

**Perceptions of Interlingual Communication  
Challenges in NDIS Service Settings with  
CALD Clients:  
A Study of Interpreting/Translating  
Practitioners**

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## **Perceptions of Interlingual Communication Challenges in NDIS Service Settings with CALD Clients: A Study of Interpreting/Translating Practitioners**

### **Executive Summary**

This project was commissioned by the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) in 2023 for the purpose of understanding intercultural and interlinguistic challenges experienced by professional interpreters and translators (T&I practitioners hereafter) with an aim to enhance language mediation outcomes between the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) service providers and clients who are not proficient in English or do not speak the language at all.

The project took a mixed-methods approach, using a national online survey by questionnaire and in-depth interviews with T&I practitioners. Data collection took place between August and December 2023. A total of 162 valid questionnaire responses were received and analysed, and a total of 15 interviews were conducted with interpreters and 4 with translators. Minimum experience of working in NDIS settings was mandated for the two data collection methods to ensure the validity of the study. The language spread of the two data collection methods was broad and distributed, ensuring the stratified samples used provided fair representations of the population being studied.

The study used the national survey to capture the current landscape of NDIS interpreting services from the perspective of the respondent interpreters, supported by further insights elicited from individual in-depth interviews conducted with participant practitioners. Guided by the research questions, the study presents the following findings:

- Although more than six in every ten respondent interpreters had positive experiences working in NDIS/disability settings, they also felt challenging in NDIS communication in these three areas in descending order:
  - interactional issues with CALD clients, their carers, and family members
  - system-related challenges

- interacting with NDIS professionals
- Interviews with participant T&I practitioners further identified their perceived challenges into five categories: thematic, linguistic, sociocultural, interactional, and systemic.
- The specific skills and knowledge required of T&I practitioners for quality performance in NDIS/disability settings include developing competencies in:
  - language proficiency
  - transfer skills (i.e., interpreting and interactional management skills)
  - thematic knowledge
  - research skills (i.e., understanding the NDIS, its specialist terminology, its specialist services, and concepts about disability)
  - service provision (i.e., communication and interaction with people with disabilities)
  - intercultural communication
  - ethical conduct (i.e., understanding role boundaries)
  - technical skills (i.e., dealing with telephone remote interpreting).
- Respondent interpreters in the survey regarded “ongoing professional development” and “access to specialist resources” among the most important supports for quality performance.
- Participant translators in the interview pointed out a lack of knowledge for those who handle desktop and webpage publishing in relation to various languages and their specificities for fonts, formatting, spacing and punctuation requirements, resulting in negative impacts on the readability and comprehensibility of NDIS translation.
- There is strong evidence that quality NDIS/disability communication cannot be achieved solely by T&I practitioners. It is a shared responsibility and needs facilitation by the NDIS and NDIS professionals.

Key recommendations in response to the findings are as follows.

Interpreters and translators focused:

1. Make NDIS training and continuous professional development compulsory for interpreters and translators in order to gain a better understanding of the system, its specialist terminology, and specific cultural and ethical challenges prior to attending any assignments, as well as keeping up to date with NDIS developments.

2. Interpreters and NDIS professionals to forge inter-professional dialogues to inform and share observations and insights to achieve client-centredness.

NDIS/Disability professionals focused:

3. NDIS professionals to receive training in how interpreting works (e.g., the concept of linguistic presence, literal interpreting vs. meaning-based interpreting) and how to work with interpreters effectively (e.g., manage orderly turn-taking, proactively provide contextual information for the topic under discussion, be observant of CALD client responses).
4. NDIS professionals to take on a more proactive role in managing the flow of conversations, especially when there are multiple parties present, to facilitate better interpreting quality.
5. NDIS professionals to receive training on interlingual and intercultural communication to be sensitised about CALD client inhibitors of expressing needs and demonstrating comprehension (e.g., spotting gratuitous concurrence, reassuring them about privacy).
6. NDIS professionals to be more observant in ensuring that clients understand the information that is relayed to them, in assessing whether the presence of family members is helpful or distracting, and in encouraging participants to share information when they seem less open, possibly due to cultural reasons.

NDIS system focused:

7. NDIS to set up protocols for NDIS professionals to supply essential information to interpreters in order to facilitate pre-assignment preparation, including the NDIS participant's basic information, their diagnosis, the stage of the application, the purpose of the meeting and who will attend the meeting.
8. NDIS to put briefing procedures in place prior to commencing meetings with CALD clients to allow NDIS professionals to speak with interpreters separately and share essential information about the case and the purpose of the meeting.
9. NDIS to allow sufficient assignment time for briefing interpreters and for communication with CALD clients to be unhurried, providing for time to check client understanding.

10. NDIS to use telephone interpreting as a last resort. Onsite or video interpreting should be the default mode of meeting, especially for long plan meetings and for meetings where multiple parties are involved.
11. NDIS to book the same interpreter for the CALD client throughout the NDIS journey to ensure continuity of care, wherever possible.
12. NDIS to put in place protocols to address situations where credentialed interpreters in certain languages or dialects are not available for CALD clients. A non-credentialed bilingual person should be booked with another credentialed senior interpreter so the latter can provide mentorship. This model is based on the *Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals*.
13. NDIS communications to be written using plain English and with translation in mind.
14. NDIS translations to be commissioned, translated, and checked following the *Recommended Protocols for the Translation of Community Communications* developed by AUSIT and FECCA.
15. NDIS to build an in-house workforce to cater for (a) a terminology repository that is centrally managed and regularly maintained to ensure consistency of translations and timely updates for all stakeholders and end-users to access; (b) desktop and webpage publishing for all required community languages featured and appended on NDIS and NDIA websites to ensure knowhow of multilingual publishing is retained in-house for consistency and high-quality communication.

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## **Perceptions of Interlingual Communication Challenges in NDIS Service Settings with CALD Clients: A Study of Interpreting/Translating Practitioners**

### **Background Information**

#### **Community Interpreting and Translation in Australia**

Australia is a multicultural country with a population of 25.4 million according to the 2021 census (ABS, n.d.). More than a quarter (27.6%) of the current population were born overseas, reflecting the 22.8% of the population which speaks a language other than English (LOTE) at home (ABS, 2022). More than four hundred languages are spoken in the community, including Australian Sign Language (Auslan) and 310 Indigenous languages (SBS, n.d.). Linguistic heterogeneity in Australia as a result of immigration and a commitment to multiculturalism has given rise to publicly funded translation and interpreting (T&I) services, often referred to as community interpreting and translation. Community interpreting is defined as a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural activity that enables individuals from cultural and linguistic minority communities to equally access essential services such as legal aid, healthcare, education, and social support (Mikkelson, 1996). Community translation is defined as “written language services needed in a variety of situations to facilitate communication between public services and readers of non-mainstream languages” (Taibi & Ozolins, 2016, p. 10). Community interpreting and translation serve a broader social purpose to facilitate and encourage social, economic, and political participation (Taibi & Ozolins, 2016), thereby empowering community members experiencing language discordance to fully participate in their civic lives. Egalitarian states such as Australia, regard equal access to public services as more important than the expectation for new citizens to become proficient in the dominant language (Pöchhacker, 2016), in that it is “a cultural value and political philosophy that access to government services and participation in the life of the country is not to be denied by a lack of English proficiency” (Gentile, 2019, p. 39).

According to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI, 2023), there were 10,353 practitioners operating in Australia as at the end of the 2022–23 financial year, holding 14,904 credentials across 179 languages, including Auslan and 29 Indigenous languages. NAATI credentials are required for translators and interpreters (hereafter T&I practitioners) working

in most Australian health and legal settings, which serves as a mechanism to ensure high quality language services for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.

### **Interpreting and Translation in the NDIS Context**

As at 31 December 2023, there were 646,449 participants nationwide to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), of whom 58,924 were identified as from CALD backgrounds (i.e. roughly 9%) (NDIS, n.d.-a). CALD participants in NDIS are significantly underrepresented when considering the ABS data on the proportion of Australians born overseas and the number who speak a LOTE at home (Drilon, 2023; NEDA, 2024, 7th December). Recognising the importance of T&I services for NDIS participants to access the support they need regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) – the independent statutory agency responsible for implementing the NDIS – funds language services for CALD participants through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), a service managed by the Department of Home Affairs. TIS National has over 3,000 NAATI certified T&I practitioners on contract in more than 160 languages (NDIS, n.d.-b). Participants can ask for their NDIS plan to be translated into their preferred language (Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health [CEH], n.d.) and on-demand or pre-booked phone interpreting as well as on-site or video interpreting (NDIS, 2023) are free for access for the following:

- NDIS access request, access enquiry
- NDIS planning meeting
- NDIS appeals process
- Plan review meeting
- Plan implementation: NDIS participants and carers/family members can access unlimited free interpreting for the duration of their plan as long as the service or activity for which interpreting is needed is in the plan and delivered by a provider who is registered with the NDIA
- Support coordination: Support coordinators can use TIS interpreters free of charge when working with participants and their family/carers. (CEH, n.d.)

Apart from Lai's (2021) paper investigating communication issues in NDIS settings from interpreters' perspective, and a restricted number of publications touching on deaf clients' experiences in NDIS and their access to Auslan interpreters (Jenkinson, 2021; Treloar, 2023), there has been manifestly scant

attention paid to language access and communication challenges in NDIS contexts for CALD participants. The current study commissioned by NEDA, therefore, intends to address this gap of knowledge.

### **The Study**

This study intends to identify and understand the communication challenges faced by CALD clients within the NDIS system through the lens of T&I practitioners. These professionals are pivotal in facilitating effective communication between CALD clients and NDIS service providers. The primary goal of this investigation is to shed light on the intercultural and interlinguistic obstacles that CALD clients encounter when engaging with NDIS services. By examining the experiences of T&I practitioners working in this specialised context, the study aims to identify the enabling factors and barriers that impacted the interaction between CALD clients and service providers, thereby raising the visibility of CALD participants and enhancing the client-centredness of services provided by the NDIS.

Furthermore, this project intends to explore the professional landscape of T&I practitioners working in the NDIS context to identify the challenges and issues they face, which may affect their job satisfaction, professional development, and sustainability in the field. This research seeks to improve the working conditions for interpreters and translators, thereby strengthening the sustainability and quality of language services provided to CALD participants in the NDIS.

To achieve these research goals, this study is guided by an overarching research question: **how is interlingual communication in NDIS-related encounters with CALD clients perceived by professional translators and interpreters?** Three component questions make up this overarching question:

Q1: Are there any challenges? What are they?

Q2: Are there any specific skills or knowledge required? What are they?

Q3: What can be done to improve the status quo?

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design by collecting quantitative data through a national survey to establish the overall landscape of interpreters who provided language mediation services for the NDIS, supplemented by individual interviews with a number of interpreters and translators to collect in-depth qualitative data. The combined methods are considered particularly suitable to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied.

### **Quantitative Component: Survey by Questionnaire**

The quantitative component of this study used a structured questionnaire built on RMIT surveying platform Qualtrics and ran from 26 August to 26 December 2023 (refer to Appendix 1 for full questionnaire). A series of questions were designed to capture a broad overview of interpreters working in the NDIS context, including aspects of their general work experience, the type of challenges they face, the knowledge and skills they thought they should have and the areas of support they felt they needed. To ensure robust data collection, the questionnaire incorporated multiple-choice questions, Likert-type items, and optional open-ended responses for further contributions.

Purposive sampling was employed by asking potential respondents in the recruitment advertisement to self-select for participation only if they had experience interpreting in NDIS settings. This sampling technique ensures the validity of the study in that the respondents had firsthand experience and knowledge to contribute to the phenomena studied. The recruitment advertisement was sent through a variety of channels to ensure a wide reach to the practitioner community for those who possess diverse experiences and linguistic backgrounds in NDIS-related interpreting assignments. The channels included the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT), NAATI, and a number of language service providers, including TIS National.

### **Qualitative Component: Individual Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with interpreters and translators engaged in NDIS settings from October to December 2023. The interview contained generic questions applicable to both T&I practitioners (Q1 to 4, and Q11 to 13) and questions specific to interpreters (Q5 to 8) and to translators (Q9 and 10). The interview guide is available in Appendix 2. This data collection method was selected

for its flexibility, allowing for themes and issues to emerge organically and dynamically during the conversation while ensuring that all relevant topics were addressed (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The design of the questions aimed to elicit detailed insights into challenges participant T&I practitioners encountered in their NDIS-related assignments.

Recruitment of participants for this component was achieved by adding an additional question for expressions of interest in the above-mentioned survey. The inclusion criteria for interpreter participants mandated a NAATI credential with at least five years of interpreting experience, as well as involvement in a minimum of five NDIS-related assignments. Similar criteria were set for participant translators: a NAATI credential with a minimum of five years of translating experience, as well as participation in at least five NDIS-related assignments. Additional calls for expressions of interest were disseminated through the same channels as the survey (i.e., AUSIT, NAATI, and language service providers, including TIS National).

## **Study Cohort**

### **Questionnaire Respondents**

A total of 217 responses from interpreters across Australia were received, of which 162 were complete and valid for the purpose of data analysis. Figure 1 illustrates the gender distribution among the survey respondents, revealing a predominant female representation at 73.84%. This gender distribution largely corresponds to the broader feminised industry landscape.

Figure 1  
*Gender Distribution of Survey Participants*

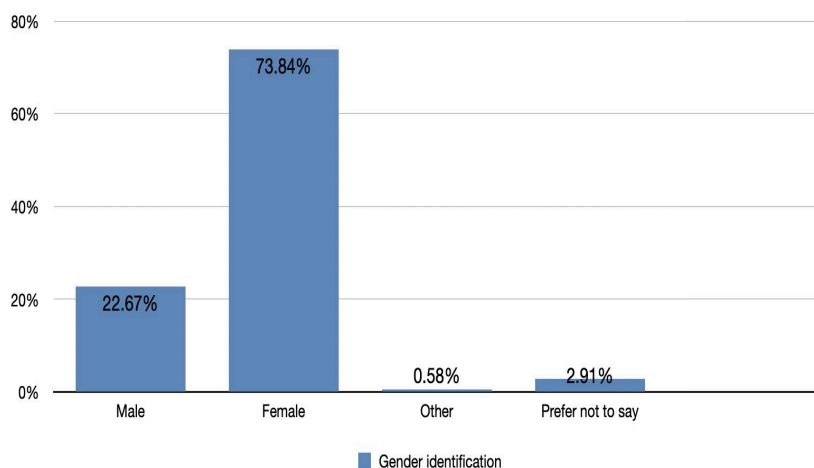


Figure 2 presents a word cloud visualising the diverse range of working languages of the participant interpreters in this study. The size of each language’s visual representation corresponds to its prevalence among the participants. Mandarin emerged as the most represented language, followed by Vietnamese, Arabic, Cantonese, Auslan, Spanish, and Korean, indicating a significant variation in the linguistic backgrounds of the respondents.

Figure 2  
*A Word Cloud of the Working Languages of Participant Interpreters*



Figures 3 and 4 show the distribution of NAATI credentials and formal qualifications in interpreting studies among the interpreter respondents in the study. The breakdown reveals that almost half of the respondents (48%) were Certified Provisional Interpreters, followed by 38% of NAATI Certified Interpreters. Recognised Interpreters and those who did not have any NAATI credentials were equally represented by 7% of the respondents. Although a NAATI credential was a prerequisite for taking part in this survey, the researchers accept that there are many languages which NAATI does not test and therefore practitioners in this category would at best have NAATI Recognition or no credential at all.

A relatively high percentage (43%) of the respondents held postgraduate qualifications in interpreting, indicating a high level of education within the sample. A further 27% had completed undergraduate studies in interpreting, while vocational education in interpreting accounted for another 20% of the respondents. There were also interpreters holding PhD degrees among the respondents, accounting for 7% of the sample.

This distribution highlights the diverse levels of formal certification and academic qualification within the sample, suggesting a variety of experience and training. This diversity may offer insights into the varying challenges and perspectives these interpreters bring to their work.

**Figure 3**  
*NAATI Credential Distribution among Participant Interpreters*

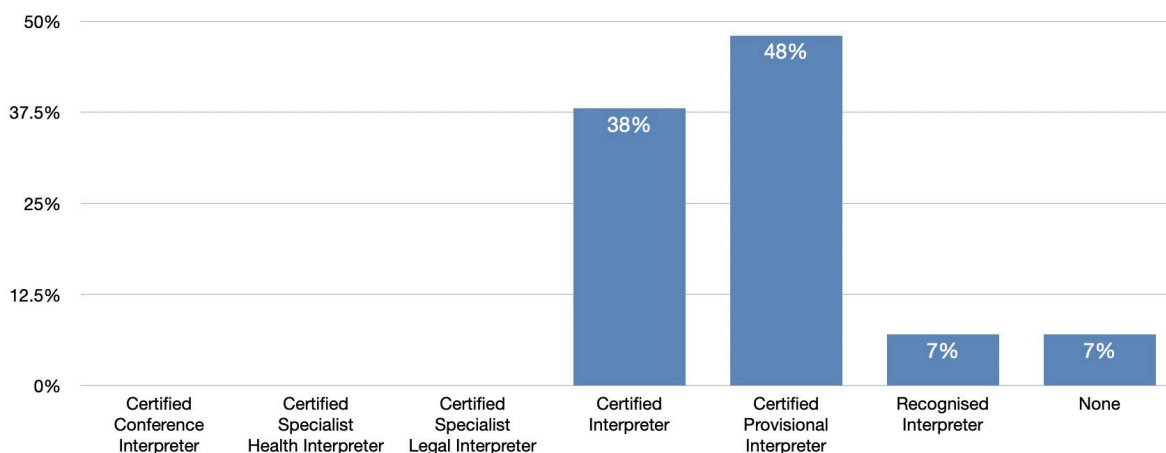
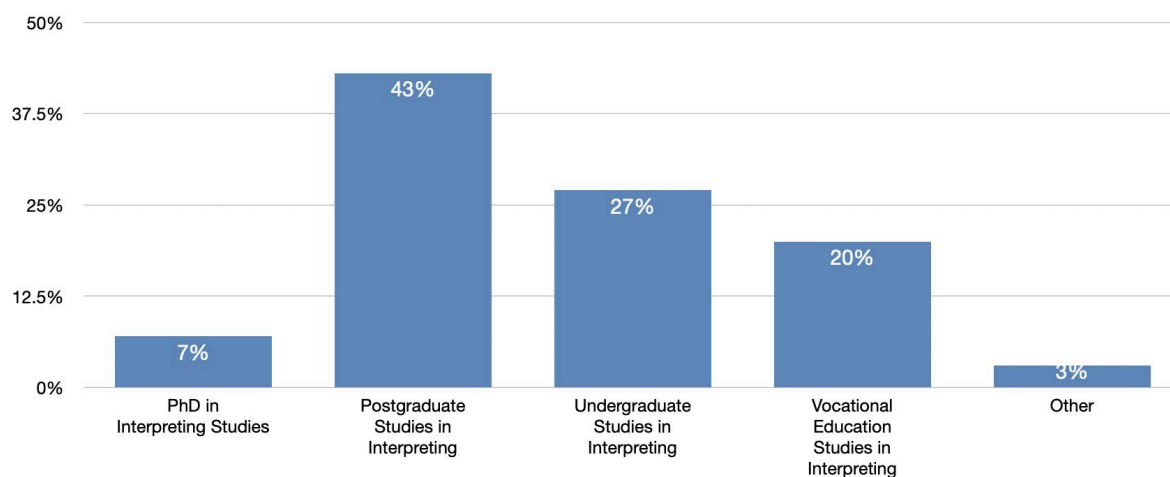


Figure 4  
*Distribution of Formal Academic Qualifications in Interpreting Studies among Participants*



### Interview Participants

All interviews were conducted in English online via the Microsoft Teams platform between August to December 2023. They were video-recorded, and the automatic transcription function of Microsoft Teams was utilised to produce the initial transcripts. A research assistant then reviewed and “cleaned up” the text concurrently with the coding process. An inductive, bottom-up approach was adopted to identify, examine and report recurring patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is characterised by the generation of themes and categories emerging directly from the data itself, rather than being imposed by preconceived theories or researcher expectations.

A total of 19 interviews were carried out, consisting of 15 with interpreters and 4 with translators. Tables 1 and 2 show the language mix, gender distribution and credential status of the participant interpreters and translators respectively. One participant (marked with an asterisk in both tables) had interpreter and translator credentials and met the respective inclusion criteria, and therefore contributed as both in the same interview.



Table 1  
*The Language Profiles, Gender Distribution and Credential Status of Interpreter Interviewees*

Reference No.	Language profile	Gender	Credential
ARA-F	Arabic	Female	Certified Interpreter
BCS-F	Bosnian, Croatian, & Serbian,	Female	Certified Interpreter
BUR-M	Burmese	Male	Certified Provisional Interpreter
HIN-F	Hindi	Female	Certified Provisional Interpreter
JAP-F	Japanese	Female	Certified Interpreter
KOR-F	Korean	Female	Certified Interpreter
MAC-M	Macedonian	Male	Certified Provisional Interpreter
MAN-M1	Mandarin	Male	Certified Interpreter
MAN-M2	Mandarin	Male	Certified Interpreter
MAN-F1	Mandarin	Female	Certified Interpreter
MAN-F2	Mandarin*	Female	Certified Interpreter
THA-F	Thai	Female	Certified Interpreter
TUR-F	Turkish	Female	Certified Interpreter
VIE-F1	Vietnamese	Female	Certified Provisional Interpreter
VIE-F2	Vietnamese	Female	Certified Interpreter

\*This same Mandarin interpreter was also interviewed as a Chinese translator.

Table 2  
*The Language Profiles, Gender Distribution and Credential Status of Translator Interviewees*

Reference No.	Language profile	Gender	Credential
ARA-FT	Arabic	Female	Certified Translator
CHI-FT	Chinese*	Female	Certified Translator
SWA-FT	Swahili	Female	Certified Translator
TUR-FT	Turkish	Female	Certified Translator

\*This same Chinese translator was also interviewed as a Mandarin interpreter.

## Research Findings

### Survey by Questionnaire

Figure 5 shows that just over half (54%) of the participant interpreters had undertaken specialised training in NDIS/disability contexts. Participants reported that this training ranged from NDIS worker orientation module, workshops, to professional development courses. In the next follow-up question

probing the usefulness of the training, 94% of those who had training found it helpful as they were better able to “understand how the system works” and “have a better understanding of NDIS terminology”, and such training provided them with “tools to manage difficult situations.”

Figure 5  
*NDIS-Related Training*

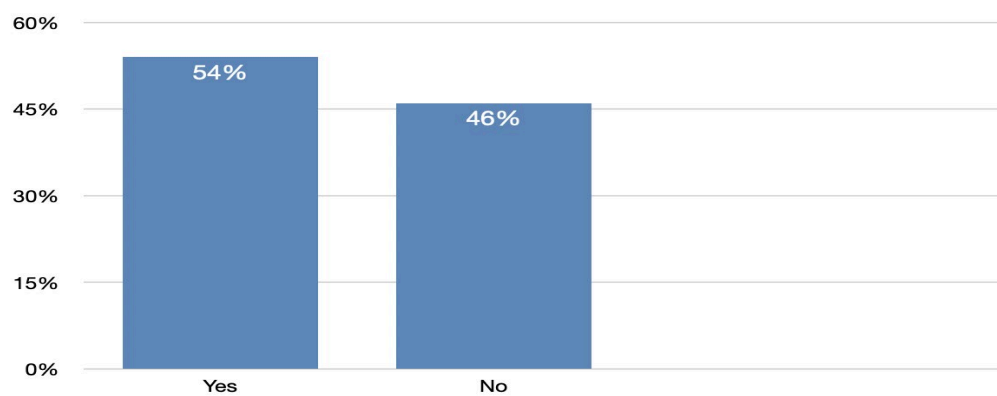


Figure 6 presents a nested bar chart that visualises the responses to three related questions (Q9, Q10, and Q11) regarding training in NDIS/disability settings. Among those who completed the training, an overwhelming majority (93.67%) found the training helpful for their work in NDIS/disability settings. For the remaining respondents who did not complete any specific training, a significant majority (76.67%) believed they would benefit from specialist training in NDIS/disability settings. The data indicate a strong recognition of the value of specialised training in NDIS/disability settings among the respondents, highlighting a potential area for further professional development and resource allocation to enhance the capabilities of interpreters in NDIS/disability settings.

Figure 6  
Specialised Training vs. Perceived Usefulness of Training

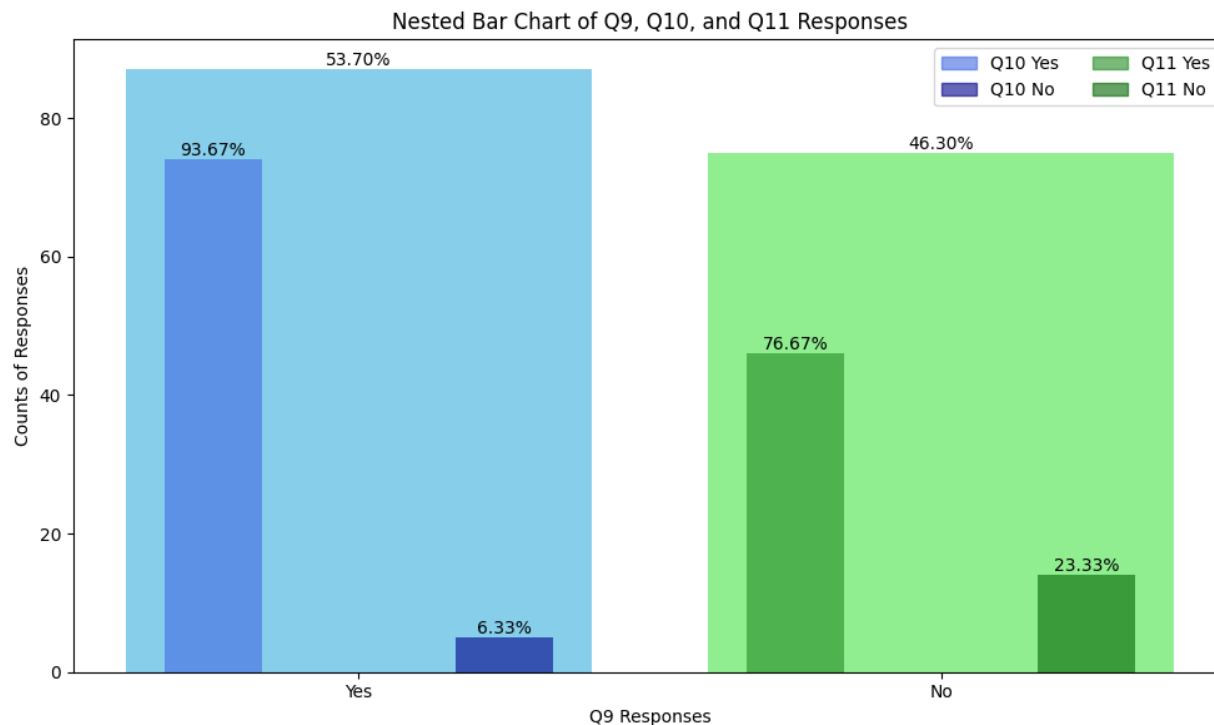
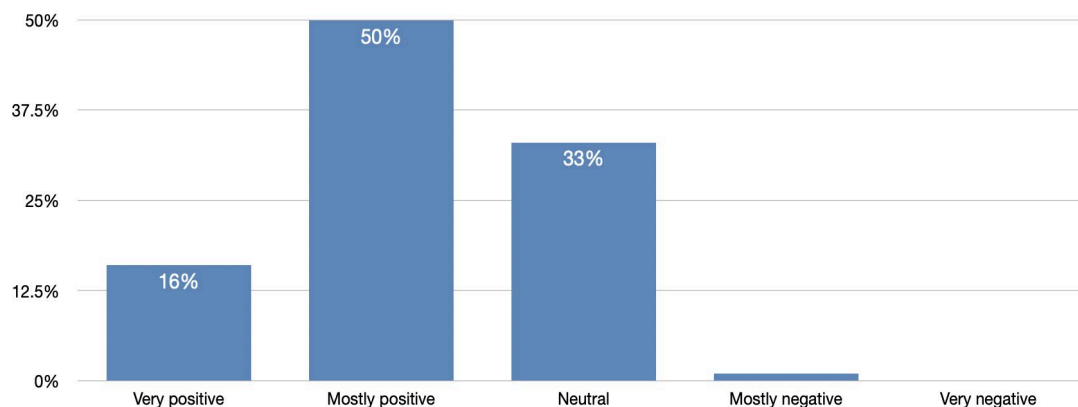


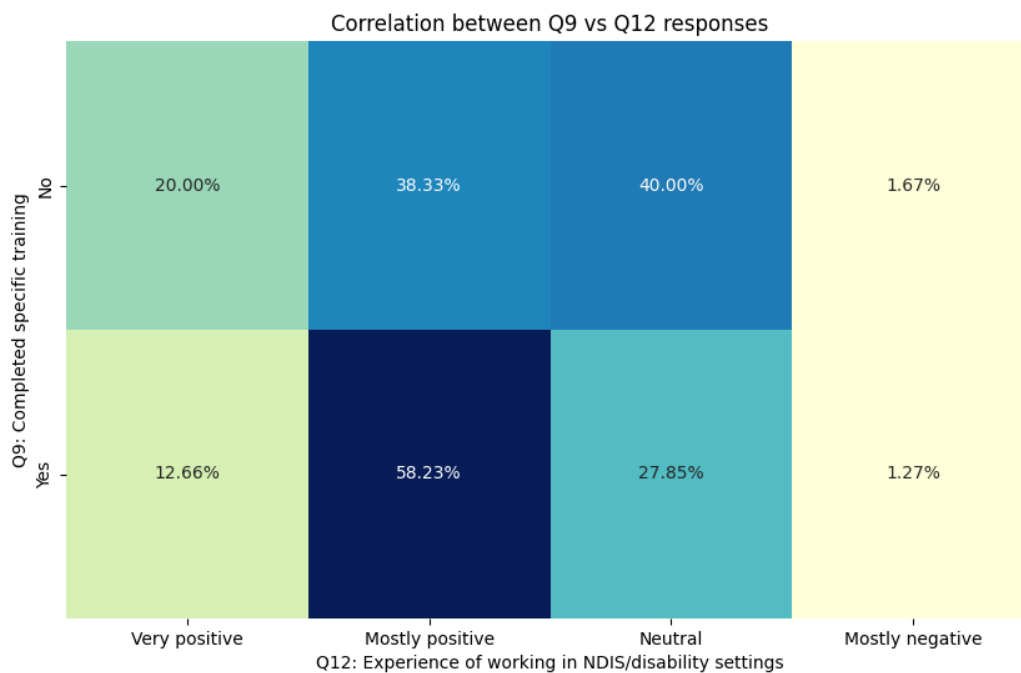
Figure 7 illustrates that 66% of the respondents had very positive or mostly positive experiences working in NDIS/disability settings. Examples provided by text about these positive experiences included: “feeling valued in helping people with disabilities”, “cooperative staff”, and “positive feedback from NDIS service.”

Figure 7  
General Experience of Working in NDIS/Disability Settings



Cross-tabulating the data in Figures 5 and 7, it can be seen that higher proportions of respondents who completed specialised training in NDIS/disability had more positive work experiences in this domain (70.89%, being for 12.66% “very positive “ and 58.23% “mostly positive”), compared to those respondents who did not received specialised training (58.33% ,being for 20% “very positive” and 38.33% “mostly positive”). On the other hand, it is much more likely (41.67%) to have neutral (40%) or negative (1.67%) job experiences when respondents did not receive specialised training than those who had training (29.12%, being for 27.85% “neutral” and 1.27% “mostly negative”). These statistics support the respondents’ perception of the usefulness of training when working in this domain presented in Figure 6.

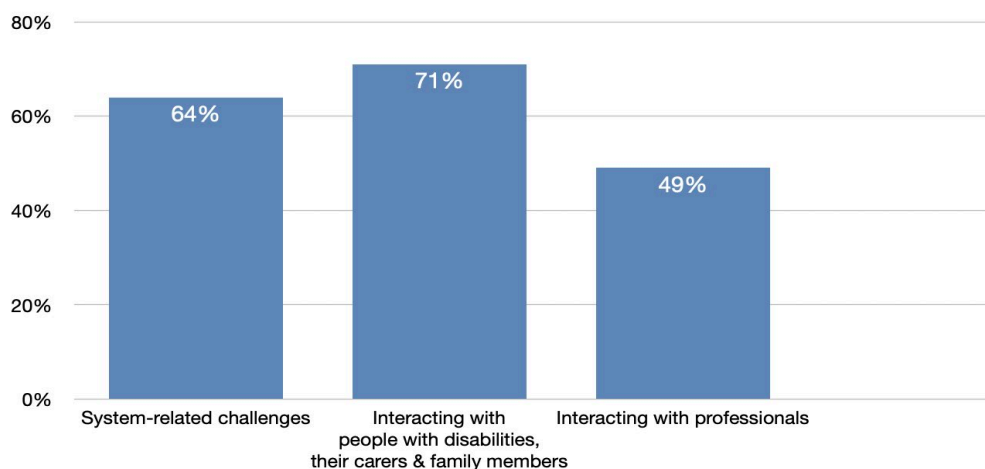
Figure 8  
*Specialised Training vs. Positive Work Experience*



Of the three types of challenges probed in Q15, a majority of the respondents had encountered system-related challenges and difficulties in interacting with people with disability, their carers, and family members, as is shown in Figure 7. Under system-related challenges, an overwhelming number of text responses identified “lack of case information for preparation” or “lack of briefings beforehand.” For challenges regarding interactions with CALD clients, interpreters noted that they often found it

difficult to understand people with disabilities and to manage the emotional responses from these clients or their family members. It was also reported that the presence of family members can sometimes be distracting, and there were instances where family members completely took over the conversation. When interacting with professionals, interpreters found that some NDIS officers or service providers did not fully understand the role of interpreters or know how to work with interpreters. They were not aware of certain cultural sensitivities in some instances. In fact, 86% of participant interpreters thought that NDIS/disability professionals should complete training in how to work with interpreters (Q18).

Figure 9  
*Types of Challenges in NDIS/Disability Settings*



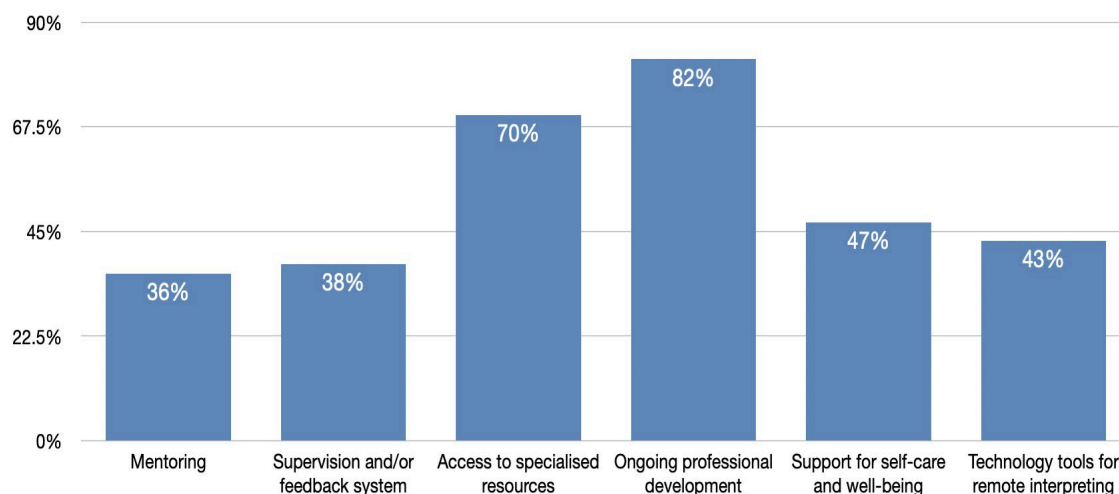
Respondents were presented with a list of various skills and knowledge and asked to rate their importance on a scale of 0 (*not important at all*) to 5 (*extremely important*). Table 3 shows that all the items listed were deemed to be very important by the respondent interpreters with their respective mean score above 4.

Table 3  
*Importance of Knowledge/Skill*

Field	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Language skills	4.56	0.81	0.65
Interpreting skills (e.g., chuchotage)	4.22	1.02	1.03
Interactional management skills	4.19	1.05	1.10
Understanding the NDIS and how it works	4.32	0.92	0.85
Specialist terminology	4.30	0.79	0.63
Understanding the work of service providers/professionals in these settings	4.01	0.95	0.91
Understanding disabilities	4.08	1.04	1.08
Communication and interaction with people with disabilities	4.34	0.90	0.81
Cultural competence and diversity	4.28	0.88	0.78
Ethics and role	4.53	0.82	0.68

Respondents were asked about the type of support they felt would be helpful for their NDIS/disability assignments (Q19). As is shown in Figure 8, the type of support most requested by participants was “ongoing professional development” (82%), followed by “access to specialised resources” (70%). “Supervision and/or feedback system” (38%) and “mentoring” (36%) were the least requested types of support. In between these two poles were “support for self-care and well-being” (47%) and “technology tools for remote interpreting” (43%). These outcomes highlight the interpreters’ desire for professional growth and adequate resources to perform their duties effectively.

Figure 10  
*Type of Support for Interpreters*

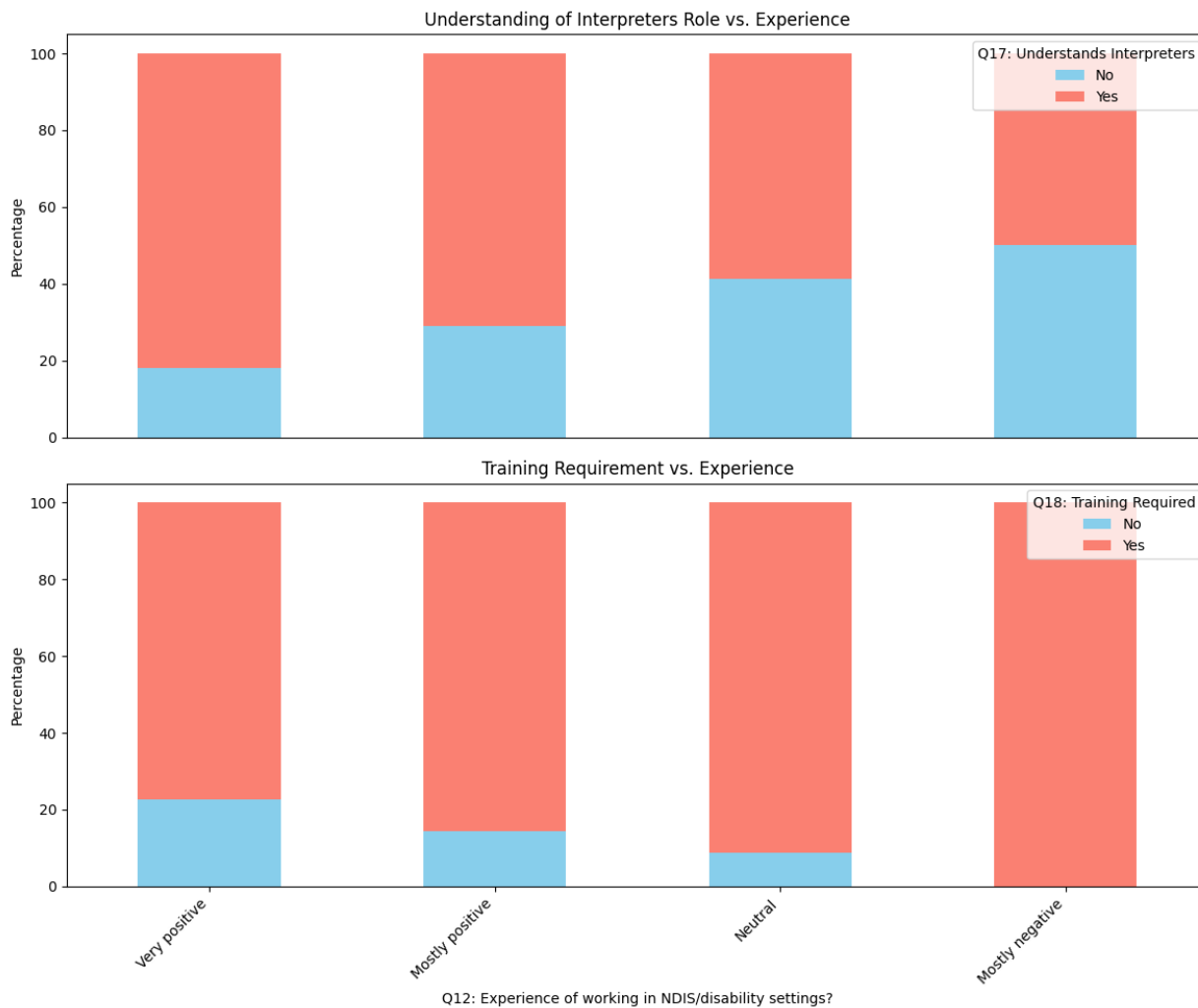


In Q17, respondents were asked whether NDIS/disability professionals understood the role of interpreters. More than double ( $n = 95$ ) the number of the respondents felt that these professionals understood their role, compared to those who answered negatively ( $n = 44$ ). Q18 further probed the respondents about whether they thought these professionals should get training on how to work with interpreters, to which roughly six times as many respondents ( $n = 120$ ) responded positively, compared to those who did not think training was necessary for the professionals ( $n = 19$ ). Cross-tabulating Q12 on the respondents’ work experience in NDIS/disability domain with Q17 and Q18, Figure 11 below shows that those who had a “very positive” experience of working in NDIS/disability settings (Q12) mostly indicated “yes” for understanding the role of interpreters (Q17). This trend continues but lessens as the experience rating decreases. Besides, there is a significant majority across all experience levels from Q12 that indicate “yes” for requiring training on how to work with interpreters in these settings (Q18). This trend is consistent regardless of whether their general experience is positive or negative. These trends suggest that those with more positive experiences working in NDIS/disability settings tend to believe professionals understood the role of interpreters better than those with less positive experiences. However, regardless of their general experience level, there is a strong consensus that training on how to work with interpreters is needed for NDIS/disability professionals.

Figure 11

*Positive Work Experience vs. Understanding of Interpreter's Role*

*Positive Work Experience vs. Training Requirement to Work with Interpreters*



### Interviews: Interpreters

The interview transcripts were analysed using Nvivo, applying an inductive, bottom-up approach for thematic analysis. As the analysis progressed, codes were organised into broader themes that encapsulated the underlying meanings within the data. This process involved a consistent back-and-forth review between the data and the thematic framework to ensure that the identified themes genuinely reflected the participants' experiences and viewpoints. The following section presents the themes arising from the interpreter and translator groups separately to allow due discussions of the



different natures of interpreting and translating operations. In order to clearly delineate the themes that emerged from the two groups, each theme or sub-theme number will be preceded by *I* to denote interpreting and *T* to denote translating.

## **Theme I-1: Linguistic Challenges**

### *Sub-Theme I-1.1: NDIS-Specific Terminology Challenges*

NDIS has its own terminology, and it has become its own genre... You can't interpret those words as a [*sic*] face value, you actually have to understand them as well, what it means, like capacity building, assistive technology and things like that. (THA-F)

Many participant interpreters reported facing considerable challenges when interpreting specialised terminology used in the NDIS. The interpreters indicated that such terms frequently require additional context and explanation for accurate interpretation. When lack of context, it can hinder the interpreter's ability to provide precise and meaningful renditions, directly impacting the quality of service provided to clients. KOR-F recounted her experience in one of her NDIS assignments:

... the NDIS officer was going, "so how's it going with your son with the restrictive practices?" So, I kept wondering, ok, restrictive practice and at this point I don't know what the son has. Is it autism? What is it? Because we're not talking about that. I can only imagine, but without knowing exactly what that means. If I do a direct translation of this into Korean, it sounds like you know in those prisons or detention centres where a person gets violent, and you have to tie them up. It sounds like that in Korean, so I couldn't do the translation because already that mom was distressed, she was tired, exhausted. And if I say something like a prison tie up, no.

KOR-F resorted to asking what the "restrictive practice" was, only to find out it was "just protective gloves, because the child keeps scratching his face." The difference between innocuous protective gloves and a device to tie someone up cannot be more different. KOR-F, therefore, implored that officers to build more context in their communication to enable easier transfer of meaning and avoid creating unnecessary distress for the CALD client.

The difficulty interpreters face with NDIS-specific terminology also highlights the scarcity of a standardised and authoritative glossary across various community languages. This absence can lead to inconsistencies in interpretation, as each interpreter may apply their subjective understanding to interpret a term, resulting in varied renditions of the same word or phrase for the same CALD client every time a different interpreter comes.

It's hard to explain these terminologies [sic] because we don't have the standardised translations across different languages. So, it all depends on the interpreter, how you interpret that, and there are lots of discrepancies on how we interpret that specific terminology in a target language. And it creates confusion sometimes because one interpreter might say coordinator is 协调员 [gloss translation: coordination-person], another might say coordinator is 负责人 [gloss translation: responsible-person]. (MAN-M1)

Furthermore, as the NDIS evolves, new concepts or terms continue to enrich its lexicon. However, existing glossaries are static resources which do not appear to be managed nor updated in a systematic manner.

#### *Sub-Theme I-1.2: Conceptual and Socio-Relational Challenges*

The intricacies of language and culture significantly impact the interpretation of concepts across linguistic and cultural borders. The NDIS lexicon includes concepts and services that may be absent or not equivalent in the target language and culture. This necessitates additional interpreting strategies such as explication or paraphrasing, rather than mechanically providing a literal translation which does not facilitate understanding.

Sometimes interpreting terminology, especially when you have terminology in English that it's not the same in Serbian or doesn't exist in Serbian at all, then you have to explain...Not to mention that some services in our home country only started existing lately...They never heard of it. (BCS-F)

MAC-M further illustrated the challenge by pointing out that interpreters had to coin phrases or, for example, had to come up with a Macedonian version of a government department here in Australia. But “if you do a Google search for that word phrase on a Macedonian website from Macedonia, it doesn’t exist.”

In many cultures, socio-relational elements such as age, gender, social status, and level of familiarity are determinants of language use between interlocutors. Misaddressing someone may not only lead to confusion but can also be seen as disrespectful, affecting the interpersonal dynamics in the communicative event and the outcomes of service provision. VIE-F2 shared that

I would love to know sometimes, I have to ask, because in Vietnamese, we address each person according to their age, their gender differently. So sometimes I have to ask how old the Vietnamese person is, male or female, because sometimes I can’t tell even male or female over the phone.

Another interpreter recounted an experience where, after she and the NDIS officer introduced themselves to each other, the NDIS officer said: “So how’s Jake?” There were four people in the conversation and all were female.

Who’s Jake? What’s the use of introducing everybody that’s there when we are talking about somebody that’s not there? Who in the world is Jake? That relates to, it can be a cultural thing, but more of a linguistic thing, because I think it is true for many languages and cultures. But I can’t say Jake. I need to know what the relationship between Sarah, the client, and Jake is in order to use the proper polite term. If Jake is Sarah’s partner, there’s a different term. If Jake is the son, different. If Jake is her father and I say Jake, that is unimaginably rude, I can never say that. So, there are all different terms depending on the relationship and you have to give that to the interpreter in advance to make a very good start. (KOR-F)

These issues point to the need for English-speaking NDIS officers to receive more training on how to work with interpreters and to raise their awareness on providing context for appropriate interlingual

transfers. In most cases, a CALD client does not have the luxury of having the same interpreter for all their NDIS communications. Therefore, every time a different interpreter is assigned, the interpreter does not have the necessary contextual knowledge about the case unless the NDIS officer provides a briefing and relevant context when talking about a topic.

### *Sub-Theme I-1.3: Challenges of Language or Dialect Variation*

The interviewees referred to situations where the CALD client only spoke a particular variant of a language, or a particular dialect from a specific region, and therefore had a limited understanding of the standard variant of the same language spoken by the interpreter. In other instances, there were mismatches of language variations between the interpreter and the client or, worse still, there were simply no interpreters available for a certain dialect. BUR-M explained that

Our country's national language is Burmese. All the schools, they use the Burmese language. I speak Burmese and write Burmese, but some people, the parents of the patient, they don't speak proper Burmese. They are from the rural area, and they speak their own dialect. I try to explain things to them in several different way [sic] but their Burmese is very weak, so they don't understand much. I don't understand their dialect and there is no interpreter for their specific dialect either.

These issues are not unique to NDIS settings. Ultimately the CALD client is always the one who is disadvantaged. It is therefore important to strengthen NDIS protocols when engaging interpreters to achieve the best match with the client's language, language variant, and/or dialect preference. Sometimes having the same ethnicity and/or gender are important factors which also need to be included in the protocols for booking interpreters.

## Theme I-2: Systemic Challenges

### *Sub-Theme I-2.1: Lack of Sufficient Information for Interpreters*

Insufficient information provision to interpreters emerged as a prominent concern echoed by the majority of the interviewees. Participants consistently reported that they often enter NDIS assignments without briefings, without essential background knowledge about the client, the specifics of their condition or the services under discussion. This absence of information places interpreters at a distinct disadvantage, impacting their ability to facilitate accurate and sensitive communication. JAP-F described that

Quite often if I [get] invited [to] a conference call or conference setting. I'm quite puzzled [about] who is the client. Quite often the client is not there, only the parents and the service providers. So, they are talking about the client, [in] most of the cases the kid, but you don't know what I don't know. I don't have enough information, [including] the age and the actual symptoms or disease, so everybody knows everything, except for me.

Similarly, MAN-M1 shared his frustration with not having the necessary information to enable quality language service and being the only one who did not know what people were talking about:

We don't have enough information, general information about the client, the diagnosis of the client, and [the stage of their application]. They have already lodged application and get the funding approved, etc. Last time we've [the NDIS officer and the interpreter] got a son with Autism and also, we're talking about a daughter and then towards the end of this conversation, I realise the daughter is actually a dog because they say how is Emily? Have you taken Emily to the vet clinic? I said, what vet clinic? So, everybody understands, everybody knows exactly what's going on, but not interpreters.

NDIS service providers sometimes operate under the assumption that interpreters have been continuously involved and are thus familiar with the ongoing discussions and case specifics. However, this is not the reality. The lack of information becomes particularly problematic in scenarios where

interpreters are brought into a conversation midway, such as when they are called to replace another interpreter who may have been disconnected during a phone session. In these instances, interpreters find themselves thrown into discussions without any background information, significantly impairing their ability to provide quality interpreting and disadvantaging the CALD client at the same time. For example, MAN-M2 remarked that

When it comes to some phone calls in the middle of their case, they started talking a lot about a very specific program or a service that they and the client have talked about multiple times, but it's the first time for the interpreter, so the officer may take it for granted that we are very familiar with that topic or with that service or with that program. But in fact, we are not very informed.

This sub-theme reinforces sub-themes I-1.1, I-1.2 and I-1.3 in that more training is needed for NDIS officers on how to work with interpreters, the need to brief the interpreter, the need to provide context for topics under discussion during an assignment, and the need to set up protocols for NDIS workers to follow when booking interpreters for CALD clients.

#### *Sub-Theme I-2.2: Complicated System or Process*

The complexities inherent in the NDIS present a significant challenge not only for interpreters but also for the CALD clients they serve. Interpreters, particularly those who have less experience working in the NDIS context, have reported difficulties in understanding and effectively navigating the system's processes. Not fully understanding how the system operates hinders interpreters' ability to facilitate quality service. JAP-F expressed her view: "The NDIS system itself is quite complicated...what kind of requirement, what the steps are, I don't know." Similarly, THA-F stated that

You really have to understand the whole process...There's a first appointment interview that can take quite a long time. Then there's an outcome that they would tell you sometimes over the phone...There was confusion about the funding as well, because when you get the NDIS funding, it doesn't actually go into your bank account.

As previously mentioned, the concept of the NDIS as a model of disability support and the services under the scheme are relatively new to many CALD community members. As was shared by TUR-F,

It's just sometimes the non-English speaker and doesn't understand what the NDIS provides. They don't know what their entitlements are like. They say it is self-managed or they can have a provider that can manage the whole thing for them, so that aspect of it. Because often they say I'd like to join NDIS because I want somebody to clean my room or clean my house or cut my grass and all that.

For these clients, the absence of a familiar point of reference or a similar system in their home countries means that it is even more difficult for them to grasp how the scheme works and what it involves. Identifying who the providers are in the NDIS, their roles, and the purpose of their visits can be confusing. According to MAC-F's observation,

Often for the LOTE, a lot of these issues are happening all at once, so they often haven't had help. And then all of a sudden, whether it's a hospital visit or something's happened, and then suddenly heaps of people are rocking up and there is often confusion. Who are you? Where are you from? What is your role here? And it doesn't help saying, my name's Laura. I'm your case manager from the NDIS. But say, what am I doing here? What's the purpose of me coming to your house? Because often what I've observed is the way that they'll refer to whoever came, the people that came here last week, the ladies that came a while ago. So, the fact that the LOTE is not able to recall which particular organisation probably suggests they don't fully understand their role or what they're there to do, they know someone came out, but they are unable to pinpoint and what that means is NDIS is having to figure out well who was there, what did they do, what did they look like?

To improve client-centred care, more professional development is needed for interpreters to gain a better contextual understanding of the NDIS and for NDIS workers to cultivate competence in interlingual communication.

### *Sub-Theme I-2.3: Lack of Continuity*

Lack of continuity of relationships with CALD clients in NDIS settings emerged as another key feedback from the participant interpreters. They pointed out the rarity of working with a client throughout their entire NDIS journey. In fact, certain language service providers actively prevent it from happening. This often results in interpreters being brought into assignments mid-case, not knowing what has been discussed in the previous sessions, thus experiencing difficulties in grasping the context of the conversation and providing the best quality interpretation. BCS-F explained,

For example, if you get certain clients when they have touched base with the NDIS for the 4th or 5th time and they still don't know how certain things work. You don't know what was explained to them before. Because you were not there, someone else was there. I believe they always have interpreters, but it is tricky. If you follow up one client from the beginning, for example from the first contact with the NDIS until the last one or first five or six, then you would say for sure what has been done.

While certain NDIS officers may provide interpreters with some contextual information, it tends to take valuable time from already limited session time. Skipping this step, however, will inevitably lead to confusion: "Different interpreters turn up, and then you probably have to explain the case scenario again. If you don't explain the case scenario, we feel lost. But if you explain the case scenario, it's very time consuming because we normally have only 45, 60 minutes for one session" (MAN-M1).

Limited session time was another difficulty raised by the participant interpreters, which, as they observed, led to two main issues: (1) the service provider tended to speak too fast and did not allow sufficient time for the interpreter to complete their interpretation; and (2) the constrained appointment time often meant there was no opportunity to check whether the client fully comprehended what was relayed to them, nor was there adequate time to fully understand the client's needs.



#### *Sub-Theme I-2.4: The Use of Telephone Interpreting*

Within the NDIS context, interpreting services are provided via a mix of communication modes: face-to-face appointments, video calls, and telephone interpreting. A number of participant interpreters expressed strong reservations about the use of telephone interpreting, with one suggesting that it should never be used in NDIS settings. The challenges posed by telephone interpreting relate to technical difficulties, such as noise and poor connection, but also to the lack of visual feedback, including facial expressions and body language from the clients, which are valuable to interpreters in aiding the comprehension of meanings and gauging the success of the communication. The two following examples pinpoint the issues confronted by interpreters:

The phone interpreting jobs are just horrendous. With the noise and the interferences and being on the phone for a good two hours, absolutely consumed in two hours of speaking and switching languages. It is really exhausting. (ARA-F)

When you are on the phone, you can't see the client and client can't see you. So there is no body clues or facial expressions or anything. Then you'll become tired if you are repeating things many times if they don't understand. If the line is very bad, and you can't hear well, it becomes a bit frustrating. (BCS-F)

In situations where there are multiple participants, it becomes difficult for the interpreter to even identify the speaker because there are no visual cues available, let alone if there are technological issues:

Many people like the NDIS planner, the service coordinator, the service to supply accommodation, and support workers, many different services, they all attend the appointment. When they are on the phone, it is difficult to recognise which service the voice belongs to, especially if they have technical errors. (VIE-F1)

Considering the higher vulnerability of CALD clients in the NDIS, clear and effective communication is a prerequisite of client-centredness. Minimising the use of telephone interpreting should be prioritised.

### **Theme I-3: Interactional Management Challenges**

The presence of multiple parties in a NDIS appointment created interactional management challenges for interpreters. When multiple speakers are involved, conversations can flow in different ways making it extremely difficult for interpreters to follow and interpret everything. At times, the NDIS officer and the coordinator may even engage in side conversations in English, thus linguistically excluding the CALD client. KOR-F described one such experience.

Sometimes there is a client, and a client can be two people, like mother and son, and then there is the support coordinator, and then there's sometimes the supervisor of the support coordinator joining as well. And then there's the NDIS officer. That's 5 people already. They can have conversations this way, that way, between these two, among those three. It gets very confusing...so [I need to jump in and say], "look, for this part, you have to speak in English directly if you want to say something to the officer." If the officer and the coordinator start to have a conversation in English, I'm the one who has to say, "hey, stop, wait a minute, doesn't the client need to know what you two have been talking about."

There was often the presence of other family members in NDIS encounters, creating challenges for participant interpreters to manage discourse effectively. MAC-M observed "a big dynamic shift ... [as] the son or the daughter will then sort of veer the conversation away from the LOTE speaker." An account provided by MAN-F1 effectively depicted the disruption in such a situation:

Most of the times, it's home visits, so the family members will be with them when the staff or case managers are there, and a lot of the times, the family members are too protective. They are too good an advocate for the patient. So sometimes when the professional asks the question and then the family member would be really keen and eager to answer that question for the patient.

But the patient would try to stop him, “no, that’s not what I mean” or “just shut up.” But then the family member would be, “no, you don’t understand what you’re talking about.”

Some participant interpreters suggested that the NDIS officer should take on a more proactive role in housekeeping and managing these multi-party conversations. At the outset of conversation, the NDIS officer should clarify the interpreter’s role to everyone involved. If participants start talking over each other, the officer should intervene to organise orderly turn-taking as the CALD client has the right to know what is being said.

Participant interpreters also noted that NDIS officers needed to pay more attention to whether the CALD client “understand(s) the system, (and) if they really understand it” (VIE-F2), because “often though, a lot of the LOTE [clients], they’ll just nod their head and go, “yes, yes, yes” but you can see the message is not getting cut through” (MAC-M).

#### **Theme I-4: Cultural Challenges with Clients**

Cultural issues emerged as a recurring theme in the interviews with many participant interpreters, as language does not exist in a vacuum but is intertwined with the culture it operates in. Words that might seem neutral in one language can carry a negative or offensive connotation in another. Such sensitivities need to be navigated by interpreters with care.

I think the word disability itself as well. It’s a bit...We have a few equivalences in Thai for this word, so when I interpret, I try not to make it sound too offensive. It’s hard for them, especially when a parent with a child with ADHD or autism. Because if I use the incorrect word, they will [perceive] it as someone in a wheelchair or someone crippled. (THA-F)

In certain cultures, individuals may adopt a more reserved approach to communication, especially in formal or professional settings. This may be influenced by cultural values that one should not burden others with seemingly minor issues. For example, JAP-F shared

So, if the service provider asks, “do you have any questions?” Normally the answer is no. But beforehand, they told me they were concerned about this, this and this. But when officially being asked, the parents would just say “no, we are ok.” This is probably a cultural thing. The system in Japan is a bit different and the service they are given through NDIS is more than what they expected...[So], there is a bit of hesitation [in voicing their concerns].

Individuals may perceive NDIS professionals and interpreters as outsiders, which can lead to hesitancy in sharing sensitive information which is useful or critical for their case. As HIN-F’s comment illustrates, they are worried about “airing dirty laundry”: “It is a cultural thing that people don’t tell about themselves. They think the professional is a stranger and the interpreter is a stranger, so they are hesitant to tell, especially very sensitive things.” In such instances, it is important for the interpreter to reassure the participant that all the information shared will be kept confidential.

Attitudes towards disability vary widely across different cultures and societies. Stigmatisation may stem from a fear of being socially excluded or a concern about bringing shame to the family. Such cultural inhibition may “prevent the clients from reaching out to the service because it’s a stigma and it’s not something they would like to speak about” (MAN-M2), or “sometimes at the early stages of determining if they need a NDIS plan or they can be a participant or not, they are not really forthcoming” (MAN-F2).

## **Interviews: Translators**

To give due voice to translators who have translated NDIS texts, this section presents the themes derived from the participant translators.

### **Theme T-1: Linguistic Challenges**

#### *Sub-Theme T-1.1: NDIS-Specific Terminology*

Echoing the linguistic challenges faced by participant interpreters, translators working in the NDIS context also expressed issues with NDIS-specific terminology in written communication. ARA-FT

explained the challenges of translating NDIS plans for clients because “there was new language, new vocabulary...There is a paragraph that refers to the NDIS rules or code...and the different kind of assistance. And ‘capacity building’. So that kind of explanation was important to get right.”

As new service roles and terms are being developed, so are the challenges faced by translators. They often find themselves having to invent new expressions in the target language, and being apprehensive about whether the aim of communication is achieved. SWA-FT stated

There were these things called community connectors. They were in NT. So they were people who are from Council, I think, who would be helping, say NDIS clients, but other clients as well to connect with good services or services that might assist them. But that’s a new concept...I just had to make a word up... It’s hard when services invent new English words and you’ve got to invent Swahili words, but you don’t know if people are going to really understand them well.

ARA-FT also attested to constant terminological challenges and the flawed last resort of leaving certain terms in English untranslated.

... a recent one that I did last month was when they launched “the NDIS navigators” who are certain employees employed by NDIS in schools and especially specialist schools to help people navigate the NDIS system. The word “navigator” itself—there is a direct translation to it, but I can’t use that direct translation, because that word conjures to mind the marine navigation that you navigate in sea or air navigation. So, it took me a while like 3 or 4 attempts to find a suitable phrase to put it and I couldn’t. I had to leave it in English, and I really don’t like to keep words in English inside the Arabic text because they are two different scripts.

All participant translators commented on the importance and usefulness of the definition of terms provided by the NDIS, which were instrumental in helping them understand the underlying meaning of the words. As stated in Sub-Theme I-1.1, the available translations are not exhaustive and are heterogenous across different sources. So a concerted effort to establish a central terminology bank

with up-to-date English terms and unified translation into community languages should urgently be explored and attempted.

### *Sub-Theme T-1.2: Interlinguistic Transfer Challenges*

Producing translation in different target languages calls for many considerations in desktop publishing. Different languages have different rules and conventions for text orientation (i.e., from left to right, such as English, or right to left, such as Arabic) and layout (e.g., differences in punctuation, the use of bold face and italics, and target text expansion or contraction). In the case of Arabic, “there are no small letters or capital letters. So, as it is within all English texts, they are fond of abbreviations, [but] I can’t do abbreviations. I have to state the term as is” (ARA-FT). Abbreviation is a common feature of the English language, used to save space, improve readability, or signify importance, but translators must use other linguistic resources and approved conventions in the target language when it is not transferrable. Language differences also led to target language formatting and spacing challenges for the participant translators. For example, non-Latin scripts such as Arabic and Chinese require adjustments in font size and line spacing to maintain readability of the translated texts and layout consistency with the source text. As remarked on by SWA-FT, there is furthermore the issue of target text expansion: “In the [NDIS] plans, I found the formatting difficult because they’ve got boxes for goals and budgets, and if the Swahili took up more words than the English, they wouldn’t fit in. So sometimes I’d have to re-size or I’d have the formatting sort of disappear and [it] becomes tricky to use.”

Syntactical differences between languages also pose challenges to translators in formatting the target text. For instance, the Turkish language is characterised by its subject-object-verb sentence structure, in contrast to the subject-verb-object structure in English. As TUR-FT pointed out, “Even with that plain language NDIS booklet. It was kind of formulated in bullet points, and bullet points are impossible. You have to invent [a way to present the information] ...”. This accentuates the issue that the source text was not necessarily translation friendly and requires conscious decisions from the translator to render the target text in ways that are acceptable and communicative to the target readers.

Further, what is natural and idiomatic in English may not be transferrable into the target language. For example, Arabic tends to employ a more impersonal style, especially in formal communication. The default pronoun in such contexts is often the third person, as ARA-FT explained.

[Another example] is the personal discourse that they use, my NDIS, my NDIS contact, my goals. So, this “my”, when I translate into Arabic, is really awkward because I have to say, “that is pertaining to me”. It’s another two extra words that I have put that is unnatural to Arabic. It renders the text marked. Because in Arabic the usual discourse for correspondence or for any fact sheets or for anything, it is not even the second person, but it’s the third person default pronoun that we use, which is he. It wouldn’t be personalised. So, there is no “I” or “your” or “my” in our discourse. So, all of these are already abundantly present in NDIS source text: “your NDIS contact”, “my portal”, “my place”, “my capital”... All this type of discourse is not present [in the Arabic language].

## **Theme T-2: Sociocultural and Conceptual Challenges**

Regional variation of a language is a factor to consider in translation. For example, Swahili spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique are not exactly the same. SWA-FT explained that the term for “brother” in Kenyan Swahili carries a different meaning in Tanzanian Swahili, where it would be understood as “comrade” or a general word for “relative”: “So, this can be a bit tricky...In other languages I think it’s similar that there are different kinds of aunties, so you need to know what kind of auntie they are or uncle.”

Similar to Sub-Theme I-1.2, sociocultural and conceptual differences emerged as a common challenge for the translator group. Translatability, or rather untranslatability, was a constant struggle for the participant translators, as certain words or concepts do not exist or have no exact equivalent in the target language. For example, “there are some words that have had to be left in English because there is no translation equivalence, like the word ‘picnic’...I never remember seeing people in Tanzania having picnics except the English people” (SWA-FT).

Unlike English used in largely egalitarian Australian society, in many other cultures and languages, the use of pronouns and forms of address signals social, interpersonal and hierarchical relationships. For instance, in the case of the Turkish language, the choice of pronoun affects the formality of the language. Using an individual's first name is seen as informal, which could be inappropriate in professional or formal settings, according to TUR-FT.

### **Theme T-3: Inadequate Source Text Quality**

Participant translators pointed out that the quality of certain source texts was less than ideal. NDIS plans appeared to account for a significant proportion of participants' work in this field and it was reported that these documents were not translation friendly. As was described by TUR-FT: "They're a bit challenging. They're not super easy to read for someone who's not familiar with those terms. So, I would say in that sense, they weren't quite written with translation in mind, except for that booklet that was completely designed for this purpose in mind."

Further, the quality of writing of NDIS workers in these plans appeared to be inconsistent, which not only presented challenges for translators, but also created unnecessary confusion for CALD clients. While CHI-FT and SWA-FT did not report experiences of inadequate quality of source materials, ARA-FT did:

Sometimes the quality of the letter [about the NDIS plan] isn't OK. The start of the text, the paragraph is, for example, my goals or my living arrangements. They would start in "I", "I live with my daughter", or "I live alone in a government housing" etc. Then they move on to say that "her daughter only comes whenever she can because of her family arrangement or responsibilities", for example. But I can't change it. Even if it's a third person, I can't do it in the first person. It confuses the person reading. OK, I'm starting with "I", with the first-person pronoun and then I'm shifting to the third person.



This theme highlights the mixed authorship of NDIS source texts and the heterogeneous quality of writing impacting on the communication received by the CALD client. This is yet another factor affecting client-centredness in NDIS communication.

#### **Theme T-4: Cultural Clashes**

Similar to Theme I-4 in the interpreter interviews, the participant translators also reported challenges regarding cultural sensitivity when working in the NDIS context. Translators expressed the need to take into account cultural nuances and connotations of certain words and exercise care in their choice of words and phrases in the target text to ensure their translations are respectful and culturally appropriate: “it may be difficult to translate a person with disability rather than a disabled person, into Turkish in a meaningful way that is not offensive. They are the things that need to be looked at carefully and not just literally translated, like translating deaf and disability related terms” (TUR-FT).

The participant translators also pointed out the issue of stigmatisation surrounding disability within certain cultures, and the association of intellectual disability with mental illness. Some CALD community members may refuse to accept the term “intellectual disability” due to the negative connotations it projects within their cultures. This not only impacts precise communication and understanding but also has practical implications, including the potential rejection of applications for NDIS services. ARA-FT offered insights into such situations:

The cultural factors, especially it comes up with the term “intellectual disability” because of the stigma that is associated with disability in my culture, which is a related or it can be substituted in the collective brain of Arabs as mental illness... There is a certain wording that needs to be put in NDIS context in order to gain access. If the person assessing the application doesn't find the term intellectual disability, for example, access wouldn't be granted... Some clients refuse to accept the term that their child has intellectual disability. He told me “My son is not crazy” ... They mix up intellectual disability with mental illness ... Even if a child has a speech delay, if you tell [the parent], your son has developmental delay, he would think that he [the son] is retarded.

He is mentally retarded, so it's not a developmental delay. It's a mental retardedness [*sic*] even though the terms are different.

Similar to Theme T-3, this theme calls for attention both by the translator and the NDIS worker. For the former, careful production of the target text that is respectful and avoids stigmatising expressions should be prioritised. For the latter, interactions with the CALD client should be guided by client-centredness, so cultural inhibitors should be identified and skilfully navigated so the report can be written, and therefore translated, in a way that is going to provide assistance suitable for the client.

## Discussions

The survey results and the thematic analyses of the interviews outlined so far provide the landscape of NDIS communication with CALD clients observed from the perspective of T&I practitioners. This section presents the discussions guided by the research questions.

### Q1: Are there any challenges? What are they?

Although Figure 7 shows that 66% of participant interpreters had either very positive (16%) or positive (50%) experiences working in NDIS/disability settings, various challenges were identified in both the survey and the interviews. According to Figure 9, interactional issues with CALD clients, their carers, and family members were identified as a challenge by a majority of the respondent interpreters (71%), followed by system-related challenges (64%). Almost half of the respondent interpreters (49%) also thought interacting with NDIS professionals presented challenges.

Further, using the qualitative data from the interviews, the challenges in NDIS communication can be categorised into: (1) thematic; (2) linguistic; (3) sociocultural; (4) interactional; and (5) systemic, which will be discussed below.

#### (1) Thematic

Sub-themes I-2.1 and I-2.2 highlight the complexities of the NDIS and its challenging nature to both the interpreter and the CALD client. For the former, the difficulty arises from the ad-hoc engagement of interpreters in the NDIS and their fleeting relationship with the CALD client (Sub-theme I-2.3),

making it difficult to accumulate experience and to foster familiarity with any individual client case. The survey findings pointed to respondent interpreters' positive attitude towards the usefulness of specialised training (see Figures 6), and the higher likelihood of positive work experiences in NDIS when they had specialised training (see Figure 8). It is, therefore, without a doubt that professional development effort should be directed to interpreters to build their thematic knowledge in this domain.

## (2) Linguistic

As are revealed in Sub-themes I-1.1 and T-1.1, both groups of interviewees vocalised similar linguistic challenges due to the complexity of the NDIS system and its specialised terminology, compounded by a lack of equivalent for some concepts and services in the target culture and language. This results in (un)translatability and the need to employ strategies such as paraphrasing (i.e., stating something without using the equivalent word in the target language either because the term does not exist or the equivalent exists but does not make sense in the context) or substitution (i.e., using a concept or term which is close or relevant but not exactly the same as in the source language). It is, therefore, extremely useful to have a good-quality translated NDIS glossary into community languages for T&I practitioners to access to ensure the translations received by CALD clients are consistent regardless of different practitioners they may get language services from. However, the reality of decentralised translation services in all domains of government services, including the NDIS, face similar challenges of heterogeneous translations produced across different sources, inconsistent coverage of languages, and a lack of systematic reviews and updates. Currently there are only two known NDIS glossaries available online, one developed by CEH in 2019 covering 71 terms in five languages (Arabic, Farsi, Chinese, Turkish and Vietnamese)<sup>1</sup> and the other provided by the NDIS itself covering 43 terms in 12 languages<sup>2</sup>. While many social services and NDIS service delivery agencies have contributed to a growing collection of translated NDIS information made available on their websites or downloadable pamphlets, NDIS terminology in them features inconsistent translations even in the same community language. It is time to consider a regularly updated NDIS terminology bank centrally managed by the NDIS itself which offers authoritative and standardised bilingual glossaries in community languages for T&I practitioners and CALD community members. The NDIS is particularly suited to pursue this

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to CEH website: <https://www.ceh.org.au/resource-hub/glossary-of-terms-disability-services-multilingual-resource/>

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the list of languages: <https://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/resources/glossary-of-ndis-key-words>

opportunity as it has a clear target population of CALD clients and a defined oversight agency, NDIA, which can take charge of this endeavour.

The challenges of NDIS translation are not unique to this domain alone. Rather, they are ubiquitous in community translation for all domains, where the drafting of source texts for public services often does not take into account the potential of translation further down the track. In 2022, AUSIT and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) jointly published a set of guidelines for organisations engaging in translation of community communications for CALD communities. The guidelines emphasise the importance of identifying target community groups and understanding target audience needs. It also provides a list of recommendations for source text drafting, where “use plain language” occupies the most prominent position (AUSIT, 2022, pp. 3-4). According to the guidelines, to achieve plain language, the text produced should:

- Keep sentences short
- Use simple and clear messaging
- Use visual aids to support key points
- Break up complex actions with step-by-step instructions
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid use of uncommon idiomatic and colloquial expressions.

The guidelines also make reference to the use of easy English for those who “experience difficulties reading and understanding English” (AUSIT, 2022, p. 12), in addition to plain English, which is “a direct writing style for those who can read reasonably well. Its use is encouraged where information needs to be read and understood quickly” (AUSIT, 2022, p. 12). It is encouraging that a number of NDIS information resources have been available in both plain English and/or easy English. Admittedly, the translation challenges reported in this study may not be fully resolved by plain and easy English. However, it is a good starting point to produce more translation-friendly texts.

### (3) Sociocultural

Under Sub-themes I-1.2, I-1.3 and Theme I-4, participant interpreters all referred to sociocultural differences, including cultural views on disability and apprehension about sharing disability in the

family with others. It should be noted that interpreters may observe these issues due to their cultural affinity, but may not be able to address them for the CALD client due to their role boundaries. Good language services cannot be achieved unilaterally by the interpreter alone. Therefore, intercultural training for NDIS workers will enable them to be more vigilant in their interactions with the CALD client and to develop client-centred strategies to reassure the client that the aim of their work is to provide the best possible solution for them and their family, and that none of the communication will leave the room. It will also be beneficial to have a debriefing session after such encounters for an interprofessional dialogue about what worked well and what did not to enable ongoing improvement on both ends.

Similarly, to address sociocultural issues effectively in NDIS translation (refer to Theme T-2), it highlights the importance of communication between the translator and the commissioning party to confirm the intended target readership so as to enable the translator to use the appropriate language variety or, if necessary, to locate an appropriate translator proficient in the language variety in question. Further, translators must also be acutely aware of the purpose of translation in the NDIS context and prioritise the success of communication with the target readers over conventional faithfulness to the source text. According to the AUSIT–FECCA (2022) guidelines for community communications, it is advisable that translations produced for the NDIS go through a “community review panel”, consisting of members from the target community who provide feedback on a draft translation, including translation reception (i.e., how the translation might be perceived and received by the target community), comprehensibility (i.e., the extent to which the translation is readable and understandable to an average community member), and cultural appropriateness (i.e., whether the translation and visuals are culturally appropriate). This panel may also be able to identify any possible language issues overlooked by the translator and reviser (AUSIT, 2022, pp. 8-9).

#### (4) Interactional

Under Sub-theme I-1.1 where participant interpreters described the challenges of interpreting for NDIS workers when they provide no or insufficient context of what they were talking about with the CALD client, one could argue that interpreters can always ask for clarification or request additional explanation in such situations, which is the right course of action. There is, however, a reluctance

among practitioners to frequently interrupt the conversation for clarifications or explanations. The interviewees voiced concerns about the potential disruption to the flow of communication this may cause, as well as the perception that it could reflect poorly on their competence. This feedback points to the need for NDIS assignments to proactively provide key concepts, terms, and the purpose of the meeting in the booking information relayed to the interpreter. This would enable the interpreter to undertake targeted preparation and enhance interactional dynamics and quality of interpretation.

Similarly, under Sub-theme I-1.2, participant interpreters reported difficulties in interpreting concepts or terms in NDIS which do not have linguistic and/or cultural equivalent into the target language, while the NDIS worker did not seem to appreciate such difficulties. This feedback points to the need for NDIS worker to receive more training on how to work with interpreters and to raise their awareness on providing context for appropriate interlingual transfers. This corresponds to the statistics in Figure 11 which suggests that those with more positive experiences working in NDIS/disability settings tend to believe professionals understand the role of interpreters better than those with less positive experiences. However, regardless of their general experience level, there is a strong consensus that training on how to work with interpreters is needed for NDIS/disability professionals.

Further, Theme I-3 highlighted the phenomenon of *gratuitous concurrence*, which has been well documented in Australia with Aboriginal people and, to a lesser extent, with CALD community members. When people from these cohorts are not fully comprehending what is being said, but do not want to admit that they do not understand, they have been observed to express apparent agreement because it is the safest thing to do (Eades, 2016; Gray, 2022). Although the existing scholarship predominantly relates to interviews with police or lawyers, or during courtroom questioning, the common issue in NDIS settings is the presence of power imbalance which produces apparent, but not real, agreement. This points to the need for NDIS workers to develop awareness of the concept of *linguistic presence* for their CALD clients. This concept originates in the right of a defendant in the courtroom to be afforded the ability to spontaneously understand who says what in the proceedings through interpretation if they do not speak the language of the court. Without linguistic presence, it is like the defendant is forced to observe the proceedings from a soundproofed booth where they are only able to observe but unable to comprehend what is going on (González et al., 1991). Client-centredness

calls for NDIS workers to be vigilant of the CALD client's (and other family members') comprehension of the communication and be observant of *gratuitous concurrence* arising from cultural gaps and power imbalances. When there are other family members in the communication, the NDIS worker must also have the skill to manage orderly input by every participant, while paying attention to the CALD client's right of autonomy in case of the tendency of vocal family members dominating the discussion.

#### (5) Systemic

Lack of continuity with the CALD client (Sub-theme I-2.3) was identified by participant interpreters to have prevented them from providing quality language services, as they were unable to familiarise themselves with client cases, leading to more prominent challenges in rendering conceptual and socio-relational challenges (Sub-theme I-1.2), in matching the client's language or dialect variation (Sub-theme I-1.3), and navigating cultural challenges (Theme I-4). Continuity of interpreter has been identified as an important factor in other settings including health and psychology (Pardy, 1995; American Psychological Society, 2013; Foundation House, 2023). Improvements to the system are needed to consider booking the same interpreter for the same client and a set of protocols for NDIS workers to follow when making bookings, including providing basic case information, relevant diagnosis, the stage of application, the purpose of the meeting, language or dialect variation required, gender or ethnicity preference, if any, and allocating enough assignment time for unrushed communication and briefing and debriefing time.

Difficulties in locating an interpreter of the right language or dialect variation is not unique to NDIS settings. Ultimately the CALD client is always the one who is disadvantaged. It is, therefore, important to strengthen NDIS protocols when engaging interpreters to achieve the best match for the client. In the worst case scenario, where no credentialed interpreters are available in the language variety or dialect, the NDIS could consider adopting the model proposed by the Judicial Council for Diversity and Inclusion (JCIDI, 2022) for courts and tribunals: when uncredentialed interpreters attend court or tribunal assignments, a professional mentor is sent to support the interpreter by providing guidance on ethical conduct, interactional issues with various courtroom players, and any matters arising from the assignment. A professional mentor is an experienced interpreter from an established language who has received interpreting training and has extensive experience interpreting in courts and tribunals. This is

obviously more costly and complex to organise and coordinate. However, it should not be disregarded because it is “too hard”. When a Deaf person has limited exposure to Auslan and uses a home signing system or an idiosyncratic signing style, it is possible to provide interpretation by a Deaf interpreter, who is able to more readily understand this type of signing, and to team up with a hearing Auslan interpreter, who can then mediate between the Deaf interpreter and the NDIS officer. The mentor model proposed by the JCDI is not that different from this Deaf interpreter–hearing Auslan interpreter team in the NDIS setting.

The prevalence of using telephone interpreting in NDIS communication posed a big issue for participant interpreters. The drawbacks are not unique to NDIS settings and echo the findings of other studies on telephone interpreting in various work contexts (cf. Hale et al., 2022; Jaiteh et al., 2022; Joseph et al., 2018; Lion et al., 2015; Locatis et al., 2010; Price et al., 2012; Saeki et al., 2022; Schulz et al., 2015). Although these studies cover diverse contexts (e.g., police interview, primary care, paediatric or medical encounters) and heterogenous study designs (e.g., comparing different interpreting modes such as onsite vs. remote, video interpreting vs. telephone interpreting; focus on practitioners’ feedback, clients’ responses, or interpreters’ perspectives), none of the studies finds telephone interpreting to be superior to video remote interpreting or onsite face-to-face interpreting. Considering the higher vulnerability of CALD clients in the NDIS, clear and effective communication is a prerequisite of client-centredness. Given the overwhelming evidence from existing literature, urgent attention should be devoted to minimising the use of telephone interpreting, if total elimination is not yet achievable.

## **Q2: Are there any specific skills or knowledge required? What are they?**

Table 3 revealed that the respondent interpreters considered all the knowledge and skills probed in Q19 important (i.e., all achieved a mean score of higher than 4 out of 5) for their work in the NDIS and disability fields, with “language skills” ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) and “ethics and role” ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) receiving the highest ratings. Table 5 below cross references the items from Table 3 with the qualitative data from both the interpreter and translator interviews, which confirms the presence of all items in the interview data. The items were also mapped with the skills and competencies for



interpreters specified by NAATI (n.d.) as part of the review outcomes for the *Improvements to NAATI Testing Project* (NAATI, 2016). “Interpreting skills” and “interactional management skills” are mapped against the “transfer competency” as defined by NAATI. By the same token, “understanding the NDIS and how it works”, “specialist terminology”, “understanding the work of service providers / professionals in these settings”, and “understanding disabilities” are all related to thematic competency and must be researched in order for the practitioner to perform, and therefore the four items are grouped under the two competencies. The only exception is “technical competency” listed under the NAATI column, which is not probed in Q19 in the survey. The interview data contains references to challenges in performing NDIS interpreting via telephone interpreting, as well as typesetting skills required for translators, and therefore it is deemed present in the interview data. It should be noted that according to Figure 8, “ongoing professional development” (82%) and “access to specialist resources” (70%) were chosen by the highest numbers of respondent interpreters to be the type of support they needed. This provides directions for future effort in developing practitioners’ competencies working in NDIS/disability settings.

Table 5  
*Specialised Skills and Knowledge for Interpreters and Translators*

Skills & knowledge probed in Q19 in survey	Present in interview data	Corresponding NAATI skills & competencies
Language skills	√	Language competency
Interpreting skills (e.g. chuchotage)	√	Transfer competency
Interactional management skills	√	
Understanding the NDIS and how it works	√	
Specialist terminology	√	Thematic competency Research competency
Understanding the work of service providers/professionals in these settings	√	
Understanding disabilities	√	
Communication and interaction with people with disabilities	√	Service provision competency
Cultural competence and diversity	√	Intercultural competency
Ethics and role	√	Ethical competency
	√	Technical competency

### **Q3: What can be done to improve the status quo?**

This research highlights a range of systemic, intercultural and interlinguistic issues impacting communication in NDIS settings. These challenges hinder both service providers and T&I practitioners' ability to deliver quality services, ultimately affecting the experiences of CALD clients and other parties involved. The challenges identified by this study highlight the shared responsibility to address the problems in alignment with client-centred approaches. This shared responsibility translates into the following recommendations to achieve quality service delivery for CALD clients and other participants including families and carers.

## **Recommendations**

Interpreters and translators focused:

1. Make NDIS training and continuous professional development compulsory for interpreters and translators in order to gain a better understanding of the system, its specialist terminology, and specific cultural and ethical challenges prior to attending any assignments, as well as keeping up to date with NDIS developments.
2. Interpreters and NDIS professionals to forge inter-professional dialogues to inform and share observations and insights to achieve client-centredness.

NDIS/Disability professionals focused:

3. NDIS professionals to receive training in how interpreting works (e.g., the concept of linguistic presence, literal interpreting vs. meaning-based interpreting) and how to work with interpreters effectively (e.g., manage orderly turn-taking, proactively provide contextual information for the topic under discussion, be observant of CALD client responses).
4. NDIS professionals to take on a more proactive role in managing the flow of conversations, especially when there are multiple parties present, to facilitate better interpreting quality.
5. NDIS professionals to receive training on interlingual and intercultural communication to be sensitised about CALD client inhibitors of expressing needs and demonstrating comprehension (e.g., spotting gratuitous concurrence, reassuring them about privacy).

6. NDIS professionals to be more observant in ensuring that clients understand the information that is relayed to them, in assessing whether the presence of family members is helpful or distracting, and in encouraging participants to share information when they seem less open, possibly due to cultural reasons.

NDIS system focused:

7. NDIS to set up protocols for NDIS professionals to supply essential information to interpreters in order to facilitate pre-assignment preparation, including the NDIS participant's basic information, their diagnosis, the stage of the application, the purpose of the meeting and who will attend the meeting.
8. NDIS to put briefing procedures in place prior to commencing meetings with CALD clients to allow NDIS professionals to speak with interpreters separately and share essential information about the case and the purpose of the meeting.
9. NDIS to allow sufficient assignment time for briefing interpreters and for communication with CALD clients to be unhurried, providing for time to check client understanding.
10. NDIS to use telephone interpreting as a last resort. Onsite or video interpreting should be the default mode of meeting, especially for long plan meetings and for meetings where multiple parties are involved.
11. NDIS to book the same interpreter for the CALD client throughout the NDIS journey to ensure continuity of care, wherever possible.
12. NDIS to put in place protocols to address situations where credentialed interpreters in certain languages or dialects are not available for CALD clients. A non-credentialed bilingual person should be booked with another credentialed senior interpreter so the latter can provide mentorship. This model is based on the *Recommended National Standards for Working with Interpreters in Courts and Tribunals*.
13. NDIS communications to be written using plain English and with translation in mind.
14. NDIS translations to be commissioned, translated, and checked following the *Recommended Protocols for the Translation of Community Communications* developed by AUSIT and FECCA.

15. NDIS to build an in-house workforce to cater for (a) a terminology repository that is centrally managed and regularly maintained to ensure consistency of translations and timely updates for all stakeholders and end-users to access; (b) desktop and webpage publishing for all required community languages featured and appended on NDIS and NDIA websites to ensure knowhow of multilingual publishing is retained in-house for consistency and high-quality communication.

## Conclusion

Built upon data collected from a national survey administered among interpreters and in-depth interviews conducted with interpreters and translators working in the NDIS context, this study has gained insights into challenges in NDIS communication faced by CALD clients from the perspective of T&I practitioners.

The key findings bring to the foreground the multifaceted nature of the communication in NDIS settings, categorised into five distinct areas: thematic, linguistic, socio-cultural, interactional, and systemic. The inherent complexity of NDIS communication calls for T&I practitioners to possess critical skills and knowledge in their language, transfer, thematic, research, service provision, intercultural, ethical, and technical competencies. This accentuates the importance and necessity of ongoing professional development and access to specialist resources for T&I practitioners to provide quality services.

Translation and interpreting within NDIS settings is a complex and nuanced process, involving a blend of social, cultural and interpersonal factors. In order for T&I practitioners to facilitate effective communication, concerted efforts from the NDIS and NDIS professionals are essential to ensure a truly client-centred approach. This includes further training for NDIS professionals on how interpreting works and how to work effectively with interpreters. NDIS should consider setting up protocols for booking interpreting assignment to provide basic case related information to enable the interpreter to conduct pre-assignment preparation. The Recommended Protocols for the Translation of Community Communications developed by AUSIT and FECCA should be adopted for all NDIS

related translations. To ensure quality of translated NDIS terminology and information, it is highly recommended that NDIS set up an in-house workforce to retain knowledge and skills of multilingual communication and desktop publishing, the expertise of which is currently dispersed in the T&I industry leading to heterogenous translations and inconsistent services received by CALD community members.

Achieving quality communication within the NDIS framework is a shared responsibility. Only through collaborative efforts can language mediation outcomes be enhanced and the overall effectiveness of NDIS services for CALD clients be improved.

## Appendix 1

### Survey Questionnaire

#### Participant Information Consent Statement

**Title:** Perceptions of Interlingual Communication Challenges in NDIS Service Settings with CALD Clients: A Study of Interpreting/Translating Practitioners

Principal Investigator: Dr Miranda Lai

Co-Investigator: Olga Garcia-Caro

Dear interpreter,

You are invited to take part in this research project entitled “Perceptions of Interlingual Communication Challenges in NDIS Service Settings with CALD Clients: A Study of Interpreting/Translating Practitioners”. You have been directed to this webpage because you have responded to an advertisement email to participate in this survey.

#### **What is the purpose of this research?**

This project aims to investigate communication challenges encountered by Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) clients in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) from the perspectives of interpreters and translators. These practitioners play an important role in facilitating communication in NDIS settings, and are often the only person in the situation who have access to both English and the language other than English (LOTE). Little is known what intercultural and interlingual issues are experienced by the CALD clients when they communicate with NDIS service providers. Through investigating professional translators and interpreters who work in this specialised context, it is anticipated that insights will be gained to understand facilitators and inhibitors of successful communication for this particular NDIS client cohort in order to enhance their user experience and remove their invisibility. Another purpose of the project is to identify issues related to working in the NDIS setting for the translators and interpreters in order to enhance their work conditions and professional sustainability.

#### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research; however, you may feel a sense of satisfaction from making a contribution to expanding knowledge in the area of NDIS where CALD clients interact with service providers.

#### **What are the risks and disadvantages of taking part?**

You may feel that responding to some questions is stressful or upsetting. Participation is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. You have the right to withdraw from completing the questionnaire at any point. But once all information has been submitted, it will not be possible to withdraw your data as it will be unidentifiable.

Counselling services are available should you wish to seek support.

Service	Contact Details
Lifeline	Phone: 13 11 14 (24-hour service)
Beyond Blue	Phone: 1300 22 4636 (24-hour service)

### What happens when the research project ends?

The research project will result in recommendations on how NDIS service providers can collaborate better with interpreters and translators to facilitate best communication possible for CALD clients. There will also be academic publications and presentations in various forums.

### Who is organising and funding the research?

This project is funded by the National Ethnic Disability Alliance.

### Who has reviewed the research project?

This research project has been approved by the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee.

### Further information and who to contact

If you want any further information concerning this project, you can contact the principal investigator on (03) 9925 3523 or contact any of the following researchers:

#### Research contact person #1

Name	Dr Miranda Lai
Position	Chief Investigator
Telephone	(03) 9925 3523
Email	<a href="mailto:miranda.lai@rmit.edu.au">miranda.lai@rmit.edu.au</a>

#### Research contact person #2

Name	Olga Garcia-Caro
Position	Co-Investigator
Email	<a href="mailto:olga.garcia-caro@rmit.edu.au">olga.garcia-caro@rmit.edu.au</a>

### Complaints

Should you have any concerns or questions about this research project which you do not wish to discuss with the researchers listed in this document, then you may contact:

Reviewing HREC name	RMIT University
HREC Secretary	Anita Arndt
Telephone	03 9925 5037
Email	<a href="mailto:humanethics@rmit.edu.au">humanethics@rmit.edu.au</a>
Mailing address	Manager, Research Governance and Ethics RMIT University GPO Box 2476 MELBOURNE VIC 3001

**If I agree to participate, what will I be required to do?**

Instructions: This survey has 19 questions. Some of them are multiple-choice, others require a short answer. You will also have the opportunity to further comment on your experiences or insights about this topic. Completion of this survey will take approximately 15 minutes. You may discontinue your participation at any time. At the end of the survey, you will have the opportunity to indicate your interest in participating in an interview at a later stage.

Completing this survey will entitle you to claim 10 Professional Development points for NAATI recertification purposes under category 2.15 Industry Engagement.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Statement. By clicking this button, I am consenting to participate in this study.

1. Please indicate your gender
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other
  - d. Prefer not to answer
  
2. Please indicate your NAATI interpreting certification
  - a. Certified Conference Interpreter
  - b. Certified Specialist Health Interpreter
  - c. Certified Specialist Legal Interpreter
  - d. Certified Interpreter



- e. Certified Provisional Interpreter
  - f. Recognised Interpreter
  - g. None
3. In which language/s do you interpret?
- a. [free text] or if there is a ready list to pick
4. How long have you practised as an interpreter?
- a. Less than 3 years
  - b. 4-6 years
  - c. 7-10 years
  - d. +10 years
5. What type of employment arrangement are you in working as an interpreter? [check all that apply]
- a. Full-time, e.g. an in-house position
  - b. Part-time, e.g. an in-house position
  - c. I accept assignments from language service provider(s) as their casual employee.
  - d. I pick up assignments from language service provider(s) or private clients as an independent contractor or freelancer.
6. What is your highest education qualification?
- a. PhD
  - b. Postgraduate studies (e.g.: Grad Cert, Grad Dip, Master)
  - c. Undergraduate studies (e.g.: Bachelor's degree, Honours)
  - d. Vocational Education studies (e.g.: Certificate IV, Adv. Dip, Dip.)
  - e. Other
7. Do you hold any academic qualifications in Interpreting Studies?
- a. PhD in Interpreting Studies
  - b. Postgraduate studies in Interpreting (e.g.: Grad Cert, Grad Dip, Master)
  - c. Undergraduate studies in Interpreting (e.g.: Bachelor's degree)
  - d. Vocational Education studies in Interpreting (E.g.: Dip or Adv Dip)
  - e. None
8. On average, how often do you work in NDIS settings?
- a. 1-2 times per month
  - b. 3-4 times per month
  - c. 5+ times per month
9. Have you completed any specific training in working in NDIS/disability settings (e.g., workshop, PD course)?

- a. Yes (please specify) [to question 10]
  - b. No [to question 11]
10. In your experience was this training helpful for your work in NDIS/disability settings?
- a. Yes (please specify)
  - b. No (please specify)
11. In your experience do you think you would benefit from specialist training for interpreters working in NDIS/disability settings?
- a. Yes (please specify)
  - b. No (please specify)
12. In general, what is your experience of working in NDIS/disability settings?
- a. Very positive
  - b. Mostly positive
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Mostly negative
  - e. Very negative
13. What have been examples of your positive experiences of interpreting in NDIS/disability sector settings? [free text]
14. What have been examples of challenging experiences of interpreting in NDIS/disability sector settings? [free text]
15. Have you encountered any of the following challenges when interpreting in NDIS/disability settings? (Can be multiple answers)
- a. System-related challenges, e.g., booking processes, coordination between providers, lack of case information for preparation. [free text to elaborate]
  - b. Interacting with people with disabilities, their carers, and family members. [free text to elaborate]
  - c. Interacting with health professionals, disability professionals and/or NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) professionals. [free text to elaborate]
16. What type of support do you think should be set up by your interpreting employers? [free text]
17. In your professional experience do you think professionals in the disability and health sectors understand the role of interpreters?
- a. Yes
  - b. No, why? [free text]

18. In your professional experience do you think NDIS/disability professionals should complete training in how to work with interpreters in these settings?
- Yes
  - No
19. According to your professional experience please indicate the level of importance of the following areas of knowledge/skills an interpreter should have to work in NDIS/disability sector settings: [from very important to not important]
- Language skills
  - Interpreting skills (e.g., chuchotage)
  - Interactional management skills
  - Understanding the NDIS and how it works
  - Specialist terminology
  - Understanding the work of service providers/professionals in these settings
  - Understanding disabilities
  - Communication and interaction with people with disabilities
  - Cultural competence and diversity
  - Ethics and Role
20. In your experience of working in these settings what types of support would assist your interpreting work with NDIS/disability sector clients and professionals?
- Mentoring
  - Supervision and/or feedback system
  - Access to specialised resources
  - Ongoing professional development
  - Support for self-care and well-being
  - Technology tools for remote interpreting
  - Other (please indicate)
21. Would you like to make any other comments on this topic? Or something that perhaps hasn't been covered? [free text]
22. Would you like to participate in a one-hour interview (online) regarding this same topic? You are entitled to claim 10 PD points for NAATI recertification for the activity.
- Yes, please provide your email address: [text]
  - No, submit survey.

## Appendix 2

### Interview guide:

1. Please tell me your NAATI credential, years of being a professional interpreter/translator, and your T&I related training or education.
2. How often do you undertake NDIS assignments, e.g., on average once a month
3. How has your NDIS related work experience generally been?
4. What has been challenging?
5. Are there any issues specifically arising from the NDIS service providers?
6. Are there any issues specifically arising from the NDIS LOTE clients?
7. Have you observed any specific cultural related issues in NDIS settings?
8. Have you observed any linguistic related issues in NDIS settings?
9. What can you tell us about the NDIS related source texts you have translated? (e.g. type of texts, quality).
10. What type of translation challenges have you experienced? (e.g., cultural factors, terminology, etc)
11. What do you think should be done in order to make NDIS communication as effective as possible?
12. Are there any aspects in the NDIS setting you think impact on your performance?
13. What should be done to enable you to perform to the best of your ability?

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