

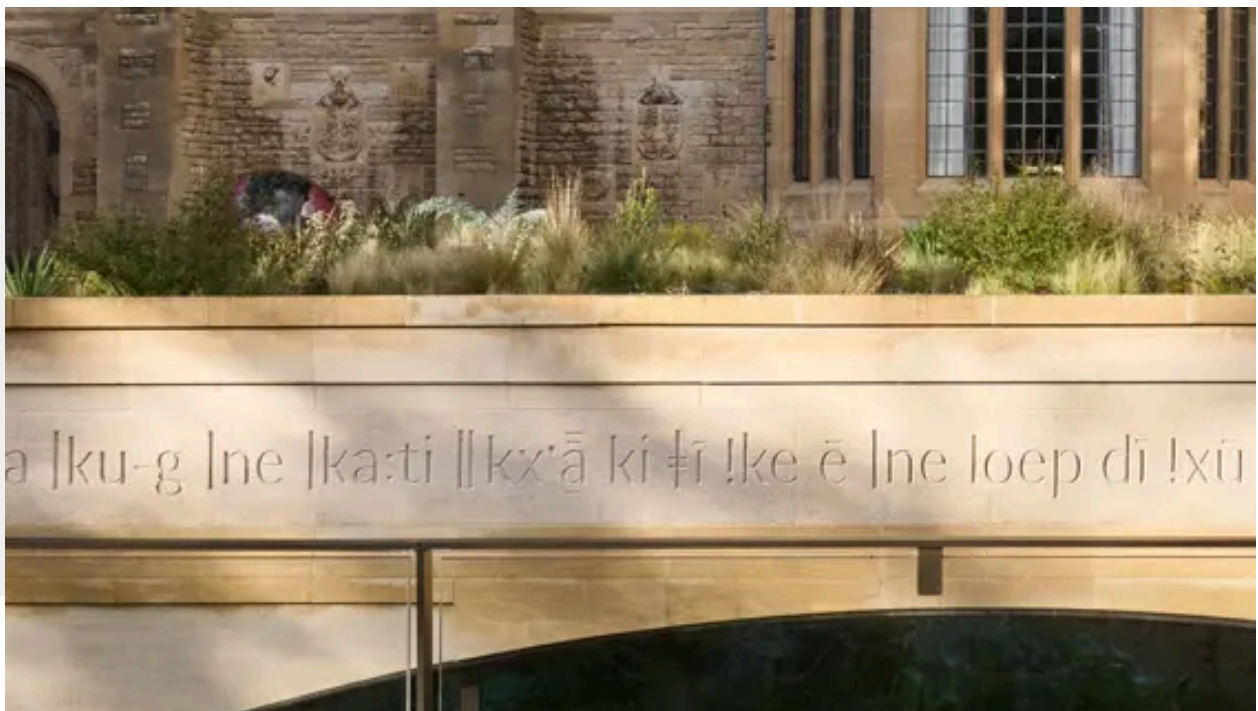
SATI

South African Translators' Institute

newsletter

YOUR
LANGUAGE
CONNECTION

08 2025



Medical leaflets and the risks of imperfect language

When words hurt: The role of cultural competence in medical interpreting

Member benefits

Contributing to local language association

SATI webinars

Other webinars

International Translation Day

A sleeping Southern African language acknowledged

Welcome to SATI



MEDICAL LEAFLETS AND THE RISKS OF IMPERFECT LANGUAGE

Imagine a patient receiving a medication leaflet translated into isiZulu that tells them to take their pills “amaphilisi amathathu kathathu ngosuku”. While it may sound correct, it actually tells them to take three pills, three times a day – a potential overdose. The intended instruction was one pill three times a day.

This type of mistranslation is not uncommon in South Africa. Studies like the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s MediZulu project have highlighted how poor terminology standardisation in isiZulu medical materials leads to misunderstandings and reduced patient trust. The consequences can be severe, ranging from ineffective treatment to life-threatening misuse.

Medical terminology often doesn’t have direct equivalents in African languages. For example, terms like “hypertension”, “antibiotic resistance”, or “contraindicated” are complex even in English. Without adequate training or collaboration with healthcare professionals, translators often default to literal or overly simplified language, leading to dangerous misunderstandings.

For language practitioners, this problem presents a unique opportunity. The need for qualified medical translators is growing, not just in government health departments but also in NGOs, pharmaceutical companies and clinical research.

How to become a medical translator

To enter the field, you typically need:

- A strong grasp of at least two languages, including an indigenous South African language.
- Training in medical terminology, which can be gained through CPD courses, short diplomas, or mentorship from health-sector linguists.
- Experience or studies in health communication or life sciences is a plus.
- Consider certification from the International Medical Interpreters Association.

Accurate medical translation isn’t just a job: it’s a public health service. As language professionals, we have the power to make information safer, clearer, and life-saving. Let’s raise the standard, one leaflet at a time.





When words hurt: The role of cultural competence in medical interpreting

A Xhosa-speaking patient nods silently as the interpreter explains the diagnosis of bipolar disorder, as provided by the psychiatrist. But her silence isn't understanding – it's shock. The words used was “uGqirha weengqondo”; literally, “doctor for crazy people.”

In multilingual, multicultural South Africa, medical interpreters don't just translate – they navigate cultural landmines. Words like “schizophrenia”, “depression” or even “cancer” often carry heavy cultural baggage or have no direct equivalent in indigenous languages. If translated carelessly, they can cause shame, fear or non-compliance.

Cultural competence in interpreting is the ability to convey not just the words, but the meaning, in a way that is accurate, respectful and culturally appropriate. A direct translation might be linguistically correct but socially harmful. For example, referring to a miscarriage as “ukulahlekelwa ngumntwana” (loss of a child) may sound gentle, but in some contexts, it implies the mother was negligent.

Trained medical interpreters act as cultural brokers, offering neutral, clear language that respects both patient and practitioner. This requires:

- Deep knowledge of both source and target cultures.
- Emotional intelligence and sensitivity.
- Ongoing training in health terminology and cultural context.

Organisations like the International Medical Interpreters Association offer workshops in cultural competence. In South Africa, initiatives at the University of the Free State and Stellenbosch University are beginning to include cultural nuance in health communication studies.

Cultural competence isn't a “nice to have”; it's a necessity. For interpreters and translators, it's the difference between communication and alienation, between treatment and trauma.

Words matter. And in medical settings, culturally competent words can heal more than we realise.



MEMBER BENEFITS

Trados

Check out Edwin de Klerk's discounted offers on new Trados subscriptions, upgrades or licenses.

Consult this website for current discounted offers: www.language-solutions.co.za or email him at edwin@trados-solutions.com.

PharosOnline

As members know, we talked to PharosOnline about a significant discount for our members.

Unfortunately, SATI does not have the funds to sponsor this offer on behalf of members, and we would have needed a minimum of 200 members to each pay around R200 per year to make use of this offer. Thank you to every member who took the time to respond; sadly only 36 members indicated that they would be interested and committed to paying the fee from their side.

We are happy to still be able to offer a 15% discount to members signing up for a PharosOnline package or renewing their subscription.

Members should email current proof of SATI membership to Charnell on sales@pharosonline.co.za, so she can manually apply the special discount to members signing up, or when they renew membership. She will assist with payment.

Essential business skills - adopting an entrepreneurial mindset

Date: 29 September 2025

Time: 13:00 - 15:00

Cost: Free webinar

Over the last couple of years the marketplace for translation and interpreting has been disrupted by AI in the sense that clients are now tempted by the technology and might not automatically turn to their trusted language professional as they did in the past. So perhaps language professionals also need to adapt and consider adopting a more entrepreneurial approach in order to be successful now and in the future.

Developing greater business acumen, and enhancing client-facing skills and technological proficiency are likely to be useful strategies to deploy. However, a mindset shift might also be required to enable us to feel comfortable talking about delivering solutions that fit the clients' needs rather than focusing solely on the quality of our language outputs.

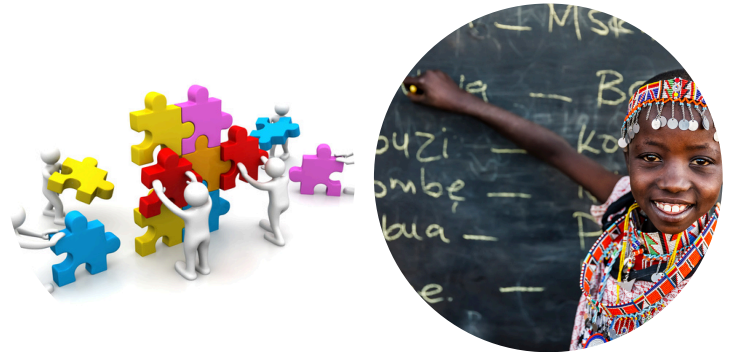
Sara Robertson (CEO of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting in the UK) will share her thoughts on how we prepare ourselves to be entrepreneurial professionals.

More info at the link below.

The Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL), was formed in 2015 to enable academics and relevant other university staff members to collaborate, network and share knowledge on issues of common interest.

In addition to influencing and contributing to national and institutional language policies, the CoPAL seeks to benchmark, develop, advocate for and share good practices and relevant information needed to advance the teaching and learning of African Languages in schools and universities.

CONTRIBUTING TO LOCAL LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION



The SATI Chair, Johan Blaauw, was invited to do a presentation on SATI to the Community of Practice for African Languages (CoPAL).

The presentation to CoPAL introduced the South African Translator' Institute and its role in the professionalisation of language practice in South Africa. It defined SATI as a voluntary association representing language practitioners (LPs) across all South African official and several international languages. It seeks to protect both practitioners and the public through a code of ethics and an accreditation system.

The historical context that was given, highlighted SATI's founding in 1956 and its affiliation with the International Federation of Translators (FIT) since 1993. SATI's active participation in FIT, including leadership roles and in the establishment of FIT Africa, was emphasised. FIT Africa now includes associations from several African countries, expanding regional collaboration.

The presentation reviewed national regulatory efforts: initial work between 1998 and 2000 led to the drafting of the SA Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) Bill, culminating in the SALPC Act of 2014, which provides for practitioner registration, accreditation, training standards and a code of ethics.

While statutory regulation was delayed over many years, SATI pursued self-regulation, including developing its own code of ethics and accreditation system. The code sets professional standards, although true professionalism relies on practitioners' internal locus of control. Accreditation offers voluntary competency testing, providing a quality benchmark and preparing members for future SALPC registration.

The presentation invited CoPAL members, many of whom already work as language practitioners (notably translators and terminologists contributing to African language intellectualisation), to consider SATI membership. Benefits include recognition as subscribing to a code of ethics, professional representation nationally and internationally, and access to accreditation.

In closing, it was explained that SATI positioned itself as the primary professional body for language practitioners, offering immediate pathways to professionalisation while aligning with future statutory regulation, and interested practitioners were urged to join SATI.

SATI WEBINARS

Date	Time	Topic/Webinar/Forum	Type of Event / Venue	Facilitated/presented by
Thursday, 07 August 2025	16:00 - 17:00	Thesis editing in the age of Generative AI	Zoom	Gene Mathey & Laurinda van Tonder
August 2025 TBC	TBC	Voice work for interpreters, focusing on delivery, charisma, and persuasion	Zoom	Eduard de Kock
Thursday, 11 September 2025	16:00 - 17:00	Research corner forum: Informal online research-sharing session	Zoom	Sponono Mahlangu
Saturday, 27 September 2025	9:00 - 13:30	Plain language advanced workshop: Refining and tackling complex communication challenges	University of Johannesburg	Prof. Eleanor Cornelius
Saturday, 18 October 2025	9:00 - 13:30	Hands-on introduction to Trados Studio: Projects, translation memories, and termbases	University of Johannesburg	Salomé van Niekerk
Thursday, 23 October 2025	16:00 - 17:00	Generative AI as a tool for plain language: Insights, limitations, and ethical implications	Zoom	Carol Els & Ammaarah Mahomed
Saturday, 01 November 2025	9:00 - 11:00	An introduction to Trados (Part 1): Essential CAT tool skills	Zoom	Salomé van Niekerk
Saturday, 15 November 2025	9:00 - 11:00	An introduction to Trados (Part 2): Essential CAT tool skills	Zoom	Salomé van Niekerk

Problematic linguistic constructions: Word level

1. Lack of pronouns (cont.)

- Relative pronouns (*that, who, which, what, whose, whom*) and complementiser (*that*): important anaphoric reference function – important reference tool
- Lack of relative pronouns = adds to cognitive load of reader; must reconstruct missing information themselves

This medicine should not usually be given to patients receiving other central nervous system depressants [...], and to patients receiving MAOI inhibitors [...]

The use of ADONIS ETORICOMIB is not recommended in women attempting to fall pregnant.



Dr. George de Bruin



TOWARDS PLAIN LANGUAGE FOR PACKAGE INSERT LEAFLETS WEBINAR

In June, SATI hosted a webinar presented by Dr George de Bruin, Towards Plain Language for Package Insert Leaflets. Dr de Bruin discussed his research on a model for intralingual translation into plain language to improve the effectiveness of medicine brochures for the consumer.

FINANCES FOR FREELANCERS WEBINAR

In July, SATI hosted a webinar presented by James Boland, Finances for freelancers. Mr Boland shared an overview of relevant financial concepts, invoicing best practices and tax options and the impact thereof which are available to freelancers. At the end of this practical and relevant presentation, Mr Boland answered specific questions attendees were battling with, such as whether one could deduct a cellular expense or electricity for tax purposes.

Income

Income = Money you earn from clients (if they pay you! – Part 4)
If you have no income, you have no business!

Invoicing requirements

- + Your business name
- + Your client's name
- + Date of service
- + A sequential number
- + Description of the service
- + The amount due from the client
- + YOUR BANK DETAILS!

Incorrect invoicing makes you look unprofessional
+ it can delay the payment of your invoice
- so get it right!

- ❖ You must keep a record of all invoices you issue



OTHER WEBINARS

PEG WEBINARS

Professional Editors' Guild webinar programme – SATI members receive a **30% discount** on PEG webinars.

Editing fiction: the facts and fantasies

12 August 2025 (18:00–20:00)

Presenter: Sheena Carnie

More info at the link below

Another C for your copy-editing basket: Becoming a critical (but kind) copy-editor

19 August 2025 (18:00–20:00)

Presenter: Linda Pretorius

More info at the link below

INKBIRD LANGUAGE SERVICES WEBINARS

SATI members receive a **50% discount** on these online webinars. Click on the links for full information.

Schoolbooks: Lessons from the Trenches

21 August 2025 (09:00–16:00)

More info at the link below

Smart not sorry: Using AI & post editing without selling out

10 September 2025 (09:00–13:00)

More info at the link below

Freelancing fears, follies & foes: Real talk. Real tools.

14 October 2025 (09:00–13:00)

More info at the link below

INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATION DAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2025

The International Federation of Translators Council has announced the theme for International Translation Day (ITD) 2025: **“Translation, shaping a future you can trust.”**

This theme aligns with the UN's designation of 2025 as the International Year of Peace and Trust, and FIT's upcoming Congress theme, “Mastering the machine: shaping an intelligent future.”

It highlights the vital role of translators, interpreters, and terminologists in building trust, enabling dialogue, and overseeing AI-generated communication in an era of global uncertainty. The theme also reinforces the value of these professionals in fostering peace and diplomacy, especially in high-stakes international negotiations.

FIT encourages members to base their ITD celebrations on this theme and invites all to join the annual webinar on 26 September 2025.





WELCOME TO SATI

New members

Bronwynn Dyson
Christo Snyman
Juanita Baker
Moataz Balel
Mongezi Sikhakhane
Ngalula Kalala
Nomvuzo Mnguni
Thothokiso Diaho
Ubuntu Language Consultancy Pty Ltd.
Vhatendi Mutshenawamadi



Rejoined members

Carina Maré
Christa Meyer
Estie Meintjes
Kagiso-Brandon Sepato
Sam Usadolo

A SLEEPING SOUTHERN AFRICAN LANGUAGE ACKNOWLEDGED

A new stone carving at Rhodes House at the University of Oxford in UK uses the sleeping southern African language Ixam to honour the people whose hard work and suffering helped build the Rhodes Trust's wealth.

The language choice is important: Ixam is the language of the South African coat of arms. It is no longer spoken but is closely related to N!uu, which is still used by some communities in the Northern Cape. The project involved consulting those communities about how Ixam should be used.

The message carved in the stone acknowledges history and invites reflection on how the space came to be. It now sits alongside an older inscription in Latin, also a sleeping language.

CHECK IT OUT

SATI }

Your language is our language

newsletter

YOUR
LANGUAGE
CONNECTION

08 2025



satranslatorsinstitute



sati_media

More about SATI at
www.translators.org.za