

Interpreting in refugee settings

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This paper will discuss a research project investigating interpreting in refugee settings in the Greater Auckland area. New Zealand accepts up to 750 quota refugees each year. Refugees spend six weeks at the Refugee Resettlement Centre in Mangere, South Auckland, where they attend classes which aim to prepare them for settlement in New Zealand society. They also have access to health services and counselling. Interpreters are used in refugees' interactions with classroom teachers, health providers and counsellors. Occasionally the situation arises where no trained interpreters are available for a particular regional language (e.g. Chin). This may be the case if the refugees in question are from a region which New Zealand has not accepted refugees from before. In other cases, trained interpreters are used.

The impetus for the study was the anecdotal evidence surrounding some of these interpreter-mediated encounters, especially where the interpreters themselves are from a refugee background. The aim of the research is to examine implications for interpreter (and professional) training and provide suggestions for supporting interpreters who have been affected by interpreting sensitive and traumatic information. The research instruments include an online questionnaire for interpreters and focus discussion groups.



Dr Ineke CREZEE was born and educated in the Netherlands where she studied English and Translation Studies, and also qualified as a Registered Nurse. She started interpreting for Amnesty International and hospital patients in the Netherlands. Since arriving in New Zealand in 1989, Ineke has been working as a court and medical interpreter. She has been involved in interpreter training since 1989 and in 1998 published a popular book on health terminology and healthcare settings which is still very popular with New Zealand interpreters. Ineke completed her PhD in Applied Language Studies focusing on possible L1 reversion among older migrants. She is a Senior LecAUSIT insideturer in Translation and Interpreting and a member of the National Council of the New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters.