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Cultus

THE JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL
MEDIATION AND COMMUNICATION

MEDIATING NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION

2020, Volume 13

ICONESOFT EDIZIONI - GRUPPO RADIVO HOLDING
BOLOGNA – ITALY

Registrazione al Tribunale di Terni
n. 11 del 24.09.2007

Direttore Responsabile Agostino Quero
Editore Iconesoft Edizioni – Radivo Holding
Anno 2020
ISSN 2035-3111
2035-2948

Policy: double-blind peer review

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Via Giuseppe Landi, 13 – 40122 Bologna

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MEDIATING NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION

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Table of Contents

Narrating narratives of migration through translation, interpreting and the media <i>Raffaella Merlini and Christina Schäffner</i>	3
A Conversation about Translation and Migration <i>Moira Inghilleri and Loredana Polezzi</i>	24
Easy Eatalian Chefs of Italian origin hosting cookery series on British television and mediating their cultural heritage <i>Linda Rossato</i>	44
The mediation of subtitling in the narrative construction of migrant and/or marginalized stories <i>Alessandra Rizzi</i>	70
Interlinguistic and intercultural mediation in psychological care interviews with asylum seekers and refugees: Handling emotions in the narration of traumatic experience <i>Francisco Raga, Dora Sales and Marta Sánchez</i>	94
Interpreting Distress Narratives in Italian Reception Centres: The need for caution when negotiating empathy <i>Mette Rudvin and Astrid Carfagnini</i>	123
From Italy with love: narratives of expats' political engagement in a corpus of Italian media outlets <i>Gaia Aragrande and Chiara De Lazari</i>	145

Journalistic translation in migrant news narratives: Representations of the <i>Diciotti Crisis</i> in British news brands <i>Denise Filmer</i>	169
“Language barrier” in UK newspapers 2010-2020: Figurative meaning, migration, and language needs <i>Federico Federici</i>	194
To Translate or not To Translate: Narratives and Translation in the UK Home Office <i>Elena Ruiz-Cortés</i>	220
Notes on Contributors	239

Narrating narratives of migration through translation, interpreting and the media¹

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Abstract

Rather than providing a unifying framework for its diverse theoretical and methodological applications, this paper attempts to explore the territory of narrative by tracking the routes of a number of germinal core-constructs that have spread across disciplines and fields of activity. Taking migration and migration policy models as our “air-view map”, the first leg of the journey follows along the paths of multiculturalism, interculturality and transculturality, discussing the socio-political implications of these conceptual approaches and their repercussions on the provision of translation and interpreting services. Subsequently, the epistemological construct of narrative is observed from the vantage point of socio-narrative theory as applied to translation and interpreting studies, with a specific focus on the identity-contruction dynamics that emerge when mediating migrants’ personal stories that clash with public (institutionally acceptable) narratives. Wandering through the theoretical domains of positioning, voice, empathy and media cross-genre recontextualization practices, the paper ends with one of the many possible narratives of the collection of papers in this volume.

Keywords: cultural identity, migration policies, narrative, positioning, renarration

¹ This paper was jointly authored, with Christina Schäffner primarily responsible for Sections 1 and 3, and Raffaella Merlini for Section 2.

1. Introduction

“It’s being quite a journey, this one!” These are the words one of the contributors wrote to us when submitting a revised version of their paper after having engaged with the reviewers’ comments. The statement is highly appropriate to this special issue as a whole given that our contributors worked on their papers almost throughout 2020, from the first versions submitted in the early spring and the final ones in the autumn of a year which was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The worries about health and the decisions taken by governments on lockdowns all affected the submission and completion of the papers. It was not easy to focus on writing an academic paper while at the same time suddenly having to switch to the new online modality in conducting one’s university lectures and seminars, helping the children with their distance learning, supporting parents and relatives, and being confined to home for months. We are therefore very grateful to all our contributors for their hard work and equally for the support and understanding we received from the general editors of *Cultus* and all the reviewers. In view of these circumstances, this issue is indeed a *special* one, in all senses of the word.

The COVID-19 pandemic understandably dominated the news as well. As a consequence, other topics of political significance somehow receded into the background. One such topic is migration, the key topic for this issue. Migration has been a regular phenomenon in the history of humankind. People have left their homeland, their place of origin, for a variety of reasons, be it to flee war or persecution in their home countries, in search of a better life abroad, to work in another cultural environment, or to reunite with family and friends. Although the overall number of people on the move may not have increased dramatically in the course of time, it is in the last two decades that migration has become a major issue in politics and society. In the European Union, politicians debate how many migrants to accept and how to distribute them across the EU member states. They also adopt regulations to set rules and conditions for granting migrants the status of a refugee, or an asylum seeker, or for granting them a permanent right of residency. The majority of citizens have been open-minded, welcoming migrants and supporting them to settle down in their new environment. Others, however, oppose migration, arguing that it undermines the cohesion of the home culture and traditional values. Discourses of inclusion and integration thus alternate with discourses of exclusion, reflecting a constructed opposition of “us” vs “them”.

While political discussions about migrants continue, often dragging on due to polarised opinions and intractable attitudes, many migrants wait in crowded makeshift camps to continue the journey to their destination. Or maybe they are still on a boat in the Mediterranean hoping to reach a safe haven. Others will already be in their hoped-for country of destination, having more or less successfully integrated in the new environment.

For whatever reasons people decide to leave their original place, migration always means movement, displacement, and change. The new destination is a different place with its own history, traditions and behavioural conventions. In this new socio-cultural context, migrants try to establish themselves and start their new lives, hoping these will be better than those they left behind. Hopes and expectations go hand in hand with memories, which can be fond memories of the lives they had before a civil war broke out, or else traumatic memories of life-threatening circumstances they experienced in their home country or during their migration journey. The new environments they reach are also, very often, new linguistic and cultural environments. This makes it difficult for them to tell their stories, to communicate both their hopes and expectations as well as their experience. A new life in a new environment with its own conventions and traditions also challenges the migrants' sense of identity. Do they feel as aliens and outsiders who prefer to keep their own identity, continue their own way of life, speak only their own language? Or do they strive to fully integrate into the new environment, accepting all its rules, adapting to its conventions, acquiring the new language as quickly as possible? Is such an either-or perspective possible and of any value at all since the whole migration process is much more complex and complicated? And what options are there for migrants to tell their stories, to narrate their experience and emotions?

One possibility to overcome linguistic and cultural boundaries and facilitate communication between migrants and the local population in the receiving countries is the support of translators and interpreters. In constructing narratives of migration, mass media too play an important role since it is through media reports that migration is presented as an opportunity or a threat; and it is through the media that the stories of migrants become known to the readers. In all cases, translating and interpreting narratives of migration as told by migrants as well as reporting (about) such narratives in the mass media entail the (re)construction and transformation of these narratives. These all influence not only the policies of social inclusion and community cohesion but also the representations of “self” and “other”.

The aim of this special issue is to explore precisely the role of language, translation and interpreting in constructing narratives of migration. The idea for this issue was born after a Round Table on the topic “Constructing and revising narratives of migration” convened as part of a seminar held by the Associazione Italiana di Anglistica (Italian Association of English Studies) in May 2018 at the University of Macerata on the theme “On the move: sites of change, states of insecurity”. The papers, which were selected following a call, address the topic from various perspectives, and apply a variety of methods to their data. They address questions such as: What factors influence the construction of narratives in interpreter-mediated events? How are narratives (re/de)constructed and transformed in processes of translation and interpreting, and in media reports? How do the narratives which are (re/de)constructed influence the representations of ‘self’ and ‘other’? What are the implications of rendering narratives of migration for translators and interpreters in respect of professional ethics? What policies are in place to use (or reject) translation and interpreting that would engage with narratives of migration?

2. Following along the migration routes of key-constructs

In light of both the variety of research fields and the diversity of conceptual and methodological approaches which characterize the contributions to this issue, any attempt at reunifying them under a single theoretical framework would not only be doomed to failure but would also restrain the reader’s wanderings along unexpected paths and boundary crossings. Even though the epistemological construct of “narrative” is evidently at the very core of this collection of papers, a more thought-provoking – albeit less cohesive – way to proceed is by tracking the routes of a number of germinal constructs that have spread across disciplines and domains of activity.

To keep to the initial metaphor of the journey, and taking migration as the “air-view map” of our territory, a preliminary discussion of the shift from multicultural and intercultural policy models to transcultural ones might offer some initial bearings. With the theoretical premises of the assimilationist approach to immigration coming increasingly under critique (Bashi Treitler, 2015), multiculturalism became the inspiring principle guiding governments in their relationships with minority groups. The Australian response to immigration in the second half of last century

is emblematic of the transition from a policy of absorption into mainstream British-Australian culture and society to a multicultural “community of communities” model (see Martin, 1978; and Cline, 1991). Multiculturalism upholds the equal dignity of the linguistic and cultural expressions of all the ethnic communities that coexist within the same socio-political space. As such, it places upon the State the obligation to pass legislation that protects and promotes cultural diversity. The aim is thus the demarcation of clearly recognizable cultural identities whose visibility and preservation are to be guaranteed by law.

In the last decades of the 20th century, the multiculturalist model was, in its turn, called into question not only in terms of its practical implementation and financial sustainability, but also for socio-cultural reasons (Spinner-Halev, 2008). Criticism was levelled, in particular, against the risk of social fragmentation ensuing from the emphasis that multicultural policies place on the defence of cultural specificity, and that could paradoxically lead to new forms of self-segregation. An alternative model began to emerge which redrew the contours of such concepts as integration and inclusion, making them into dynamic and creative two-way processes. Although the genesis of the notion of “interculturality” can be broadly traced back to the works of the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1959; 1966), its currency increased when the term was appropriated within the European socio-political context in the 1970s through the work of the Council of Europe. As Dervin *et al.* (2011: 3) note, in this context the “intercultural” was closely associated with migration management and, in particular, with institutional efforts (mainly in the educational field) designed to neutralize the supposed danger that migration embodied. The “politics of interculturality” opened up prospects for mutually enriching “encounter” and “dialogue” between cultures, with the notion of “complementarity between opposites” becoming a popular one in official rhetoric (Moccia, 2016: 44). The migration phenomenon was consequently framed as a vital source of opportunities for both migrants and host countries.

From the many disciplinary fields where it took root – cultural studies, sociology, psychology, education, linguistics, among others – interculturality made a forceful entry into translation studies, following the “cultural turn” advocated by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in the early 1990s. It was Mary Snell-Hornby who adopted the term in the title of the volume *Translation as Intercultural Communication* (Snell-Hornby *et al.*, 1995) collecting the selected papers from the First International Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies. In interpreting studies, a

parallel shift was taking place in the same decade. Ushered in by the Critical Link conference series, dialogic contexts came to the fore of scholarly attention, stirring debate on the perception of community interpreting (in healthcare, legal, and social services settings) as an intrinsically cultural practice enabling migrant communities to gain access to institutional service provision. Discussions about cultural agency, cultural brokering, and cultural mediation, that soon occupied centre stage in academic publications, seeped back to the policymaking sphere. As a case in point, where other countries (Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom among the first) had already identified the professional figure of the community or public service interpreter, the Italian legislator opted for a more hybrid and multifunctional profile. This was initially denominated “cultural mediator” in the Italian National Council for the Economy and Employment first ever guidelines (CNEL, 2000). Nine years later, an updated version of the guidelines was issued bearing the title “Intercultural mediation and mediators: Operational instructions” (CNEL, 2009). Albeit hardly noticeable, the change in designation (from “cultural” to “intercultural” mediation) acknowledged the shift in perspective, and was emblematic of the policymakers’ attempt to explicitly foreground the inter-relational dimension, by promoting bidirectional openness to dialogue between native and immigrant cultures, with social cohesion and harmony as the ultimate goal (Merlini, 2015: 41). On a conceptual level, the addition of the prefix creates a metaphorical in-between space where cultures can meet while remaining, however, still distinct, as noted in Merlini (2016).

Turn-of-century definitions of intercultural mediation by Italian authors provide clear evidence of this; Tarozzi (1998: 129-130; our translation and emphasis) speaks about a professional practice that is performed “in interpersonal spaces to favour connection between *far-away elements*”, while Favaro (2004) assigns the mediator a bridge-like function (“mediatore-ponte”) between otherwise separate and distant parties. Even though the transition from the multicultural model to the intercultural one did mark a significant development in how migration-related issues were approached and addressed, the notion of “otherness”, as based on the distinction between “us” and “them”, remains solidly anchored at the core of both paradigms. To achieve full integration of the migrant population (assuming this to be a realistic or desirable outcome), a new formula had to be sought for. The realization brought in its wake a rethinking of the role of translation and interpreting services, which have increasingly come to be perceived in some countries as obstacles, rather than pathways to

social cohesion. Especially over the last decade, media coverage has offered eloquent documentation of the politicized discourse depicting linguistic diversity as a hindrance to migrants' empowerment and integration (see Federici, this volume). As early as 2009, Schöffner already commented on a number of illustrative examples taken from UK news reports where the availability of public translation and interpreting provision was said to reinforce the "language barrier" between ethnic communities and the rest of the country, "by preventing immigrants from actively learning English" (*ibid.*: 100). The underlying preoccupation voiced in the news reports was not only a financial one, concerning the undue costs that this provision would impose on government budgets, but also that failure to integrate can be a dangerous "breeding ground for extremism" (*ibid.*: 104).

A third conceptual framework where the "us-them" categorization blurs into indistinction is the transcultural one. Here, the prefix substitution goes in the direction of crossing into the hybrid, where the notion of "ethnic identity" is discarded as divisive, being built on the differences that keep social groups apart rather than on their fluid and mutable relationships (Remotti, 2010). Similarly, the concept of "culture", on which identity has traditionally been grounded, is being questioned as a meaningless abstraction, detached as it is from reality where symbolic systems are in constant flux and evolve through mutual contaminations. Modern anthropology itself (see Fox and King, 2002) has increasingly vented dissatisfaction with the homogeneity and continuity that definitions of culture assume in presenting it as "a highly patterned and consistent set of representations (or beliefs) that constitute a people's perception of reality and that get reproduced relatively intact across generations through enculturation" (*ibid.*: 1). Coined by Welsch (1999), the term "transculturality" suggests, on the contrary, a state of permanent interconnectivity, where monolithic cultural entities disappear as do the lines of demarcation between (imaginary) spaces of cultural belonging. The existence of a globalized communication network, expanded physical mobility (which the COVID pandemic brought to an abrupt and hardly conceivable halt), and an accentuated psychological disposition towards exploring otherness are the main factors behind a phenomenon that Bennett (2005) thus describes:

Once clearly demarcated by relatively static and ethnically homogeneous communities, the 'spaces' and 'places' of everyday life are now highly pluralistic and contested, and are constantly

being defined and redefined through processes of relocation and cultural hybridization. (*ibid.*: 4)

Just as a “relocated culture” is one which reinvents itself when coming into contact with other “cultures”, a “relocated individual identity” is the outcome of negotiation (and hybridization) processes unfolding in multiple interactional contexts and through multiple storylines. As Rossato’s contribution to this volume suggests, even food, which in Hall’s (1976) iceberg model (see also Katan, 2020) was categorized as one of the most visible (“above surface”) manifestations of culture, is no longer a clear-cut marker of either authenticity or cultural belonging.

One of the pathways that is indeed most clearly discernible on the “map” of this issue is the question of how translation responds when faced with the task of giving voice to migrants’ relocated identities. A most intriguing (and quintessentially “transcultural”) route is marked out by Polezzi in her conversation with Inghilleri (this volume, pp. 30-31), when she suggests abandoning the view of translation as “substitution” and “erasure” to embrace its “knottiness and messiness”:

Migrant narratives seem to me to reach out for a form of translation that is not perfect, linear, harmonious or easy, but which can bear the traces of multiple experiences, positionalities, forms of identification and, indeed, languages. These narratives are themselves translations.

Tormented narratives born out of fragmented storylines are set against attempts at giving them coherence and composure through re-narration and adaptation to the accepted models of the host community. It’s here that the epistemological construct of narrative shows its full potential as well as its dangers.

Viewed as “a semiotic phenomenon that transcends disciplines and media” (Herman *et al.*, 2005: 344) narrative, in its most radical conceptualization, is the principal mode by which we make sense of the world. As Alasdair MacIntyre (2013 [1981]: 94) argues, the social life of each human being is, in its entirety, a narrative, or rather a unified narrative embedded in several other narratives. Without this narrative form we would be lost in a meaningless description of sensory data, and in the end “we would be confronted with not only an uninterpreted, but also an uninterpretable world”. While an overview of the wide domain of narrative goes far beyond our scope, the title of this special issue warrants at least a brief account of the impact on translation and interpreting

studies of the approach known as socio-narrative theory. Our guide along this path cannot but be Mona Baker whose *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (2006) remains to date the most detailed application of this theory, and who, rather felicitously was interviewed by Andrew Chesterman on the ethics of renarration in the very first issue of *CULTUS* (Baker, 2008). Drawing on the typology of narratives first proposed by the social theorists Somers and Gibson (1994), Baker provided plentiful examples of the kinds of choices that translators and interpreters are confronted with when called upon to relay ontological narratives clashing with public ones. Ontological narratives were initially defined restrictively as “personal narratives that we tell ourselves about our place in the world and our personal history” (Baker, 2006: 28). As Baker (2018) herself subsequently clarified, that definition confined the narrative to the cognitive (intrapersonal) sphere, and needed expanding to account for the interpersonal dimension. The category thus came to include also “the narratives an individual tells others and those that others elaborate about the individual, with the main criterion being that a given individual is located at the centre of narration” (*ibid.*: 183-184).

Narrative categories are highly interdependent, and narratives themselves are practically intertwined; so every personal narrative is bound to become at some point a public one, i.e. a story “elaborated by and circulating among social and institutional formations larger than the individual” (Baker, 2006: 33). It is the friction between stories told by discordant voices and the role that translation plays in foregrounding, streamlining, reducing or even occluding some accounts or some aspects of them that was of interest to Baker and is to us as guest editors of this issue.

At the cross-roads between narrative and migration, an emblematic example discussed in Baker (2006) was the construction of an acceptable identity as an asylum applicant, requiring refugees to adapt their personal stories to the narrative frameworks of the adjudicating institution. Interpreters may be found to either improve on the asylum seekers’ testimonies during the proceedings, so as to align them to the public narrative as argued by Inghilleri (2005), or offer advice on the appropriate course of action, before the official hearing, as in the study by Merlini (2009). Here, narrative analysis is operationalized through the linguistic-interactive notion of role, and even more productively (following Mason, 2005) through the socio-psychological construct of “positioning” (Davies and Harré, 1990). Significantly, Baker’s revised definition of personal narrative echoes the premises of positioning theory, while

implicitly addressing a most critical issue of social constructivism; namely, its construal of the world as a collection of subjective personal narratives that may have little to do with objective reality (Czarniawska, 2004). If the author of the narrative is not one single individual, and “my story” is told and co-constructed by all the people I interact with, then objectivity is (at least partially) reinstated. Much more finely than roles, positions convey a fluid and immanent sense of the multiple identities a person may project, stemming as they do from within interactions, and being thus jointly produced by all participants.

In Davies and Harré’s (1990: 46) conceptualization, identity building is “an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices”. By taking part in different discourses, people generate a multiplicity of selves, each of which may contradict both the selves located in past storylines, and other present selves located in alternative storylines. As the authors observe (*ibid.*: 59), such discontinuities in the production of self (“reflexive positioning”) derive from a complex weaving together of different elements, among which the cultural, social, political, and emotional meanings that are attached to each position, or that have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located in each position, as well as the moral system that legitimizes each positioning choice. As it couples reflexive with “interactional (other-) positioning” and defines alignment with a speaker’s storyline in terms of a hearer’s power of choice, or lack thereof, Davies and Harré’s theory addresses vital issues of power relations. It also invites reflection on the fact that hearers may accept the storyline being suggested not simply because they see themselves as powerless, but because they see potential advantages in adopting it, even though they do not share the stereotypes, biases and reductions it implies. Evidence of this is found in Merlini’s (2009) data where the mediator’s attempt to replace the asylum seeker’s personal story with the more coherently structured (but depersonalized) one of “refugee claimant” was initially resisted by the latter, and then gradually accepted as the refugee understood the advantages of the narrative account proposed by the mediator. Whereas this tension between them was soon resolved, a subtler one permeated the whole encounter. Empathizing with the refugee’s sense of cultural uprooting and estrangement that the mediator himself had felt upon his arrival in the new country, the latter was inclined to offer the new claimant advice on the construction of an institutionally acceptable narrative. However, at the same time, the symbolic position accrued to the mediator from his present status as a fully integrated citizen in the host

country pushed him in the opposite direction. Not only did he feel the need to justify his behaviour, but by shifting to a patronizing tone he appropriated the self-celebratory discourse of official European rhetoric to mark the distance between himself and the newly arrived immigrant. At a deeper level, the tension was clearly between the mediator's past identity and his present one. As Davies and Harré (1990: 49) note, the positions created for oneself "are not part of a linear non-contradictory autobiography [...] but rather, the cumulative fragments of a lived autobiography".

The emotional meanings attached to both self- and other-positioning have increasingly attracted scholarly attention. A few years ago, Baker (2014: 164) identified "the detail of individual dilemmas, personal suffering, fear, joy and apprehension that appeals to our common humanity", and that characterizes our personal stories, as the privileged site where we exercise our agency and open up spaces for empathy. This is all the more evident in the medical field where healthcare providers and mediators are confronted daily with migrants' narratives of distress. As argued by Rudvin and Carfagnini and, with specific reference to the context of psychological care, by Raga *et al.* (both in this volume), handling emotions is an extremely delicate issue calling for a fine balance between professional objectivity, self-care, and empathic engagement. An interesting example of how the psycho-sociological domain of emotions has been explored in interpreting studies is the study by Leanza *et al.* (2013), where occurrences of exclusion vs. inclusion of affective elements in the interpreters' renditions are analysed on the basis of Mishler's (1984) distinction between, yet again, two discordant voices, i.e. the "voice of medicine" and the "voice of the lifeworld". Starting from an initial definition of "voice" as an ensemble of "relationships between talk and speakers' underlying frameworks of meaning" (*ibid.*: 14), Mishler uses the former label to refer to the expression of and attention to concerns stemming from events and problems of patients' everyday life. In contrast, the voice of medicine designates an abstract, affectively neutral and functionally specific interpretation of facts, as well as compliance with a "normative order", whereby the medical professional controls both content and organization of the interaction with the patient. Revolving around the same theoretical construct of "voice", an earlier study by Merlini and Favaron (2005) outlined the contours of a third voice, the "voice of interpreting". In their set of data relating to speech-therapy sessions between Australian healthcare practitioners and second generation senior Italian immigrants, this voice was revealed to amplify

the voice of the lifeworld and support an empathic patient-centred communication model. It was not until quite recently, however, that empathy as a specific case of emotional responsivity was investigated.

Among the first authors to use it as the core construct are Merlini (2015) and Merlini and Gatti (2015). Their main findings are two-fold. Firstly, far from clashing with the medical goal of responding appropriately to a patient's problem, empathy can be functionally and successfully used both to show compassion to a human being in need and to complete the institutional task at hand. Secondly, although the empathic process can be initiated by the move(s) of any one participant (including the interpreter), its development and outcome are necessarily the result of complex interactional dynamics and, ultimately, of the deliberate co-construction of rapport by all participants – what Tipton and Furmanek (2016: 6) identify as “an openness to the other in order to understand oneself”. Moving beyond one's own reflected image and truly “seeing” the other by entering their own world is, after all, the very essence of empathy, as the father of modern empathy research wrote a few decades ago: “to be with another in [an empathic] way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another world without prejudice” (Rogers, 1975: 4).

The final leg of our wandering through some of the core-constructs of this issue takes us to the handling of public narratives of a political nature in the media. Exploring an under-researched area in translation studies, and adopting the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis, Schäffner (2014) discusses how discursive events such as political speeches, meetings and press-conferences are recontextualized via the channels of the political institutions themselves (e.g. government websites) and via mass media (e.g. broadcasts and printed news reports). In a globalized world where politics is increasingly international in nature and the effects of politicians' decisions have an impact well beyond the boundaries of national communities (see, as a most eloquent example, the debate on migration policies within EU member countries), the linguistic cross-genre re-contextualization of political events is bound to require acts of interpreting and translation. This, as Schäffner notes, raises questions as to who decides which political speeches get translated and into which languages; which translations are made available where; who prepares transcripts for press conferences and authorizes corrections and stylistic enhancements; and who decides on the editing processes that take place when interpreted speeches and interviews are turned into media reports (*ibid.*: 149-150). The issue of whose “voices” get heard in the mediated

cross-national chain of political discourse is an important one. In particular, it is the use of direct and reported speech that is found to reveal most clearly the (ideological) positioning and identity construction of political actors. Specifically drawing on Weizman's (2008) positioning analysis, Schäffner's 2015 study of interpreter-mediated press-conferences supports evidence of how these events are identity-building (rather than just information-giving) sites. Here, the potential influence of interpreting practice on interactional positioning dynamics is assessed together with larger contextual factors.

Research into news translation (see Kang, 2007; Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2009; and Chen, 2011) has illustrated how translation strategies are influenced by the dominant values upheld by a given mass media institution. Yet, wider concerns with (unclear, invisible, possibly collective) agency in translational decision-making practices still remain to be adequately addressed. As Schäffner (2014: 150-151) suggests, so complex an enquiry would call for the complementary use of ethnomethodological tools (such as interviewing and field observation) along interactional and discourse analytical ones. But we will leave this for another journey...

3. Narrating this special issue

Any summary of the papers and the way they are ordered is also one narrative among many possible ones. We decided to arrange the papers around the question: who gets to tell whose story, in whose language(s), for whom, and for which purpose? The issue starts with a stimulating conversation between **Moira Inghilleri** and **Loredana Polezzi** who share their thoughts on the relationship between translation and migration. Both scholars have carried out research on translation and migration and are interested in migrants' stories and stories about migrants. Moira Inghilleri's research includes an investigation of the role of interpreters in political asylum cases in the UK, while Loredana Polezzi has researched links between travel writing and translation. In their dialogue, they address questions such as: Are there different challenges in translating fiction and non-fictional accounts of migration narratives? Who are the key agents when translation and migration meet? What are the gaps and the opportunities as we continue to develop research at the intersection between migration, translation and mediation? They argue

that both travellers and translators are engaged in forms of mediation. In researching the role of translators and interpreters as social agents who operate within social and political processes, both researchers stress the need to (re)present the voices of those involved as carefully as possible, at the same time being aware of the plurality of languages and experiences that are inscribed in migration and in its processes of translation. In this context, they discuss the ethical responsibility translators and interpreters have to the narratives they are (re)telling. They express their dissatisfaction with notions or practices of translation that narrow it down to a “linguistic” activity or to a “neutral” professional concern, and advocate enhancing interdisciplinary dialogue. By conducting research and disseminating it as widely and actively as possible, translation and migration scholars can sensitize everyone involved in the processes and procedures of migration to the role that languages, narratives and their multiple translations play in how people are seen, treated, allowed (or not allowed) to live a human and humane life.

Many of the points raised in the conversation between Moira Inghilleri and Loredana Polezzi resonate in the papers that follow. When we talk about migration, we tend to think of recent and current asylum seekers or refugees who have been on the move due to political or economic crises in their home countries. As **Linda Rossato** reminds us, there are also people who migrated to another country early on in their careers and stayed there. Rossato illustrates such cases with three chefs of Italian origin (Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo, Giorgio Locatelli) who chose the UK as their professional home – and who in the meantime have become very popular as a result of their British TV cookery series and accompanying cookbooks on Italian cuisine. In their TV series, these three chefs use English, the language of their new home, to construct narratives of Italian culinary traditions and of their experience of migration. The TV travelogue cooking shows are set in Italy, and the Italian chefs serve as ambassadors for Italian cuisine abroad. Based on an analysis of extracts from these shows, Rossato illustrates how the chefs use a variety of strategies to interpret the Italian cuisine for their intended British audience, and how they construct their individual images of Italy. Finally, she reflects on the sense of identity that emerges from the chefs’ accounts.

Not in all cases, however, do we hear the voices of the migrants themselves, let alone in their own language. Their accounts are often mediated for a new audience who do not understand the language of the migrants. One way of mediation is the use of subtitles, the topic of the

paper by **Alessandra Rizzo**. She analyses extracts from two digital series characterised as “emergency cinema”: a short film from the Abounaddara collective and a video interview from *The Mirror Project*, both intended to give voice to the lives of Syrian and Iraqi-Kurdish communities. Based on narrative theory and accessibility research, the narratives of two female protagonists who speak Arabic and Iraqi Kurdish as their mother tongues, respectively, are analysed as they are constructed in English subtitles, with English functioning as a lingua franca. Rizzo’s focus is on the role of subtitles as narrative devices, as activist spaces, and as frames of re-narration and self-translation. It is through the subtitles, in this case produced by non-professional translators-as-activists, that personal and institutional narratives and identities are constructed and mediated.

Migrants arriving in a new country often do not have the language competence to communicate directly with institutional service providers. For a number of contexts, e.g. interviews with authorities who process their applications for asylum or encounters with health care professionals, they depend on the service of mediators. Such mediators can be professionally qualified interpreters and translators, but since they are not always available for particular languages spoken by the migrants, other migrants who have already been living in the country for a longer period of time, as well as friends or family members act as ad-hoc interpreters. In these processes of translation and interpreting, narratives are (re/de)constructed and transformed. Two papers address interpreter-mediated interaction. In the first one, **Francisco Raga, Dora Sales and Marta Sánchez** investigate how mediators in psychological care interviews with asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) handle emotions in the narration of traumatic experience. Based on fieldwork in Spain, involving interviews with psychologists and interlinguistic and intercultural mediators who work with ASRs, they illustrate how different conceptions of mental illness and cultural differences related to the patterns of communicative interaction can affect the clinical interviews. This is specifically obvious in the expression of emotions during the narration of traumatic events suffered by ASRs. The authors argue for further in-depth reflection on the role of mediators, on the communicative initiatives they can put into practice as well as the verbal and non-verbal strategies they can deploy to prevent the blockages that cultural differences of an emotional nature can generate in the narration of traumatic experiences. In their conclusion, they put forward some proposals for action as offers for discussion.

The crucial role of interpreters, or interpreter-mediators, in relaying migrant narratives is also addressed in the paper by **Mette Rudvin and Astrid Carfagnini**, focusing on distress narratives and empathy. Their empirical research was conducted in Italian migrant reception centres, and the basis of their analyses are recorded mediated interactions and in-depth interviews. Empathy is a valuable human quality, and since interpreters are actively engaged in the mediated sessions, empathy can help them to build a relationship of trust with their interlocutors and encourage cooperation. However, as Rudvin and Carfagnini argue, empathy can also negatively impact the interpreter, in particular if there is a high level of distress in the migrants' narrative content. Excerpts from the interviews illustrate the interpreters' struggle to position themselves both professionally (vis-à-vis the expected professional ethics of neutrality) and personally, and to find a balance between engagement and self-protection. They conclude that it is essential that interpreters or mediators are made aware of the dangers of empathic bonding, and that they be given the tools and resources to pre-empt and manage any potentially resulting trauma.

Mass media play an important role in reporting migration and thus also in (re/de)constructing narratives and identities. Three papers deal with news media representations of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. **Gaia Aragrande and Chiara De Lazzari** investigate how a sample of Italian newspapers report political engagement of Italians who live abroad. These expats are legally entitled to participate in elections in Italy, with the votes cast from abroad having an impact on the overall election results. Their paper investigates the way in which Italian newspapers have portrayed the political engagement of Italians living abroad and the narratives they have employed to describe Italian expats. For their methodology, they used Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) and analysed a purpose-built corpus of Italian news outlets reporting on the 2018 elections. They illustrate the results obtained from concordance and collocational analyses of terms related to expat voters. This corpus-based analysis has made it possible to uncover discourse patterns of attitude and stance towards Italians abroad and towards their political engagement. Aragrande and De Lazzari argue that three main reporting trends (informative, investigative, narrative) were detected, with all three patterns verging on a negative attitude. These findings thus also illustrate narratives of belonging and the representations of "self" and "other".

Denise Filmer reflects on journalistic translation in migrant news narratives. She uses the *Diciotti Crisis* as a case study - the events which led to asylum seekers being refused the right to disembark on Italian soil.

Filmer's main interest is in investigating how this event is represented in the British news and what role translation has played in this respect. Her analysis draws on a theoretical framework that combines journalism and media studies, news translation, and critical discourse studies, and uses a corpus of British news texts from major UK media sources. She illustrates how translated quotations (transquotations) are employed in the narration, critically reflecting on translational choices in the journalistic reconstruction of the events. Her investigation of the British newspaper's perspective of the crisis revealed that declarations by the then Interior Minister who had declined to authorise disembarkation, were far more prominent in the news discourse than the asylum seekers' voices.

In narrating migration, stories of language, empathy, identity, loss and renewal are woven together. Migrants not being able to understand what is being said are linguistically excluded. Learning the language of the new country is one option and often welcomed by the authorities. Providing assistance through translation and interpreting, however, is sometimes perceived as both expensive and harmful to social cohesion. In his paper, **Federico Federici** highlights the relationship between language policies and discourses on multilingualism with reference to the United Kingdom. He approaches the investigation of narratives on integration by analysing the use of the metaphorical expression "language barrier" in news items dealing with migration and language needs in online and printed newspapers in the UK between 2010 and 2020. A quantitative analysis investigating the frequency of the usage of the "language barrier" expression is combined with a qualitative analysis to relate its usage to negative or positive connotations. Over the period analysed, the negative connotation which legitimized the conceptualization of linguistic diversity as a hindrance to integration became dominant. Federici discovers a connection between the textual evidence and policy changes: an increased frequency of use of the term in the UK media correlated with restrictive immigration policies and a gradual dismantling of language service provision for the country's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Federici argues that the politicization of the discourse on multilingualism and the ever stricter migration policies risk increasing societal vulnerability.

Language policies in the United Kingdom is also the topic of the paper by **Elena Ruiz-Cortés**. She is interested in investigating how translation and migration narratives have impacted on the provision of translation services. Her case study is the UK's Home Office as the ministerial department responsible for immigration. In the context of migration

control, individuals are obliged to follow procedures to gain entry to the country, which include filling out forms and participating in oral interviews. Ruiz-Cortés focuses on the application process of EU nationals and their family members to obtain EU residence documentation which confirms their legal residence in the UK. Her main concern is to identify to what extent translation services are available at the Home Office to migrants during the application process. Her analysis of online information available to applicants revealed that some of them may have problems understanding the immigration procedure and completing the application form due to a lack of translation services. Her initial conclusion is that the Home Office's translation policy is one of non-translation, which is related to the negative EU migration and translation narratives in the UK.

Most of the papers in this special issue refer to the need to raise awareness among authorities, professionals, and the general public of how narratives of migration get (re/de)constructed through translation, interpreting and media reports. As Loredana Polezzi and Moira Inghilleri (this volume, p. 26) point out in their conversation, "researching migration and translation definitely has a political dimension and connects academic work to the world out there. It allows us to reflect on what is happening around us and hopefully to have an impact, however small, on it". We hope that this collection of papers will make a contribution with respect to this ambition.

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A Conversation about Translation and Migration

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This conversation is the result of an invitation extended to us by the guest editors of the present special issue. We reflect on our shared interests in translation, interpreting and their intersection with migration, while keeping in mind the overarching theme of this collection: *Mediating Narratives of Migration*. The resulting dialogue is, in many ways, both the continuation and the materialization of a longer, ongoing conversation, which we have conducted mostly at a distance, by reading each other's work, but also through occasional direct exchanges. These culminated, in preparation for this piece, in three hours of free-wheeling on-line discussion on our personal and academic trajectories, our current interests and preoccupations, our sense of where the future of research in translation and migration may be headed. While that real-life conversation turned out to be far too rambling to be of use to any reader, it was certainly productive for us and we have tried to maintain at least some of its tone and pace in the pages that follow. In line with that choice, we have included some of the key questions we agreed to reflect upon. References, on the other hand, will only be given as a list of 'Further readings' to be found at the end of our discussion.

What led you to carry out research on translation and migration?

Loredana: For me, the choice to connect these two areas of research was a gradual move but, at the same time, almost an obvious, unavoidable one. My early work was on travel writing. First on travelers to Italy and the whole Grand Tour tradition. Then on Italians as travelers and explorers. At the same time, I developed an interest in translation and

started to think about how both travelers and translators are engaged in forms of mediation of difference, of alterity, as well as in the negotiation between what is distant and what is close. Both are invested in the construction of identity: our own and that of others. Coming from a background in literary studies, there was, also, a strong methodological appeal in combining those two areas and approaches. One, travel, took me towards socio-historical reality, towards ethnography, towards macro-phenomena and broad notions of culture. The other, translation, held me close to the text and to the texture of language. Combining the two provided me with an interdisciplinary space that gave me a lot of freedom, both in terms of objects of study and methodology. They set me free, in particular, from the disciplinary boundaries of Italian studies, which is where I formally belonged, allowing me to work comparatively (as I would have said then) or transnationally (as I would put it now).

At a certain point, though, the notion of travel was no longer enough for me. I remember reading James Clifford's seminal article on 'Traveling Cultures', where he puts travel and translation side by side and sees travel as a 'translation term' which, like all such devices, is tainted, takes you a certain distance and then falls apart. For me, translation didn't really fall apart, but 'travel' certainly did, because it was becoming too restrictive, too narrow, too closely linked to a white, male, middle class, Western set of practices. It didn't relate enough to the reality out there – which I definitely wanted to deal with. I was reading more and more in areas that connected translation with ethnography, with the emerging field of mobility studies, with postcolonial theory and gender studies. The field of migrant writing (or migration writing or translanguaging writing – there are many labels we can use and they are all 'tainted') was also becoming more visible and important, both in the Anglophone context and in Italian studies. From a professional point of view, all of these influences, taken together, reinforced my dissatisfaction with the word 'travel' and with travel writing as a form. 'Migration' became a much more relevant term.

Maira: May I ask you a question about that? Did it have anything to do with what was going on increasingly in Europe, at around that same time, with regard to migration from former colonies to the EU?

Loredana: Yes, definitely. I really wanted to escape that bourgeois, middle class notion of travel, and I was working increasingly on colonial and postcolonial travel writing, looking precisely at the history of colonialism and its aftermath, its memory. This was particularly relevant

for me as an Italian and a scholar of Italian studies. There had been a few precursors, but it is my generation of researchers that started to get really interested in the history and the memory (or the lack of memory) of Italian colonialism. This did not happen by chance. It was partly because we were working within a transnational perspective, but also because suddenly, or not so suddenly, there was a postcolonial Italy, there was an Italy that was more evidently and inescapably diverse. An Italy in which the question of racism, for instance, had to be tackled, in which you couldn't ignore attitudes towards diversity any longer. The growing visibility of migrants in Italy also raised another question about memory and forgetfulness: that of Italy's history of emigration. A number of scholars – me included – were increasingly focusing on this double erasure in Italian culture: of the country's colonial past and also of its history of diaspora. These were two things post-war Italy wasn't really interested in speaking about. There is still a lot of work to be done, but things are changing and the 1990s/early 2000s, in this sense, were a historical juncture, both for Italy and more generally for Europe, with the resurgence of populist nationalism and the increasing popularity of formulas such as 'Fortress Europe'. So, researching migration and translation definitely has a political dimension and connects academic work to the world out there. It allows us to reflect on what is happening around us and hopefully to have an impact, however small, on it. For me, the increasing visibility and prominence of the notion of migration was very much part of that move towards a form of research which tries to engage with social reality. Plus, of course, there is an experiential dimension to my interest: as an Italian citizen who has lived the majority of her life in the UK, including the Brexit years, and is now in the process of moving to the US, the question of migration and of the kinds of translation it demands of us is definitely personal.

Maira: This is true of my own biography as well. I have always lived amongst first-, second- or third- generation immigrants in my own family and also many friends' families. My mother was born and raised in Ireland but left to study nursing in London, from there went to Toronto, and finally to New York where she met my father, a second-generation immigrant whose parents, my paternal grandparents, had migrated to New York from Sicily in the early part of the 20th century. When I finished my undergraduate degree, I began working as a paralegal and Spanish language translator and interpreter with immigration attorneys in Boston, and at one point worked for a non-profit with an attorney who specialized

in asylum and refugee law. This was the 1980s and we were processing a lot of asylum applications from Central Americans and Eritreans whose countries were embroiled in civil wars. A few decades later, in the early 2000s when I was at Goldsmiths in London teaching translation theory, news articles started appearing about Europe's "immigration crisis". At that point, drawing on my past experience working in the US on preparing asylum applicants for interviews and hearings, I embarked on a series of research projects funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council concerned with the role of interpreters in political asylum cases in the UK. The research focused on interpreters as social agents situated within social and political processes and sought to locate applicants' views of interpreting activity within the wider social and institutional contexts in which interpreted events occur. It set out to foreground how interpreters practiced their roles within the various situated institutional practices that constitute the asylum application process in the UK, critically examining the notion of a value-free, de-contextualized model of the interpreter mechanically transforming meaning from one language to another.

In my more recent book, *Translation and Migration*, I decided to explore other types of migration experiences, not specifically to do with refugees or asylum seekers. In many ways, that book was my response to a problem I perceived when I returned to the US in 2007, having been in London for over a decade. It seemed to me that there were a lot of people in the US who seemed to have forgotten their own migrant histories, or perhaps were willfully erasing those experiences. This erasure, which is different but very much connected to what you were saying about Italy, was not serving the forging of relationships between previous generations and newly arriving immigrants very well. So the book really was my attempt to address this by reframing the phenomenon of migration as simultaneously a synchronic and a diachronic experience and to address what I feel to be a problematic tendency these days to present the concepts of assimilation and transnationalism as binary and mutually exclusive, rather than focus on their dialectical relation. I am interested in revealing what makes the experience of migration at once universal and particular, not universalizing in the sense that the experiences of all migrants or migrant groups are the same, but the idea that all sentient beings experience migration or the effects of migration, in one form or another, whether internal or external, temporary or permanent, voluntary or involuntary.

We are both interested in migrants' stories and stories about migrants. These stories tend to have some themes in common, regardless of whether we are talking about a fictional or non-fictional experience. Are there different challenges in translating fiction and non-fictional account? Do the translators/interpreters who translate these different stories have to be more closely connected to the experiences conveyed to do them justice?

Moira: Yes, as you noted in our conversation, I also included a lot of stories in *Translation and Migration*. These were mostly based on historical accounts and records, and ethnographies I read when I was researching material for the book, with some fictional and autobiographical sources included as well. Part of my training as an academic was in ethnography and I think that continues to influence my research and writing, even when what I'm writing about doesn't involve fieldwork that I have personally conducted. In researching a particular social or cultural phenomenon, I try to re-present as carefully as I can the voices of those involved, even when relying on secondary sources, fully aware that my decisions about what to include or exclude are part of the story. It's not ethnography, strictly speaking (although sometimes I include others' ethnographic research), it's just my best attempt to "fixate on the occasion, the real," here I'm quoting Barbara Folkhart writing about translation, with regard to the situations of different categories of migrants. I suppose what I am really attempting to do in juxtaposing different categories of migration is to widen the frame of reference regarding the experience. This is itself an act of translation I think, in the sense that it invites us to reflect on certain phenomena in a broader context and, in the case of migration stories, better understand the relationship between past and current experiences. Is this what fictional migration narratives are aiming for and does it matter whether their authors have experienced migration directly or not? What about the translators of these fictional narratives? Can a shared history, language, culture, gender or country of origin necessarily be equated with shared experiential knowledge? Can experiential knowledge be reduced to such commonalities?

One of the things I observed in conducting fieldwork on asylum seekers in the UK was the complex relationship that existed between asylum applicants and interpreters who, though they shared a common country of origin, were on opposite sides of a political or ethnic divide. Under these circumstances, there was much animosity and little trust

between them. To a certain extent, this might be said of all migrants who share a country of origin but are deeply divided by class, wealth, education, religion, race, etc.. This certainly was the case and remains true to some extent in the Italian American diaspora between migrants coming from the north and the south of Italy in the 19th and 20th centuries. A similar observation has been made about the Latino diaspora where white and light-skinned Latinos' resistance to talk about how white privilege operates in their communities contributes to the erasure of Indigenous and Afro-Latinos both within and outside of those spaces. The gaps between individuals who migrate from the same place, like those between privileged cosmopolitans who move rather freely across borders and others who risk their lives to leave home under political duress or economic hardship, reveals a potential paradox of one of the assumed benefits of transnationalism, namely the idea of a seamless and borderless inter-connectivity in communities of the same race or ethnicity. I think it's very important to acknowledge these forms of internal erasure, against the promotion of cultural, regional, or national essentialism which, though sometimes strategically beneficial, ultimately tends to benefit the privileged and perpetuate the marginalization of the disenfranchised.

You mentioned the juxtaposition of ethnography and the texture of language. Does your interest in this relationship have any bearing on what I'm saying here?

Loredana: Given my academic background and the trajectory I described, I suppose the question of how language presents and represents experience was always going to be central for me. Translation is a paradoxical activity, in this sense, or at least it can be. It is, ostensibly, primarily a linguistic practice, but if we understand it as a process that 'simply' replaces one code with another in a linear fashion (or as a mechanical transfer of meaning from one language to another, following your image of mis-constructed notions of interpreting), we risk precisely what you described as forms of erasure or even self-erasure. Translation as 'perfect' substitution deletes what was there, leaves no trace of it, controls and contains the difference that is at its core – that gives it its reason to exist – by effectively silencing it. Understood as this neat act of substitution, translation imposes a very tough set of requirements on the migrant. It demands that you translate yourself into 'one of us', replace what you were with something new, starting, precisely, with the learning of a different language: that of the host community or the dominant group. In this perspective, then, migration literally demands a linguistic

translation or a self-translation – but language also becomes a proxy for something else: by learning ‘our’ language you are showing your desire to become ‘one of us’ and that makes you a good migrant. So your (self-) translation and your erasure of what you were become the basis for a moral judgement and, more often than not, also the basis for decisions about your future, your rights, your chances to be allowed to stay and settle among us. It is a huge price to ask someone to pay, a violent gesture that can be experienced as trauma or lead to a sense of schizophrenia, as it separates someone from their past self (that is how Tzvetan Todorov described his own experience of bilingualism and biculturalism in a famous essay). I think the fact that the diachronic dimension of migration is often difficult, as you noted, is linked to these forms of erasure. But something that is under erasure is always felt as a gap: erasure is a presence of an absence as Derrida taught us, so the lack continues to be felt, it does not go away.

This is not how every migration story ends, however: we do not have to stop at negative images, whether these are the narratives of active exclusion (of racism, nationalism, class privilege, and so on) or the mirroring tales that represent being erased as migration’s only possible outcome (though this can be perceived either as a story of soaring success or crushing defeat). Instead, I am interested in forms of translation that make the question of language visible, audible and, through that, also tell us something about the complexity of the ethnographic gaze and, ultimately, of lived experience. It is that ‘messiness’ of experience that got me interested in narrative accounts that focus on stories of migration and on practices of self-translation. So I suppose in my case too, I was searching for ways to enlarge the frame of reference – but, instead of looking at ‘the real’, in the sense of ethnographic fieldwork or the ‘archive’ of historical migrations, I looked at fictional and semi-fictional accounts. I was trying to find two things: ways of talking about migration that moved away from the strictures of official discourse (though, of course, no type of narrative is ever entirely free from constraints); and traces of the plurality of languages and experiences that are inscribed in migration and in its processes of translation. It is following those narratives and also working with writers who engage in processes of self-translation – by producing multiple versions of their own work in different languages, or by foregrounding polylingualism as a constitutive element of their texts – that I started to think about a notion of translation that does not insist on substitution and erasure but that can make space, instead, for co-presence. Migrant narratives seem to me to reach out for a form of translation that

is not perfect, linear, harmonious or easy, but which can bear the traces of multiple experiences, positionalities, forms of identification and, indeed, languages. These narratives are themselves translations. They are not perfect, nor perfectly equitable, certainly not universal or universally shared, but they try to harness the power of narrative to talk about the experiential complexity of migration, the mix of pain and desire that goes with it, its sense of fragmentation but also its transformative dimension, the productivity and creativity that can come of it. Translations of this kind do not even hope to resolve the ‘messiness’ of lived experience, but do something to allow us to see it at least a bit more clearly. And they also counter the monotone of negative discourse about migrants and migration.

What about the question of agency? Who are the key agents when translation and migration meet? And how do translation, interpreting and mediation differ in terms of agency?

Loredana: Focusing on narrative also foregrounds a series of other questions, which relate to agency. I have been talking of writers and of their narratives of migration as forms of self-translation – but what about translators and interpreters, whether professional or otherwise, in that ‘real’ world to which other kinds of narratives belong? Here, the question of who gets to tell whose story, in whose language(s), and for whom remains very fraught and poses a number of ethical problems. The conceptualization of translation as substitution that I was talking about before neatly aligns with rigid notions of identity and their mono-logical assumptions, which ask us to choose, to identify with one category, one group, one language. Take the case of asylum seekers or refugees which, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the focus of increasing attention (to the point that at times it seems to be seen as co-extensive with migration, even if it is not). When a translator or an interpreter is faced with the difficult complexity, the ‘messiness’, of the life stories told to them, the temptation and perhaps also the most effective solution, in many ways, is to turn that into a narrative that follows the required patterns, that will be recognizable and understandable from the point of view of the host community, of the people who hold the power to decide what happens next. This shifts the perspective, however, making our narrative models central and requiring, once again, a form of translation that erases what does not fit. We want a ‘neat’ story that we can place into the appropriate box, and translation helps with that. First, because it reinforces the idea that a migrant is

‘other’, different from ‘us’: the fact that they speak ‘their’ language proves it. Second, because ‘their’ language also allows them to be identified and catalogued: this is what practices such as LADO (Language Assessment for the Determination of Origin) do, by placing both people and languages into boxes – and those who do not pass the test are marked as potential liars, criminals, undesirables. All of this also helps to reinforce the idea that migration is an exceptional phenomenon (and requires a state of exception in response), while the reality, as you said, is that all human beings experience migration and/or its effects, in one way or another. And the same goes for translation.

I am not saying that any process of translation that adapts a narrative to accepted models is bad – but we need to be aware of and to acknowledge what it does. I think one of the effects of translation, even when it is motivated by the best of intentions, is that it shifts the focus on ‘us’ (whoever that may be in any specific case), on what ‘we’ can do for ‘them’, and in doing so it imposes our vision, our values, our categories, once again. In the way we talk about translation you and I take it as given that a translator has agency, that translation is about more than a supposedly mechanical transfer of information, that it tackles also what remains unspoken. In this sense, we do not make a rigid distinction between translation and mediation, just as we do not separate language from meaning or from culture. Yet that distinction is often made. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), for instance, provides a separate descriptor for mediation and states that it is ‘not limited to cross-linguistic mediation (passing on information in another language)’. The CEFR also gives mediators a lot more agency than interpreters/translators, though for me, decades after Jakobson or the ‘cultural turn’ or work on ‘rewriting’ and on ‘the translator as communicator’, the idea that paraphrase is a clearly distinct process from translation, for instance, is rather surprising. More to the point, if we separate translation from mediation, what happens when mediators are not trained as translators?

Then there is the question of loyalty, which is an old one in translation studies, but I think is much more complicated than choosing between the source and the target text (or author, reader, culture). In our conversations, the two of us also instinctively tend to assume that, in the context of migration, the translator’s or the interpreter’s loyalty should be with the migrant, that they have an ethical responsibility to the voices and to the narratives of those who are positioned as the weaker party in the exchange, even if that implies not being entirely ‘neutral’ (whatever that

might mean), or mediating and re-telling a story in ways which will make it more acceptable and therefore will also make the migrant more 'desirable'. But is that always the case? And, if it is, is that best served by maintaining or by erasing a sense of difference? Can the 'messiness' and the co-presence (of positionalities, languages, identifications, performances and memories of oneself) be translated? When discussing these issues, by the way, it seems to me that today we tend to shift towards the perspective of the interpreter, rather than the translator, to imagine and to privilege the immediacy of the interpreter's embodied presence, their role and their ethical position. But this is something about which you know a lot more than I do...

Moira: First, I need to say that the research I conducted on interpreting in the asylum context in the UK taught me never to assume that the translator's or the interpreter's loyalty will be with the migrant! I interviewed a lot of individuals who worked in different capacities, e.g. lawyers, judges, interpreter coordinators and trainers, and interpreters themselves, who had witnessed many instances of bias on the part of interpreters who, even if they didn't verbalize their disdain for the person for whom they were interpreting, would intentionally embody their feelings through facial expressions or other bodily movements or gestures. A judge I interviewed told me about an occasion in which she sensed the bias of an interpreter when he (whom she referred to as a predator) placed his chair as far away from the applicant as possible in the hearing room to demonstrate his contempt for the asylum seeker and disbelief in his version of events. And this was before the hearing had even started. In other instances, reported to me by eye witnesses, an interpreter would interrupt an asylum interview to verbally discount the veracity of the asylum seeker's claim or to disparage an applicant for using dialect, informing the judge that the asylum seeker was just being difficult by demanding a different interpreter. In all these instances, interpreters took advantage of the cultural insensitivity and ignorance that some immigration department officials displayed, effectively colluding in behavior designed to weaken asylum seekers' credibility.

The matter of agency and mediation aims to get to the heart of how to think about the presence of the translator or the interpreter with regard to the communicated message. It's hard to fathom why - given that it is they who make it possible for the communication to take place beyond the source text language - the presence of either could or should ever go unnoticed. Whatever the degree of authority or autonomy granted to

them, translators and interpreters leave their marks on the texts they translate. Unwittingly or not, they can find themselves and their translations upholding or reproducing harmful narratives that are used to frame the experiences of certain groups or individuals or cooperating with the very institutions engaged in marginalizing or silencing others. Amongst the fictional and autobiographical migration narratives written about the United States in English, some authors reproduce the trope of the American Dream, others strongly critique it, and some fall somewhere in between. In translating these stories, how these narratives are re/deconstructed and transformed may contribute to the reproduction or the demise of this trope, but is it the translator or is it the reader who ultimately decides how they will be read or re-read? With respect to interpreting, I have suggested to students that they think of the interpreter as the person in charge of the interaction, but not of the individuals taking part. What I mean is that interpreters don't try to speak *for* others but facilitate others speaking for themselves. This includes language competency of course, but also an awareness of the relationship between the speakers and the institutional context in which the communication is situated. But even this is not straightforward. It's not uncommon, for example, for participants in an interpreted interaction to turn and speak to interpreters directly, catching them off guard, sometimes to say something they don't want the other person to hear, even when the interpreter has made it clear that they will interpret everything that is said. What do you do in this case if what is said is offensive to the hearer or might cause trouble for the speaker? But it's also important to remember that, in many cases, an interpreter is the only witness to what is taking place, so the question of interpreter agency and mediation becomes very real in instances where unfairness, mistreatment, or outright discriminatory practices are taking place that affect the communication and/or the outcome.

Do translators have any more control over this space, over the messiness of co-presence? I don't think so. In one of Maureen Freely's published accounts of the experiences surrounding her translation of Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow*, she describes the moment she knew that, as she put it "the translation was already off the page," when she realized that words she used both in the translation and about the translation were being distorted and used against her to prop up a particular political agenda. This raises the question of what, given the unpredictability of the reception of any text, might be the most effective use of mediation and agency in relation to translation? Is it more effectively enacted as a subtle

act that operates at the level of the text, or more overtly in the decisions one makes about what, where, and for whom to translate? The simplest (and probably unsatisfactory) answer to that question would be that it really depends on the situation and the context.

Why is it that we both turned to art as a means of translating migrant stories in our more recent research?

Maira: I started thinking about art in relation to translation in 2012 after reading a quote in a paper by Carol Maier about a Chilean interpreter, one of Carol's students, who wrote of being haunted after an interpreting assignment involving a young woman who had been abused and had attempted suicide. The student felt unprepared to deal with the emotional aspects of interpreting which left her feeling distraught. In response to this, and to interpreters I had interviewed in my research who had expressed similar feelings, I turned to visual art and the work of two artists, Kazimir Malevich and Mark Rothko, to understand better how in privileging and encouraging the use of formal discourse in certain interpreted interactions and translations, including some literary texts, we can tend to limit rather than enhance the representation of meaning, particularly in emotive texts. I was interested in how both Malevich and Rothko had at some point in their careers renounced figurative expression because, as Rothko put it speaking for himself, "a time came when none of us could use the figure without mutilating it." That thought stayed with me and I returned to it again more recently in thinking about cases where the words of a particular migrant narrative as well as the responses to them by the institutions in which they are received, become treated as ends in themselves rather than vehicles for expression in the hands of translators and interpreters. In the context of migration control, for example, the procedures individuals are obliged to follow to gain entry to a particular country, which include filling out forms and participating in oral interviews, are often purposely designed to produce truncated narratives that prevent the adequate elucidation of the motivations for fleeing a country or region. I fear that the translators of these narratives may be unwittingly (and sometimes wittingly) complicit in what the philosopher Miranda Fricker refers to as epistemic injustice, in this case of the testimonial kind, which she describes as unfairness related to trusting someone's word and that occurs when a person is not believed because of their gender, race or more broadly speaking, their identity. I think that this suggests the need for additional translational tools through which

narrative content can be framed – for me that includes art and artefacts not normally considered forms of communication for translators or interpreters or the individuals they represent. There are types of media (art, music, poetry, for example) that tend to encourage a withdrawal from the literal into a more sensual form of encounter with others. Specifically, the interplay between the verbal and visual, and the human and non-human – by this I mean the material technologies and techniques that underpin translation – can enhance and even alter understandings of particular phenomena associated with migration, particularly for those individuals and institutions who are inclined to negate, dismiss or disparage certain migrants’ experiences.

The kind of media I have in mind might be embedded in written or spoken narratives, juxtaposed with them, or even replace them in some cases. An example of this is the Darfur genocide in the early 2000s where there was overwhelming evidence that the Sudanese government had been training, arming and paying Janjaweed militias to kill non-Arabs and clear them off the oil-rich land. At one point a researcher from the human rights organization “Waging Peace”, while on a fact-finding mission regarding the events that took place, was told by Darfuri women in a refugee camp in eastern Chad about the horrendous things their children had witnessed when their villages were being attacked. This prompted her to talk to the children who ranged in age from 5 to 18. With the help of interpreters who spoke Arabic and the languages of Darfur, she asked the children to write down their memories. One of them asked if they could draw instead. They drew pictures showing their villages full of tanks and armed men on horseback, houses on fire, and helicopters circling the skies. Villagers are shown under attack, women are led off in chains, and civilians are shot at, and try to defend themselves with spears and arrows. Helicopters bear the markings of military aircraft and the men in camouflage are labeled by the children as Janjaweed militia. The interpreters asked the children to tell them what was in their pictures, and wrote their explanations down on the back of each one. In November of 2007, the drawings were submitted to the International Criminal Court in The Hague by “Waging Peace” and were accepted as contextual evidence of the crimes committed in Darfur and used in the trials of the accused as a graphic illustration of the atrocities. Taken together with other documents, they helped confirm the fact that the Darfur population had been attacked by the Janjaweed militias. The original 500 drawings have since been donated by “Waging Peace” to the University of South Florida Libraries, Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center. Another example that

stands out for me is the Syrian artist/sculptor Nizar Ali Badr who gathers stones on the beach near the ancient port city of Ugarit, Syria, where he lives, and uses them as the medium for highlighting the millions of Syrians forced to flee their homes due to the ongoing violence. His images are composed entirely of small solid rocks arranged in such a way as to display the wide-ranging emotions attached to this experience. When he can't obtain glue to give them permanence, he'll take a photo and then reuse the stones. Some of his images were published in a children's book entitled *Stepping Stones* (2016) written in English by the Netherlands born Canadian author Margriet Ruurs and translated into Arabic. The translator, Falah Raheem, a Canadian Iraqi translator and writer, said that when the book was first sent to him, there were no images, just the text, so when he received a first draft and saw Badr's work, he felt compelled to revise his translation in light of the illustrations. The first thing he revised was his original title, *The Threshold of Departure*, because he realized that the stones were the real medium of communication and needed to be mentioned in the title. In an attempt to capture the double meaning of the English title of the stones as a kind of hurdle but also of progress on the journey, he titled it *The Stones of the Roads*.

For me, both these examples reveal the potential of inter-semiotic translation to be a powerful mode of communication, carrying source texts, objects and figures across sign systems, creating a dialogue between the signs and their forms of representation. In thinking of translation, we tend to focus on the content of the written or spoken message, hence the obsession with notions like fidelity or neutrality. But translation can also be thought of as a medium of communication that is used to reconfigure human association and action and, in the case of migration, awaken us to both its harsh and hopeful realities. You mentioned something similar I recall about the artists you've been working with, how the combination of their material and aesthetic practices revealed complex layers of meaning that would simply not be evident using words alone.

Loredana: I definitely recognize your search for additional translational tools. I may risk coming across as very impatient (which I probably am), but for me the need to think more actively about the visual as a form of translation came from an increasing sense of impatience, precisely, with the insufficiency of verbal language, with its inability to take me to the core of the experiences I was trying to understand and to describe. I am a very logocentric person, I have always put the word, written or spoken, first, so my entry point into the experiential dimension

of migration and of its multiple processes of translation was through narratives understood in a narrow sense, i.e. as stories told and retold through verbal language. After a while, however, I felt I was going round in circles (an image I am stealing from you and from our conversations): I was getting frustrated by trying to prove or to argue points about translation which were somehow staring me in the face, but which resisted the confines of the metalanguage we use to talk about translation and, more broadly, about human verbal behavior.

It happened with teaching first. Nothing as traumatic as the examples you gave, but I was asking students or participants in workshops to describe their personal experience of translation and of self-translation – and all I was getting was constant repetitions of the same formulaic responses: translation as a transfer of information, languages divided in accordance to neatly contoured national territories, idioms split into “mother tongue” and “all the rest”... One day I asked people to draw, instead of writing, and after a couple of minutes of panic and blank staring I found I had a wealth of different maps, metaphors, journeys and stories. Something similar happened with artists. In some cases, they found me, and in others I found them, but exploring visual art that engages with migration and, especially, establishing conversations with the artists who produce it has meant that some aspects of the migration experience and of its entanglement with translation have become highlighted, have gained relief. One such element is performativity or, more precisely, the performative nature of each of the stories we tell about our histories of migration and of their many subsequent translations and re-translations. As with processes of identification or with the mechanisms of individual and collective memory, each narrative has its own complex relationship with “reality” and “truth”. How we narrate, translate and retranslate migration has to do with our perceptions of ourselves and others, as well as with the audiences we are reaching out to, their expectations and our relationship with them. Another characteristic of translation which becomes particularly visible when dealing with visual art is the fact that (especially, but I think not only in the context of migration) its function is not one of substitution but rather of co-presence, as I was saying earlier. That co-presence extends beyond verbal languages and also incorporates visual codes as well as embodied experiences, with their physical and emotional dimensions.

A number of the artists I am interested in – such as Angela Cavalieri, Luci Callipari Marcuzzo, Filomena Coppola, or B. Amore – work with a range of media and codes which include verbal language, in its written or

aural forms, but are not limited to it. Their techniques range from paint to collage or, in the case of Angela, to adopting the graphic shape of written words as the building block of her entire visual production. But what they are interested in is not just the narrow capacity of individual human idioms to carry meaning among members of a language group. They also use the verbal sign for its aesthetic, social and political power, and they mix multiple tongues as well as multiple media to compound that effect as well as to convey the layering of personal and shared experience, of individual and family memories, of collective histories of exclusion, assimilation, trauma, or survival. At the same time, these artists (and I think it is interesting that the ones I named are all women) combine traditional media and genres such as painting, drawing, or sculpture with creative practices associated with women's work: their production incorporates crafts like sewing and embroidery, the preparation of food, or everyday objects with their materiality. These practices trace genealogies of gendered labour and maps of female memory in which, for a long time, the written word was not the dominant nor the most common language. Rather, it was at most one among many ways of telling and remembering important tales, of passing on essential knowledge.

This co-presence of languages and codes, the combination of material and aesthetic planes, also helped me capture and bring together, the epistemological dimension and the metaphorical labour of translation, on the one hand, and its material, embodied and often gendered elements on the other. A powerful example of this is the image of weaving. This is a metaphor which has been repeatedly used to talk about translation, but which is often overlooked in favour of other images, such as bridging, transporting, mirroring. For a while, I had been working on the idea of "translational fabric" as a way to encapsulate how deeply enmeshed translation processes are not just in our linguistic behavior but in our social and emotional life. And here I was, working with artists who use exactly that image and that language – but also those techniques: weaving, embroidery, sewing, stitching together – to produce art that speaks about their experience of life as first, second or third generation migrants. Luci Callipari Marcuzzo, for instance, talks of her art performances as a way of tracing the threads of her family's past, as her parents and grandparents migrated from Italy to Australia; and she describes her mother's 1960s treadle-powered sewing machine, used in these live events, as a translation tool. Recently, another Italian Australian artist, Filomena Coppola, sent me images of her contribution to a collaborative global project called *@covid19quilt*. The work is an embroidered spiral going from magenta to

indigo – the colours of a bruise, she said – covering the Earth globe. But the most interesting thing for me was that she sent two photographs, front and back, with the working side of the embroidery showing all its “messy”, “knotty” materiality and openly displaying the labour that goes into the perfect circles that are on show, for the viewer, on the other side. That double image reminded me of the Chinese term for translation, *fan yi*, which Maria Tymoczko discussed in one of her articles as linked, precisely, to the two sides of an embroidery, only one of which allows us to see the signs of its construction. It is the capacity to encapsulate this complexity of epistemological and material processes that really fascinates me in the way visual artists engage with translation as both a metaphorical notion and a practice.

What are the gaps and the opportunities as we continue to develop research at the intersection between migration, translation and mediation?

Loredana: If I think about what we have been saying throughout our conversation, it seems to me that we are both dissatisfied with notions or practices of translation that narrow it down to a “linguistic” activity or a “neutral” professional concern. I certainly do not want to move too far away from language, but I also don’t want to de-couple that dimension of translation from the cultural, the experiential, the embodied. It is precisely the intermeshing of these dimensions that interests me – and that interweaving is very much in evidence when translation and migration connect. So, if I had to point to two items on the research agenda, for the present and the future, the first would be the question of enhancing interdisciplinary dialogue and sensitization. Whether it is with the field of cultural mediation or with English as a lingua franca, research in translation needs to be open to dialogue with cognate disciplines, and vice versa. But we also need to look further afield. I keep saying that translation and interpreting are too important to leave them only to professionals: we need to sensitize the users of those services and that means, in the case of migration, that everyone involved in its processes and procedures should be made aware of the role that languages, narratives and their multiple translations play in how people are seen, treated, allowed (or not allowed) to live a human life. I think of this as a form of activism, of resistance against what I call “language indifference”. That is also why I think the notion of neutrality is at times used too readily and simplistically: I always tell students that being neutral does not

mean not taking a position – on the contrary, it usually aligns us with the more powerful side in any exchange.

The other point I would make, is about how we carry out and communicate our research. It may well turn out to be futile, but I think we must at least try to reach wider audiences, beyond students or professionals specializing in translation. This is closely linked with the idea of sensitization as one of the key goals of research and education, which I just mentioned. It also means privileging different forms of writing or of public speaking and going beyond academic channels, even though this may be difficult or uncomfortable: when we relinquish the “protection” of formal academic writing, what we do and say may feel personal, at times even confessional, or in some cases appropriative with respect to other people’s experiences. This is where creative writing or the visual arts have an advantage: they do it so much better. But I would still like to think that we can do our work in a way which maintains that sense of the human, which upholds the fact that we are dealing with human beings, their lives, their stories. That is why I like translation in all its “knottiness” and “messiness” and I would never want to see it as a problem to be wished away, whether via some form of universal language or the advances of Artificial Intelligence.

Moira: I completely agree with everything you’ve said here Loredana, and couldn’t have said it any better! I’ll take this final turn then to thank Christina Schaeffner and Raffaella Merlini for allowing us this space to dialogue about migration in a way that would likely never have happened in quite the same way otherwise. As you mentioned in the introduction, we’ve been reading each other’s work for over a decade and had the occasional stolen moment of conversation, but this interchange of ideas over a short but concentrated period of time has really allowed me to see clearly what we share and what we can learn from one another. Thank you for being such an inspiring conversational partner.

Loredana: I’ll second all of that!

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***Easy Eatalian:
Chefs of Italian origin hosting cookery series
on British television and mediating
their cultural heritage***

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Abstract

Drawing on an analysis of a sample of extracts from TV cookery programs hosted by Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo and Giorgio Locatelli, three Italian chefs who under different circumstances chose the UK as their elective professional home-country, the present paper sets out to investigate three cases of recent (after the 1970s and after the 1980s) migration to the UK linked to the food industry. Well-known London restaurateurs, but also TV personae, these three chefs have become very popular both in the UK and in Italy via their British TV cookery series. This paper looks for narration patterns that relate to migration, redemption and success in the TV series analysed, and also addresses the topic of how culture-specific contents of the Italian food tradition have been retained, erased or adapted in order to appeal to UK recipients who do not share the cultural or the gastronomic background of the chefs' country of origin. One further objective of the study is to investigate if the TV chefs' representation of a sense of identity and belonging connect more to the Italian community at home or to the Italian-British community in the UK, and how these aspects have been conveyed through such culturally connoted programs as TV cookery series. In order to obtain a more thorough picture of the factors involved, the paper also considers cookbooks accompanying the TV series along with other cookbooks published by the chefs on Italian cuisine.

Keywords: recent Italian migration to the UK; migration narrative; mediated Italian food culture; authenticity; identity

1. Introduction

The presence of an Italian population in the UK and Ireland is the result of a history of emigration that reached considerable proportions at the turn of the 19th century, decreased between the two World Wars, rose

again after World War II, dropped and then stabilized in the 1970s when migrants who returned to Italy outnumbered the new arrivals (Fortier, 2000: 26). Recent socio-demographic research has shown how the flow of Italian migration to the UK has changed considerably since the beginning of the 21st century. Different waves of mass migration to the UK after the reunification of Italy up to the advent of fascism and after World War II were motivated by poor economic conditions in Italy which forced people, mainly blue-collar workers, to leave their home country in search of a better life and improved working conditions. A new wave of white-collar migration has been taking place more recently, up to the turning point of the political crisis caused by Brexit, whose effects and consequences on Italian migration are beyond the scope of the present study.

Italian migrants to the UK have had a long-established connection with the catering and food industry (see Sponza, 1988; Colpi, 199). After early, small-scale waves of Italian migration to the UK linked to art, architecture, finance and trade, a larger community took root in the nineteenth century composed of artisans, organ-grinders, and somewhat later, ice-cream sellers (King *et al.*, 2014: 18). According to Colpi,¹ by the 1930s, in most cities in the UK there was at least one ice cream or fish and chip business run by an Italian family. These and other food shops were located on main roads in popular seaside resorts, such as the south coast or on the Thames estuary, while many Italians became headwaiters and chefs at prestigious British venues, and Italian restaurants opened in Soho. After World War II, a new wave of migrants from central and northern Italy arrived in the historic centres of Italian migration such as London, Manchester, Wales and Scotland through work permits obtained by family or friends to work in the expanding catering and service industries. Colpi also reports that first trattorias and Italian-style espresso coffee bars were opened in the 1950s, while Italian pizzerias became popular in the 1960s. A new phase of Italian migration began in the 1980s, when Italian professionals such as bankers, academics, engineers, scientists, and artists reached the UK. While coming from all regions of Italy, they concentrated in London. By 1993 cheap flights, further European integration, and increased job opportunities generated an increasing flow of Italian migrants to the British Isles. Renewed vulnerability of the Southern

¹ See Colpi, T. "Building Italian communities: caterers, industrial recruits, and professionals." In *20th and 21st Century Migrations*.

<https://www.ourmigrationstory.org.uk/oms/building-italian-communities-catering-war-service-industrial-recruitment> (last accessed 1 May 2020).

peripheral EU countries, Italy included, combined with a lack of meritocracy became dramatically apparent in connection with the 2008 global financial crisis, which caused growth stagnation across the EU and a rise in unemployment, youth unemployment in particular, in Southern European countries. As a consequence, there has been an increasing trend towards emigration among Italians, especially young jobless university graduates, although the brain drain northwards is a phenomenon which dates back to the early 1990s, if not before (King *et al.*, 2014: 17). These young Italian migrants, although well educated, often lacked professional experience and many gravitated to the traditional and, exceptionally strong, Italian catering sector (*ibid*). According to an article published in *The Economist* in 2013, finding good jobs took time, while work in the catering industry was plentiful, and Britain's Italian restaurants were once again hiring Italian waiters (November 16th, 2013)². As for future developments, although there is little research available on the impact of Brexit on Italian migration flows to the UK as yet, plausible empirically based estimates of the Brexit-induced reductions in migration from EU member states (Portes and Forte, 2017: 33), together with mobility restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, would indicate that the migration rates of EU citizens, including Italians, to the UK are likely to decrease, at least in the short and middle term.

2. Current trends in Italian migration to the UK

In contrast to earlier migrants who left their country of origin because they were affected by harsh economic conditions, in the 1970s and 1980s returnees to Italy outnumbered new migrants to the UK. In those years, Italian immigration to Britain stabilized at one or two thousand per year. Very little is known about these migrants, but it is likely that a number of them included migrants who moved to the UK on a temporary basis and for different reasons from their predecessors (Fortier, 2000: 29). Between March 2009 and March 2010, Scotto (2012) carried out open interviews with representatives of Italian institutions, associations and organizations in London; he found that the key elements of Italian mobility patterns to the UK today are a quest for meritocracy and fair competition, as well as hopes of better professional opportunities than they could obtain at

² "Pigs can fly". <https://www.economist.com/britain/2013/11/16/pigs-can-fly> (last accessed 30 April 2020).

home. Scotto (*ibid.*) argues that Italians now mainly live in the Greater London area, where they are attracted by the fact that it is an international financial and commercial hub. Their migration tends not to be permanent, they spend periods of three to five years in London working in banks, insurance companies and the service industry. Italians are mainly skilled professionals, doctors, experts in the financial sector, researchers, scientists, students or artists (AAVV, 2006: 1-2) who come to London to consolidate their professional skills and to improve their language skills, as well as to escape from a stagnating system based on gerontocracy. Young artists, musicians, directors, writers, but also designers and chefs, consider London as an opportunity to launch themselves onto an international market and art scene that they cannot access at home.

Further comparative research (King *et al.*, 2014) which considers the motivations and characteristics of recent migration to the UK (mainly to the London area) of three highly educated young-adult national groups – from Germany, Italy and Latvia – shows that Italian graduates migrate to find career opportunities in the economically and culturally dynamic London region which are unavailable to them at home, while the Germans relocating to London generally do not plan this as a career move, but as a temporary, life-enhancing experience. In Italy, employment and career prospects for young educated people have long been difficult because of problems such as the lack of recognition, “power brokering, nepotism” (*ibid.*: 21) and the Italian recommendation system, which has worsened with the post-2008 economic crisis, leading to enhanced migratory movements from the weaker peripheral areas of the EU zone to the “core” region of London and its surroundings.

Drawing on the analysis of a sample of extracts from TV cookery programs hosted by Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo, and Giorgio Locatelli, three Italian chefs who, under different circumstances, chose the UK as their professional home-country, the present paper sets out to investigate three cases of post-1970s migration to the UK linked to the food industry. Well-known London restaurateurs, but also TV personae, these three chefs have become very popular both in the UK and in Italy via their British TV cookery series, having achieved success in London. In line with the results of sociological research conducted on the reasons for Italian recent migration to the UK (AAVV, 2006; King *et al.*, 2014) the three chefs’ migration to the UK started as a temporary project and became a permanent one because of the opportunities they encountered in the host country.

The analysis has used a mixed methodology involving the research tools of linguistics, multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leuven, 1996, 2001), textual analysis applied to media (Gillespie and Toynebee, 2006) as well as food studies (Heldke, 2003, 2005; James, 2005) and sociological research (Cavallaro, 2009; Scotto, 2012; King *et al.*, 2014). The paper looks for narration patterns that relate to migration, redemption and success in the TV series analyzed, and also addresses the topic of how culture-specific contents of the Italian food tradition have been retained, erased or adapted in these TV cookery series in order to appeal to UK recipients who do not share either the cultural or the gastronomic background of the chefs' country of origin. One further objective of the study is to investigate whether the TV chefs' representation of a sense of identity and belonging connect more to the Italian community at home or to the Italian-British community in the UK, and how these aspects have been conveyed through such culturally connoted programs as TV cookery series. In order to obtain a more thorough picture of the factors involved, the paper also takes into consideration some cookbooks accompanying the TV series and other cookbooks published by the same authors on Italian cuisine.

In order to analyze the materials from the perspective of migrant narratives I referred to sociological research, and in particular to Cavallaro (2009) who argues that, similarly to biographies, life narratives are never a simple reflection of the past life of migrants, they are rather a reconstruction of what they consider to be the salient events according to their prospective audience (Cavallaro, 2009: 31). Studying the life stories of Calabrian migrants who moved to the UK in the 1970s, he identified some recurrent narrative themes in the narrations of the people he interviewed. Cavallaro lists four lexical and thematic clusters that migrants used in their narrations to shape the time framework of the *narratum* (2009: 33). The time before migration was normally associated with poverty and suffering, with the journey marking a transition from an old to a new life, the migration experience was identified as a turning point in their lives, while the narration of the return had more to do with dreams about a serene old age and social liberation than with a real plan of returning to their homeland in the near future (2009: 34-40). Cavallaro also mentions that in the life stories of the migrants he interviewed, whenever a happy memory from pre-migration periods was recollected, it was often linked to childhood memories of smells and flavours, and of occasional food abundance (Cavallaro, 2009: 35). As we will see below, some of these lexical and discursive clusters are present in the narrations

of the chefs' relationship to their homeland. Of course, we are well aware that cookery TV series, like any other televisual text, are artificially constructed and cannot be taken as uncontroversial autobiographical material. Any object can carry meaning to some extent, but the peculiarity about media texts is that their primary function is the "making and taking of meaning," apart from the making and taking of profits (Gillespie and Toynebee, 2006: 2). Even the most factual documentary footage is to be read as an artificial construction of meaning; yet, these specific cookery series and particularly the episodes filmed in the chefs' regions of origin, clearly contain a number of autobiographical elements. Because of the particular angle from which the chefs observe Italy and the Italian food culture, the series also provide some discursive patterns that can be ascribed to the narrative(s) of migration, and this is why they were selected for the purpose of the present paper.

3. Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo and Giorgio Locatelli, three Italian chefs in the UK

In this section the biographies of the three celebrity chefs of Italian origin will be briefly outlined. Particular attention will be devoted to their migration stories.

3.1 Antonio Carluccio

Well-known for his chain of eponymous restaurants, his 20 cookery books and numerous TV series, Antonio Carluccio is recognized as a food ambassador of Italian cuisine in the UK. Born in 1937 in Vietri sul Mare, in Salerno, he moved to the north of Italy with his family when he was a young boy and grew up in the northwest region of Piedmont. After studying languages in Vienna and gaining 13 years of experience as a wine merchant in Germany, he moved to London in 1975, where a few years later he set up the *Neal Street Restaurant* in Covent Garden, which he ran until 2008. In London, he also opened the first deli, gourmet shop and restaurant of his successful chain *Carluccio's Cafés*, with 80 outlets around the UK, one in Dublin and six in the Middle East. As an apprentice, celebrity chef Jamie Oliver learnt how to cook Italian food in the kitchens of his Neal Street Restaurant, where Jamie also met his mentor Gennaro Contaldo.

The fifth of six children, Antonio Carluccio recollects his childhood as an idyllic period of his life, and insists that although his family was not rich, there was always enough food on their table (the *Telegraph*, March 14th, 2009)³ His father worked for the Italian railways as a stationmaster and his mother was a passionate family cook “who managed to feed her large family well, creatively and very lovingly through the lean post-war years” (Carluccio, 2012: 6). Although his television trademark image is of a rustic Italian peasant-type, Carluccio insists that his family was poor, but not uncultured. His happy adolescence was shattered by the death of his younger brother, Enrico, from which his mother never recovered, becoming a Jehovah's Witness for the last 20 years of her life. Partly to escape his painful home life, Carluccio left Italy for Vienna at the age of 21, and then moved to Germany, before migrating to London. It was then that he met his third wife Priscilla, the sister of designer Sir Terence Conran, from whom Carluccio bought the Neal Street Restaurant (the *Telegraph*, March 14th, 2009).⁴ Carluccio is also well known for collaboration with his fellow countryman, chef Gennaro Contaldo and their enormously successful BBC Two television series *Two Greedy Italians* (BBC, 2011) and *Two Greedy Italians: still hungry* (BBC, 2012). Both series feature the two internationally renowned chefs and old friends, Carluccio and Contaldo, travelling around Italy to find out how society and food have evolved in the *Bel Paese* over the years. As stated on the DVD cover of the series: “They uncover a changed Italy in some areas and a fiercely traditional, mostly untouched world in others” (FremantleMedia Productions, 2012). When Carluccio died in November 2017, many celebrity chefs and other TV personalities expressed their sadness and admiration for the godfather of Italian gastronomy in the UK (the *Guardian*, November 8th, 2017).⁵

³Harrison, D. 2009. “Antonio Carluccio: My marriage had collapsed, I was desperate”. *The Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/4991878/Antonio-Carluccio-My-marriage-had-collapsed.-I-was-desperate.html> (last accessed 28 April 2020).

⁴ See previous footnote.

⁵ See Khomami, N. (2017) “Italian chef Antonio Carluccio dies aged 80” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/nov/08/chef-antonio-carluccio-dies-aged-80> (last accessed 30 April 2020).

3.2 Gennaro Contaldo

Best known for being the mentor of Jamie Oliver after they met at Carluccio's *Neal Street* restaurant, Gennaro Contaldo, a highly respected chef in London and a renowned TV personality, was born in Minori on the Amalfi coast, where he started helping in the kitchen of a local restaurant at a very early age. He migrated to the UK in the 1960s, and spent his first years working in local village restaurants around the country and studying autochthonous food. He then moved to London where he worked at a number of popular restaurants, before opening his own award-winning restaurant *Passione* (Contaldo, 2010: 1).

Contaldo's and Carluccio's professional partnership started well before the television series was filmed. In the cookery book which accompanied the second *Two Greedy Italians* TV series, Carluccio reports that they first met when Contaldo "presented himself at the back door of my Neal Street restaurant with a basket of wild mushrooms, gathered from the wooded glades of Walthamstow. He had seen me on television extolling the virtues of the "quiet hunt". Thinking I would not consider him worthy if he were revealed to be from the south, he tried to disguise his heavy accent, pretending that he came from the more fashionable Tuscany (Chianti-shire). I wasn't deceived however, and yet still I took him on. And thus began our turbulent 30-year relationship" (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 55). Contaldo's witty and outgoing style as well as his positive and passionate nature have made him a TV star regularly appearing on BBC's *Saturday Kitchen* (BBC1, 2001-) and in many episodes of Jamie Oliver's numerous TV series. He has published five cookbooks including *Passione* (2003), awarded Best Italian Cookbook at the world Gourmet Awards in 2003.

3.3 Giorgio Locatelli

Giorgio Locatelli was brought up in Northern Italy, on the banks of Lake Comabbio, in the Lombardy region. His uncle ran a restaurant which provided him with an appreciation and understanding of food from a very early age. Locatelli worked in his family-run restaurant until he was 20 and then started travelling. After working for a short period in local restaurants in Northern Italy and Switzerland, he relocated to England in 1986 to join the kitchens of Anton Edelmann at *The Savoy* restaurant. In 1990, Locatelli moved to Paris where he worked at the *Laurent* and *La Tour d'Argent*. On his return to London a couple of years later, he became

head chef at *Olivo*, before opening *Zafferano* in 1995. He opened his second restaurant, *Spighetta*, in 1997 and its sister restaurant *Spiga*, two years later. In 2002, Locatelli opened his first independent restaurant, *Locanda Locatelli*, in Seymour Street together with his wife. The restaurant was awarded a Michelin star in 2003, and has retained it ever since. When asked how dynamic the London dining scene was, he replied: “In London we have very different types of cuisine of the highest level compared to other European capitals...they must envy us!” (*Londonist*, November 24th, 2011).⁶

4. Travelogue cooking shows

The food series which have been selected for the purpose of the present study are set in Italy and hosted by Italian chefs who, early on in their careers, migrated to the UK and have since lived and worked in London. Giorgio Locatelli’s *Italy Unpacked* (BBC, 2011-) which he presented together with art historian and critic Graham Dixon: *Two Greedy Italians* (BBC, 2011) and *Two Greedy Italians: still hungry* (BBC, 2012) hosted by Gennaro Contaldo and Antonio Carluccio, all belong to a sub-genre of television cookery known as the “travelogue cooking show”. This factual genre combines cookery and travelling, and takes both the chefs and the cooking out of television studios into exciting, exotic locations. As noted by Leer and Kjaer (2015: 310), travelogue series allow the television chefs more freedom of movement as they can then actually experience and share exotic cuisines rather than simply describe and interpret them in abstract terms. This genre first became popular on UK TV in the 1980s through celebrity chef Keith Floyd’s first TV cooking series *Floyd on Fish* (BBC, 1984), and subsequent sixteen further series typically beginning with “Floyd on ...”, followed by a destination: *Floyd on Italy*, *Floyd on France*, *Floyd on Africa*, *Floyd’s India*, *Floyd’s China* etc. These early series prefigured and inspired many of the food travelogues currently broadcast on British and international TV. As argued in Rossato (2015: 276), the travelogue cooking show is the perfect format to bring together cultural tradition and culinary innovation.

Notions of novelty and tradition are fundamental in the food discourse of Western societies (Warde, 1997: 57), since novelty promises excitement

⁶ Milazzo, F. (2011) “Chefspective: Giorgio Locatelli, Refettorio” *Londonist*. <http://londonist.com/2011/11/chefspective-giorgio-locatelli-refettorio> (last accessed 12 June 2020).

while tradition guarantees the comforts of the familiar and the safe. In this respect, travelogue-cooking shows are the ideal television space to go beyond one's own culinary tradition in favour of an exploration of the gastronomic traditions of different, distant cultures. British television chefs like Jamie Oliver and Gordon Ramsay tend to go culture-hopping in the kitchen to introduce innovation by exploring what may be perceived at home as cultural and culinary traditions of "exotic Others" (Heldke, 2005: 385; Rossato, 2015: 277).

Whether one is a temporary traveller on holiday from one's own culture, or a long-term transplant away from one's cultural home for the foreseeable future, the experience is common to all travel. [...] According to a prevailing view in modern Western culture, we leave the familiar in order to encounter the unusual, unfamiliar, strange, exotic Other and to reflect on how this particular Other transforms our own identities. (Heldke, 2005: 385)

5. The authentic-exotic Other

Although there is a long-standing tradition of British and American cookery writers who resorted to exotic culinary traditions to enrich their food offer at home – Elizabeth David who dealt with Mediterranean and Italian cuisine, Jane Grigson who wrote extensively on European gastronomy, Julia Child who explored French cuisine, to name just a few – the quest for "authenticity" of exotic culinary traditions is a relatively recent concern. That the authenticity of food might be difficult to trace and define, from the point of view of both consumer and producer, is argued by James (2005: 374), among others. According to her, global flows in food resources, as well as increased mobility of chefs and consumers, challenge the notion of the geographically based authenticity of food, making it difficult to pinpoint how "authentic food" is conceptualized or constructed in an age of cultural globalization and creolization (*ibid.*: 382). This in turn brings into question "the very notion of 'authentic' food traditions, raising doubts as to the validating role food might have with respect to cultural identity" (*ibid.*: 374). Cheng (2004) speculates that one of the cultural forces behind the continuous reification of authenticity and ethnic "identity politics" in the world today, at a time when distinct cultures seem to be increasingly melting into a transnational global culture, might be the anxiety suffered by previously distinct cultures about "the perceived loss of identity and subjectivity, thus requiring the

construction and maintenance of fantasmatic identities and authenticities so as to continue to be able to assert difference and superiority” (Cheng, 2003: 6). As one of the food scholars who first raised questions about which groups take responsibility for conferring “authentic” status on ethnic cuisines, Heldke (2003, 2005, [2001] 2013), argues that “there is no such thing as a cuisine untouched by ‘outside influences’” (Heldke, 2005: 388) and that purity is no virtue in a cuisine: “Lack of influence is not, in and of itself, desirable. One can unearth countless examples of the ways in which food exchanges have enriched, expanded, perhaps even improved cultures’ cuisines. Not all of these exchanges have been free and open ones, but some of them have” (Heldke, 2003: xix-xx).

In the case of the travelogue cooking shows discussed here, the hosting TV chefs live and work in-between two different culinary cultures. Their status is ambiguous with regard to the authenticity of the food they present and yet it is powerful from a migration narrative perspective (Mehta, 2009; Jagannath, 2017). The chefs are of Italian origin, but they are also UK-based restaurateurs and BBC television food celebrities. They are at the same time alien to UK culinary traditions, as they are a special type of migrant, namely white-collar ones in search of new opportunities abroad, and yet they are not completely Italian as they have long lived abroad. They can concurrently embody the observing outsider and the observed exotic insider. The three chefs with an Italian background might be perceived as more entitled to deal with the “authentic” culinary cultures they explore in their travelogues than their British counterparts. They are both cultural and culinary mediators of an exotic gastronomic tradition, since they share an Italian cultural heritage. In the perception of their intended audiences, their Italian origins might allow them greater authority with respect to the judgments and opinions they express about Italian society and Italian food and cuisine. Their Italian accents, their sometimes-inaccurate English, far from being a stigma of their outsider status, might be perceived as the ultimate evidence of their authentic “Italian culinary identity” even if they have lived in the UK for more than 50 years in the case of Contaldo and Carluccio, and around 30 years in the case of Locatelli.

6. Cultural translation: two portraits of Italy

In hosting these TV series, Locatelli, Contaldo and Carluccio serve as ambassadors for Italian cuisine abroad. These chefs interpret the Italian

culinary tradition for their intended audience, namely British and international TV viewers who are native speakers of English, and also provide details of the cultural, political and geographical dimension of the places they visit and the recipes they illustrate. Recipe adjustments are the tip of the iceberg of the cultural adaptation these chefs perform, appealing not only to specialists, but also to anyone with an interest in Italian gastronomy and, more generally, in visiting Italy. Carluccio and Contaldo's TV series is constructed as a homecoming of two expatriates who are passionate about their country of origin and enjoy visiting their home country looking back at the good old days. Locatelli and Graham Dixon's series is assembled as a cultural tour of two highbrow tourists who are keen on Italian food, art and lifestyle.

Carluccio and Contaldo seem to be more inclined to explain and simplify "culture bumps"; they facilitate their viewers' understanding of Italian cultural specificities by resorting to stereotypes and *clichés*. Locatelli paints a more modern picture of Italy, and refers to present-day values such as those of the Slow Food movement, mentioning products that are well-known Italian brands such as Ferrari cars and Alessi table and kitchenware.

In the Introduction to the book associated with the second TV series hosted by Carluccio and Contaldo, the authors explain some of the historical, political and geographical traits of Italian cuisine:

Each region of what is now Italy, north and south, has at some point in the past been dominated or influenced by other civilisations or governing powers, and so a sense of "Italian-ness" does not intrinsically exist. Instead Italians are by nature very loyal to family, to home, to friends, to locality [...] It is no wonder then that Italians (with the example of recent governments in front of them) have a profound sense of the impermanence of anything remotely political and do not easily identify national interest with their own, being instead very adaptable in changing circumstances and good at solving problems. This is what is known as *l'arte di arrangiarsi* the art of "arranging oneself" or reaching into oneself, to do the best you possibly can with what you have. (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 7-8)

In his Introduction to *Made in Italy: Food and Stories* (2006), Locatelli introduces Italian cuisine from his perspective as a northern Italian and concentrates on the most appealing aspects Italy has to offer to modern foodies and businessmen:

The way I think about food is entirely in tune with the Slow Food movement, started in Italy back in 1986 by Carlo Petrini in defiance of the opening of a McDonalds outlet in the Piazza di Spagna in Roma. Now a worldwide force, Slow Food champions local, traditional produce with real flavour; made by caring people with skill and wisdom, which is celebrated every two years - with wonderful conviviality - at the Salone del Gusto, the famous food fair in Torino. [...] Life in the North of Italy is very different from the way it is in the pretty Italy of the South - the idyllic Italy, still a little wild, that you always see in movies. The south fulfills the Mediterranean expectation, whereas the North is the real heart of Europe. Historically we have been under many influences. Spanish, French, Austrian... at home we are only around 20 kilometres from Switzerland and Milano is the most cosmopolitan city in Italy. In the North I don't know anyone who hasn't got a job and everyone comes to the north to find work - the reverse of the way it is in England. [...] In the North, we are famous for designing and making things, things that work properly. (Locatelli, 2006: 21-25)

The different TV series adopt different strategies to address their respective audiences. An older, more traditional viewer with a general interest in Italian gastronomy and on a relatively low budget, seems to be the target of *Two Greedy Italians*, whereas a more refined, cosmopolitan and wealthy spectator seems to be the addressee of *Italy Unpacked*. These are all programmes for a predominantly middle-class audience⁷, but we may infer that *Two Greedy Italians* is more appealing to a lower middle-class viewer, while *Italy Unpacked* targets an upper middle-class audience. The first TV series hosted by Contaldo and Carluccio features a series of episodes that are named after typical clichés associated with Italian people; The Family, Poor Man's food, Regional Pride, Saints and Miracles, Calabria and Bambinone, Liguria and La bella Figura, The Alps and Arrangiarsi, Lazio and Machismo. Giorgio Locatelli and Graham Dixon's first series of *Italy unpacked* explores the northern regions of Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Piedmont, which are off the usual tourist tracks.

⁷ I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers who pointed that out that the ever-changing British class system is complex to pinpoint, and identifying audiences in terms of upper-middle/lower middle class is a little too crude. Although such a simplification allows some kind of "working categorization" of TV viewers, one should not forget that the class issue is further complicated by age, education and gender factors. Where people live is also important in the case of cookery programs, as Londoners might have better chances to find ingredients for Italian dishes than people from the rest of the country.

As the introduction to the first episode of *Italy unpacked* highlights, the two hosts want to show a part of Italy that is often overlooked, presenting both its classic dishes and the hidden legacy of artists, designers and intellectuals who lived there. Emilia-Romagna is the first region both TV series explore, but while Locatelli and Dixon describe it as the birthplace of modern Italian cuisine and home to some of the most fascinating artists and powerful dynasties, the same region is described by Contaldo and Carluccio as the home of parma ham and parmesan cheese. In the first episode of season 1 of *Two Greedy Italians* the two chefs decide to:

[...] spend an enjoyable Sunday lunch with a traditional Italian family whose fortunes ferment with the balsamic vinegar in their vaults. For the daughters, weekends are dominated by the loving preparation of traditional tortellini, a symbol of their love and ties with their family.⁸

Locatelli and Dixon drive a Maserati sports car through the bustling streets of Bologna, while Carluccio and Contaldo drive an old-fashioned vintage Alfa Romeo along the narrow country lanes on the beautiful hills around Modena. In the opening scene of episode 1 of the first series, Locatelli introduces Bologna as a city that has represented quality, taste and power since the Middle Ages. Dixon explains that Bologna boasts the oldest university in the world, founded in 1088. In the episode filmed in Emilia-Romagna, Carluccio and Contaldo explain that they came to this region to see if Italian families still eat together as they used to do, and whether Italian “mamas” still teach their daughters how to cook. Carluccio also tells Contaldo that he believes Italy has two or three million starred chefs, namely Italian mothers.

From a semiotic point of view, there are some differences in the use of the music too. For example, the soundtrack of *Italy unpacked* is a mix of music from recent internationally successful Italian films such as *La Vita è Bella* (Benigni, 1997), classical Italian music and choir music, while *Two Greedy Italians* mainly uses well-known pieces of operatic music and soundtracks from classical movies such as Fellini’s *Amarcord* (Fellini, 1973) *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini, 1960) and *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972) which were either filmed in Italy or featured Italian-American characters, and contributed to shaping the stereotypical picture of Italy abroad. Music has an important narrative function within Carluccio and Contaldo’s series, as

⁸ “Two Greedy Italians: the Family”.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/programmes/b0110c5x> (last accessed 6 May 2020).

it provides an off-screen ironic, grotesque comment, a key to interpreting the most controversial scenes or simply the most challenging ones from a cultural point of view. That is the case of the scene of Contaldo teaching children how to cook a black pudding with fresh pig's blood, a scene which comes right after that of a traditional pig-slaughtering. Here the background music is Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to the film *Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto*⁹ (Petri, 1970).

7. Culinary adaptations

As mentioned above, cultural adaptation also operates at a micro-level, and includes strategies that are also typical of interlingual translation such as substitutions, omissions, expansions (or explanations) and simplifications. In line with Chiaro and Rossato's assumption that there are numerous points of convergence between translation and food adaptation (2015: 238), the chefs apply a mixture of domesticating and foreignizing strategies to their cultural and culinary translations. Carluccio and Contaldo tend to simplify Italian recipes for their prospective audience, while Locatelli seems to count on addressees who are already familiar with many Italian ingredients found in delicatessens, and most importantly, who can afford them.

One of Contaldo's recipes that includes porcini mushrooms is introduced by his suggestion for substituting the main ingredient with a more widely available, and cheaper, type of mushroom:

Porcini (ceps) and other wild fungi are much sought after in the woods and valleys of Italy's mountains. This is a simple recipe which maximises their flavour. If you can't get hold of porcini, use the large portobello mushroom that is widely available. (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 20)

Other adaptations of genuine Italian recipes by these two celebrity chefs who suggest simplifying procedures and using more popular or more cost-effective ingredients are found in the recipe for the Piedmontese *Brasato di Manzo in Vino Rosso*:

This is a typically robust Piedmontese dish which is normally cooked with Barolo wine from the area. Marinating the beef

⁹ Translated into English as *Investigation of a citizen beyond suspicion*, the film is an Italian crime drama, a black-humour satire on the corruption of a police officer.

with the vegetables, herbs and wine gives the best flavour, but if you are pressed for time, you can omit this stage. Traditionally served with steaming polenta (see page 39), this hearty winter dish is equally good with mashed potato. (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 45)

Instead of Barolo, the list of ingredients only includes a bottle of generic “red wine”. The option of substituting polenta with mashed potatoes is a culinary adaptation to cater for the taste buds of an international audience, and yet it does not lead to a complete distortion of the original recipe, as in Italy this course might be served with *purè*, which is typically made with mashed potatoes with the addition of parmesan cheese, butter and a little bit of nutmeg. Similarly, Carluccio explains that to make *Bucatini all’Amatriciana* you can substitute *guanciale* with *pancetta*. Significantly, the chef does not suggest using bacon instead, thus avoiding the approximation of replacing one cultural item with its nearest British equivalent, with the result of maintaining a sense of Italianness in the overall recipe. Genuine Italian ingredients are *guanciale* and *pancetta*, both Italian types of bacon (from pork meat) although used in different dishes and in different regional cuisines. Moreover, the chef also suggests using less expensive *pecorino* cheese rather than the more popular Parmesan. These insider tips are evidence of an effort to bridge a culinary as well as a cultural gap:

You must use *bucatino* - a large spaghetti-type pasta with a hole in the middle, which makes it easy to cook. You should also use *guanciale*, cured pig cheek, although you could substitute the less tasty *pancetta*. Use *pecorino* cheese here rather than the posher (and dearer) Parmesan. (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 142).

Many cultural equivalents and simplifications are also used in the *Two Greedy Italians* TV series. In an episode devoted to the regional cuisine of Calabria, Contaldo and Carluccio’s first destination is Tropea. While driving along the southern coastline of the region, the chefs introduce a local PGI (protected geographical indication) product, namely the Tropea onion. While munching on fresh onion and some *Provolone* cheese, they talk about the cultural value of onions in the whole peninsula, in combination with *Provolone*.¹⁰ In doing so, the chefs use generalizations

¹⁰ Although experts say *Provolone* cheese comes from the south of Italy, and the Italian audience would associate this cheese to the southern regions, nowadays it is mostly produced in the north of Italy. See: Angelo Frosio (2020) “Il Provolone:

and oversimplifications which do not necessarily correspond to reality today. Carluccio opens a conversation with an inquiry: “Do you want an onion? Do you know this is a very special onion, from Tropea, it’s a sweet onion, it’s like an apple” and Contaldo replies: “It is like being in England: Bread and butter in Italy is bread and onions, with a bit of *Provolone* cheese.”

Carluccio and Contaldo are not obsessed with the “authenticity” of the recipes they decide to include in their cookbook (a small selection from their TV programme). Maybe because they have been away from Italy for many years or because they do not feel the need to underline that they represent “authentic” Italian culinary culture, their preoccupation with the purity and genuineness of real Italian food is not particularly stressed in their language. The theme of authenticity only emerges indirectly in the introduction to some of the most traditional Italian classic dishes, like the world-famous *lasagne*. Moreover, the version the chefs include in the cookbook only appears as Carluccio’s version of the dish:

So many bad versions of lasagne can now be found in fast food restaurants and supermarkets that its reputation seems to have suffered. This is a shame because, if made properly, lasagne really is delicious comfort food at its best. This is my version of the baked pasta dish from Emilia-Romagna, made with the typical Bolognese sauce of the region as well as egg pasta. (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 141)

Conversely, Locatelli seems to pay a lot of attention to the authenticity of the recipes he illustrates. On the very first page of *Made in Italy* (2006: 21), he introduces the concepts of PGI (protected geographical indication) and PDO (protected designation of origin) products, and generally speaking, he tends to present himself as authentic Italian. In the promotional trailer of *Italy unpacked* series 1 he asserts: “The smells, the colours, that’s what food is all about. The rich flavours and classic dishes of this land are in my culinary DNA”. The episode filmed in Lombardy opens with Locatelli visiting his parents in Corgegnò for lunch. There is a very traditional dish on the menu, *polenta*. The typical maize flour food is cooked in a copper pot on an open fire, a very traditional way of cooking it, as Locatelli says: “good *polenta* has to taste of smoke”. Furthermore, the only dish Locatelli

Un formaggio da leggenda. Storia e caratteristiche”. *Ristorazione italiana magazine*. <https://www.ristorazioneitalianamagazine.it/il-provolone-formaggio/> (last accessed 30 June 2020).

cooks during this episode is *casseula*, that according to him is a winter dish epitomizing Lombard cuisine. He goes shopping at a local greengrocer's and a butcher's to find the right traditional ingredients, namely cabbage, onions, carrots and pork meat (ribs, ears, trotters, nose, tail). In his book *Made in Italy*, which is a sort of compendium of Italian modern cuisine with an eye on regional traditions, Locatelli writes extensively about Italian ingredients before naming them in his recipes. In the "Dolci" section (desserts, puddings and cakes) there are a number of "cards" where the chef describes some of the most unusual or typical Italian ingredients named in subsequent recipes in depth. Locatelli's dessert recipe "Chocolate fondant with Bicerin di Gianduiotto" for example lists "Bicerin di Gianduiotto liqueur" among the necessary ingredients, and refers back to the page where chocolate products in Italy are described, adding that this liqueur is now being sold in the UK (Locatelli, 2006: 594), although it is a very special local liqueur. A simplified version of the same dessert is included in Carluccio and Contaldo's cookbook under the title "Tortino al Cioccolato Caldo: warm mini chocolate puddings", but their version does not include Bicerin di Gianduiotto liqueur nor any other delicatessen ingredient (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 68).

Locatelli jauntily tends to use very special, local or regional, products, some of which might even not be too familiar to all Italians. That is the case of the main ingredient for the dressing of his salad: "Radicchio salad with button mushrooms and Gorgonzola dressing" where he appears to be addressing northern Italian readers rather than a UK readership.

In Lombardia, we call Gorgonzola *erborinato*, after the parsley green colour of the mould. (...) In the restaurant, we use ninety-day-old Gorgonzola, which is harder and saltier (*piccante*), instead of the young creamy one (*dolce*), but you could use either. (Locatelli, 2006: 61)

The fact that Locatelli suggests that his readers can use either variety of cheese presupposes that his international target audience can easily recognize the difference between the two and can find both types of cheese outside of Italy with equal ease.

8. Narrative themes of migrant life stories

Drawing on some ideas borrowed from sociological research (Cavallaro, 2009), I analyzed some of the lexical and discursive patterns relating to the

experience of migration, namely: ideas about a beautiful homeland, childhood memories related to food, and the prospect of redemption through migration.

The rhetoric of the rediscovery of one's own homeland is present in all the chefs' accounts of their journey to Italy, but while Carluccio and Contaldo's recollections are steeped in a feeling of nostalgia, maybe because of their seniority, Locatelli's depiction of Italy, and of Lombardy in particular, is more future-oriented as we can infer from the following extracts: "We are going back to the world that gave us our passion for food. The world that made us hungry... for Italy" (*Two Greedy Italians ... still hungry*, BBC, 2012), "Italy may have changed in many ways since we were boys (a long time ago) but at heart she is still our much loved *bella Italia*" (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 9). The episode of *Italy unpacked* that is more concerned with Locatelli's Italian roots is the one filmed in Lombardy, where Locatelli and Graham Dixon visit some architectural highlights scattered around the main cities. Locatelli introduces one of the most stunning 19th century industrial artefacts:

Built in 1889, the S. Michele Bridge was much admired across Europe for its elegant design and cutting-edge technology. It is simple, beautiful and most importantly functioning. This is what Lombardy is all about: looking towards the future. They built it in two years. They fit well, definitely in Europe! These guys were there with everybody else, with the industrial revolution, and building and going forward. (*Italy unpacked*, BBC, 2011).

In pronouncing these words, Locatelli becomes very emotional about his Italian origins and his voice starts trembling, so the message that comes across is that Locatelli is also talking about himself and about his motivations for leaving Italy to go and live in the UK. He too wanted to be part of Europe, move forward and look towards the future.

In the promotional trailer to the episode on Calabria's regional cuisine of *Two Greedy Italians... still hungry*, an episode that is devoted to Contaldo's region of origin and to children's food, and hence particularly focused on childhood memories, Carluccio and Contaldo announce:

Returning to the South brings us back to childhood, and what childhood we had. But what is life for children who grow up in southern Italy now? And do they enjoy the simple pleasures we did when we were young? We are on a voyage of discovery, but with Gennaro on board the old things could all turn out to be a

disaster. But don't worry. It will be fantastic just as long as there is plenty of food to eat. (BBC, 2012)

To the theme of “*Libiamo ne' lieti calici*” from *La Traviata*, the trailer showcases the two chefs picking figs, persimmons and tangerines, picking wild mushrooms in the woods, running after waves on the shoreline, and kneading pizza dough with Italian children. For their visit to Calabria, that they describe as “the most unindustrialized region of Italy”, the two chefs choose Contaldo's old-fashioned family car as a means of transportation, a *Topolino*.¹¹ As proof that their trip to Italy is also to be read as an expatriates' homecoming, a picture of Contaldo's father driving a *Topolino* is shown in the very first scene of the episode while Contaldo wistfully recollects his childhood: “I first drove a *Topolino* sitting on my papa's knees”. Later on, speaking of his mother's ambivalent feelings during the pig-slaughtering “feast”, Contaldo is visibly moved. In the same episode, Carluccio also adds some of his childhood memories: “Being in a stranger's garden picking ripe persimmons reminds me that as a child, the countryside was our switch-off. Then and now food was exciting. It was stolen treasure.” Acoustically complemented by “ahh” and “mmm” enjoyment sounds, happy memories related to food flavours and childhood experiences are cited in connection with food abundance in a general context of poverty and food scarcity, as in the following examples: “Do you know what we used to do with this? [a ripe persimmon] Grabbed a nice bit of fresh bread, especially if it was bread from the bakery. You took a ripe one, you rubbed it on top and squeezed it like a tomato. That used to be jam on toast or on bread ahhh! This is what we used to call the poor man's jam”.

In the episode of *Italy Unpacked* series 1 devoted to the part of Italy where Locatelli grew up, Lombardy is described as the “motor of the country” that “drives the Old Country”. Along with Locatelli uncovering the “Lombard food of his youth”, Graham Dixon presents the “hidden legacy of artists, designers and intellectuals” who produced some of the most “ingenious art pieces” and “thrilling design” objects which have contributed to make the “Made in Italy” famous around the world. Locatelli places the area where he was born, both geographically and culturally, at the heart of Europe: “Bordering Switzerland, we are closer here to Zurich than Rome” and “Lombardy often has more in common with northern Europe than with the Mediterranean South. Progressive,

¹¹ The Fiat 500, commonly known as “*Topolino*”, was an Italian car produced in Italy from 1936 to 1955.

pragmatic, unlike the laid-back southerners the Lombard likes to get things moving.”

All the chefs mention the smell of food as part of their happy childhood memories and they refer as well to the fulfilling experience of early experiments in the kitchen with their mothers and grandmothers. Carluccio and Contaldo look back with nostalgia on their young adulthood when homecoming also meant running to their mothers’ kitchen: “We both like to be seen as macho, but have to admit that we were only too happy to run to the safe haven of our mother’s home even as young adults.” (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 9). While cooking a traditional *cassunla* for his TV series co-host Graham Dixon, Locatelli says: “This is the smell that I used to smell as I came home from school. Since I got to the gate of the house I knew that my grandmother was cooking this because you can smell it from outside” (BBC, 2011). In his cookbook, he mentions his grandmother many times in connection with food and life’s turning points: “My first feelings for cooking came from my grandmother, Vincenzina.” (Locatelli, 2006: 24). Locatelli names his grandmother also in relation to his redemption story that is linked both to his experience of migration and to his becoming a celebrity chef abroad. He first gained his cooking experience at his uncle’s restaurant, but it was at the age of 16 that he got a real job as commis chef. Recollecting those times, Locatelli says that he used to be “picked on” all the time. The head chef once even yelled at him: “You will never be a chef Locatelli, you are an idiot”. Locatelli admits he couldn’t forget those words: “I went home and my grandmother was waiting. ‘What does he know?’ she said. ‘Who is he?’ ‘He is the chef!’ I told her: I would have run away, but as always my grandmother put everything into perspective, and she told me I had to go back and show him. So I went back. And I did show him.” (Locatelli, 2006: 23).

9. Identity issues

That food serves as a marker of cultural identity has long been discussed by anthropologists and food scholars (Lévi-Strauss, 1962), yet as recent work on food systems has noted, historically there has been a constant interchange between cultures in relation to food consumption, which was recently accelerated by trade, travel, transport and technology (James, 2005: 374). James argues that today’s globalization of food is not just a matter of the movement of foodstuffs between nations, nor is it simply

the amalgamation or accommodation of different cuisines; it is a complex interplay of meanings and intentions (*ibid.*: 383). In the presentation of *Two Greedy Italians Eat Italy* the theme of the “homecoming” with its sense of dreamy nostalgia and homesickness is very significant, yet the two chefs tend to distance themselves from their fellow countrymen, as if they were not part of the same cultural and ethnic group:

We have been back to our beloved Italy, and indeed how beautiful it is - almost completely surrounded by sea, with its spectacular mountain ranges, valleys, lakes, rivers plains and forests. How proud both of us feel to come from such a magnificent country! But, yes, then there are the Italians” (Carluccio and Contaldo, 2012: 6)

What is noticeable is that the hosts of *Two Greedy Italians* never use the first person plural pronouns “we” or “us” to refer to the Italians and tend to describe them as a third party, an object of study. They neither identify with the Italians in Italy, nor do they describe themselves as part of the British-Italian community in the UK, which they do not even mention. They often refer to their past in Italy in a nostalgic way, but they also distance themselves as expatriates who do not know how Italians really live in today’s Italy.

Locatelli is even more ambiguous as he describes himself as a product of Italy, namely “Made *of* Italy”, and uses alternatively the pronouns “we” and “us” in conjunction with his belonging to Italian or UK inhabitants:

Convivialità [...] is the word I use most to explain the way Italians feel about food. For us the sign of welcome is to feed people. [...] In the UK it is easy to blame supermarkets for clocking up air miles, for persuading us that we want fruit and vegetables that look perfect, but often have little flavour; for luring us on to diets of things that are salty, fatty, sugary and easy to eat; for packaging everything into convenient parcels so that we almost forget where our food comes from; and conditioning us to think that as long as our food is cheap, we are satisfied. But we have responsibilities too, and we have the power to change things. (Locatelli, 2006: 21; our underlining)

Locatelli alternatively identifies with the Italians at home and with the British in the UK. He proudly announces that the first *autostrada* (motorway) in Europe was Italian, not British or German, but he also refers to the London cosmopolitan food scene as if it was his own city:

“we have very different types of cuisine of the highest level compared to other European capitals...they must envy us!”.

10. Conclusions

Through the analysis of some extracts from TV cookery programs hosted by Antonio Carluccio, Gennaro Contaldo and Giorgio Locatelli, three Italian chefs who migrated to the UK and experienced success in the food, publishing and television industries abroad, I suggest that these three chefs engage in cultural translation not only of Italian culinary traditions but also of the cultural, historical and political aspects of broader Italian society. Culture-specific contents of Italian food and cultural tradition have been retained, explained or adapted through different adjustment techniques which resemble those of interlingual translations in their TV cookery series as well as in cookbooks in order to appeal to UK and international recipients, who do not share either the cultural or the gastronomic background of the chefs' country of origin. I have argued that the TV series under analysis portray two different pictures of Italy: a more idealized, stereotyped one, still linked to family and traditions in the case of Carluccio and Contaldo's series; a more pragmatic, modern and forward looking one in the case of Locatelli's. In particular, I have explored the difference between two diverse types of migration projects, and how these differences are reflected in the words and in the approaches of the TV series hosted by the three chefs, also in connection to their age and the time when they migrated. I argued that in the case of Carluccio and Contaldo, their migration project started as a job opportunity abroad and turned out to be a permanent migration project. The way the episodes are constructed, the way the chefs look back nostalgically at Italy, and at their childhood experiences in the Old Country, is more in line with the findings of Cavallaro (2009) about Calabrian migrants to the UK in the 1970s. As for Locatelli, although some discourse patterns within his TV series are reminiscent of Cavallaro's lexical and thematic clusters, the words of the younger chef often reveal that his project reflects a more recent phase of Italian migration to the UK, starting in the 1980s and continuing well into the new millennium. The chef sees himself as part of an international, broad-minded elite of professionals and intellectuals, with strong roots in their country of origin, who have decided to work in a cosmopolitan environment like London because of the opportunities it offers to

ambitious professionals, which is more in line with the findings of Scotto (2012) and King *et al.* (2014).

The paper also suggests that the sense of identity that emerges from the chefs' accounts links them ambiguously both to an Italian community at home and to a British community in the UK where they have lived for many years and have achieved success. This confirms that food is not a clear-cut marker of cultural identity in a creolized and globalized society (Cheng, 2004; James, 2005) like that of the contemporary West to which these three chefs belong.

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Television series and Filmography

Italy Unpacked (BBC, UK 2011-)

[*Two Greedy Italians*](#) (BBC, UK 2011)

Two Greedy Italians: still hungry (BBC, UK, 2012)

Amarcord (Fellini, 1973, Italy)

The Godfather (Coppola, 1972, USA)

Indagine su un cittadino al di sopra di ogni sospetto (Petri, Italy, 1970).

The mediation of subtitling in the narrative construction of migrant and/or marginalized stories

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Abstract

Media products, cultures and the arts have recently been transformed by migration, and these cultural and aesthetic transformations have contributed to re-shaping identities, ethnicities, distant societies, and minority groups. The growing interest in migratory aesthetics has brought into representation marginalized subjectivities in ways that depart from migrant depictions in the conventional media (e.g., the news bulletins) and the oversimplified and manipulated stories of marginalization in networked mainstream platforms. Against the backdrop of narrative theory and accessibility as a new terrain of human rights practice, this study examines the subtitling activity of what I identify as “emergency cinema”, according to the perspective of the Abounaddara collective spread across the web. As audiovisual products are easily uploaded, posted, and screened on the Internet, subtitles have acquired the role of activist spaces, frames of re-narration, and self-translation, where marginalized stories are mediated and hegemonic practices contested. By focusing this scrutiny on the sphere of the aesthetics of migration for the purpose of dissemination of marginalized identities, namely, within a selected corpus of subtitles produced for the Abounaddara short films and The Mirror Project video interviews, subtitling is viewed as an instrument that stimulates the mediation of narratives of resistance and conflict recounted against the normative background of subtitles in English Lingua Franca (ELF).

Keywords: activist subtitles; counter narrative; emergency cinema; ELF; accessibility

1. Introduction

This study falls within the context of media activism coupled with the visual arts, understood as the result of disseminated computer-mediated artistic works that actively intervene in public and private areas through narrative productions that make use of audiovisual translation (AVT) in

English. Attention is paid specifically to two distinct groups of aesthetic digital series: (i) the Abounaddara film series (2011-17), belonging to the Abounaddara collective (Abounaddara meaning “the man with glasses”¹, the group of filmmakers who first introduced the concept of “emergency cinema”²), released both with English and French subtitles, and (ii) the short video interviews produced by the German artist Kevin McElvaney under the title *The Mirror Project* (2016-17), which only contains English subtitles. These products have been disseminated through the Vimeo and YouTube platforms, and have given voice to the lives of Syrian and Iraqi-Kurdish communities with the purpose of narrating what these people have gone through, and of providing “a glimpse behind the Western world’s often one-sided perspective” (McElvaney, 2017a). Drawing on Baker’s (2005; 2006) narrative theory relating to translation and interpreting studies, the Arab and Iraqi-Kurdish artistic products are conceived as audiovisual narratives or stories aimed at informing and denouncing, all through the use of English subtitles, chiefly perceived as ELF subtitles (i.e., this concerns the fact that English is used as the means of communication among people from different first language backgrounds across linguacultural boundaries, and as the international language). In this sense, subtitles occupy a strategic and functional role as narrative devices that contribute to the international diffusion of marginalized stories involving exiled people, migrants or citizens who risk their lives every day in their countries of origin. In these stories subtitling is an integral part of the filmic productions, and is normally carried out by non-professional translators-as-activists who participate in the projects. Narrative theory (Bruner 1991; Somers and Gibson, 1994; Somers, 1997) is used as a methodological approach to shed light upon the narrative

¹ This expression is “a reference to nicknaming people according to their professions and the items associated with them in everyday Arabic culture. It is also a reference to documentary cinema and one of its early pioneers, the Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov (1896-1954), who called himself “the man with a movie camera” and inspired a filmmaker collective, the Dziga Vertov Group, in the 1960s, which in ways similar to ABOUNADDARA set out to combine art and political activism” (Mejcher-Atassi, 2014).

² This genre is explicitly compared with “emergency medicine”, implying that artist activists must intervene quickly to save the image of their society (Lange, 2016). The “emergency” content is overtly connected with the medical field, since priority is given to concerns requiring immediate cures, and to the total rejection of human spectacularisation (Jurich, 2019).

elements that dominate the Arab and Iraqi-Kurdish stories, framed within the space of English subtitles. Nevertheless, the focus on subtitles is not meant to provide a contrastive analysis of language pairs, nor to evaluate to what extent target texts can be considered as deviances from, or alterations of, the originals. Instead, the aim is to appraise how subtitles shape English counter-narratives.

Subtitling in English becomes a meaning-making process involving collaboration between translating and filmmaking practices, where subtitles are meaningful constituents, central to the spread of “emergency cinema” on a global scale. Viewed in terms of translation as “re-narration”, where re-narration implies the construction rather than the representation of the “events and characters it re-narrates in another language” (Baker, 2014: 159), the English subtitles are often produced in non-standard English, encompassing ELF interactions among non-native speakers of English. Unlike discourse studies, the most important methodological characteristic of the narrative approach is the focus on narratives as the units of analysis; that is, a narrative is “a concrete story of some aspects of the world, complete with characters, settings, outcomes or projected outcomes, and plot” (*ibid.*: 159). Light is shed upon the creation and circulation of personal and institutional narratives to construct the world, and upon the role of ELF subtitles in the process of their dissemination.

Narrative theory is specifically applied to two narratives selected from two different web series, namely, *The Woman in Pants* (2013), one of the Abounaddara collective’s short films, and the video interview “Munifa Kret” (2017), one of the 12 video interviews contained in *The Mirror Project*. Against the backdrop of enclosed spaces, the interview model is the discursive narrative modality through which the two activist female characters, Suad Nofal, the protagonist in *The Woman in Pants*, and Munifa Kret, describe everyday contexts of marginalization through first- and third-person singular voices – sometimes also by using the first- and third-person plural pronouns, “we” and “they”, which imply closeness and distance respectively. The two audiovisual narratives have been selected because they foreground female perspectives in the Syrian voice of *The Woman in Pants*, and in the Kurdish Yazidi voice of Munifa Kret. Both female citizens are emancipated and educated women who fight for freedom and their rights against the Islamic State (IS)³.

³ In the artistic products examined, the two female characters, Suad and Munifa, speak two different vernaculars: the Syrian dialect is the language spoken by the protagonist in *The Woman in Pants*, whereas the northern dialect of the Kurdish

I argue that the subtitled versions⁴ of these short films disclose subject-specific narratives in English as counter-discourse, which is globally understood, read, and interpreted via superimposed subtitles. These narrative resources unlock unheard stories of lives and truths which are typically neglected or overturned in media coverage. I also maintain that web activist subtitles give voice to narrative discourses that share similar structures and contents, since activist participants, both citizens as actors and filmmakers, cohabit within a collaborative dimension⁵, as will be demonstrated in *The Woman in Pants* and “Munifa Kret”.

2. Activism and fansubbing through ELF

Within the realm of AVT, research on activism has begun receiving great attention, even though only a limited number of articles (Pérez-González, 2010; Buser and Arthurs, 2013; Díaz Cintas, 2018), encyclopedia entries (Baker, 2019) and dedicated books (Baker and Blaagaard, 2016; Pickard and Young, 2017; Rizzo and Seago, 2018) bear witness to the function of translation promoted by activists, translator activists, and online communities in the struggle for information transparency, recognition, and collective identities. A significant contribution to the scrutiny of activism translation has been carried out by translation studies scholars (Tymoczko, 2006; Boéri and Maier, 2007). Nevertheless, an increased number of works focusing on activism and participation through and within translation refer specifically to AVT. In particular, the field of non-professional translation, also known as amateur translation, has gradually developed and reinforced activism-related issues through the application of translation procedures to digital aesthetic products such as

languages, Kurmanji, also known as Northern Kurdish, is the dialect spoken in the Iraqi Kurdistan, where Munifa is from. This implies that the use of subtitles is also useful to some Arab viewers, who may not be familiar with the dialects used by the female characters.

⁴ All subtitles have been faithfully transcribed as they appear in the videos.

⁵ Collaboration also includes the world of subtitlers as active participants in the selection and transmission of messages transferred in narratives that “*construct*” human existences through the re-narration in another language (Baker, 2014: 159). Seen as embedded within a ‘revolutionary’ framework powered by digital devices and English subtitling for a global spread, the artistic digital narratives under scrutiny can potentially unsettle social order, resist mainstream narratives, and propose new accounts of the world (Jiménez-Crespo, 2017).

documentaries, videos, short films, and the like. Aesthetic products and their subtitled versions in English, as counter narratives to mainstream stories, have been acting as political interventions, in which importance is given to language and translingual practices as tools to disseminate globally unheard or oversimplified stories about marginalized peoples. Against this backdrop, subtitling has become the space of narrative negotiation in English, which is the product of meaning-making processes resulting in the choice of what type of content artists aim to prioritize in their narrative spaces.

This affects in particular the digital dissemination of films, documentaries, and videos produced within the context of Arab countries, where audiovisual products act politically using English as a pivot language across networked spaces. English has made the language of cinema universally accessible across networked platforms thanks to its being recognized as the language of communication and, consequently, has been involved in the translation of dialogues, monologues, in-vision and display captions from Arabic, its related dialectal variants, and minority languages.

Within this setting, the practice of subtitling in English has come to occupy the “centre stage of the digital world” (Díaz Cintas, 2018: 127). Subtitling activities have been imbued with social significance, while exploiting “the opportunities offered by the affordabilities and democratization of technology”, and contributing to reinforcing “the pursuit of individual freedom and the breakdown of hegemony”. Thus, in addition to their commercial utility, subtitles have become a means by which collectives and activists can benefit in terms of both “recreational purposes” and aid in “advancing campaigns of cultural and political resistance against the establishment and in favour of militant causes” (*ibid.*: 129). In line with the belief that the incorporation of English interlingual subtitles within web artistic products in non-European languages has to be recognized as a fundamental practice for entering the global world, I argue that the role of English is even more crucial when it is used to spread what has been identified as “emergency cinema”, a term used by an anonymous collective of Syrian self-taught filmmakers (Abounaddara 2015), whose nature is explained further on in this study. In this context, AVT has turned into an instrument that not only gives voice to social fragmentation and diversification in the language of the coloniser, but also challenges the traditional understanding of national identities, and is thus instrumental in bringing towards the centre what has normally occupied peripheral positions. In the production of emergency cinema, subtitling is

a fundamental component in meaning-making processes, an essential device for transferring information across languages, where English has been recognized as the lingua franca.

As abundantly shown in scholarly research, “an important part of media activism in the contemporary world happens in the networked spaces of digital media” (Yang, 2017: 62), where activism expressed in non-westernized languages is potentially dependent upon the centrality of narratives in which translation becomes a form of mediation. As a mediator, the translator of Arab films and videos into English must possess competencies in both the SL and TL, including a certain degree of familiarity with a generalized and universal approach to English as a language crossing a multitude of countries and communities. In a nutshell, the Syrian and Kurdish narratives are constructed within aesthetic spaces, and through the voice of English subtitles that are expected to be very close to the source cultures, since this is the scope of amateur translation. In fact, the act of mediating social interactions, and cultural and political encounters, configures online translation activism as a “doubly mediated form of activism” (Yang, 2017: 62), where translators share non-hierarchical spaces of community participation (Baker, 2016), in which subtitling becomes “a site of interventionist practice” (Pérez-González, 2014: 58).

In the Abounaddara short films and in McElvaney’s video interviews, translation seems to be conceptually and cognitively part of the filmmaking and interviewing processes, in line with the concept of accessible filmmaking, which does not involve, in this specific context, “the integration of audiovisual translation and accessibility” as effectively taking place during “the filmmaking process” (Romero-Fresco, 2017). Instead, translation in the form of subtitling is recognized as an essential and fundamental practice for the diffusion of niche films and videos, whose original languages are usually unknown to the target users. In brief, AVT and accessibility in the audiovisual products under scrutiny are not integrated during the filmmaking process, but thought of *ex post* by the non-professional translators and creative team involved in the projects. Their mission is to reflect upon the modalities and strategies for the dissemination of contents by means of subtitling. Thus, the production of English subtitles in this context commonly entails a collaborative system that involves scriptwriters, filmmakers, ordinary citizens, and translators, where translation is endowed with subjective aesthetic preferences relating to the filmmakers’ choices, and where narrative functions refer to the spread of cultural contents on a global scale. On a technical level, these

subtitles are the result of non-professional subtitling activities (e.g., in “Munifa Kret”, only one-liners are used, typos are recurrent, and spotting is frequently lousy). They are not integrated at either the pre- or the post-production stages, but are used to globally disseminate common topics such as resistance, forced exile, and social and gender marginalization.

3. Cybersubtitles and the dominance of English: tools of accessibility

As Díaz Cintas (2018: 132) has pointed out, the spread of the web 2.0 has encouraged the users’ production and distribution of their materials with the purpose of achieving visibility through amateur subtitling. In Díaz Cintas’s classification of subtitles in cyberspace, “volunteer subtitle” seems to be “a fit candidate to be used as an umbrella term to refer to this reality”, although the term “crowds subtitles” also exists to refer to subtitles commissioned by private platforms.

Since the interaction between subtitlers and viewers has grown and become more dynamic in the various mediascapes, “cybersubtitling”⁶ is a most appropriate expression to refer to the massive presence of subtitles occurring “via decentralized communication modes on the internet, semi-direct or direct interaction between translators and viewers” (*ibid.*: 140). The English subtitles that translate the Syrian and Kurdish narratives examined here are spaces of re-narration, acts of interventionism and resistance, and can be ideologically identified with the “guerrilla subtitles” type, sometimes also referred to as “activist subtitles” (*ibid.*). Thus, the translation of emergency cinema is an act of political significance of its own, a creative transposition of the filmic content into ELF as the dominant language, often taking the form of subversive counter information available on the Internet, where subtitles are transformed into active spaces for marginalized social groups to circulate counter discourses in contrast with hegemonic practices (*ibid.*). Emergency cinema becomes a practice of accessibility of niche contents by the implementation of online

⁶ “Cybersubtitles”, which can be generated on a voluntary basis either by amateurs or professionals, include three main types of subtitles (Díaz Cintas, 2018: 132), namely, “fansubs”, “guerrilla subtitles”, and “altruist subtitles”. They can also be classified as “genuine” or “fake” subtitles. “Guerrilla subtitles” are identifiable as those produced by “individuals or collectives highly engaged in political causes” (*ibid.*: 134), with the objective of spreading counter narratives that challenge the truth reported in mainstream contexts (Sinha, 2004).

translation practices whereby English subtitles function as concrete political devices. These subtitles make emergency documentary films and videos accessible by actively maximising knowledge diffusion and the inclusivity of information, thus establishing themselves in a new terrain of human rights practice (Greco, 2018) as depositaries of counter information which complement images of authentic narrative sequences of life experiences in a state of emergency.

The subtitles under scrutiny, which make Arabic and Kurmanji networked film series accessible to speakers of English, involve processes of either direct interlingual translations or the translation of translations via the use of a pivot language⁷.

On the basis of what has been said, the spread of Arabic multimodal web aesthetics relies on the participative function of English guerrilla subtitles as tools of accessibility and inclusion. This phenomenon conceptually integrates AVT and accessibility services into filmmaking processes, while instrumentally fostering the collaboration between filmmakers, translators, and citizens. The role of the analysed subtitles is thus twofold: identifying the specific linguacultural source domain, and transferring narratives and their hidden truths. Besides, these subtitles introduce types of “narratives in and of translation” (Baker 2005: 4), which, while rendering unknown contents in English, attempt to reduce cultural misunderstanding, thus sensitizing viewers to cultural differences. In this sense, narratives in translation through subtitles are forms of social practices, where knowledge and information are instrumental in mediating conflict and deconstructing stereotypes against marginalized, often exiled, communities.

4. Data: general features

The corpus consists of stories embedded in socio-political realities in Syria and Kurdistan. These are told from newish perspectives by people who are personally experiencing them, where ordinary citizens are interviewed on all sides of the conflict, children are filmed in the streets in silent scenes, clearly attacking local TV news broadcasts. The short films and

⁷ In emergency cinema, subtitles in English can also coexist with subtitles in a third target language, for example, Italian. This can be seen as an attempt to minimize the role of English as the most widespread instrument of communication, as well as to empower non-dominant languages which are otherwise considerably disadvantaged.

video interviews share common features, among which are the presence of English subtitles, ordinary citizens as actors, and close-ups of people looking straight at the audience, with no background at all or with very little context. In both networked artistic series, close, long, static shots are employed, involving wordless scenes of daily life and multi-part confessional interviews, which call into question the role of the artist in the face of unfolding socio-political events. Both aesthetic products seek to give their regions and people not only a voice, but many voices, an approach that seeks to counteract the idea of the Arab world as a cohesive entity, and aims to capture images and words that make the heterogeneity of the Syrian and Kurdish realities and identities more easily comprehensible, despite their complexity. In both cases, the subtitles have been incorporated in the post-production stage, and this is evident in the videos themselves.

In the two audiovisual narratives, both female citizens ask for respect for human dignity and overtly proclaim their positions in their respective places of origin, where women are persecuted and offended by IS. The protagonist of *The Woman in Pants* is a Syrian activist who used to work as a teacher before being deprived of her job, whereas Munifa is a student who, after witnessing the kidnapping of women, girls, and children, has become a Peshmerga fighter against IS. Personal experiences, inner conflicts, and cultural aspects of Syrian and Kurdish existences are recurrent topics in these video collections. Moreover, both narrative frameworks are embedded within similar linguistic structures. The topic of one's own profession becomes crucial, as well as the question of one's own mission in life, as shown in the clauses reported in the following English subtitles: "I am a teacher", "I demonstrate" (*The Woman in Pants*, henceforth, *TWiP*), and "I am a student", "I became a Peshmerga fighter" ("Munifa Kret", henceforth, "MK").

The Mirror Project is an interview-based collection of twelve videos, where the interviewer is never visible, and his voice is audible only through questions that appear encapsulated on screen within unusual subtitles (if compared with commercial ones). In all twelve videos, the font, upper case letters, and background do not follow the standard norms in subtitling. These videos are the combination of the experiences of McElvaney as filmmaker, the citizens as actors, and of a number of people who helped bring the project to life, where translation occupies a central role considering that three dialectal varieties are spoken in Iraqi

Kurdistan⁸. The interviews, which are numbered, and where each speaker has a name for identification, took place in a room where the interviewee was alone, “in front of a two-way mirror hiding the camera” (McElvaney, 2017a). The episodes, as the artist calls them, do not aim to provide alternative truths, but, rather, unique stories where people are neither victims nor heroes, but simply struggle for freedom and strive for dignity.

The stories are all preceded by background information about each storyteller taking part in the project. The narratives include two sections: the introduction, and the interview proper. In particular, the video interview of “MK” is preceded by narrative details that introduce the female protagonist as a member of the “Sun Ladies Battalion”, the first female Peshmerga unit formed by Yazidi women, as shown in Figure 1.

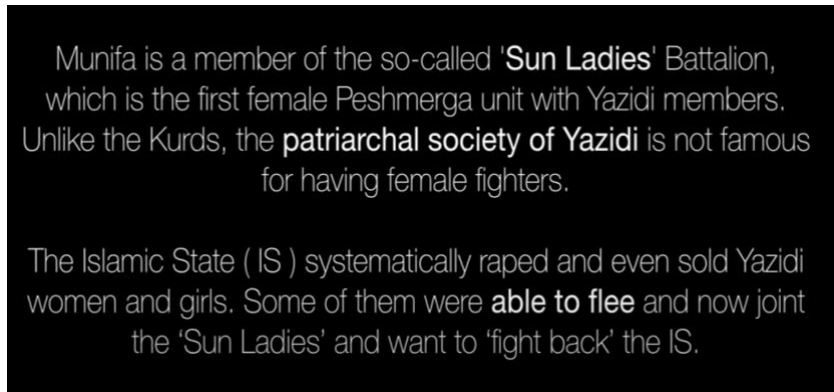


Figure 1. Textual visual section in the “Introduction” to the “Munifa Kret” video interview in *The Mirror Project*

⁸ The presence of subtitles in *The Mirror Project* is the result of acts of interpreting that took place when the filmmaker was in Kurdistan thanks to local people and a translator who accompanied the artist for the realisation of his project. The act of fixing the subtitles on screen was a process accomplished by non-professional translators once the production crew had returned to Germany. Patterns of interaction and constructive relationships occurred through exchanges involving translators-interpreters, local people helping in translation, the filmmaker, and his creative team as a human network of solidarity. In the project’s web section, “Who worked on this project?”, McElvaney refers to two phases of translation: acts of interpreting in Kurdistan, on the one hand, and subtitling procedures in Germany, on the other (McElvaney, 2017a).

The textual visual section offers an initial political contextualization of the setting by providing cultural and historical information within superimposed in-vision texts at the opening, where key nominal and verbal phrases scroll on the screen highlighted in white. “MK” is the story included in interview #9, where attention is paid to the fact that being a “Peshmerga” is important to Munifa, even though the girl has “also doubts”. In the interview section, Munifa is sitting on a chair wearing a military uniform. The context of the room is somehow blurred, and her storytelling goes backward and forward in terms of space and time.

The background context in *TWiP* is more complex. We see a woman wearing a headscarf and jeans (as shown in Figure 2), sitting in an oversized chair in a room with a hand-written banner beside her, whose content is never translated but appears in Arabic lettering as proof of authenticity (as shown on the lower right side in Figure 2).



Figure 2. Suad and the hand-written banner in *The Woman in Pants*

The scarf and pair of jeans, the apartment, and the poster she uses as the symbol of a one-woman protest against the IS members occupying her city are all narrative elements of “selective appropriation”, to use Somers and Gibson’s terminology in narrative theory (1994). The internal context sharply contrasts with the external setting of conflict evoked by the woman’s storytelling. This shifts the listener temporally and spatially from the internal domestic environment to external spaces, where actions and facts have taken place in a non-distant past in churches and streets, and

where the woman in pants has demonstrated to persuade people to change their minds about the militant Islamic fundamentalist group, active particularly in Syria and Iraq. Suad accounts for prejudices and stereotypes by remarking that it is not the protesting that rankles the IS members as much as the fact that she is wearing jeans, which becomes one essential topic in her narrative, allowing her to ironize while providing examples of gender discrimination.

5. A narrative-theory based analysis

Narratives “constitute crucial means of generating, sustaining, mediating, and representing conflict at all levels of social organization” (Briggs, 1996: 3). Conflict is the driving force of these narratives known as narratives of marginalization. Somers (1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994) distinguish four types of narratives: ontological⁹, public, conceptual, and meta narratives. In this study, the focus is on ontological narratives and their relationship with collective or shared narratives, which differ from public narratives, since they are somehow outside the canons and norms of a specific model, and can be adapted to any narrative that has “currency in a given community” (Baker, 2006: 33).

In these stories, scrutiny is focused on the narrative strategies employed in the English subtitles. In order to decipher how these narratives are constructed and function within the space of activist translation, the use of narrative theory in translation studies and its set of categories based on the works of Somers (1997) and Somers and Gibson (1994) has been central to the analysis. Narrative theory is centred upon taxonomical classifications that include selective appropriation, temporality, relationality, and causal employment, and a further set which draws upon Bruner’s work (1991), where the features of particularity, genericness, normativeness, and narrative accrual are also incorporated. Selective appropriation is the first element to be considered, since it tells readers about the narrative location of each storytelling. It involves decisions related to the inclusion or exclusion of certain settings, and to the minimization or maximization of narrative elements (e.g., details relating to events, character identification, and contextual frameworks).

⁹ *TWiP* and “MK” are ontological narratives since they are focused on the self, although they are also interpersonal and social in nature, that is, the person who tells the story is situated in the immediate world and is a “located self” (Baker, 2006: 28).

In the English subtitles¹⁰ in *TWiP*, a story is told from the perspective of a Syrian woman who does not hide her feelings and reactions against the Islamic State and the foreigners who support it. At the same time, she is the voice of Syrian resistance and testifies to what extent the Syrians suffer as victims of IS. The woman is courageous, clever, and projects an image of Syrian women as having strong character, in contrast to the image usually disseminated in mainstream media. She provides the viewer with a detailed description of her activism (i.e., being a woman, an activist woman, wearing the veil and a pair of jeans, demonstrating against IS, encouraging them not to use masks because they scare the population, giving people freedom to dress as they wish). In terms of selective appropriation, the protagonist of *TWiP* includes in her narrative important figures of Arab culture (e.g., she refers to the presence of sheikhs and explains who they are and what they are expected to be) and, in less than 5 minutes, she provides information on a wide range of issues from the critical perspective of an ordinary educated Syrian woman. Cultural contents are selected twice: first, the Syrian woman, Suad, decides what she wants to select and transmit to her audience, and then, the public receives the impact of the translator's choices. In the transfer from the Syrian and Kurmanji dialects to English, we may presume that the translator would have had to select some details from the foreign language varieties and disregarded others. Unless the target viewers have adequate competence in Arabic (i.e., the Syrian dialect), the audience's acceptance of meanings is based upon a trustful relationship towards voluntary non-professional translators. This procedure involves the interpretation of contents via English as a form of mediation from a lingua franca (Gambier, 2003), where the transmission of the Syrian and Kurdish stories via ELF can be viewed as the most productive means of inclusion for cultural frameworks from peripheral cultures (Pięta, 2019).

The subtitled narratives in *TWiP* unfold through simple clauses that are usually constructed through the use of Subject + Simple Present or Present Continuous formulations (in most cases, the protagonist uses first- and third-person singular and plural narrative voices: "I", "a girl", "my clothes") in order to place the actions and events in the present time, and to focus the attention on the character and on her ordinary life (i.e., religion, education and the professional world, politics, and female roles in Arab societies). On other occasions, Suad's narratives are formulated

¹⁰ The use of italics in the quoted subtitles has the purpose of signalling off-screen voices or thoughts, and direct speeches.

through the use of existential processes, empty subjects, and third-person plural narrative voices (“They”), which are employed to project the protagonist’s subjectivity (and, implicitly, to express the Syrians’ feelings) through unmarked patterns of detachment (i.e., “They think if someone claims their opposition [...]”; “there aren’t more people like me”). Suad’s concept of religion emerges in pieces of stories encapsulated in sentences such as “I usually go during the afternoon prayer time”; “They can’t imagine that I’m wearing pants”; “My clothes don’t fit with my religion”, which demonstrate that Suad’s faith is not based upon the passive respect of rigid norms, but rather upon the selective appropriation of religious rules according to her own interpretation (e.g., she is religious but she wears pants).

Suad informs her audience about issues concerning politics by shedding light upon the conditions of a woman who wants to be an activist in her country. She introduces politics from her female viewpoint, and shows what happens to a woman when coping with civil commitment through demonstrations and activism against the regime and IS. She explains how she tries to fight in a country where powerful people take “advantage of people’s fear”: “I demonstrate there for an hour and half”; “A girl all by herself facing the Islamic State”; “Talk about a state!”; “It’s like a small gang that...”. Suad also criticizes her society when it proves to be a sexist one: “They can’t imagine that I’m wearing pants”; “What bothers them is that I am a woman.” All this seems to contradict the Arab cultural system, which is described through constructions such as “There are these...so-called sheikhs... because a sheikh to me [...] is supposed to be an eminent dignitary in Islam”; “It takes a lot of studying to deserve this title”. Criticism towards the system emerges again when she affirms that “they give 10-12-year-old kids the title of sheikh”. Social and gender recognition is blended with themes of character identification and professional success in sentences in which Suad imagines herself conversing with someone who is against her political commitment, and who was also a student of hers when she was a teacher: “He replied: *you have taught us religion and ethics*”; “*how can you present yourself this way?*”; “I am a teacher, but I was suspended.”; “*How could I not respect them?*”; “*I am your teacher who have [sic] taught you virtue and ethics*”. The Syrian world of ethics, values, and stereotypes is introduced by the use of a mixture of grammatical categories involving first-person singular and third-person plural narrative voices (implying either closeness to or distance from the audience) as shown in the following sentences: “They can’t imagine that I’m wearing pants.”; “My clothes don’t fit with the religion.”; “*I don’t ask*

you why you are wearing a mask?; That mask behind which you hide your face...; “Masked people, they’re up to no good in the area.”; “They kidnap, they steal, they arrest.”; “How can pants be sinful and not the mask?!”

In contrast to *TWiP*, Munifa’s selective appropriation on a narrative level includes aspects concerning memories in which girls, women, and children were kidnapped, and men killed by IS, when the Kurdish people were forced to escape into the mountains, having had their dignity trodden upon. This makes Munifa’s activism more aggressive, as the subtitled narratives show. Munifa’s stories give access to certain socio-cultural contents as expressed through switches from more inclusive first-person plural narrative voices (i.e., the personal pronoun “we”), which refer to a general collective environment united by the same fate of uncertainty, to first-person singular narrative voices (i.e., the personal pronoun “I”), which put emphasis on individual destinies of women in Munifa’s country, such as Munifa’s own future. Among the examples are: “We had no idea, we didn’t know that one day we would have to use weapons. To be honest, we never thought that one day, we would, like a man, have to take weapons in our hands”. Selective appropriation, pertaining to the description of cultural features of Munifa’s origins, and symbolising the destiny of numerous women like Munifa, is expressed by the use of linguistic constructions, where the personal pronoun “I” dominates in the stories: “I am a Yazadi girl”; “I come from Khanasor” (Sjniar); “The most important moment was, that I became a Peshmerga fighter and the school, my studies, to become a Peshmerga fighter is so important”. Munifa’s voice in the English narratives is marked by the use of relational and material processes, followed by participants and circumstances that indicate relations in terms of attribution, possession, and locations: “I’m a Peshmerga fighter”; “At the moment I’m living in a camp in Scharia”; “I’m a student and I came here to become a Peshmerga fighter”; “We are all comrades here”; “We are closely knitted together, just like sisters”. Terms such as “fighter”, “student”, “comrades” (the last one also uttered by the Syrian narrator, Suad), and “sisters”, are all words that reinforce the dimension of conflict in the Syrian and Kurdish narratives, and the idea of comradeship and brotherhood (sisterhood) among the protagonists in the narratives and the citizens who live in their countries. Munifa’s stories also consider and narrate torture by IS: she tells her audience about the genocide by chiefly using material processes that emphasize conditions of movement and transition, on the one hand, and relations, on the other. Following are some examples from subtitles: “The Genocide began and we had to escape into the mountains”; “We had to

escape into the mountains, the Islamic State (IS) captured women, girls and children and killed the men”; “As the families came hungry, thirsty and barefoot in the mountains, the IS took the girls and children as prisoners”; “They were only 14 years old”.

Subtitling in *TWiP* is the result of choices which may be typical of non-professional translation, where norms in standard subtitling are often replaced with choices aiming at ensuring audience understanding and making the SL context explicit. In *TWiP* the protagonist creates imaginary dialogues with people she usually meets in the street when she goes out to demonstrate or to pray. On a technical level, the reproduction of the original imaginary dialogues occurs and is signalled in the subtitles through expedients such as the use of direct speech, which provides the reader with the words and expressions uttered by the people themselves, as if those dialogues were taking place at that specific moment in time. Although the audience does not know who the imaginary interlocutors are, these seem to be there in flesh and bone thanks to the subtitled narrative descriptions which depict contextualized situations. Besides, specific typographical devices are used in the subtitling of these dialogues: the utterances of the woman in pants’ interlocutors and, in some cases, also the protagonist’s thoughts (pronounced aloud), as shown in Figure 3, are all stressed through the use of italics, even though the statements and questions are examples of direct speech, which, in commercial subtitling, would be indicated by the use of inverted commas, as occurs in standard writing. This choice indisputably echoes the convention applied in standard subtitling when characters are not visible on screen but only audible, or are thinking without speaking (e.g., “*How are you miss? What are you doing here?*”; “I said: *the “Islamic state” is arresting our comrades*” ... “*peace activists*”; He replied: “[...] *how can you present yourself this way?*”; “He said to me: *but I’m surprised you’re here*”; “*No one is allowed to talk to her; by order of the Emir!*”).



Figure 3. A screenshot from *The Woman in Pants* with italicized subtitles

In Munifa Kret's video interview, the alternation of capital letters (signalling the voice of the filmmaker-interviewer) and small print (signalling Munifa's narrative voice) on grey backgrounds reinforces the non-professional translation dimension, since these techniques appear to be new, and different from standard subtitling norms. The interview itself is a very special type of interview, where the power of the interviewer is fully entrusted to the subtitles that "speak" in capital letters. These elements provide McElvaney's video collection with a certain degree of experimentation in relation to the way in which the topic has been dealt with from a technical and textual perspective. It would be impossible to listen to and understand the questions without the presence of subtitles. In the *TWiP* video, the subtitles are poor technically (i.e., lack of synchronization, some of them are too fast) and, in terms of layout; there are lots of typos, and the lack of competence as far as the English language conventions are concerned is exemplary of non-professional subtitling.

Temporality, as the second category in narrative theory, is regularly present in both stories. It is not chronological, but follows the inner self of the protagonists, whose streams of consciousness go backward and forward. In *TWiP*, the temporal-spatial dimension is signalled by the use of italics and strengthened by the presence of certain grammatical categories, such as direct speech, to report dialogues that took place in a non-specified past, or to voice the thoughts of the protagonist (i.e., "He

replied: *you have taught us religion and ethics, how can you present yourself this way?; "How could I not respect you?"; I am your teacher who have [sic] taught you virtue and ethics.; "What's your name?"*). The viewer learns that the woman in pants worked formerly as a teacher, but no longer does so because of the current political situation in Syria. Suad's spatial context is marked by the interior where she is seen in the short video, which signals her current life. At the same time, her italicized imaginary dialogues and memories preserved in the subtitles depict the period in which she was a teacher, on the one hand, and the present in which she publicly demonstrates with her banners, on the other. Temporality is identified as the category that highlights sequences of events as an organising principle in the experiential interpretation. The set of facts, relationships and characters constituting any narrative is embedded in a sequential context and in a specific temporal and spatial dimension that make it possible to interpret past and present as running together in the stories. As mentioned above, Suad was a teacher at some point in her life, but no longer because of the political situation in Syria ("I am a teacher, but I was suspended."). She is still a devoted Muslim ("I usually go during the afternoon prayer time.") and also an activist demonstrator. In the case of Munifa, the viewer learns that she is a student, who has become a Peshmerga fighter, although she considers herself both a student and a fighter, and she lives in a camp with her sisters from the Peshmerga community ("On one side I am a Peshmerga fighter, on the other hand I am a student."; "To be honest I can't choose between the two."; "We are all comrades here, we are closely knitted together, just like sisters.").

The temporal and spatial dimensions are not clearly marked in her narrative, since three different states of being seem to coexist in her life. This makes it possible for past and present to become fused together in Munifa's existence, rendering it the sum of these significant elements in her temporal and spatial dimensions: she is a fighter, a student, and a comrade in specific temporal-spatial frameworks.

The spaces in which these Arab stories are constructed is an aspect of temporal ordering, but this does not mean that the narratives are recounted chronologically. Rather, the stories are organized topically, in relation to specific subjects. The sequence in which each narrative is recounted represents the constitutive element of the narrative itself, in which the elements, whether temporally or spatially ordered, create networks of relations and exchanges that are transformed from isolated episodes into coherent narrative accounts. In the cases under analysis, sets of utterances transcribed in the English subtitles correspond to the

different meaningful moments described by the protagonists, resulting in meaning-making processes within narrative sequences organized according to subject matters (i.e., prayer, demonstration, home, women and politics, the Peshmerga fighting training, teaching and studying, IS, genocide). The time is set by the exact moment in which the two women start talking in their rooms, and they then return to facts and events of their everyday life connected with their historical present. Their present is revealed through subtitles that act as narrative spaces, where ordinary realities of marginalized women unfold. This encourages the belief that subtitles produced for niche products such as *TWiP* and “MK” can be viewed as depositaries of independent stories, as if they had been narrated for the first time in the *lingua franca*, English. Reference can also be made here to the phenomenon of translation as an act of interpretation that derives from each target reader’s understanding of the subtitled narratives¹¹ (Schulte and Biguenet, 1992: 9).

The third category, relationality, involves the relationship between the different elements that compose the narrative – such as imagery, linguistic items, register, slang, and dialects. On a lexical level, in particular, the presence of certain topical words such as “comrades” and “IS” in both the Syrian and Kurdish narratives is evidence that the concept of Syrian and Kurdish brotherhood against IS and its terrorism is what the locals want to transmit globally.

The fourth non-secondary element in narrative theory is the causal emplotment device, which gives each narrative sequence its own narrative meaning by signalling the links and relations between narrative meanings within a framework of non-neutral unfolding. These categories, relationality and causal emplotment, go hand in hand. Bruner’s (1991) categories reflect upon the levels of genericness, particularity, normativeness, and narrative accrual. Genericness implies that narratives make sense if they are elaborated within frameworks of narration that are recognisable as genres (i.e., in the cases analysed, such a framework is provided by the video clips uploaded to YouTube and Vimeo in their English subtitled versions, in which marginalized citizens – migrants, asylum seekers, civilians in war conflicts, women and children – ask for attention and tell their stories). Particularity refers to the fact that the stories make sense when they move from the general to the specific, that is, when they involve facts and events constructed by characters and their

¹¹ This perspective is rooted in the German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer’s thoughts as far as the relationship between the act of reading and the translation process is concerned.

scenarios. In the case of the subtitled version of *TWiP*, Suad initially moves from the general situation where she goes to church as her routine, then she examines the criticism she receives because of the way she dresses when she goes to demonstrate (i.e., “*If you want to come out and demonstrate, sister, at least, put on some decent clothes.*”) and, finally, she decries at the worrying situation where everyday citizens become alarmed at seeing unknown people around wearing masks (i.e., “*Take that mask off so you can reassure people!*”). Shifts from generic to particular cases also take place in Munifa’s subtitled narratives, where from initial descriptions portraying the protagonist’s origins, the focus moves to the details of the experience of the Genocide in 2014, and ends with the depiction of Munifa’s new status as a Peshmerga fighter. The subtitled narratives appear to be thematically and linguistically connected by means of what Bruner refers to as narrative accrual, or the attempt to link stories “in a whole of some sort” (Bruner, 1991: 18) in order to “form larger and larger narratives over time” (Baker, 2014: 170). The category of narrative accrual is a key element in the audiovisual series selected in this study, since it proves that an infinite number of individual stories from the same geographical areas and from different parts of the world are the collective voices that denounce acts of violence and marginalization, and which create global narratives of denunciation and resistance.

6. Conclusions

The use of English subtitles for the translation of Arabic films and videos constructed through the adoption of the interview as the chief narrative model involves acts of translation of social repertoires. In these scenarios, translation is undertaken primarily by volunteers who are usually also political activists, and who mediate linguistically between fellow activists: activist non-translators (i.e., filmmakers, video creators, artists) and activist translators (i.e., interpreters, subtitlers, cultural mediators). Subtitling is thus perceived as a creative and necessary procedure that encourages the dissemination of authentic voices talking about controversial topics to a majority of viewers who do not speak the language of the interviewees, and who are not familiar with the original cultural codes. In this sense, subtitling becomes the instrument that widens the horizons within worlds that are basically oversimplified and manipulated across mainstream media (Baker, 2016: 11).

In practices of digital media activism, non-professional translators interact with activist filmmakers and have an active role in the process of language and culture transfer as they are usually permitted to have a greater degree of freedom and experimentation. In fact, amateur translators can potentially amplify the original messages, if they want to strengthen the political message of the project beyond the confines of the source language film or video. These choices cannot be assessed within the restrictive framework of the translation model governed by faithfulness and equivalence to the source text, but have to be approached within a radical rethinking of the parameters of translation, involving the re-conceptualization of translators “as full participants within non-hierarchical, solidary activist communities” (*ibid.*: 11), and the attention to the public as the interpreter of cultural concepts transmitted through English subtitles.

In brief, the challenge of translating Arabic and Kurdish narratives into English has transformed the experience of translating in a state of emergency into an act of political intervention. In this context, the Abounaddara films and *The Mirror Project* represent narratives in translation based on the revelation of affective experiences, where subtitling has come to represent a narrative practice within filmmaking, rendered through structured text understood as “guerrilla subtitles” and built to contrast and resist mainstream media.

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**Interlinguistic and intercultural mediation in
psychological care interviews with asylum seekers
and refugees:
Handling emotions in the narration of traumatic
experience**

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of our fieldwork with an NGO in the Valencian Community (Spain) that temporarily takes in asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs), especially from Arab countries, Eastern Europe and West Africa, and provides them with basic services, including psychological assistance. Following a qualitative methodology, interviews were conducted to collect the opinions and experiences of psychologists and interlinguistic and intercultural mediators who work with ASRs. We have observed that the aspects related to the different conceptions of mental illness (for example, the effect of spiritual entities), which can be decisive in the clinical interviews between psychiatrists and economic and social immigrants, play a somewhat secondary role in the clinical interviews. In this type of interview, cultural differences related to the patterns of communicative interaction between psychologist and patient have been seen to be particularly problematic, especially with regard to the expression of emotions during the narration of traumatic events suffered by ASRs. The initial results of the study demand an in-depth reflection on the communicative initiatives that mediators can put into practice in these interventions. Specifically, they call for a closer examination of the

communicative initiatives related not only to the interpretation or explanation of the cultural differences observed in emotional expressions, but also the verbal and non-verbal strategies that mediators can deploy to prevent the blockages that cultural differences of an emotional nature can generate in the narration of the traumatic experiences of ASRs. This paper makes some proposals for action in this regard.

Keywords: interlinguistic and intercultural mediation; psychological care interview; asylum seekers and refugees; narration of traumatic experience; qualitative study

1. Introduction

Interlinguistic and intercultural mediation (which we will refer to simply as “mediation”) in the area of psychological care for asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) is, at least in the case of Spain, in a blatantly precarious professional situation (Las Heras, 2010; León *et al.*, 2016). For example, the language officers at the NGO that we examined in this study indicated that they occasionally hire interpreters when the person seeking psychological care does not speak French or English. Other NGOs and even some Refugee Reception Centres dependent on government institutions¹ do not even have the funds to hire interpreters in this type of situation.² This precariousness is largely attributable to various institutional and even ideological factors (Raga, 2019: 78), but also to the fact that research and training proposals, which should provide mediators’ actions with a certain level of consistency (Verrept and Coune, 2018: 6), are still very much lacking and disjointed in this area. Various codes of ethics have indeed been put forward in recent decades for mediation in the area of healthcare in general (such as CHIA, 2002, and IMIA, 2016), and it seems reasonable for there to be a certain level of homogeneity in the actions of mediators who undertake their work in hospitals and health centres. However, in recent times, calls are being made for guidelines to be adapted to the individual characteristics of more specific areas of practice, such as those for mediation in reproductive health (Sales *et al.*, 2014) and in psychiatric care (Raga *et al.*, 2014).

¹ We are in the process of extending our research to these Refugee Reception Centres, which in Spain actually have fewer ASRs than some NGOs.

² Some kind of linguistic mediation does seem, however, to be guaranteed in legal communication contexts involving ASRs (Las Heras, 2010).

2. Research design

As part of a project that the authors are carrying out on mediation processes in the field of mental health care for patients of foreign origin in Spain, especially in the Valencian Community, this paper presents the results of the initial phase of that research, focused specifically on psychological care for ASRs. The research questions at this stage are the following: Do the communicative interactions that take place in the field of psychological care for ASRs present specific characteristics, different from those in other fields of mental health care? Are these characteristics related to the emotional circumstances of ASRs? Do these characteristics require mediators to perform their work in a specific way?

The aim of this paper is thus to describe the healthcare, social and interpersonal characteristics of interactions between ASRs, psychologists and mediators, by analysing the type of intercultural communication problems that are linked to these characteristics. The paper focuses specifically on ASRs' utterances used to express emotions and their impact on the narration of traumatic events. It also puts forward (albeit tentatively due to the early stage of our research) a number of mediating interventions that would appear to be most appropriate in this type of communicative situation.

In order to achieve this, we will first consider what is set out both in the studies on the psychosocial situation of ASRs and in the few studies on the work of mediators in this area. This evidence will then be compared and contrasted against data yielded by the interviews we carried out with some of the professionals working at an NGO that collaborates in an official capacity in the reception and integration processes for ASRs in the Valencian Community.

The interviews took place between June and November 2019, and on average each interview lasted seventy minutes. The interviews with the psychologists were held on the NGO's premises, whereas the interviews with the mediators took place in their homes. In both cases, they were semi-structured interviews addressing a wide range of issues. In the interviews with the mediators, questions were asked about their training and professional experience, terminological difficulties, confidentiality, impartiality, development of conversational dynamics, characteristics of non-face-to-face mediations, and vicarious trauma (See Appendix 1). In the interviews with the psychologists, questions were asked about their training and professional experience, organisational procedures in the NGO, the social situation of ASRs in the host country and, specifically in the NGO under study, the general characteristics of clinical interviews, the

main psychological problems that ASRs often have, and the social stigma of mental illness (Appendix 2). Following the transcription of the interviews, a qualitative discourse analysis was carried out on the data thereby obtained.

Specifically, we interviewed: one mediator hired by the NGO on an hourly basis for interviews with Arabic- and French-speaking ASRs (Mediator A); one mediator hired by the NGO for interviews with Russian ASRs (Mediator B); one mediator for interviews with French-speaking sub-Saharan ASRs (Mediator C); one psychologist hired by the NGO who works primarily with social and economic immigrants (Psychologist A); and one psychologist hired by the NGO who works primarily with ASRs (Psychologist B). With a view to future research in this field, it seems essential, among other initiatives, to know the opinions of the ASRs themselves on the subjects covered in this work. However, for various reasons, we have not been able to incorporate them into the current phase of our research.

In this paper, we specifically analyse: (1) the responses related to the characteristics of mental health care in the ASRs' cultures of origin and their impact on clinical interviews, (2) cultural differences in the expression and regulation of emotions, especially in the narration of traumatic events, and (3) the role of mediators regarding these issues. These topics provide an organisational framework for the analysis of the opinions expressed in the interviews. In each of the following three sections, the discussion is presented in an integrated manner, using verbatim quotes to illustrate the interviewees' viewpoints.

3. Psychosocial characteristics of ASRs attending the psychological care departments

The first characteristic is related to the type of care received. Although a notably high percentage of ASRs receive psychological care,³ very few cases are referred from the psychological care department to the public health service psychiatric department (Achotegui *et al.*, 2016: 11). Psychologist A mentioned that, in recent years, she has only referred a couple of people (of the hundreds she has treated) to psychiatric departments. She explained that this referral was because those individuals

³ Some reports mention figures of between 40% and 70% (Díaz *et al.*, 2018).

needed to be prescribed medication to mitigate the particularly severe effects of the acute depression they were experiencing.

Psychologist B, on the other hand, mentioned that, of the several hundred patients she had treated in the two years she had been working at the NGO, she had only referred around ten individuals to the psychiatric department, most of them with extreme trauma-related symptoms or post-traumatic stress disorder:

On the one hand, there are the people who go to primary care to be given anxiolytic or antidepressant medication, but many of these do not go to mental health: it is only a pharmacological support to psychological therapy. Those who are referred are people with post-traumatic stress symptoms, and then there are those who come in with a bipolar, or psychotic, disorder. (Psychologist B)⁴

In terms of the types of disorders experienced by ASRs, as indicated by Díaz *et al.* (2018: 112), “there is a high prevalence [...] of clinical pictures of stress, grieving processes, traumas, somatisations such as headache and muscle pain, sleep disorders, and clinical pictures of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder”. Without a doubt, post-traumatic stress disorder is the one most commonly cited as a characteristic of ASRs. However, many authors have doubts regarding not only the direct relationship between the condition of ASRs and post-traumatic stress disorder, which may develop into a pathologisation process for ASRs, but also of the very existence of a specific disorder which we can refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder (Beneduce, 2004: 115; Ingleby, 2005: 10-11; Achotegui *et al.*, 2016: 49; Evangelidou *et al.*, 2016: 70-73). Psychologist A indicated that she does not trust the classification of post-traumatic stress disorder. In her view, what ASRs have in common is trauma itself, which can manifest as anxiety, depression or anxious-depressive symptoms, depending on the individual:

I don't diagnose post-traumatic stress syndrome. For me, in general, what they have in common is the trauma itself. We work with people who have gone through very traumatic situations, and who, depending on how they are, have more depressive, or anxious, or anxiety-depressive symptoms. (Psychologist A)

⁴ The translations of quotes from the interviews and of some bibliographic references originally in Spanish were carried out by the authors of this work.

Psychologist B, on the other hand, mentioned that most ASRs have anxiety problems and, to a lesser extent, depression. She considers that the disorders directly related to trauma, which are far less common, are associated with more extreme symptoms that usually require medication and occasionally referral to psychiatric departments.

Whichever classification we follow, the psychological problems experienced by ASRs are always attributable to very specific external causes, i.e. particularly traumatic past experiences, such as war, persecution, and physical and psychological torture, which usually occur over long periods of time, both in the country of origin and during the escape journey (Ingleby, 2005: 7; Kramer, 2005: 135; Evangelidou *et al.*, 2016: 69). There is, however, some consensus that the social situation in which they find themselves on arrival in the host countries may have an even greater impact on their mental health problems (Achotegui *et al.*, 2016: 16).

Without a doubt, the issues related to the ASRs' own health culture play a crucial role in intercultural communicative situations in the area of mental health. Yet, it seems clear that the factor which will particularly determine the type of intercultural communication in interactions between ASRs and psychologists is that of the psychological, social and economic situation caused by the experiences undergone by ASRs in their country of origin, during their escape journey, and in the host country.

4. Types of intercultural communication problems in psychological care for ASRs

In line with the classification developed by Raga and Sales (2010), intercultural communication problems in the area of healthcare may be due to differences in the conceptions of how the human body, health, illness and the healing process work, and of the behaviours associated with these aspects. However, they can also be the result of differences in the communicative interaction patterns (CIPs) between the patient and caregiver that are observed within different cultures. To put it very briefly, CIPs refer to the communicative behaviours that only occur in face-to-face interactions, accompanying the spoken language in an inseparable way, and include all the significant aspects related to non-spoken language, turn-taking, paralanguage and verbal politeness (Raga, 2005: 165-167).

Clearly, both types of problems may occur in any intercultural clinical interview. Whilst most authors agree that psychologists working with

ASRs should have a certain level of communicative competence to help them understand the conceptions of mental health that are specific to the patients' cultures of origin (Lurbe, 2005: 209-210; Ingleby, 2005: 19; Evangelidou *et al.*, 2016: 74-75), in actual fact these differences are not usually highlighted as being a particularly distorting factor in interviews with psychologists, nor are there widely cited examples in this regard. We must consider that ASRs may naturally attribute the origin of their mental problems to the traumatic situations they have experienced in their country of origin, during the escape journey and in the host country, without the need to turn to, for example, spiritual explanations.

The opinions expressed in the interviews in relation to this issue are not particularly consistent. The Arabic mediator indicated that problems arising from the different conceptions of mental health are not very common, and that he only remembered some interviews in which ASRs from Yemen occasionally brought up the issue of the evil eye:

I did have to explain the evil eye issue to the psychologist. There aren't many cases, but they exist. For example, someone tells you that the problems between his father and mother were because a woman who was jealous wrote a spell on a piece of paper, which they found thirty years later. And that person has every right to think that this is so. When it's something that doesn't exist here, I explain it to the psychologist. (Mediator A)

The Russian mediator mentioned that there are no significant differences between the Spanish and the Russian cultures regarding this issue. The French mediator stated that she was almost completely unaware of the health cultures of the ASRs from West African countries she worked with. Psychologist A agreed that having a certain level of training in intercultural competence was advisable, although she did not remember any cases in which these differences in terms of conception of mental health had caused any intercultural communication problems. In any case, she suspected that some of her patients also attended traditional healers residing in Spain, which generally did not cause any problems:

Sometimes I have felt limited in my work [...] because what I propose is not good enough for them. And in the end they contact a *marabout*,⁵ here in Spain, who gives them something,

⁵ *Marabouts* are traditional healers from the Maghreb region and West Africa, who follow the precepts of the Muslim religion, although they sometimes introduce elements typical of animist religions.

and it turns out that it works and they start to feel good. It happened to me recently with a boy, and now he's doing very well. (Psychologist A)

The differing points of view in this case come from the statements made by Psychologist B, who indicated that ASRs, and particularly those of sub-Saharan origin,⁶ typically tend to interpret their mental problems, particularly somatic manifestations (such as insomnia, nightmares and headaches), from a spiritual perspective, which includes phenomena such as witchcraft, possession and the evil eye.

We continually run the risk of mistaking any type of disorder or emotional moment that a person is undergoing for a delusional or psychotic disorder. For example, a boy from Mali who came here had a stomach infection, due to *E. coli*. He believed that someone had put a bug in his body and that the bug was going to kill him. The explanation he gave was based on witchcraft, which is typical in his country. If the psychologist had not taken a cross-cultural view, this boy's expressions could have been interpreted as delusions, as symptoms of schizophrenia. (Psychologist B)

Psychologist B insisted, as mentioned above, on the need to adopt an intercultural outlook, one of learning, and avoid making the mistake of interpreting these spiritual manifestations as severe pathological symptoms such as psychotic or schizophrenic disorders.

The experiences of ASRs in their countries of origin and during the escape journey, the precarious administrative, socioeconomic and living conditions in the host countries, as well as the psychological consequences, in the form of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, make cultural differences all the more important in clinical interviews with psychologists. This is especially so in terms of how they experience emotions and express them through different types of CIPs.

Intercultural difficulties in expressing and managing emotions, which are recurrent in almost every psychological interview with ASRs, are all the more relevant during interactions in which the psychologist tries to make the patient verbally relive the traumatic situations they had to endure. It

⁶ As Psychologist A points out, Muslims adopt a more religious perspective and tend to interpret their mental problems as a divine plan: "Sometimes religious belief, such as believing that you cannot change anything, that it is destiny or the divine will, does more harm than belief in the evil eye. But other times, religious belief can also help you move forward".

should be noted that the traumatic events experienced by ASRs can be particularly dramatic. Mediator A offers the following example:

On one occasion a young boy of Syrian origin told us that his father hung him from the foot of a tree above a fire and whipped him; in his flight, he had crossed several countries, in one country they kidnapped him and took his kidney out, and in another country they sold him into slavery.
(Mediator A)

There appears to be a broad consensus regarding the enormous therapeutic value of the narration of traumatic events (Beneduce, 2004: 100). As noted by Lurbe (2005: 269), “the acknowledgement of trauma in one’s own words, shared in a therapeutic space, is identified as being the only lasting method of psychological repair”. However, several problems arise around the development of these narratives by ASRs, which make the work of psychologists and mediators difficult, and which advise that these narratives must not be forced under any circumstances (Achotegui *et al.*, 2016: 17). Firstly, trauma itself generates a series of psychological mechanisms that tend to block the memory and the narration of the events that have generated it. It causes feelings of guilt about surviving when many others have perished (Lurbe, 2005: 268), nightmares about the content of the traumatic events, memory lapses, frequent ruminations about what happened, cognitive attempts to suppress certain unpleasant thoughts or memories and a certain emotional numbness. As López (2017: 52) noted:

Trauma, with its unspeakable condition, makes it difficult to deal with it. The difficulty in finding the words, the anticipated risk of breaking down if they start to speak, the feeling that nobody can understand the pain experienced and the distance from the references of the person who accompanies them explain the resistance to initiate a therapeutic process.

Furthermore, in clinical interviews where the memory and narration of the traumatic events are addressed both the psychologist and the mediator can be psychologically assimilated to the figure of the interrogator in torture sessions. As Beneduce (2004: 115) pointed out, “the therapist must witness the pain, but this means joining all those who in the past have violated the patient’s privacy”.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, ASRs in host countries may be experiencing equally traumatic experiences that stem from, among

other things, their legal and economic insecurity. As Pérez (2004: 98) observes, it is extremely difficult to establish a relationship of trust in these situations, since “any personal information can be used to repatriate you, and the data you might give could put the relatives or friends who remain in the country in danger”. As Pérez elaborates, rejection reactions can also arise from people who have professional relations with ASRs, when faced with the latter's perception of mistrust, or even deceit or omission. It should be added that the refugee system in Spain already forces ASRs to go through this ordeal during interviews with police officers and public officials, in which they have to recount their traumatic experiences in a very direct and crude manner, with no kind of psychological support. The French mediator pointed out that these interviews are indeed the encounters in which ASRs face truly severe emotional problems:

The psychologists don't insist much on ASRs' recounting or recalling these facts if they don't want to. They focus more on somatic aspects. Indeed, the recounting of traumatic events takes place mainly in the initial interview, without any psychological support, and in the interviews with the lawyers, who have to prepare the sessions with the police. This initial interview, which is focused on legal matters, is the hardest, because you see that the ASRs are really out of place, that they are afraid, that they don't really know where they are. Some administrative assistants don't have any empathy for the ASRs at all. (Mediator C)

Finally, as noted by Beneduce (2004: 105), traumatic events are embedded in a whole life and cultural experience. Memory is individual but also social and cultural. Its laws also depend on social norms, indicating “which parts of memory should be explored and which should be left in the shade”. Similarly, as will be discussed below, the emotional CIPs that facilitate or hinder the narration of traumatic events differ significantly according to the cultural background of the ASRs.

Following Brody (1999: 15), emotions can be defined as motivational systems with physiological, behavioural, experiential and cognitive components, which have a positive or negative valence, with different degrees of intensity, and are usually caused by interpersonal situations or events that deserve our attention because they affect our well-being. In the last few decades, research into emotions has focused on determining the specific weight that both strictly universal biological factors and social, communicative, and cultural factors may have in surfacing emotions. In

this line, one of the most productive fields of study is that of display rules, that is, the informal rules of a social or cultural group about how to express emotions appropriately. As Winkelman stated (2009: 286), cultures present different interpretations of emotional expressions and different evaluations with regard to what is considered an acceptable response to basic emotions. The cultural formulation of basic emotions can intensify, minimise, modify or mask their expression.

These display rules can affect both non-verbal and verbal language. With regard to non-verbal language, Matsumoto *et al.* (2007) cited the classic work by Ekman and Friesen (1969), in which Americans and Japanese were recorded while watching highly stressful films:

When viewing the stimuli alone, both American and Japanese observers showed the same emotions on their faces; when in the presence of a higher status experimenter, however, cultural differences emerged. While the Americans continued to show their facial signs of negative emotions, Japanese observers were more likely to mask their negative feelings with smiles. (Matsumoto *et al.*, 2007: 27)

As regards verbal language, for example, De Leersnyder *et al.* (2013: 2) remarked that the Inuit avoid expressions of anger at all costs. They try not to interact verbally with others when they are in this state, and avoid talking about their own anger. Basso (1972) noted that the Apaches systematically use silence when they meet very angry or very sad people.

With regard to our informant NGO, communication difficulties deriving from the verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions were observed. With respect to the former, psychologist B noted that the ASRs with the greatest difficulties when it comes to expressing their feelings are men of Slavic origin and some of Arab origin (but less so those from the Maghreb region):

The cultural and gender perspective is very influential. Talking about emotions with a man or with a woman is completely different. People from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus are often more reluctant to express their emotions. In some cases, there are very striking reactions, for example, you ask someone: "Have you felt sad this week?", and that person is offended, and he or she says: "How dare you ask me that?" There are also quite a few emotional barriers with people coming from Syria, and not so many difficulties with people from North Africa. (Psychologist B)

With specific reference to the non-verbal expression of emotions, the Arabic mediator commented on the extremely harsh nature of some of the ASRs' narrations he has to interpret,⁷ and added that he (being a fellow citizen of some of the ASRs) perceives some emotional expressions, conveyed through specific CIPs, which may be misleading for psychologists:

There was a boy of Moroccan origin who looked at the social worker and began to laugh a lot, and she interpreted this as a form of sympathy and kindness. But I warned the social worker that, in fact, that laughter was very rare in his culture of origin, that this boy was in a very bad state, that he was losing his mind. And now he's going to a psychiatrist. (Mediator A)

Achotegui *et al.* (2016: 17) indicated that gaining their confidence should be the main objective of the first contact with refugees. Patients should therefore not be forced to describe the traumatic experiences they have gone through or to relive and openly express the emotions that these events create in them.

On the other hand, it does seem advisable to make efforts to avoid personal, social and cultural barriers that often hinder ASRs' free verbal and emotional expressions in clinical interviews. To achieve this, the role of mediators is essential. As Theys *et al.* (2020: 41) note, mediators seem to play a crucial role in the interactive process of co-constructing emotional communication, because they validate and enable the contributions of the other participants, and thus create common ground and mutual understanding. However, these authors argue that the process may call into question the neutrality of mediators.

⁷ A particularly relevant issue in this area is that of the vicarious trauma, or emotional contagion, sometimes experienced by mediators. Martin and Valero (2008: 2) note that community interpreters will always find themselves in "circumstances in which it would be difficult for any human being to remain unperturbed". Merlini and Gatti (2015: 142) further clarify that the kind of empathy the mediator should display implies "understanding and perceiving the other's emotional state, but without acquiring it".

5. The role of mediators

Interlinguistic and intercultural mediation can be defined as the process of facilitating oral communication, in its linguistic and cultural dimensions, as carried out by professionals, especially in the field of public services. For a while now, the debate regarding the visibility vs. invisibility of mediators in the healthcare domain has evolved into an attempt to specify the degree and type of visibility which is required by the specific circumstances of each type of clinical interview. The enormous cultural burden characterising mental health, as well as the importance of interaction between healthcare staff and patients in this area,⁸ have led us to consider a maximum level of mediators' visibility. Indeed, on occasions, psychologists themselves require mediators to play a role close to that of a co-therapist, actively taking part in diagnosis and treatment (Pérez, 2004: 6; Bot, 2005: 79-80). Psychologist A is against such active participation by mediators, while Psychologist B is in favour of it.

As we have mentioned, there are few studies dedicated to mediation in the psychological care of ASRs. However, they generally confirm the active communicative role of mediators working with this group of patients (Pöllabauer, 2005, León *et al.*, 2016: 33), and in general (with a few exceptions such as Bancroft 2017), they consider it even necessary (Patel, 2003: 222; Evangelidou *et al.*, 2016: 72). Psychologist B's comments regarding her experiences with mediators lead us to believe that the mediators' frequent lack of training and the extreme emotional circumstances in which they carry out these interviews make it a very regular occurrence for them to move too far away, and unduly so, from the basic principles set forth in the codes of ethics (such as CHIA, 2002, and IMIA, 2016).⁹ In doing so, they seem to implement excessive communicative initiatives, which can sometimes contaminate the whole therapeutic process. This same psychologist indicated that the following cases are common:

⁸ As noted by Collazos and Casas (2007: 256), "in psychiatry, given the lack of biological markers, the diagnosis is purely clinical, which makes communication fundamental; if it fails, the diagnosis, and therefore the treatment, also fail".

⁹ However, as indicated by Merlini and Gatti (2015: 144), in the National Code of Ethics for Interpreters in Health Care, a highly influential document drawn up by the National Council on Interpreting in Health Care (NCIHC) in 2004, it is noted that: "Responding with empathy to a patient who may need comfort and reassurance is simply the response of a caring, human being" (NCIHC, 2004: 16).

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- the mediator becomes too involved from an emotional perspective;
 - the mediator tries to adopt an excessively neutral type of emotional expression, which breaks down the communicative understanding between the ASR and the psychologist;
 - it is clear that the patient is not understanding what the mediator is saying;
 - the mediator establishes dyadic conversations with the patient, details of which he or she fails to relay to the psychologist;
 - the mediator takes the patient's side;
 - the mediator unduly reinterprets the psychologist's questions.

Krystallidou (2012: 77) notes that the presence of mediators significantly alters some aspects of the nature of doctor–patient interaction. Doctors find it difficult to develop a relationship with their patients, make more eye contact with mediators than with patients, sometimes feel excluded from mediator–patient interaction, and perceive patients as being uncommitted. Patients tend to ask doctors fewer questions, and perceive them as less respectful and less concerned about them as individuals.

Before going on to specify the characteristics of the mediators' communicative initiatives required for these clinical interviews, we would contend that mediators themselves must be aware of and have basic proficiency in the principles set forth in the codes of ethics. Equally important is that mediators have some knowledge of the general characteristics of clinical interviews with psychologists, of the communicative aspects that may be relevant in delivering diagnoses and treatment, and of the strategies that psychologists may deploy in this context (Hlavac *et al.*, 2020: 338). It seems clear that the particular personal, social and cultural characteristics of ASRs appear to require mediators to have a specific type of communicative initiative. Without neglecting the aspects related to cultural differences in the conception of mental health, the mediator must be specially prepared (and duly trained) to avoid misunderstandings related to CIPs, particularly those expressing emotions.

Several studies on mediation in the healthcare context (see for instance Baraldi and Gavioli 2007, and Merlini and Gatti 2015) show that, contrary to what the codes of professional ethics and a large part of the specialised literature indicate, “interpreters are seen to challenge affective neutrality through affiliative responses which treat the patient's manifestation of feelings and worries as conversationally relevant, and, in some cases, further reinforce the healthcare practitioner's empathic model of communication” (Merlini, 2019: 222). Conversely, other studies, such as

those by Cirillo (2012) or by Leanza *et al.* (2013), note that affective initiatives by doctors and patients are often filtered or blocked by mediators, who try to stick to an objective medical tone. Interestingly, the latter study revealed an opposite trend among non-professional mediators, in many cases members of the patients' families, who were found to promote the affective aspects of doctor–patient interactions. In recent times, the benefits of this type of “family mediation” have been highlighted. For example, Hsieh (2016) argues that doctors in certain specialties, such as oncology, value very positively the emotional support that can be provided by a mediator who is a member of the patient's family. However, the same author also states that “a provider in mental health care may prefer professional interpreters over family interpreters due to concerns about patient privacy and treatment efficacy” (Hsieh, 2016: 46).

Literature data seem to indicate that the simple presence of a mediator does not guarantee fluid emotional expression between doctor and patient. Cirillo (2012: 119) explains that the establishment of an affective relationship may be simpler in dyadic conversations between doctor and patient (even if the latter does not speak the language of the host country correctly) than in conversations involving a mediator. Successful emotional communication will depend largely on the characteristics of the mediator in question, not only on his/her personal profile, but above all on the training he/she has received in the emotional components of communication. As Merlini (2019: 236) states, “people with a non-empathic disposition may act empathically under specific circumstances, and vice versa; empathy is a context-dependent, interactionally achieved outcome; and empathic skills may be acquired”. If training in the emotional components of communication is to be effective, especially in a context such as the narration of traumatic events by ASRs, what is required is in-depth knowledge of the specific characteristics of emotional expression in this context and its cultural determinants. In the rest of this section, we look at some of the dilemmas that should be addressed in the development of this type of analysis.

In tune with earlier studies, and on the basis of our interview data, the following paragraphs detail some of the communicative initiatives that we consider may play a crucial role in preventing cultural differences (regarding the expression of emotions) from interfering in the narrative therapies of psychological interviews with ASRs.

1. Provided that circumstances allow it, it seems advisable to turn to a mediator whose gender and age do not pose a cultural problem for ASRs

to freely express themselves verbally and emotionally (Patel, 2003: 223). Psychologist A mentioned that, although it is common to assign psychologists whose gender and age fit the characteristics of ASRs, this is not the case in the NGO she currently works in.

2. Provided that the psychologists take the initiative, the therapeutic (but not the legal or administrative) objective of the narration of the traumatic events should be clearly explained to the ASRs in the specific context of the clinical interview. As the Arabic mediator noted, this is usually done in the first interviews with ASRs:

Sometimes what the patient has told the lawyer does not match what he or she is telling the psychologist, and he or she is afraid that the psychologist will tell the lawyer. So we reassure them by telling them that “what you talk about here will not be made known to the managers of the NGO, or the lawyers, or the police, or the consulate of your country, or to anyone else”.
(Mediator A)

3. The role of the mediator can consist in explaining to psychologists and ASRs both the cultural differences in the conception of mental illness, and the emotional expressions of the intervening parties that may be causing some kind of intercultural misunderstanding. The Arabic mediator confirmed that he performs this type of task quite often.

This point was confirmed by Psychologist B, who indicated that, whether upon her own request or following the mediators’ own initiative, these verbal explanation processes of cognitive and emotional cultural differences are common:

Usually the interpreters will say to you: “Excuse me, about what the patient is saying, can I point out something that has to do with a cultural difference?” and they explain it to you. Or they say, “This question you’re asking the patient may be a little misleading or problematic in their culture. Would it be all right if I explained to him/her why you’re asking that question now?” They offer very necessary and very interesting explanations.
(Psychologist B)

The Russian mediator, on the other hand, thought that cultural explanations should only be given when specifically requested by any of the intervening parties. She highlighted the risks of over-culturalisation

and attributing patients' behaviour to cultural factors that might instead be due to the patient's specific personal characteristics.¹⁰

4. Although both the psychologists and the mediators we interviewed indicated that, according to the protocol, the relationship between the ASRs and the mediators must be confined to the clinical encounter, on some occasions it would seem advisable for them to establish an interpersonal relationship (Bot, 2005: 35). Relationship-building, even if limited to a few moments before and after the interviews, can generate confidence in patients who are not used to these communicative situations. The Arabic mediator saw the development of a relationship – almost of friendship – between mediator and patient as highly beneficial.

As the Russian mediator noted, it is common for subsequent clinical interviews between a psychologist and ASRs to be carried out with different mediators. He was also firmly against personal rapport-building with patients:

Sometimes you're not the only interpreter working with the same patient. The patient says, "I told you that the other day, don't you remember?" And it turns out that the other day he or she had been with another interpreter. And they get angry, because they've already made the effort to tell it. But if the ASR begins to trust the interpreter too much, he or she may start to think that they can expect something from the interpreter. It is not good to establish a personal relationship between the patient and the interpreter; you have to remain impartial. (Mediator B)

The French mediator pointed to a clear tendency to resort increasingly to remote mediation, with all the technical and interpersonal problems that this may entail:

Telephone interpretations are terrible. There are a lot of technical problems, you can't hear anything well, and a lot of things are lost. Sometimes, if there are no images, you don't know if the patient is serious or joking. Also, many times you don't know which psychologist or ASR you are going to talk to, and you have to ask them who they are and ask them to set the scene a little bit. It's very complicated. (Mediator C)

¹⁰ The Russian mediator explained that her view might be partially due to the fact that not many differences are actually observed between the Spanish and the Russian, Ukrainian or Georgian cultures.

5. In line with the patient-centred healthcare model, it seems advisable to hand over some of the control of the sessions to the ASRs themselves, so that they do not feel that they are being subjected to anything that might resemble an interrogation. For example, as Messent (2003: 143) observes, it is advisable not to interrupt patients' narratives or emotional expressions. Both the Russian and the French mediators stated that, in general, there are no major problems with speaking turns, except in sessions in which many people are participating at the same time, such as workshops or informative talks:

Turn-taking is sometimes difficult in the workshops. They talk fast and a lot. Besides, in a workshop there may be twenty attendees, but you only have to interpret for three, and each group goes at its own pace. Sometimes I have to ask the person giving the workshop to take a break, but other times I have to summarize a lot. (Mediator B)

6. It seems advisable that, in some way, the mediator should be attuned to the emotional expression of the ASR. Psychologist B mentioned that the communicative actions she expects from the mediator, in addition to interpreting, involve reproducing the paralinguage and non-verbal language of both the patient and herself:

Paralanguage is very important in the psychological interview. Having the interpreter reproduce the tone of voice and volume of the psychologist helps a lot. It's great, because you very often say more with the tone than with the content. It's also important that the interpreter reproduces the patient's paralanguage but, above all, the psychologist's. (Psychologist B)

Although the Russian mediator preferred to be as "invisible" as possible, she considered it appropriate to reproduce both the paralinguage and non-verbal language, as she maintained that she had "to become the mirror of the intervening parties":

If the patient is speaking slowly, I must do the interpretation slowly too, but without overacting. The imitation comes naturally, because it's about empathy. (Mediator B)

The French mediator considered it appropriate that the mediator's expressions be in tune with the paralinguage and non-verbal language of the ASRs, but called for softening manifestations when they may be too

extreme. This form of interpreting, almost in the theatrical sense of the expression, is envisaged by some codes of ethics (for instance, CHIA, section 5.a). It does not seem to be particularly advisable, however, in specific moments of extreme tension, in which the intervening parties raise the tone and volume of their voice, and make somewhat aggressive gestures.¹¹ On the whole, in the context of psychological interviews with ASRs, it may help create communicative understanding between the parties involved.

7. Finally, a most controversial strategy is the mediators' active management of patients' emotions. Raga (2018) argued that for the communicative problems related to differences in CIPs (that is, the communicative behaviours between the caregiver and patient) it seems advisable to make use of mediators' initiatives based on communicative actions. For example, if the patient is uncomfortable during a trauma consultation due to being naked in front of the mediator, the mediator can simply find a physical location that avoids visual contact with the patient. Or, for instance, if a doctor is using highly technical terminology, mediators may simplify it in their renditions into the patient's language. In these situations, some active interventions by mediators can help ASRs overcome the emotional block. As noted by Evangelidou *et al.* (2016: 72), "their intervention may make it easier for refugees to attempt to express their pain and the emotional suffering they are experiencing, which, for reasons related to pride and dignity, they may not do immediately before professionals in the healthcare and social areas". The mediator may create a suitable communicative atmosphere from the perspective of the culture of origin, so that the ASR is able to express the emotions required by the situation. For example, the Arabic mediator indicated that, on occasions, he performs CIPs that, in the patients' culture of origin, are appropriate to facilitate emotional expression. Such CIPs may consist in touching the ASR's hand, hugging him/her, or conveying reassurance, understanding and support:

Once a girl told me that she had been kidnapped – to be prostituted – by her stepmother, who then took her and her sister to undergo genital mutilation. Her sister died, and the girl ran away and came here... It's impossible for this not to affect you. And, due to cultural closeness, you feel that person, in that moment, needs you to hold her hand, and touch her, and indeed that has a huge reassuring effect on the person. The psychologist,

¹¹ See also Hsieh and Nicodemus (2015).

who is there in front of you, doesn't think this is bad, she understands. (Mediator A)

Clearly, these behaviours can lead to problems of different kinds and a partial loss of professional objectivity (Beneduce, 2004: 107), as noted by Las Heras (2010): "it is complicated to establish a suitable balance between empathy and professional distance and to maintain a proper attitude in emotionally difficult situations". In this sense, both the two psychologists who said they are in favour of verbal explanation of cultural differences and the Russian mediator were quite critical of the possibility of mediators carrying out this type of communicative action aimed at encouraging the patient's emotional expression, arguing that they may contaminate the therapeutic process:

[...] your job is not to show your personality, it is to be a mirror of the people you're interpreting, so that they feel more connection through you, but nobody needs your personality. You don't have to be totally invisible, but you have to control it. Your intercultural mediation can be in the very words you choose to translate. (Mediator B)

In our view, the mediator should aim to develop those non-verbal actions or those expressions of encouragement that are commonly used in the patients' cultures of origin in situations with an emotional charge similar to that observed in clinical interviews, as implicitly suggested in the above quote from Mediator A.

All in all, it seems evident that the mediator, as an individual and as a participant in the communicative interaction, will find it difficult to play a role that is completely devoid of emotion, as this could hamper the patient's emotional expression even further. What seems clear is that it falls upon the mediator to ensure that the intercultural differences between the CIPs of the psychologists and those of the ASRs do not lead to a breakdown in communication, especially with regard to expressing emotions.

6. Conclusions

A very high percentage of the ASRs in our study required mental health care during the initial stage of their stay in the reception centres. Most of them had problems related to anxiety and depression. Cases of severe

pathological symptoms, such as psychotic or schizophrenic disorders, were not very common. The psychologists of the NGO under study treated practically all the ASRs who had some kind of mental health problem. Very few cases required psychiatric treatment.

During the clinical interviews between ASRs (especially those of Arab and sub-Saharan origin) and psychologists, communication problems stemming from different cultural conceptions about the origin, nature and treatment of mental problems were detected.¹² However, in these situations, the key to intercultural communication problems lies above all in cultural differences in terms of the CIPs displayed by the ASRs and psychologists, particularly those used to express emotions. It is common for patients, especially from Arab and Eastern European countries, to have difficulties in expressing their emotions during the narration of the traumatic situations they have had to go through. These difficulties are largely due to cultural differences in display rules, that is, the informal rules of a social or cultural group about how to express emotions appropriately.

Obviously, the role of mediators is crucial in addressing communication problems of a linguistic and, especially in the contexts under study, cultural nature. The findings of the present study and of earlier ones suggest that there is no general consensus about the kinds of actions mediators should implement when dealing with differences in emotional expression. We have proposed a number of action guidelines for mediators who carry out their work in the area of clinical interviews between psychologists and ASRs. Given the early stage of our research, these proposals invite further discussion and should be regarded as mere hypotheses.

First of all, before being introduced to the specific characteristics of the interviews between ASRs and psychologists, and before being made aware of the communicative initiatives which mediators may undertake in this context, we consider it urgent that mediators be trained in interlinguistic and intercultural mediation techniques, as well as in the ethical principles they must abide by.

With regard to the type of intercultural communication problems observed, it seems advisable to provide mediators with specific training in the characteristics of the CIPs between healthcare staff and patients in different cultures, especially with regard to emotional expression. It also seems appropriate that a series of communicative actions be carried out, among which we highlight the following: the selection of mediators with

¹² This is not to say that there are no language issues, which we do not address in this research.

gender and age characteristics that are suited to the cultural characteristics of the patients, the explanation of the therapeutic value of the narration of traumatic events, the explanation of cultural differences in terms of emotional expression, the non-coercion of the free emotional expression of the patients, and the attunement with the paralinguage and non-verbal language of the patient. Finally, in situations in which the differences between the interaction patterns of psychologists and ASRs are causing a breakdown in the latter's emotional expression, it may be advisable that mediators adopt communicative behaviours (such as physical contact and expressions of encouragement) that, in the patient's culture of origin, tend to facilitate the manifestation of emotions.

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Appendix 1.

Outline for the interviews with psychologists about the biopsychosocial situation of the asylum seekers and refugees they treat, and about their professional experience in clinical interviews with mediators

- Training and professional experience of the interviewee
- What are the administrative procedures that are put in place for the psychological care of asylum seekers and refugees? What percentage of asylum seekers and refugees receive psychological care? How many patients are referred to psychiatric services? What other activities are psychologists involved in (workshops, seminars, etc.)?
- What is the socioeconomic situation of asylum seekers and refugees in the host country? What is the role of families and social support groups?
- What are the general characteristics of clinical interviews with asylum seekers and refugees? What is their duration and frequency? What types of treatment are implemented?
- What are the main psychological problems experienced by asylum seekers and refugees?
- What are the main differences between the biomedical conception of mental health and the conception proper to the cultures of origin of the patients? What about the relationship between patient and healer? How do they influence the development of clinical interviews? How do you deal with these differences?
- What are the main therapeutic challenges involved in the narration of traumatic events by asylum seekers and refugees?
- What are the main characteristics of the expression of emotions in the patients' cultures of origin? How do they influence the course of clinical interviews? How do you deal with them?
- What is the role of social stigma among asylum seekers and refugees in accessing mental health services?
- What have your experiences working with mediators generally been like? How does the presence of mediators influence the way interviews progress?
- How do you feel about a single mediator being involved in all the interviews with the same patient?
- Do mediators usually intervene to offer explanations related to cultural aspects and how does this influence the way the clinical interviews progress?

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- Are mediators often emotionally involved in the conduct of clinical interviews and how does this influence the way the clinical interviews progress?
 - What is your experience with mediation through remote audiovisual devices?
 - Have you had any emotional problems as a result of your work in clinical interviews with asylum seekers and refugees and, if so, how do you deal with them?

Appendix 2.

Outline for the interviews with mediators about their professional experiences in clinical interviews between psychologists and asylum seekers

- Training and professional experience of the interviewee
- What are the main terminological problems you often encounter in this type of situation?
- How does the issue of confidentiality affect patients and what do you do to ensure it?
- How do you generally deal with the issue of fidelity, and in what circumstances do you consider adding, removing or altering some of the expressions used by your interlocutors?
- Are you faced with situations where one of your interlocutors wants you to take his or her side? How do you deal with dilemmas related to impartiality?
- Do you find yourself in situations where you are asked by one of your interlocutors to carry out functions that are not those of a mediator? How do you react in such cases?
- What are the main problems related to the spatial and temporal regulation of the communicative interactions you have encountered? How do you deal with them?
- Do you usually intervene in all the clinical interviews with the same patient? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this practice?
- What is your experience with mediation through remote audiovisual devices?
- What are the general aspects of the patients' cultures of origin with respect to mental health that tend to generate the most misunderstandings? What communicative strategies do you use in these cases?
- What are the emotional aspects of the cultures of origin of the patients and their life experiences that most influence the way clinical interviews progress? What communicative strategies do you use in these cases?
- Have you experienced any emotional problems as a result of your work as a mediator in clinical interviews with asylum seekers and refugees and, if so, how do you deal with them?

Interpreting Distress Narratives in Italian Reception Centres: The need for caution when negotiating empathy¹

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Abstract

Based on first-hand data collected by the authors this paper examines how public service interpreters (known as “language mediators” in the Italian setting) negotiate empathic stress. The paper seeks to demonstrate how empathy can be beneficial in building a constructive relationship but can also negatively impact the interpreter. Following a description of the Italian setting, the authors analyse recorded mediated interactions and in-depth interviews in Italian migrant reception centres, illustrating how language mediators are pro-actively engaged during the mediated sessions in a mutually supportive relationship. As a result of the high level of distress in the narrative content, they struggle to position themselves professionally (impartiality) and personally (empathic alignment) vis-a-vis the migrant, especially when they themselves have similar migratory backgrounds. We suggest that although empathy is useful in the overall communication process to maximize cognitive and pragmatic comprehension, to build a relationship of trust and to provide an optimal rendition, it is crucial to be aware of the risks for the interpreter’s self-care. This is especially important in a country like Italy where language mediators are encouraged to engage pro-actively and empathically in the communication.

Keywords: PSI, empathy, refugees and migrants, reception centres, narratives of distress

¹ Whilst both authors have worked closely together to write this paper, M. Rudvin is responsible for part 1 and A. Carfagnini for the majority of part 2 (except for 2.2 which was analysed and written by both authors), including the data collection and transcription. The data are being analysed by Carfagnini from an interactional perspective for her PhD at the University of Mons.

1. Bonding and empathy

A number of disciplines in the humanities and in the hard sciences acknowledge the importance of soft skills, not only as a humanitarian value but because they optimize financial, medical, or other results. In this paper, we have chosen to focus specifically on one such soft skill that has come into the public arena in a broad range of disciplines over the last decade, namely empathy. Loosely seen as “putting oneself in another person’s shoes” and generally perceived as a positive value, it underpins the human ability to cooperate and collaborate in groups – an “other-oriented” ability upon which human civilization depends. Empathy has been hailed as a crucial relationship-building skill across a range of disciplines and professions (see e.g. Betzler 2019), and more recently also in interpreting studies.²

1.1 Disambiguating empathy

By virtue of having a predominantly positive connotation, it may seem self-evident that showing empathy is desirable, especially when dealing with persons in distress. A broadly used layman’s understanding of “empathy” contains multiple sub-sets and states of being that are often categorized, and therefore perceived, as uniform. Rather, empathy as a broad concept encompasses cognitive, affect-based and moral-ideological aspects. Among the many studies disambiguating empathy is Davis’ IRI index constructed around the four scales of perspective taking, fantasy, empathic concern and personal distress, and adopted by Merlini (2019) in her experimental study on empathy in interpreter education. In their 2013 study, Gleichgerrcht and Decety, further elucidate the multidimensional nature of empathy:

There is now a converging agreement that empathy is not a single ability but a complex socio-emotional competency that encompasses different interacting components. **Empathic**

² See e.g. Mercer and Reynolds (2002); Hojat *et al.* (2002, 2017). For empathic communication in interpreting, see Merlini and Gatti (2015) Merlini (2019). See also the KU Leuven project *Empathiccare4all* (Salaets, Wermuth, Pype, Krystallidou) focusing on integrating empathy into the interpreter training curriculum:

https://www.arts.kuleuven.be/english/rg_interpreting_studies/research-projects/empathiccare4all/index.

Çoban and Albiz Telci (2106) suggest integrating emotional intelligence into translation and interpreter training.

arousal, the first element of empathy to appear during ontogeny, refers to the contagious sharing of the affective state of another. **Empathic understanding** entails the formation of an explicit mental representation of the emotional state of another person. **Empathic concern** refers to other-oriented emotion felt for someone in need, which produces a motivational state of increasing the other's welfare. Finally, **emotion regulation** enables the control of emotion, affect, drive, and motivation. Even though these components are intertwined and not independent of one another, it is helpful to dissociate them, as each contributes to various aspects of the experience of empathy. (Gleichgerrcht and Decety 2013: 2; our emphasis)

In a translation or interpreting setting, the very act of translation rests upon what we might broadly call *cognitive empathy* (a pre-affect state): having a mental representation of the writer's/speaker's intentionality (to the extent this is possible).³ Whereas translators or conference interpreters can rely primarily on cognitive empathy, public service interpreters are frequently confronted with the need to understand and relate directly to people recounting distress narratives, potentially triggering *empathic concern*. Being able to distinguish states of empathy (cognitive, moral, ideological, psychological, and emotional) can help *emotion regulation* and counter potential empathy-related stress.

1.2 The medical field: empathy enhances treatment

Many disciplines and professions encourage empathy as a constructive skill, but it is the medical literature (in both physical and mental health) that is particularly robust. "Entering into" the patient's experience by listening attentively and by verbally and non-verbally communicating an empathic bond, can help the clinician reach a more accurate diagnosis, provide better treatment, and obtain better patient compliance.⁴ The

³ The distinction between cognitive vs affective empathy is not however clearcut. Hojat *et al.* (2017), for example, distinguish between cognitive and affective empathy, but regard affective empathy as "sympathy". For simplicity, we choose to regard cognitive empathy as propositional and as pragmatic comprehension, and affective empathy as engagement.

⁴ There is by now a great wealth of literature on this in the medical sciences (e.g. Gleichgerrcht and Decety, 2013). There is also a growing field of popular literature available on the internet on the therapeutic impact of a constructive

medical literature thus suggests that empathy not only furthers cognitive understanding, but is therapeutic in and of itself. However, the (positive) empathic bond created between clinician and patient can create an emotional overload that can be difficult to regulate, jeopardizing self-care. Although empathy and trust are instrumental to therapeutic success, they may add another potential stressor for the clinician not least in the mental health setting and in settings involving trauma.⁵ Impacting factors are both intrinsic to the information content (distress narratives of profound trauma, violence, abuse, etc.) and extrinsic to it (the therapist's own identification and involvement, as perceived personally by him- or herself).

In interpreter-mediated patient-clinician communication, if the interpreter is party to the empathic communication and is able to represent – to the extent that is possible – the clinician's propositional and pragmatic message in his/her rendition, this will further mutual comprehension. Furthermore, in the same way that an empathic bond helps to establish trust between patient and clinician (optimizing patient compliance), it can crucially help the interpreter establish a relationship of *trust*, especially in situations involving intense emotions or physical danger. Results such as these are useful in order to understand how listening to distress narratives is processed by interpreters in a broader array of settings, including the refugee setting.

patient-clinician relationship (e.g. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/should_we_train_clinicians_for_empathy).

⁵ Communicative events involving refugees and victims of violence (torture, domestic violence, abuse, etc.) are particularly pertinent settings; research examining interpreters and trauma narratives has been increasing, such as the EU funded SOS-VICS project on interpreting and gender-based violence. See Valero-Garcés (2005) and Rudvin and Pesare's 2015 study from a migrant identification centre. See also Ndongo-Keller (2015) for a more recent study of interpreters and vicarious trauma. Zancanaro's excellent unpublished 2019 MA thesis is a valuable insight into the work of interpreters and mediators working with victims of torture, and contains an in-depth discussion of situational, professional and psychological issues. For research relating specifically to interpreting and clinicians see Hlavac (2017) and Krystallidou et al. (2018). Research on Sign Language Interpreting (e.g. Harvey, 2003) began to address empathy and self-care quite early on. Gallaudet University Press has published many excellent studies; for an early study see Metzger (1999). See also Robyn Dean's work, and the more recent work she has done with Robert Pollard on the Demand control schema perspective (Dean and Pollard, 2011).

1.3 Potentially harmful effects of empathy

Although empathy is important for human moral and social organization, un-regulated empathy can also be a cause of distress if it leads to an internalization of the other person's pain (known as vicarious, or secondary trauma). Rauvola *et al.* (2019: 298) define empathy-based stress as “a process of trauma exposure (i.e., a stressor) combined with the experience of empathy (i.e., an individually- and contextually-driven affective reaction) that results in empathy-based strain, adverse occupational health reactions, and other work-relevant outcomes.” They define secondary traumatic stress as “the stress reaction induced in caregivers following exposure to clients’ traumatic material” (Rauvola *et al.*, 2019: 303). The authoritative British Medical Association (BMA) gives the following definition of vicarious trauma:

Vicarious trauma is a process of change resulting from empathetic engagement with trauma survivors. Anyone who engages empathetically with survivors of traumatic incidents, torture, and material relating to their trauma, is potentially affected, including doctors and other health professionals.⁶

1.4 Potential negative impact of empathy on interpreter

The work of scholars such as Beverly Costa and Marjorie Bancroft have thrown light on how interpreters listening to distress narratives and becoming deeply involved in the event, are particularly susceptible to vicarious trauma: “Although we know that many survivors experience trauma, most people don’t realize how often interpreters experience vicarious trauma. ... It’s a dirty secret that many interpreters are affected by VT, yet few are trained to manage it.”⁷

⁶ <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/your-wellbeing/vicarious-trauma/vicarious-trauma-signs-and-strategies-for-coping>.

⁷ <https://www.ata-chronicle.online/cover-feature/breaking-silence-what-interpreters-need-to-know-about-victim%E2%80%A8services-interpreting/.%20See%20also%20Bancroft%E2%80%99s%20Access2Interpreter%E2%80%A8website%20at%20https://www.access2interpreters.com/breaking-silence-what-interpreters-need-to-know-about-victim-services-interpreting/>

As early as 1999, the psychologist Karen Baistow reported on interpreter stress related to traumatic content at one of the first international conferences on community interpreting. Her findings (295 respondents) showed that more than 66% were sometimes upset by the material they had to interpret, and 49% experienced mood or behavioral changes related to their work. Lai *et al.*'s large-scale 2015 study (271 respondents), examined interpreter stress related to emotional involvement and issues of self-care, reporting a high level of emotional stress and vicarious trauma. Like Lai *et al.*, Costa *et al.* (2020) also address the “tug-of-war” between emotions and a “neutral code of ethics”, as does Costa in a previous study:

They would hear and relay clients' harrowing stories. But their ethical code binds them to strict confidentiality and requires them to take no action beyond the transfer of meaning between speakers of different languages. Interpreters cannot offer a solution to the problems they hear, nor can they talk to anyone about the impact the stories have on them. They are left without any means of relief.⁸

Polat's (2020: 697) most recent paper perfectly captures the frustration regarding role boundaries through the notion of “restricted agency”, her respondents expressing alignment to a professional code of conduct. The author provides numerous examples illustrating the emotion-impartiality dilemma in her data from interpreters in refugee settings. Her interviewees confirm that they try to control their emotions and maintain “emotional stamina” during the mediation session; the majority are strongly committed to their impartiality guidelines stating that “an interpreter who shares the same culture or the same traumatic past may lose neutrality by causing emotionality in their own behavior. In such cases, the interpreter should show emotional maturity and stamina, and avoid behaviors that may adversely affect the interview” (*ibid.*: 695).

Emotional stress adds to an already intense real-time cognitive processing during the interpreting session, potentially compromising the quality of the interpreting rendition. As Lai *et al.* (2015: 15) state “any additional load caused by the cognitive shifts described above will divert the brain's finite resources away from the task of rendering one language comprehensibly into another and cause a decline in the interpreting performance, either in accuracy, fluency, or completeness.”

⁸ <https://research.reading.ac.uk/exploring-archives/2019/10/29/dr-costa-on-around-the-well/> See also Costa 2020.

Lastly, where service providers “enter into” a distress narrative in order to understand, diagnose and treat – which could feel cathartic when successfully resolved – interpreters’ role-boundary limitation (Polat’s “restrictive agency”) excludes them from the benefits of positive “closure”. Thus, where service providers in many professions can proactively provide solutions to the narrator’s distress, the interpreter cannot, a situation which may lead to feelings of paralysis, inertia and powerlessness.

The picture that emerges from the works mentioned above is the need to include emotional stress management in interpreter training (and by the same token the need to use professional rather than ad-hoc interpreters), provide clear-cut guidelines on role boundaries, and support groups (such as that of Costa’s *Mother tongue* or the online support groups she describes in Costa *et al.*, 2020).

1.5 PSI and language mediation. Balancing empathy and self-care

Based on numerous interactions, interviews and surveys with managers, trainers, language mediators and mediation students over the last two decades, and confirmed in the data-sets described here, a clear picture has emerged for us as researchers and interpreter trainers: language mediators in Italy are encouraged to be more pro-active in their interactions with clients than what is expected of interpreters in most English-speaking and European countries in those same settings. There is by now ample literature describing how the role of the “language mediator”⁹ (IM) is

⁹ <https://www.cies.it/mediazione-interculturale/>. The CNEL guidelines also provide an indication of job descriptions. UNI has recently provided standards for community interpreters (available at http://store.uni.com/catalogo/iso-13611-2014/?josso_back_to=http://store.uni.com/josso-security-check.php&josso_cmd=login_optional&josso_partnerapp_host=store.uni.com#) For further details on the Italian situation see e.g Rudvin and Spinzi (2014); Merlini and Gatti (2015); Zancanaro(2019).

The international literature on Community- and Public Service Interpreting provides ample examples of codes of ethics, especially as they pertain to specific sectors: the National Association of Legal Interpreters (<https://najit.org/>) provides a much-used code of ethics; the Californian Standards for Healthcare Interpreters.

(http://www.chiaonline.org/Resources/Documents/CHIA%20Standards/standards_chia.pdf). Sandra Hale (2007) provides an overview of codes of ethics from around the world, from which three recurrent tenets emerge that we consider to be central to the interpreting profession: accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality.

highly agentic as a result of both training and job description. In this paper, solely for the purposes of brevity, we will be using the terms “public service interpreter” and “language mediator” in the Italian sense of the term synonymously; when referring to the Italian setting, we will use an abbreviated form of Interpreter-Mediator, namely IM (see e.g. Rudvin and Spinzi, 2014). Due to the lack of professional, organizational, institutional and juridical structure surrounding “language mediation” in Italy, there is no consolidated national code of ethics, although some of the larger NGOs such as CIES have ethical guidelines. Many Italian organizations prefer to hire mediators from the same countries as the non-Italian speaker precisely because they expect a pro-active intervention (by the mediator) that will also take on board – also pre-emptively – cultural aspects that an “outsider” might not be able to provide. An example of this is the code of ethics provided by the cultural organization CIES above, that actively promotes empathic bonding between IM and migrant whilst requiring the IM to be impartial and to provide an accurate (but summary) translation as well as cultural decoding. An important caveat here is that many IMs do not receive training (due to lack of organization and/or funding) and are hired on the basis of language and cultural compatibility. The provision or lack of training impacts deeply both on interpreter self-care and performance.

In Italy, both the role (tending towards an “assistance-based approach”) and the terminology (“mediation” rather than “interpreting”) reflect and shape the Italian approach. This is relevant to the present discussion because the real and perceived self-participation and agency of the IM could strengthen the bond and the degree of perceived empathy. If the IM belongs to the same ethnic group as the migrant (or are themselves victims of trauma¹⁰), the likelihood of bonding and identification taking place is – we claim – increased; likewise, in settings involving narratives of severe trauma, the engaged approach will likely trigger stress-inducing empathic bonds. Our data suggest that IMs are forced to balance various sets of professional and personal ethics. We suggest that in this “struggle”, affect-based empathy may run deeper and prevail over professional distancing ethics, unless previously addressed (i.e. in training).

In our data, there were multiple cases of IMs struggling to negotiate complex empathic bonds against baseline injunctions of not taking sides and maintaining distance. Reflecting the Italian “mediated approach”, the IMs were at times actively advising migrants on how to proceed in order

¹⁰ See Ahlberg’s in-depth 2008 study on her experience as a clinical psychologist working with victims of torture; the book contains many reflections on the therapist-interpreter-patient relationship.

for their application to be successful. Indeed, they were frequently encouraged to “take over” the event, with no clear boundaries regarding professional mandate. This lack of clarity triggers a shift of focus from cognition-empathy (understanding and translating) to affect-empathy (or possibly antipathy), an extra stressor in the already complex task at hand. The further the IM is drawn into the situation as an active decision-maker in terms of content, information exchange and procedure, the more difficult it will be to manage affect-based empathy, we suggest.

In the previous paragraphs we have looked at both beneficial and potentially harmful effects of empathy, arguing that the interest in empathy as an interpreting skill is important, but should be treated with caution. This is even more so for a setting that by definition involves high-impact distress narratives, namely the refugee setting.

2. Data-Sets and analysis

2.1 Description

Data consist of first-hand material collected by Carfagnini at two reception centres in Italy. CARA (Centro di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo), a reception centre for asylum seekers operating under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior, was hosting asylum seekers. The second centre, under the auspices of an international Catholic organization, assists refugees and forced migrants.¹¹

These data were collected between October 2013 and March 2014 while in-depth interviews were carried out between September and October 2019.

There are three data-sets:

- 19 audio-recorded mediated interactions of medical consultations (involving French and English as lingua franca);
- 16 hours of recorded semi-structured interviews involving: 9 IMs, 5 doctors and psychotherapists, 3 legal assistants, 1 social

¹¹ Data were also collected by the authors in two additional CIE (Centro di identificazione ed espulsione) centres, in two different cities, hosting undocumented migrants. Further data from the CIE in Bologna were collected by Rudvin in 2014 (Rudvin and Pesare, 2015).

assistant, 1 humanitarian assistant and 1 social assistant dealing with victims of trafficking;¹²

- contextual data collected *in situ* through ethnographic methods such as direct observation of 20 IMs, 7 doctors, 3 social assistants, and 3 legal assistants.

The transcription format is inspired by Gallez's PHD thesis (2014). Although space-consuming, it has the advantage of clearly visualizing the turn progression in the triadic interaction. This format is therefore a useful visual tool to analyze the IM's moves from an interactionist perspective. The interviews provide clear evidence of negotiation of empathic bonds. The excerpts illustrate the IM's attempt to find a balance between engagement and self-protection.

Whereas the mediated interactions (see excerpts in 2.3 below) provide data that attest to the IMs' positive empathic engagement, it was the *in situ* contextual data and the semi-structured interviews that clearly illustrated the inner struggle of the IMs regarding their empathic positioning. Thus, the first data set provides examples of positive empathic engagement, whilst the other two data-sets – supported by examples from an ongoing survey – illustrate how empathic engagement can play out negatively for IMs.

2.2 Ongoing on-line survey on empathy and stress among IMs

A fourth source of data, an online survey conducted by the authors, specifically probing issues of empathy and stress among IMs in Italy, supports the data-sets. Although the survey is still ongoing and the results too few to warrant its inclusion as a separate data-set (14 respondents to date, 11 of whom work in the health sector and/or with refugees), the responses clearly demonstrate that empathy can be a powerful potential stressor. The majority of the respondents stated that it is important to establish a rapport with the non-Italian speaking migrant; "helping" and "giving a voice to" the migrant is overwhelmingly seen as a positive feature.

The following comments show how much importance the respondents give to an empathic interpersonal relationship with the migrant, and how deeply they are driven by their own sense of solidarity and/or

¹² We refer to the situation in effect during our data collection. At the time of writing, the latest decree Law 113/2018 has brought significant changes to the structure of the Italian reception system.

responsibility; at times the empathic bond is strengthened by their own migratory experiences. Here are some examples from the survey (translated from Italian by the authors):

I would say that each of them has their own story and their own way of dealing with things. But the bond I had with them remained a bond of fraternity.

After the interview I always kept in touch with my friends because I am young, only 22 years old, and most of the people I meet are either the same age or a little older. For me it is important because I always try to help, not materially, but with advice. I have been an undocumented migrant, so I always try to share my experience.

For me it is important to create a bond, even if they are about to leave, because usually the migrant is wary of the other person and to open up he will need reassurance otherwise he closes up inside and won't say anything else. It's really important not to let yourself get carried away by the feelings that result from those bonds; you have to put limits, so that you can interpret well without taking sides.

Sometimes even just a kind word or a piece of advice showing empathy can be of great help for those who are really desperate.

It's nice to help those in need.

The second part of the survey aimed to probe for potential negative effects of the migrant-IM bond. The following are some of the results that emerged (questions in italics, followed by response). *The bond with the migrant can be negative because ...* (options provided). A third of the respondents answered "it renders the IM less impartial" and "it makes the IM seem less professional in the eyes of the service provider"; just under a third answered "it gives the IM too much responsibility"; and "it can be painful if 'sad stories' are involved"; over a third answered "I keep thinking about it after the interpreting session". *Do you ever find yourself re-living the migrant's problems as if it were your own experience?* Over a third answered "yes". *Do you ever re-live past traumas or difficult situations that you have experienced in the past as a result of what you are listening to during the*

mediated session? A third answered “yes”, and a small minority “don’t know”. *Do you ever feel bad because of what you are listening to?* Over two thirds answered “yes”. A spontaneous comment in response to the last question was the following: “I felt like reliving the death of my mother and then I had to ask them to stop the session and I asked my colleague to replace me, as I was no longer able to continue.”

Interestingly, when asked if they used any coping strategies to deal with the stress resulting from the session, 13 replied that they either: “try not to think about it”, “talk about it with the family”, “participate in sports or other activities” or “other”. Only three said that they “didn’t need any strategies as such”¹³. (There were 13 responses; several answers were possible). Our results strongly suggest that empathic bonds were being created during contact with migrants and that IMs were struggling to negotiate these bonds. Indeed, such bonds were seen as positive and appropriate, but at the same time a source of inner conflict.

2.3 Identifying areas of conflict and tension in the data-sets

The interview format in the second data-set was designed after careful examination of patterns observed during the four weeks spent inside the centres by Carfagnini¹⁴. The questions mainly focused on the way the IM’s communicative strategies were influenced by and interconnected with the different services and service providers in the centers. Research strands that emerged during the semi-structured interviews and further interactions include: How do the IMs experience empathic pressure? How does it impact on the communicative situation? Do they draw back to protect themselves? Do they align more closely with the asylum applicant, or with the institution? Do they prioritize the ultimate goal of the communicative event (a successful asylum application) and actively help the migrant, thus activating “deep”, rather than “surface”, ethics? Is an empathic bond felt to be an added stressor?

¹³ These answers might reflect a reluctance to admit difficulties in managing or regulating emotional engagement to save professional and personal face – or simply the strong desire to do a good job while showing humanity (as indeed cultural/linguistic-mediation training in Italy encourages). The data must also be seen in the light of occupational conditions – lack of pre- or continuous training, lack of clear guidelines, lack of professional prestige and certainly lack of adequate pay. All such factors compromise professional motivation.

¹⁴ Semi-structured interviews based on a 58-item questionnaire (open and closed questions).

Respondent 1: Malinke IM from the Ivory Coast, with Italian-Malinke/French/Bambara/English language combinations¹⁵. When asked about coping strategies, he replies¹⁶:

So to tell you the truth, when I started to work as a mediator, the first few months were difficult. I was also a refugee, having experienced some of the problems, not all of them, so at the beginning **I found myself inside the patients' stories**. I had **difficulty in detaching myself** from these problems and it made me feel bad and I also had difficulties at home to sleep, because I was always thinking about these bad stories.

It doesn't mean that a mediator isn't a person, we have a heart, emotions, but he **mustn't show these emotions, you have to control them. But often it's not easy**, someone who starts crying for 30 minutes, you're a bit confused as a mediator, because **you start to live again the difficulties**. Because **we mediators are refugees too**. Some of us have also crossed the desert, have passed through these experiences, and they come to tell you about them in front of you. And from the beginning it reminds you of all the difficulties. But it is your job. **You have to make the difference between the work, the mediator, your role as mediator, and your life**. You're here to support, to help this young man, not to cry.

Respondent 2: Tunisian IM with Italian-Arabic/French language combinations. In the following excerpt he was describing a particularly complex emotional situation:

Even if now I have less difficulty than before, the difficulty is **when the patient is too emotionally charged**, when an emotion that is too strong emerges from the patient and even

¹⁵ Respondent 1 did not only work for the centre where Carfagnini met him, but had also worked for and was still working for many centres dealing with migrants in the first reception phase.

¹⁶ Transcriptions and translations of interactions and interviews by Carfagnini. Emphasis added. All translations have been adapted as little as possible to ensure readability and comprehension but at the same time maintain the oral nature and sometimes stylistic incongruencies.

you, as a human being, the mediator is also often **in difficulty, emotionally implicated, affected by the words**. So, often, for us, emotions can emerge that can make you feel sad. It's true that **I try to resist my emotions, but there is still some sympathy** when confronted with a difficult story.

Respondent 3: IM from Mali with the following language combinations: Italian – Bambara/French/English/Wolof/Mandingo¹⁷. In the following excerpt he specifically addresses alignment issues:

As far as the positive aspects are concerned, in my opinion it is very **important to create trust between the three parties** involved in the interaction because **if there is no such bond of trust, you go nowhere**. ...Well, let's not forget that most of the migrants have been persecuted in their country, so one who runs away from a difficult, dramatic situation, **always sees the doctor or the mediator as the boss**. So they already come with an idea that they always feel persecuted so it is very **important to create this trust**, to confide in you to allow them to speak, **to bring out the problem by themselves**. So that's the positive aspect, it is important in my opinion. The negative aspect, if there is one, is however the **risk of not being able to put a barrier between the professional bond and what we can call the heart bond**. And it's a little more nuanced in that case. We're human beings.

In the patient-clinician interactions we find recurrent alignment patterns. In the excerpt below, the participants are a 40-45 year old Italian female GP; a 40-45 year old male patient from Mauritania (P); and a 35-40 year old female IM of Ivorian origin. To the doctor's (GP) question "What is the reason for your visit?" the patient (P) replies that he has a date for the hearing, and that they have requested a medical report. The doctor (GP) shows the IM this part of the report as illustrated in the following sequence:¹⁸

¹⁷ Respondent 3 had worked for more the 50 reception centres in one specific region of Italy and had more than 8 years of experience.

¹⁸ In transcribing the original utterances, the following conventions were adopted:

[] overlapping utterances
 = latched utterances

N°	Doctor – GP	Mediator - IM	Patient - P
89	Do you understand? ((GP shows IM the medical records))		
90		mhm	
91	((GP looks IM in the eye)) so try to find out how he got those scars(.) well (.) he does have scars(.) but:		
92		how'd you get those scars?	
93			but now (.) I've come to Italy now
94		where are you from?	
95			e: (.) until after a month (.) I've got through the forest=
96		=>>no no no no no >> (.) I said (.) where are you from? Where do you come from? (.) Your country? What country are you from?	
97			Mauritania
98		Mauritania	
99			yes
100		where'd you get those scars? How'd you get them?	
101			li:ste:n to me ca:refully (1)
102		mhm	
103			I (.) look after animals

- (.) brief pause
 (2) pause of 2 seconds
 (+) pause of more than 2 seconds
 ↑ rising intonation
 °text° decreased volume
 te::xt stretched sound
 TEXT louder volume
 >text> increased pace
 <text< decreased pace
 (xxx) inaudible
 ((text)) analyst comments or descriptions

104		mhm	
105			in the forest
106		mhm	
107			now until a month (.) I went through the trees (2)
108		mhm (+) I'm listening eh sir?	
109			the (xxx) kept the animals >the animals they made me fall> (.) and there is a lot of torture (.) now I went to Marocco
110		did the animals do this to you?	
111			yes
112		>>HOW ?>>	
113			eh::- my boss↑
114		>>GET dressed please >>	
115			what are you saying?
116		>please get dressed> (.) ((IM turns and looks at GP)) °very confused°=	
117			=NOW I have [a
118	[confused? ((GP and IM look at each other while P speaks))		
119		mhm	

The doctor gives the IM the floor, telling her: “so try to find out how he got those scars”. The IM is very straightforward, adopts a peremptory tone and seeks to impose her professional authority; in an interview that took place after the consultation, she explained that as an African woman her prior experience with African men had led her to feel that she was not being treated as a professional, and that the interpersonal dynamic was crucial between them. As the interaction unfolds, her willingness to encourage communication increases. The IM’s communicative tone becomes more and more friendly, encouraging the patient to tell her as much as possible about his health problems. Four times the IM takes the initiative to interject questions: “Do you have any other problems besides that? Do you have other health problems?” (line 145), “Other than that?” (line 174), “Yes (.) apart from that (.) is everything physically all right? (line 178)”, “Apart from that, are you all right? I (.) speak to you (.) on a (.) physical level. You don't have any health problems apart from the foot

and there?” (line 205). The IM’s proactive, engaged approach is meant to establish rapport, strongly signaling empathy and a desire to help the patient.

Other examples of empathic IM-migrant bonds that are successfully dealt with by the IM in the first data-set are the following. In one interaction, an asylum seeker from the Ivory Coast is afraid that providing a blood sample could lead to him losing all his blood. But the interpreter understands this and continues to converse with the patient to reassure him. In another interaction, a woman from Mauritania has been a victim of abuse for 10 years, the perpetrator being a man for whom she did domestic chores. When asked “Where do you sleep?”, the patient responded “It’s him, the one who helped me here”. The IM hearing “him” is afraid that “him” refers to the same man who had been hurting her for 10 years, so she decides on her own initiative to continue asking questions, as if to reassure herself that the patient is in safe hands.

Although we observed IMs engaging empathically with migrants when listening to their traumatic narratives in our interactional data, we did not witness first-hand any triadic interactions characterized by conflicting empathic behaviors. However, in the contextual data and in the informal interviews, IMs frequently reported negotiating empathic stress, and one of their main concerns was indeed struggling to negotiate an empathically engaged approach. Many IMs stressed that keeping the right distance on an emotional level was paramount in order not to “lose control”. In the words of an Eritrean IM:

It’s really a job that you have to do, it’s really a job that you have to do in your head; when you leave home, eh::: **you have to have two pairs of shoes.** Two pairs of shoes. When you come into the house, you have to leave your shoes behind you; that’s what they say. Especially with the refugee boats; it isn’t easy, it’s hard, it isn’t easy; there should be a psychologist for the mediator; yes, yes.

This also reflected the preliminary results from the online survey as described above, and from both authors’ previous work with IMs in Italy. An example from the second data-set – the interviews – illustrates the IM’s acute struggle to negotiate empathy, putting at risk their own self-care. In our data we see that this last aspect, self-care, usually kicks in later, after the session. Although the IMs seemed to handle empathic stress well during the session itself, it is impossible to say how this might affect them in the long run. The dilemmas and feelings of intense stress observed in

both the online survey and the recorded sessions are strongly supported by the *in situ* observations and the informal conversations Carfagnini had with the IMs during her research period. A Tunisian IM who arrived in Italy in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring, tells the researcher how he finds it difficult to negotiate certain situations. He gives the example of two young boys who had just come off the refugee boats, and had lost both mother and father during the sea voyage. It was very difficult, he says. During the mediation sessions he tries to exercise self-control and not cry, but afterwards, in the evening, he vents his frustration with others or goes out to get drunk.

It's the kind of thing that makes your hair go grey or makes you stay awake till four in the morning, but while you're with that person, **you try to avoid it [crying]. It's really really hard.** For me personally it's the most difficult thing there is, maintaining a distance from the stories they tell. And:: often I hear such painful stories and I feel like crying, **but it's not the right time, at all,** and so one has to try to stay strong until after the session, **and then go alone to get drunk.**

An Eritrean IM still remembers the arrival of a group of Eritreans and, perceiving their suffering, she still remembers their smell – associated with the suffering:

I remember an episode, in Crotona. They called me at three in the morning, some boats had arrived, **some boats had arrived from Lampedusa;** instead of taking the migrants from Lampedusa to Crotona, **they kept them for three days** [in another city].¹⁹ Can you believe that? Can you believe that I was feeling unwell, I was unwell for 15 days, I was unwell because for 24 hours I could smell their smell. For 24 hours **I could smell their smell, that stayed with me for 15 days.** I went back, I went there for 15 days, but I came back, I couldn't do it; I was in the shower the whole time. **These are traumas;** maybe when I tell these stories, they're hard to even believe; d'you understand? **Only those people who have experienced this can understand certain things; oh well; bad, eh... Really awful.**

Carfagnini heard numerous similar narratives during her research period. What emerged was a clear picture of how IMs attempted to negotiate emotionally highly complex interactions with very few tools for support.

¹⁹ Added by the authors in order to omit the city for reasons of privacy.

They negotiated as best as they could, trying to “be strong” and not getting carried away by their emotions. It was afterwards however, after the sessions, in their daily lives, that they felt the true emotional impact of the empathic bond. This could take the form of insomnia, recurrent anxious thoughts, crying, alcohol consumption or lingering smells.

3. Concluding remarks

Showing concern for a person in need – empathy – is a valuable human quality, and triggers the desire to help, which is a fundamental drive for human survival. We have argued above that empathy can help professionals to better understand their interlocutors, encourage cooperation and trigger positive treatment reactions. Both cognitive and emotional empathy can be a useful part of the interpreter’s tool-kit in many ways. However, although encouraging interpreters and language mediators to demonstrate emotional empathy when listening to narratives of distress seems both natural and moral, the consequences of not managing potential stress resulting from that very same empathic bond can be harmful. It is crucial that the interpreter or language mediator is made aware of the dangers of empathic bonding to him/herself, and is given the tools and resources to pre-empt and/or manage any resulting trauma, especially in those countries where interpreters are encouraged to engage pro-actively with the interlocutors.

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***From Italy with love:
Narratives of expat political engagement
in a corpus of Italian media outlets***

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Abstract

Political participation of non-resident citizens in their country of origin has become a common practice around the world. The enfranchisement of Italians abroad has allowed the participation of non-resident citizens in the general elections since 2006 (twelve MPs and six Senators). Over the years, electoral results in the foreign constituency have generated an increasing interest within media outlets in Italy due to the impact of the votes in the national elections. The aim of the paper is to understand the way in which Italian newspapers have portrayed the political engagement of Italians living abroad one month before and after the 2018 elections. The paper analyses the narratives offered by these media outlets by means of a specialized corpus composed of Italian online newspapers. Starting from the corpus-based analysis of a selection of terms related to expats, relevant discourse patterns are uncovered showing attitudes and stances towards Italians abroad and their political engagement.

Keywords: migration; external voting; Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies; political discourse analysis; Italy

1. Introduction: the Italian transnational community and the Italian media

Between the 19th and 20th century, Italy experienced significant emigration waves that had long-term implications for the presence of Italians abroad. The first emigration wave, also known as The Great Migration, started in the 1890s and saw Italians leaving their country of origin to relocate mostly in North and South America. Italian emigration

continued during the twentieth century as a result of the two World Wars and it has been estimated that between 1876 and 1976, almost 26 million Italians relocated abroad (Del Boca and Venturini, 2003: 2).

Over the years, Italians abroad maintained strong connections with their homeland. Because of the large presence of citizens abroad, fostering the connection with Italians living in foreign countries became a matter of interest for Italian policymakers. This resulted in the implementation of policies aimed at maintaining strong socio-economic, cultural and political ties with non-resident citizens. Scholars, including Bettinelli (1995), have argued that Italian policymakers implemented policies targeting the transnational community due to a sense of guilt developed over the years towards Italian citizens because of the forced emigration. In the late 1800s up until the mid-1900s, the relocation of many Italians was a relief for the country due to economic hardship. For this reason, the country had to find a way to reconnect with the emigrant community.

The interest Italy demonstrated towards citizens living abroad and their descendants resulted in very generous policies, such as the 1992 dual citizenship policy. This policy represented a turning point for the Italian transnational community. Based on the *ius sanguinis* principles (the right of the blood), it allows Italian citizens to maintain full citizenship rights, including political rights, and transmit Italian citizenship to their descendants with no limitations in the family tree as long as members can prove they have Italian blood (Zincone, 2006). Because of the nature of the citizenship policy, the transnational community increased significantly in numbers over the past decades, with a presence of almost 5.3 million Italians abroad in 2018. The current figure of Italian expats, however, is also the result of the new presence of Italian citizens who relocated to foreign countries in recent years. Due to the Global Financial Crisis in 2011, many Italians, especially young citizens, relocated abroad starting what has been described by scholars as a new phenomenon of Italian mobility (De Lazzari, 2017).

This paper focuses on Italy since it was one of the first nations worldwide to implement such a generous policy. As a result of it, the transnational community participated in the elections with turnouts of more than 30%, demonstrating the interest Italians abroad have towards politics in their country of origin (De Lazzari, 2019). Moreover, both the large presence of the Italian transnational community and the importance it has gained in the home country, in particular from a political standpoint, make Italy a good case study for the investigation of narratives of diasporic context. In particular, within the Italian (transnational) context and with the increasing pervasiveness of online Italian newspapers and the ability of the transnational community to access information through the

internet, the question of the impact of the Italian media on the preferences of Italians abroad has been raised (especially in the latest general elections in 2018). The narrative offered by Italian media on Italians abroad represents the focus of this paper to understand how these media outlets discussed the participation of Italians abroad and whether they can affect the perception of the external voting in Italy and elsewhere.

As far as methodology is concerned, this study has employed an *ad-hoc* corpus, to uncover the discourses Italian newspapers use in the debate on external voting. This research is based on the assumption that digital media can consistently impact on the political talk, engagement and voting behaviours of the population (Bimber *et al.*, 2014). We have applied these principles by looking at discourses offered by Italian media in relation to external voting in the Italian context. We are well aware that the term *discourse* may be regarded as problematic and, in line with other scholars (Baker, 2006; Partington *et al.*, 2013) within the methodology of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS), we understand *discourses* as the “practices that systematically form the object of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972: 49). Language(s) is perhaps the most prominent realization of discourse(s), in that it is through language that discourses create representations of realities and of self, categorize and interpret social situations.

As we need to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to language and discourse, CADS provides a strong methodological framework that employs Corpus Linguistics (CL) as the main evidence-providing tool. Indeed, within the CADS framework, CL allows us to “uncover linguistic patterns which can enable us to make sense of the ways that language is used in the construction of discourses (or ways of construing reality)” (Baker, 2006: 1). A specialized corpus of Italian news outlets built for the purposes of this study (the ItalianMedia Corpus) will be our main evidence provider, and we will use it to explore the narratives of expat political engagement by means of concordances and collocational data, as well as by analysing “the wider context of text production and reception, and, of course, by relying on the researcher’s own intuition” (Nasti and Venuti, 2014: 31).

2. External voting and participation from abroad

To understand the political trends from abroad, it is important to grasp the composition of the Italian transnational community. The nature of the

new Italian emigration cannot be compared with previous emigration waves since numbers are significantly lower and the profile of current emigrants is very different compared to the Italian Diaspora of the previous century (Tirabassi and Del Prà, 2014). However, the new mobility has also contributed to enlarging the Italian community abroad. Figure 1 shows the increasing presence of Italians abroad over the years as a result of two phenomena: 1) the acquisition of Italian citizenship by Italian descendants, and 2) the new mobility of young Italians.

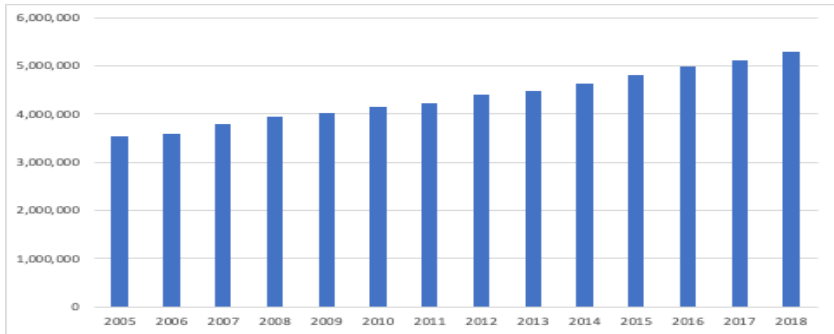


Figure 1. Registry of Italians residing abroad¹

It is important to mention that, when compared to the official data provided by the Italian Ministry of the Interior through the Registry of Italians Abroad (*Anagrafe Italiani Residenti all'Estero - AIRE*), the number of non-resident Italian citizens was estimated to be higher from the early 2000s since many of them decide not to register at the *AIRE* (Zincone, 2006).

Another interesting aspect to analyse is the country of residency of Italians currently abroad. Figure 2 shows the countries with the largest presence of non-resident citizens. As the data show, Argentina ranks first even though it is not a preferred destination for the current Italian mobility. As a result, these numbers can only be explained through the citizenship reacquisition process of many second and third-generation Italians, particularly those living in Latin American countries.

¹ Source: Authors' adaptations of data provided by the Ministry of the Interior from 2005 to 2018.

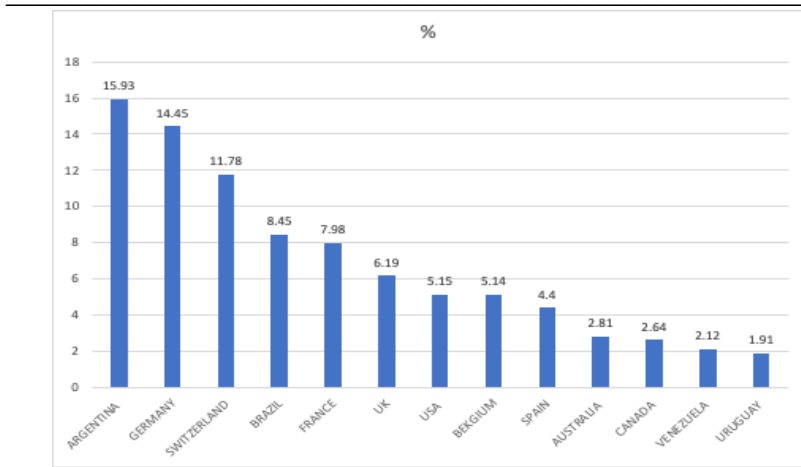


Figure 2. Registry of Italians Abroad in 2018 (percentage based of total residents abroad)²

Because of the significant presence of Italians living abroad, policymakers not only decided to support policies for the maintenance of the Italian culture and identity outside the national borders but also allowed Italians abroad to actively participate in the political life of their country of origin. This participation was not only secured through the implementation of this policy, but the Constitution was also changed to include the Foreign Constituency (*circonscrizione estero*), thus guaranteeing the political rights of Italian citizens abroad from a constitutional standpoint. These changes in the Constitution gave significant importance to the vote from abroad, demonstrating the relevance policymakers gave to the political participation of non-resident citizens at that time (Battiston and Mascitelli, 2008).

Based on the external voting policy, Italian citizens who live permanently abroad and are registered at the *AIRE* can cast their vote in general elections and referenda via correspondence from their country of residency. Even though the policy was adopted in 2001, it was tested for the first time in 2006 when the first general elections were held since its implementation. Since 2006, Italians abroad have participated in four

² Source: Authors' adaptation of data provided by the *Annuario delle Statistiche Ufficiali* of the Ministry of the Interior, Italy (2019).

general elections (2006, 2008, 2013 and 2018) and seven referenda of different nature.

The political participation from abroad attracted significant criticism from scholars, political parties and the media for different reasons. Firstly, in the general elections in 2006, questions were raised about the impact of votes coming from abroad since votes in the foreign constituency significantly contributed to the formation of the government. These results generated concerns about the legitimacy of the inclusion of non-resident citizens in the voting system and the impact Italians abroad can have in homeland politics (De Lazzari, 2019). Secondly, the postal vote method was heavily criticized on the ground of presumed lack of control over the ballot papers. This system, according to some, does not guarantee the secrecy of the vote (Sampugnaro, 2017). This topic was widely covered by the Italian media since the first elections in 2006 proving frauds in the voting system.

Lastly, over the years, political parties and members of Italian institutions have engaged in a debate on whether external voting should be reconsidered. Despite the decreasing participation from abroad, the number of citizens permanently residing in foreign countries has been increasing every year. Because of these trends, some policymakers have questioned the political engagement of Italians living abroad (Sampugnaro, 2017; De Lazzari, 2019).

Table 1 and Table 2 show the number of voters and corresponding percentages in the four elections (2006, 2008, 2013 and 2018).

	2006	2008	2013	2018
Electorate	2,707,382	2,924,178	3,494,687	4,230,854
Votes	1,053,864	1,155,411	1,103,989	1,262,422
%	38.93	39.51	31.59	29.82

Table 1. Participation in the foreign constituency in the 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2018 elections for the Chamber of Deputies³

³ Tables 1 and 2 - Source: Authors' adaptation of data provided by the Historical Archive of Elections, Ministry of the Interior (2006, 2008, 2013 and 2018).

	2006	2008	2013	2018
Electorate	2,432,340	2,627,832	3,149,501	3,835,780
Voters	962,107	1,059,625	1,009,921	1,160,985
%	39.55	40.32	32.07	30.27

Table 2. Participation in the foreign constituency in the 2006, 2008, 2013 and 2018 elections for the Senate

Despite the increasing number of Italians abroad, data indicate a decrease in the number of votes from abroad since 2013. In particular, in the last general elections in 2018, only 30% of the electorate (29.83% in the Chambers of Deputies and 30.27% in the Senate) cast their vote. These figures have posed questions regarding the current external voting policy and the system in place from a technical perspective (vote by correspondence) and from a more holistic standpoint, such as the legitimacy of the external voting policy for an old emigrant community.

In addition, the results show specific trends in the political preferences of Italians abroad in each district of the foreign constituency. Depending on the geographical areas, Italians abroad have demonstrated specific preferences due to historical factors, composition of the transnational community, influence of non-government actors (including the media), and impact of the transnational actions of Italian political parties.

3. The ItalianMedia Corpus: Design and Components

The ItalianMedia Corpus was built using BootCaT (Baroni and Bernardini, 2004), which is a tool allowing for text search, download and preparation. We chose to consider exclusively online news reports for two main reasons. First, the retrievability of sources: BootCaT allows for automated “quick-and-dirty” corpus building with some parameters to be defined manually by the user. Secondly, the popularity of online news: online news has become increasingly prominent in the last 20 years essentially transforming the news language itself and giving way to new forms of interaction between audiences and journalists as well as new convergent

platforms, such as social media (Gambier, 2006; Flew, 2009; Zappavigna, 2015).

The text sources composing the ItalianMedia Corpus were selected on the basis of the online presence indicator of Italian newspapers, that also have a printed version. The online presence indicator makes an estimate of the “total digital audience” of a website measuring access to a website through PC and/or mobile devices excluding any possible overlapping. We chose newspapers with both an online and a printed version as, in our opinion, this allowed to strike a balance between the total exclusion of the printed press or the total exclusion of online news. Finally, we established 8,000 as a cut-off value of the online presence indicator and this allowed us to select the newspapers in Figure 3.

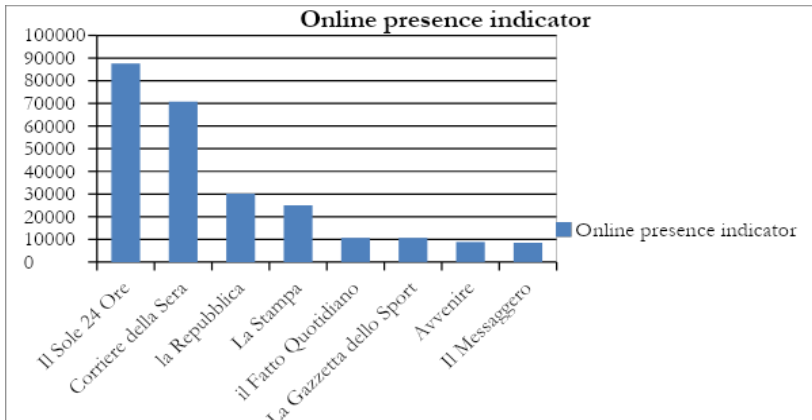


Figure 3. Italian newspapers with online presence indicator >8,000⁴

Once we decided which newspapers to use, we used Google to operationalize the following requests: one website only, restricted time-frame, and restricted number of search words. Based on these requests, we performed searches using the following string and restricted them to the period February 1st to April 1st, 2018:

site: nameofnewspaperwebsite.it elezioni OR voto italiani
estero OR elezioni politiche OR circoscrizione OR AIRE

⁴ Source: Authors' adaptation of data provided by *Accertamenti Diffusione Stampa* (<http://www.adsnotizie.it/>).

This operation was necessary to extract a list of URLs to feed into BootCaT, which then automatically downloaded the texts. Through this process, we obtained eight separate text collections (sub-corpora) and uploaded them onto AntConc (Anthony, 2019), which is the concordancer we used for this study. Table 3 below contains relevant information about the ItalianMedia Corpus and its components.

In line with the CADS methodology, the interaction with the texts was kept to a minimum with the intention of minimizing the “semiotic impoverishment” (Hardt-Mautner, 1995) texts undergo while changing their context of appearance (Partington *et al.*, 2013). Although objectivity is to be regarded more as something to aspire to rather than an achievable goal, the point of using the ItalianMedia Corpus to inform our analysis is indeed to reduce our own biases, “starting (hopefully) from a position whereby the data itself has not been selected in order to confirm conscious (or unconscious) biases” (Baker, 2006: 12). The texts downloaded via BootCaT went through a brief and rough cleaning process, where files not containing any text were eliminated and repeated paratextual information (e.g. buttons, banners and disclaimers) was erased from the text files composing the corpus.

Sub-corpora	Texts	Tokens	Types
Avvenire (AVV)	19	18,629	4,746
Corriere della Sera (CDS)	170	118,230	16,526
Il Fatto Quotidiano (FQ)	205	165,261	17,008
Il Sole 24 Ore (S24H)	120	87,212	13,077

La Gazzetta dello Sport (GDS)	3	9,836	2,283
Il Messaggero (MSG)	10	5,615	1,891
La Repubblica (REP)	232	242,169	22,669
La Stampa (STA)	21	21,467	4,915
Total	780	668,419	39,282

Table 3. ItalianMedia Corpus information

As our focus is on the narrative around expat voters, we started from a concordance and collocational analysis of some selected terms mainly concerning our object of study, thus *voto/i [degli italiani all'] [dall'] [all'] estero* (vote* +[Italians] abroad), *circoscrizione [estero/a]* ([foreign] constituency), and *AIRE*, essentially making this a corpus-based analysis in which we look at the contextual information of some lexical items that are relevant according to our research angle.

4. Results and discussion

As mentioned above, we looked at a selection of lexical items, whose raw and normalized frequencies in each sub-corpus are listed in Table 4 below. Due to the sizes of each sub-corpus, we decided to normalize the frequencies using 10,000 words as a baseline. Our methodological take on the data is both quantitative and qualitative. For this reason and because of space restrictions, we provide a representative selection of the results extracted from the ItalianMedia Corpus, which is nevertheless available on request.

	<i>voto + estero</i>		<i>circoscrizione</i>		<i>AIRE</i>	
	Raw f	fp10,000	Raw f	fp10,000	Raw f	fp10,000
Italian Media	34	0.51	54	0.81	19	0.28
AVV	2	1.07	1	0.54	0	0
CDS	5	0.42	2	0.17	8	0.68
FQ	15	0.91	19	1.15	7	0.42
GDS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MSG	0	0	3	5.34	1	1.78
REP	4	0.16	14	0.58	3	0.12
S24H	2	0.23	12	1.4	0	0
STA	6	2.8	2	0.93	0	0

Table 4. Search terms and their raw and normalized frequencies in the Italian Media corpus

As we can observe in Table 4, in some of the sub-corpora the terms we looked up are not accounted for. In particular, in GDS none of the search terms is to be found, presumably because this is a popular Italian sports newspaper and the expat vote was not a primary concern of the editors or of their readership. Search terms are also missing from other sub-corpora, like MSG or STA and AVV. In the case of these general-purpose newspapers, we could attribute the absence of some of the search terms to the relatively limited number of texts each of these sub-corpora contributes to the ItalianMedia Corpus. An equally plausible explanation is not available for the acronym *AIRE* missing from the S24H sub-corpus, which is instead one of the most sizable sub-corpora in the ItalianMedia Corpus.

4.1 *Voto + estero*

As expected, the noun *voto* (vote) is very frequent in the ItalianMedia corpus, with an overall frequency of 21.7 p10,000 words and with over 1,000 occurrences. However, a concordance search of *voto* and *estero* (foreign) using AntConc's Context and Horizon function reveals that, in the whole corpus, there are 34 occurrences of the combination *voto* and *estero* with an overall frequency per 10,000 words of 0.51 (Table 4).

A further important aspect to be considered before analysing the concordance lines is that of word plotting, that is the distribution of this word combination across each sub-corpus. Indeed, if a word occurs 100 times in the same text file or 100 times in 100 different text files, its relevance surely changes. The same is true for the output of our concordance analysis: if the same word combination always appears in the same news article, its impact and relevance on the audience and within the newspaper agenda are presumably low. In smaller sub-corpora, such as AVV and STA, we can expect a very uneven distribution, and in fact this is what we actually find: in the AVV sub-corpus the two occurrences of *voto + estero* are found in the same text, whereas in the STA sub-corpus we observe a more varied plotting with occurrences from two different texts (33%-67%). Uneven distributions are found also among larger sub-corpora presenting low frequencies, such as the S24H (all occurrences within the same text) or REP (50% from the same text) sub-corpora. The most evenly plotted sub-corpora are those presenting higher frequencies such as CDS and FQ. The latter in particular shows the most composite plotting among the eight sub-corpora of the ItalianMedia corpus, with occurrences scattered over 6 different texts. This is already an important

result per se, as we can get a hint of the coverage that expat voting in 2018 had in these newspapers.

Concerning the description of the external voting, the concordance lines show two main trends (see also Table 5 for some examples): an “informative” one and one that we could label as “investigative”. Only 25% of the concordance lines can be labelled as purely “informative” (of which 66% are from two sub-corpora, S24H and AVV) and all these instances are in reports published either on the election day or afterwards. The concordance line from the AVV sub-corpus in Table 5, for example, contains information about the election results (“Votes from abroad decided on the 12 seats of the Chamber of Deputies, 5 went to the PD [Democratic Party], 3 to the centre-right coalition and one to the M5S [Five Stars Movement]”); the same applies to S24H where information about vote ballots is provided (“Votes from abroad: votes counted in 1 electoral section out of 3. PD leads the way”). This trend provides information about the issue at hand, which in this case is the votes coming from Italians living abroad, without interpreting or judging the fact.

The remaining 75% of the concordance lines of *voto + estero* can be labelled as “investigative” and the object of the inquiry is, in this case, the suspicion of vote rigging in the external voting system which had emerged thanks to an investigation carried out by “Le Iene”, an Italian comedy/satirical TV show. The bulk of the debate around this issue in the ItalianMedia Corpus seems to have been primarily after the elections with 42.5% of the occurrences dating March 4th, 2018 or later. For example, the concordance line from the STA sub-corpus in Table 5 contains a headline from *La Stampa* that reads “Votes from Italians living abroad: sold and forged ballot papers, 12 years of investigations and treachery”. This news article reports on suspicion of vote rigging not only in the 2018 Italian election, but also refers to previous occasions in which Italians abroad were called to the ballots.

In the ItalianMedia corpus, the context surrounding the word combination *voto + estero* is characterized by terms carrying negative evaluation, with collocates⁵ such as *brogli* (rigging), *irregolarità* (invalidity), *schede contraffatte* (compromised ballot papers) or the emergence of new actors like *cacciatori di schede* (ballot paper hunters) involved in the vote rigging scheme. This leads to a negative evaluative prosody pending on expat voting, which is confirmed by the collocational profile of *voto + estero* with collocates generally clustering around verbs of “accusation” and the

⁵ T-Score was used to calculate collocations in this paper.

area of “exposé”, and with few collocates identifying procedures or structures.

Sub-corpora	Trends	Left context	NODE WORDS ⁶	Right context
AVV	Informative	alla Camera in base ai risultati delle elezioni politiche aggiornati sul sito del ministero dell'Interno. Dal	voto all'estero	i 12 seggi in palio alla Camera, 5 sono andati al Pd, 3 al Centrodestra e uno rispettivamente a M5s. M5S vede finora
CDS	Investigative	schede pronte al voto in serie". Tutto mandato on line. Può succedere ancora? Vedremo. Ma certo anche stavolta il	voto degli italiani all'estero	, con la sua fama di carrozzone elettorale dalle mille sorprese, ha visto affacciarsi da tutto il mondo figure di varia
FQ	Investigative	e mando io il voto. non c'è nessun controllo (cerca un servizio fatto dalle IENE e vedrai che merda si sistema è questo del	voto all'estero) – vladimiro policriti (@vladimirobcn) February 20, 2018 A raccogliere altre irregolarità è anche Vito Crimi del
	Investigative	mandato in onda questa sera dalla trasmissione le Iene secondo le quali si sarebbero verificati una serie di brogli nel	voto all'estero	. L'acquisizione servirà a svolgere tutti gli accertamenti utili a verificare se si configurano ipotesi di reato.

⁶ In Corpus Linguistics, “node word” refers to the word(s) that are the object of a specific query, whatever comes before that word(s) is referred to as “Left context” (referring to the left of the node word), whatever comes after that word(s) is referred to as “Right context” (referring to the right of the node word).

S24H	Informative	conquista solo Toscana e Trentino Alto Adige.	Voto estero	: scrutinate 1/3 sezioni, Pd in testa II
STA	Investigative		Voto all'estero	: schede vendute o contraffatte in 12 anni d' inchieste e tradimenti (U. Magri) Sono circa 4 milioni e 300 mila i

Table 5. Concordance lines exemplifying “investigative” and “informative” trends in the ItalianMedia Corpus

4.2 Circoscrizione

In the case of *circoscrizione* (constituency) a simple concordance search was performed, and then the results were skimmed in order to obtain a list of foreign constituencies only. Although *circoscrizione* can refer to Italian electoral districts, in the ItalianMedia corpus, 65% of occurrences of *circoscrizione* identify one or more of the four foreign constituencies, making this a preferred term for referring to expat electoral districts as opposed to national ones. In Table 6 below, we collected some examples of the concordance lines of *circoscrizione* indicating one or more foreign constituencies in either the left or right context.

Sub-corpora	Trends	Left context	NODE WORDS	Right context
FQ	Investigative	grandissimo. Ciao". La voce è quella – appunto – di Francesca Alderisi, candidata al Senato nella	circoscrizione estera	Nord e Centro America con Forza Italia nonchà© conduttrice di Rai Italia (ex
	Narrative	ella tornata elettorale 2018 spicca senz'altro quella dell'ex deputato messinese Massimo Romagnoli,	circoscrizione estero	, che agli elettori italiani si ripropone con quello slogan: "Coming back". In effetti
	Informative	, non lontano da Roma, si continuano a scrutinare e controllare voti e schede. Nella	circoscrizione	Europa, che è quella che elegge il maggior numero di parlamentari (cinque deputati e
REP	Investigative	ripartizione Asia, Africa, Oceania e Antartide (Aaoa), uno dei quattro collegi che compone la	circoscrizione Estero	, denuncia brogli elettorali nelle recentissime elezioni Politiche. Brienza, barese di 44 ann
	Investigative	, si è candidato - come racconta la Gazzetta di Parma - alle recenti elezioni Politiche nella	circoscrizione degli italiani all'estero	per l'America meridionale. Facile presupporre che, per farlo, abbia
S24H	Informative	di attribuire 607 seggi sui 630 disponibili (232 uninominali, 386 proporzionali + 12 proporzionali	circoscrizione Estero), al netto della Valle d'Aosta (circoscrizione a se, elegge solo un deputato
	Informative	singolo seggio diventa dunque decisiva. In questo scenario fanno particolarmente gola i seggi della	circoscrizione estero	: 12 alla Camera e 6 al Senato. Qui i partiti tradizionali se la devono vedere
	Informative	calabrese emigrato a Buenos Aires. Le regole per l'elezione nella Circoscrizione Estero La	circoscrizione Estero	elegge 12 deputati e 6 senatori. A sua volta, questa è divisa in sotto circoscrizioni:
	Narrative	strappare dal 2006 nove seggi. Dal Maie all'Usei Anche per queste elezioni politiche nella	Circoscrizioni e Estero	si sono presentati dei movimenti degli italiani residenti oltreconfine che non hanno alcuna

Table 6. Examples of concordance lines of *circoscrizione* referring to one or more of the foreign constituencies

More than 75% of the instances of *circoscrizione* referring to foreign constituencies in the ItalianMedia corpus are contained in two sub-corpora: S24H (31%) and FQ (46%). So, we have fewer sources mentioning this item, even though those who do mention *circoscrizione* do so with a slightly higher frequency (f 0.52 p 10,000w) than, for example, *voto + estero*. Compared to the latter, *circoscrizione* seems to have a more composite pattern both in terms of evaluation and of the discourses it

triggers. By observing and reading its concordance lines, here too we can detect an “investigative” trend (40%), which, however, does not appear to be exclusively related to the “Le Iene” investigation, but it also takes the shape of social criticism, exposing flawed foreign constituency candidates (e.g. the concordance lines from the REP sub-corpus and the first two examples from FQ the sub-corpus).⁷ This social criticism dimension remains, however, restricted to a few instances in a couple of sub-corpora; the “investigative” pattern of *circoscrizione* is instead frequent across all the sub-corpora with the only exception of the S24H sub-corpus, which seems to privilege a more informative style.

Finally, in the case of *circoscrizione* we cannot detect a strong negative connotation in the immediate co-text of the node-word. By taking a quick look at its collocations, this impression is confirmed, as most collocates of *circoscrizione* seem to cluster around themes such as geographical areas, instructional and structural features, and only a few can be traced back to the negative evaluative pattern observed in *voto + estero*, with which those collocates are in fact shared.

The “informative” trend accounts for approximately 51% of the concordance lines. However, of these concordance lines the vast majority are from the S24H sub-corpus (61%) while the remaining are from the FQ sub-corpus. In one of the concordance lines of the FQ sub-corpus, we find information about the electoral results from the foreign constituencies and the report identifies those voters as *cervelli in fuga* (brain drain), raising the interesting issue of how expats are generally portrayed

⁷ Backtranslation of REP sub-corpus concordance lines (see Table 6):

Concordance line 1: [...] one of the four foreign constituencies reports frauds in recent elections [...]

Concordance line 2: [...] as reported by the *Gazzetta di Parma*, he stood for the recent elections as representative of the foreign constituency of South America. We can suppose that, in order to be a candidate, he had to [...]

Backtranslation of FQ sub-corpus concordance lines (see Table 6):
 Concordance line 1: who’s speaking is Francesca Alderisi, she is *Forza Italia*’s candidate for the Senate in the foreign constituencies of North America and Central America and a television host on [the channel] *Rai Italia* [...]

Concordance line 2: the name of former MP Massimo Romagnoli from Messina surely stands out [among the names] of the 2018 election. He continues to present himself to the electorate with that same motto “Coming back”. [...]

Concordance line 3: [Poll-watchers] continue counting votes and checking ballot papers in Rome. The European constituency is the one electing the higher number of MPs [...]

by the Italian press – a further interesting narrative whose analysis would go beyond the scope of this paper.

Despite privileging a more informative and perhaps factual style of reporting, S24H still shows evaluative prosody: in the second example from this sub-corpus (see Table 6 above) we read that the foreign constituency parliamentary seats “are particularly appealing” (*fanno particolarmente gola*). While providing information about how votes in the Senate were going to be distributed, the journalist used evaluation to characterize the electoral results coming from the foreign constituencies.

Finally, a third trend surfaces from the concordance analysis, one that records events around expat vote counting or the electoral campaign overseas. This “narrative” trend is not very frequent, but still presents an instance of evaluative prosody that is worth mentioning. Indeed, by expanding the concordance in the fourth example from the S24H sub-corpus, we can read “in these elections we find once again in the foreign constituency Italian expat movements which do not have any counterpart whatsoever in Italy”.⁸ We can surely detect some criticism on the part of the journalist here. This criticism, however, cannot be pinned down to a few contextual and co-textual elements around the node-word but rather it spreads across the sentence and is felt through adverbial phrases (“in these elections”, “once again”) and negations (“do not have any counterpart whatsoever”).

A further example of this trend is to be found in the second concordance line from the FQ sub-corpus in Table 6: here the “narrative” trend concerns a candidate for the foreign constituency. Once again, it was necessary to expand the concordance line in order to uncover the evaluative prosody contained in this short text:

Among the surprising candidates [of the foreign constituency] to the 2018 elections the name of Massimo Romagnoli, former deputy from Messina, surely stands out. He presented himself to the voters of his constituency with the motto: “Coming back”. And come back he did. Romagnoli, businessman and politician came back from a very remote place: the Manhattan penitentiary. He came back and ran for elections after 32 months’ imprisonment on the count of illegal arms trafficking and international terrorism.⁹

⁸ Anche per queste elezioni politiche nella Circoscrizione Estero si sono presentati dei movimenti degli italiani residenti oltre confine che non hanno alcun corrispettivo nel territorio italiano - Il Sole 24 Ore, February 8th, 2018.

⁹ Tra le candidature sorprendenti della tornata elettorale 2018 spicca senz’altro quella dell’ex deputato messinese Massimo Romagnoli, circoscrizione estero, che

As in the previous example, here we observe a “narrative” trend, the journalist is indeed telling us some facts about candidates in the foreign constituency, and in doing so a form of social criticism emerges: the candidate’s past is sanctionable from a social and moral standpoint.

4.3 *AIRE* - *Anagrafe Italiana Residenti all’Estero*

As Table 4 above shows, *AIRE* is the term with the lowest frequency (f 0.28 p10,000w) in this study with a very uneven distribution across the sub-corpora (CDS 44.4%, FQ 38.9%, REP 11.1%, MSG 5.6%) and with 89% of the occurrences occurring before the election day. Furthermore, text plotting among the sub-corpora containing the majority of instances of *AIRE* is scarcely varied, with FQ containing over 70% of instances from the same text and CDS with 37.5% of occurrences from the same text and the remaining instances in clusters of 12.5%.

What we can gather from these quantitative results is that *AIRE* is not a preferred term for discussing expat voting habits, even though it is the very institution that allows Italian citizens to cast their vote from abroad. We can hypothesize that newspapers do not employ *AIRE* very often because, being an acronym, it may represent an obstacle to comprehension. The infrequency of *AIRE* in the ItalianMedia corpus is perhaps less surprising if we compare it to a reference corpus of general Italian: for example, *AIRE* in the ItTenTen16 Corpus (Jakubíček *et al.*, 2013) has a frequency of 0.006 per million words, which corresponds to 0.00006 per 10,000 words. Even though at first sight *AIRE* frequency might suggest otherwise, once put into perspective, it becomes clear that this lexical item covers a relevant yet not principal position in the narrative around expat political engagement.

Sub-corpus	Trends	left context	NODE WORD	right context
CDS	Narrative	non sanno quantificare quanti connazionali	Aire	, il registro degli italiani all'estero", spiega l'addetto all'ufficio commerciale. Del resto

agli elettori italiani si ripropone con quello slogan: "Coming back". In effetti Romagnoli, imprenditore e politico, torna da molto lontano: dal carcere di Manhattan. Torna e si candida dopo 32 mesi di detenzione per traffico di armi e terrorismo internazionale. – Il Fatto Quotidiano, February 17th, 2018.

		siano presenti. "Sono tanti, ma pochi si registrano all'		
	Informative	una analisi dei dati statistici	AIRE	aggiornati al 31.12.2015 si evince il seguente andamento:
FQ	Investigative	il fatto che il mio numero lo abbiano ottenuto o dal Consolato o dall'	Aire	(anagrafe degli italiani all'estero); che della privacy si ricordano solo quando serve a
MSG	Narrative	proprio i giovani i più assenti: spesso non sanno neanche che dovrebbero iscriversi all'	Aire	(Anagrafe degli italiani residenti all'estero) per poter ottenere il diritto di voto.
REP	Narrative	che questi brasiliani! Il voto degli italiani all'estero, non di quelli iscritti all'	Aire	, è una vergogna perché diamo l'opportunità a persone che nulla hanno a che

Table 7. Concordance lines of *AIRE* in the ItalianMedia corpus

In Table 7 above, we collected some occurrences of *AIRE* in the ItalianMedia corpus. The conclusions drawn from the quantitative analysis and from the comparison with a larger reference corpus seem to be confirmed by reading the actual text extracts. Indeed, we can see how in several examples the acronym *AIRE* is either preceded or followed by an explanation, thus showing the unfamiliarity of the Italian readership with this term - e.g. in line three of Table 7: “Often they don’t even know that they should get registered at the Aire (Registry of Italians Abroad) in order to obtain the right to vote”.

Moreover, the verb forms surrounding the node-word are sometimes in the first person singular or plural, and by cross-referencing this information with concordance lines coming from the same source we soon realize that over 66% of the occurrences of *AIRE* are used by expats themselves offering their first-hand experience as Italian emigrants having to cast their vote. Some of them may be critical about the voting or citizen acquisition systems, others mention their experience as *cervelli in fuga*; these examples can often be counted in the “narrative” trend, which by this

token becomes the prominent trend of the acronym AIRE.¹⁰ Interestingly enough, in this scenario, among the top 5 collocates of *AIRE* we do find *expat*, a borrowing. Judging from what we read in the concordance lines above, we can presume that “*expat*” is a term used by Italians abroad for self-definition as well as by the Italian press in order to alternatively identify the so-called *cervelli in fuga*.

The remaining 34% of the examples¹¹ of *AIRE* are equally divided between the “investigative”, “informative” and “narrative” trends we previously observed. Similarly to what was illustrated above with the “narrative” trend of *circostrizione*, in the concordance line from the FQ sub-corpus we see that *Il Fatto Quotidiano* reports on a privacy issue that has been raised also within the investigation about vote rigging by quoting an angry Facebook user who is an Italian living abroad: “What pisses me off is that they got my number from the Consulate or the AIRE (the Register of Italian living abroad); they remember about privacy only when they have to protect some corrupt politician or journalist”. By reporting someone else’s voice, the journalist can build his/her argument and proceed in exposing the faults and the results of the investigation into the Italian external voting system.

5. Conclusion

The data discussed in the previous sections show how the Italian newspapers under study have represented external voting with recurring discursive patterns. In our study, we detected three main reporting trends across the three lexical items under investigation: “informative”, “investigative”, and “narrative”. All patterns presented evaluative prosody

¹⁰ E.g. in the concordance line from the REP sub-corpus in Table 7, an Italian citizen abroad complains about the external voting policy and says: *Il voto degli italiani all'estero, non di quelli iscritti all'Aire, è una vergogna perché diamo l'opportunità a persone che nulla hanno a che vedere con noi, se non un bisnonno italiano, di decidere per gli italiani, quelli veri* (The vote of Italians abroad – I am not referring to those registered at the Aire – is shameful because we allow the right to vote to people who do not have anything to do with us other than an Italian great-grandfather. We allow them to make decisions for real Italians).

¹¹ E.g. second concordance line from the CDS sub-corpus in Table 7: “The following trend surfaces from an analysis of AIRE statistics last updated on 31.12.2015”, provides information about the number of registered voters in one of the foreign constituencies.

that verged towards negativity, with *voto + estero* being the most negatively connotated, followed by *circonscrizione*. *AIRE*, on the other hand, did not present strongly negative evaluation and, interestingly enough, we found out that it is a term often used by expats when they are self-defining or explaining their habits as voters, hence the slightly more positive stance. This result has at least two implications. Firstly, the newspapers in the ItalianMedia Corpus tend not to be over-informative about external-voting procedures since they rarely mention the institutions enabling such processes. Secondly, online news and the interaction between users and journalists/newspapers enabled this self-defining function eventually resulting in a convergent type of journalism.

Among the four most sizable sub-corpora of the ItalianMedia Corpus (*La Repubblica*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, and *Corriere della Sera*), *Il Fatto Quotidiano* surely shows more interest in the matter of expat voting habits both in terms of number of reports and of emphasis on its ambiguous aspects. However, we have illustrated how a newspaper like *Il Sole 24 Ore*, which apparently promotes a more informative and factual style of reporting, can present negative evaluation around the issue of external voting (see *fare gola* in section 4.2). Despite the size of the REP sub-corpus, the newspaper *La Repubblica* pays little attention to the issues regarding expat voting, making tREP less impactful than the other “big” sub-corpora in establishing a narrative. Finally, *Il Corriere della Sera* seems to consider the issue of external voting especially from the perspective of expats themselves as we could observe in the section analysing *AIRE* (4.3).

On a final note, we would like to mention the serendipitous discovery (Partington *et al.*, 2013) of *cervelli in fuga* that came up as collocate of both *AIRE* and *circonscrizione*, which makes the case for further research into the narratives employed by the Italian press to describe Italian expats, as well as into the meta-discursive narratives used by Italian expats themselves. This also proves the validity of the methodology of CADS, as it triggered a virtuous circle of knowledge that brought up further issues. In turn, these issues pointed our attention back to the corpus with further data to test new hypotheses and intuitions deriving from an approach that is able to be quantitative and qualitative at the same time (Aragrande, 2016).

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Journalistic translation in migrant news narratives: Representations of the *Diciotti Crisis* in British news brands¹

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Abstract

On August 20th, 2018, 177 refugees were refused the right to disembark at the Port of Catania following their rescue at sea by the Italian coastguard. Matteo Salvini, then Interior Minister, declined to authorise disembarkation stating that he was acting in the public interest. He was subsequently charged by Italian prosecutors for illegal detention and abuse of office. A sad milestone in the European migration crisis, the narration of the Diciotti Crisis unfolds across languages, cultures, and media: digital intertextuality via translated quotations, tweets and posts from Facebook are interwoven with evocative images in the construction of multimodal news texts. Through a qualitative lens, this contribution examines the representation of the Diciotti Crisis in major UK news brands focusing on the role of translanguaging quotations in narrating the events. Drawing on a theoretical framework that combines journalism and media studies, news translation, and critical discourse studies, a self-compiled dataset was constructed in order to address the following questions: In which ways are translated quotations employed in the construction of the news and where are they sourced? In terms of news values, which aspects of the episode, with its far-reaching implications on the issues of international asylum law and human rights, were foregrounded by the different news brands?

Keywords: news translation; migrant crisis; Matteo Salvini; Italian politics; online newsbrands

1. Introduction

This contribution adds to research on news media representations of asylum seekers in the ongoing European migrant crisis. It presents the

¹ I wish to thank the guest editors and external reviewers for their thoughtful and detailed comments on my paper, which have been extremely helpful to improving earlier drafts.

results of a qualitative study on the ways in which the *Diciotti Crisis* was portrayed in major UK news brands. Viewing news as narrative (Baker, 2006; Buoziš and Creech 2018), the study examines the role of translation and the journalist-narrator in reporting events that saw 190 asylum seekers refused the right to disembark on Italian soil after being rescued at sea. The Italian government's decision to flout international human rights law signalled a crisis point in the tortuous migration scenario. The narration of the affair unfolds across languages, cultures, and media: digital intertextuality, tweets and posts from Facebook, evocative images and translation-mediated quotations are interwoven in complex multimodal news texts. A small-scale purpose-built corpus of texts retrieved from online UK news brands² is examined through a comparative-synchronic lens (Carvalho, 2008: 161). The analysis reveals how Italian source language soundbites and social media posts by key social actors re-emerge in British news texts as translanguaging quotations (Haapanen and Perrin, 2019). Focusing on Munday's (2012) adaptation of Agar's (1994: 232) "Critical Points to translator-journalist decision-making, the study questions translational choices in the journalistic reconstruction of events. Put simply, "critical points might be considered "locations in discourse where major cultural differences are signalled" (Agar 1994: 232). The theoretical framework draws on journalism and media studies, news translation, and critical discourse studies in order to address the following questions: in what ways are translated quotations employed and where are they sourced? Which aspects of the episode are foregrounded in the news discourse? The contribution is organised in eight parts: Section 2 summarises the sequence of events in the Diciotti case; Section 3 offers an overview of the relevant literature on journalistic translation, and is followed by the methods and rationale in Section 4. Section 5 and 6 present the results and discussion, while Section 7 concludes with some final observations and future directions for research.

2. The chronology of events

On August 16th, 2018 the coastguard ship *Ubaldo Diciotti* rescued 177 people including 11 women and 37 minors in international waters off the

² Searches were carried out on the following newspaper websites: the *Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Mailonline*, the *Independent*, the *Express*, the *Mirror* and the *Sun*.

coast of Malta. The Italian authorities had been aware of the overcrowded boat since August 14th but waited for the Maltese coastguard to intervene given that it was within their search and rescue zone. Malta remained inactive. After a four-day deadlock between Malta and Italy regarding where the refugees should disembark, on August 20th, the Italian ship headed for the port of Catania. On route, the Italian Ministry for the Interior informed the captain that the passengers were not allowed to disembark and were to be detained on-board while the vessel was moored at the port. On August 22nd, Public Prosecutor Luigi Patronaggio filed a case against Matteo Salvini, Interior Minister at the time, for suspected “reato di sequestro di persona aggravato” and “abuso di ufficio” [aggravated damages for unlawful detention and abuse of office]. At 11pm that day, 27 minors were permitted to disembark. On August 25th, six ailing men suspected of having tuberculosis, pneumonia or other infections, and seven women were taken away by medics. On August 26th, the remaining refugees were authorised to come ashore. Salvini justified his decision stating he had acted in the public interest (*Corriere della Sera*, January 19th, 2019)³ and claimed that those on board had posed a threat to Italian security (*Il Foglio* March 20th, 2019)⁴. Despite multiple violations of national, European, and international law⁵ the former minister did not go to trial. The Italian senate voted to uphold his right to parliamentary immunity, reasoning that his refusal to allow the refugees to disembark on Italian soil was in agreement with Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio; therefore, he was not

³https://www.corriere.it/politica/19_gennaio_29/salvini-per-diciotti-stato-interesse-pubblico-dd7b8baa-2344-11e9-9543-1916afeb08d9.shtml (last accessed 30 September 2020).

⁴<https://www.ilfoglio.it/politica/2019/03/20/news/io-amo-l-italia-la-spericolata-difesa-di-salvini-sul-ca-so-diciotti-244252/> (last accessed 30 September 2020).

⁵<https://www.euronews.com/2018/08/24/8-laws-italy-may-be-violating-by-preventing-diciotti-migrants-from-arriving>. (last accessed 30 September 2020). Italy's national ombudsman for the rights of the detained people, Mauro Palma, said Italy was violating:

- a. European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (ECHR)
- b. Article 13 of the Constitution
- c. Article 10 of the Constitution
- d. Geneva Convention, Community Law and Italian Law
- e. Article 33 of the Geneva Convention
- f. Code of Navigation, Article 83
- g. International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR, signed in Hamburg in 1979)

personally responsible. The case drew considerable international media attention, not least for Salvini's vociferous self-defence on social media. In an analogous case, 116 migrants including 20 minors aboard the *Gregoretti* rescue ship were denied the right to disembark at Augusta Port in Sicily from July 27th-31st, 2019. On this later occasion, when Salvini was charged with the same offences, senators voted to lift his parliamentary immunity so that he could be tried. If found guilty, he will face a maximum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment and will be barred from political office. The trial was scheduled to start in October 2020 (after the deadline for this article). Before analysing how these events were reported in the British press, an overview of the relevant literature on the production of news narratives is presented below.

3. Journalism as narration, journalism studies in translation

The Information Age has witnessed traditional news media shift from print to digital forms. Simultaneously, online news outlets have burgeoned, undermining the supremacy of traditional newspaper brands. Although Conboy (2010: 103) maintains that "the future of journalism is linked to brand trust", van Krieken and Sanders (2017: 1365) argue that "simply providing news is no longer sufficient". The authors suggest that narrative journalism⁶ offers enormous potential to the traditional news brands because "news narratives are able to assign meaning to complex situations" and can increase mainstream audience engagement (*ibid.*). Yet, the notion that journalists are narrators is not new. Long before the dominance of the digital, Bell (1991: 147) stated that "[j]ournalists do not write articles. They write stories. A story has structure, direction, and a viewpoint. [...] Journalists are professional storytellers of our age". Indeed, Buozis and Creech (2018: 1430) contend that "[n]ews is not reality as it happened, but an observed documentation of that reality - a representation". On a micro level therefore, the voice of the individual journalist is central to the recreation of reality in news discourse, while on a macro level the

⁶ Van Krieken and Sanders (2019: 1) define narrative journalism thus: "Journalistic products that display storytelling techniques to report upon real-world events and situations. More particularly, mutual understanding could benefit from defining narrative journalism as a genre that employs the narrative storytelling techniques of voice, point of view, character, setting, plot, and/or chronology to report on reality through a subjective filter. This filter can be either a character or the journalist".

ideological stances of the different news brands “*reveal[s] broader social relations and cultural meanings*” (*ibid.*). In other words, the journalist plays a significant role in determining the ways in which discursive events are portrayed, but to what extent they act as single agents or as part of a cultural practice is still open to debate. What is manifest, however, is that news providers are powerful gatekeepers in modern societies, shaping public opinion on global events (Lippman, 1922/2007; Haapanen and Perrin, 2019: 36). In the case under investigation here, as with other foreign news stories, the audience’s perception of events will be coloured not only by the journalist’s selective appropriation of information but also by the added filter of journalistic translation. The next section focuses on the question of journalist-narrator versus migrant agency in relating events regarding the migrant crisis.

3.1 Who is the narrator? – the foreign correspondent versus the migrants’ lost voice

The advent of globalisation and new technologies have challenged the convention of the foreign correspondent as a permanent staff member in news organisations (see Sambrook, 2010). Nevertheless, the notion of the journalist as a “cultural authority” has endured (Hannerz 1996: 120; Zelizer, 2004: 104). Archetti (2012: 847) for instance, argues that foreign correspondents have an “increasingly important role as ‘sense makers’ within the huge tide of information available” on the Internet. Far from becoming extinct, foreign correspondence is thriving, albeit in a different guise (*ibid.*). There are, however, caveats. Reductions in postings abroad may result in more reliance on foreign freelance journalists who are paid per piece and are thus less motivated to spend time researching their stories (Archetti, 2012: 853). This can lead to disjointed and ill-informed narratives produced by non-specialist journalists. In the specific case, when it comes to reporting on the multi-layered issues implicit in the Mediterranean migrant crisis, specialist knowledge is essential. Journalists who work for elite newspapers will enjoy the brand trust this confers; inevitably they will be perceived as “authorities” on the complex issues they write about. In reality, as we shall see, this is not always the case. By contrast, the protagonists of the migrant crisis often have no voice. Ieracitano and Vigneri (2018: 64) demonstrate that “it is not a direct story migrants tell, but the description of their experience through other witnesses’ eyes: rescuers, doctors, volunteers or the *journalists themselves?*” (my emphasis). Therefore, it is from the perspective of the journalist that

the migrant narratives are heard. Nelken (2018: 58), however, points out that asylum seekers “are not explicitly dehumanised in media representations, but their agency is deleted. The choice of depiction as 'victim' or 'threat' varies over time and across different newspapers, but their agency is consistently ignored”. He contends that what is glaringly absent in media representations of asylum seekers is, in fact, their voice. The question of voice is strictly linked to issues of translation and quotation, which are discussed in the following section.

3.2 Translingual quotation and translation in the news

This study adheres to the definition of journalistic translation (Valdeón, 2020)⁷ provided by Davier and Conway (2019: 1): “we intend translation here in the broadest possible sense, from the re-expression of bits of speech or text in a different language to the explanation of how members of a foreign cultural community interpret an object or event”. Such a flexible approach allows for the different ways in which news translation can be construed: it is not restricted to interlinguistic meaning transfer but embraces intercultural mediation, audiovisual translation, and cultural representation via images and other multisemiotic modes employed in the construction of news. These “multimodal ensembles” (Kress, 2011: 38) in which different semiotic modes work together to shape meaning require in-depth scrutiny. The present study, however, focuses on one aspect of journalistic translation: the role of translated quotations in the creation of multimodal digital news texts.

In his seminal study on news translation, Orengo (2005: 173) observed that official speeches, interviews, and witness accounts of facts are systematically disassembled bit by bit, translated, and re-used as raw material for the construction of news stories, through a process he refers to as “embedding”. In terms of political communication, Schäffner (2008) has highlighted the role of translation in reporting foreign politicians’ speech through cross-lingual and cross-cultural recontextualisation processes. According to Schäffner (*ibid.*: 3), “[n]ewspapers regularly provide quotes of statements by foreign politicians, without explicitly indicating that these politicians were actually speaking in their own languages”. In more recent research, recontextualisation is theorised within the convergence paradigm. Davier and Conway (2019: 3) explain

⁷ For an in-depth discussion on terminology surrounding the concept of translation in the news, see Schäffner (2012).

that “convergence [also] comprises the creation or integration of content for or from social media”. For journalists this entails refining skills and professional identities, especially for those trained in traditional news production settings. The data presented in this study offers examples of these multi-source texts that are seamlessly and invisibly pieced together via translation with what Haapanen and Perrin (2019) refer to as translingual quoting⁸. They explain (2019: 18) “[...] the process of quoting often harbours a translational aspect: whenever interviews and published articles involve different languages, the original discourse on which the quote is based is translated during quoting”. In the construction of news stories, quotations have important functions, for instance “they enhance the reliability, credibility, and objectivity of an article and characterize the person quoted” (Haapanen and Perrin, 2019: 17). Recent research adopting approaches from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) brought to light the ideological implications of reformulating translated political discourse in news contexts (Schäffner, 2004; Filmer, 2018; Caimotto, 2020). However, this crucial facet of translingual quoting is not addressed by Haapanen and Perrin (2019). They merely observe: “journalist-translators tend to keep quotation marks even in cases where the words of the original speaker have been noticeably changed” (*ibid.*: 19) without questioning the consequences of shifts in meaning. Nevertheless, their study provides valuable ethnographic evidence of journalists’ translation practices within the context of Swiss television newsrooms:

Journalists mostly translate quotes or to-be-quoted utterances by themselves, and their decision to do so is often solely based on their personal assessment of their own proficiency. [...] decisions relating to translingual quoting are often made on an ad hoc basis [therefore] the current practice is vulnerable to mistakes. Furthermore, in standard editorial practice, there is rarely anybody to check the validity of translations or notice such mistakes. (Haapanen and Perrin, 2019: 36)

In other lingua-cultural contexts, research has demonstrated the reluctance of news workers to recognise the importance of translation practices within their work (see Bielsa and Bassnett, 2009; van Doorslaer, 2010; Holland, 2013; Filmer, 2014). Even though translation is intrinsically a

⁸ In this contribution the shortened form “transquotation” is used by the author to refer to the same phenomenon, although Haapanen and Perrin do not use this term.

part of foreign news reporting, journalists often lack the linguistic and intercultural competencies necessary to undertake such tasks in the 21st century (Filmer, 2014: 154). This may account for the uneasy relationship between translation studies and journalism studies (Valdeón, 2017: 253), which can pose obstacles to interdisciplinary research. The following section moves on to describe the methods adopted for this study, the rationale and research questions, and reports on the difficulties and limitations.

4. Research rationale, methods and data

A sad milestone in the European migration crisis, the Diciotti case was chosen as the object of study for its far-reaching implications on the issues of asylum, reception, and human rights. It also sheds light on the ever-increasing nexus between politics and the social media exemplifying “the link of populist phenomena with the communication eco-systems” (Mazzoleni and Bracciale, 2018: 3). The political debates in this case, needed to be relayed from the Italian context to a British audience, therefore underscoring the vital role of translation. This article focuses on the representation of the *Diciotti case* in British digital news narratives and addresses two research questions:

1. Firstly, in which ways is translation employed in the narration of events and to what effects?
2. The second is deontological and relates to news values: which perspective of the affair would surface in the British newspaper coverage? A G7 country conspicuously transgressing basic human rights or would Matteo Salvini’s propaganda via social media dominate the news discourse?

Grounded in multimodal critical discourse studies (Machin and Mayr, 2012), the study performs a synchronic analysis in order to trace “the sequence of texts appearing in the media and the evolution of their meaning” (Carvalho, 2008: 164). A synchronic axis compares “simultaneous discourses” (*ibid.*) – for example texts dealing with the same event in different news brands. The data was collected by performing key word searches on the newspaper database *Nexis UK* and on individual newspaper websites with the term “Diciotti” on a cross-section of British national news brands: the *Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Telegraph*, the *Mailonline*, the *Independent*, the *Express*, the *Mirror*, and the *Sun*. This initial search

revealed a large quantity of data, not only articles published during the *Diciotti crisis* itself, but also subsequent reports on the Gregoretti case in August 2019, the Italian Senate vote on Salvini's Parliamentary immunity in February 2019, and again in February 2020 containing intertextual references to the *Diciotti*. It was therefore necessary to review the texts manually to check that the content was specifically related to the object of this study. These results were further refined to include only the articles published between August 19th-27th, 2018, the period in which the refugees were held on board the rescue ship. As there were no results for the *Mirror* or the *Sun* within the timeframe, they are not shown in Table 1. The texts analysed were sourced directly from newspaper websites. Although *Nexis UK* may be useful for creating large quantitative corpora, the constraints of such a database for fine-grained qualitative analyses are many. Firstly, the search results often exclude the texts published on newspaper websites and show only articles published in the printed newspaper formats. Digital news texts in which numerous images, video clips, links to other news sources and previously published news articles are embedded offer the audience a network of meaning making mechanisms that are unavailable on news databases, which only provide the written text. This is a considerable drawback for the researcher because as Bednarek and Caple (2012: 45) point out, “[n]ewsworthiness is not inherent in events but established through language and image”. A close multimodal analysis of many of the texts examined here would certainly yield interesting results, however, for space constraints this contribution focuses on the linguistic aspects.

The table below illustrates the dataset. The news brands are categorised as “popular”, “mid-market”, and “quality” as defined by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC)⁹.

⁹ <https://www.abc.org.uk/>

NEWS BRAND	BY-LINE	NO. OF ARTICLES PER JOURNALIST	TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTICLES
<i>THE TIMES</i>	Philip Willan (Rome)	6	6
<i>GUARDIAN</i>	Lorenzo Tondo	4	4
<i>INDEPENDENT</i>	John Stone Bel Trew Mattha Busby	1 1 1	3
<i>TELEGRAPH</i>	Andrea Vogt Foreign staff	1 1	2
<i>EXPRESS ONLINE</i>	Harvey Gavin Ciaran McGrath Joe Gamp (freelance) Joe Barnes, Paul Withers Alessandra Scotto Santolo Ollie Smith	1 1 1 1 3 1	9
<i>MAILONLINE</i>	<i>Reuters</i> (without by- line) <i>Associated Press</i> , <i>Agence France- Presse</i> (without by-line) <i>Press</i> <i>Association</i> Faith Ridler, <i>AFP</i> for <i>MailOnline</i>	11 12 2 5 2	36

Debbie White, freelance, for <i>MailOnline</i>	1
David Churchill, freelance, for <i>MailOnline</i>	1
Steve Schrerer, (Rome) <i>Reuters</i> for <i>MailOnline</i>	2

Table 1. The dataset by news brand, by-line and number of articles

In the sections that follow, the most indicative findings from the two mid-market and three quality news brands examined for this study are discussed.

5. The middle-market news brands

As the name would imply, the middle-market news brands, the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, fall somewhere between the tabloids and the quality press in terms of content and style. They are neither upmarket, that deal primarily with hard news, nor downmarket that are primarily sensationalist; they offer a combination of entertainment and celebrity news with more serious items (Chandler and Munday, 2020). In terms of worldview, both the *Daily Mail* and the *Express* are conservative and traditionalist. Their target audience is mainly middle and lower middle class, middle-aged and female. Their news values lie more with national than international affairs, which could explain why the middle-market titles have very few staff foreign correspondents. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that quotations from foreign figures are taken directly from news agency sources, which have readymade translated soundbites embedded in their texts, or from social media, then translated “in-house” by whichever staff journalist happens to be writing the piece. Of the eight news brands sampled, the *MailOnline* and *Express* published the highest number of articles, 36 and nine respectively, within the timeframe.

5.1 The *MailOnline*

The *MailOnline* is the digital offshoot of the *Daily Mail*, and is the most popular middle-market online news brand¹⁰. Its ideological position is right wing, anti-immigration and Eurosceptic. The *MailOnline* published 36 articles within the timeframe and was therefore the most prolific news outlet on the subject of the *Diciotti Crisis* of the brands examined. However, 30 of the articles were attributed to various news agencies without specifying the name of a journalist, whilst two appeared under the by-line of a *Reuters* journalist, and two to an *AFP* journalist (see Table 1). Only two articles were produced by freelance journalists for the *MailOnline*. Updates on the evolving *Diciotti Crisis* were frequent; at the height of the crisis, five articles appeared online in one day, 4 supplied by news agencies and one by a freelancer thereby indicating that in terms of news values, the *Diciotti Crisis* had considerable resonance for the *MailOnline*. The longest and most in-depth article was entitled: “Migrants ‘held hostage’ aboard Italian coastguard ship begin hunger strike in protest at not being allowed to disembark” (White, August 24th, 2018)¹¹. The headline structure places “Migrants” in theme position, thus foregrounding them as agents of protest.

This was the only text from the entire corpus to focus on the asylum seekers’ agency. Embedded in the headline is the expression, “held hostage”, which is placed within inverted commas, which would imply that it is direct speech. Alternatively, the quotation marks might be construed as a distancing strategy that questions the veracity of what is placed within them. In fact, it is a translated reformulation of a statement by left-wing politician Laura Boldrini, drawn from an interview published in *Il Corriere della Sera*¹² the previous day. Boldrini referred to those detained on the *Diciotti* as “hostages”, accusing Salvini of exploiting the situation to gain leverage with the EU on the question of irregular migration. From source to target text, a translational shift takes place: “Qui ci sono 195 ostaggi: 150 naufraghi e 45 uomini dell’equipaggio che attendono di essere liberati mentre il ministro Salvini chiede un riscatto all’Europa” [Here there are 195 hostages: 150 victims of a

¹⁰ <https://pamco.co.uk/pamco-data/data-archive/>

¹¹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/italy/article-6095709/Migrants-held-hostage-aboard-Italian-coastguard-ship-begin-hunger-strike-protest.html> (last accessed 10 April 2020).

¹² https://www.corriere.it/politica/18_agosto_25/diciotti-boldrini-sono-ostaggi-chiedere-riscatto-bruxelles-1ff883a6-a835-11e8-a941-3e0c2a4df45f.shtml (last accessed 10 April 2020).

shipwreck and 45 crew who are waiting to be freed while Salvini asks Europe for the ransom]. The source language noun “ostaggi” becomes the passive verb phrase “held hostage” in the target text, which at once underlines the asylum seekers’ lack of agency while implying a hidden agent. In the first line of the article, the agent becomes apparent: “*Italy* has been accused of holding 150 migrants ‘hostage’ on a coastguard ship” (my emphasis). For the target audience, the name of the accuser is irrelevant but by omitting Salvini’s name from theme position, his role in the affair is backgrounded; by metonymy, the Italian people are responsible for the actions of the former interior minister.

Further instances of reformulated quotes and indirect transquotations emerge in conflicting reports on the deteriorating health of those on-board. The article: “Tuberculosis outbreak sparks evacuation of 16 of the 150 migrants stranded in Sicily as Italian government continues to insist other EU nations take the refugees in” (*Associated Press*, August 25th)¹³ indirectly quotes members of the Red Cross: “authorities decided that 16 migrants should be taken off the ship for medical reasons, two of them for suspected cases of tuberculosis and three for pneumonia, Red Cross officials said”. As the events took place in an Italian port, it is likely that the Red Cross officials were Italian, and therefore any statement on their part would have been translated. In the same article, a Red Cross spokesperson is quoted directly: “‘more than a health emergency, it would be better to speak of a psychological emergency,’ Principato said”. The same Red Cross spokesman is indirectly transquoted in another article posted on the same day on the *MailOnline* website but this time by a *Reuters* reporter¹⁴. Regarding the health of the detainees, the journalist reformulates the spokesperson’s words and states: “A Red Cross representative said the health of the migrants *‘isn’t particularly critical,’* adding that their problems “are more psychological than physical” (my emphasis). These diverging representations (through translation) of the asylum seekers’ health published on the same day illustrate how “disjointed narratives” (see section 3.1) produced by different journalists for the same publication are likely to create dissonance for the reader.

¹³ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6097247/UN-refugee-agency-urges-end-Italy-migrant-standoff.html> (last accessed 10 April 2020).

¹⁴ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-6097579/Doctors-visit-migrants-stranded-Italian-boat-Salvini-defies-UN.html> (last accessed 10 April 2020).

 5.2 The *Express*

The *Express*'s editorial stance has traditionally been Eurosceptic, right-wing populism and was harshly criticised for its anti-immigration standpoint by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights¹⁵. The *Express Online* published 9 articles on the *Diciotti case* within the timeframe, 8 of which by staff journalists who are mainly based in London. By searching on the *Express* website,¹⁶ it can be ascertained that the expertise of the journalists reporting on the *Diciotti case* ranges from legal affairs, science and technology, weather, to world news and politics. Therefore, it might reasonably be assumed that none of them has any specific knowledge of Italian affairs nor of the Italian language. The first narrative strand to emerge from the *Express*'s coverage of the crisis is also about the refugees' state of health but in this case the "news" is scabies. The article: "EU migrant crisis: Scabies rife on-board ship carrying migrants refused entry to Italy" (my emphasis, McGrath August 23rd)¹⁷ reported that many refugees had been infected by the skin disease. The adjective "rife" cues mental frames of uncontrollable infection, possibly eliciting fear and repulsion in the audience. The text recounts prosecutor Luigi Patronaggio's inspection of the vessel as if the journalist were present. However, once again Italian newspapers are the source; the prosecutor's words were extracted and translated from an interview published in *Il Corriere della Sera*¹⁸ the day before. The following transquotation is displayed in a separate box and graphically represented between large inverted commas thus highlighting its importance to the narration of events: "I have found that they are almost all suffering from scabies". In-text, further transquotations are interwoven with the journalist's introductory narration: "He painted a grim picture of the scene on board the ship: 'A devastating reality, starting from the bad smells that remain on you'". No mention is made of the source for the citations. The same graphic strategy to frame selected translingual quotations is used in the article: "EU-Italy crisis talks FAIL: Italian leader LASHES OUT at

¹⁵<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15885>

¹⁶<https://www.express.co.uk/journalists>

¹⁷<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1007646/eu-migrant-crisis-scabies-italy-matteo-salvini-ubaldo-diciotti>

¹⁸https://www.corriere.it/politica/18_agosto_23/migranti-procuratore-catania-a-bordo-diciotti-ho-visto-realta-devastante-c-erano-bambini-tanti-malati-scabbia-0be87d8e-a642-11e8-91e4-21266181578b.shtml

'hypocrisy' of European allies'' (Smith, August 26th)¹⁹. It cites Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte via a translated post drawn from Facebook: "Once again we see a discrepancy, which mutates into hypocrisy, between words and deeds" [Ancora una volta misuriamo la discrasia, che trascolora in ipocrisia, tra parole e fatti]. Conte was referring to the EU partners' refusal to share the burden of refugee arrivals in Italy, a situation that came to head with the *Diciotti crisis*. The same quotation appeared two days earlier in the *MailOnline* (August 24th)²⁰: "Yet again, we take the measure of the dysfunction, which morphs into hypocrisy, between words and deeds,' he said". In both cases the translation with very obvious calques and Italian syntax has a foreignising effect, and might suggest a non-expert translator. Further examples of social media transquotations were revealed in the quality press, which are discussed below.

6. The quality news brands

The quality press and their digital offshoots have a reputation for being serious newspapers, which are more likely to offer more in-depth coverage of politics, economics, and foreign affairs compared to the mid-market and tabloid news brands. Also known colloquially as the "heavies", the quality brands aim at a smaller, more upmarket readership, but also an international audience, especially for the online versions (Harcup, 2014). In terms of political leaning, the *Guardian* is an independent, liberal and left of centre publication. It is renowned for its commitment to investigative journalism (*ibid.*). It has a younger, more London-based readership than the other qualities (Pamco)²¹; *The Times* is right of centre, while the *Telegraph* is Conservative and squarely on the right. All three have freelance correspondents who regularly report on Italian affairs. Compared to the middle market titles, the quality brands published fewer articles on the *Diciotti case* within the timeframe: *The Times* published six, the *Guardian* four, and the *Telegraph* two.

¹⁹ <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1008432/EU-Italy-crisis-emergency-talks-Brussels-Giuseppe-Conte>

²⁰ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/italy/article-6095709/Migrants-held-ostage-aboard-Italian-coastguard-ship-begin-hunger-strike-protest.html>

²¹ <https://pamco.co.uk/pamco-data/data-archive/>

6.1 *The Telegraph*

The *Telegraph* is one of the very few British newspapers to have a staff member based in Rome, yet the articles on the *Diciotti case* within the timeframe were not written by the *Telegraph* Italian correspondent, Nick Squires. The first is attributed to “our foreign staff”, which could be anyone from a reporter in Brussels to a correspondent in Spain. Entitled “Salvini threatens to send migrants stuck on coastguard ship back to Libya”, the article begins: “Italy's Far-Right interior minister has threatened to ‘send back to Libya’ nearly 180 people stranded for three days on an Italian coastguard ship” (August 19th, 2018)²², illustrating how translated text is embedded within news discourse without any clear indication of what was actually said and in which language. The ideologically loaded pre-modifier, “far-right” is an example of overlexicalisation and is used transversally in all the news brands along with other stock phrases such as “hard right” and “hardline”. Considering the *Telegraph*'s overtly right-wing stance, the question begs what “far right” might indicate in this context and to what aim. Such labelling leads to issues of perception of political leanings across cultures and their subsequent translations: in Italy, Salvini is rarely referred to in the national media as “far-right” [estrema destra] but rather as part of the centre-right (Filmer, forthcoming). Transquoting from social media can be found throughout the article with varying levels of success. An example is the following: “‘Malta's behaviour is once again unqualifiable and deserves sanction’, Italian Minister of Transport Danilo Toninelli said on Twitter on Sunday”. The original Tweet was: “[...]Malta è ancora una volta inqualificabile e meritevole di sanzioni”. “Inqualificabile” in Italian means “deplorable” or “unspeakable” but the term “unqualifiable” in English is defined in the *OED* as “lacking the attributes or accomplishments required to qualify for something; incapable of attaining the necessary qualifications”, which does not correspond to the source text meaning.

6.2 *The Times*

The Times published six online articles regarding the *Diciotti crisis* during the timeframe, all by Philip Willan, who is one of *The Times*'s freelance Italy correspondents. Published on August 19th just before the *Diciotti* arrived at the Port of Catania, the first is entitled “We’ll send migrants back to

²² <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/19/salvini-threatens-send-migrants-stuck-coastguard-ship-back-libya/>

Libya unless EU steps in, vows Salvini”. The headline uses the same transquotation “send back to Libya” used by the *Telegraph* (discussed above), but appears in *The Times* headline without inverted commas and with the pronoun “we”. The article begins with the statement: “Italy’s far-right interior minister has threatened to deport 177 migrants back to Libya if Brussels refuses to redistribute them across Europe in a move that would violate international law” (*ibid.*). The article is structured around Salvini’s statement to the Italian press, which he made on August 19th, and therefore contains quotes that have been extracted and translated, as in Orengo’s (2005) “cut and paste” journalistic practices.

The following example from *The Times* (August 24th)²³ illustrates how journalistic licence can construct news through the invisible filter of translation. In “Get Stuffed, Matteo Salvini tells stranded migrants” Willan wrote: “Italy’s interior minister *told* 150 migrants spending an eighth day on the Mediterranean to “get stuffed” as he sought to bolster his dominance of Rome’s populist government” (my emphasis). The journalist cites the source of the translingual quotations as being a video posted on Facebook by Salvini. Salvini’s diatribe was in Italian, and therefore the selected phrases extracted from the video required translation, as with all the examples discussed so far, although who does the translating is not apparent. The editorial decision to employ the expression “get stuffed” in the headline and attribute the “coarse imprecation”²⁴ to Salvini is an ideological one, creating translation effects. At best, the insult could be described as a satirical summary of the 20-minute tirade. Although the essence of the former minister’s speech was clearly a condemnation of refugees arriving on Italian shores, he did not use an Italian equivalent of “get stuffed”, nor did he directly address asylum seekers. His discourse was aimed at his Facebook followers. Therefore, the use of the reporting verb “told” and the vulgar insult in the headline are entirely misleading.

The article is accompanied by an image of a belligerent looking official on board the Diciotti, pointing an accusing finger at a group of weary asylum seekers crouching under a makeshift tarpaulin shade to shelter from the hot Sicilian sun. The image anchors Willan’s words: “Mr Salvini’s performance, accompanied by finger-wagging, was watched by more than 20,000 people”. Kress (2011: 36) has argued that:

²³ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/get-stuffed-matteo-salvini-tells-stranded-migrants-3c91977dg>

²⁴ OED Online

Texts, of whatever kind, are the result of the semiotic work of design, and of processes of composition and production. They result in ensembles composed of different modes, resting on the agentive semiotic work of the maker of such texts.

The article is an example of the ways in which a combination of visual prompts and manipulated translation render foreign news reporting infotainment. While such tactics might be expected in the tabloid press, it is disconcerting to find them in a quality news brand.

6.3 The *Guardian*

The *Guardian* is considered the most trustworthy of British news brands²⁵ and provides the nearest to a narrator-journalist in the form of freelancer, Lorenzo Tondo. All four articles on the *Diciotti case* carry his by-line, although twice authorship was shared with reporters based in Brussels and Rome. He is Italian, and therefore falls into the category of “foreign freelance journalist” discussed in section 3.1. The British reader is reminded of Tondo’s geographical proximity to the events: “in Palermo” appears after his by-line in all the articles analysed. Yet, the *Diciotti Crisis* he reports on took place in Catania, which is on the other side of Sicily and a two-hour drive away. This might raise a doubt as to whether the articles produced by the journalist, however well-documented, actually contain any first-hand reporting. Tondo’s narrative begins with the article: “Standoff in Italian port as Salvini refuses to let refugees disembark - Interior minister wants EU states to take 177 refugees and migrants from ship” (August 21st, 2018)²⁶. The first word in the headline is “standoff”, a term that reverberates throughout the news discourse on the *Diciotti crisis* across the ideological spectrum. A standoff according to the *OED* “is any uneasy stalemate or deadlock; an impasse. Frequently in political contexts”. A more refined definition is: “a deadlock between two equally matched opponents in a dispute or conflict” (Lexico.com)²⁷. In the

²⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/gnm-press-office/2020/jun/17/new-data-shows-guardian-is-the-top-quality-and-most-trusted-newspaper-in-the-uk#:~:text=Katharine%20Viner%2C%20editor%2Din%2Dchief%2C%20Guardian%20News%20%26%20Media%3A&text=The%20Guardian%20is%20also%20the,ABC1%2C%20under%2035s%20and%20families.>

²⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/21/italy-refugees-salvini-refuses-coastguard-ship-docks-diciotti>

²⁷ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/stand-off>

Guardian headline, the “standoff” is implicitly with the asylum seekers but as powerless agents against Salvini, they are clearly not the ones creating a deadlock. The second point of linguistic interest in headlines is the differentiation between “refugees” and “migrants”. The importance of terminology when naming social actors in migratory situations has been discussed in the literature (see Khosravini, 2010; Ieracitano and Vigneri, 2018; Mahrouse, 2018; Nelken, 2018, for recent research on the subject). As a left-wing quality newspaper, the *Guardian* might appear to offer a more “empathetic” perspective by using the term “refugees” than conservative right-wing publications such as the *Daily Mail*, who use almost exclusively the generic “migrants” (Mahrouse, 2018: 34). Yet, the “refugee” versus “migrant” dichotomy creates tensions in the narratives surrounding who has the right to ask for asylum.

In the narration of the legal aspects of the *Diciotti case*, the role of translation becomes crucial. Here, we compare *The Times* and the *Guardian*. The article “Matteo Salvini facing kidnap charge after migrants held on rescue boat” (*The Times* ²⁸) contains two extremely significant critical points in terms of translational decisions. The first concerns the offences of which Salvini was suspected: “Sequestro di persone” (false imprisonment or illegal detention), which has been rendered with “kidnapped”. If we look at a technical definition of “kidnapping”, it is evident that the journalist’s choice of term creates translation effects:

Kidnapping n. *Carrying a person away, without his consent, by means of force, threats, or fraud.* Kidnapping is a common-law offence that overlaps to some extent with the offences of child abduction and false imprisonment. Kidnapping is punishable with a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. (Oxford Dictionary of Law²⁹; my emphasis)

The *Guardian* (Tondo August 22nd, 2020) on the other hand, writes “Salvini defiant over investigation into illegal detention”³⁰. The less loaded translation “illegal detention” is used during the event itself, however, when the Court of Ministers ruled (later overturned) that parliamentary immunity could be lifted, the *Guardian* headline read: “Court in Italy rules

²⁸ <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/salvini-facing-kidnapping-charge-after-migrants-held-on-rescue-boat-hr23stvcj>

²⁹ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100036295>

³⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/22/illegal-detention-italian-ministers-bar-on-migrant-ship-probed>

Matteo Salvini should be tried for kidnapping” (January 24th, 2019)³¹. The *Guardian* and *The Times* were not alone in choosing to translate the Italian “reato di sequestro di persona aggravato” with the term “kidnapping”. All of the news brands used this rendering at some point when referring to the case and its aftermath, yet this was not the only option. A search on the translation website *Reverso*³² yielded the following alternatives: abduction, false imprisonment, unlawful imprisonment, forcible confinement, illegal detention, to name a few. Whilst hyperbole might be expected in the tabloids, the translational decision to use “kidnapping” in the left-wing *Guardian* might be considered an ideological one.

The second critical point might be viewed in the light of cultural translation, which in terms of news translation “is essentially hermeneutical and aims to explain to one group of people how another group interprets an object or event” (Conway, 2012: 1002). The same *Times* article (Willan, 2018)³³ states that Salvini has “in effect” been charged with “kidnap, illegal arrest and abuse of office”. It explains that the public prosecutor “announced that he had placed Mr Salvini under investigation: the equivalent in Italy of being charged”. This is not the case. He was suspected of the crimes but he was not charged at this point in the proceedings. The Italian juridical system is very clear on the two distinct positions. The translation of legal discourse and terminology are some of the most complex and onerous linguistic spheres requiring expert knowledge in source and target languages plus competence in the respective legal systems. An inaccurate legal translation in a juridical context could have very serious consequences. However, the translational act in journalistic contexts is obscured, and those inaccuracies remain unaccounted for.

7. Final remarks and future directions

This contribution presented a qualitative study on the use of translation in British news narratives surrounding the *Diciotti case*, an episode whose ramifications continue to be far-reaching in the current political debate on immigration in Europe. From a translation studies perspective, the case

³¹<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/24/court-in-italy-rules-matteo-salvini-should-be-tried-for-kidnapping>

³²<https://context.reverso.net/translation/italian-english/sequestro+di+persona>

³³<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/salvini-facing-kidnapping-charge-after-migrants-held-on-rescue-boat-hr23stvcj>

was significant for the ways in which quotations from source language social media were translated and recontextualised in order to narrate events to an anglophone audience. Synchronic sampling was carried out on the major UK news brands' coverage of the case during the period that the asylum seekers were held on the Diciotti. With regards to the first research question on the use of translation and the sources of transquotation, the results would indicate that anglophone news narratives on Italian affairs are often constructed around textual material extracted from social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and from Italian newspapers, which are then translated into ready-made quotes. No indication is given that the original utterance was in fact in another language. This process entails translation input from the journalists, who may have no knowledge of a foreign language, let alone translation theory. Yet, they are providing their audience with the “news” from overseas. It appears that news texts on foreign affairs, even in the quality brands, can easily be constructed with a few well-chosen images and a sprinkling of transquoted tweets. Buoziš and Creech (2018: 1430) suggest that “news is not reality as it happened, but an observed documentation of that reality”. Instead, it seems that reality is not being observed at all; it is refracted through virtual discourse which is then reformulated and translated to fit the aims of the text producer, in this case the journalist, to meet target audience expectations.

However, examining the textual content is only a part of the puzzle. A triangulation of research approaches that account for not only the product but also their production (i.e. speaking to journalists) would greatly enhance the analysis of textual data. As the *Guardian's* correspondent, Lorenzo Tondo represented the best example from the study of the narrator-journalist-translator, he was contacted via telephone and email to ask if he would grant an interview. Having initially agreed to participate, when provided with a short list of questions, he failed to respond to my attempts to contact him again in order to arrange the interview. This is just a small example of the kind of obstacles researchers of news translation face, thus limiting investigations into translational practices in news contexts. Another area of journalistic research that has been underexplored is the reception of multimodal news texts. Investigations into the use of translation in digital news sources might focus on how much time readers spend browsing a news text, and if they actually watch and listen to the videos. Audience awareness and perception of embedded translanguing quotations of foreign leaders would provide useful insights

into the role of translation in national image building, cognition, and stereotyping.

Returning to the second research question, in terms of narratives, one of the most striking findings from this sample study, in agreement with Nelken (2018), is the total absence of the asylum seekers' voice. From the data analysed, across the ideological spectrum, the declarations of Salvini on social media, that reverberate through translation, were far more "newsworthy" than the fate of the 137 asylum seekers who were denied their identity, freedom of movement, and fundamental human rights.

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“Language barrier” in UK newspapers 2010-2020: Figurative meaning, migration, and language needs

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Abstract

This article investigates the use of the expression “language barrier” in online and printed newspapers in the United Kingdom between 2010 and 2020. The analysis focuses on occurrences published in news items dealing with migration and language needs in multilingual UK contexts. The usage of the expression is discussed referring to policies addressing language needs of long-term and recent culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Language policy changes in the UK over the same period indicate an adoption of progressively negative connotations of the concept of “language barrier”, which reshaped language provision thus creating vulnerabilities for CALD communities. Being able to access information in a language that is understood in crisis settings relies on language policies recognising the linguistic diversity of the local population and accepting the need for language service provision for transient resident and/or recent arrivals in a country. The study focuses on the parallel between an increased frequency of use of the term in the UK media and a gradual dismantling of language service provision for the country’s CALD communities. Mapping the usage of “language barrier” leads the article to reflect on the politicization of the discourse on multilingualism, as historically the UK pursued ever stricter migration policies, leading to policy-making choices that risk increasing societal vulnerability.

Keywords: language policies, integration policies, multilingual preparedness, figurative language, migration

1. Introduction

“Semantic” is often used as “academic” in derogatory constructs connotating picky and irrelevant differences. Language usage affects clarity of thought and changes perception of reality. When communication of crucial information relies on language to perform specific actions (e.g. take precautions and avoid risks), having access to clear messages in a language

that at-risk populations understand is non-negotiable; multilingualism and multiculturalism make this challenge extremely complex. Language access matters for migrants and ever more so in crises (Guadagno, 2016), from those triggered by natural hazards to epidemic, pandemic, and terrorist attacks (Alexander and Pescaroli, 2019). Setting up language provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities – be they established or establishing in their new environments – contributes to reducing risks for the local society as a whole, and provides better support for transient allophone residents (e.g. business travellers and tourists) as it creates resources for multilingual communication that can accommodate language needs during crises. These needs cannot be accommodated overnight, and even less so if the existing needs of CALD communities are routinely unmatched by the available offer of local language service providers (LSP). In these contexts, languages become barriers to acting timely and to mitigating risks. In the UK, the government department with responsibilities over local communities and emergency management drives the integration agenda and its associated language-related policies.

This paper engages with the expression “language barrier”, as a figurative collocation that can connote the complexity of communication in multilingual societies in both positive and negative terms. The expression reflects political views of migration; through policy making and budgeting measures, it has influenced all practical measures connected with institutional language support to multilingual communities in the UK – be they permanent or temporary (services to tourists and business travellers). A definition or discussion of the metaphor itself goes beyond the scope of this paper whose specific aim is to question whether the metaphor has become *too* embedded in a political use in UK English¹. The visible changes in the UK usage, elicited in the data, seem to correspond to privileging predominantly negative connotations. News articles provide evidence of how the expression, regardless of its semantic potential, has been overtly used in a weaponised manner. The data map a process framing the politicized narrative of discussing the cost and disadvantages of language provision in relation to immigration.

The process has happened over consecutive (and increasingly more) right-wing UK governments and almost flattened the figurative potential

¹ In other languages, possibly even in other varieties of English, such as International or EU English, the same metaphor or other figurative expressions used to indicate complexity of communication between two languages might not necessarily share the connotations described here.

of the “language barrier” expression in portraying linguistic diversity by reducing multiculturalism into a two-dimensional problem of cost/benefit of social economics, regardless of the broader impact of language policies on economic and social resilience. Beyond its shorthand usefulness, the “language barrier” has become connected with the notion that local authorities’ provision of translation and interpreting services were excessive and unnecessary expenditures in the UK, thus changing their public portrayals (see Maniar, 2014).

In the following four sections, the paper engages with journalistic usage of the expression in UK English-language newspapers between 2010 and 2020. Qualitative data is analysed to consider how “language barrier” specifies a view of language service provision and of support of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the UK, in terms of the risks it entails for emergency responders (police, medical personnel, and firefighters). The first section illustrates the data collection method in relation to the conceptualization of “language barrier” and its usage. The second section hypothesises a connection between the textual evidence and policy changes that ran in parallel to the emergence of increasingly far-right narratives in British news-making language. The third section looks at the contradictory conceptualization of language service provision as a hindrance to integration and a stimulus to global trade. The concluding remarks engage with direct and indirect effects of these narratives on the role that professional translators and interpreters are expected to perform in a globalised, yet ever more insular multilingual United Kingdom.

1. Methods: the case study and the data

In a theoretical void – a mere rhetorical exercise as no linguistic context is ever neutral – “language barrier” expresses the difficulty in communicating efficiently across linguistic, cultural, and social divides. Languages can become hurdles, obstacles, walls, a *barrier* when no resources are available to establish a form of communication among human beings. However, the expression is a favourite among language service providers (LSP) as it encapsulates the added value of the work of language-related professionals who make up the composite world of international communication. Widely-used in institutional settings of translation and interpreting – such as the Directorate General for

Translation (DGT)² and the Directorate General for Interpretation (SCIC/DGInterpretation), or the UN Language Services – and regularly present in academic debates, the term is effective. Its usage by those advocating for mutual understanding takes up a function that enables communication, thus breaking down such barrier, and is arguably – but not the point for debate in this paper – a positive (maybe positivistic) perception of interpreting and translating as crucial supports to enabling communication in multilingual settings. The metaphor works. It persuades, it speaks clearly. Among the many nuanced uses of the expression, the extremely negative view seems to equate linguistic diversity with difficult or refused integration. The term “integration” refers to a socio-political construct (for the UK context, see the comprehensive discussion in Phillimore and Goodson, 2008), with its own contextual and situational variants of meaning – e.g. the notion is different legally whether it refers to asylum seekers or to economic migrants. Some constant factors exist as the notion of integrating migrants into the host society is linked with language skills (see the link between law and migration policies in relation to language competences, detailed in the Europe-wide project entitled *Determinants of International Migration*; DEMIG, 2015). This paper looks at integration as described in language-related policies of the UK. Consequently, the definitions considered here stem from government definition(s). Almost exactly at the two ends of the 2010-2020 decade, two fundamental definitions were put forward by the UK institutions. In 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government, responsible both for language service provision to CALD communities and emergency plans to protect all members of local communities, defined it as follow: “Integration means creating the conditions for everyone to play a full part in national and local life. Our country is stronger by far when each of us, whatever our background, has a chance to contribute” (H.M. Government, 2012: 2).

The UK government has since adopted ways of measuring integration by looking at specific indicators. In its 2019 *Integrated Communities Action Plan*, the definition has been revised and consolidated; now integration refers to “communities where people, whatever their background, live, work, learn and socialise together, based on shared rights, responsibilities and opportunities” (H.M. Government, 2019: 11).³

² For example, Viola and Martikonis, 2017.

³ The plan is achieved by measuring indicators of integration in ‘14 key domains: work, education, housing, health and social care, leisure, social bonds – with those you share a sense of identity, social bridges – with people from different

“Language barrier” correlates to discussions of those contexts in which the presence of speakers of minority- or community languages (for which no practical distinction is made in UK language policies) signals issues. These issues concern communication with speakers of the official, main, or “dominant language” (for the definition of the latter, see Yule, 2020) and, by extension, they are issues concerning integration. For many years, in the anglophone LSP industry, the expression served as a useful shorthand to explain the most axiomatic functions of translating and interpreting (at least in their most noble and primal intentions). In this paper, the “language barrier” is however discussed with illustrations of its use in political settings and its manifestations in journalistic texts. Such use often seems to betray a disregard for the notion that the right to speak one’s own language (be they minority, community, or rare languages) was enshrined in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see UN 1948; de Varennes, 2001), of which the UK is one of the signatories. It does not mean that learning the dominant language of a country in which one migrates is not expected, but it suggests that people cannot be discriminated for using their own languages in the early phases of integration, as language learning takes time (significantly, the 2019 *Integrated Communities Action Plan* policy refers exclusively to learning English as the solution to integration).

From a critical perspective, the notion of language as a barrier is influenced by monolingual perceptions of the world (see Yule, 2020). Extensively multilingual countries (e.g. Nigeria, Zambia, or India) see tens of languages spoken locally with limited mutual intelligibility every day. Languages are not barriers. They are something more fundamental: they are the intrinsic element of the genomic makeup of the *homo sapiens*. Languages become a barrier when we do not want to do anything to communicate across multiple languages (e.g. referring to learning other local languages, denying the existence of minority languages, shunning the services of LSP professionals, etc.). In the 2010-2020 decade, UK local authority budgets fell by a median average of 17% (Harris, Hodge, and Phillips, 2019). Local authority social services budget to support vulnerable groups (CALD communities fall in this category) fell in this decade by 80% (*ibid.*: 42). Financial support assists CALD communities to have access to services that facilitate integration. Budgetary changes in this area represent a political statement, as allocated budgets to language service provision suffered from these changes (Harris, Hodge, and

backgrounds, social links – with institutions, language and communication, culture, digital skills, safety, stability, rights and responsibilities.

Phillips, 2019: 42). When no budget is available, language needs of CALD communities become a problem. Although significantly alternative views (Marlowe and Bogen, 2015; Shackleton, 2018) indicate that early interpreting and translation support might become routes to social integration and access to services, the “language barrier” is presented as a problem to be solved by ensuring people learn English (see Section 3). This might be discussed as a fair perspective for integration. However, it does not account for immediate needs at point of access for aging, accepted migrant populations, recent migrants, business travellers, or tourists, whose main impact is on the healthcare system. The provision of services at point of access, which rely on interpreters, community interpreters, and local authorities as well as NHS budgets to support the local CALD members is a statutory expectation from local authorities and for primary care trusts (see H.M. Government, 2017), and it is part of non-discriminating statutory legal expectations as stated in the 2010 Equality Act.

This study carried out an analysis of the diffusion of the “language barrier” expression and its usage in relation to negative or positive connotations in newspapers and tracked this usage against the policy changes. A version of genre-based approach to journalism studies has been adopted in this paper (Bouzis and Creech, 2018)⁴ by focusing on the metaphor as a legitimizing narrative. Legitimizing narratives impose one potential interpretation as a truth through multiple adjustments of textual components, which become an “acknowledgement of the legitimacy of explanations and justifications for how things are and how things are done” (Fairclough, 2003: 219). By considering how the “language barrier” metaphor is used in the media, as an implicit tool for legitimizing political actions and policy-making, the paper indicates a correlation between the language policy changes and representation of translating and interpreting in relation to multilingualism.

A corpus of 146 articles, from 1,209 hits for the search query LANGUAGE and BARRIER, AND MIGRANT* was compiled to conduct the exploratory assessment of the usage of this metaphor. The data were then scrutinized, tagged, and coded by the author to ascertain connotations. The corpus aimed to test the hypothesis that (im)migration narratives skew the perception of multilingualism and its broader, more

⁴ “The study of news as narrative takes it as a given that journalism, as a site of textual practice, reveals broader social relations and cultural meanings” (Bouzis and Creech, 2018: 1431).

complex, and nuanced needs once these are all grouped and discussed as part of the “language barrier”.

1.1 Corpus parameters

News items were collected using the databases Nexis®, a single point of access to multiple news providers. Its search query can be used for constructing small-scale and simplified corpora by extracting articles from a range of press and online sources. UK national and regional newspapers as well as newswires were selected; for a more robust approach, online archives of individual news sources ought to be studied to ascertain whether the database is comprehensive. A randomised test was conducted on one of the chosen newspapers, *The Herald*. The same queries and search parameters that had been used on Nexis® were also used directly on the historical archive of the newspaper. The query returned identical results (bringing up all the same articles), thus satisfying a baseline of data accuracy for the analysis conducted for this paper. The search queries were repeated 5 times to ensure that the same hits were returned every time.

In structuring the corpus, priority was given to focus and feasibility: the corpus was compiled over a 3-month period by a single researcher, who also coded and tagged the articles after reading them. International press and foreign language news sources were excluded even when they referred to the British context. The query was filtered to focus on English-language sources, published in the United Kingdom, and only referring to residents in Britain. In practical terms, the query used parameters pertaining to time, sources, origin of publication, and geography of reference; it was then further narrowed down by considering a representative sample of outlets including local editions, online, paper, and news wires that had numerous hits for the selected time span.

Time:	articles published between 1 January 2010 and 31 January 2020.
Sources:	newspapers, newswires, and press releases published in English in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
Sample:	Included publications were by frequency of usage <i>the Guardian</i> , <i>MailOnline</i> and <i>Daily Mail</i> and <i>Mail on Sunday</i> , <i>telegraph.co.uk</i> , <i>the Independent</i> , <i>BBC Monitoring: International Reports</i> , <i>Financial Times</i> , <i>Express</i> and <i>Express Online</i> , <i>Financial Times</i> and <i>Financial Times Online</i> , <i>The Times</i> and <i>thetimes.co.uk</i> , <i>The Herald</i> , <i>the Express</i> , <i>the Observer</i> , <i>the</i>

	<i>Sun, walesonline.co.uk.</i>
Query:	Boolean search query: 'language AND barrier AND migrant'.
Raw data:	1,209 hits.

Table 1. Essential corpus parameters

As Table 1 shows, the corpus parameters were basic. Of the original hits, only news items from the 10 sources with most occurrences were analysed and coded individually (using NVivo ver. 12.0.0.71). Figure 1 shows how “language barrier” becomes a recurrent term in 2013 and 2016 (see discussion in 2.1) and Figure 2 shows the total number of news items focussing on issues of immigration that used “language barrier” to plot their distribution by year.

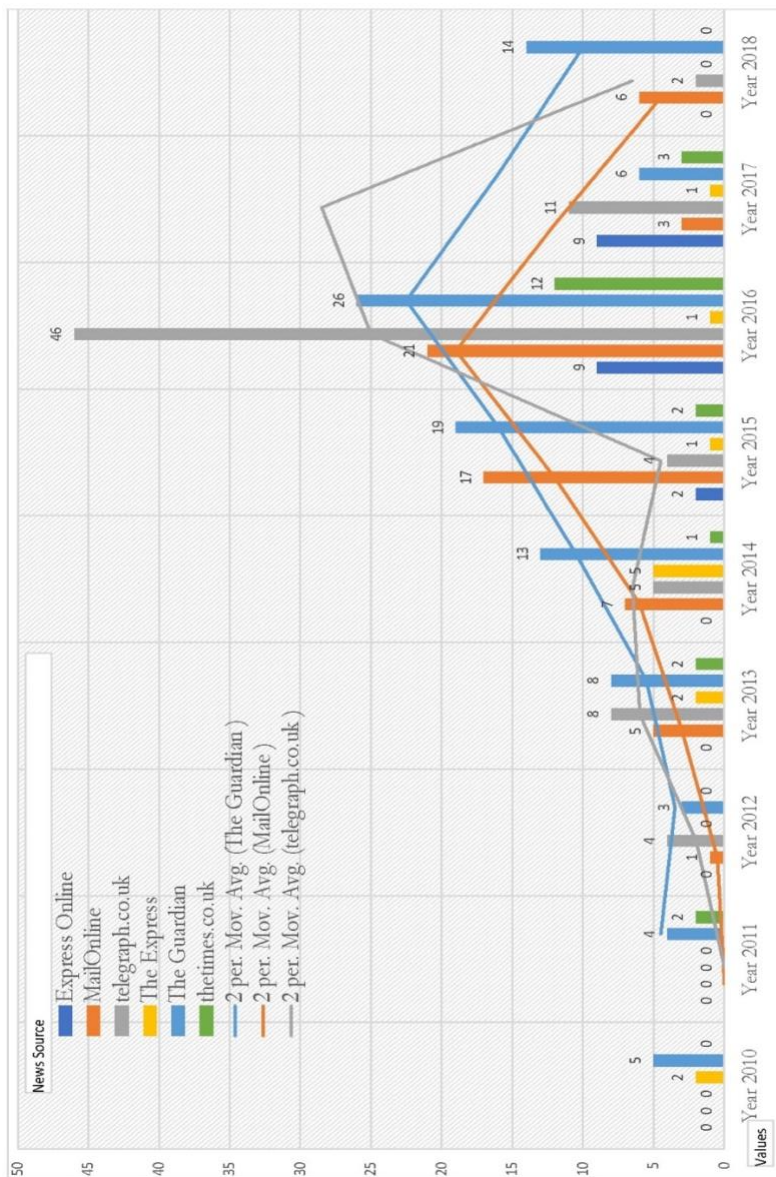


Figure 1. “language barrier” in news articles, 2010-2020

1.2 Data size

After applying all the parameters, the news items were selected and annotated manually; the 146 articles included references to the “language barrier” expression in relation to migrants and immigration matters. The frequency of occurrences increased in relation to changes to language policy in response to the issue of migration and reorganization of translation and interpreting procurement for the government (2013; discussed in Maniar, 2014) and in the year of the Referendum about UK membership of the EU. Clear clusters are visible in the *Daily Mail*, *the Guardian*, and *The Times*.

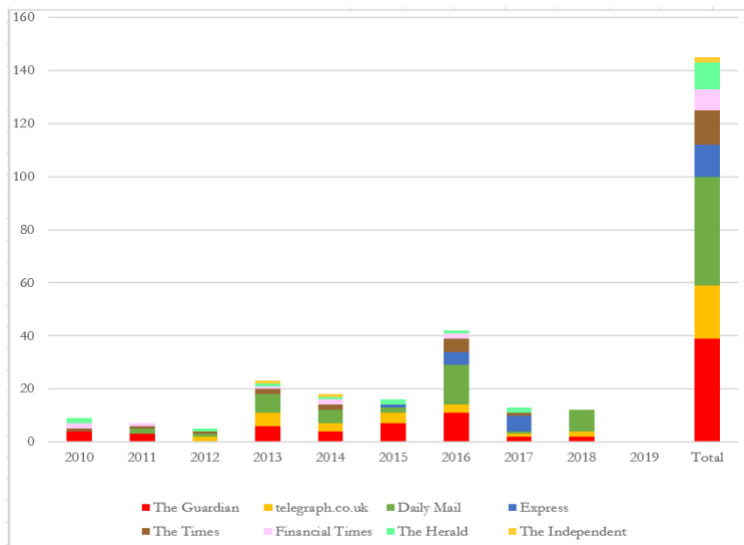


Figure 2. News items using “language barrier” in relation to migration by year

Paraphrases of “language barrier” (e.g. language skills are a barrier to integration) regularly occur in the data. They appear when discussing problems of exclusion in social, economic, and cultural terms. Long news items focusing on election nights, electoral campaign specials, letters, lifestyle (food, arts), and charity awards reports were excluded. Appendix 1 shows 23 examples of negative connotations and Appendix 2 shows 8 examples of positive connotations. A unique number (1 to 31) is

associated to each example in the Appendixes⁵; in the article “Ex. No.” is used to refer to that specific example.

2. Analysis

The sample suggests that “language barrier” became successfully politicized as a legitimization of the language policies that complemented the integration policies (H.M. Government, 2012, 2018, 2019) dictated by emphasis on excessive migration. These policies are discussed in section 2.1. “Language barrier” and its paraphrases are used to create narratives pertaining to immigration, without distinguishing between long-term established CALD communities, recent Eastern European citizens moving to the UK from the EU, former interpreters for the UK military forces, or refugees and asylum seekers (who are not allowed to work) from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Stylistically, the “language barrier” metaphor collocated close to noun-clauses such as “lack of integration” (also accepted by Labour politicians, ex. 21), “cost” (ex. 2, 8), and “benefits” (ex. 6, 11, 22). Three often overlapping narratives emerge from the corpus:

- a. Limited English proficiency (LEP) limits work opportunities and increases benefit expenditures on immigrant workers. (Ex. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 14)
- b. LEP is a hindrance to provision of and access to healthcare and schooling. (Ex. 2, 11, 15, 17, 20, 22)
- c. Catering for immigrants’ language needs is expensive and an obstruction to integration. (Ex. 1, 8, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23)

The subdivision into three narratives⁶ is merely used as a tool to analyse the data. As the examples are organized in chronological order, the progression shows that from initial concerns about job opportunities the focus shifted entirely onto the perception of LSP as expensive, in the second part of the decade.

The moderate left-leaning *Guardian* used the metaphor too, as did *The Financial Times* with its financial focus determined by analysis and studies of world-wide market dynamics. For these broadsheets, the narrative sits within the first one of the three: individuals who succeed by overcoming

⁵ They are available here: <https://tinyurl.com/FMFCultus2020>.

⁶ See Appendixes for complete examples, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/FMFCultus2020>.

the barrier are likely to achieve higher degrees of success (e.g. “What it takes to be a migrant entrepreneur; Language and cultural barriers are the first hurdles when starting a business in a foreign country, but networking is key”, *Guardian*, April 24th, 2016, also ex. 14); or natives fail despite not having to face the “language and cultural barriers” (*Financial Times*, November 3rd, 2010, ex. 24).

The frequency of use peaks in 2013 and 2016. Up to 2013 the main usage was that LEP was a hindrance to taking job opportunities or schooling. Then the Department of Work and Pensions introduced a mandatory English exam, as according to the Minister at the time, Ian Duncan Smith “The British public are rightly concerned that migrants should contribute to this country, and not be drawn here by the attractiveness of our benefits system. We are taking action to ensure that that is the case” (ex. 6). The *Guardian* defined this approach as “peddling populist myths about ‘benefit tourism’” (ex. 25) but at this point in the data, “language barrier” turns into the expression connected to all the issues of migration. Commentators close to racist and extremist positions started referring to LSP as an expenditure that hurt integration: “Perpetuating the language barrier by hiring so many translators is not only costly, it’s also harming the very people it aims to assist” (*Daily Mail*, January 14th, 2014; ex. 8).

The months leading to the 2016 Referendum on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union greatly focused on misleading immigration debates. Over that year, the “language barrier” appears repeatedly to infer lack of integration (ex. 18), under-performing (ex. 20) or overperforming (ex. 27) migrant pupils, and impact on service provision (ex. 22). The *Daily Mail* correlates issues with language skills (their view on “language barrier”) to “ethnic diversity”, “linguistic diversity”, and “migrant-background” thus providing incoherent readings about school children performance comparing “white British pupils” (ex. 22) to migrant pupils. Barely do these articles disguise institutionalised racism: the term “language barrier” is adopted to refer to all non-white residents, thus implying that all British Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) are migrants.

2.1 Legitimising the barrier

The legitimisation of the negative connotation, increasingly linked to narratives b. and c. in the corpus, saw a surge when the government changed procurement rules for translation and interpreting services, because of a change in language policy. In the winter of 2012-2013, a cost-

cutting language policy transformed the political discourse surrounding language service access into a political battle against efficient multilingual communication in the UK. On December 19th, 2012, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government published the policy entitled *50 ways to save: examples of sensible savings in local government*. Its 34th recommendation reads “Stop translating documents into foreign languages: only publish documents in English. Translation undermines community cohesion by encouraging segregation. Similarly, do not give community grants to organisations which promote segregation or division in society” (MHCLG, 2013: 11). Accommodating language needs is seen as the same as funding organizations that promote segregation (e.g. faith schools). The third sector, which had been hard-pressed to compensate for the cuts to interpreting services (ex. 1), was de facto excluded from governmental grants, should it contribute to offering LSP to CALD communities. This policy was not an accident. On March 12th, 2013, the Minister Eric Pickles defended it with a Written Parliamentary Statement:

I would like to reaffirm my department’s approach to the use of translation and interpretation services for foreign languages by local authorities.

Some local authorities translate a range of documents and other materials into languages spoken by their residents, and provide interpretation services. While there may be rare occasions in which this is entirely necessary - for instance in emergency situations - I am concerned that such services are in many cases being provided unnecessarily because of a misinterpretation of equality or human rights legislation. Such translation services have an unintentional, adverse impact on integration by reducing the incentive for some migrant communities to learn English and are wasteful where many members of these communities already speak or understand English.⁷

There is no ambiguity of message: the UK government perceives multilingual communication to vulnerable CALD communities as an obstacle to their integration but wants them supported in emergencies. High quality translation and interpreting however rely on experienced and available professionals. Without supporting the services of regular pools of LSP professionals in ordinary circumstances, it is difficult to access suitable LSP when a crisis erupts. This governmental department has the

⁷ Written Statement archived in the official governmental website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/translation-into-foreign-languages> (last accessed 15 April 2020).

remit to create and enact policies to enable local communities in the UK to be prepared to deal with emergencies (floods, epidemic, pandemic, technological disasters, cyberattacks, and terrorism). Promoting this way of communicating with CALD communities the department created a substantial vulnerability in clear contradiction to its institutional and statutory functions (O'Brien *et al.*, 2018).

In 2018, the Conservative government led by Prime Minister Theresa May introduced more restrictive language and immigration policies. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, at the time led by Sajid Javid, further restricted access to language services. Mr Javid directly used the “language barrier” narrative in a legitimizing narrative that draws upon the path of “personal experience” of the speaker, who is from an established CALD community background:

When I was a young child, I sometimes had to miss school so that I could go to the doctor with my mother. But it wasn't because I was ill. It was because more than a decade after arriving from Pakistan she still barely spoke a word of English and needed me - her six-year-old-son - to translate for her. For me, it was an early introduction to the way in which issues such as language skills create barriers to integration... eventually, my mother decided she'd be better off if she learned English. (ex. 23)

The personal remarks were used in an interview introducing the reiterated institutional opposition to translation services in favour of (a not-funded) programme to boost English language proficiency in CALD members (ex. 15):

Low levels of proficiency also create costs for providers of local services, such as local authorities and health providers, which have to pay for translation of information and may impact on others in the family, including children, who have to act as translators for relations or friends who cannot speak English. (H.M. Government, 2018: 37)⁸

Accommodating language needs by providing translation and interpreting support became described as an act of institutional generosity – rather

⁸ The policy document refers to findings from a paper by Paget and Stevenson (2014).

than statutory expectations to avoid discriminations and to fulfil requirements to equal opportunities as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

The legitimizing narrative emerging in relation to migrants and the “language barrier” followed a parallel trajectory with policies reducing access to services for all vulnerable groups. Reduction of language services map in the corpus against the consolidation in usage of the “language barrier” framing. To reduce the costs associated with language provision, machine translation systems were expected to support primary healthcare information as much as emergency information for CALD communities (see O’Brien, 2019 on translation technologies in emergencies). Figure 3 and Figure 4 are screenshots from the National Health Service (NHS) patient information page targeting access to information in languages other than English; they illustrate this change.



Figure 3. UK National Health Service information in other languages up to 2018

From 2013 onwards, links to Google Translate were introduced on patient information pages, only replaced by a more cautious message in 2019. The caveat added in the 2019 version of the website (“although online translators... information”) might reflect a moderate push back from the NHS. It could, otherwise, be an alignment to the Government’s own guidance for healthcare communication (2017), which reintroduced the need for efficient communication in healthcare, in an almost contradictory move to the official language policy for CALD communities.

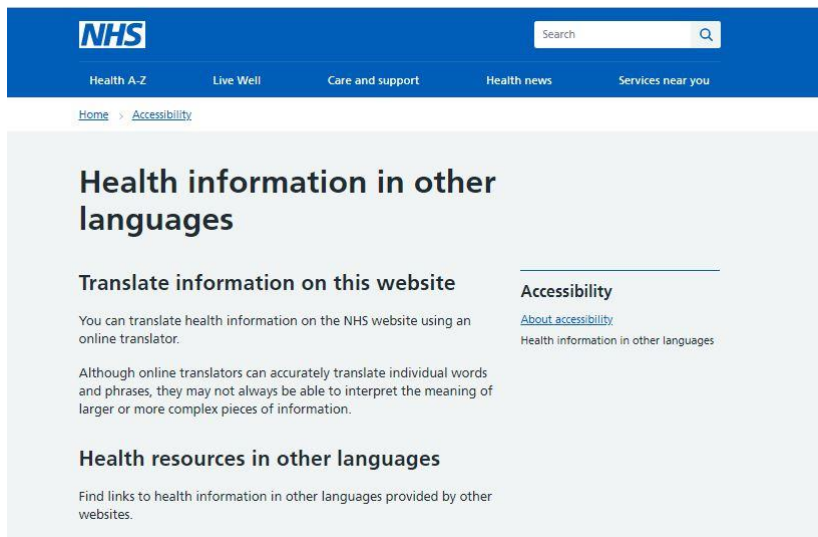


Figure 4. UK National Health Service information in other languages up since 2019⁹

Regular hypes about advanced technologies, especially in 2016 those around neural machine translation, and their powers may underpin the advice to break down the patients’ “language barriers” presented in Figure 3. Technology-based translation services may reduce costs in line with institutional language policies if applied in a systemic manner and monitored by translators (see Halimi Mallem and Bouillon, 2019), whereas their indiscriminate use might cause serious clinical issues (e.g. Albrecht *et*

⁹ Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/accessibility/health-information-in-other-languages/> (last accessed 15 April 2020)

al., 2013). The advice in Figure 3 (“You can translate”...) implies the type of blind faith in translation technologies that welcomes them as a solution-to-all-problems, key and self-sufficient tools to overcome issues determined by linguistic diversity. However, the use of translation technologies without human quality control poses serious issues in crises, just as the deployment of non-professional, non-trained, inexperienced translators and interpreters does (see O’Brien, 2019; O’Mathúna *et al.*, 2020). Once CALD communities have limited access to professional-quality language provision and might become reliant on sub-standard or ad hoc solutions (Angelelli, 2015; Taibi and Ozolins, 2016), they are more exposed to risks, in turn increasing exposure to risk for emergency responders and non-CALD residents in their communities.

The *50 ways* policy of 2013 established that accommodating language needs in crisis and emergencies was an exemption from the reduction in translation and interpreting services for CALD communities in ordinary times. Any barrier increases social vulnerability in crisis settings (Alexander and Pescaroli, 2019; Federici, 2020). Yet, as large events generating cascading crises initially affect people’s health, barriers to standard operations in the NHS, determined by reduced funds for LSP, create that vulnerability in routine conditions. Such vulnerability might become unmanageable in crisis conditions. Even with the exemption of emergencies, the policy contradicts the government and NHS’ aims to fulfil its statutory requirements of accessibility. NHS England – which influences but does not dictate standard practice on devolved healthcare provision in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales – indicates very clearly how

Language is very important in the context of the health practitioner to patient consultation. It can help reduce barriers between practitioner and patient and ensure safety with respect to diagnosis and prescription.

Where language is a problem in discussing health matters, offer a professional interpreter rather than using family or friends. Using neutral-speaking interpreters can help foster trust with the patient (H.M. Government 2017/2018).

From this perspective, to reduce the barrier, LSP is best embedded in services provided by local authorities that have knowledge and understanding of the demand and needs of local CALD communities – e.g. established Pakistani communities might have language needs only in ageing population, more recent Syrian communities might have complex and different language needs by age and gender, and so on. As the

“language barrier” metaphor became a policy-construct that restricted access to essential services for responders as much as affected CALD groups, it wiped out these subtle yet essential distinctions.

Once the Ministry responsible for emergency preparedness makes explicit efforts to reduce LSP investments for CALD communities, it is impossible to have access to appropriate resources in crisis communication settings. Unsurprisingly, a local tragedy in a multilingual borough such as the 2017 Grenfell Tower Fire (ex. 29) and the 2020 COVID-19 national response disproportionately affected BAME members and CALD communities. Changing LSP provision creates an additional vulnerability affecting social groups already more exposed to hazards by their socio-economic conditions: the metaphor of “language barrier” was endorsed by the department most interested in diffusing the potential impact of major incidents and emergencies. The hostility to cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity embedded in the language policies spills over to other forms of accessibility. British Sign Language (BSL) speakers face lack of access to translation and interpreting support regularly in healthcare settings and when accessing other services (Batterbury Magill, 2014: 28-29)¹⁰.

2.2 Limiting integration and increasing vulnerability

There are strong indications that once politicians had legitimised the “language barrier” as a drain to welfare, schooling, and healthcare system, and connected the barrier only to migrants (but affecting also transient and often profitable communities such as business travellers and tourists), the discourse could move from journalistic representations to policy. Policy changes in 2013 and 2018 have a common denominator in how direct quotes from politicians (ex. 7, 16, 21, 23), editorialists (ex. 3, 8), and journalists’ assessments (ex. 10, 19) of the complexity of multilingual societies coincide.

Even if the drive to reduce LSP in local authorities might serve plans for long-term integration through the use of English alone, impoverished budgets for appropriate LSP to CALD communities (including those who

¹⁰ The lack of BSL interpreters during the COVID-19 briefings in March 2020 is an illustration of this issue. See the Statement from the British Deaf Association, ‘Televised Sign Language interpretations. Letter to Prime Minister 31 March 2020’, available at: <https://bda.org.uk/statement-sl-interpretations/> (last accessed 15 April 2020).

cannot legally work and have to be on welfare benefits, as happens to asylum seekers and refugees waiting months for their applications) delay the very process of integration that the policies are supposedly seeking. This contradiction creates a significant vulnerability. Vulnerability has been defined as the resultant of measurable factors determining an equation between the potential impact of natural hazards (fire, flooding, disease, etc.) and vulnerabilities due to susceptibility, coping capacities such as resources, emergency personnel, level of training, social resilience, and adaptive capacity. Figure 5 shows how they correlate in an equation that offers a quantifiable Risk Index for each country of the world (Welle and Birkmann, 2015).

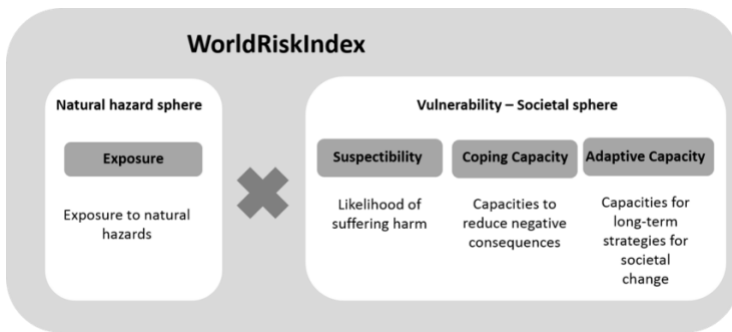


Figure 5. World Risk Index. Source: Institut für Raumordnung und Entwicklungsplanung, Stuttgart¹¹

The UK has a low risk hazardscape for major disasters triggered by natural hazards, excluding pandemic for which several models from 2015 to 2019 had shown significant vulnerabilities. Urban hazards, such as high-rise building fires, terrorist attacks, and healthcare emergencies have a greater impact on linguistic and ethnic minorities. Crisis communication rests on trust and expedite information reaching everybody. Considering learning the local language as the only solution to the “language barrier” is a risk for the whole society. In a crisis, residents and multilingual transient population (tourists, business people, etc.) rely on the same finite number of medical personnel and equipment, of firefighters, of police personnel, and so on. These emergency services and responders cannot be expected

¹¹ See <https://www.ircus.uni-tuttgart.de/Internationales/WorldRiskIndex/#tabs-1>.

to be proficient polyglots, nor should they be exposed to additional risks due to a systemic lack of language support.

Without financial resources for the local authorities that understand the needs of local CALD communities, it is to be expected that any emergency will have a more significant impact on the most vulnerable groups (the report on the COVID-19 impact on BAME communities demonstrates the impact of compounding vulnerabilities, which in several instances included issues with accessing information in the right language). According to the most recent integration policy suggestion that everybody must *know* English (H.M. Government, 2019), the “language barrier” in the UK can only be overcome by achieving a politically-induced monolingualism. The policy plans to “Boost [...] English language” (2019: 13-14), but language learning takes time. Translation and interpreting remain services needed for the integration as well as for the safety of multilingual communities. The policy-construct around English learning actualizes the metaphor, and its reductivist approach to integration strengthens any potential “language barrier”, because it restricts budget allocations for interpreting and translation services needed by the local authorities. By restricting access to essential services, not only does it create a barrier for the CALD communities and non-English speaking transient residents, but also for emergency services and responders.

Providing access to crucial information in a language that vulnerable groups understand relies on having access to established translation and interpreting services. Punitive language policies reducing LSP have an impact on crisis communication strategies, thus putting additional strains on other core, emergency services. In other words, de facto creation of “the language barrier” increases societal vulnerability. The legitimization of the policy can be used to change electorates’ views but it strains social services for entire areas, not just for the CALD communities. This is the point where all negative correlations between cost and value of translation and interpreting services (as were found in the news items collected in the corpus) reveal the short-sightedness of the cost analysis. After having disinvested in the system, fewer practiced, experienced, and available translators and interpreters will be operationally suitable and immediately reliable to support crisis response operations (ex. 27).

2.3 Limitations

This study of the “language barrier” aimed to assess whether mapping the use of this expression in journalistic narratives might show a correlation with ill-conceived language policies. To some extent the corpus fulfilled

this aim. The 2018 *Green Paper* on integration, including a new language policy, and the 2019 *Integrated Communities Action Plan* do not consider the different needs of CALD communities, do not differentiate between minority languages (which of course co-exist in situation of bilingualism, e.g. in Wales) and community languages (e.g. in the Greater Manchester, Birmingham, or London regions), nor on language needs of recent migrants seeking asylum, temporary refugees, and economic migrants. The lack of distinctions is a manifestation of political prejudice against non-English speakers, which in turn has affected preparedness and risk reduction of health treats, when communication requires all residents to be informed.

However, narratives on integration are far more complex to represent than merely using the “language barrier” metaphor as a key search. Mapping its use in journalistic discourse shows the need to consider alternative metaphors that might better embody the role, impact, and significance of translation and interpreting services. There is a need to go beyond one that considers them as mere means to overcome the “language barrier”. Even the examples of usages with positive connotations (see Appendix 2) reveal a conceptualization of multilingualism as an extraordinary achievement (especially when British residents are those acquiring a second language, ex. 31). Further study would be required as well as a broader corpus to see correlations between perceptions of the “language barrier”, the “cultural barriers”, racism, and linguistic inequalities, or the connection between linguistic diversity and social justice (for a discussion of this connection, see Piller, 2016).

The corpus has limitations as it is too small and not fully representative of all the newspapers and magazines on the UK market. The mixed method approach, using frequency data, includes interpretative coding and tagging articles that could be replaced by more objective approaches: the coding would be more revealing had it been carried out by at least 3 people other than the author. Effectively, the assessment of connotations, although still subjective, might be better calibrated through peer interpretations. Extrapolated and interpreted data from the corpus cannot be considered as conclusive evidence that there is a causal relationship between increasingly framing “the language barrier” as an economic problem and changes in the provision of professional translation and interpreting services. However, from the illustration of NHS webpages to prescriptive references in the UK national emergency plans of using Red Cross resources, the “language barrier” framing seems to exempt the UK government from protecting and serving the people inhabiting its territories.

3. Conclusions

Analysing a sample of news items stretching over a decade and connecting the expression “language barrier” with migration, the legitimized narrative to emerge more prominently is that multilingualism is a problem to be resolved with fewer opportunities to accommodate language needs of CALD communities. From narratives about the superdiverse, multilingual UK society that flourishes by breaking “language barriers” of the articles in 2010, the newspapers discourse shifted to a dominant use of the negative connotation that legitimized the conceptualization of linguistic diversity as a hindrance to integration (up to 2013). The legitimized use in newspapers was further consolidated (from 2016) by political discourse on language policies as a way of supporting ongoing representations of issues connected with migration.

The negative connotation of “language barrier” appears to have become a pervasive representation of the risks of multilingualism; it has legitimized monolingual views of the world and corresponded (pushed by other factors) to a decline in the number of UK learners of foreign languages. A study that focused on English-speaking countries and their respective trends in learning languages reported that “since 2002 entries to MFL [modern foreign language] exams have reduced by almost half” (Churchward, 2019: 11). Institutional provision of language access services for vulnerable groups in established or recent CALD communities was reduced, thus exacerbating the “language barrier”. Not only are these socio-economically disadvantaged groups, who might also be vulnerable due to age, low-literacy levels, and low-income jobs, but their vulnerability to crises increases the demands on emergency responders, thus augmenting risks for the whole population. Alexander and Pescaroli (2019) show how there could be extremely valid economic as well as social arguments in ensuring that access to accurate information exists for all members of the population when a crisis erupts.

The opposition to LSP in favour of immediate acquisition of the English Language (e.g. H.M. Government, 2019) is also indicated increasingly as the solution in the journalistic narratives emerging from the corpus used for this study. Linguists may want to engage with the shorthand expression “language barrier” in its usage in English, at least for the UK context. After all, the expression emerged in monolingual cultures, in which bilingual and trilingual competences are often perceived from the point of view of dominant (European) languages and the life-long training efforts needed to master foreign languages, rather than from ordinarily polyglot environments in which billions of people world-wide live.

The data collected in the corpus suggest that mapping the usage of “language barrier” corresponds to mapping the ten-year-long rise of monolingual language policies, restrictive immigration policies, damage to the LSP professionals (see the early report by Maniar, 2014), and to language learning in the UK (Churchward, 2019). Compounding these changes together, England-driven monolingual policies hostile to migrants are likely to pose serious risks, in current and future emergencies, also to the devolved countries of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland that continue to use slightly different language policies with their CALD communities, but are affected by the budgetary implications of these policies.

Acknowledgements

The initial idea to look at the “language barrier” came following a conversation with Claudia Angelelli, Sabine Braun, Ellie Kemp, and Sharon O’Brien at a workshop in May 2019. This paper does not make justice to that conversation nor to what is a much-needed debate on what should be a better expression than “language barrier” to engage with the complexity of communication in multilingual settings. Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers, as their constructive and detailed criticism enabled the author to carry out a complete reorganization of the paper that greatly improved its core argument. All remaining errors, choice of tone, and weaknesses are the author’s sole responsibility.

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Appendices 1 and 2 are available at:
<https://tinyurl.com/FMFCultus2020>.

To Translate or not To Translate: Narratives and Translation in the UK Home Office

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Abstract

Translation services in migratory contexts have not been traditionally depicted as an advantage for British society. In fact, the provision of such services in these contexts has been seen as a social and economic burden. In this paper, we aim to connect how the translation and migration narratives that have emerged in the UK over the years have impacted on the provision of translation by the ministerial department responsible for immigration in this country, i.e., the Home Office (HO). As a first stage of an on-going project, the methodological concept of domain is used to investigate the provision of translation services during EU immigration procedures at the HO from a descriptive standpoint. Here, we will examine to what extent translations are available at this key administrative stage at the outset of the migratory experience when migrants, with and without language barriers, need to communicate their narratives correctly in order to be granted EU residence documentation. Our initial findings suggest that both EU migration and translation narratives seem to have influenced an HO translation policy of non-translation, a policy that needs to be further addressed in the near future.

Keywords: translation policy; Home Office; migration narratives; translation narratives; EU immigration procedures

1. Introduction

In recent years, migration has become a highly politicized and controversial issue in the United Kingdom (UK). It is no secret that it dominated the pro-Brexit campaign – a campaign which sought to foreground the threat that European Union (EU) migrants represented for British society. A variety of social actors have also contributed to this trend, such as politicians and the British media in which, as recently reported by Wambach (2018: 212), “the EU is more frequently represented as disadvantaging the UK as opposed to benefitting it. Of particular interest here was the representation of EU migration as straining UK public services while EU migrants’ contributions are rarely

mentioned”. It is against this background that migration narratives in the British context have emerged, i.e. “explanations, accounts, discourses, and positions that have become given, commonly known and accepted by key players in the [...] migration space” (Akanle, 2018: 162). In this context, migration narratives go hand in hand with translation and interpreting narratives. In UK public discourse, translation and interpreting services in migratory contexts have not always been depicted as beneficial for British society (Schäffner, 2009). In his study on Community Translation (CT)¹ in Britain, Townsley (2018) identified two opposing positions in terms of CT narratives. On the one hand, its supporters foreground the “social inclusion` framing of the function of CT”, while the detractors believe that CT “increases segregation of the non-English speaking communities” and perceive it as a social and economic burden (Townsley, 2018: 111-112). Since State obligations to translate are rather limited in international law, González Núñez (2016) argues that States have a lot of discretion on whether to implement translation policies at the national level, especially in the case of migrant languages. In the UK, “there are no laws [...] that deal exclusively with translation. Further, very few laws are explicit about translation obligations” (González Núñez, 2016: 120), which allows the UK to approach communication with migrant communities with a great deal of discretion.

Even if traditionally non-EU migrants have been regarded as the most vulnerable group in terms of restriction of rights, several EU reports² and previous research (Ruiz-Cortés, 2020; Shaw and Miller, 2013) suggest that substantial implementation obstacles to the right to EU freedom of movement and residence for EU migrants and their family members have persisted in the UK over the years. It should be noted that the general label “EU migration” applies to an array of citizens from EU and non-EU countries, since under EU law, both EU migrants and their third country family members are allowed to move and reside freely in the UK until 2021. In order to confirm their right of residence in the country, EU migrants and their family members need to apply for EU residence

¹ Undeniably this also applies to interpreting. In this paper the term CT is used as a synonym of Public Service Translation as used in Ruiz-Cortés (forthcoming).

² One of the most recent and detailed reports on obstacles to the right to free movement and residence was carried out by the Directorate General for Internal Policies in 2016. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/571375/IPOL_STU\(2016\)571375_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/571375/IPOL_STU(2016)571375_EN.pdf) (last accessed 13 July 2020).

documentation, a process in which language and cultural barriers play an important role (Codó Olsina, 2008). In other words, throughout the process some of these migrants may come across obstacles that hinder their ability to understand the immigration procedure and complete the application form. Consequently, the benefits of CT to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers should not be underestimated, especially considering that migrants are required to be extremely rigorous with the information provided throughout these procedures, and that previous studies have highlighted the negative impact that fragmented or incomplete migrants' narratives may have on immigration procedures in the UK (Gibb and Good, 2014: 396). Migrants' narratives, in this case, can be defined as the "basic mode of understanding and sharing of experience" (De Fina and Tseng, 2017: 381) on the part of migrants when communicating their situation to the authorities³. However, if the immigration procedure or the forms are misunderstood by migrants, information may be miscommunicated to the authorities, which may influence the success of the procedure itself (Sarangi and Slembrouck, 2013).

Foregrounding the "social inclusion" framing of the function of CT" (Townsend, 2018: 111), we therefore contend that CT has the key social mission of promoting equitable access to public service information for migrant communities, enabling their communication with the Public Services (Taibi and Ozolins, 2016). Thus, our premise is that translation will help to bridge the communication divide that may occur in this context (Codó Olsina, 2008), hence discouraging the construction of migrants' fragmented or incomplete narratives (Gibb and Good, 2014: 396). Based on this premise, we seek to investigate whether the EU migration narratives (Wambach, 2018: 212) and the translation narratives (Schäffner, 2009; Townsend, 2018) that have emerged in the UK over the years have impacted on the provision of translation services in EU immigration procedures at the Home Office (HO), the ministerial department responsible for immigration in the UK. To do so, we will examine a key stage at the outset of the migratory experience, i.e. the application process of EU nationals and their family members to obtain EU residence documentation that confirms their legal residence in the UK⁴.

³ In this paper, we draw a distinction between **migration narratives** (Akanle, 2018: 162) and **migrants' narratives** understood as defined above.

⁴ It is not mandatory to apply for this residence documentation in the UK; however, it helps citizens to prove their legal residence in the country, for instance, for the EU Settlement Scheme. According to the UK government webpage, in 2019 65,606 EU residence documents were issued

222

This paper reports on the first stage of an on-going project, in which the provision of translation is approached from a descriptive stance. Future empirical studies will be conducted to test our premise; consequently, this is a first exploratory analysis framed within Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 2012). By following the descriptive standpoint of González Núñez (2016: 42), we will organise the collection of our data via the methodological concept of “domain”⁵, a sociolinguistic context that can be identified in terms of three criteria: location (the British public sector), topic (translation provision in EU immigration procedures) and participants (the UK Home Office and the applicants). Firstly, we will present the participants involved. Secondly, we will delve into the provision of translation services in EU immigration procedures (our object of analysis) to discover whether translation is provided to help migrants construct the narratives needed to complete their application process at the HO (our location).⁶ Finally, after analysing our main results, we will present our conclusions.

2. The Home Office and the applicants

Under *Directive 2004/38/EC*,⁷ EU nationals and their family members have the right to move and reside freely across the EU. In the UK, this Directive was transposed into UK legislation in *The Immigration (EEA) Regulations 2006*⁸, and the executive branch of the British State that has

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-year-ending-december-2019/how-many-people-continue-their-stay-in-the-uk>

(last accessed 13 July 2020).

⁵ This methodology is useful for this first phase; however, different methodologies may be used in the empirical stage.

⁶ At this initial stage of our project we will focus on the analysis of HO’s documents and statements. However, in our empirical study, we plan to include the HO’s position.

⁷ *Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ES/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32004L0038> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

⁸ In 2006, the Directive was transposed into British law and the last version of it is *The Immigration (EEA) Regulations 2016* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2016/1052/made> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

been in charge of implementing this national law over the years is the HO. Consequently, the HO is not only the institution that creates the immigration procedures under study, but is also the one that controls the processing of all EU residence forms - and decides whether EU residence documentation is finally granted. As reflected in this statement on the HO webpage, this ministry has an array of institutional goals:

The first duty of the government is to keep citizens safe and the country secure. The Home Office has been at the front line of this endeavour since 1782. As such, the Home Office plays a fundamental role in the security and economic prosperity of the United Kingdom⁹.

The division of the HO that deals with immigration procedures is the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)¹⁰. Few authors have studied the UKVI or the HO thoroughly, which makes Campbell's (2016) ethnographic research of utmost importance. After analysing the British asylum system, Campbell describes the HO as a "flawed institution" and a "complex bureaucratic organization" with "poorly conceived policies" (Campbell, 2016: 13, 30, 44). As for the administrative decisions taken, Campbell (2016: 31, 42) highlights that generally:

Official decisions are marked by an organizational culture that 'included a range of assumptions, stereotypes and myths' about particular nationals and communities, notably the myth that immigration is a 'threat to society' and that success can be measured by the number of individuals who are deported. [...] In short, officials seize on minor details of a claim in an effort to undermine the applicant's credibility and refuse the claim.

However, not only Campbell (2016) has been critical of the HO's restrictive immigration approach. Shaw and Miller (2013) found similar results in their study on the implementation of EU freedom of movement and residence rules in the UK, where they based their results both on legal doctrine and interviews with key national stakeholders in the implementation process. They highlighted the obscurity surrounding this bureaucratic institution while detecting "the importation of immigration case reasoning into EU free movement cases by decision-makers [...],

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/home-office/about#responsibilities> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration/about-our-services> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

with the result that tests or standards which were incorrect or inappropriate were applied” (Shaw and Miller, 2013: 23). In other words, even if more flexible rules were applicable to migrants under EU law, the HO officials neglected these rules, at times, applying more restrictions than those required. Consequently, what all of the above suggests is that the HO has had a restrictive approach towards immigration over time (Campbell, 2016), including EU immigration (Shaw and Miller, 2013).

As for the applicants, their common denominator is that they are all migrants. In other words, the applicants may be EU nationals, i.e. EU migrants, or their third country family members, i.e. non-EU migrants. Due to that common denominator, previous studies indicate that these applicants usually have an initial misunderstanding not only of British bureaucratic procedures, but also of the implications that their statements may have on the final administrative decision (Sarangi and Slembrouck, 2013). At the same time, these applicants have heterogeneous profiles since they differ in age, nationality, language, culture, socio-economic situations or educational backgrounds¹¹. Whichever the case, in this bureaucratic context there is an asymmetrical relationship between the participants involved, with the migrant being in a subordinate position to the authorities or, as Sarangi and Slembrouck (2013: 59) put it, with “an examinee supplying information to an examiner, who, in his/her turn, is also mandated to doubt, challenge and probe into any aspects of the applicant’s life that he/she may deem relevant to the procedure”. However, although the HO decides the fate of the applicant, “an unsuccessful outcome is often blamed on the client, because the bureaucratic decision is taken in accordance with the information provided” (Sarangi and Slembrouck, 2013: 130). Consequently, providing the information correctly, or in other words, constructing your narrative properly will have an impact on the final outcome. To this end, translation may be essential for a very heterogeneous migrant population with different levels of education and literacy. The question that remains unanswered is: Are translated materials provided by the HO to help applicants with these immigration procedures?

¹¹ See “Migration Statistics 2020”
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06077/>
(last accessed 13 July 2020).

3. Translation provision at the HO and EU immigration procedures

Unlike the situation in other Member States (see Ruiz-Cortés, 2019 for an analysis of the situation in Spain) EU immigration procedures in the UK do not involve face-to-face contact, which entails that all the information concerning EU application processes is provided online. This implies that investigating whether translation is provided or not in this context requires the analysis of the online information facilitated by this ministry to help the applicant with the application process.

It should be noted that in order to initiate the application process migrants are required to submit EU residence forms by post¹² to the HO, with the necessary complementary documentation having to be enclosed. However, EU forms are only available online on the UKVI webpage, so before completing them, migrants need to download the relevant information concerning their procedure and their application form. Since, as reported by the national stakeholders involved (Shaw and Miller, 2013), EU freedom of movement and residence law is complex enough for legal practitioners and civil servants, arguably it may be even more challenging for migrants with possibly no subject knowledge on the matter and who may be experiencing linguistic and cultural barriers. Bearing this in mind, the first setback these migrants may encounter is that, depending on their personal situation and the kind of residence for which they are applying, they need to choose one out of the five possible forms applicable to migrants under EU Law¹³. It could be argued that these forms, which total 374 pages, are not exactly straightforward for someone who is not literate in EU law since they use complex legal concepts, such as “permanent residence” or “derivative right of residence”, that need to be decoded in order to simply choose the right form. This ratifies the perception of previous studies that applicants are sometimes addressed “as someone who will be able to judge him/herself the eligibility condition on the basis of the information provided” (Sarangi and Slembrouck, 2013: 138), which may not always be the case, especially if these applicants are not familiar with the host country language or bureaucracy. What can migrants do if this occurs?

¹² In very specific cases they are allowed to apply online: <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/eea-qp> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

¹³ See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-visa-forms#forms-for-citizens-of-the-european-economic-area> (last accessed 13 July 2020). In other Member States this may differ. For instance, in Spain, only one application form has been created for all family members under EU law (See Ruiz-Cortés, 2019).

Firstly, they may look for the relevant information on the internet. However, even if “websites are a crucial point of entry for many citizens seeking services” (González Núñez, 2017: 163), they will not find the HO’s website translated into any foreign language. Even so, applicants may try to find out if their application forms or other related documents are translated. However, even if they do so, they will find no translated information whatsoever, since no applications forms or any other supporting documents are translated into any foreign language for EU law immigration procedures in the UK. In fact, the only resource the HO makes available to these applicants to solve their doubts is the “Contact UK Visas and Immigration about your application” tab¹⁴. In this tab, the first question migrants will be asked is if they are applying for residence from inside or outside the UK, as shown in Figure 1.

Contact UK Visas and Immigration about your application

1 Where are you applying from?

If you are contacting UK Visas and Immigration on behalf of someone outside the UK, select 'Outside the UK', even if you are in the UK.

- Inside the UK
- Outside the UK

Next step

Figure 1. UKVI step 1- Where are you applying from?

On the one hand, if they choose the option “Inside the UK”, they will be presented with a list of possible topics their queries may be related to, such as Asylum, British Citizenship and Nationality or the EU Settlement

¹⁴ This is a general resource that can be used by all migrants in the UK.

Scheme. After selecting one, they will be given contact details (UK telephone numbers and emails) to solve their queries using English as the language of communication with the authorities. On the other hand, if they choose the option “Outside the UK”, they will be directly presented with a list of languages they can use to contact the HO, as can be seen in Figure 2.

2 What language do you want to use?

Choose the language you want to use:

- to speak to someone on the phone
- to get a reply by email

- English
- Arabic
- Cantonese
- French
- Hindi
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Spanish

Next step

Figure 2. UKVI step 2- What languages do you want to use?

As can be observed, they may choose from eight possible languages, English and seven other languages, to obtain information in this second case. As an example, Figure 3 shows the information they will find if they choose to contact the HO in Spanish.

Contact UK Visas and Immigration in Spanish

You can call or email Spanish-speaking staff with a question about your application. Contact centre staff cannot give you advice about your personal circumstances.

By phone

Telephone: 00 44 203 481 1738

Monday to Friday, 1pm to 1am UK local time

Calls cost £1.37 per minute on top of your standard network charges.

By email

[Email UK Visas and Immigration.](#)

Emails enquiries cost £5.48. You will not be charged for any follow-up emails about the same enquiry.

You'll get a reply to your email within 2 days, except on Saturdays, Sundays and UK [public holidays](#).

Report a technical problem

To report a technical problem with your online application, for example problems with passwords, payments, refunds and booking appointments, you must include:

- your name
 - what you're applying for (for example Tier 2 visa)
-

Figure 3. UKVI step 3- Contact UK Visas and Immigration in Spanish

Interesting differences may be inferred from the HO's division "Inside and outside the UK". Firstly, if migrants are applying from within the UK, they are required to use English to contact the authorities, while being referred to specific immigration services depending on their query. Nevertheless, if they are applying from outside the UK, they will be able to use a foreign language to communicate with the HO (one of the abovementioned), but independent of the language, users are given the same contact details without discriminating the specific residence documentation they are applying for. In both cases, however, solving their queries is not free of charge since migrants must pay £1.37 per minute if they decide to use the phone option or £5.48 for an enquiry if they choose the email option.

As for the linguistic dimension, a number of assumptions seem to lurk beneath the HO's linguistic decisions. Firstly, according to the HO perspective, if migrants are in the UK they are automatically expected to use English to communicate with the authorities. Secondly, from the seven foreign languages chosen by the HO for those applying from outside the UK, two of them are varieties of Chinese. This may be linked to economic reasons, and particularly to the Tier one investor visas that, as argued in the *Independent*: "have proved popular with Russian and Chinese applicants. They allow anyone investing at least £2m in

government bonds to work or study in Britain”¹⁵ (December 6th, 2018). Whichever the case, all of the above suggests that no translation is provided for EU immigration procedures during the application process in the UK, leaving the applicants with no choice but to pay to contact the UKVI, or to find a translator themselves, if they experience language barriers. What will happen with those migrants who do not speak English or any of the foreign languages chosen to communicate with the HO, or who do not have the means to pay for a translator during the application process, remains a mystery. However, it is worth mentioning that, according to the HO’s webpage¹⁶, this ministry does hire freelance interpreters at times after the form has been submitted for “casework interviews where an individual has been booked in advance”. Nevertheless, this approach neglects the fact that potential communication problems may be avoided if translation or interpreting services were provided right from the start of the immigration procedure. It is also relevant to note how the HO justifies the need for interpreters:

The vast majority of overseas nationals are able to communicate satisfactorily with immigration officers but in some cases, where communication proves impossible, the immigration officer will call on the services of an interpreter.

Thus, two relevant questions to answer in the future would be (1) how does the HO measure “satisfactory communication” and (2) what exactly does the HO mean by “where communication proves impossible”? Both statements seem to imply that interpreting would be used only as a last resort but not as a medium to improve communication or to allow migrants to construct their narratives (Gibb and Good, 2014: 396), even if EU law has a variety of nuances that may mislead applicants during the application process¹⁷. However, translation of key materials, such as the application forms or the supporting documents, seems not to be a relevant option for the HO to assist migrants in this context. In our view, the translation of these key materials could help migrants to construct their migration narratives when contacting the HO online or by phone (if they do so), since it will foster a prior understanding of the procedure. In turn, the proper construction of narratives will allow them to be advised

¹⁵ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/investor-visas-tier-one-uk-suspended-money-laundering-financial-crime-immigration-russia-china-a8670876.html> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-interpreters/guidance-for-interpreters> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

¹⁷ See Ruiz-Cortés (2020: 279-288).

according to their situation, which will lead them to reproduce their circumstances appropriately in the form. If not legally or institutionally advised, these translated materials may be even more crucial since, in the end, as argued by Sarangi and Slembrouck (2013: 135) “application forms presuppose a client who is literate to understand the instructions contained in the form, who is prepared to provide the information required and who is in a position to judge whether s/he falls within a category”. Nonetheless, the genuine contribution that CT may bring to the table to bridge this communicative divide seems to be neglected by the HO, even though “online procedures generate problems of access (e.g. being able to afford an internet or phone subscription), as well as introducing new layers of complexity – especially for individuals who may already have a limited knowledge of the host country’s language” (Loveluck, 2015: 93).

However, this underestimation of translation services seems also to be shared by the British government, at least judging by measures such as “How to publish on GOV.UK”¹⁸, where “government editors and publishers”, not translators, “can add one or more translations to any published document on GOV.UK”. However, at the same time, this website is also proof that the British government is aware that translating documents is necessary for the heterogeneous population of the UK. Undeniably, this institutional position concerning non-professional translation of government documents contrasts with the control exercised on the private translations that applicants enclose with their immigration applications. In fact, the EU Guidance Notes 2020 (3) highlight: “The Home Office may contact your translator or translation company [the applicant’s] to conduct further enquiries into any translated documents provided”¹⁹. This certainly seems to reinforce the “ingrained suspicion” (Shaw and Miller, 2013: 23) surrounding immigration and translation in the UK, while it also suggests that the British government is clearly sending a message: CT is not our concern.

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/translations>
(last accessed 13 July 2020).

¹⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/864756/Form-EEA-PR-guidance-notes-v5.pdf
(last accessed 13 July 2020).

3. To translate or not to translate?

States have no option but to make choices about translation or non-translation in their countries. Since the HO is the ministry responsible for the management of linguistic diversity in the British migration context, arguably the HO's decisions on translation are of key symbolic and material significance in the UK context. However, in order to contextualize these decisions, how the HO understands migration should be also considered.

If the statement concerning HO's goals highlighted in section 2 is taken as a starting point, it is certainly surprising that no mention of immigration whatsoever can be found there. Conversely, the threats supposedly posed by migrants in migration narratives, such as a threat to national security or economic prosperity (Akanle, 2018: 165), are clearly included. This statement seems to imply that among the responsibilities of this ministry, the main one is to keep the country secure, even if that means being more restrictive in terms of immigration. In fact, "A Short Guide to the Home Office 2015" (SGHO, 2015) confirms the tone set in the previous statement highlighting that one of the four priorities of the HO is to reduce immigration and, particularly, to "develop and implement **policies** to reduce net migration and tackle abuse, while attracting and retaining the brightest and best migrants to work, study or invest in the UK"²⁰ (SGHO, 2015: 4; our emphasis). In both public statements, immigration seems to fade into the background compared to the rest of the HO's responsibilities. In fact, according to the second quote, reducing immigration is the HO's goal. As for the participants involved, the statements seem to situate HO officials as guardians of security and economic prosperity, who in order to "tackle abuse", should be strict immigration controllers. As for migrants, both statements refer to them in general, not to specific migrant communities. This is relevant for this study where our heterogeneous group of applicants fall into this general categorization of "migrants" even though they may be nationals from countries profiled as both developed and underdeveloped in migration narratives (Akanle, 2018: 164). Thus, if migration narratives are "a coherent body of knowledge about what migration is, what it should be, and how it is to be managed and addressed" (Pécoud, 2015: 3 cited in Akanle, 2018: 162), in the light of the above, migration for the HO seems to be perceived as a problem to be managed in such a way that only

²⁰ <https://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/Home-Office-Short-Guide1.pdf> (last accessed 13 July 2020).

migrants that may benefit the UK, according to the HO criteria, should be allowed to stay.

Does all of the above affect the implementation of a specific translation policy at the HO for EU immigration procedures? Considering that translation policy encompasses translation management, translation practice and translation beliefs (González Núñez, 2016), we will use these three parameters for our description. “Translation management” refers to the “decisions regarding translation made by people in authority to decide a domain’s use or non-use of translations” (*ibid.*: 54). In our case, it seems that translation management is inexistent from an institutional stance, since no document is translated by the HO for EU immigration procedures. However, in a wider sense, it could also be argued that leaving the procuring of translation to the applicants themselves may also be a form of (poor) management by the HO²¹. In turn, all of the above entails that translation practice, that “involves questions such as what texts get translated [...] into and out of what languages, and where it takes place” (*ibid.*: 55) does not even occur at the HO. Undeniably, behind translation management and practice, there seem to lie negative “translation beliefs” or “beliefs that members of a community hold about the value of translation” (*ibid.*: 55). These beliefs, in our case, seem to be related to the debates concerning the costs of offering translation services to migrant communities, the scarce public resources to do so, or even, their (detrimental) impact on the acquisition of the English language (Schäffner, 2009).

Consequently, our initial results seem to indicate that negative EU migration and translation narratives appear to be connected with the restrictive immigration stance of the HO in terms of translation policy when approaching EU law immigration procedures. On the one hand, this policy of non-translation seems to support the HO’s perception of migration, both EU and non-EU, only as migration of economic and highly skilled migrants (SGHO, 2015: 4) who are able to understand English, or able to pay to understand it, in order to be able to access public services. On the other hand, this policy of non-translation seems to foreground the CT narratives that perceive CT as social and economic burden for the UK that could potentially be another way in which EU migration may “strain the UK public services” (Wambach, 2018: 212).

²¹ Furthermore, the fact that interpreting services are offered at times, seems to confirm the trend highlighted in previous studies that CT is considered as “a minor adjunct to interpreting” in the British public sector (Townesley, 2018: 118).

Arguably, this policy is also connected with the “dominant ideology of monolingualism” (Schäffner, 2009) in UK public discourse as highlighted in the 2007 British Commission on Integration and Cohesion report²². In this report, statements such as English “binds us together as a single group in a way that a multiplicity of community languages cannot” (73) or “translation can never be a substitute for learning English” (167) can be found. However, interestingly, the same report also highlights that: “translation should be reduced **except where it builds integration and cohesion**” (our emphasis), pointing out that the authorities need to judge when migrants need translation in order to “build integration and cohesion”, and specifying that: “where new communities have arrived in a local area then **clearly** they need initial information in appropriate languages” (168; our emphasis). Even if we are not studying a local area, is this not also applicable here? The HO seems to think it is not, which results in newly arrived migrants who are unable to communicate in the dominant language (English), or to pay for multilingual information or translation services (of public documents), being kept from accessing services that others readily access. Therefore, the non-translation policy of this ministry seems to meet the goal of “retaining the brightest and best migrants” (SGHO, 2015: 4), which in this case seem to be those who already know English or, in the absence of this, those who have the means to pay to be provided with multilingual information or CT. The final consequence of this policy of non-translation is that migrants with language barriers would not be able to overcome them in order to construct their narratives throughout these immigration procedures, which may impact on the final outcome. Since, in the case presented, the final outcome is the confirmation of legal residence, this may indicate that the HO acts as a gatekeeper of the aforementioned confirmation in the EU immigration procedures mentioned. This is so because the HO does not only decide which applicants should be allowed through the metaphorical “gate” that gives access to the confirmation of legal residence, but the HO also determines the information on the immigration procedure and the languages in which it is provided, in order to achieve said confirmation. Therefore, as defended by Shaw and Miller (2013: 32) in the context of EU freedom of movement “the quality of information provided to applicants [by British authorities]” may be one of the explanations of why “up to 38% of applications in what is supposed to be a largely rights-based legal framework are turned down”. In sum, in the light of the above, the

²²http://image.guardian.co.uk/sysfiles/Education/documents/2007/06/14/ours_haredfuture.pdf (last accessed 13 July 2020).

HO's translation policy in the context under analysis may also be considered to be another "poorly conceived policy" (Campbell, 2016: 44) of this ministry.

5. Conclusions

Migration has traditionally been a contentious issue in the UK where linguistic rights of migrant minorities have caused heated debates. In this study we have investigated whether translation services are available to migrants during the application process of EU immigration procedures at the HO. Our conclusion is that the negative EU migration and translation narratives that have emerged in the UK seem to be connected with the HO's translation policy of non-translation; a policy that does not contribute to assisting migrants to overcome language barriers when constructing key narratives that may influence their final confirmation of legal residence.

Furthermore, this exploratory research has allowed us to initially identify problems which require a close follow-up investigation in the next empirical stage of our project. Firstly, whether this policy of non-translation affects all immigration procedures (EU and non-EU procedures) to the same extent needs to be studied. Secondly, a pilot study with the applicants that explores the impact of the policy of non-translation of the HO on the success of immigration procedures needs to be empirically addressed. Thirdly, interviews with HO officials need to be carried out in order to investigate their perceptions, not only on migration, but also on the lack of availability of translation services at the HO. Last but not least, the justifications behind the non-provision of translation for migrant languages at the HO should be further examined considering that "arguments about practicability [of the provision of translation] are neither neutral nor innocent, but function to advance dominant groups and disadvantage others" (Mowbray, 2017: 39). In this specific context, these arguments are closely connected with the lack of obligation to translate (González Núñez, 2016: 120) and, especially, the short-term costs of CT. However, when these questions arise, hardly any reference is made to the fact that a policy of non-translation simply passes on the costs of translation to migrants. The burdens that non-translation may cause in terms of cost-effectiveness for the State are also rarely mentioned. These burdens for the State are connected with the time, effort or financial resources devoted by the authorities to reinitiating administrative procedures due to a lack of understanding of the procedure and/or the

application form on the part of the applicant (Barnett, 2007: 9-10), resulting in repeatedly poorly completed forms and longer administrative procedures. Consequently, the cost of the HO's policy of non-translation in immigration procedures should be aligned with the cost of translation. This line of research will allow us to investigate whether CT is economically viable in this context, while allowing us to raise awareness at the HO so that UK authorities can design a translation policy that not only meets the demands of austerity budgets but, more importantly, the demands of a linguistically heterogeneous society that would benefit from CT.

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