

Editorial

Looking after the mental and emotional health of interpreters

Interpreters are regularly engaged in difficult assignments that are charged with emotions and trauma. For instance, refugees who have left war zones would carry a level of trauma that interpreters will find difficult to disconnect from during and after their assignments. This is called vicarious trauma and interpreters need support to be able to deal with these issues.

In-Trans, a language service provider from Aberdeen, has gone the extra mile to support their interpreters with vicarious and secondary trauma. They have engaged the guidance of Dr Beverly Costa to create [Reflective Practice Groups](#). In this issue, we will hear about this project from the three perspectives: the trainer (Dr Beverley Costa), the trainee (Marina Burgess) and the commissioning organisation (the Language Service Provider In-Trans).

When interpreters are required for emotionally charged assignments to support professionals such as social workers, psychologists, police officers, etc., it can be very helpful for the interpreter to be briefed before the session starts, and also debriefed at the end. It makes sense to allow for this extra time at both ends of the assignment and everyone would certainly benefit from it.

Translations can also involve trauma. Dr Charlotte Bosseaux at the University of Edinburgh has been researching the ethical demands of translating trauma and gender-based violence. Along with her team, she is organising the 4th edition of the [Whose Voice is it Anyway](#) series, which will take place on Thursday 23rd of February in Edinburgh (and online) with a focus on ethical challenges in both translation and interpreting settings.

This newsletter would not be complete without an update on the work the Academy has been doing. We have been busy with the plans for the creation of a directory of qualified interpreters in Scotland, and we have reached a stage where we can expect the website work to start soon. Stay tuned.

How can you help us?

*Please helps us spread the message
by sharing this newsletter. Thank you!*



Ricky Mateus

Interpreting Academy Chair

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Directory of Qualified Interpreters

A decision has been made

Since 2018, a group of interpreters in Scotland has been working on plans to create a Scottish Register of Interpreters. After many discussions, it became clear that this would be a very laborious and expensive organisation to set up and maintain, not to mention the cost involved for interpreters as it would require high annual registration fees. Calling it a Register would also create confusion and raise the wrong expectations. The future public register of qualified interpreters will instead be called a *Directory of Qualified Interpreters*. The NRPSI ([National Register of Public Sector Interpreters](#)) will remain the only volunteer regulator in the UK for spoken languages.



Edinburgh, Scotland

Why create a *Directory of Qualified Interpreters*?

The Academy will create a public directory of qualified and vetted interpreters, which will allow any client of interpreting services to quickly check if the interpreter they intend to engage is qualified or not. Initially, this new directory will only apply to interpreters based in Scotland.

A necessary top up

This directory will provide extra jobs for qualified interpreters. In order to achieve this objective, the directory vetting process needs to be robust thus ensuring that private clients who wish to engage directly with a qualified interpreter can feel reassured that all necessary checks have been done. We also need a well thought out marketing strategy to advertise the directory. It is important that qualified interpreters are offered these extra direct jobs to top up their income. This will also act as a motivator for other interpreters to gain an interpreting qualification whilst helping to keep existing qualified and experienced interpreters in the industry.

Focus groups

The Academy has been engaged with some qualified interpreters to hear their views regarding the future directory. We are close to have a final draft to engage with website developers.

Website development

We are making sure that we have the right structure in place before the website is actually built, in order to keep costs on check. The Academy has received a small grant to begin building the website, which will help us to get started. There will be further updates in the next newsletter in April 2023.

Self-sustaining reflective support for interpreters: training interpreter-facilitators to do it for themselves

By Dr Beverley Costa

REACTMe project

This article is an adapted extract from the upcoming chapter by Beverley Costa on Reflective Support groups as part of the REACTMe project <http://reactme.net/home> . For further information about the chapter please contact Beverley Costa directly beverley@pasaloproject.org

1. Why?

Recharging the battery

A mobile phone connects us to each other. Once its battery goes flat it needs to be recharged or it won't be connecting anyone at all. The battery charger is one element which keeps the phone alive so it can continue to connect people. Interpreters also connect people together. But the cognitive and emotional load of the effort can make them go flat. Without some form of recharging how can interpreters restore, revive, refresh or repair themselves?

Everyone knows about the emotional toll on professions such as nurses (Li et al 2014). That toll is increasing. The Nursing Times (2022) reported that more than 27,000 NHS workers voluntarily resigned from the NHS from July to September 2021, the highest number on record. Less well known is the serious impact on interpreters who work in health and social care and other sensitive settings and who frequently have to deal with emotionally and ethically conflicting demands (Doherty, 2010; Boyles and Talbot, 2017; Costa, 2020; Hubscher-Davidson, 2020).

Interpreters do a herculean job of managing their feelings in the moment. However, this often means that they do not have an opportunity to process those emotions. Practitioners can treat interpreters like objects. Interpreters, in turn, may internalise this objectification and regard the pushing down of emotions as part and parcel of their job, to be endured as if they were a piece of the furniture. Even if that were possible, it is counterproductive. Unprocessed emotions become lodged in the psyche. They continue to haunt us. The incremental effect of emotions being lodged and left unprocessed can have repercussions over days, weeks, and even years. And they can suddenly reappear when you least expect them. They can wear us out.

Empathic engagement may cause helpers to burnout (Harvey, 2003; Rothschild, 2007). Gieling et.al (2022) report on the results from 164 participants who responded to a survey about the psychological distress and trauma exposure related to working in refugee care in Germany. The researchers recommended that employers and interpreting agencies should offer supervision for interpreters in refugee care as well as in other sensitive contexts.

2. What?

Ongoing self-sustaining reflective support

Support and supervision for interpreters who work in sensitive contexts is regularly recommended but, sadly, in present day practice it is seldom seen as a priority. However, recently a support offering has been trialled with interpreters, called Reflective Practice Support (RPS) groups. RPS groups are similar to the type of clinical supervision that healthcare workers frequently receive. Framing supportive reflective practice as continuous professional development may make its purpose clearer if this is a new experience for interpreters.

Support with difficult feelings is helpful. It allows us to feel connected, not alone with these feelings. But support that helps us understand our feelings is important as well as useful, because the feelings hold useful information. The feelings and emotional reactions can tell us things we might miss otherwise. Although counselling or psychotherapy can be useful for individual personal healing and growth, support for one's occupation can often be more usefully delivered by what is called clinical supervision, or reflective practice support (RPS), which is run by a trained facilitator. RPS provides an opportunity, and a safe and confidential space, to process emotions and to help to make sense of them so that we make good decisions in the moment. Donald Schön (1983) calls this 'reflection-in-action'.

For interpreters, who frequently work in isolation, a group format may be very welcome as a form of support as well as the chance to learn from each other. The RPS groups meet once a month. The commitment to ongoing support is important. This is about ongoing self/group care even when things seem to be going OK. Because "going OK" doesn't always accurately represent the incremental effect of unprocessed emotions. Reflective support is not about a quick fix for a crisis. It is about being there for your colleagues as well as being there for yourself.

In the reflective groups participants discuss professional situations, unprocessed feelings and ethical dilemmas, as the group needs. The conversations are based on a model of reflective practice which considers what we know, (through our felt sense as well as through our cognition) and why we know it.

3. How?

Interpreters doing it for themselves

Supervision and RPS groups for interpreters have tended to be facilitated by clinicians such as psychological therapists. To facilitate RPS groups clearly requires sensitivity, skills and awareness of the ethical challenges of personal and professional development work. But designating the position of facilitator of interpreters' support interventions to clinicians maintains the power dynamic and the hierarchical structure of interpreter-mediated healthcare where interpreters occupy a passive position with limited agency. Training interpreters to facilitate the groups, gives the agency back to the interpreting profession. But the circle of support doesn't stop there. Once trained, interpreter-facilitators are also expected to continue with supervision of their facilitation. Facilitators continue to learn, to develop and to be nurtured so that they can give ongoing support.

A training programme for interpreter-facilitators has recently been developed by the Pásalo Project www.pasaloproject.org. It has been trialled with a small number of interpreter organisations, one of which is In-trans at GREC, in Aberdeen. Five interpreter-facilitators have completed the course and a Reflective Practice Support group is now offered to the new interpreters who have been recruited to support Ukrainian recent arrivals to Aberdeen. Marina Burgess, a "graduate" interpreter-facilitator, will share her thoughts and experiences about the training programme in the following article.

Trained interpreter-facilitators are like the battery charger which is designed specifically for a mobile phone. They help interpreters to recharge their emotional and cognitive batteries. But unlike the mobile phone's reliance on the external battery charger, interpreters are doing it for themselves.

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Dr Beverley Costa

Beverley Costa grew up in a multilingual and cross-cultural family. After qualifying as a psychotherapist, she set up Mothertongue multi-ethnic counselling service (2000-2018). In 2009 she created a mental health interpreter service and in 2017 she set up The Pásalo Project www.pasaloproject.org to disseminate learning from Mothertongue. Her book *Other Tongues - psychological therapies in a multilingual world* was published in 2020: beverley@pasaloproject.org

The Interpreter as a Reflective Practice Group Facilitator: The GREC Initiative

By Marina Burgess, DPSI / MCIL

The perspective from a reflective practice facilitator

This article recounts the initiative of the Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) to enable a number of interpreters working on a self-employed basis for the GREC In-Trans interpreting service to undertake training as reflective practice facilitators and to establish a programme of Reflective Practice (RP) sessions for other interpreters. I should particularly like to thank Rosilda Panoni, In-Trans Coordinator, for her enthusiastic and ongoing support of this project and the interpreters involved.

1. The Problem

As Public Service interpreters, we interact with a number of different services: medical, legal, social, and so on. Some of the practitioners in these services often have little understanding of how to work with interpreters. My own twenty-odd years of working as a public service interpreter had involved going through sometimes very traumatic interpreting assignments, exacerbated by constantly having to speak in the first person. I had repeatedly tried to find answers as to how to cope, while finding no exit to my emotional fatigue as everything we experience as an interpreter is confidential.

Support systems may or may not be available for public bodies professionals, but in their work these professionals are at least part of a team. We interpreters, as a rule, work in isolation from each other, and quite often I have been left with the feeling that I do not belong anywhere. The paradox is that interpreters connect people, however we often find ourselves in the position of being “the odd one out”. Your fellow interpreters know best where you are coming from and can relate to you. We had collected so many difficult memories over the years with no support available and it was generally felt that now it was time to talk and support each other. My training to be an interpreter-facilitator taught me how to do this.

Over a number of years, GREC had organised various meetings for interpreters during which the participants talked about challenges that public service interpreters may experience on their assignments. In these meetings, interpreters had brought up various issues such as feelings of isolation, burnout, lack of security and secondary trauma related to their assignments. The idea of a more formal approach to cope with these issues was floated, and in 2022 an apprenticeship programme, supported by GREC, was established. This was aimed at training a group of interpreters as facilitators who would then subsequently run reflective practice sessions for other interpreters, and I was one of the participants. Right from the beginning, for me, the important thing about my training was that this would be something that interpreters could do for the benefit of other interpreters.

2. The Training

Five interpreters completed the training over several months. This training was developed and delivered by Dr Beverley Costa (www.pasaloproject.org), who has written a companion piece for this Newsletter. The training started in January 2022. Beverley led us through the whole process from the very beginning, and the first tip she gave us was to start with an open mind.

I think it would be fair to say that none of us had very much idea of what was in front of us. Reflective Practice is a completely new concept for most interpreters. Discovering what it means was one of the first things we learned. It is not a therapy, but it is not just a social chat either. It has its ground rules, sequence and structure, and the group must have a working agreement.

During the first two days we were introduced to the apprenticeship model for facilitating reflective and supportive supervision. The clearly structured training sessions covered the purposes of Reflective Practice, intelligent empathy, how to receive and give feedback, and much more. We observed, listened, shared, deconstructed and reconstructed Reflective Practice facilitation.

Between January and March, we did homework which gave us the opportunity to experience what it felt like to be a listener, and what it felt like to be a sharer. In our March session with Beverley, we practised, step by step, how to be a group facilitator.

After day 3 of the training, between March and the end of June, we had further sessions as group facilitators, just with the course participants. It was a really good opportunity for each of us to practise as facilitators. Each practice session was followed by a feedback session with Beverley. These sessions provided an opportunity to exchange insights honestly about how we had done as facilitators and to hear from the rest of the participants in the group.

As a group, we had many, many questions about how to plan for contingencies:

What if no-one wants to bring anything up? What if too many people want to share? Or what if you are running out of time? Of course, it is not possible to foresee all scenarios. But, it is important to be aware what kinds of contingencies there can be. The three practice sessions when we had a chance to be facilitators, allowed us to see that unexpected things can happen even in a small group when you are not expecting anything challenging to be happening at all.

Beverley repeatedly stressed how important it is to keep to time and how to deal with this issue. She provided a number of tips on finding solutions to prevent things getting out of control. As a facilitator, you ask the participants to be mindful of the time and it is your job to set the time boundaries very clearly. This has to be part of the working agreement.

From having “no idea at all”, we gradually arrived at the discovery that we are able to be an interpreter-facilitator as a result of this journey.

3. Putting all of this into practice

The facilitator is responsible for making sure that the session is a place of safety. Everyone plays a part in this responsibility. In order to feel safe, the participants have to respect each other and remember that people have different opinions. They are not there to be judged but to support each other.

It is a privileged position for the facilitator, who can thereby provide a safe space for reflection and continuous learning. Mutual trust, respect and being non-judgemental are the essential building blocks of that safe space. Part of this trust is confidentiality, and one of the ground rules is: “What’s said here, stays here.”

Reflective Practice may provide the support an interpreter needs, and you will have played a positive role in it as the facilitator. For example:

- the session may have helped you let go of a difficult memory
- you may have been able to share your experience with people who understand you in a safe environment (as far as confidentiality allows you to, of course)
- someone in a group may have given you a tip for a future assignment which you would not have known how to handle otherwise.

My first ever Reflective Practice session as a facilitator took place in July 2022 for a group of interpreters involved with Ukrainian refugees. Based on their feedback, 100% of the participants asked for further sessions. They commented they felt *inter alia*, “understood”, “validated”, “relieved”, “acknowledged”, and “connected”. This is how I had felt going through the training myself, when I was able to share my experiences with my colleagues and listen to their stories.

After completing the training, and having started to hold my own Reflective Practice sessions in my role as a facilitator, I firmly believe that every agency providing public service interpreting should run Reflective Practice support groups. The value of this has been acknowledged within GREC through the support and encouragement we are continuing to receive. It has also been recognised more widely within the NHS. There is now a modest budget from “NHS Grampian Endowment Fund Community Grants” to enable this pilot project to continue and develop. Within the framework of our work, more groups of interpreters have been supported through Reflective Practice by five facilitators from the end of September 2022. The NHS funding aims to support people to manage their own wellbeing. Specifically, the funding is to enable community interpreters to feel more confident and have the resources to better support themselves and each other (through peer networks) so that they feel less isolated than hitherto. It further aims at enabling community interpreters to feel more confident to discuss mental health issues, including within their wider community of contacts.

We are hopeful that this initiative will continue to thrive and to be supported, financially and otherwise, in the future.



Marina Burgess, DPSI / MCIL

A Russian native speaker, Marina Burgess studied English and German at university. She worked as a language teacher and interpreter in Russia, Hungary and the UK, mainly in the fields of commerce and politics. Since moving to the UK, she has specialised in commercial, legal, and medical translation. She is a longstanding DPSI / MCIL registered interpreter. She can be reached via m.burgess20@outlook.com.

Developing supportive practices to mitigate interpreters' secondary trauma in North East Scotland

By Rosilda Panoni, In-Trans Co-ordinator

A pilot project

In-Trans is an interpreting and translation service provider based in Aberdeen. In-Trans has been working with the Pásalo Project to develop and pilot supportive, peer-led mechanisms with freelance interpreters and translators in the Grampian region.

In-Trans

[In-Trans](#) was established in 2003 to support individuals accessing NHS Grampian health services. Since then, the service has developed, and it is now serving a wide range of sectors and organisations. In-Trans is part of [GREC](#) (Grampian Regional Equality Council) and aims to provide the best possible language support for people in the community. We recognise that an important stage of supporting those whose first language is not English, is to help people to overcome language barriers.



We invest in people of our community and help them to improve and achieve their full potential. Our interpreters and translators are highly dedicated and committed to continuous development.

Trauma Survivors

For In-Trans-GREC, interpreters play a critical role in provision for trauma survivors. When dealing with the increasing number of resettled people, refugees, and people seeking asylum in the last few years, we realise how often interpreters are exposed to secondary and vicarious trauma. In general, very little support is provided by the agencies regarding the mental health of the interpreter.

The duty of care towards interpreters

Although interpreters are self-employed and normally advised to look for independent support, GREC acknowledges its duty to help and guide them in the development of good practices. We want our interpreters to reach for the support they need to carry out their duties in a healthy way.

The idea behind the Reflective Support Group was born from the conversation about the duty of care where interpreters acknowledged the challenge of the appointments they attend with service providers and users.

The feeling of isolation and lack of security

Before the pandemic, NHS Grampian funded GREC to deliver four sessions exploring the mental health issues linked to challenging interpreting appointments. The sessions were open to all GREC interpreters and run with the support of highly-experienced GREC counsellors Tuck-Chee Phung and Riitta Jutila. Between November 2019 and February 2020 these sessions allowed GREC to gather a lot of information on how the interpreters felt during their assignments and how they responded to the demands of their job. The feeling of isolation and lack of security were the most significant issues brought up by interpreters.

Finding ways to support interpreters

Based on the information collected, Tuck-Chee and Riitta explored ways to support the interpreters, including the creation of a Reflective Support Group.

Exposure of our interpreters to secondary and vicarious trauma

Unfortunately, the start of the pandemic meant that the last two planned workshops could not go ahead. The pandemic also caused an increase in the number of requests from interpreters to attend mental health and counselling appointments, and this number further increased during the most recent arrivals of “New Scots” (refugees and people seeking asylum) in the city. All these cases exposed our interpreters to secondary and vicarious trauma.

All these issues combined, made us reflect on how interpreters were managing the challenges they faced and how we could help to support them to prevent secondary trauma. Unfortunately, very little support is available to cope with the issues and challenges faced by interpreters in Scotland. After some research, we came across Dr Beverley Costa, her publications, and books, as well as the Pásalo Project.

Training session delivered by Dr Beverley Costa:

The stresses and strengths of triangles – interpreter-mediated therapy

We realised how vital it was to make sure interpreters were well supported during their assignments. This meant, among other things, acknowledging their struggles and working side-by-side to overcome problems arising during the interpreting sessions. We wanted to keep our interpreters mentally healthy and well-motivated. Thus, in June 2021, we contacted Dr Costa and organised a training session with her entitled “The stresses and strengths of triangles – interpreter-mediated therapy”. From here we started a conversation and planned an apprenticeship to create effective reflective support groups.

Apprenticeship Programme

Eight candidates were selected to attend the apprenticeship programme. All the candidates had a diploma in public interpreting and several years of experience as interpreters in the medical and social settings. This initial group completed a programme of four fully-immersive days. At the end, five candidates were ready to start delivering the Reflective Support sessions to their peers.

Reducing loneliness and increasing solidarity among interpreters

In June 2022, our first group started attending the Reflective Support Group. Initially, it included Ukrainian and Russian interpreters. A session was provided every month. The feedback from the interpreters and the facilitator of the session was very positive. The facilitator was able to create a safe space, where interpreters could freely talk about their experiences and feelings during the assignments and receive advice from their peers on how to overcome the issues. These sessions were extremely helpful to contrasting the feeling of loneliness and to create a strong sense of solidarity among the interpreters. The feeling of being taken care by the agency they represent was also growing.

Support groups

In September we created two new groups to support even more interpreters during their journey. From this initiative, GREC hopes to open the opportunity to discuss and support interpreters in delivering their services to the community while preventing secondary trauma.

The impact of professional interpreting in community services

We believe that initiatives like these are essential to change the perception of service providers about professional interpreters and to acknowledge the role of the interpreter as a facilitator when delivering services to the community. We hope our initiative is a significant step towards a proper professional recognition of interpreters in community services.



Rosilda Panoni, In-Trans Coordinator

Rosilda Panoni, also known as Rosie, holds a degree in Business Administration and possesses a strong passion for language. Since 2014, she has been employed as the In-Trans Coordinator for [Grampian REC Ltd](#), located at 680 King Street in Aberdeen. Throughout her tenure, Rosie has worked tirelessly with a talented team of interpreters and translators to deliver exceptional language support services to the Grampian region, thereby elevating the standards and quality of the language support sector. Those interested in reaching out to her may do so through her email address in-trans@grec.co.uk

Whose Voice is it Anyway?

An event reflecting on ethical challenges in a translation and interpreting context



WHOSE VOICE IS IT ANYWAY?

Reflecting on ethical challenges in a translation and interpreting context.

University of Edinburgh

Project Room, 50 George Square
Edinburgh EH8 9LH

23 February, 3.30-8.15pm

Free - ticketed



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

The 4th edition in the *Whose Voice is it Anyway?* series will be held in Edinburgh (and online) on Thursday 23rd February and will be dedicated to reflecting on ethical challenges in a translation and interpreting contexts.

This event brings together translation scholars and language professionals working in various fields such as literary translation, community interpreting, subtitling and medical translation with different language pairs, including Chinese, Italian, Polish, French and English.

Speakers

Speakers include **Rebecca Tipton** on ethical challenges in interpreting situations, **Charlotte Bosseaux** on ethical issues when subtitling trauma and Gender-Based Violence and **Hephzibah Israel** on ethical dilemmas when translating in the religious context. Their talks will be followed by a round table chaired by **Kari Dickson** with language professionals - **Esther Tyldesley, Denise Muir, Catherine Roux, Raquel Dou and Alicja Tokarska** - who will share their experience of the different ethical issues they have faced in their professional lives.

Event details

Title	Whose Voice is it Anyway?
Date	Thursday, 23rd February 2023
Times	The event will start at 3.30pm and will be followed by a reception (6.45-8.15pm).
Location	University of Edinburgh, Project room, 50 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LH
Cost	Free event, but you need to register.
Register here	https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/whose-voice-is-it-anyway-tickets-510101345857
Livestream	If you are not able to join in person they will also livestream the event on their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/ethicaltranslation/

Research

Dr Charlotte Bosseaux is one of the speakers and the main event organiser. Charlotte is currently leading a research project on the [ethical demands of translating trauma and gender-based violence](#). Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a global pandemic with United Nations figures indicating that 1 in 3 women will suffer GBV in her life. This statistic sheds light on a disturbing escalation worldwide created by the social effects of COVID 19 and the refugee crisis in Europe. Beyond those statistics are human beings, survivors, whose stories Dr Charlotte Bosseaux explores in a multilingual documentary. Charlotte's project focuses on testimonies told by women who have suffered trauma, as she is interested in the ethical role played by translation when transmitting the experience of survivors and in the way translators cope with the translation of challenging sensitive material. The project's primary goals are to establish which translation methods and techniques are the most ethical when translating sensitive and challenging audiovisual personal narratives, and to provide good practice guidelines for translators, translation companies, filmmakers and charities.



Dr Charlotte Bosseaux

A Senior Lecturer in Translation Studies at the [University of Edinburgh](#). She has wide experience teaching in all areas of Translation Studies in the UK and abroad, and has presented her research at various conferences worldwide.

Chartered Institute of Linguists DPSI

DPSI in English Law

extra session in March 2023

Registration for the March 2023 Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) extra session of the DPSI is now open. This session has been added in response to candidate demand and demand from Police and the Ministry of Justice, in the DPSI English Law pathway only. This session is offered on a 'first come, first served' basis for the most in-demand languages of: **Arabic, Cantonese (Traditional), Farsi, French, Italian, Mandarin (Simplified & Traditional), Polish, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Urdu**. The number of candidates CIOL can accept will be limited; once they hit their cap they will close entry for March 2023.



QUALIFICATIONS

Please note that for the March session CIOL is not offering other pathways and language combinations. These will be considered for future exam sessions in June and November 2023 and you can express an interest for these future sessions by visiting <https://www.ciol.org.uk/dpsi-expressions-interest>.

If you have any other questions about languages, pathways or future sessions please contact CIOL's Client Services Team (CST) at info.dpsi@ciol.org.uk.

Acknowledgments

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