



Chuchotage in community settings

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Abstract: This paper reports on a study which investigates the current status of chuchotage, or whispered interpreting, as a technique performed by community interpreters in Australia. The objective of the study is to understand the interpreters' experience in providing this form of interpreting and identify the associated challenges. The aim is to inform future education for aspiring interpreters and continuous professional development for practitioners on this interpreting technique. Traditionally, chuchotage has predominantly been performed in international meetings and conferences. Therefore, it has been a staple skill taught as part of conference interpreting courses. This form of interpreting works more effectively than the consecutive mode in certain community settings, such as some healthcare consultations and courtroom hearings. In Australia, chuchotage is an essential skill for community interpreters operating at the professional level, and therefore has been added to the new certification testing that the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) has implemented since 2018. Prior to 2018, NAATI did not assess interpreters for this skill and, thus, when the new certification system was introduced, NAATI offered a one-day workshop as gap training, providing accredited interpreters with the foundations required for community settings. Through a post-workshop questionnaire, data were collected from 741 participant interpreters. Quantitative and qualitative data analyses provide insights into who among the practitioners performed this form of interpreting, the community settings where they provided such service, their self-appraised level of skilfulness, and the client feedback they received. Recommendations for future training in this technique are made based on the results.

Keywords: Chuchotage; whispered interpreting; interpreter training; certification; professional interpreter.

1. Introduction

This paper reports on a study which investigates the current status of chuchotage, or whispered interpreting, as a technique performed by community interpreters in Australia. The objective of the study is to understand the interpreters' experience in providing this form of interpreting and identify the associated challenges. The aim is to inform future education for aspiring interpreters and continuous professional development (CPD) for practitioners on this interpreting technique. Chuchotage is an "improvised form of SI [simultaneous interpreting] without equipment, in which the interpreter sits behind or to one side of one (or more) participants and whispers the interpretation" (Setton & Dawrant, 2016, p. 18). Traditionally, this form of interpreting has predominantly been used in contexts such as international meetings and conferences. Therefore, it has been a staple skill taught as part of conference interpreting courses and degrees. This interpreting technique has been associated with diplomacy, bilateral negotiations and conference settings,

and thus, little attention has been paid to its usefulness and pedagogy outside the realm of diplomacy and international conferences. However, with the increasing professionalisation of community interpreting, this technique is attracting more attention outside the boundaries of conference interpreting. In Australia, it is an interpreting technique that has been assessed in the professional interpreting certification exams since 2018 and nowadays is taught broadly by interpreting programs at higher education and vocational education institutions. However, a large cohort of practising interpreters who obtained their professional credentials before the new certification system was introduced in 2018 had never received any training in chuchotage, nor were their chuchotage skills assessed at any point. In order to bridge this gap, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) offered a one-day chuchotage workshop, rolled out nationwide from September 2017 to October 2018, to help transition interpreters who obtained their NAATI credentials pre-2018 to the current system. An exit survey on workshop attendees was conducted to collect data for the current study. In this paper, we first review the limited literature on chuchotage and its application and efficacy, and describe the study and the research tool. Subsequently, the results of the data analysis are presented, with a discussion section to outline their interpretation. The paper concludes by highlighting the implications of the findings and the limitations of the study, and proposing possible future research directions.

2. Literature review

As Baxter (2015) states in his review of boothless interpreting modes, some view chuchotage as a peripheral type of SI (Alexieva, 1997) and others as a technique closer to consecutive interpreting (CI) (Salevsky, 1982) or locate it midway between CI and SI (Markic, 2009). Regardless of where chuchotage is placed on the continuum of interpreting modes, the challenges it poses call for specific training, just as any other interpreting technique (Garwood & Preziosi, 2016). Certainly, the conditions under which chuchotage is performed are difficult and more demanding than those encountered with SI performed in interpreting booths. These difficulties arise from issues related to acoustics and the cognitive load in the processing task (Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011). According to Hale (2007), these complexities are even more evident in community settings:

The simultaneous interpreting performed in the context of community interpreting, often referred to as *chuchotage*, or whispering interpreting, can be more demanding, in that there is no access to text, it is performed in a straining soft voice (*sotto voce*), by one interpreter and with very few breaks. (p. 14)

As Phelan (2001) concurs, this technique can affect the vocal cords – hence, the need to perform it in a low voice rather than whispering. Apart from the interpreting technique per se, practitioners working in community contexts face other challenges related to the complexities of the setting itself. These can be classified as interpreting-, context-, participant- and system-related challenges (for a full discussion, see Hale, 2007). In a nutshell, community interpreters do not have scripts or speeches they can prepare beforehand, and they rarely know the future direction of the conversation; the participants may not always understand their role, and their work environment might not be optimal owing to high noise levels (e.g. other participants entering and leaving the premises and activity in adjacent rooms). In addition, as opposed to conferences and bilateral diplomatic meetings where participants share the same status and are usually from a similar background, in community settings, interpreters work with clients who, apart from not sharing the same language,

have very different levels of literacy and education, cognitive abilities (e.g. in mental health consultations) and knowledge regarding the system. As Russo (2005a) states, it is a form of interpreting characterised by “unbalanced power relationships between the participants” (p. 9). Given the paucity of literature on chuchotage in the field of community interpreting, the rest of this section presents discussions about the provision of chuchotage, arguments about accuracy between chuchotage and other modes of interpreting, and the dilemmas faced by interpreters when providing chuchotage.

2.1 Community settings and chuchotage

Chuchotage is a widely used technique in community settings, one of which being the law courts. As Hale et al. (2017) state, it is an efficient mode to make non-speakers of the court language linguistically present during the proceedings:

When interpreting for the defendant in order to make him or her linguistically present at all times during their case, for example while others are giving evidence or lawyers are debating issues with the bench, interpreters use the whispered simultaneous mode (*chuchotage*), usually without equipment. (p. 70)

It is also a suitable interpreting mode in police interviews in which the cognitive interviewing (Fisher & Geiselman, 2010) technique is applied. Cognitive interviewing is characterised by open-ended questions aimed at eliciting free uninterrupted narratives from the interviewee, supplemented by probing questions to exploit leads from the narratives. This method allows interviewees more control to organise and mine their memories and to report their recollections in a sequence that makes the most sense to them (Alpert et al., 2012). According to Lai’s (2016) empirical study on the interpreting of police interviews, the use of the long consecutive mode featured omission rates ranging from 31–51% for segments over 100 words. It may also be reasonable to posit that the interruptions necessitated by consecutive interpreting – and therefore the disruptions on the train of thought of the interviewee – may negatively impact the goals of cognitive interviewing. In this light, chuchotage may be a more suitable interpreting mode to use.

In healthcare settings, chuchotage is useful in mental health consultations with clients who speak incoherently or rapidly, or do not understand the dynamics of turn-taking, and may flout the communication maxims (Grice, 1975). In Australia, for example, it is also a technique broadly used in medical sessions during which a seminar/class (e.g. pain management course or antenatal classes) is being facilitated by a healthcare professional to a mixed group of English and non-English-speaking patients. In these situations, it is more practical to render the interpretation in simultaneous mode to the non-English-speaking client in a low voice, thus allowing the English-speaking facilitator to present uninterruptedly to those audience members who do not need interpreter assistance.

A less conventional area where chuchotage is performed is media interpreting, e.g. television broadcasting. Although the media cannot be considered a community setting per se, the interpreting is performed for members of the community (Cencini & Aston, 2002; Dal Favio & Falbo, 2017; De Zen, 2015; Russo, 2005b; Straniero-Sergio, 1999, 2012) and therefore should not be excluded from the scholarship of community interpreting.

2.2 Chuchotage and accuracy

When interpreters apply chuchotage in a range of community settings and under diverse circumstances, they need to be aware of the *skopos* (Vermeer, 1978), i.e. the goal of the interactions, and of the accuracy requirements of these encounters. For example, in police interviews, domestic violence investigations, or mental health assessments where an individual’s intellectual capacity, well-

being and personality are being assessed, conveying the *how* (tone and style of the speech) is as important as the *what* (content of the message).

Also, in the area of forensic linguistics, it has been established that “form and style are as important as meaning, if not more so” (Lai & Mulayim, 2013, p. 318). Researchers who have conducted studies in courtroom discourse (Berg-Seligson, 1990/2002; Hale, 2004; Tebble, 1999) emphasise the importance of relaying the speaker’s style in addition to the propositional content of the speech. Evidence shows that the use of the simultaneous mode is more effective and accurate than consecutive interpreting when interpreting the illocutionary force of the speech – the intonation, hesitations, pauses, swearing and other pragmatic aspects that constitute *how* we say things (Fowler, 2017). Gile (2001), on conducting an experiment with 20 professional conference interpreters, determined that the level of accuracy was better when employing the simultaneous mode because it also contains the false starts, uncertainties and hesitations of normal speech. Based on another experiment, Hale et al. (2017) note that “it would appear that the interpreting mode more conducive to placing the non-English speaker in the same position as an English speaker is the simultaneous mode” (p. 91).

It can, therefore, be argued that in many instances in community interpreting, the simultaneous mode is desirable in order to achieve the accuracy level required for that situation, and to fulfil the skopos of that particular interaction (for a full discussion, see Hale, 2007). In this regard, Ozolins (2017) rightly argues that chuchotage is a necessary technique in community interpreting, “but one often neglected” (p. 48).

2.3 Conundrums of chuchotage in community settings

Although community interpreting has attracted much academic attention in the past two decades – hence generating an abundance of literature – it has not attained the prestige that conference interpreting enjoys in terms of remuneration and working conditions:

When comparing diplomatic, business escort or conference interpreters with public service interpreters, there is no doubt that the latter occupy a much lower status, a fact which is reflected by low pay, often difficult working conditions and particularly lack of equipment. (Fowler, 2017, p. 138).

This is partly because of the type of clientele who use community interpreting services (Gentile et al., 1996). In this regard, conference interpreting and business interpreting can be considered “profession-driven fields”, whereas community interpreting is an “institution-driven field” (Ozolins, 2000, p.21) and the public sector that employs the community interpreting service generally has fewer financial resources than the private sector in which conference interpreting operates (Hale, 2019). Community interpreting’s “Cinderella” (Gentile, 1997, p.117) perception and its particular market drivers have, over decades, affected factors such as education and certification.

Various authors state that all interpreters should meet the same standards and competence levels regardless of the setting in which their work eventuates (Gentile, 1997; Mikkelsen, 1998; Roberts, 2002). However, Garwood and Preziosi (2016, p. 46) found that some students who participated in the continuous professional development courses they facilitated did not even know the concept of chuchotage. Similarly, O’Byrne (2013) observes that interpreters were unable to employ this mode, despite it being the most effective and suitable for the occasion, because they lacked the necessary training and skills. Among the community settings in which chuchotage is applied, it is in the legal field where most efforts have been made in terms of teaching the technique in a structured manner (Garwood & Preziosi, 2016; Hale & Gonzalez, 2017; Ng, 2015; Preziosi & Garwood, 2017). Overall, the pedagogy of chuchotage was

not a concern for most community interpreting training programs available in Australia until 2018, as the NAATI testing system prior to 2018 only assessed dialogue interpreting (i.e. short consecutive), monologue interpreting (i.e. long consecutive), and sight translation.

3. The study

The inclusion of chuchotage by NAATI in its post-2018 certification testing regime for professional interpreters working in Australia confirms the utility and importance of this interpreting technique. Anecdotal evidence points to haphazard application of chuchotage by practitioners and their inconsistent, or even non-existent, training in it. Given the paucity of literature on chuchotage in the field of community interpreting, this study sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. Who among Australian interpreters performs chuchotage?
2. In what kind of assignments and settings is chuchotage applied?
3. How is chuchotage appraised by the interpreters and their clients?
4. What factors correlate with interpreter chuchotage performance?
5. What must be done to enhance interpreter chuchotage performance?

3.1 Background

In 2018, NAATI introduced a new certification scheme to replace the accreditation system which had operated since 1976. For test takers attempting the professional level (as opposed to the provisional level, i.e. the “paraprofessional” level in the pre-2018 nomenclature), the previous accreditation system did not mandate any training and it tested a smaller range of skills. In contrast, the new system requires evidence of having completed minimum training and also demonstrated chuchotage competence among the other skills and interpreting modes used in community settings. There were two pathways for interpreters who entered the industry prior to 2018: one through NAATI’s one-off exam, and the other through courses ranging from advanced diploma to undergraduate or postgraduate degrees in interpreting (for a full discussion, see Gonzalez, 2019). In any case, most training courses did not systematically teach chuchotage, given that it was not a NAATI-tested skill. In order to transition to the new system and continue practising, interpreters who had qualified pre-2018 and could not prove experience or prior training in chuchotage had to complete a one-day NAATI workshop at no cost to them. NAATI commissioned the design and facilitation of this top-up chuchotage training to the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT). In order for NAATI to gauge the efficacy of the workshops and collect practitioners’ chuchotage experience in the field, an exit survey was designed by NAATI and administered at the conclusion of each workshop. The present authors obtained agreement from NAATI to access the survey data for our research purposes.

3.2 Data collection

From September 2017 to October 2018, 29 workshops were held in Melbourne, 18 in Sydney and 17 in other states and territories (Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia). At the end of each workshop, an anonymous and voluntary paper questionnaire was administered on behalf of NAATI by the workshop facilitator. The questionnaire included ten questions, where three are free-text questions and the rest are multiple-choice questions with an extra free-text option (see Appendix 1). Fifteen minutes were given to the participants to complete the questionnaire. In addition to gauging the efficacy of the workshop, the questionnaire NAATI designed was intended to collect firsthand experience from practitioners relating

to their provision of chuchotage, with a view to informing future chuchotage training. The researchers received university ethics clearance to undertake analysis of the survey data. To the researchers' knowledge, no such insight about the application of chuchotage in community settings has ever been documented in Australia or overseas.

A total of 690 completed questionnaires were received from NAATI. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) contained eight multiple-choice questions, for which the data were entered into SPSS for quantitative analysis and cross-tabulation. The text responses were entered in NVivo for thematic analysis, using an inductive approach (Willig, 2013) under the qualitative paradigm. Forty-three invalid samples due to sporadic missing answers in the questionnaire were removed from the data set to achieve a fixed sample size (N=647) for reliable cross-tabulation. Although the missing values may be filled with estimations via the multiple imputation technique, due to the large number of valid samples compared to the incomplete questionnaires with random loss of data, the trimming technique was considered the best.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic information

The respondents were asked demographic questions to form a baseline description of the sample of participants; this includes their NAATI credential level, years of interpreting experience, and whether they had any previous chuchotage training.

Table 1 shows the NAATI credential levels among the survey participants. Some respondents have more than one language, therefore more than one credential, resulting in the total of 696 credentials reported and a total percentage of more than 100% when calculating each credential level against the total sample population (N=647). Close to 90% of the respondents held NAATI Professional Interpreter accreditation from the old system, which confirms the workshops captured the right target audience intended by NAATI. A further 114 practitioners who had lower credentials also completed the workshop—an encouraging sign that these practitioners took an interest in chuchotage.

Table 1. NAATI credentials among survey sample

	Credential Count	% of Credential Count (N=696)	% of Head count (N=647)
Conference Interpreter or above	9	1.3%	1.4%
Professional Interpreter	573	82.3%	88.6%
Paraprofessional Interpreter	88	12.6%	13.6%
Recognition*	14	2.0%	2.2%
None	12	1.7%	1.9%
Total	696	100.0%	107.6%

* NAATI Recognition is granted in languages which NAATI does not test. Practitioners must satisfy NAATI's minimum training requirements and provide evidence of relevant work experience.

Over one-third of the respondents had been interpreters for more than 10 years, with close to half having mid-range experience of four to ten years; and the remaining 22.4% were newer practitioners who had less than 4 years' experience.

Table 2. Years of interpreting experience among survey sample

Interpreting experience	Head Count	%	Cumulative %
Less than 3 years	145	22.4	22.4
4 to 6 years	164	25.3	47.8
7 to 10 years	104	16.1	63.8
More than 10 years	234	36.2	100.0
Total	647	100.0	

Of all the valid responses, close to 70% of them said they had not undertaken any prior chuchotage training.

Table 3. Prior chuchotage training among survey sample

Training in Chuchotage	Head Count	%
No	442	68.3
Yes	205	31.7
Total	647	100.0

Cross-tabulating the survey participants' chuchotage training (Table 3, Q8) with their NAATI credential levels (Table 1, Q1), table 4 shows that roughly one in three professional interpreters and roughly one in five practitioners in the paraprofessional or NAATI Recognition categories had prior chuchotage training. This confirms that, except for conference interpreters, those who had any prior chuchotage training were in the minority.

Table 4. NAATI credential vs prior chuchotage training

Prior Training		NAATI				No NAATI	[Row Total] Head Count ¹
		Conference Interpreter	NAATI Prof. Interpreter	Paraprof. Interpreter	NAATI Recognition		
No	Credential Count	5	384	69	11	9	[478]
	% against prior training "no"	1.2%	91.0%	16.4%	2.6%	2.1%	422
	% prior training "no" against credentials	55.6%	67.0%	78.4%	78.6%	75.0%	
	% of Total h/count	0.8%	59.4%	10.7%	1.7%	1.4%	68.3%
Yes	Credential Count	4	189	19	3	3	[218]
	% against prior training "yes"	2.0%	92.2%	9.3%	1.5%	1.5%	205
	% prior training "yes" against credentials	44.4%	33.0%	21.6%	21.4%	25.0%	
	% of Total h/count	0.6%	29.2%	2.9%	0.5%	0.5%	31.7%
Total	Credential Count	9	573	88	14	12	[696]
	% of Total h/count	1.4%	88.6%	13.6%	2.2%	1.9%	100.0%

1. As some participants have more than one credential, this column shows the total credential count of the row (in brackets) and the total head count below it (without brackets). The total head count at the bottom of the column comes to the sample size (N=647), whereas the total credential count comes to 696 (as per Table 1).

4.2 Prevalence of chuchotage and client feedback

Participants were asked about the frequency of their use of chuchotage in their interpreting practice. Over 40% said they never, or very rarely, use it, whereas the remainder said they use it once, twice or three or more times a week. This result highlights that over half of the practitioners need to use chuchotage to various degrees in their work.

Table 5. Frequency of chuchotage use among survey sample

Chuchotage use	Head		Cumulative %
	Count	%	
Never	42	6.5	6.5
Very rarely	239	36.9	43.4
At least once a week on average	186	28.7	72.2
Twice a week on average	60	9.3	81.5
Three or more times a week on average	120	18.5	100.0
Total	647	100.0	

Table 6. Frequency of chuchotage use by NAATI credential level

Frequency of chuchotage use		Conference	NAATI Prof.	NAATI Paraprof.	NAATI Recognition	No NAATI	[Row Total]
		Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Interpreter	Head Count ¹
Never	Credential Count	0	35	7	0	1	[43]
	% against freq. of using chuchotage	0.0%	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%	2.4%	42
	% freq. of using chuchotage against credential levels	0.0%	6.1%	8.0%	0.0%	8.3%	
	% of Total h/count	0.0%	5.4%	1.1%	0.0%	0.2%	6.5%
Very rarely	Credential Count	2	213	34	3	5	[257]
	% against freq. of using chuchotage	0.8%	89.1%	14.2%	1.3%	2.1%	239
	% freq. of using chuchotage against credential levels	22.2%	37.2%	38.6%	21.4%	41.7%	
	% of Total h/count	0.3%	32.9%	5.3%	0.5%	0.8%	36.9%
At least once a week on average	Credential Count	4	173	16	5	3	[201]
	% against freq. of using chuchotage	2.2%	93.0%	8.6%	2.7%	1.6%	186
	% freq. of using chuchotage against credential levels	44.4%	30.2%	18.2%	35.7%	25.0%	
	% of Total h/count	0.6%	26.7%	2.5%	0.8%	0.5%	28.7%
Twice a week on average	Credential Count	0	52	8	0	2	[62]
	% against freq. of using chuchotage	0.0%	86.7%	13.3%	0.0%	3.3%	60
	% freq. of using chuchotage against credential levels	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%	16.7%	
	% of Total h/count	0.0%	8.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.3%	9.3%
Three or more times a week on average	Credential Count	3	100	23	6	1	[133]
	% against freq. of using chuchotage	2.5%	83.3%	19.2%	5.0%	0.8%	120
	% freq. of using chuchotage against credential levels	33.3%	17.5%	26.1%	42.9%	8.3%	
	% of Total h/count	0.5%	15.5%	3.6%	0.9%	0.2%	18.5%
Total	Credential Count	9	573	88	14	12	[696]
	% of Total h/count	1.4%	88.6%	13.6%	2.2%	1.9%	100.0%

1. As some participants have more than one credential, this column shows the total credential count of the row (in brackets) and the total head count below it (without brackets). The total head count at the bottom of the column comes to the sample size (N=647), whereas the total credential count comes to 696 (as per Table 1).

Cross-tabulating the frequency of chuchotage use (Table 5, Q3) with the participants' NAATI credential (Table 1, Q1), Table 6 above reveals some interesting trends. When adding the frequencies of using chuchotage once, twice, and three or more times per week (i.e. percentages within credential levels in Table 6), over half of the professional interpreters ($30.2\% + 9.1\% + 17.5\% = 56.8\%$) as well as the paraprofessional interpreters ($18.2\% + 9.1\% + 26.1\% = 53.4\%$) use chuchotage at least once a week. Similarly, half of those without any NAATI credential ($25.0\% + 16.7\% + 8.3\% = 50\%$) also perform chuchotage at least once a week. However, a significantly higher percentage of those operating with NAATI Recognition use chuchotage at least once a week ($35.7\% + 0\% + 42.9\% = 78.6\%$). A Chi-square test for independence is unable to be performed, because the number of frequency counts in this contingency table are smaller than 5.

Those respondents who said they provided chuchotage to their clients (N=605; refer to Table 5 where 42 who answered "never" is subtracted from the total sample size of 647) were also invited to share further information about the settings in which they provided chuchotage. Each respondent could name as many settings as they had worked in. The text responses were coded in NVivo for thematic analysis, which revealed that this interpreting technique is used in a wide range of contexts, and the percentages in Table 7 below reflect the proportions against the total topic count of 1282 grouped under various domains. Of all the domains mentioned by the respondents, health settings score the highest (42%), of which medical consultation (with no further elaboration by the respondents) and family conferences (normally relating to a family member's medical situation or treatment) account for the overwhelming majority. This is followed by legal settings, where court hearings stand out as the occasion where chuchotage is mostly provided by practitioners. The other domains mentioned cover various community contexts, conferences, business, etc.

Table 8 shows the feedback the respondents received from their clients when they provided chuchotage. More than 60% of the respondents reported positive client feedback because the client received instant interpretation, as opposed to having to wait for each speaker to finish, as in the consecutive mode. However, a small number of practitioners (2.9%) experienced negative feedback, and the reasons they provided can be summarised as follows (in no particular order):

1. Clients do not understand what you are doing or have never experienced this mode of interpreting.
2. Clients think the interpreter is talking over them while they are talking.
3. Clients think too many people are talking at the same time.
4. The interpretation interferes with primary speakers and their concentration.
5. It interferes with the clients receiving the service who want to hear the utterances in English.
6. Multiple sound sources create confusion, especially in confined spaces.
7. The interpretation creates incomplete renderings.

Table 7. Chuchotage settings reported by survey sample

Domain	Topics under Domain	Topic Counts	Domain Counts	Domain Percentage
<i>Health Settings</i>			539	42.0%
	Aged care	2		
	Counselling	6		
	Family conference	223		
	Workcover/insurance	3		
	Medical consultations	231		
	Mental health	74		
<i>Legal Settings</i>			475	37.0%
	Child protection	4		
	Prison	1		
	Court hearings	389		
	Mediation	8		
	Police/AFP	25		
	Social work/domestic violence	3		
	Tribunals (civil & administrative, mental health review, migration, refugee)	45		
<i>Social Services Settings</i>			88	6.9%
	Centrelink - social welfare	12		
	Community information sessions	76		
<i>Education</i>			81	6.3%
	School info session			
	Group education			
	Parent-teacher interviews			
	Parental group education			
	Family conference			
<i>Business</i>			46	3.6%
<i>Conference and Events</i>			23	1.8%
<i>Immigration & Border Protection</i>			20	1.6%
	Border force			
	Detention settings			
	Protection visa interviews			
	Information session			
<i>Other</i>			8	0.6%
	Marriage	2		
	Media	1		
	Theatre	2		
	Religious contexts	2		
	Tourism	1		
<i>Diplomatic</i>			2	0.2%
			1282	100.0%

Table 8. Perceived client reception of chuchotage reported by survey sample

Client feedback	Head Count	%
They appreciate the instant interpretation they receive	422	65.3
They do not appreciate it	19	2.9
I receive mixed feedback	79	12.2
I don't receive any feedback	87	13.4
N/A (respondents who never performed chuchotage)	40	6.2
Total	647	100.0

Table 9 below cross-tabulates the survey participants' perceived client reception of their chuchotage service (Table 8, Q5) against their previous chuchotage training (Table 3, Q8). For those who reported they received positive client feedback, roughly double the number had prior training (67.3%) than those who had no training (32.7%). A chi-square test of independence was performed, and the relation between these variables was significant, $X^2(4, N = 647) = 2.906, p < .001$. Although the difference is not huge, it highlights the general appreciation from clients who received this type of instantaneous interpreting service.

Table 9. Perceived client reception of chuchotage v. prior chuchotage training

Perceived client reception		No	Had	Total Head
		Training	Training	Count
They appreciate the instant interpretation they receive	Headcount	284	138	422
	% against client feedback	67.3%	32.7%	100.0%
	% against prior training	64.3%	67.3%	65.3%
	% of Total h/count	43.9%	21.3%	65.2%
They do not appreciate it	Headcount	11	8	19
	% against client feedback	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%
	% against prior training	2.5%	3.9%	2.9%
	% of Total h/count	1.7%	1.2%	2.9%
I receive mixed feedback	Headcount	55	24	79
	% against client feedback	69.6%	30.4%	100.0%
	% against prior training	12.4%	11.7%	12.2%
	% of Total h/count	8.5%	3.7%	12.2%
I don't receive any feedback	Headcount	61	26	87
	% against client feedback	70.1%	29.9%	100.0%
	% against prior training	13.8%	12.7%	13.4%
	% of Total h/count	9.4%	4.0%	13.4%
N/A	Headcount	31	9	40
	% against client feedback	77.5%	22.5%	100.0%
	% against prior training	7.0%	4.4%	6.2%
	% of Total h/count	4.8%	1.4%	6.2%
Total	Headcount	442	205	647
	% against client feedback	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%
	% against prior training	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total h/count	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%

4.3 Self-appraisal and further professional development

In the last section of the questionnaire, the survey participants were asked about their self-assessment of their chuchotage skills and their views on further professional development. As shown in Table 10, half of the participants reported that they felt their chuchotage skills were good, while close to 40% of them felt their skills were average. Less than 5% of the respondents said their skills were insufficient.

Table 10. Self-appraisal of chuchotage performance

Self-appraisal	Head Count	%
Good	327	50.5
Average	253	39.1
Insufficient	28	4.3
N/A	39	6.0
Total	647	100.0

Table 11 below cross-tabulates participants' self-appraisal of chuchotage performance against their NAATI credential levels. The conference interpreters demonstrated the highest percentage of positive self-appraisal (66.7%), compared with those operating at the professional and paraprofessional levels. Somewhat surprisingly, very high proportions of those respondents with NAATI Recognition or no NAATI credentials felt they performed chuchotage well (71.4% and 66.7%). A Chi-square test for independence is unable to be performed because a number of frequency counts in this contingency table are smaller than 5.

Table 11. Self-appraisal of chuchotage performance v. NAATI credential levels

Self-appraisal		Conference Interpreter	NAATI Prof. Interpreter	NAATI Paraprof. Interpreter	NAATI Recognition	No NAATI	[Row Total] H/Count¹
Good	Credential Count	6	288	39	10	8	[351]
	% against self-appraisal	1.8%	88.1%	11.9%	3.1%	2.4%	327
	% against credential levels	66.7%	50.3%	44.3%	71.4%	66.7%	
	% of Total h/count	0.9%	44.5%	6.0%	1.5%	1.2%	50.5%
Average	Credential Count	3	225	40	4	4	[276]
	% against self-appraisal	1.2%	88.9%	15.8%	1.6%	1.6%	253
	% against credential levels	33.3%	39.3%	45.5%	28.6%	33.3%	
	% of Total h/count	0.5%	34.8%	6.2%	0.6%	0.6%	39.1%
Insufficient	Credential Count	0	26	3	0	0	[29]
	% against self-appraisal	0.0%	92.9%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%	28
	% against credential levels	0.0%	4.5%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	
	% of Total h/count	0.0%	4.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%	4.3%
N/A	Credential Count	0	34	6	0	0	[40]
	% against self-appraisal	0.0%	87.2%	15.4%	0.0%	0.0%	39
	% against credential levels	0.0%	5.9%	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	
	% of Total h/count	0.0%	5.3%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	6.0%
Total	Credential Count	9	573	88	14	12	[696] 647
	% of Total h/count	1.4%	88.6%	13.6%	2.2%	1.9%	100.0%

1. As some participants have more than one credential, this column shows the total credential count of the row (in brackets) and the total headcount below it (without brackets). The total headcount at the bottom of the column comes to the sample size (N=647), whereas the total credential count comes to 696 (as per Table 1).

Table 12 below shows the survey participants' self-appraisal of their chuchotage performance (Table 10, Q6) in relation to whether they had prior chuchotage training. More practitioners (66.8%) who had received chuchotage training than those who had not (43%) felt that they have good chuchotage skills, and almost twice as many of those who had not received training (45.9%) said their chuchotage skills were only average, compared with those who had (24.4%). A chi-square test of independence was performed, and the relation between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 647) = 34.824, p < .001$.

Table 12. Self-appraisal of chuchotage performance v. prior training

Self-appraisal		No Training	Had Training	Total
Good	Headcount	190	137	327
	% against self-appraisal	58.1%	41.9%	100.0%
	% against prior training	43.0%	66.8%	50.5%
	% of Total h/count	29.4%	21.2%	50.5%
Average	Headcount	203	50	253
	% against self-appraisal	80.2%	19.8%	100.0%
	% against prior training	45.9%	24.4%	39.1%
	% of Total h/count	31.4%	7.7%	39.1%
Insufficient	Headcount	18	10	28
	% against self-appraisal	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
	% against prior training	4.1%	4.9%	4.3%
	% of Total h/count	2.8%	1.5%	4.3%
N/A	Headcount	31	8	39
	% against self-appraisal	79.5%	20.5%	100.0%
	% against prior training	7.0%	3.9%	6.0%
	% of Total h/count	4.8%	1.2%	6.0%
Total	Headcount	442	205	647
	% against self-appraisal	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%
	% against prior training	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total h/count	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%

In Table 13 below, for those who reported they had good chuchotage skills, a clear trend of an increased sense of skilfulness corresponds to increased years of practice, from 8.6% for those who had less than four years of interpreting experience to just under 50% for those who have interpreted for more than 10 years. The trend in other self-appraised categories is not as clear, and a Chi-square test for independence is unable to be performed due to a couple low frequency counts.

Table 13. Self-appraisal of chuchotage performance v. interpreting experience

Self-appraisal		Less than 3 years	4 to 6 years	7 to 10 years	More than 10 years	Total Head Count
Good	Headcount	28	78	60	161	327
	% against self-appraisal	8.6%	23.9%	18.3%	49.2%	100.0%
	% against interpreting experience	19.3%	47.6%	57.7%	68.8%	50.5%
	% of Total h/count	4.3%	12.1%	9.3%	24.9%	50.5%
Average	Headcount	73	76	42	62	253
	% against self-appraisal	28.9%	30.0%	16.6%	24.5%	100.0%
	% against interpreting experience	50.3%	46.3%	40.4%	26.5%	39.1%
	% of Total h/count	11.3%	11.7%	6.5%	9.6%	39.1%
Insufficient	Headcount	14	6	1	7	28
	% against self-appraisal	50.0%	21.4%	3.6%	25.0%	100.0%
	% against interpreting experience	9.7%	3.7%	1.0%	3.0%	4.3%
	% of Total h/count	2.2%	0.9%	0.2%	1.1%	4.3%
N/A	Headcount	30	4	1	4	39
	% against self-appraisal	76.9%	10.3%	2.6%	10.3%	100.0%
	% against interpreting experience	20.7%	2.4%	1.0%	1.7%	6.0%
	% of Total h/count	4.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.6%	6.0%
Total	Headcount	145	164	104	234	647
	% against self-appraisal	22.4%	25.3%	16.1%	36.2%	100.0%
	% against interpreting experience	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total h/count	22.4%	25.3%	16.1%	36.2%	100.0%

Survey participants were asked about four nominated areas of challenges relating to chuchotage listed in Table 14 below. Note that the respondents could select more than one area, therefore the sum of more than 100% in the last column when each challenge is calculated against the total sample. The survey participants seemed to think the need to multi-task, such as listening and talking at the same time, and keeping up with the speed of the speaker are the most challenging aspects. This is both by the proportion of frequency count (the “percent” column) and by the proportion of participants (the “percent of cases” column). Further, more than 30% of the participants thought acoustic issues created difficulties in their chuchotage performance. There are 48 respondents who entered further text under “other” challenges, which can be summarised under the following four categories:

1. Factors specific to the interpreting setting
 - Unfamiliar setting, e.g. court
 - Lack of thematic knowledge about the setting
 - Lack of case specific knowledge
 - Difficulty in achieving the same register in the target language
 - Difficulty in achieving equivalence for technical terms
2. Factors specific to the interaction between the interpreters and the primary speakers
 - Interruption by primary speaker

- More than one person talking at a given time; overlapping talk
- Cultural differences with primary speakers
- 3. Factors specific to the primary speakers' expressive language
 - Primary speakers unable to talk clearly
 - Unfamiliar accents
 - Multiple languages used in one setting
- 4. Factors specific to the interpreter's self
 - Interpreting context is upsetting
 - Loss of concentration
 - Memory failure

Table 14. Self-reported challenging aspects of chuchotage by survey sample

	Answer Count	% of answer count	% of head count (N=647)
Multi-tasking, e.g. listening and talking at the same time	259	24.0%	40.0%
Acoustics, e.g. trouble hearing the talk clearly	202	18.7%	31.2%
Speed, e.g. unable to keep up with the pace of the speaker	215	19.9%	33.2%
Omissions, e.g. because of experiencing one or more of above factors	186	17.2%	28.7%
Other	47	4.3%	7.3%
No challenging aspect	172	15.9%	26.6%
Total	1081	100.0%	167.1%

Cross-tabulating participants who had prior chuchotage training as opposed to those who did not, Table 15 below clearly shows lower reporting of challenges by those respondents who had training.

Finally, thematic analysis of the respondents' text input on what could strengthen their professional performance when applying chuchotage in the future reveals they believe that they need to:

- Practice more (188 mentions)
- Learn to summarise in certain situations rather than interpreting word-for-word (43 mentions)
- Build knowledge and develop skills, including further training or study (25 mentions)
- Communicate with the client to address seating arrangement and environmental factors to improve acoustics (23 mentions)
- Request domain and case related information to enable advanced preparation (22 mentions)
- Ask clients to speak clearly, louder, or slower to enable better performance (19 mentions)
- Be assertive of the interpreter's role and be in control of the communication at hand (18 mentions)

Table 15. Self-reported challenging aspects v. prior chuchotage training

Challenges		No Training	Had Training	Total
Multi-tasking, e.g. listening and talking at the same time	Headcount	197	62	259
	% against challenges	76.1%	23.9%	
	% against prior training	44.6%	30.2%	
	% of Total h/count	30.4%	9.6%	40.0%
Acoustics, e.g. trouble hearing the talk clearly	Headcount	151	51	202
	% against challenges	74.8%	25.2%	
	% against prior training	34.2%	24.9%	
	% of Total of h/count	23.3%	7.9%	31.2%
Speed, e.g. unable to keep up with the pace of the	Headcount	154	61	215
	% against challenges	71.6%	28.4%	
	% against prior training	34.8%	29.8%	
	% of Total of h/count	23.8%	9.4%	33.2%
Omissions, e.g. because of experiencing one or more of above the factors	Headcount	128	58	186
	% against challenges	68.8%	31.2%	
	% against prior training	29.0%	28.3%	
	% of Total of h/count	19.8%	9.0%	28.7%
Other	Headcount	35	12	47
	% against challenges	74.5%	25.5%	
	% against prior training	7.9%	5.9%	
	% of Total of h/count	5.4%	1.9%	7.3%
No challenging aspect	Headcount	94	78	172
	% against challenges	54.7%	45.3%	
	% against prior training	21.3%	38.0%	
	% of Total of h/count	14.5%	12.1%	26.6%
Total	Headcount	442	205	647
	% of Total of h/count	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%

5. Discussion

The results reported in the previous section provide a picture about chuchotage in Australia that has never been explored before. Of the 647-sample population, over 80% hold professional or higher accreditation under the old NAATI system (Table 1 “percent” column); of these, close to 70% said they had not previously received chuchotage training (Table 3). Over half of those professional interpreters (56.8%) and of those paraprofessional interpreters (53.4%) provided chuchotage services at least once a week. While the proportion is similar for those with no NAATI credentials (50%), a much higher rate was reported by those holding NAATI Recognition (78.6%) (Table 6). This phenomenon indicates that practitioners with a lower-level credential will find themselves in situations where they must perform a skill which is not assumed

at their level of credential. Therefore, gap training in the chuchotage technique for practitioners in these categories becomes critical. Up to this point and as the results above show, research question 1 is answered in terms of the demography of the survey sample and who among these practitioners performs chuchotage in their work.

Research question 2 about the work settings and assignments where chuchotage is performed is directly addressed in Table 7, with the respondents reporting domains such as health, legal, social services, and education as those where they regard the chuchotage technique most useful. The topics under each domain area reported in the same table can be a valuable guide for future interpreter training to strengthen learners' contextual knowledge in these domains and topics when teaching chuchotage.

Research question 3 is answered by Table 10 in terms of the respondents' self-appraisal of their chuchotage competence, while Table 8 addresses client appraisals that they received. About half (50.5%) of the participants regarded their chuchotage skills to be good, while the remainder thought they were either average (39.1%) or insufficient (4.3%). On the other hand, more than six in every ten respondents (65.3%) said they received positive feedback from their clients on their chuchotage service, highlighting an appetite for this type of instantaneous interpretation in certain situations, while a small proportion (2.9%) reported negative client feedback. The reasons reported for client aversion to chuchotage indicate the need to educate service users on this interpreting technique and its advantages, and for practitioners to discern when to apply it and how to perform it competently. In the cross-tabulation of the respondents' chuchotage self-appraisal with their NAATI credential (Table 11), very high proportions of those with NAATI Recognition or no NAATI credentials (71.4% and 66.7% respectively) felt they perform chuchotage well. Although there is no way to ascertain the opposite, it is notable that fewer of those holding higher NAATI professional and paraprofessional credentials regard themselves as having good chuchotage skills (50.3% and 44.3% respectively). The authors posit that the former groups of practitioners may have a certain level of complacency, particularly those holding NAATI Recognition, considering roughly only every one in five of them (21.4%) had received relevant training as is shown in Table 4, and there may be a lack of awareness of the demands of the technique and accuracy requirements, suggesting a possible Dunning-Kruger effect which describes one's incompetence leading to inflated self-assessments (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Prior training in chuchotage as an independent variable is shown to have a statistically significant relationship with the client feedback received by the respondents (Table 9) and the appraisal of their own chuchotage competence (Table 12). For those who made a positive self-appraisal regarding their chuchotage skills, the years of their interpreting experience positively correlates with their level of perceived skilfulness in their chuchotage performance (Table 13), which supports the argument that interpreters need time to master this mode. Juggling multiple tasks (e.g. listening and talking at the same time), keeping up with the speaker's pace, and struggling with poor acoustics are regarded as challenges by more than one in five interpreters (Table 14), and those who had prior chuchotage training appear to experience fewer challenges in these areas than those who did not (Table 15). These findings on prior training and length of experience address research question 4.

Finally, research question 5 is addressed by the challenges the respondents specified (Table 14 and the associated text analysis) and what they think they need to do (presented at the end of Section 4). These insights are valuable in shaping the design of future training for the purpose of CPD, especially for those practitioners who had no chuchotage training and novice interpreters with limited experience. The authors, therefore, propose that future CPD should cover five aspects as outlined in Table 16 below, each having the basic and

advanced versions. For student interpreters in formal interpreting programs, it is paramount that the curricula ensure this interpreting technique is included in language-specific tuition, and such training should be conducted over a number of semesters to ensure proper skills development.

Table 16. Proposed CPD for chuchotage

	Basic level	Advanced level
1. Introduction to chuchotage as a form of simultaneous interpreting without equipment and its application in community settings, addressing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is chuchotage: knowledge oriented - How to do chuchotage: skill oriented and factors affecting performance - When and where to provide chuchotage: suitable community settings - Why use chuchotage: explore communication maxims, the concept of contextual goals and accuracy 	1.1	1.2
2. Introduction to self-reflection and action learning	2.1	2.2
3. Guided practice with feedback on skills	3.1 receive guided practice	3.2 offer guided practice
4. Mentoring	4.1 receive mentoring	4.2 offer mentoring
5. Peer review	5.1 receive peer review	5.2 provide peer review

The NAATI gap training course, which this paper reports on, was a one-off foundational course developed and delivered to address a specific gap at a specific time in the Australian interpreter certification history when the new testing system was being introduced. The authors further propose the following CPD training matrix to cater for practitioners with various levels of training and experience, bearing in mind that those with lower NAATI credentials are, in reality, often required to perform chuchotage regardless. The authors are also mindful not to confuse length of interpreting experience with competence.

Table 17. Proposed gap training matrix

	Training - YES	Training - NO
Experience - YES	1.2 as refresher 2.2 as refresher 3.1 (3.2 if competence is verified) 4.1 (4.2 if competence is verified) 5.1 (5.2 if competence is verified)	1.1 + 1.2 2.1 + 2.2 3.1 4.1 5.1
Experience - NO	1.2 2.2 3.1 4.1 5.1	1.1 2.1 3.1 4.1 5.1

Lastly, it is also important to educate interpreting clients – both non-English speakers and the professionals who provide services to them – about different interpreting modes and techniques, and on how to work with interpreters effectively so they can achieve the best possible communication outcomes. Professional interpreter associations, universities and language service providers would be best placed to develop and deliver such training.

6. Conclusion

The data analysed and the literature reviewed in the current study demonstrate that chuchotage, or whispered interpreting, is utilised broadly in various community settings and is a demanding interpreting technique which poses various challenges to practitioners and requires time to master. Just over 30% of the respondents reported they had received prior chuchotage training, of whom a higher percentage of participants reported better chuchotage skills and positive client feedback, and fewer experienced challenges in their performance. The domain areas and topics the respondents cover in their interpreting assignments should become the focus for future training. This study also provides evidence that practitioners, even if they hold a lower level of NAATI credentials, in reality, will find themselves in situations where they need to perform chuchotage, even though it is not a skill assumed of their credential.

The importance of chuchotage has been acknowledged by NAATI and has been included in its testing regime for interpreters operating at the professional level since 2018. The community interpreter workforce in Australia comprises practitioners with different levels of NAATI credentials, years of experience, and extent of interpreter education and training – be it formal (such as a university or vocational course), a non-award course (such as language-independent workshops or a skill set), or none. It is, therefore, paramount to address the skills gap in the current workforce by offering various levels and combinations of training and support as outlined in tables 16 and 17. Non-English speakers and professionals in community settings who rely on interpreters to receive or deliver public services should have an understanding of this form of interpreting and of the situations where they can and should request it.

A major limitation of this study is having chuchotage competence self-appraised by the respondents, rather than criteria referenced; similarly, user feedback on participants' performance is also self-reported, rather than first-hand. Furthermore, information was only collected on whether or not the respondents had training in chuchotage, so nothing is known about the nature of their interpreter education. Future research should expand data collection to include these areas for the purpose of triangulation. Follow-up studies on the CPD proposed will be beneficial for advancing the pedagogy for chuchotage.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire

1. Please provide your NAATI interpreting credential(s) and language(s)?
 Conference Interpreter or above in _____
 Professional Interpreter in _____
 Paraprofessional Interpreter in _____
 Recognition in _____
 None in _____
2. How long have you practiced as an interpreter?
1) Less than 3 years 2) 4 to 6 years
3) 7 to 10 years 4) More than 10 years
3. How often do you perform simultaneous interpreting or chuchotage at work?
1) Never (go to question 7) 2) Very rarely
3) At least once a week on average 4) Twice a week on average
5) Three or more times a week on average
4. In what work contexts did you perform simultaneous interpreting or chuchotage, e.g. court hearings, family conferences for critical medical treatment, etc.?

5. When you provide simultaneous interpreting or chuchotage, what feedback do you normally get from your interpreting clients?
1) They appreciate the instant interpretation they receive
2) They do not appreciate it, because _____
3) I receive mixed feedback, because _____
4) I don't receive any feedback _____
6. On average, how would you rate your performance of this technique?
1) Good (go to Q8) 2) Average 3) Insufficient
7. When you perform simultaneous interpreting and chuchotage, what aspects do you find challenging?
1) Multi-tasking, e.g. listening and talking at the same time
2) Acoustics, e.g. trouble hearing the talk clearly
3) Speed, e.g. unable to keep up with the pace of the speaker
4) Omissions, e.g. as a result of one or more factors experienced above
5) Other: _____
6) N/A _____

8. Have you had any formal simultaneous or chuchotage training?
 Yes, please describe: _____
 No

9. After today's workshop, how do you think you may be able to do to address the challenges you identified in question 7?

10. Are there any aspects of today's workshop that you think worked well and/or need improvement?

Positive aspects: _____

Improvement needed: _____

Thanks for your cooperation and assistance!