the words and other linguistic elements subject to *translation* in a given translation task constitute coherent sentences, then in so far as these may deal with propositions or speech acts that refer in some way to some human activity that is otherwise categorised and named, then the “field” of that translation would be that named, human activity. Examples would be “chemistry”, “politics”, “engineering” and so on, or may be more specific subdivisions of these into areas, subjects and topics.

The use of words such as “field”, “area”, “subject”, “topic” and so on is very loose and the definition proposed here is entirely my own and by no means established, but it might be useful to treat these four words as a hierarchy of specificity with topic being the most specific. I.e. area – medicine, field – orthopaedics, subject – rehabilitation of certain patient, topic – what happened to her leg this morning.

A “field” (or area) is not a *domain*, or a *mode*, or a *setting*, (although considerable confusion exists as to the meaning and application of these various terms). The easiest way to demonstrate this is by observing that the very same string of words, say from an agricultural scientist giving expert evidence from prepared notes, in legal action over the marketing of a certain hybrid of fruit, may have to be interpreted there (mode: consecutive interpreting, setting: court room, domain: business) then translated into another language for research purposes (mode: translation, domain: business) and then referred to during treaty negotiations which are also being interpreted (mode: simultaneous interpreting, setting: meeting, domain: diplomatic) and all the while the *field* remains (say) horticulture.

Neither are fields a particularly useful method of analysis as there is no finite set of “fields” which could account for all translation tasks, without overlapping, and as all practitioners know, rare is the text or speech that remains neatly confined to a single field, area, subject or topic.

There is a tendency to categorise people according to the way in which they *specialise*, referring to it as their “field”, such as “legal interpreter” or “medical interpreter”. The use of the

word in this way adds little to our understanding of the nature of the work being carried out. Such categorisation is only reasonable in commercial terms, in that the practitioner has chosen to *specialise* in a combination of *mode*, *setting* and perhaps *sector*. See also “genre”

**fluent** *a.* Attribute of a person’s speech. Used colloquially in this industry most often to describe a high level of second language proficiency (because fluency is assumed for first language).

To be fluent, a person must be able to converse or speak, without causing in their interlocutor/s a consciousness of the need to modify their own speech to accommodate the limited language proficiency of the speaker. This excludes cases where people modify their own speech on the basis of a lack of familiarity with a particular *field* etc.

A more detailed and strict definition for the T&I industry might be based on the definition of “Communicative Proficiency” as set out in the “Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: Theoretical Framework<sup>iii</sup>”, consisting of the following five elements, each of which would be expected in the second language fluency of a professional T&I practitioner (NOTE: these are not to be confused with the “Competencies” developed around 2005 in Australia as the basis for VET sector courses):

- 1) **Linguistic competence** is the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary at a sentence level. It enables the building and recognition of well-formed, grammatically accurate utterances, according to the rules of syntax, semantics, morphology, and phonology/graphology.
- 2) **Textual competence** is the knowledge and application of cohesion and coherence rules and devices in building larger texts/discourse. It enables the connection of utterances and sentences into cohesive, logical and functionally coherent texts and/or discourse.
- 3) **Functional competence** is competence to convey and interpret communicative intent (or function) behind a sentence, utterance or text. It encompasses macro-functions of language use (e.g., transmission of information, social interaction and getting things done/persuading others, learning and thinking, creation and enjoyment) and micro-functions, or speech acts (e.g., requests, threats, warnings, pleas, etc.), and the conventions of use.
- 4) **Socio-cultural competence** focuses on appropriateness in producing and understanding utterances. These include rules of politeness; sensitivity to register, dialect or variety; norms of stylistic appropriateness; sensitivity to “naturalness”; knowledge of idioms and figurative language; knowledge of culture, custom and institutions; knowledge of cultural references; and uses of language through interactional skills to establish and maintain social relationships.
- 5) **Strategic competence** manages the integration and application of all the other language competence components to the specific context and situation of language use. It involves planning and assessing communication, avoiding potential or repairing actual difficulties in communication, coping with communication breakdown, and using affective devices. Most of all, its function is to ensure effectiveness of communication “transactions”.

**formal equivalence** *adj.* equivalence is an attribute of a translation, measured by comparing it to the SL text or speech. Formal equivalence is where the translation seeks to reproduce the form of the SL, which can be described as including but not limited to: the same number of sections, paragraphs, sentences and words; that they all appear in the same order (to the extent that a relationship can be discerned between a “word” in the SL and its translation in the TL).

The expectation that translation might prioritise the reproduction of form is archaic and uninformed by any understanding of language or the translation process. See *functional equivalence*.

**fraternal twin problem** *n.* The rendering of one word in the SL as two different ones in the TL. (See “common grave problem”).

**freelance practitioner** *n.* A translator who offers their services for a defined scope of work to both LSPs and end users on a subcontract or contract basis, outside of any relationship whereby the purchaser has any obligation to the translator that extends beyond completion of and payment for that scope of work.

**functional equivalence** *adj.* equivalence is an attribute of a translation, measured by comparing it to the SL text or speech. Functional equivalence is where the translation seeks to restore to the client the experience that would otherwise be obtained had there been no language barrier. Definition of the function of a text or utterance is therefore entirely the prerogative of the client and it is the translator’s responsibility to reproduce that function in the TL.

The function of the SL can be further broadly divided into communication of *information* and recreation of *pragmatic effect*. See *formal equivalence*.

**genre** *n.* A method of categorising literature. Also used occasionally to categorise SL text or speech for translation.

There is no list of “genre” that comprehensively accounts for every possible type of literature nor any list that has been universally accepted. Given that literature at least consists of texts displaying a fairly high degree of finish and conscious intent, the word “genre” is even less effective as a method of categorising the SL speech or text of translation which may display none of these things. The word “genre” is nevertheless used in this way from time to time, effectively serving as nothing more than a vague synonym for *sector* or *domain* or *area* etc. depending on the user and instance.

The reasons which we might want to categorise literature and SL for translation are also very different, with the latter being more important than the former. This is because pricing of translation work and/or allocation of work to practitioners in some sectors of the market rely on various vague and arbitrary systems of categorising texts such as “technical” or “complex”. See *terminology* and *complexity*.

**industry** *n.* In this glossary it refers to all the *T&I practitioners* working for money.

**information** *n.* Features of the SL text, speech or sign, the existence of which is generally accepted without dispute, including but not limited to number, identity, date, name, order, orientation, hierarchy, and subject – object – agent, hypernym, hyponym and other syntactic and logical relationships.

**interlocutor** *n.* One who takes part in a conversation or dialogue. (2)

**interpret** *vt.* 1. To *translate* speech or sign orally. (4) This is the sense that is relevant to this industry. 2. To explain. See below.

**interpretation** *n.* Rendering of speech, text or other event that seeks to explain or make it intelligible. See *interpreting* for which it is sometimes mistaken in use (e.g. “This person will be doing the interpretation”), and *translation* for which is sometimes mistaken in intended meaning (e.g. “That’s not a good interpretation of that utterance”).

**interpreter** *n.* One who interprets

**interpreting** *n.* The oral *translation* of speech or text. See also **sight translation**. (1)

**lexical density** *n.* In a given text, the number of different words appearing at least once in the text divided by the total number of words in the text. A factor influencing time required to translate. This use is not established.

**literal (of translation)** *adj.* 1. Often used colloquially to describe unnatural (see “*natural*”) translation, or translation defective in some other way.

Strictly, it is the opposite of “figurative” which in turn describes “figures of speech” (deviations from standard meaning) and especially “figures of thought” or “tropes” (deviations from standard order or usage) both for rhetorical effect, such as simile, metaphor, etc. (Also “direct translation”).

Only figurative language can be translated “literally”. Allegations of “literal translation” should be examined closely to see whether they are in fact this, or whether the person simply finds the translation disagreeable for some reason. (6) 2. Also ill-advisedly *requested* as an attribute of a translation (often by legal practitioners), where, for example, the translation fails for some reason to meet the expectation of the person making the request, who suspects that the translator is adding something to or omitting something from the translation, neither of which they suspect would occur if translated “literally”. 3. In this context it can also be a synonym for “word-for-word” or “verbatim translation”, the former being defined as translation “made on a level lower than is sufficient to convey the content unchanged while observing TL norms” (4) or where each lexeme is “translated” without regard for structure at any higher level such as phrase, sentence etc. This is sometimes necessary where the SL text or speech itself is nothing more than individual words that fail to form complete or grammatical structures, as may be found in lists of items, or in “word salad” encountered in some mental health interpreting.

Except in some situations such as the last two instances given above, generally no useful translation can be produced according to any of these methods, which are largely the product of the imaginations of non-translators, except where they are used to carry out linguistic analyses of foreign speech or text, which is a *metalinguistic* task.

(Further recommended reading : “[Verbatim Interpretation: an Oxymoron](#)” by Holly Mikkelsen)

**literary translation** *n.* Translation of texts classed as literature. Can take place in the *Business*, *Community* or *Diplomatic Domains*.

**loan word** *n.* Although according to (3) it is any word “borrowed” from another language, clearly the date on which a word was borrowed can vary wildly, meaning that the degree to which it has become generally regarded as a word belonging to the borrowing language can also vary from completely to not at all. “Loan words” are those of which there is a general awareness that they were borrowed recently, as opposed to the very low awareness of loan words that may have entered the language centuries ago.

**localisation** *n.* Synonym for “translation”, connoting to its users a more modern and responsive form of “translation”, which in turn is perceived as being stolidly grounded in formally equivalent texts that fail to take into account the needs of the end user. This is quite ridiculous. Here’s why.

In the late 90s the internet and ecommerce seemed to promise enormous profits, (and indeed it ultimately did but only after the maturation of the [Gartner hype cycle](#)). Around and subsequent to the bubble bursting in March 2000 (the dotcom Crash) vast sums of money were invested in online assets such as websites, and this caused a rapid rise in demand for translation services because ecommerce offered the prospect of cross-border buying and selling with minimal effort.

The task of planning, arranging and delivering translations fell to young people whose place in the world was due to their understanding of IT but who, like most people, had a very poor grasp of how language or translation works. In contrast however to most people, they had formidable budgets and momentum. They immediately encountered all the problems that have challenged translators since the Third Dynasty of Ancient Egypt and which generally fall under the heading

of *functional equivalence*, but the momentum of money and hubris propelled them to where they imagined themselves pioneers experiencing these things for the first time. So without taking the trouble to see whether there was an existing professional class of people whose expertise might have solved these problems, they wantonly coined the term “localisation” as a witty counterpart to the very popular buzzword “globalisation” to describe such mundane requirements as redesigning the address field on a web page because (feigning shock) different countries have different ways of addressing parcels!

The typically supine traditional translation industry apparently watched in helpless paralysis while a bunch of historically illiterate nerds invented new names for everything and then had the financial power to inject them into all sorts of industries. Now millions of people say “localisation” when they mean “translation” and translators wonder now why their jobs are threatened by AI. See transcreation.

**LOTE** *acr.* Language Other Than English

**market** *n.* All the transactions of T&I work for money or other value.

All the transactions of T&I work for money or other value, and hence all instances of T&I practitioners and their client being exposed to financial risk, and their clients or employers or third parties being exposed to the risks of poor quality translation. The market can be divided into three “domains”: community, business and diplomatic. It may also be divided into “sectors” or “areas”, such as medicine, law, education, manufacturing, banking etc. *Domains* and *sectors* overlap and intersect with one another, as do *modes*.

**metalinguistic** *adj.* A metalanguage is any language used to talk about language.

Of course in practice, the language in question, if used by English speakers, may be indistinguishable from English, except for some technical terms and awkward constructs not normally encountered in common parlance. But any discourse that refers to language and linguistic matters is metalinguistic.

This is important for *T&I practitioners* who, it may be argued, have an ethical obligation to be able to discuss and explain their work, and inter alia both *SL* and *TL*, in such a way that their *clients* gain access and insight into the problems that the practitioner is being paid to solve. For example, as a method of checking the quality of a translation, simply re-translating or *back-translating* the same *SL* text or speech are of little use to a monolingual client. Metalinguistic comment is the only ethically accountable way to explain to someone why a translation is good or bad.

**mode** *n.* The mode of translation dictates the mental resources required to perform the work. See *setting*.

There are a number of modes of *translation*. The two most widely encompassing modes are spoken to spoken, and written to written, being known colloquially within this industry as “*interpreting*” and “*translation*” respectively. But there are many other combinations and subdivisions of these two modes such as *consecutive* and *simultaneous* interpreting, written to spoken and vice versa, *summarising* and those modes involving broadcasting, internet text, subtitling, formal speeches and telephone intercepts.

The word “mode”, like “domain”, is used widely in this industry, with variations in intended meaning also spread widely. It is proposed here that this *strict* definition be adopted.

“Mode” is also closely related to the *setting* which dictates the physical resources required to perform the work. Consideration of a particular mode will often include the setting, and it will tend to characterise the experience for all involved and as a result of this, the development of a

practitioner's career is often aligned closely with a particular mode and/or setting, such as court or conference interpreting, or written translation. Hence the colloquial practice of referring to oneself by mode i.e. "I'm an interpreter". This then contributes to the idea that there discrete groups of people who are either interpreters or translators, or both.

Clearly, given a large enough market and enough practitioners, there may be large discrete groups of people who only do one or the other. There is no evidence to date that demonstrates that this is the case in Australia, and it also tends to obscure the fact that, at a level more basic than selection of a particular mode/setting as a career path, all practitioners are drawing largely on the same set of skills and knowledge to perform their work, regardless of mode. That this fact is obscured generally retards development of the industry because it artificially segments it, preventing the increase in power and understanding that would come from a clear perception of the common ground and interests that all translators and interpreters share.

Modes are not to be confused with "*domains*" as they can all overlap (or be combined in people's perception, as in "Community interpreter").

**monolingual** *n. adj.* Person, or of a person, who speaks only one language.

**NAATI.** (Rhymes with "party") National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. The body that examines and accredits practitioners, and approves courses. Australian

**native language** *n.* The language one acquires greatest proficiency in during childhood. Generally the language in which one is most *fluent*. Also "L1", "first language", "Mother tongue".

**native speaker** *n.* Of a person in relationship to a given language, which is their *native language*.

**natural** *adj.* **naturalness** *n.* Property of a translation where it displays no errors typical of a *non-native speaker*.

**NESB** *adj.* Non-English Speaking Background (person). This acronym enjoyed popularity in Australian Government publications for several years, but in 2004 started to be replaced by the acronym "CALD" or "Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (person, community etc.)".

**nuance** *n.* Very subtle difference in the sense of a lexical unit. Successful reproduction of nuance in TL may not take place at the level of lexeme.

This word is very popular amongst people with no training in linguistics or translation as an indicator of quality in translation, e.g. that it "captured every nuance".

**omission** *n.* defect of translation where *information* in SL text, sign or speech is not reproduced in TL text, sign or speech.

**panel** *n. adj.* The list of, or descriptive of, freelance *practitioners* to whom *agencies* allocate work.

**pragmatic (feature, effect, value etc.)** *adj.* Functional or non-linguistic feature of the SL text or speech. The parts of language that do things other than convey *information*. (See also *style*) Successful reproduction of pragmatic features makes a translation "*faithful*".

Mention is often made of "visual cues" and "body language" in relation to interpreting. These are all pragmatic features. NOTE: The word "pragmatic" has a strict meaning in linguistics quite different from its colloquial meaning. Also "Para lingual". (Further reading: BLAKEMORE, D., 1992. Understanding utterances: An introduction to **pragmatics**. Oxford. Blackwell. AUSTIN, J.L., 1962. How to do things with words. Oxford: Oxford University

Press.)

**practitioner** *n.* Person who works as an *interpreter* and/or *translator* for remuneration.

**precedent** *n.* Previous or existing translation of word or expression in SL which has become well established, requiring the translator to adhere to this rather than translate anew. Most commonly applies to proper nouns, reported speech etc. but can apply to any word that may have been previously translated.

**proofreading** *n.* Examining a translation to confirm there are no errors due to fatigue, carelessness, laziness etc. such as typos, spelling mistakes etc.

Proofreading is not *checking* nor is it *editing* and reference to SL is not required. Proofreading cannot be effectively carried out by anyone involved in the drafting, checking or editing of that text, and will generally be most efficiently carried out by a TL native speaker, but they need not be a translator.

**profession** *n.* The collective body of persons practicing a particular occupation requiring advanced training in some liberal art or science and which involves mental rather than manual work. (1)

This word has a talismanic quality that prevents many people from reflecting on its *strict* meaning. Like many words it has many senses and it is used quite selectively by people in this industry, sometimes to mean high standards, sometimes just to mean worth lots of money. The concept is critical to many key issues for the industry and a more detailed definition follows.

### What is a Profession?

(This definition was written by Chris Poole and published in the AUSIT National Newsletter in 2001.)

The existence of a profession assumes a society in which there is both a government and a degree of free association amongst the members of the society. A profession is a group of individuals in such a society of which the following things are true:

1. The members of it possess of a set of skills, and theoretical and practical expertise (the “skill set”) that are necessary to manage and resolve problems that are of a nature *critical* to basic human activities. **Not trivial.**
2. The services based on this skill set are considered essential to any society as defined above, and therefore will be found in most if not all modern states. **Not cultural.**
3. Because of this, the offer of services based on this skill set will *necessarily* result in some actual provision. Therefore a profession must come under the purview of a government as part of the economy over which they preside. It is therefore naturally a candidate for regulation. **Not optional.**
4. The skill set will require considerable innate intelligence as a pre-requisite, and hard work, determination and extensive study to master and then apply. **Not easy.**
5. The application of the skill set however will then also include a significant proportion of creative thinking. In other words not every set of circumstances confronted by a professional in the line of their business can be anticipated and trained for. Although based on their training, a significant part of a professional person’s work will consist of developing novel solutions to unforeseen problems. **Not learnt by rote.**

6. The skill set will be based on and refer to a body of knowledge that represents all the available wisdom that has accumulated over the years of other people working in the same field. It will be a body of knowledge far greater than any one person could accumulate within their lifetime. A professional represents this body of knowledge. The public gain access to this knowledge via currently practicing professionals. **Not arbitrary.**
7. This body of knowledge will be regarded as the highest authority on that topic, notwithstanding its ongoing development which may include challenges to certain elements within it. **Best available.**
8. The body of knowledge will have achieved this status as a result of the unfettered ability to challenge elements of it, and the resulting revision of those elements, according to scholarly principles (i.e. the culture and habit of research; the presentation in a public forum of the results of that research with a view to inviting complimentary or contradictory arguments that are also based on empirical evidence; and the testing of various modes of application in a free market). **Robust and reliable.**
9. As the profession deals with matters critical to human society; as it is necessarily part of any social economy, and as it presents itself as the best available knowledge on that topic, the profession will also be *publicly accountable*. The definitive skill set consists not just of the skills and expertise sufficient to practice, but also includes a grasp of theory sufficient to explain and defend every decision made in the course of their work, in a way that is completely transparent and accessible to people outside the profession. The nature of this accountability might best be illustrated by reference to the following diagram. (Please see figure 1).

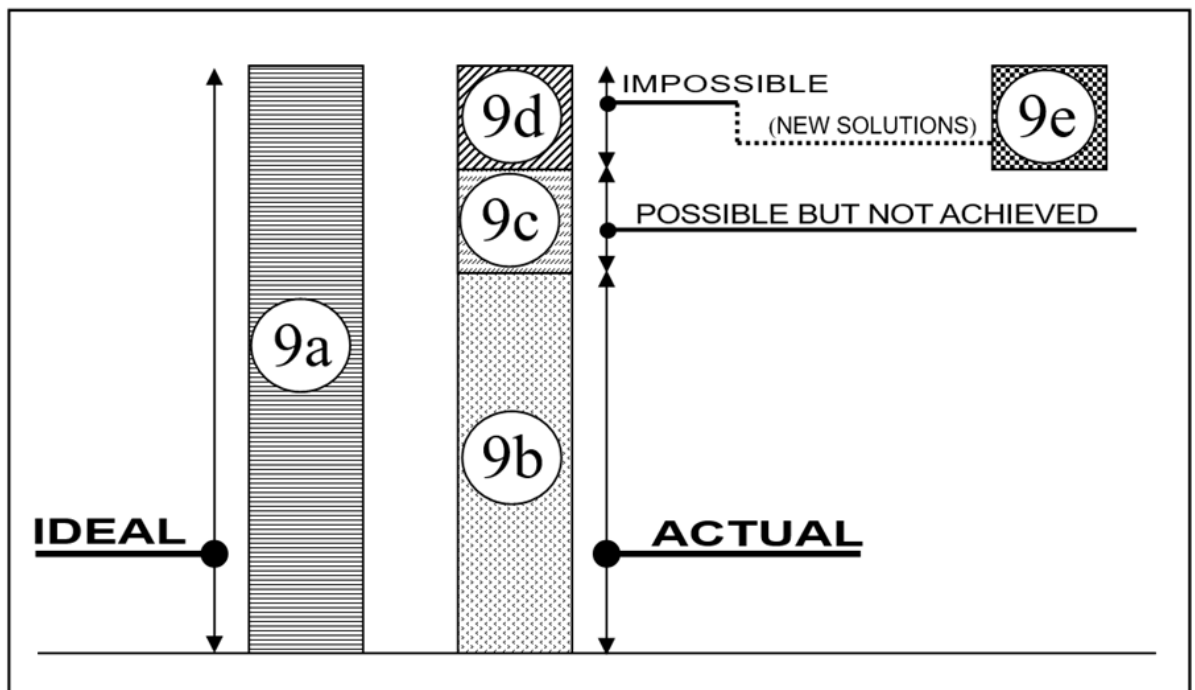


Figure 1.

This diagram may apply to any instance of the application of the skill set, no matter how specific or general. It may be a question of the accuracy of a translation of one sentence; it may be the question of provision of interpreting service to a hospital; or it may be the

experience of a witness in court whose evidence is being translated. In any qualitative judgement of the application of the skill set, the profession must be able to account for the following. These are all obligations that a profession has to society. **Not a hobby.**

9a. The profession and its practicing members must be able to give the most authoritative definition of the ideal. It is not sufficient that they wait to be asked. A profession must have this knowledge.

9b. The profession and its practicing members must be able to give an accurate account of what actually takes place. Of all parties and groups within society, they must possess the most detailed and up-to-date information on every aspect of activity that depends on application of the skill set.

9c. They must also be able to give an accurate account of how far short of the ideal, those actual activities fall. And it must understand, before and more thoroughly than any other party or group within society, the reasons for that shortfall.

9d. Further to this last point, it must be able to show that all the resources and energy available to it for the maintenance of the culture and habit of research, are being directed efficiently towards narrowing that gap between the ideal and the actual. In other words they must be able to show a responsible plan for achieving everything that is conceivably possible.

9e. As with any field of human endeavour, some things will simply not be possible. The profession and its practicing members must be the highest authority on what those are, and finally they must be able to show what other plans there are to develop new solutions that might palliate the situation.

10. In their professional capacity, a professional practitioner will necessarily have, at some point, a face-to-face relationship with their clients. They will be caught up in the cycles of action to which the people for whom they are interpreting are committed, and who in turn may be subject to the imperatives of an organisation or institution which requires movements, or the commencement or completion of certain tasks or activities, that are also beyond the control of the professional practitioner. The pace and timing of a professional practitioner's work may be dictated by the interests of others.

A professional practitioner must be able to work within these constraints without jeopardising those interests, with which they have been entrusted. Therefore a professional must display high levels of personal organisation and management, including better than average literacy, numeracy, punctuality, interpersonal and communication skills, tidiness and with well-developed habits of record keeping and practical understanding of basic business.

11. In respect to all parties outside the profession, and most importantly to their clients, a professional practitioner will apply their skill set, and run their own business affairs, according to their best understanding of professional standards. They will have the courage and strength of character to make themselves the final arbiter of all of these matters and will not pander to, or allow themselves to be swayed by, ideas or expectations of others that fall short of professional standards.
12. Finally a professional practitioner will *profess* all of the above. They will offer (and be free to do so) their skills to the public on a commercial basis. They will issue an open invitation to any member of society to place their interests in the hands of the professional practitioner and the professional will stand fully prepared for all the

responsibilities consequent upon it. By this last act a professional “practices”.

**professional (standard, conduct etc)** *adj.* Appropriate to or representative of a profession.

**professional development** *n.* Training and education undertaken by a person after they have commenced professional practice, with the aims of further specialisation; further improvement of skills and knowledge; or to keep abreast of new developments in theory, practice and technology.

**professional, the** *n.* Colloquially used to refer to a doctor or lawyer or some other English speaker in a setting involving two people for whom *consecutive* interpreting was being performed in the Community Domain.

**rare language** *n.* A language (in a given geographical area), the demand for which is insufficient to provide, by itself, a fulltime living for a single interpreter in that area.

This definition is not established. The word is more often linked to “*emerging*” to denote more crudely, languages for which in practice there is a certain level of demand that *agencies* are not able to service. But a language can clearly be “rare” without being “emerging” and vice versa. Similarly, failure of agencies to meet demand for T&I services can occur in languages that are rare, or emerging, or both, or neither. See “emerging”. There are also a number of other terms, similarly undefined and all seeming to refer to the same thing “new”, “of urgent need”, “of limited diffusion”, “minority” etc

**register** *n.* “A property of discourse that takes into account the nature of the relationships amongst speakers; their socio-cultural level; the subjects treated; and the degree of formality and familiarity selected for a given utterance or text”. (5) Colloquially often described as “level of politeness”. Register is a *pragmatic feature*.

**sector** *n.* In any T&I work a practitioner undertakes, there will be parties involved such as *clients*, *interlocutors*, target readership or author of *SL text*. “Sector” is a loose term referring to the industry in which these parties work, such as health, law etc.

This term is used very loosely and without definition. It seems meaningful to say that an interpreter is working in the health sector, but “law sector” is unnatural. “Industry” is variously a synonym and a subdivision of “sector”.

A sector is not a *domain*, nor is it an *area*, nor is it a *context*.

**semantic set** *n.* A set of terms which in common parlance all seem to be synonymous but which, in a specific context acquire strict and often mutually exclusive meanings, with these distinctions being so specialised or localised that they are not discoverable in any public domain resource, but must be extracted from the people who have first hand knowledge.

This definition is not established.

**sense** *n.* The meaning of a lexical unit distinguished from other meanings of the same lexical unit. (3)

**setting** *n.* A description of the environment where an interpreter works, that specifically addresses all the physical demands that a particular job makes of an interpreter, including number of people and their various roles, seating, sitting and standing arrangements, nature of control exercised over the discourse (i.e. chaired or un-chaired meeting, courtroom etc) presence or absence of acoustic isolation, visibility and sightlines and so on. Many settings are known by name such as “courtroom”. Use of the word “*context*” instead of “setting” is to be avoided (See context and *mode*)

**sight translation** *n.* The act of reading a SL document and producing an oral translation.

**sign** *vi. vt.* 1. The act of communicating in sign language. *n.* A lexeme in sign language, i.e. particular position for the hands.

**simultaneous interpreting** *n.* Mode of interpreting where speech is translated while it is being spoken (usually with a delay of no more than a few seconds). In the case of spoken languages, often performed with the aid of interpreter's booth or some other method of acoustic isolation of interpreter from speaker and listener/s so as not to distract them (see also "*Chuchotage*").

**Skopos theory** *n.* First articulated by Reiss and Vermeer in 1985, it makes functional equivalence more important than formal equivalence (see *editing* above).

That it remains the name of a "theory" suggests that those who developed and teach it are perhaps less familiar with professional practice than they are with *ad hoc* work.

**source language** *n.* The language of the text or utterance that is being translated. Also "SL".

**specialisation** *n.* *Translators*, like any business-people, will naturally derive greatest returns from work with which they have the greatest familiarity (many other factors remaining equal) and so will tend to maximise the amount of work they do of that type, or "specialise". It is a fact that accounts of successful specialisation will be given by practicing translators that nevertheless display the confusion between "*field*", "*setting*", "*mode*" and "*domain*" described above. Specialisation will usually consist of specialisation in a particular combination of these, or of their subdivisions.

**speech** *n.* In this context the *sense* of the word "speech" applied means that it is a non-count noun. It simply refers to oral language production as opposed to the colloquial sense where a person "gives a speech". See *utterance*.

**strict (meaning)** *adj.* Referring to the precise meaning of a word as governed by an internally consistent system of terminology, such as the one you are reading now. Opp. "*Colloquial*".

**style** *n.* Attribute of SL text or speech other than *information*. Including but not limited to lexis; frequency of use and type of figurative language; sentence structure; prosody; rhetorical aims and effects. Style is a *pragmatic effect*. (6)

**subject** *n.* see *field*.

**summarising** *n.* Deliberately incomplete translation of speech or text.

The translation may purport to be the "gist", or those parts of the speech or text that the translator deems on behalf of the person or people for whom they are translating to be important or of interest. But this inevitably obliges the translator to judge things for which they are not trained or qualified, and for which they can therefore not be held to account as a professional practitioner. The practice is therefore questionable, unless of course the client has been duly advised of these issues, and instructs the translator to summarise, at the client's risk.

**T&I** *abbr.* "Translation and Interpreting" used to refer to this industry. Includes *signing*. Also "T/I" and "TI".

**target language** *n.* the language in which the translation is produced. Also "TL".

**terminology** *n.* Colloquially this refers to terms and linguistic units of currency limited to a particular *field*, *area*, *subject*, *sector* or period. Also "Technical terminology", "special terminology", "jargon" etc.

The importance of knowledge of technical terminology is grossly overstated by practitioners, mainly because they have imported, uncritically, the expectation amongst their clientele that this represents a major difficulty in translation. Non-translators do this because it is one of the few difficulties that are visible to non-translators. The expectation is also founded on a lay

definition of “limited currency” which also has no valid basis in linguistics whatsoever, and so is of no use in trying to understand T&I.

**topic** *n.* The most specific way of delineating the matter dealt with in speech or text. A subdivision of “*subject*”. See *field*.

**transcreation** *n.* All translation involves both change and preservation. Changing the language while preserving the business case for have the material translated. The change can be broken down into these stages: complete destruction or at least reduction of the original text or speech into its intention and style and the SL pragmatic effects – all the things by which a person in the SL community would judge there to be a business case. Then, while preserving those things, the translator rebuilds them in the target language.

In the course of their work translators may be involved in the translation of texts whose function is to reach a TL readership or audience that is broad and unknown, for the purposes of commercial promotion, marketing or public education. Such texts will seek to obtain a specific outcome in a sufficiently large number of people to justify the cost of its production and translation, and these are possibly just smaller components of an overall marketing strategy or business plan, so there may in fact be some very large anticipated profits dependent on the outcome.

The mechanisms by which the author (marketing or advertising copy writers) hopes to achieve their goals often rely on the likely reaction in a reader to some idea or stimulus or punchline.

It is however sometimes the case that the basic creative idea or strategy only has meaning or currency within the writer’s own language community or culture. A responsible translator will flag that this is the case and advise that no amount of reduction and rebuilding by them, or for that matter reframing or rewording by the copy writer, will make it possible to achieve the goals, because the underlying mechanism – the creative idea or joke - simply has no currency in the TL community.

Up to that point the translator has simply pointed out what won’t work.

If the translator goes onto to claim that they know what will work, this is called “Transcreation”: the work to develop marketing materials by a SL client in a TL market with the assistance of a translator.

There is nothing inherently wrong with this.

It would be in the interests of both parties to draw a line under the uncompleted translation work, and to enter into a new agreement to provide TL copy writing and other creative services, which are quite different from translation.

It would increase the chances of success if the translator also happens to be a trained and qualified copy writer with the professional standing to take full responsibility for their work. But it is no one else’s business whether these forms of due diligence are in place.

It is sometimes the case that none of these conditions are met, and the term simply provides a convenient escape hatch for a translator to undertake work for which they have no training, qualification or competence, but which seems an attractive evolution because it commands slightly more respect from the client. The attraction is strong in those translators without the knowledge or patience to simply enlighten people as to the true value of translation itself.

Again, that isn’t to say that it will be impossible for them to solve all problems! I’ve solved a few that way too. But there are several potential business ethics pitfalls down the transcreation laneway.

**transfer competence** *n.* all the skills an individual requires to be able to translate other than

fluency and proficiency in the source and target languages. The ability that distinguishes a translator from a bilingual person.

This definition simply describes anecdotally a use to which the expression has been put amongst people of the author's acquaintance. It most closely resembles the usage adopted by Nida and Taber (as described in 4) but is broader, encompassing both the analysis and restructuring stages that they place before and after "transfer".

**translation** *n.* 1. The transfer of meaning from one language to another, whether written, spoken or *signed*; *accurately* reproducing all the *information*, and *faithfully* reproducing the *style, register* and all other *pragmatic effects* of the original, in the translation. (1, 2, 9 etc)

The convention of limiting use of the word "translate" (and its derivatives) to written translation, and "interpret" (and its derivatives) to oral translation, is so well established *within* the T&I industry that many practitioners are unaware of the original and current definition (above) and generally object to exceptions to this usage.

This happens quite often as the convention has very little currency *outside* the industry, e.g. regular reference made in the media to someone speaking "through a translator". For the sake of brevity only however, the word "translate" (and its derivatives) is used throughout this glossary to refer to all modes unless specified. This is only for the sake of brevity however; no argument is hereby put that "translators and interpreters are all the same" and neither is this an argument against broader promotion of the industry usage.

2. The product of translation i.e. the text or speech produced by a translator.

**Translator** *n.* 1. One who translates. 2. One who translates written text. (as opposed to an *interpreter* who translates speech). This sense has currency only among translators. (See above)

**transcription** *n.* **transcribe** *vt.* The recording in writing of electronically recorded speech, in the same language.

**transliteration** *n.* The recording of speech or text that is expressed in one language, in the writing system or system of phonetic notation of another language, reproducing the phonetic characteristics as faithfully as possible, without necessarily reproducing the meaning.

**triage** *n.* the assessment of a large volume of written material in order to identify those parts requiring *translation*, and to allocate priorities in the translation of various parts. Aka "document review".

**utterance** *n.* A section of speech, sometimes correlating to the turns taken in a dialogue. May be delimited for the purposes of consecutive interpreting, or for the purposes of discussion and analysis.

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<sup>i</sup> Chesher et al 1999 in “Community-Based Interpreting Around the World” 1999 “...an insight into this **domain**.”; “Ethics in the Fuzzy **Domain** of Military Interpreting: A 'Military' Perspective." Monacelli Claudia, Roberto Punzo in “The Translator”. ; “...the **domain** of translation studies...” in publishing details of “Translation Studies Abstracts” Published by St. Jerome.; “We report results of applying the method to English-to-Spanish translation in the **domain** of air travel information and English-to-Japanese translation in the **domain** of telephone operator assistance.” abstract of paper on machine translation. 2026 NAATI Directory list of “[Domains](#)” etc

<sup>ii</sup> “Agency” is used here in the broadest possible sense, without necessarily meaning Language Service Provider or Branch of the Government.

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