

AUT

A FUTURE IN  
**INTERPRETING  
& TRANSLATION**







## WHAT IS INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION ABOUT?

Imagine trying to make yourself understood when no one knows what you're saying, and yet you desperately need to be understood for legal, health, educational or social purposes?

The role of professional interpreters and translators is to help communication between people who don't have a common language, within settings ranging from dispute tribunals to news conferences, immigration agencies, private businesses and social services.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of how essential it is to have efficient and professional language access services across the country.

Interpreters must convey information with accuracy. They need to be confident within their specialised area, able to control the pace of questions and answers, relay difficulties and sometimes advise of cultural differences. Interpretation is particularly important when clients need complex or detailed information explained, such as rights and obligations, or when they are in stressful or sensitive situations.

Translators render information written in one language into another, usually from their acquired language into their first language. These documents range from degree transcripts, medical records or police clearance certificates for immigration, to divorce certificates, driver licences and fiction.

Are you fluent in English and at least one other language? Do you like to be challenged by the nuances of the written word? Are you capable of dealing with people in stressful situations, such as refugees talking about traumatic life events? Are you interested in helping facilitate communication between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds? Then interpreting and/or translating could be the career option for you!

## OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

### Individual rights

Under the Bill of Rights Act and Human Rights Act, all individuals with limited English have the right to an interpreter when dealing with the law, health service providers and during elections. The courts provide free interpreters for criminal and family cases and disputes tribunals, but not for civil cases.

### New quality certification

The New Zealand Government has embarked on a project to improve the quality and consistency of New Zealand public service interpreting services (court, health, immigration). From 1 July 2024, NAATI certification (National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters), will be a prerequisite for community language interpreters in the New Zealand public sector. Anyone wanting to gain a NAATI certification must complete prerequisite training or a qualification in accordance with the NAATI certification system. AUT's degree and postgraduate qualifications fully prepare interpreters for sitting the NAATI certifications.

### Te reo Māori translators

The growing revitalisation of te reo Māori and recognition of the language as a taonga to be treasured is creating opportunities for translators of te reo Māori in New Zealand. There is also increased opportunity for Pacific language interpreters/translators in New Zealand.

### Pacific freelance interpreters

Very experienced freelance Pacific interpreters/translators can command high rates because there is a scarcity of Pacific interpreters, especially for some of the rarer languages (Tuvaluan, Bislama, Nauru, Tokelauan). There is also high demand for interpreters and translators of the less widely used languages of some refugees.

### Telephone interpreting

Telephone interpreting is growing. Most health boards provide their own telephone interpreting services and NZ Language Line telephone interpreting service is used by over 80 agencies, providing interpreting services in 44 community languages.

Source: Let's Keep Talking Online – Office of Ethnic Affairs, July 2012.

### Western healthcare

Because the Western healthcare model is not necessarily familiar to other cultures, healthcare interpreters need to be very skilled in the use of complex medical terminology, including descriptions of frequently encountered conditions, diagnostic tests and treatment options.

Sources: Let's Keep Talking Online – Office of Ethnic Affairs, July 2012; lecturer and author Dr Ineke Crezee.

### Court interpreting challenges

There are issues in New Zealand courts about a lack of case information provided to interpreters and a call for lawyers and court workers to be better trained in working with interpreters. Sometimes the job involves visiting clients in prisons as well as being in court.

### Translation opportunities

Translators have the opportunity to work from their home base for clients around the world once they have established good (inter)national networks – but it can take time.

## COMPLEXITY OF INTERPRETING AND TRANSLATION

Interpreters and translators need very high levels of bilingual (or multilingual) proficiency to be able to faithfully convey the intent of the speaker or writer, including all nuances of register and underlying meaning.

The interpreter's role is to facilitate communication while maintaining professional boundaries and a normal pace of conversation. They are often performing under pressure, to deadlines or in front of audiences, such as courts.

Both interpreters and translators often wrestle with languages with different word order (eg Korean), underlying meaning and the lack of equivalent phrases or words. Both roles require cultural sensitivity, while interpreters also need efficient note taking and excellent memory retention skills.

## WORK OPTIONS AND SETTINGS

### Interpreters

Interpreters are often self-employed and can work everywhere, including police stations, courtrooms, dispute tribunals, airports, refugee centres, hospitals, medical centres and Government departments (eg Immigration NZ, Customs and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment [MBIE] etc).

Most employers require graduates to have a graduate certificate or graduate diploma or degree in interpreting with a B/B+ average (as proof they have completed health and legal interpreting courses).

Interpreters' main tool is a smart phone (most bookings are made by email or text). They also need excellent knowledge of health and legal settings, depending on their specialty.

While a growing number of interpreting jobs are completed over the phone, police interpreting must be carried out at the police station for safety and confidentiality reasons.

It is important graduates accept a range of assignments initially to develop a reputation for being hard working and available.

### Translation

Translators are often self-employed or work by contract for translation agencies, export/import companies, Immigration and NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) requiring translation for official purposes. Translators usually work from their own office or home, although translation for the Police, must be done at police stations.

NZQA and MBIE only accept translations from full members of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI).

While based in New Zealand, translators could be translating for organisations anywhere in the world. It takes time to build up a comprehensive client base.



## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Interpreters and translators need a deep understanding of the language and cultural systems involved. They also need:

- Local cultural advice ('localisation') is needed to ensure any language that is too colloquial or has an inappropriate meaning is rendered appropriately, eg Mitsubishi had to change a car name for the South American market because it had derogatory connotations in Spanish
- The ability to be impartial and keep confidentiality
- Excellent linguistic and communication skills in at least two languages
- In-depth understanding of subject matter and terminology
- Recognition of different ways of conveying meaning
- A strong understanding of at least two cultures
- A good educational background to assist in dealing with a variety of subjects
- A commitment to always uphold the code of ethics



## PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Good listening and memory skills
- Calm and not easily frustrated
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Very empathetic
- An eye for detail
- Capability to make split second decisions

## THE AUT ADVANTAGE

The Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Interpreting and/or Translation prepares graduates well for interpreting and translating roles in medical, legal and business settings with NAATI endorsed qualifications (required for all public service work).

Students can also select electives or minors, including translation, language teaching, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, NZ Sign Language and Deaf Studies. A number of students take a major in Interpreting and a minor in Translation to expand their career options. International Studies is another useful major.

In their final year, students complete a co-operative work placement (co-op) of at least 150 hours, putting their skills and theoretical knowledge into practice in the workplace.

## SALARY GUIDE

Interpreting pay rates can vary widely, from \$40-\$140 per hour, according to demand for a particular language. Pay rates are usually highest for those working with Te Reo Māori or Pacific languages. Below are rates for specific sectors.

Interpreting	Salary
Court interpreting	\$35 per hour minimum (daytime rates) in Auckland; always minimum of three hours
Interpreting for MBIE	\$40 per hour
Healthcare interpreting	\$30 per hour upwards during daytime hours; \$36-\$38 per hour for people with postgraduate qualifications that include medical interpreting papers
Telephone interpreting (Connecting Now)	\$60.60 an hour per business hours/\$84 an hour after hours
Video interpreting (Connecting Now)	\$56 an hour within business hours/\$75 per hour after hours

Translation	Salary
Te Reo Māori	60c per word
Pacific languages	40c minimum per word
Standard text	20c per word. Word rate higher if language requires a different script or limited lexicon, specialised terminology (legal, medical) or if the translation is urgent.

Sources: Counties Manukau DHB interpreting service, Department of Justice (Auckland), Ministry of Business, Innovation and Enterprise (MBIE), Connecting Now.

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (mid-2022) and should only be used as a guideline.

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

All interpreters working in public service settings must be NAATI certified. Attaining a NAATI credential is highly recommended for both interpreters and translators, as this will hugely increase employment opportunities. AUT thoroughly prepares interpreters and translators with its four NAATI endorsed qualifications.

## FURTHER STUDY OPTIONS

Graduates with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Interpreting and/or Translation can enter further study at postgraduate certificate or diploma level, or continue into master's study. Master of Language and Culture, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy. Research areas include police and court interpreting, telephone interpreting and health interpreting.



A portrait of Hoy Neng Wong Soon, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a red button-down shirt over a white and red striped shirt. She has a pink and white flower tucked behind her ear. The background is a lush green tree with large leaves.

## HOY NENG WONG SOON

Interpreter contractor for health and legal agencies

Graduate Diploma in Arts in Interpreting

Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences, HR & Employment Relations

Master of Health Science

PhD student

"I am Samoan and I am an interpreter and translator (health and legal) for multiple organisations. I spend a lot of time in health settings such as hospitals and smaller clinics. I see my role as assisting our people to navigate our health and legal systems in Auckland, so people are not in the dark about what is happening to them or their loved ones.

I get to meet amazing people from our community; not only health professionals but the patients, their families and support people.

During the day I am often interpreting or doing sight translation for patients and their families in pre-surgery situations and outpatient clinics. This includes sight translating informed consent documents which involves reading and explaining consent forms to the patient and their loved ones in front of the medical/health team, then asking the patient and family members if they understand before they sign.

I have been privileged to interpret in a legal setting at parole hearings for psychiatric prisoners. I sometimes interpret for psychiatrists and psychologists during their consultations and can hear difficult stories, but I've learned to detach. It is one of the skills needed in our job.

There are some practical challenges in this role. The main one is distance and travel; it can be challenging trying to get from one clinic on the North Shore to another in West Auckland, or try to beat traffic when driving to Greenlane for an appointment.

I find my interpreting and translation skills add value with two other roles I have undertaken – Pacific Islands Families Study research and project manager and Vaccine Trust Programme project manager. I sight translate research material for our Samoan people in accordance with AUT's ethic review committee's standards – this helps our community and researchers a lot.

It is a great job. I enjoy bridging the language barrier for my community by using my interpreting and translating skills and knowledge."



## USEFUL WEBSITES

**New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters**  
<https://www.nzsti.org>

**Interpreting NZ**  
<https://interpret.org.nz/become-an-interpreter.html>

**Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment**  
[www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz)

**Ethnic Communities – promoting the advantages of ethnic diversity in NZ**  
[www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz](http://www.ethniccommunities.govt.nz)

## FURTHER INFORMATION


For the most up-to-date information on interpreting and translation study and the BA, visit  
[www.aut.ac.nz/interpreting-translation](http://www.aut.ac.nz/interpreting-translation)

For other Future Career Sheets visit  
[www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets](http://www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets)


### EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through  
<https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>

### FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information:  
[www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire)  
[futurestudents@aut.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@aut.ac.nz)  
 @AUTFutureStudents





### CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information:  
0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://www.aut.ac.nz/enquire)  
[studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz)  
 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

### CITY CAMPUS

55 Wellesley Street East, Auckland Central

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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, mid-2022.

