
Mentoring interpreters of new and emerging languages for Australian courts and tribunals

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Outline

- **Overview of RMIT Pilot Project**
- **What is mentoring/ship?**
- **Why?**
- **How?**
- **Where to from here?**

RMIT Pilot Project (2019-21)

Design

- **Stage 1:** weekly 3-hr sessions x 4 weeks, Aug – Sept 2019
 - The Australian legal system
 - Tribunals, alternative dispute resolution, and interpreter oaths and affirmations
 - Ethics, interpreter's role and professional issues
 - Legal discourse

53 practitioners completed at least 3 sessions, average quiz outcome 71%

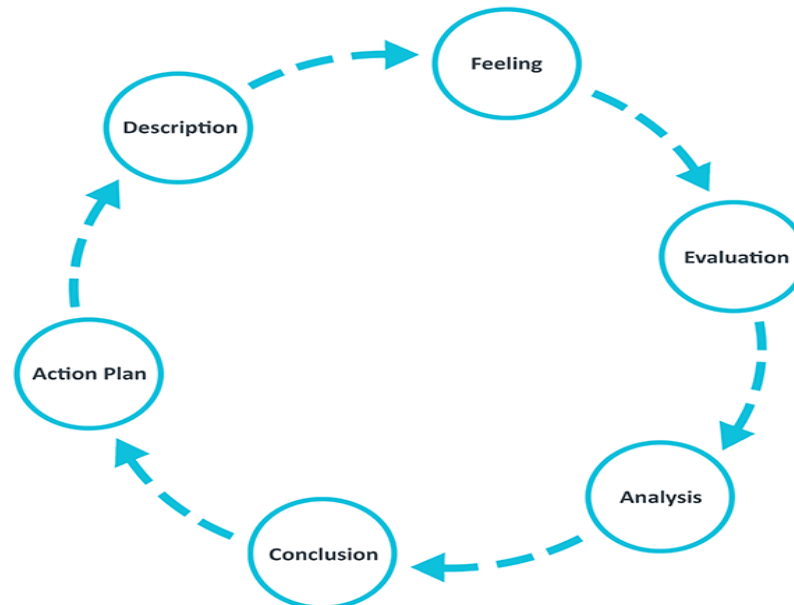
- **Stage 2:** paired mentor-mentee x 13 for court assignments, 2020-21
 - Mentees (6): 1 x Hazaraghi, 1 x Assyrian/Chaldean, 1 x Swahili, 1 x Thai, 2 x Burmese/Karen
 - Mentors (4): 1 x Arabic, 2 x Spanish, 1 x Turkish
must be Certified Interpreter + min. 5 yrs experience + master's degree + teaching experience + briefed about mentorship

RMIT Pilot Project (2019-21)

Continued

Stage 2

- Mentor-mentee one-on-one meeting to know each other
- Whenever the mentee was allocated a court job, the researchers booked the mentor to attend the same job
- They met onsite 15 min earlier, & stayed back another 15 min afterwards for debriefing.
- Mentor sat in the public gallery to observe & document: environmental, interpersonal, intrapersonal, paralinguistic
- Mentee completed a diary entry, using Gibbs' (1988) Reflective Cycle
- Monthly meeting



Demand and Control Schema (Dean & Pollard, 2013)

What is mentoring/ship

- “A relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of helping and developing the protégé’s career” (Roosevelt et al., 2008, p. 5)
- More recently (Dominguez & Kochan, 2020)
 - a portal to networks of people, data, and information;
 - mutually beneficial from the relationship
 - is conceived, implemented and assessed in a wide variety of forms, formats, and relationships
 - technology continues to influence the purposes and processes of mentoring



Why mentoring/ship?

- Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals (RNS) (JCCD, 2017; JCDI, 2022).
 - sets out the **working conditions** of interpreters in courts and tribunals
 - recognises interpreter's role as **officer of the court or tribunal**
 - acknowledges interpreting quality is a **shared responsibility** rather than the interpreters' alone

Optimal Standard 3 – Provision of professional mentors

- 3.1 In cases where it has been necessary to engage a Suitable Person for a **Tier C or Tier D language**, courts and tribunals (where they are responsible for providing the interpreter) or the party engaging the interpreter should endeavour to **provide a Professional Mentor** for the person undertaking the office of interpreter. **The role of the Professional Mentor is to assist the person undertaking the office of interpreter with ethical issues, to assist with the interaction of that person with others in the hearing, including where clarification or explanations may be required.**

(JCDI, 2022, p. 18)

Language Tiers

(JCDI, 2022, pp. 41-44)

17 spoken languages with 10 to 40 Certified Interpreters and a significant number (>30) of Certified Provisional Interpreters.

11 languages with 40+ Certified Interpreters & possibly some Certified Legal Interpreters.

Table 1.1 Tier A

Language	No. Interpreters with some certification (as of February 2022)
Arabic	614
Auslan	62
Cantonese	263
Greek	135
Italian	117
Japanese	144
Mandarin	2186
Persian	362
Spanish	161
Turkish	102
Vietnamese	330

Tier C: 50 languages with very few (<10), if any, Certified Interpreters, but sufficient (10-200) Certified Provisional Interpreters, including several Australian Indigenous languages.

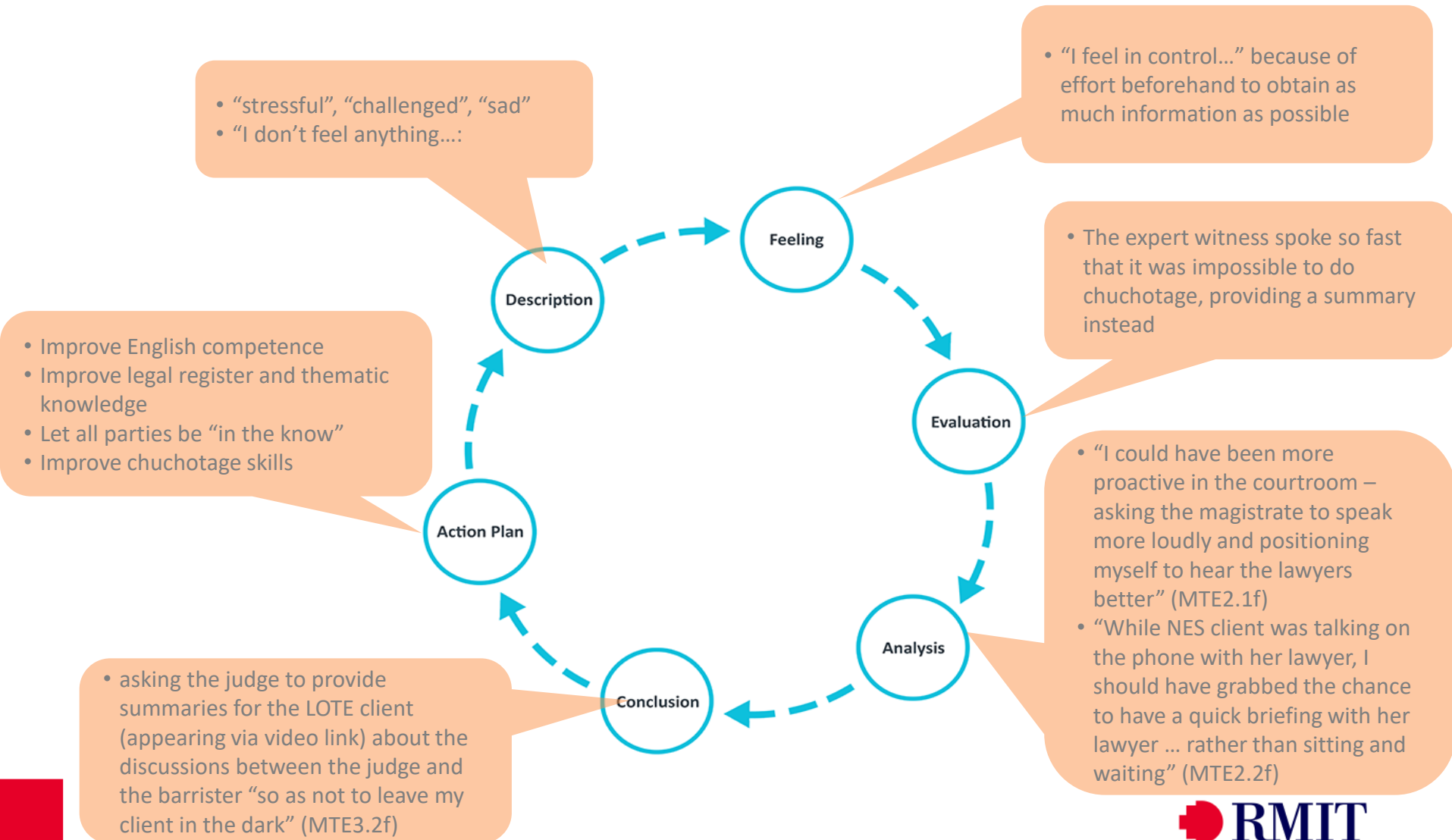
Tier D: all of the other 200 or so languages spoken in Australia & Indigenous languages.

Table 1.2 Tier B

Language	No. Interpreters with some certification (as of June 2021)
Bangla	48
Bosnian	37
Croatian	54
Dari	184
French	51
German	20
Hindi	47
Hungarian	14
Indonesian	41
Macedonian	47
Polish	32
Portuguese	32
Russian	57
Serbian	84
Sinhalese	31
Tamil	58
Thai	53



Mentees' reflections on 10 assignments



Mentors' feedback

Environmental

- “Not late” is not enough
- The large courtroom “seemed intimidating to [MTE3.2f], who looked a bit lost”.
- Specialised terminology and discourse features
- Poor audibility
- Long waits
- Not only arrive on time to report the OPP staff ... but to introduce [themselves] to the barristers to find out their names as they would come up often
- Do court observations
- Explore relevant resources online, consult more experienced colleagues
- Ask for a hearing loop headphone
- “A thermos of coffee” (MTE2.1f), and an abundance of patience

Interpersonal

- Good rapport with clients
- Asked by client to sight translate other documents in carpark after hearing
- Asked by lawyer to txt him when case was called
- **Interpreter's role boundaries**
- **Explain to client possible solution**

Intrapersonal

- Appear confident
- Appear stressed, sad...
- **Debrief + exercise emotional detachment**

Paralinguistic

- Fast-paced discourse
- **Be assertive and raise the issue with the court + work on chuchotage**

What's the verdict?

A mentoring system for courts
is expensive!

What's more expensive?

Questions?
Comments?
&
Thank you 😊

References

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