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Training Interpreters of Languages of Lesser Diffusion in an English-Medium, Non-Language-Specific Interpreting Classroom

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Abstract. This article will outline the training of interpreters working with languages of lesser diffusion in the non-language specific interpreting classroom with English as the medium of instruction at one New Zealand University. The paper will reflect on the findings of previous studies, before turning to the approaches used at the university in question, and reflecting on any remaining challenges. This paper will introduce Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology (LLESTs) as a new term to reflect the difficulty interpreters and translators working with certain languages have in identifying existing equivalent terms for specialist terminology. The author will argue that while Languages of Lesser Diffusion (LLDs) are not necessarily Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology (LLESTs), LLESTs are almost always LLDs and that this requires special attention in the interpreter training setting. The article will discuss the initiative by the New Zealand government to allow practising interpreters to complete a NAATI Endorsed Qualification so as to ensure a more even quality of interpreting in the public service setting. She will provide details on the number of students working with LLDs in the 2024 academic year, while discussing some of the challenges of non-language specific interpreter training at her university, together with some of the approaches, including the use of GoReact for interpreting practice, self-reflection and language-peer feedback.
Keywords. Non-language specific interpreter education, language-peer feedback, language-specific assessment, specialist terminology, health studies for interpreters, Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology.

La formación de intérpretes de lenguas de menor difusión en un aula de interpretación en inglés y no específica por idioma

Resumen. Este trabajo describe la formación de intérpretes de lenguas de menor difusión (LLD) en un aula no específica por idioma, con inglés como medio de instrucción, en una universidad de Nueva Zelanda. Tras una breve síntesis de la bibliografía pertinente previa, el artículo presenta el enfoque didáctico empleado en la institución estudiada y analiza los retos que aún persisten. Se propone, además, el término Lenguas con Menor Terminología Especializada Existente (LLESTs en sus siglas inglesas) para denominar la dificultad que encuentran intérpretes y traductores al identificar equivalencias terminológicas especializadas en determinadas lenguas. Se defiende que, aunque las LLD no son necesariamente LLESTs, las LLESTs sí suelen ser LLD, lo cual requiere una atención específica en los programas de formación. Asimismo, se examina una iniciativa gubernamental neozelandesa que permite a intérpretes en ejercicio cursar una cualificación avalada por NAATI, con el objetivo de homogeneizar la calidad de la interpretación en los servicios públicos. Se presentan datos del curso académico 2024 sobre el número de estudiantes que trabajan con LLD y se debaten los desafíos propios de la formación no específica por idioma, junto con estrategias de aula aplicadas, entre ellas el uso de GoReact para la práctica de interpretación, la autorreflexión y la retroalimentación entre pares lingüísticos.
Palabras clave: Formación de intérpretes no específica por idioma, retroalimentación entre pares lingüísticos, evaluación específica por idioma, terminología especializada, estudios de salud para intérpretes.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 1.1. Languages of Lesser Diffusion. 1.2. Aotearoa New Zealand. 1.3. Interpreter training. 2. Literature review. 2.1. Interpreters working with languages of lesser diffusion. 2.2. Training interpreters in LLDs. 2.3. Non-language specific interpreter education. 3. Method and findings. 4. Discussion and conclusion.

1. Introduction

1.1. Languages of Lesser Diffusion

The increased movement of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers across global borders has greatly expanded the need for language access in an ever widening range of languages, including those sometimes classified as *languages of limited diffusion,* but perhaps better described *as languages of lesser diffusion*. As new communities settle in host countries, service providers increasingly encounter languages for which trained, credentialed interpreters are in short supply. This scarcity reflects longstanding structural challenges: languages with relatively small local speaker populations often lack established proficiency testing, interpreter training programmes, and supporting linguistic resources, resulting in fewer qualified professionals available to meet growing demand. Consequently, institutions such as healthcare services, courts, and asylum systems face significant barriers in ensuring equal access for speakers of these lessresourced languages, underscoring the need for training, and capacitybuilding initiatives. This paper will introduce the term *Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology (LLESTs*) as a new term to reflect the difficulty interpreters and translators working with certain languages have in identifying existing equivalent terms for specialist terminology. The author will argue that while Languages of Lesser Diffusion (LLDs) are not necessarily Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology (LLESTs), LLESTs are almost always LLDs.

1.2. Aotearoa New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand requires interpreting and translation services in over 100 different languages. In New Zealand, the right to language assistance through an interpreter is established in legislation (Enríquez Raído et al. 2020, Crezee et al. 2022). The right to an interpreter in the police and judicial setting is laid down in the (1990) New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (New Zealand legislation 1990), while the right to an interpreter in the healthcare setting is set out in the Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996 (New Zealand legislation 1994). Healthcare interpreter training started at the author's university in 1990, followed by liaison interpreter training in 1997 and legal interpreter education in 1998. The Certificate in Liaison Interpreting, which was first offered in 1997 was inspired by work by Ozolins (1995) and the book by Gentile, Ozolins and Vasilakakos which appeared in 1996 (Gentile et al. 1996). Gentile et al. (1996) described liaison interpreting as a practical, facetoface form of interpreting used in everyday institutional encounters with diverse communities, rather than the highly formalised, boothbased model of conference interpreting. This form of interpreting is often described in other countries as public service interpreting (Gavioli et al. 2023)–or community interpreting (Pöchhacker 2022)—because it takes place in institutional settings such as healthcare, education, social services, and legal contexts, where interpreters enable access to public services for speakers of other languages.

From the onset, interpreter training in Aotearoa New Zealand was delivered through the English language medium, and student cohorts presented a range of languages, including languages of lesser diffusion. Over the years, the most in-demand languages for language assistance services have changed, depending on the numbers of migrants and/or refugees coming in from specific geographical areas. 2024 data from the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment has shown that the most commonly requested languages include Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Arabic and Spanish. However, language services professionals are also needed for languages of lesser diffusion such as Samoan and Tongan, where there are less trained or credentialled interpreters and translators available.

Some of the aforesaid languages are what Roat (C. Roat, pers. comm. February 28, 2025) prefers to refer to as Languages of Lesser Equivalency to English. Roat coined this term to indicate that these are languages where interpreters and translators have to unpack and then paraphrase terms, since they are unable to identify equivalent terminology in those languages (Burn et al. 2020). In her interview with Jo Anna Burn, Samoan interpreter Hoy Neng Wong Soon explains how she addresses some of these challenges (Burn et al. 2020). However, the term Languages of Lesser Equivalency to English seems somewhat English-centric, so it may be better to instead refer to these as Languages with Less Existing Specialised Terminology (LLEST) to indicate the challenges faced by language access professionals working with such languages.

1.3 Interpreter training

It is important, that interpreter trainers make provision for the training of interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion, especially when they have limited specialised terminology. Ideally, tertiary interpreter and translator training providers should provide bilingual trainers so students can discuss and receive feedback on the way they paraphrase specialised terminology, however, this is not always possible. The New Zealand university sector has been under financial constraints since before the COVID-19 pandemic. In the years preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) commenced their Language Assistance Services project (Enríquez Raído et al. 2020; MBIE 2016, 2019, 2024). Following two government surveys the results of which indicated that two-

thirds of those working as interpreters had not received any training, the government decided to set aside funding to increase the number of trained interpreters. In order to ensure more even quality of interpreters the government set aside 6.2 million New Zealand dollars in order to fund practising interpreters through interpreter training programmes leading to qualifications which had been endorsed by the National Authority of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) in Australia NAATI, n.d.). These qualifications are referred to as NAATI Endorsed Qualifications, or NAATI EQs for short. It was hoped that this would ensure that interpreters were NAATI credentialed, either as NAATI Certified Provisional Interpreters following a so-called CPI test, or as NAATI Recognised Practising Interpreters, for languages where no NAATI CPI (Certified Provisional Interpreter) test exists, but where interpreters have successfully completed a NAATI EQ.

This paper will look at a cohort of students working towards a NAATI endorsed qualification in interpreting at one New Zealand university in the academic year 2024, which commenced in February and finished in November 2024. This programme, the AUT Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting[1]). This programme, the AUT Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting} requires students to take four courses: one of these is TRIN603, Interpreter role, ethics and practice, where students use relevant interpreting theory to analyse interpreter role, including cross-cultural considerations In this course they also develop strategies for improvement of own interpreting/shadowing practice through self-analysis and reflection. Very importantly, students also learn to apply an ethical decision-making framework to hypothetical scenarios. In doing so, students use the relevant Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct for interpreters, with spoken-language students referring to the NZSTI (2013) Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct which is based on the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT 2012) code, or the Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand code (SLIANZ 2012). Students also refer to Robyn and Dean's (2011, 2013) context-based ethical reasoning, which divides demands (challenges) into four main categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, paralinguistic and environmental. Students discuss ethical dilemmas sometimes based on their own experiences with references to Code of Ethics principles and Demand-Control Schema. One example would be that of an interpreter with an intense fear of heights having to interpret standing on the glass floor of a revolving restaurant at a great height: such a scenario involves an intrapersonal demand as well as the principles of the code of ethics, such as accurately conveying meaning.

Other courses students can elect to take include Legal Studies for interpreters where students are familiarised with the New Zealand legal system, including procedures, protocols, participants and key terminology and Health Studies for interpreters where students develop a basic knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology of the body and its main organ systems, as well as the meaning of medical terminology and their constituent Greek and Latin roots. In both the legal and health courses, students critically analyse cross-cultural and crosslinguistic issues arising from interpreting in that setting, as well as applying sociocultural, linguistic theory and ethical guidelines to interpreting scenarios. Students must also demonstrate proficiency in interpreting and sight translating a range of legal or health discourses from English to their language and vice versa. Advanced courses in the health and legal setting introduce specialist areas, and develop proficiency in simultaneous and long-consecutive interpreting of longer (300-word) passages. Students are taught interpreting through the English-language medium and practise interpreting between English and their working languages using an interpreter education specific modality called GoReact ™ (see also Section 2.2).

This paper will start with a brief review of the relevant literature, focusing on previous studies describing approaches to training interpreters in Languages of Lesser Diffusion and the advantages and disadvantages of these practices. This will be followed by an outline of the 2024 student cohort and students' working languages at the university in question, as well as the challenges involved in the pedagogical approach. The paper will also present a new term coined to refer to those languages where there are less equivalents for specialist terminology.

2. Literature review

2.1. Interpreters working with languages of lesser diffusion

The increased movement of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers around the world involves the need for language access in a wide range of languages, including languages that may not be spoken by large populations in a particular country or region. Such languages have been referred to by a variety of terms, including Lesser Used Languages (Balogh et al. 2016: 19) Less Translated Languages (ibid.: 19-20) and LLD (ibid: 21-23). Authors such as Roat (2008), Giambruno (2014) and Skaaden & Wadensjö (in Giambruno 2014) have described languages of lesser diffusion as those with smaller populations of speakers *in a specific geographical area* (italics, mine). Recent scholarship and policy documents have sometimes used the terms *languages of limited diffusion* and *languages of lesser diffusion* largely interchangeably to refer to languages with relatively small or geographically concentrated speaker populations and limited institutional support for interpreting, testing, or training. In the United States, professional bodies such as the National Council on Interpreting in Healthcare (NCIHC) define *languages of limited diffusion* as those spoken by comparatively few people in a specific locality and for which interpreter training, proficiency testing, or linguistic resources remain scarce, creating structural challenges for equitable language access (NCIHC, n.d.-a; NCIHC, n.d.-b). Meanwhile, EU legal interpreting initiatives (such as the well-known TraiLLD project) have adopted the term

1 https://www.aut.ac.nz/courses/graduate-certificate-in-arts

languages of lesser diffusion to denote languages that are insufficiently represented in interpreter education, lack written standards or specialised terminology resources, and require tailored approaches within legal and publicservice interpreting systems (Balogh et al. 2016).

Scholars working on translation pedagogy also refer to *languages of low diffusion* to describe contexts where languages are seldom learned as foreign languages and where translation and interpreting into these languages typically involve additional challenges such as indirect translation, the absence of teaching materials, and greater reliance on interpreters' contextual knowledge (Whyatt & Pavlović 2019). These overlapping definitions highlight a central concern across jurisdictions and geographical areas, where languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs) frequently suffer from insufficient interpreter availability, necessitating contingency strategies such as relay interpreting (Mikkelson 1999), and require targeted policy interventions to ensure equitable access in legal, healthcare, and socialservice settings.

The authors (Balogh et al. 2016: 23) list eleven specific traits of LLDs in total, so which are listed with the authors' permission in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Characteristics of LLDs (Balogh et al. 2016: 23).

– An LLD is
– a language that has relatively few speakers in one specific location or geographical area in relation to the population as a whole; Roat (2008), Skaaden & Wadensjö (2014), Giambruno (2014).
– is an isolated language
– has often no official status
– is often a non-standardized, oral language (with minimal written resources);
– is often subject to greater language variation
– is a language in which legal terminology is not always firmly established or may be non-existent
– is a language with which we have little experience and/or contact
– is confronted with a lack of interpreter training resources; no training material, no bilingual trainers combining language and interpreting skills, no facilities for online training, etc.
– is a language where the organizational challenges for interpreter training are significant due to a combination of linguistic factors and context
– is a language for which no university level interpreter training programme is available
– is a language for which few or no accredited interpreters can be found (in a specific geographical area).

Item 6 in Figure 1 refers to the fact that "h legal terminology is not always firmly established or may be non-existent" and this may be true for other specialist terminology as well, including medical terms or concepts related to other public service settings in which interpreters are often required.

2.2. Training interpreters in LLDs

Skaaden and Wadensjö (in Giambruno 2014) discuss some of the challenges involved in training interpreters in LLD, especially in testing bilingual speakers and potential interpreters. They write:

> The particular problem that these languages represent to any testing system is related to the challenge of finding individuals who are qualified to assist in the design and administration of certification processes, and who can serve as assessors in the testing process (2014: 24).

Balogh et al. (2016) list a plethora of other challenges confronting educators wishing to train interpreters in LLD involves, such as a lack of training materials in those languages, a lack of bilingual trainers who possess both interpreter and training skills, a lack of accredited interpreters in a particular geographical area (Balogh et al. 2016: 23). They also state that while interpreters need to possess excellent skills in both their working languages, "there is no simple way to establish a person's bilingual level" (Balogh et al. 2016: 49).

In addition, where LLD speakers are refugees and asylum seekers who have not had access to their home language outside of the family and friendship domain (Fishman 1999), they may be unfamiliar with terminology used in the public service domain. In addition to a lack of training materials in the LLD , there may be a lack of qualified interpreters who could potentially act as interpreter trainers. These issues may be compounded by the fact that LLDs may involve a lot of different regional dialects and variants.

Balogh, Salaets & Van Schoor (2016) present one of the best overviews to date of interpreter training modes for cohorts of LLD speakers. Educators have followed different approaches to the training of interpreters working in LLDs. Given the lack of training materials and language-specific instructors, specific methodologies and programmes are required for LLD interpreter training. Balogh and colleagues (2016) describe and analyse existing strategies in organising interpreter training in their book on the TraiLLD (Training in Languages of Lesser Diffusion) project, in order to test their efficiency, to improve them, and to develop alternative approaches. This includes the approach followed by educators at the Languages Services Section at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the Netherlands.

The interpreter trainers at the ICC have developed a special approach to training in the LLD needed in various steps of the legal process. Since this often involves recruiting interpreters in languages unknown to the instructors, the process starts by firstly identifying speakers who are considered experts in a particular

language, for the purposes of assessment, as well as identifying individuals who would make good interpreters (Zanen 2015). Their assessment of identifying good *potential* interpreters starts with a role-play involving one of the aforesaid language experts in the LLD and a legal practitioner. Balogh and colleagues (2016) describe in detail the approach used by trainers at the Languages Services Section at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the Netherlands:

> One simple strategy is for a trainee interpreter to be read out a document (e.g. a witness statement) in a working language of the court (e.g. French), which the trainee renders into the other training language (e.g. Sango), which is not spoken by the trainer (Balogh et al. 2016: 74-75). [....] Another trainee then interprets the Sango back into French, enabling the trainer to see which parts of the original text were faithfully rendered and which were not. The interpreter trainer will know what errors or omissions occurred between the original utterance and final rendition in French, but crucially not where they occurred – from French into Sango or Sango into French (Balogh et al. 2016: 74-75).

In those cases where there is only a single trainee, this approach could still work if both renditions were recorded and if the trainee were then able to listen back to their own renditions, for instance using GoReact™ (please see Section 4.6 for more detail).

The interpreter trainers at the ICC face constraints in terms of the fact that they have to train interpreters in languages they themselves are not familiar with, and in terms of the relatively short timeframe in which to train trainees for their practice as fully fledged court interpreters. On the other hand, they have a wealth of authentic material at their disposal and help trainees to develop the skills to independently engage in deliberate practice (Balogh et al. 2016: 78, Motta 2016).

2.3. Non-language specific interpreter education

Non-language specific interpreter training programmes (see also Sultanić 2020) are those which aim to teach interpreting skills and competencies that are applicable across multiple languages, rather than focusing on a specific language pair. Such programmes aim to develop knowledge, skills and attributes (NAATI 2016, NAATI n.d.) and ethical principles which apply across languages. Students in non-language-specific interpreter training programmes develop general interpreting competencies—such as listening, memory retention, note-taking, and cultural mediation—before applying them to their working languages in interpreting practice. Knowledge taught may include thematic knowledge (NAATI 2016), such as knowledge of public services, including the health or legal system. Skills taught may reflect competency-based training models (Pöchhacker 2022) and include active listening, technical skills, notetaking, and selfcare. Such programmes are particularly useful for training interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion (LLDs), where language-specific resources and trainers may be scarce, or for training plurilingual student cohorts (see also Blasco Mayor 2020). Crezee (2021) describes some of the challenges of non-language specific healthcare interpreter education involving plurilingual student cohorts, including that of ensuring that students who do not have a same-language peer in the class, receive language-specific feedback on their interpreted renditions outside of the classroom.

3. Method and findings

The method involved an informal retrospective review of challenges of training interpreters in languages of lesser diffusion and Languages with Less Existing Specialised Terminology (LLEST) at a New Zealand university in the academic year 2024. Student numbers were taken from one academic year, starting late February 2024 and finishing mid-November 2024. Information listing the languages students had taken their interpreting exams in and class numbers were analysed to gain an understanding of the languages used by students in different classes. Information on class numbers was available on the Canvas Learning Management System, while information on languages taken for interpreting exam was extracted from the exam schedules, which listed students by name and language.

The challenges outlined in the literature review section will be reflected on in general, with reference to students in the 2024 Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting) courses. These challenges will include: firstly, the lack of same-language peers within the course; secondly, difficulty finding same-language feedback from outside of the course; thirdly, difficulty finding qualified language-assessors; and lastly, providing language-specific materials for LOTE to English interpreting in LLDs including LLESTs.

As outlined previously, the New Zealand government provided funding for practising interpreters who wished to be able to be eligible to apply for a NAATI credential. Between July 2021 and December 2024, interpreters working in a large range of languages took up this opportunity by enrolling in a NAATI Endorsed Qualification. In the academic year 2024, student interpreters working in 27 different languages enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting) at the author's university.

The Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting) offers students a choice of four courses, each with a study load of 150 total learning hours. Classes are taught online using the Microsoft Teams meeting modality, classes are recorded in Panopto, and recordings are then inserted in the relevant Module in the Canvas Learning Management System.

The table in the Appendix shows the choice of courses: all applicants must take Interpreter role, ethics and practice where they learn both about the Code of Ethics (AUSIT 2012, NZSTI 2013) as well as Demand-Control Schema (Dean & Pollard 2011, 2013). The Interpreter role, ethics and practice course does not include any language-specific interpreting testing, but all other courses taught in either Semester 1 or Semester 2 do require students to practise interpreting and sight translation using their working languages.

a. Languages of Lesser Diffusion and Languages with Less Existing Specialised Terminology

In the 2024 academic year, the following languages were identified as languages with less existing specialist terminology: Amharic, Bislama, Dari, Kayah-Karenni, Khmer, Kiribati, Samoan, Sinhala, Tigrigna, Tongan, Tuvaluan. Languages of lesser diffusion, which were also languages with less existing specialised terminology (LLESTs) in the first teaching semester of the year included Amharic, Bislama, Khmer, Dari, Kayah-Karenni; Kiribati, Sinhala, Tigrigna, Tongan and Tuvaluan. LLDs which were also LLESTs in the second teaching semester included Bislama, Kiribati, Samoan and Tuvaluan. It must be noted that it was the students of those languages themselves who reflected on their status as LLESTs in class discussions and in written reflections. Reflective written assignments were part of the assessments for the health studies and legal studies courses, and these assignments allowed students to reflect on special challenges, such as the lack of specialised terminology.

Other languages used by students in the first semester included Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Cantonese, German, French, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese. The focus in this paper will be on students working with the aforesaid LLESTs only, as students working with the other languages were able to access language-specific material through various sources, such as the internet, and language-specific assessors were relatively easy to find.

b. Challenge of obtaining language-specific feedback

Table 1 shows the numbers of students working with a particular language per course. This is important, because students practised interpreting using the GoReact ™ modality and only students in their course had automatic access to their interpreted renditions for feedback purposes. This means that for all those who were soloists in a particular course, it was possible to obtain language-specific feedback, but this required the students to allow same-language peers from outside of the course to access their recorded renditions. Students who had same-language peers in their course only had to send an in-Canvas email to their fellow students to ask them for feedback in GoReact. It will be clear that students who were the only ones working with a particular language in a given course faced two main issues: firstly, they had to try and find people within their own community and/or family who were not only willing, but also able to give them high-level language-specific feedback on their interpreted renditions on a weekly basis. Finally, all interpreted renditions were posted in GoReact, which only students in a particular course had access to. Where students had same-language peers in the same course, those peers could locate the students' work and any self-reflections very easily in GoReact. Where students had to find people who were not enrolled in a given course, they had to find different ways of allowing those people access to their interpreted renditions, for instance by filming their renditions on their smart phones and sharing those recordings with those giving them feedback. In other words, students working with LLDs/LLESTs who did not have a same-language peer in the same course had to jump through several hoops, compared to those who did have same-language peers in the same course.

Table 1. Languages of lesser diffusion within New Zealand and in the 2024 Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting).

Language	Maximum number of students per course	LLD within New Zealand	Demand for language within New Zealand	Ease of finding an independent language assessor (i.e. not known to student)	Presence of Teaching Assistant able to provide language-specific feedback
Amharic	1	Yes	Low	Moderate	No
Arabic	1	No	High	High	Yes
Bahasa Indonesia	1	Yes	Low	Low	No
Bislama	1	Yes	Low	Low	No
Dari	1	Yes	Moderate	Moderate	No
French	1	Yes	Low	High	No
German	1	Yes	Low	High	No
Kayah-Karenni	1	Yes	Low	Low	No
Khmer	1	Yes	Low	Moderate	No
Kiribati	1	Yes	Low	Low	No
Malay	1	Yes	Low	Moderate	No
Russian	3	Yes	Low	High	No
Samoan	2	Yes	High	High	Yes
Sinhala	1	Yes	Low	High	No

Language	Maximum number of students per course	LLD within New Zealand	Demand for language within New Zealand	Ease of finding an independent language assessor (i.e. not known to student)	Presence of Teaching Assistant able to provide language-specific feedback
Tigrigna	1	Yes	Low	Low	No
Tongan	1	Yes	High	High	No
Tuvaluan	1	Yes	Low	Low	No

All students working with the languages outlined in Table 1 were able to find language peers within their networks whose strong language skills allowed them to provide well-informed feedback. Students of LLESTs in the health studies and health interpreting courses listed in Table 1 were often able to find health professionals, usually nurses, who were willing to provide them with feedback. The problem was not so much the lack of suitable people who could give them feedback, but the fact that students felt that they did not want to take advantage of the former. The Russian-speaking students in Table 2 had elected to take different courses as part of the Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting), which meant they did not automatically have access to each other's interpreted renditions recorded in the GoReact part of those courses.

In previous years, students had been able to take a formative interpreting test from English to LOTE (Language Other Than English) and vice versa, which provided them with valuable feedback from language assessors halfway through the semester in preparation for their interpreting exams. In recent years, such formative feedback from language assessor has no longer been available to students due to financial constraints. In light thereof, instructors made it compulsory for students to not only obtain feedback from same-language peers, but also to reflect on this with a view to identifying strengths, weaknesses and strategies for improvement. Students were given a template for reflection to assist them in identifying elements of their interpreting to focus on. This could include, but was not limited to challenges such as 'unfamiliar terminology', 'unable to hear the speaker due to the speaker speaking too fast/mumbling', 'unfamiliar idiomatic or informal expressions', 'lack of familiarity with the context', lack of awareness of the correct terms in the Language Other Than English'.

c. Exams and finding suitably qualified assessors for LLDs

Table 1 also provides an impression of how easy or difficult it was in practice for the programme leader and course leaders to identify a language assessor who was not known to the student, which may be difficult where the community of language speakers is quite small and concentrated in one particular geographical area. In many cases where the programme leader was not able to find suitably qualified assessors within New Zealand, she searched the database of the National Authority of Translators and Interpreters (NAATI, n.d.) in Australia and emailed potential assessors. Some did not respond, in which case she contacted large Language Service Providers in Australia, such as All Graduates, 2M and LanguageLoop (all based in Melbourne, Australia) to see if they might have suitably qualified professionals on their books. Since the time difference between New Zealand and most Australian states (bar Western Australia) is usually two hours, this meant slight adjustments to the exam schedule, as discussed in the next paragraph. Again, some potential assessors did not respond, which made this task quite challenging, however, eventually, suitable assessors were found for all LLESTs and LLDs. This allowed exams for all students working with LLDs to proceed online, involving English-speaking role-players and LLD language experts as assessors.

Since the exams were fully online, in line with NAATI testing, sometimes the search for assessors led to qualified language professionals in students' countries of origin. In such cases, the timing of the exams was discussed with both students and assessors, to take account of the time difference between New Zealand and the other geographical zones. Flexibility was thus a major aspect of finalising the exam schedules to everyone's satisfaction. Fortunately, the fact that the interpreting tests were wholly online (in line with NAATI testing) made it easier for the author to find assessors willing to take part in the exams, and exam schedules were able to be adjusted as needed to account for time differences.

Where the first step involved finding suitably qualified assessors, the second step involved sending them confidentiality agreements, which had to be returned before exam dialogues were emailed out to assessors. Assessors were asked to translate the Language Other Than English (LOTE) part of the exam dialogues and insert it in the dialogues, which were presented in table format. Prior to exam day, students were given their exam time-slots, and a Teams meeting was set up with the English-speaking facilitator cum role-player, the LOTE assessor and the student. This meeting was recorded for moderation purposes, so that, where a student queried their grade, the recording and the marking rubric could be sent to a different assessor.

d. Languages with less existing specialist terminology

Some of the languages in Table 1 were also languages with less existing specialist terminology. These languages are represented in Table 2. The majority of these were languages used in the Pacific, such as Samoan, Tongan, Bislama, Kiribati and Tuvaluan. Students working with these languages were required to unpack terminology in order to accurately paraphrase in their respective languages. Students working with Samoan were fortunate in that they were able to avail themselves of the feedback given by the Samoan

Teaching Assistant, herself a fully qualified Samoan interpreter and translator with many years' experience. This Teaching Assistant was able to assist Samoan-speaking students with concrete examples of how to unpack complex technical and/or medical terms. One example of such unpacking was provided by the Samoan-speaking Teaching Assistant who unpacked the medical term 'malignant plural effusion' as 'there is a lot of fluid in your chest, where your lungs are, due to the seriousness of your lung cancer'. This paraphrase caused the Samoan charge nurse of the oncology ward to give her the big thumbs up. It will be clear that this type of paraphrasing requires an in-depth level of health literacy, as well as the ability to zoom in on the essential elements of a given term, see also Burn and Wong Soon (2020). The Samoan-speaking Teaching Assistant was able to assist the speakers of other LLESTs by providing them with examples of how to unpack particular medical terms in English, and those students said they found this very helpful, as it gave them an indication of how to go about paraphrasing such terms.

Table 2. Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology.

Language	Maximum number of students per course	LLD within New Zealand	Demand for language within New Zealand	Presence of TA* able to provide language-specific feedback
Bislama	1	Yes	Low	no
Kayah-Karenni	1	Yes	Low	no
Khmer	1	Yes	low	no
Kiribati	1	Yes	low	no
Samoan	2	Yes	high	Yes
Tigrigna	1	Yes	low	no
Tongan	1	Yes	high	no
Tuvaluan	1	Yes	low	no

e. Lack of language-specific materials

The lack of language-specific practice materials from Languages Other Than English (LOTEs) to English applied to all interpreting students to a similar extent, including those with languages such as Mandarin and Spanish, where lots of materials are available. However, it did pose a more significant challenge for LOTE to English interpreting in LLESTs and LLDs, since the lecturers found it easier to locate materials in languages they were familiar with. GoReact ™ allows instructors to post YouTube video clips for practice and teaching staff had been able to find, for instance, video clips of health professionals providing information on common health issues such as diabetes in a range of languages on YouTube. However, instructors were not able to search for video clips featuring speakers of languages such as Arabic, Hindi or Chinese, without assistance from speakers of those languages. Locating materials in LLDs and LLESTs posed an even bigger challenge, due to the fact that some of these languages (such as Rohingya[2]) might not exist in written form, or the fact that there was almost no information on YouTube in those languages.

By way of a work-around, students were asked to follow a similar approach to that used by trainers in the Languages Services Section at the International Criminal Court Balogh et al. 2016: 74-75): students are asked to use their own interpreted renditions from English to LOTE to interpret back from LOTE into English. While not wholly satisfactory, due to the fact that students might not have interpreted correctly, this approach did at least allow students to practise interpreting back into English.

In terms of other language-specific training materials, health interpreting students are able to use the various language-specific iterations of the book on Introduction to healthcare for interpreters and translators (Crezee 2013; Crezee et al. 2015, Crezee et al. 2016a, 2016b, 2016c; Crezee et al. 2017; Crezee et al. 2021; Crezee et al. 2022) with their language-specific glossaries in Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Japanese, Russian and Turkish, while legal interpreters working with Chinese and English are referred to the bilingual English-Chinese websites of the Hong Kong judiciary. However, students working with other Languages Other Than English (LOTEs) have to rely on their own research competency (NAATI 2016) to identify suitable resources and to assess their value. While research competency is a skill student interpreters need to develop, in practice some students are better able to find resources than others, while those working with LLDs and LLESTs may find it very difficult to find written resources in their languages.

f. Interpreting practice

There is no doubt that the use of GoReact has been very helpful in delivering non-language specific interpreter education to students working with different languages, including LLDs and LLESTs. GoReact™ allows students to record their renditions, and to play these time-stamped recordings back for the purposes of self-reflection and peer feedback. Instructors can upload audio or audiovisual source material, such as YouTube videos or practice material they themselves have created in mp3 or mp4 format. Students watch and listen,

2 We had had a student working with Rohingya in a previous year, which is why this language is not included in the table.

and audio(visually) record themselves by pressing the record button and enabling their microphones and/or cameras. They can choose to pause the original recording whenever they want, to give themselves time to think about the best rendition. Students can also let the source recording run and attempt to interpret simultaneously. Instructors can set practice so it is for open peer review, which means that student recordings can be accessed by other students working with the same language pair. If students want to reflect on their own or on their peer's recordings, they can simply start to comment, either by text or audio. As soon as students record a comment, the recording will stop, so their comments are time-coded, which makes it clear what the comment related to.

The semi-authentic scripts for legal interpreting are often based on court cases that are currently in the news which have been discussed in the lecture. As an example, several much-publicised Australian and New Zealand homicide cases were used by the lecturer as the basis for practice material in the form of opening and closing addresses by Defence and Prosecution and instructions to the jury by the presiding judge.

Students also practise in the online interactive class which follows the lecture and are able to discuss certain knotty terms with their same-language peers at that point. In addition, they can use the discussion pages on Canvas to discuss certain terms. The instructors keep an eye on these discussion pages and provide clarification where needed. As an example, one dialogue featured a baby who had just undergone a switch surgery, where the aorta and the pulmonary artery are in the incorrect anatomical position and need to be switched over. When students wrote about being unable to understand, let alone paraphrase this in the discussion pages, the instructor posted an animated clip of the surgery. The same dialogue involved a baby who was struggling to breathe with "indrawing of the chest". Following students expressing confusion about the meaning of this "indrawing" the instructor posted a very short clip of a baby with breathing difficulties. Thus, the three elements that assist students of all languages, including LLDs and LLESTs here are: practice in the online interactive class immediately following the online lecture, which enables students to discuss terms with their classmates in real time; students practising in GoReact and self-reflecting, (giving and) receiving language-specific feedback; students using the discussion pages to discuss the unpacking of specific terms, with assistance or input from the instructor in the form of either written explanations or video clips or a combination of both. Obviously, where speakers of LLDs/LLESTs do not have a same language peer in class, the instructors try and connect them with language experts (such as former students, or PhD students who are native speakers of that particular language – where available) and if that is not successful, students try and locate their own language experts. Over the years, some of our Pasifika language students have been able to locate health professionals who were fluent bilinguals and willing to give them feedback on healthcare terms, while Samoan students studying legal interpreting are able to access feedback and mentoring from external Samoan interpreters working in the legal field. However, not every "soloist" who does not have a same language peer in the same course is so fortunate.

g. Intercultural competence

Interpreters must possess intercultural competence (NAATI 2016; Ramirez et al. 2024) in order to be able to achieve pragmatic equivalence as defined by Hale (2014). All students are required to reflect on intercultural issues when they practise interpreting, and in particular when they reflect on interpreting scenarios in which they participated, or which they observed. Instructors provide formative feedback both on student reflections in GoReact ™ and on the reflective assignments which are part of some of the courses of the Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting). In addition, some students take part in an online collaborative learning module with students from other universities in other countries (Rutland et al. 2026) and find this extremely useful in reflecting on what might be inhibitive or prohibitive in their respective cultures. The intercultural competence part of interpreter training does not involve feedback from same-language peers but rather the individual's ability to reflect on intercultural issues. Formative feedback is provided to elicit deeper reflection where required. In this sense, students of all language backgrounds are able to benefit from such reflections, with speakers of LLDs and/or LLESTs able to reflect on culturally appropriate ways to unpack certain legal or medical terms.

4. Discussion and conclusion

This paper has presented a brief overview of the approaches used to the training of interpreters in Languages of Lesser Diffusion, including Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology, at one university in New Zealand. This has included challenges such as difficulty in identifying suitably qualified assessors, appropriate language-specific training materials, and feedback on interpreting practice.

In Aotearoa New Zealand interpreter training has been delivered through the English-language medium since 1990 and initially involved paper materials and cassettes for interpreting practice. Over the years, the author's university has made increasing use of technology, both in terms of learning management systems (currently Canvas) and interpreting practice technologies (currently GoReact ™). However, the challenge of students working with LLDs in general, and those working with LLESTs in particular remains: they are working with lesser resourced languages, where it may be difficult to find specialised terminology in the health and legal setting. It may also be harder for students to find language peers to provide them with in-depth feedback, either in the classroom or outside of it.

In terms of identifying suitably qualified assessors, this challenge can usually be resolved, although it may prove to be very time-consuming, given that the programme leader (who is also the author of this paper) has no specific time allowance for this aspect of her role. To date, the author has always been able to identify

suitably qualified language assessors, helped by the fact that the exams are online, which means assessors no longer have to be physically present at interpreting exams – as used to be the case before 2020. This has allowed her to approach assessors in other countries, and these have mostly included NAATI credentialed assessors resident in Australia rather than in New Zealand. Organising online exams has therefore made it easier to attract language assessors.

Identifying appropriate language-specific training materials is still a major concern, and quite beyond the author and her colleague and teaching assistants to resolve, given the large number of languages spoken by students attending a particular course. In 2024, students working with 27 different languages attended the course and this meant that identifying language-specific material was logistically complex. The use of GoReact ™ has made it easier for students to interpret from their LOTE into English, while also making it easier for students to access language specific feedback on their interpreting practice from individuals outside of the university.

It will be clear that the challenges outlined by Zanen (2015), Skaaden & Wadensjö (in Giambruno 2014) and Balogh, Salaets & Van Schoor (2016) are some way from being resolved at the author's university. And yet, providing only language-specific education in just a small number of languages would result in a lack of New Zealand trained interpreters for speakers of the many community languages who need equal access to health, legal and social services through interpreters. This applies for Languages of Lesser Diffusion in general, but for Languages with Less Existing Specialist Terminology in particular.

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Appendix: Overview of courses in the Graduate Certificate in Arts (Interpreting) in 2024.

Courses	Semester taught in	Pre-requisite/co-requisite
Compulsory course		
Interpreter role, ethics and practice	Semester 1 and 2	none
Elective courses		
Health studies for interpreters	Semester 1	Interpreter role, ethics and practice
Legal studies for interpreters	Semester 1	Interpreter role, ethics and practice
Discourse in remote public service interpreting	Semester 1 and 2	Interpreter role, ethics and practice
Principles and practice of interpreting and translation	Semester 2	none
Advanced health interpreting	Semester 2	Health studies for interpreters