

Fiji 2014

Sign Language Interpreter Training Program

Final Report

INTRODUCTION

This is the final report on the Sign Language Interpreter Training Program that took place in Suva, Fiji 30 April – 6 May 2014.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

There are a number of documents that are supplements to this report as follows:

1. My evaluation of the 4-day program
2. My evaluation of the 2-day program
3. Fiji 2014 Evaluation 4-day program
4. Fiji 2014 Evaluation 2-day program
5. Ongoing Support & Development
6. Ongoing Support & Development – Appendix A
7. Ongoing Support & Development – Appendix B
8. FJSL Interpreter Committee Strategic Plan (work in progress)
9. FJSL Interpreter Ongoing Training Program (work in progress)

These documents are attached as appendices to this report.

THE TRAINING PROGRAMS

Overall the training program was a success based on my evaluation of the programs and the participants' evaluation as detailed in documents 1-4 above. A SKYPE meeting between myself, representatives of the FJSL Interpreter Committee and ASLIA representatives discussed the evaluations in depth and overall it was agreed the training was a success.

ONGOING SUPPORT & DEVELOPMENT

Following on from the training I prepared a report for the FJSL Interpreter Committee with recommendations on how they could use the training program to reinforce learning and to hold more practical sessions in an ongoing program of training and support. I included in this templates that the committee might use as they put the program together. This report and the appendices are included as documents 5-7 above.

FINAL REPORT

This final report focuses on 2 aspects (a) training experiences and recommendations for the future interpreter training initiatives in the Australasia & Oceania region and (b) follow up work with the FJSL Interpreter to address any training related questions.

(a) Prepare a Final Report with a focus on training experiences and recommendations for the future interpreter training initiatives in the Australasia & Oceania region

Formal training in the region exists in NZ (AUT BA Program) and Australia where training is available at Diploma at Higher levels. There is no such formal training in Fiji nor, as I understand, in any other of the South Pacific island nations.

There is a need for localised formal training but it may be some time before this becomes available. In the absence of any formal training, the only real option for is for interpreters to travel to Australia or NZ to complete their formal interpreter training programs or for an external trainer to provide intensive training. The option to travel comes at some considerable cost and not really an option for many interpreters.

The cost of sending one person to another countries to study would be far greater than sending trainer to the country who could train many.

The completion of the training provided by Dr Jemina Napier and Della Goswell in 2006 provided for a level of status and recognition and the 2014 training will add to this for those awarded the Certificate of Completion for the 4-day and for the 2-day Advance program. But there is still a lack of recognition of the profession of sign language interpreter in the wider community and so the status and recognition from the completion of the training does not equate to holding a degree or some formal qualification.

There are aspirations to establish formal training at the University of the South Pacific. This would be a wonderful realisation and if it does happen it is more a long-term achievement rather than something that is likely to happen in the short to mid-term. The question is then what should happen in the short to mid-term?

The ASLIA COF funded provision of sending an external trainer to provide intensive training seems to be an effective short-term answer. To maximise effectiveness however, there probably needs to be less of a gap in provision than there was between the 2006 training by Jemina and Della and the 2014 training by myself.

SHORT TERM to MID TERM PLANS

If it were possible to send an external trainer then to maintain effectiveness I would see that happening yearly. The major role of the external trainer would be to:

- Continue to provide an intensive training program for new interpreters
- Provide an advanced program for those who completed the earlier program
- Provide a program to train experienced interpreter to become interpreter trainers
- Supporting ongoing training planning & development
- Look at training of how to be an effective Interpreter Committee

- Look at developing a mentoring program that sees experienced interpreters support novices, but also sees the experienced interpreters being supported externally
- Supporting discussions on the move towards a tertiary-based program

LONG TERM PLANS

The FJSL Interpreter Committee is developing their own Strategic Plan (see document 8 above) and one of their aims is to see tertiary-based interpreter training.

ASLIA and SLIANZ are working together to develop a WASLI (Australasia & Oceania) Regional Strategic Plan. It is important then that the 2 are synchronised.

The University of the South Pacific is located in Suva, Fiji and perhaps because of its geographical location, attracts students from all the other South Pacific nations. This places Fiji ideally if we are looking at training provision throughout the region.

Participants from Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands came to Fiji for the 2014 Training. If circumstances had been different, there would have also been participants from Samoa and Papua New Guinea. But there are many other island nations close by, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Kiribati, Tokelau and Cook Islands.

Of course, this will incur costs to those who have to travel, but it would seem that as Fiji is the major hub it would be easier for others to get to Fiji than it might be for everyone to travel to a location that is not a hub. The aim would be to maximise benefit to the greatest number of people in the region as possible.

Long-term planning will require working with other key players and this means the synchronising of the Strategic Plans is crucial so these key players can be identified and contribute to making the plans become a reality.

Possible key players include WFD Oceania Regional Secretariat, Macquarie University, Auckland University of Technology (NZ), Victoria University of Wellington (NZ), SLIANZ, ASLIA, ASLIA Interpreter Trainers Network, Deaf Australia, Deaf Aotearoa, Fiji Association of the Deaf and host of Government and Non-Governmental organisations throughout the region that would have a vested interest and able to support the development of interpreter services in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WASLI AUSTRALASIA & OCEANIA REGION

1. Support the development of tertiary training in Fiji and work with the necessary key players to enable training to interpreters throughout the South Pacific island nations

2. Support the provision of interim training by external trainers who would (1) have a program to train new interpreters (2) have a program to train experienced trainers (those who have completed the 2006 and 2014 training) and (3) have a program to train experienced interpreters to become interpreter trainers. (Just as a note, there are a number of experienced interpreters who hold a Teaching Degree)
3. Support the development of a Support Network of individuals who can act as mentors, advisors to the FJSL Interpreter Committee.
4. Support the development of a Regional Support Network that will link interpreters from all over the region to develop connections and strengthen bonds.
5. Support the holding a Regional wide conference (or joint ASLIA/SLIANZ Conference) in Fiji and work to enable as many participants from as many of the South Pacific nations to attend.
6. Support working closely with the National Deaf Associations of the South Pacific nations to ensure their involvement and participation of the development of sign language interpreter services and provision
7. Support working closely with key players throughout the region both Government and NGO and any other body that can contribute the success of the overall regional strategic plan.

(b) Carry out two post training meetings via SKYPE with the FJSL Interpreter Committee by 31 July 2014, to follow up and address any training-related questions.

It has not been possible to hold SKYPE follow up meetings with the FJSL Interpreter Committee and this has been due to conflicting work commitments and lack of access to SKYPE. However I have had intermittent email communications with members of the committee and they have shared with me 2 documents. The first is the ongoing training program (it is called "PD Topic Outline") and the second is the Strategic Plan. Both are works in progress.

ONGOING TRAINING PROGRAM

The PD schedule shows the topic for each session, the types of activities that will be included, the equipment needed and who will be part of the team to facilitate the session. It is clear that some thought has gone into this and that they have taken on board some of the recommendations from the follow up document I provided. It doesn't include any dates so there no clear timeline is indicated. I have offered myself as a point of reference if ongoing support is required with the ongoing training program.

I have sent further documentation on the Demand & Control Schema to one of the committee members who will be leading the further training on this.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan shows 6 main priorities as follows: (I have given my initial thoughts in blue)

KRA 1: TRAINING TO BE DELIVERED AT A RECOGNISED TERTIARY INSTITUTION

- TERTIARY IDENTIFIED: UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
- PROPOSAL TO BE MADE TO DONOR AGENCIES TO FUND FOR AUSTRALIAN/AMERICAN TRAINER TO TEACH THE INTERPRETING COURSE AT USP.
- CURRICULUM TO BE CREATED OR DUPLICATED FROM AUSTRALIA/AMERICA THEN MODIFIED TO SUIT FIJIS CONTEXT.

Sign Language Interpreter Training at the Tertiary level is a priority and I understand there are talks going on between FAD, USP and possibly Macquarie University to sound out the possibility of developing some sort of partnership that would work towards setting up a training program. No doubt any negotiations will deal with teaching personnel and curriculum design. I don't know where things are at the moment and there is no guarantee of a formalised partnership. So if anything does eventuate it may not happen for some years. So thought needs to be given to addressing training needs in the interim.

I would suggest in the interim that the FJSL Interpreter Committee liaise closely with ASLIA who are taking the lead with SLIANZ in developing a WASLI Australasia & Ocean Regional Strategic Plan.

It would be useful to synchronise the overall Strategic Plan for Fiji with that of the WASLI Regional Strategic Plan.

I would hope that any tertiary provision would be open to interpreters from other South Pacific Island nations to study.

KRA2: RAISE SKILL OF INTERPRETERS

- STRENGTHEN S.L CURRICULUM
- RAISE REQUIREMENT FOR ELIGIBILITY OF S.L. COURSE E.G. MINIMUM QUALIFICATION FORM 6 PASS ESPECIALLY IN ENGLISH.
- S.L. TEACHERS TO BE TRAINED
- STUDENTS TO BE FLUENT IN S.L. BEFORE GIVEN A CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE.

Indeed this is a priority and what I like about this particular priority is that it sets out to raise standards and so it sets the scene for the development of a stronger curriculum with an accompanying assessment program in sign language. (I hope I have understood this correctly).

At some point sooner than later, there is a need to start training experienced interpreters to become interpreter trainers so here a (interim) curriculum is needed together with an accompanying assessment program.

KRA3. ESTABLISH AN ASSOCIATION FOR FJSL INTERPRETERS

- HAVE PAID MEMBERS.
- CONSTITUTION TO BE FINALISED AND PASSED
- CREATE A STRATEGIC PLAN
- OPEN BANK ACCOUNT
- CALL A GENERAL MEETING TO DISCUSS PLANS TO GET INPUT FROM MEMBERS.

This is definitely a priority and one that needs to be done in collaboration and with the support of the Fiji Association of the Deaf.

KRA4. INCREASE NUMBER OF INTERPRETERS IN FIJI

- S.L TO BE TAUGHT IN SELECTED HIGH SCHOOLS AND POTENTIAL INTERPRETERS TO BE IDENTIFIED
- RAISE AWARENESS ON THE INTERPRETING PROFESSION
- APPROACH MOE AND AQEP WITH THESE PLANS.

Again here it is important to work with the FAD as well as the organisations identified above. I agree that it is important to work towards getting recognition for the profession so that as the number of interpreters increase, there are employment opportunities.

KRA5. STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH OVERSEAS PARTNERS E.G. ASLIA/SLIANZ/AMERICA

- ATTEND CONFFERENCES HELD IN THESE COUNTRIES
- SEND PROGRESS REPORTS OF ASSOCIATION/COMMITTEE
- HOLD SKYPE MEETINGS WITH PARTNERS TO DISCUSS PLANS ETC.

See my comments in KRA1 about synchronising this Strategic Plan to the WASLI Regional Strategic Plan.

KRA6. ASSIST REGIONAL COUNTRIES SET UP THEIR INTERPRETING ASSOCIATION/TRAINING ETC

- PARTNER WITH ASLIA ON PLANS TO ASSIST REGIONAL COUNTRIES.
- INVITE REGIONAL COUNTRIES TO TRAININGS CONDUCTED IN FIJI
- ATTEND TRAININGS CONDUCTED IN REGIONAL COUNTRIES.
- FAD TO PARTNER WITH INTERPRETERS ASSOCIATION ON PLANS FOR THE REGION.

Again my comments in KRA1 apply.

This document also indicates a lot of thought about the mid to long-term plans and as I said earlier is a work in progress. As a strategic plan there is still quite a lot of work to do in terms of setting timelines to indicate deadlines and measure progress. Also there is a need to identify and list the tasks and activities that need to be done and who will be delegated the responsibility of doing the work.

I have offered myself as a point of reference if ongoing support with the Strategic Plan is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FJSL INTERPRETER COMMITTEE

1. Complete the FJSL Interpreter Committee Strategic Plan as started in document 8. Schedule in time to review and evaluate the plan and make any necessary adjustments following the review.
2. Share the final Strategic Plan with the WASLI Regional Representative so it can inform the WASLI Regional Strategic Plan.
3. Complete the Ongoing Training Program as started in document 9. Schedule in a time to review and evaluate the program and use this and participant feedback to plan ongoing training.
4. Continue to work closely with the Fiji Association of the Deaf and seek their contribution to the Strategic plan and Ongoing Training Program.
5. Make use of the support that I or anyone else offers.
6. Look at how the Interpreter Committee can work more effectively together as a team given the work that will need to be done given the strategic plan and ongoing training program. A lot of hard work lies ahead and the committee needs to be realistic about what they want to achieve versus the commitment required to achieve it. Identifying ways of working more effectively is imperative.

FINAL WORDS

I have been on an amazing journey from submitting the Expression of Interest, to be selected as the Trainer, to develop the training program, to delivering the training program, to evaluating the program, to reporting back on the training and following up after the program. What really made this amazing has been all the wonderful people who have been part of this journey and I want to thank each and everyone.

Acknowledgements:

ASLIA President
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FAD

Respectfully submitted

Zane HEMA
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