CHALLENGES IN MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES. THE MYTH OF THE INVISIBLE INTERPRETER AND TRANSLATOR

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Abstract: This paper concentrates on communication with minority groups through a third party or intermediary in the public services. The variety of settings in which these encounters take place (hospitals, schools, government offices, police stations, customs checkpoints, etc.) raises questions on the role played by this intermediary, the importance of culture, the recognition of his/her job as a profession, the acceptance of the varied forms of professionalism, and the consideration of the different attitudes of the society and its institutions. This study concentrates on the different names and roles assigned to this link, with special emphasis on one of them: the interpreter and translator, and the debate surrounding the new roles he/she should (or should not) perform.

Keywords: intercultural communication, community interpreting, translation, mediation, multilingual societies

1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of the last century, a continuous and rapid increase in the flow of people from Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asia to European Union (EU) countries raised a number of new questions regarding intercultural communication and the need to develop initiatives to overcome all kinds of barriers (linguistic, socio-cultural, political, economic, and so on). After more than a decade, the debate is still open and the decisions taken show a wide variety of initiatives. This paper concentrates on a very specific topic: the role of the third party or intermediary in triadic exchanges when communicating with minorities. The variety of settings in which these encounters take place (hospitals, schools, government offices, police stations, customs checkpoints, etc.) raises questions on the

role played by the intermediary, the importance of culture, and the recognition of his/her job as a profession.

In the following pages, I will first provide an overview of the challenges that host countries, immigrants and refugees who do not speak the official language(s), have to face, with special emphasis on the means of communication provided by the public services in Spain. Secondly, I will concentrate on a specific type of link: the person who works as an interlinguistic bridge and the influence of culture in this respect. I will then move on to analyze the different names and roles assigned to this link, with special emphasis on one of them: the interpreter and translator, and the debate surrounding the new roles he/she should (or should not) perform.

2. CHALLENGES IN GROWING MULTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

Migration is not a new phenomenon. EU countries like Sweden, Germany, France, or the United Kingdom have traditionally received immigrants and refugees. However, in recent decades there has been a constant influx of people not only to these countries but also to EU countries which had previously remained outside these migratory movements, i.e. the southern European countries (Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece). Many of these immigrants or refugees bring with them a language and culture unknown in the host countries and, at the same time, they do not know the language and culture of the host country. Such a situation obviously raises new questions and demands solutions in a changing society.

The governments of the countries concerned, and their societies, have developed – and are still developing – various kinds of strategies and measures (legal, work-related, educational and/or social) to help with the situation while discussing a common policy that applies to all EU countries. Yet the subject of linguistic communication has not been seriously examined, despite the variety of languages in the EU, its long tradition in learning and teaching foreign languages, and the existence of educational exchange programs such as Erasmus or Socrates. The minority languages spoken by the new immigrant populations are rarely considered when developing strategies to facilitate the integration of these people, who often have a limited knowledge of the official language(s) of the host country, and who have to face a variety of different situations (in hospitals, schools, banks, police stations, government agencies, etc.), as well as a variety of interlocutors with diverse linguistic accents and backgrounds.

Different countries show differing degrees of awareness of these realities and, consequently, of action taken, especially in those countries where the phe-

nomenon is more recent (i.e. southern EU countries). In these countries, it is the local councils that usually deal with the problems of these people, sometimes in cooperation with the ministries concerned or with charity organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). They provide help in dealing with housing problems, official bureaucracy, medical assistance and interpreting and translating, making use of their own personnel or bringing in volunteers. In fact, in Spain these groups do most of the interpreting and translating in the public services, even though they frequently have a limited command of the languages involved, and have no training in public services interpreting and translating (PSI). When the government or the local authorities do not provide any help, these citizens – as has always happened since the migration phenomenon started (see Valero-Garcés, 1999, 2000) – manage to make themselves understood through the help of friends, relatives and often children who speak the new language better than their parents. Thanks to the help of these people, who expect nothing in return, immigrants are able to deal with their problems when interacting with refugee organizations, government offices, landlords, shop assistants and bankers, in person or even over the phone.

There also exist two officially recognized professional categories: (1) the Sworn Translator and Interpreter (*Traductor e Intérprete Jurado),* working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and (2) the Court Translator and Interpreter, working for the Ministry of Justice. But to these two 'officially recognized' categories, a third one can be added, due to its growing importance in the public services. This is the immigrant hired by the government (e.g. Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, local agencies, etc.) to work as an interpreter and translator. In the following, I will briefly describe each of these categories (for a more detailed discussion see Valero-Garcés 2003a).

The Sworn Translator and Interpreter is the only (certified) professional officially recognized by the government. In fact, it is not an actually existing job title, but simply the recognition of someone as an official interpreter and translator. To apply for this position, no experience in translation is necessary, nor does the government provide any type of training. There are two options. Option A is to pass the annual exam offered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the language(s) the candidate chooses. The requirements for taking the exam are minimal: one must be at least 18 years old, a citizen of an EU country, and hold a Spanish university degree, or a foreign university degree recognized by the Spanish Ministry of Education. Option B consists of applying for the title by presenting written proof that the applicant holds a BA in Translation and Interpreting from a Spanish university, including at least 240 hours of instruction in spe-

cialized translation in law and/or economics, and 160 hours of interpreting in the language whose title they are applying for.[1]

The Court Translator and Interpreter works for the Ministry of Justice. The main task is interpreting. However, some other tasks are also involved: translating judicial or extra-judicial documents as requested by the authorities of this Ministry; serving as a mediator in any subject or situation, such as interpreting in civil cases when required by the judge; answering cultural, political or linguistic questions when required to do so by people working for this Ministry; helping social workers when they have linguistic problems with their clients; and certifying translated documents (e.g. transcribed telephone calls, documents provided by the police, documents required by the judge, etc.).

As in the case of the Sworn Translator and Interpreter mentioned above, it is relatively easy to attain this position considering the enormous responsibilities involved. The applicant has to merely pass an exam offered by the Ministry of Justice usually once a year. No experience in translation is necessary, nor is any type of training provided. The requirements are to be a Spanish citizen over 18 years of age; to hold a university degree; and to demonstrate mastery of the specific combinations of languages required for the occasion.

With regard to the third 'official' category of interpreters and translators, they are people hired temporarily by official institutions thanks to agreements the government signs with NGOs to provide linguistic assistance to refugees and immigrants. They are often volunteers working in NGOs, or members of the community or ethnic group in question. No specific qualifications or even a university degree are required. With regard to less commonly spoken languages, and when the NGOs cannot provide anyone or there is no one who can work even as an 'ad hoc' interpreter, the authorities contact the consulate or foreign representation in the host country, and it is the consulate's job to locate an appropriate person abroad.

As for other institutions that come into contact with the foreign population, be they governmental or not, not only Spain but also many EU countries still continue to make use of their own resources, and there is no communications network or language bank for emergencies apart from their own lists. Some exceptions are, for example, the United Kingdom, where they have a National Register of Interpreters and Translators for Public Services (see http://www.iol.org), or Sweden,

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[1] At this point, it is worth mentioning that there are at least 12 universities offering a BA in Translation and Interpreting in Spain. For more information about their programs see http://www.ua.es/dpto/dfing/ccduti.

I should also mention that neither the syllabuses and languages studied, nor the training received meet what is commonly needed in the public services. As far as I know, the only specific course in PSI is the one that has been offered by the University of Alcalá since 2001 (http://www2.uah.es/aulatraduccion).

with a long tradition in providing linguistic services to the migrant population co-ordinated by the Council for Interpreter Services (see www.tolk.su.se).

Considering the variety of people working as intermediaries between the providers of services and the new population, the next step will be to analyze the role these 'bridges' perform.

3. THE ROLE OF THE INTERMEDIARY
IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

From a socio-cultural point of view, an intermediary is necessary in many different settings: business, politics, courts, hospitals, schools, etc. History is full of examples of mediators. As Wadensjö (1992:42) points out, a look at other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and ethnography that have traditionally relied on mediators may help to discover and redefine the role of the mediator in interlinguistic communication.

Wadensjö's review of the literature is very useful. She mentions: 'the broker' and 'the go between,' 'the middleman' and the 'mediator,' and describes them as follows:

> [...] to act as a broker would be to take more independent measures to initiate or promote negotiation, while a 'go between' only would carry out initiatives coming from the primary parties.

> [...] a 'mediator' would signify a person who assists in the solving of a conflict at hand, while 'middleman' would denote more generally an individual promoting communication between two parties (which thus would include the function of a 'mediator'). (Wadensjö 1992:42)

Gulliver (1979) also carried out an interesting study on the intermediary or mediator's role by analyzing the variations and strategies they use, as well as by exploring the mediating process as such related to a general theory of conflict and negotiation. Gulliver complains about the lack of interest shown by disciplines such as the ones mentioned above in considering the mediator's role. He criticizes the stereotypical images used: that of the impartial mediator whose role consists solely of making the parties collaborate towards a common goal instead of competing against each other when, in practice, the intermediary usually performs a more active role. He also distinguishes different types of mediators who may perform different functions in negotiations, although not all of them necessarily deal with interlinguistic communication.

Gulliver (1979:220) defines the mediator's role as "a continuum, representing the range of strengths of interventions," and distinguishes between the 'passive mediator,' i.e. someone who, by his or her very presence, can stimulate the continuation or the renewal of the exchange of information; the 'chairman,' i.e. a person who, in addition to the possible influence of his or her mere presence, keeps order and directs proceedings; the 'enunciator,' i.e. someone who explains the rules and norms which should be taken as relevant to issues in negotiation; the 'prompter,' i.e. a person who attempts to make the parties clarify information and interrelate, and to encourage their coordination; the 'leader,' i.e. a person who more or less directly injects his/her own opinions, evaluations and recommendations; and, the strongest extreme, the 'virtual arbitrator'. The 'go between,' in Gulliver's terminology, is simply a person who mediates between parties who are physically separated and not in direct communication.

In a general sense, the mediator is the third party who is present at a negotiation and who exerts some influence on the process. As Gulliver (1979: 30) states:

> (…) his [the mediator's] status should be evaluated, firstly, by reference to his possible personal interests in the issue at stake, and, secondly, in accordance to how, in this case, he would be an interested party.

Furthermore, he argues:

> (…) I suspect that the truly disinterested impartial mediator is in fact rather rare. He may perhaps be quite impartial towards the two parties but be quite partial towards his own interests, sometimes at the expense of one or both disputants.

Thus, a mediator is also the person who provides linguistic assistance, traditionally known as translator (in the written mode) or interpreter (in the spoken mode), and it is this type of mediator that the one we are interested in. Before concentrating on his/her role, the importance of culture needs to be considered to understand the open debate about the tasks the interpreter/ translator has to perform. The following section concentrates on exploring the role of culture.

3.1. The Influence of Culture in the Mediation Process

In 1996, Baker (1996), noting the attention being paid to culture by many scholars in Translation Studies, most of them working essentially within he Descriptive Translation Studies, which is biased towards comparative literature, warned

that many of them had adopted a "cultural perspective ... a dangerous fashionable word that almost substitutes for rigor and coherence" (17).

The interest in culture has increased since then and it has found a place not only in Translation Studies, but also in other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and applied linguistics. It has also given rise to a new area of study: termed Cultural Studies.

In the case of Translation Studies, the concepts of 'translation' and 'culture' are becoming increasingly linked. Questions regarding whether or not translations can transfer culture, and to what extent, are still in the center of debate. The two extreme views are that either everything can be translated without loss, or that nothing can be translated without loss. Between these two poles, a wide range of tendencies exists, making it difficult for any agreement to be reached. The tendencies range from globalization to localization, or from 'foreignization' to 'domestication' (Venuti 1998), and which also give rise to different products, which Nord (1997) exemplifies with the distinction between 'documentary' translation (preserving the original exoticizing setting) and 'instrumental' translation (adaptation of the setting to the target culture). According to Nord, whether a translation ought to be instrumental or documentary when cultural and historical elements are involved is the translator's informed decision. If he/she focuses on the transmission of the original flavor for the reader's reference, documentary translation is preferred; but if the main intention is to convey the information for basic communication, then instrumental translation is appropriate. Moreover, if the purpose of a translation is to achieve a particular purpose with for the target audience –'target-oriented texts' as in the case of PSI –, anything that obstructs the achievement of this purpose may be considered a translation error.

These two viewpoints are, in fact, opposed but not irreconcilable when applied to different situations. Katan (1999:1), following Hall (1990), indicates three situations or levels relevant for the discussion: technical, formal, and informal (or out-of-awareness).

At a technical level, or first level for Katan, communication tends to be global, universal. Thus many conceptual terms in industry, business, science or technology can be translated just by paying attention to their denotative meaning. The communication is so explicit and the ideas so clearly transmitted that negotiation is reduced to a minimum. This form of culture is indeed global (and it links with the concept of 'globalization'); the text is the authority and there is normally no extra-linguistic context (if there is, it is extremely limited). According to Katan (1999:1), at this level the translator and/or interpreter may only need to use the appropriate technical language and to apply the ever-increasing computer-related resources in order to make his/her task more effective and faster. This may mean that technological training must be compulsory for future interpreters and translators.

Together with this level, the translator and/or interpreter may require a formal knowledge of the culture. Thus we move on to what Katan (1999:2) considers the second or formal level. At this level, the translator's task also entails the understanding of the different cultural requirements set by the different countries and ensuring that the products meet these needs. Such is the case with localization in the computer industry, for example; or the need to know the consumer regulations that apply in every country, as well as the accepted set of priorities usually set by 'corporate cultures' (such as Apple and IBM cultures). Companies are aware of this phenomenon and are becoming more confident about handing over interpreting and translating tasks to their own departments. As a result, many companies are investing in in-service language units instead of hiring professionals (Kondo and Tebble 1997). This may be bad news for the university-trained interpreter and translator holding a degree.

The third level of culture, that of the informal or 'out-of-awareness' plane, as Katan calls it (1999:2) concerns the level at which the mediator should be able to intervene and mediate. Translators and interpreters are considered as cultural mediators, whose task it is "to mediate the non-converging world-views or maps of the worlds, so allowing the participants to cooperate to the degree they wish" (Katan 1999:11). Other practitioners and scholars (Angelelli 2003, 2004; Bot 2003; Roy 1989; Wadensjö 1995, 1998) also follow this approach. This is the kind of mediator this paper deals with.

3.2. The Translator and Interpreter as Cultural Mediator

The use of the term 'cultural mediator' to define the role of the translator as a mediating agent was first introduced by Boechner (1981) in *The Mediating Person and Cultural Identity,* an interesting collection of articles, although the concept is not new. Steiner (1975:45) had already made used of this concept, though focusing mainly on the linguistic aspect of translation. Boechner, however, goes further by considering translation as only a part of the mediator's task.

Taft (1981:53), in his contribution to the volume, defines the cultural mediator's role as follows:

> A cultural mediator is a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture. The role of the mediator is performed by interpreting expressions, intentions, perceptions, and expectations of each cultural group to the other, that is, by establishing and balancing the communication between them. In order to serve as a link in this sense, the mediator

must be able to participate to some extent in both cultures. Thus a mediator must be to a certain extent bicultural. (Taft 1981:53)

Taft (1981:73) also explains the skills and abilities this mediator must possess in both cultures:

1. Knowledge about society: history, folklore, traditions, customs; values, prohibitions; the natural environment and its importance; neighboring people, important people in society, etc.

2. Communication skills: written, spoken, non-verbal.

3. Technical skills: those required by the mediator's status, e.g. computer literacy, appropriate dress, etc.

4. Social skills: knowledge of rules that govern social relations in society and emotional competence. e.g., the appropriate level of self-control.

He concludes that the mediator is not only "two skills in one skull" but "in order to play the role of mediator, an individual has to be flexible in switching his cultural orientation" (73). In short, he/she must possess a high degree of intercultural sensitivity to be able not only to negotiate the meaning in both cultures but also to transmit it to the community.

These discrepancies in defining the role of the translator/interpreter as cultural mediator are associated with two different trends. The first of these is the traditional model, as stated by Kondo (1997:59), which attempts to impose limits on the translator's intervention. From this perspective, the idea of deliberately making changes to the form of the text, and manipulating the words in order to aid understanding across cultures is viewed with suspicion. On the other hand, a more open position that rests on the idea of the translator and interpreter as a visible party is supported by authors like Brislin (1981:213) or Knapp-Potthof and Knapp (1981:183). They even suggest that the translator and interpreter "within certain limits may develop his or her initiatives, introduce new topics, give comments and explanations, present arguments, etc."

These two tendencies reveal two different views of the role of the cultural mediator. The first one responds to the traditional way of thinking mostly found in Western society with respect to someone who is considered a professional translator and/or interpreter. The second pole draws attention to a new position that goes against this traditional orientation with regard to the meaning of 'professional' in translation and interpreting. Here, they are seen as cultural mediators, aware of their own cultural identity and behaving as active agents in the process.

In the area of Translation and Interpreting Studies, this debate is also related to the visibility vs. the invisibility of the translator/interpreter. We have already mentioned the works by Venuti and Nord as two different ways of explaining the distance between the two views in relation to translation.

As far as interpreting is concerned, Seleskovitch and Lederer (1989) regard the interpreter as an invisible language facilitator between two parties. The main goal of interpretation – according to Angelelli (2003:16) – is faithfulness to content, a sense of the message, and accuracy. The interpreter is not considered a party to the conversation but rather a 'language-switching operator', in line with the conduit model of communication. The alternative view sees interpreters as essential partners in a cross-cultural conversation (Roy 1989, 2000; Wadenjö 1995, 1998), and co-constructors of the interaction. Angelelli (2003:17) goes a step further and proposes a model in which "the interpreter is visible with all the social and cultural factors that allow her/him to co-construct a definition of reality with the other co-participants to the interaction." That is, he/she brings his/her views on power and status, plus the cultural norms and blueprints of those social factors used to construct and interpret reality. Angelelli clearly states the interpreter's role: "The interpreter brings the self. The self cannot be artificially blocked." In other words, the idea of an 'invisible' interpreter is an illusion. The interpreter is 'opaque' rather than 'transparent,' 'visible' rather than 'invisible.' In PSI, Cambridge (2002:57–60), among others, also distinguishes between the impartiality and the advocacy models.

The discussion still remains open even in the field of Translation Studies. The increasing interest in the role of culture and in the production of target-centered translation is the position defended by the many scholars and practitioners. In her article "Translation and Culture," Karamanian (2004), for instance, argues that the term 'culture' addresses three salient categories of human activity: the 'personal', whereby we as individuals think and function as such; the 'collective', whereby we function in a social context; and the 'expressive', whereby society expresses itself. Language underpins these three pillars. For her, translation, involving the transposition of thoughts expressed in one language by one social group into the appropriate expression of another group, entails a process of cultural de-coding, re-coding, and en-coding that she calls 'transcoding'. Translators are not just dealing with words written in a certain time, space and socio-political situation, as Karamanian points out. Most importantly, it is the 'cultural' aspect of the text that they should take into account. Thus, in the transfer process, i.e. re-coding across cultures, the translator should allocate corresponding attributes vis-à-vis the target culture to ensure credibility in the eyes of the target reader.

For translators, facing an alien culture that requires that its message be conveyed in anything but an alien way, Karamanian proposes the 'Integrated Approach' as the most appropriate strategy to fulfill this aim. In her words,

> This approach follows the global paradigm in which having a global vision of the text at hand has a primary importance. Such an approach focuses from the macro to the micro level in accordance with the Gestalt-

principle, which states that an analysis of parts cannot provide an understanding of the whole; thus translation studies are essentially concerned with a web of relationships, the importance of individual items being decided by their relevance within the larger context: text, situation and culture. (Karamanian 2004 internet source)

She concludes that the transcoding (de-coding, re-coding, and en-coding) process should be focused not merely on language transfer but also – and most importantly – on cultural transposition. This means that translators must be both bilingual and bicultural, if not indeed multicultural, and the main focus will be on the target text, which may imply important changes vis-à-vis a literal translation of the original text (OT).

Shi (2004) also agrees with the need to make changes to produce translated texts in line with the spirit of the OT. These changes are referred to as 'accommodation' in his paper "Accommodation in Translation." Shi defines 'accommodation' as a synonym of adaptation and believes that translation is not merely linguistic conversion or transformation between languages, but involves accommodation to variations in such diverse fields as culture, politics and aesthetics, to name but a few. In this sense, accommodation as a way of translating can lead to fresh opportunities – in his words – "to cohere the semiotic, the linguistic, the social, the cultural and the psychological perspectives on communicating" (Shi 2004).

Shi also provides an account of the types of accommodation translators or interpreters make in their work: collocation accommodation; cultural accommodation; ideological accommodation; aesthetic accommodation. The first – collocation accommodation – comes within the linguistic sphere. We know that each language articulates or organizes words differently and languages do not simply name existing categories, but articulate their own. Thus, for example, all translators have experienced how difficult it is to translate idioms, proverbs, or set phrases from one language to another. Regular dictionaries are of little help in translating collocations, and the translator must often resort to accommodation. Shi provides the following example: "When butter or eggs go bad they are described in English as rancid and addled respectively. Both rancid and addled mean 'stale/rotten,' but swapping modifiers would make unacceptable collocations. When translated into Chinese, a common collocation is *choule,* meaning 'has become stinky.'" Here, accommodation is made unhesitantly and naturally, for the original English collocation.

While accepting that 'culture' is a broad term that may cover many different things, Shi refers to cultural accommodation in a much narrower sense the shared attitudes or values of a group. The following example illustrates the idea:

> The Chinese national character which is shared, to my knowledge, with the Japanese, is implicature in talking to people as opposed to the direct and open way of the Westerners, especially Americans. In both interpreting and translation, accommodations must be made so communication may proceed smoothly, with neither party feeling offended and irritated (Shi 2004 internet source).

By ideological accommodation, Shi means sexual and political concerns. In the first case, as a way of illustration he points out that most Chinese people even today, avoid the topic of sex, which is usually considered pornographic. If you do not, you will be seen as immoral, dishonest, unreliable, and simply bad. This is one of the principle reasons why sex education is in the school curriculum but is never seriously taught. The teacher just tells the students to read what is written in the textbook and discourages the students from asking questions. So, in translation the translator either omits or abbreviates the original graphic description of a sex scene.

As for politics, not much attention is paid to this topic does not receive the same attention in the Chinese culture, as it can be paid in Western cultures. Shi illustrates the statement with the following example:

> Let us assume that a foreign medium carries offensive statements against the Chinese government. It is advisable for the translator that the details not be translated. At most, it is sufficient to mention that the government is being criticized. Patriotism forbids one from making critical or unfavorable statements or spreading them by translating. (Shi 2004 internet source)

This implies that heavy accommodations should be made. He concludes by adding: "Some of those who neglected this advice have gotten into serious trouble."

Aesthetic accommodation finds the best example in poetry. Leaving aside the debate about the translatability or untranslatability of poetry, poetry is fundamentally valuable for its aesthetic value. The example provided by Shi – quoted frequently in Chinese translation circles to demonstrate an effective skill or to attack the rigidity of the source-centered point of view – perfectly illustrates what aesthetic accommodation is about, as seen in the following rather long, but interesting quotation:

> Wang Rongpei (1995), a senior translator, changed the original Chinese image to adapt it to the English aesthetic tradition when he translated a poem in the ancient poetry collection generally known as the Book of Songs. The ancient Chinese used the following simile to depict a

beautiful girl (literally translated): her hands are like soft sprouts; her skin, condensed cream; her neck, larva of a scarab; her teeth, deviltree; her head, qing (a cicada-like insect); and her brows, the shape of a moth. Let's not inquire about the reasons why the ancient Chinese made such comparisons or analogy. One thing is sure: Westerners would not be able to appreciate such a 'beautiful' girl. Wang's version, after his artistic modification or adaptation, reads like this:

Her hands are small, her fingers slim;
Her skin is smooth as cream;
Her swan-like neck is long and slim;
Her teeth like pearls do gleam.
A broad forehead and arching brow
Complement her dimpled cheeks
And make her black eyes glow.

This again exemplifies the long-running debate surrounding the academic dispute between source-centered and target-centered orientation. For centuries, source-centeredness was regarded a priority and was strictly followed. In modern times, a target-centered approach offers a compromise and another possible solution when translating.

From a different perspective, Abdellah (2004), in his article "The Translator's Dilemma – Implicatures and the role of the translator," points out that if the hearer/reader receives the messages in the same way as the speaker/writer had in mind, then there is proper communication; if not, miscommunication or misunderstanding may arise. Then, the translator may be aware that, regardless of the quality of the message, the channels through which the message is conveyed and other situational factors may lead to a distortion of the message in the minds of the readers/hearers, and he/she may provide the necessary changes and adaptations to produce the same effect. In this respect, one of the tasks the translator has to face is, according to Abdellah, how to convey these implicatures into another language. He presents a translation and a back translation of an extract from Shakespeare's *Othello*, making some of the changes required explicit so that the Arabic reader gets the same message as the English reader. Thus, when in English we read:

Iago: Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,
    know of your love?

An Arabic reader will literally read:

Iago: I <u>was wondering whether</u> Cassio had knowledge of your love for my queen while you were wooing her.

The explanation provided by Abdellah is that the person who has doubts in his mind and heart tends to repeat lexical items in order to reorganize his thoughts or relieve his worries. Also, it is common in Arabic to say "nothing, don't worry" when there is indeed "something to worry about." The Arabic version enhances the sense of doubt by making explicit what is implicit in the original. This is a device used in Arabic for raising suspicion, especially when referring to rumours.

A different but complementary view is offered by Wiersema (2004) in his interesting article "Globalization and Translation. A discussion of the effect of globalization on today's translation." Wiersema points out that because of the current trend of globalization, the translator no longer has the absolute need to always find a translation of a term in the target language if this would make the TT lose credibility. He introduces the term 'excessive translation' and defines it in this way: "An excessive translation is a translation that fails to foreignize /exoticize, i.e., use source-language terms in the target-language text, to the degree that I believe is now acceptable." (Wiersema 2004). He defends the position that future translations need to be as foreignizing as possible within the limits of reasonable acceptability. This seems to be a rising tendency nowadays when, as a result of globalization, texts have become more exotic, and that these exoticized translations may contribute to a better and more correct understanding of the source culture.

Wiersema summarizes some of the links between globalization and translation:

- Globalization has had an enormous impact on our lives and cultures;
- Globalization has had an enormous impact on translators' lives and work;
- Translation is becoming a more and more important tool to enhance understanding between cultures;
- Cultures that readers are traditionally not familiar with have become more familiar as a result of globalization;
- The practice of foreignizing or exoticizing translation has changed as a result of globalization.

He concludes by emphasizing that globalization has always been an important aspect of translation as translation brings cultures closer. At present, the process of globalization is moving faster than ever before and there is no indication that it will stall in the short term. An example of this process is the use of more foreign words in TTs. Wiersema draws attention to this relatively new trend wherein culturally bound elements (some, one might say, untranslatable), are not translated. For the author this trend contributes to learning and understanding foreign cultures since adopting (not necessarily adapting) a selection of

words enriches the TT, makes it more exotic and thus more interesting for those who want to learn more about the culture in question. He concludes that, eventually, these new words may find their way into another language, thus globalization will decrease the element of foreignness. And, I might also add, the use of foreign words in texts produced in host societies for minority groups may also help make them more understandable for the intended population.

Culture is then an important element when going from one language to another. The agents making this possible need to be experts in dealing with it. Obviously, other extra-linguistic factors impose limits on the rendering (purpose, audience, publisher, budget, time available, etc.), but they are beyond the scope of this article. As we have seen, the variety of terms used to name these types of mediation gives us an idea of the different roles the translator may assume, and of the different products obtained. In the next section, data from empirical studies will provide evidence as to the role of the translator and interpreter in PSI.

4. TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS AS MEDIATORS IN PUBLIC SERVICES

The tendency to go beyond the textual in translation/interpretation and pay more attention to the target audience seems to be the one followed by most workers in PSI, as the results of some empirical studies show. However, it is important to note that many of these interpreters are volunteers or people without specific training, or with some training as cultural mediators but not in linguistic studies. I will report on two studies conducted in Spain, one in 1998 and the other in 2002, and analyze the differences and similarities.

The primary data for the 1998 project comes from 40 surveys of people (mostly immigrants) who worked in Madrid as interpreters and translators for NGOs or for the government when required, or simply as volunteers or assisting their families and friends (for a more detailed information see Valero-Garcés 2003b). The data from the 2002 project come from 48 surveys of people working in the northern area of Madrid and in similar conditions to those in the first project (for more detailed information, see Valero-Garcés 2004). Our aim was to analyze, on the one hand, the tasks and difficulties found in their jobs as interlinguistic mediators, and, on the other, the tasks that they think interlinguistic mediators should perform.

With regard to those surveyed, they share a similar profile in both projects: people between the ages of 25–40 who have come from different countries for different reasons (as refugees, economic immigrants, illegal immigrants, family regrouping, etc.). More than 50% of these intermediaries know other languages or even different dialects of the same language, apart from their native language and Spanish. People from Eastern European countries have usually studied the

language in their countries, or they have been in other countries before Spain. People from North Africa and sub-Saharan countries who work as interpreters and who come from places which were European colonies, have usually received an education and know some English or French. They have been living in Spain for a number of years and have an advanced level of Spanish, though without any formal education in the language. Women account for the highest percentage of intermediaries (75%). The majority work or have worked as volunteers in NGOs or humanitarian organizations, and some of them have also worked occasionally for the government (50%). They usually help their family members, friends or people from the same ethnic group as volunteers, this activity being the main source of their experience. Their educational backgrounds are rather diverse, ranging from illiterate people to university graduates. In 1998, almost no one had received instruction in interpretation or translation, although they would have liked to have had access to some training. In 2002, some of them had received instruction at the University of Alcalá, Madrid, the only training program on PSI in Spain, and others had received some instruction as cultural mediators in NGOs or in the EMSI (*Escuela de Mediadores Sociales para la Inmigración* de la Comunidad de Madrid). *Table 1* contains the results for the two main issues in both projects.

Table 1

Tasks performed by translators and interpreters in PSI

TRANSLATORS/INTERPRETERS IN PUBLIC SERVICES	1998	2002
1. Difficulties found		
a. Problems in understanding dialects or specific accents	60%	63.6%
b. Problems in understanding technical or semi-technical words	75%	55%
c. Problems related specifically to translating and interpreting skills	70%	55%
d. Problems derived from the lack of familiarity with the situation, place, or people	40%	45%
e. Problems with deciding which position to adopt	40%	550%
f. Problems derived from some sort of pressure from the providers of services	20%	52%
2. Tasks to be performed in or associated with the job		
a. Linguistic intermediary + cultural mediator	75%	70%
b. Explain technical words or difficult expressions	98%	70%
c. Correct misunderstandings produced by lack of knowledge of language and cultures	64%	69%
d. Adapt the language when necessary (simplifying or explaining)	55%	72%
e. Extra-linguistic activities	75%	45%

As the table shows, in Section 1a, there is very little difference between both projects (60%–63.6% respectively) in the case of difficulties involved in understanding dialects. This is a very common fact in the case of certain languages, for example, Arabic, with different dialects depending on the country or area where those involved come from. The same person is usually asked to interpret for people from different countries, for instance, someone from Morocco interpreting for someone from Algeria, Egypt, or Tunisia. The same happens with most people coming from Eastern European countries or ex-Soviet republics, for example, a Pole or a Ukrainian may interpreting for a Russian.

In the case of problems understanding technical or semi-technical words (Section 1b), as when working with doctors, social workers, legal representatives, etc. and also problems in translating the technical terms into the other language, the percentage (over 50% in both projects) is higher in the first project (1998). One of the reasons for this could be that the intermediaries know the languages better, having lived longer in Spain and also being more familiar with the institutions and public services. However, there is still a high percentage of people who have difficulty with specialized language.

In the case of 'technical' problems related to interpreting or translating (Section 1c), the percentage (above 50% again) is higher in the first project, while the problems the intermediaries have are similar: poor short-term memory, problems remembering exactly what they have heard, changes in attitude concerning the right way to interpret using the first or third person, problems deciding between the use of the colloquial 'tu' or the formal 'usted' in Spanish.

In both projects, those surveyed also pointed out to problems related to a lack of familiarity with the situation, the place, or the people they were working with (Section 1d) (40%–45% respectively) as well as deciding which position to adopt (Section 1e): to be loyal to the clients or the providers, or to try to be neutral. We should also mention the distance between the two projects regarding problems arising from pressure applied by the providers of services (Section 1f) (20% in 1998, as opposed to 52% in 2002). A possible reason is that in 2002 more informants worked temporarily for the government or for other institutions than in 1998, and these providers, not being used to working with interpreters, were not bothered by any code of ethics. Other possible reasons are that for example that in the case of 1b and 1c, the decrease could be results of more training received, which may take to a better understanding of texts/terms/languages. In the case of 1e, it is possible that in 1998 the 'lay bridges', without much training and reflection, just assumed one role, whereas in 2002, with more training, having become aware of other possible positions, they became more reflective. This could also be linked to an increase in 1f in 2002, which could be seen as the result of increased awareness of the problem. Similarly, the differences between 1998 and 2002 in 2, especially in 2b, 2cd and 2e, might also be

interpreted as showing the effects of training and/or increased awareness of the tasks, as explained below.

In the second section, that is, the tasks to be performed by the intermediary, in both projects a high rate of those surveyed consider that the intermediary is not only a 'linguistic' translator or interpreter, but also a cultural mediator who has to explain the hidden meaning or the differences between the cultures (Section 2a) (over 70% in both projects). They also consider that they have to explain technical words or difficult expressions (98%–70% respectively). There is also agreement between the two projects about correcting misunderstandings produced by the lack of knowledge in the languages or cultures (64%–69% respectively), and adapting the text to the reader and performing other extra-linguistic activities such as filling out application forms, completing reports, talking to social workers, etc., although in the last there is a significant difference between the first and second project (75%–45% respectively). A possible explanation could be that some of those surveyed in 2002 have received some instruction as interpreters.

Similar results have been obtained by other studies carried out in other countries (Angelelli 2003 and Roy 1989 in the USA, Wadensjö 1992 in Sweden, Bot 2003 in the Netherlands). Their results seem to suggest that there are different degrees of visibility that challenge the traditional, monolithic view of the invisibility of the interpreter.

The study by Angelelli (2003:16–26), for instance, provides evidence of these changes. Angelelli designed a questionnaire, which she called the interpreter's interpersonal role inventory (IPRI), to measure interpreters' attitudes towards the visibility/invisibility of their interpersonal role. Visibility was defined in terms of:

1. Alignment with the parties.
2. Establishing trust with/facilitating mutual respect between the parties.
3. Communicating affect as well as message.
4. Explaining cultural gaps/interpreting culture as well as language.
5. Establishing rules of communication during the conversation.

She studied three groups of interpreters: conference, court, and medical. The results indicate that conference interpreters perceived their role as being less visible than court and medical interpreters. Court interpreters perceived their role to be more visible than conference interpreters, but less visible than medical interpreters. Medical interpreters ranked higher in the continuum perception of visibility. In general, Angelelli's (2003:26) findings of IPRI provide clear evidence that interpreters themselves did not consider their role to be invisible in any of the settings in which they worked. Therefore, to a greater or lesser extent, they perceived that they played a role in building trust, facilitating

mutual respect, communicating affect as well as message, explaining cultural gaps, controlling the flow of communication, and aligning with one of the parties in an interactions. Angelelli's recent book (2004), on medical interpreting confirms her previous findings.

Bot (2003:27–35), after conducting research in the field of Mental Health, also argues that the strict 'neutrality' that is part of most codes of conduct for interpreters should be redefined. She interviewed some interpreters working in therapist-patient encounters, and she found that, even though the interpreters were aware of the fact that the interpreter is a 'non-person' who adopts a neutral stance, all three interlocutors in an interview treat each other as real people and acknowledge these roles through their actions. Thus the interpreter has an active role. Bot concludes (2003:35): "I think it is important to discuss the subtleties of the interpreter's role, in close cooperation with the professionals for whom they interpret."

5. CONCLUSIONS

The increasing mobility of people, the rapid advances in new technologies and communications, and the unstoppable phenomenon of migration whose end is difficult to predict, place us at the threshold of a new international paradigm where recognized boundaries are disappearing and distinctions are being lost.

This constant influx of migrants and refugees with different languages and cultures produces changes in the structure of society as well as in the way relationships are established. These changes also cause communication problems. Governments and societies develop strategies and take measures of various kinds to facilitate communication in emerging multicultural societies. However, different degrees of awareness are perceived and consequently the action taken is also different, ranging from providing official linguistic assistance in public services to letting the new population make themselves understood or depend on the help of friends, relatives, and often children who speak the new language better than their parents. Consequently, the risk of miscommunication and loss of information is higher, and the need for intermediaries is obvious. They have always been used. These intermediaries are of different kinds (brokers, chairmen, cultural mediators, translators and interpreters) and act in different settings (business, politics, schools, public services, etc.).

Two elements play an important role in the discussion of immigrants and refugees in public services,: minority languages and distant culture. The influence of both and the challenges they pose lead to changes in the role traditionally assigned to the intermediaries, traditionally called interpreters and translators. These changes in society indicate the need to revise their role and give them a more active participation in the communication process.

The empirical research conducted shows these changes, as well as the new role assigned to them by the new emerging multicultural societies and its institutions. Data show that, on the one hand, at least some official institutions and NGOs, as well as organizations providing help and dealing with social affairs and migration, assign the translator and interpreter a wider role by assuming that he/she also has to deal with cultural differences and to explain deficiencies in communication together with other related tasks (filling out forms, giving reports, offering phone help, accompanying them to some public services, etc.) that help the parties understand each other. On the other hand, the translator and interpreter also seems to assume these tasks are part of his/her role as interlinguistic mediator, making him/her more visible.

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