

Interpreting in the context of refugee migration: emerging professional challenges and needs

Anastasia A. Atabekova – Valentina V. Stepanova – Natalia N. Udina – Olga G. Gorbatenko – Tatyana V. Shoustikova

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Abstract

The research is implemented within the framework of the RUDN university participation in the Russia-wide 5-100 project. *The current importance* of the present research rests on the fact that despite long-standing traditions and intensive research work in the field of interpretation studies, the Academia and Industry still make first steps to consider urgent needs in the area of language service provision to refugees in the migration crisis zones. *The research aims* to explore the interpreters' needs that produce specific challenges in the context of their work with refugees in the border crossing and temporary settlement zones with the view to consider the concept and constituent components of interpreter's bespoke training for refugee crisis settings. *The research methodology* applies the qualitative analysis and rests on theoretical and empirical activities. Materials for theoretical analysis involve publications on the issues under study. Empirical studies encompass observations and case studies of concrete situations outlined by professionals working with refugees in Greece, Italy, Germany, the Yugoslav Successor States, and Russia. The research also includes cluster and factor types of analysis to identify aspects of training and ensure quality when interpreting in the migration crisis settings. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences is used for data procession. The research findings allow for drafting preliminary recommendations on adequate administrative and training tools regarding interpreters' activities in refugees' transit/border crossing zones and refugee camps.

Key words: interpreting, refugee migration, language rights, language service, professional challenges

1. Introduction

The international didactics has produced a considerable amount of research on language issues multilingual communities regarding multilingual legal, administrative, and educational contexts (Mallows, 2014). Both academic research and training have at their disposal sufficient data on specific pathways and tools to ensure language support for individuals in diverse societal contexts.

The contemporary world faces escalating migration that turns into mass influx of migrants moving across national borders from South to North. This creates situations of emergency that is rooted, among other reasons (related to administration and logistics), in the communication gap between refugees and hosting/transit country local authorities. The latter takes place if there is no interpreter on site to ensure refugees' language support or the interpreter is not able to provide the required level of service. It is worth mentioning that neither Language Service Industry no Academia has confirmed its capacity to reveal the core of interpreting service requirements within refugee contexts. Meanwhile, relevant studies in the field can contribute to ensuring refugees' language support under the new emerging risks by drafting recommendations on adequate administrative and training tools regarding interpreters' activities in refugees' transit and border crossing zones and refugee camps.

All the above mentioned testifies about certain current interest to this research.

It should be mentioned that instruments and tools, challenges and solutions regarding language support provision have been considered within legal, administrative, healthcare, educational settings. The target audiences have mostly included immigrants and asylum seekers. Academic Studies encompass structured knowledge on interpreting and translation phenomena, types of relevant activities, required competencies, etc. Training institutions also offer an array of courses and programs. Nonetheless, there is increasing number of publications that voice concerns about the fact that hosting/transit countries on the whole and language service industry in particular fail to work efficiently with refugees on the forefront lines of their itineraries.

The above mentioned state of affairs leads to the research hypothesis that the escalating refugee influx has caused the new challenges to the interpreters who face new needs in specific emerging professional settings.

The research subject matter is the process of ensuring refugees' language rights in the context of their escalating influx from South to North. The scope of the research is the integrated desk and field analysis accounted for interpreters' first hand experiences regarding their work with refugees on the forefront lines of forced migration.

All mentioned above shapes the two-fold goal of the research that aims first, at identifying the emerging challenges and needs regarding interpreters' activities in the settings specified earlier and second, at considering didactic issues to run interpreters' bespoke training for refugee crisis settings.

This goal can be reached through the following tasks:

- to explore relevant literature and to perform case-based analysis of language service experiences,
- to analyze linguistic and extra-linguistic needs interpreters experience,
- to consider these needs in relation to interpreters' professional and socio-cultural background,
- to identify specific settings that impact the interpreters' activities in the context under study
- to draft recommendations to those concerned regarding the bespoke training for interpreters who work with refugees in the host zones of their move itineraries.

2. Review of Literature

International legislation strongly advocates consistent language support to ensure individual's human rights. There is a direct message on language rights provision in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1998), and national legislations.

Guided by the above both Academia and Language Service Industry have a long-standing tradition regarding the provision of language services to migrants, immigrants and asylum-seekers. Australia and the USA are known for their pioneering activities in the field that started as community interpreting and today is widely accepted as Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT). There is a fascinating stock of publications concerning the theory of translation and interpreting for public services and respective jobs requirements and specifics (Roberts, 1997; Hale, 2007; Belenkova 2016).

Desk studies and training practices have led to the development of

international standards (ISO 13611:2014, 2014) and recommendations (SIGTIPS, 2011), as well as university-based training programs for translators and interpreters who act as language–mediators for migrants, immigrants and asylum-seekers in administrative, legal, health care and other societal contexts.

The needs analysis for interpreter and translator’s training for further work in the above-mentioned settings has been implemented in a considerable number of projects conducted under the auspices of specialized international professional associations of translators and interpreters: EULITA (2013), IMIA (2009) and European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (1987).

The last two decades witness researchers’ particular interest to psychological aspects of interpreting (Belenkova, 2015), to interpreters who work with victims of violence and torture in conflict zones across the world. The above focus stems from the international landscape that is characterized by increasing tension inside and across national states. Scholars raise concerns about language barriers for those on the move (Salaets, 2015; Goldsmith, 2015). Meanwhile, it is mostly language service providers who try to reach the public with the argument that lack of language service results in human rights violation (Gordon, 2015). Those who work on the front lines mention lack of interpreters on migration itineraries (Alloush, 2016), and interpreters’ little understanding of the specific tasks related to emergencies (Faes, 2015).

Another problem concerns locals (Tălpaş 2016) that engage in volunteer interpreting due to the lack of professionals (Baker, 2016; Huda, 2015).

International project teams and associations start specialising on providing language service in emergency situations of uncontrolled migration. Stakeholders develop special guides for civilian interpreters working in conflict zones and users of their services (Conflict zone field guide for civilian translators/interpreters and users of their services, 2012; In Zone, 2013).

Special emphasis is laid on psychological aspects of interpreting for those who come affected by local or regional conflicts. Specialists agree that interpreters who work with survivors of torture, war, and refugee trauma deserve particular attention in terms of their social maturity and stability (Akinsulure-Smith, 2007).

Scholars pay specific attention to the issues of emotional stability of interpreters working with survivors of torture and violence; they underline that interpreters are often subject to “vicarious traumatization due to their work with torture survivors and their therapists” (Schlesinger, 2005: 46).

Research has turned to the mediating role that interpreters play in the psychotherapy-focused communication with refugees and goes on to explore those challenges that interpreters face in this regard (Miller et al., 2005; Brune et al., 2011).

The above mentioned trends in research are mostly descriptive and observational in their nature. The literature analysis revealed the gap between systemically developed general theory of PSIT and lack of structured knowledge regarding interpreting activities within escalating refugee contexts and uncontrolled influx of migrants and didactic tools that might be used to improve language service provision and language rights protection in the refugee crisis contexts.

3. Materials and Methods

The research applies qualitative approach to analysis and includes theoretical and empirical activities. Materials for theoretical analysis involve legislation and publications on the issues under study. Their analysis lays the grounds for shaping research problems and outlining research framework.

Empirical activities include case studies. Materials for empirical studies encompass digital mass media publications in blogs and newspapers (see, for instance, the sites of Internews (2017), TWB (2013), Open World (2003), etc.) regarding

interpreters and language service providers' experiences and comments (Hadžiahmetović & Pavlović, 2016; O'Driscoll, 2016; Surace, 2016; Uguen-Csenge, 2016; Weese, 2016) about their work with refugees on the frontlines of migration influxes.

Totally, 114 publications in the digital media have been explored through needs analysis and assessment regarding interpreting practices in zones of refugees' cross border move.

When analyzing the material we took into account the cultural and professional background of the individuals who engaged in interpreting in refugee crisis settings and shared their experiences with the public.

Thus, among the authors and featured characters of the publications there are professional interpreters and language service providers, who represent western European community and were born in European countries, interpreters, who came to European countries from other regions of the world and have got interpreter certification from a EU institution though this category of interpreters do not separate themselves from their home country culture. There are also volunteers that came from the same countries that refugees and performed the interpreting activities due to the lack of professional interpreter on site.

The research methodology rested on the empirical observations and case studies of concrete situations outlined by professionals working with refugees in Greece, Italy, Germany, the Yugoslav Successor States, and Russia.

The cluster analysis helps identifying professional needs and aspects of training to ensure quality when interpreting in the migration crisis settings.

Factor analysis aims to specify the key elements within each cluster that require specific training activities from the angle of current interpreting practices.

The t-test is applied to evaluate the significance of different variables and to determine statistically significant differences.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences is used for data procession.

4. Results and Discussion

The case-based cluster analysis helped to identify most urgent needs that interpreters and language service agencies identify with regard to refugees' language support through interpreting service provision (see Table 1).

Table 1: Urgent needs to ensure refugees' language rights through interpreting service provision

Cluster	Percentage of cases that mention the item
Need for specific training for language rights provision in refugee crisis context	100%
Need to specify standard situations of interpreters working with refugees at the border-crossing points	91%
Need to specify factors that might complicate the interaction between hosting country officials , refugee/forced migrant/asylum seeker, and interpreter	87%
Need to specify most typical difficulties the interpreters encounter	83%
Need for extra linguistic knowledge that is a must for interpreter who works with refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker	76%

It seems important to underline that the above percentage was not sensitive to an interpreter's cultural background and EU/non-EU country origin ($p > 0,02$), and/or to the existence or absence of interpreter's professional certification ($p > 0,03$).

The case-based factor analysis was implemented to specify key elements within each cluster that require specific simulation activities from the angle of current interpreting practices.

Thus, regarding the need for specific training for language rights provision in refugee crisis context, language support providers identified the following key components.

1st factor - need for due attention to the interpreting issues from local administration (the local border divisions, police, health care services and temporary accommodation service providers) (0.989); the item was mentioned by 99% of the interpreters;

2nd factor - need for interpreters as such (0.989); the item was mentioned by 99% of the interpreters;

3rd factor - need for professionals with specific language pairs (0.982); the item was mentioned by 98% of the interpreters;

4th factor - need for forced migrant/refugee-oriented training of interpreters (0.564); the item was mentioned by 56% of the interpreters;

5th factor - need for refugee minors-focused training of interpreters (0.523); the item was mentioned by 52% of the interpreters;

6th factor - need for standards of interpreting on forefront lines of migration itineraries (0.434); the item was mentioned by 43% of the interpreters.

The interpreters' opinions did not correlate with their origin ($p > 0,02$). Nonetheless, the discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant ($\lambda = 0,243$, $\chi^2 = 4,65$, $p < 0,01$) the professional status of interpreters: the fourth, fifth and sixth factors were mentioned by certified specialists, volunteers did not care about the respective elements.

It seems interesting to mention that the importance of interpreters' specific skills to work with refugees and refugee minors in particular has been identified through the latest developments in academic research based on case study from Italy and Belgium (Salaets, Balogh, 2017). The researchers collected the empirical evidence that confirm specifics of the activities dimensions under study.

The analysis of interpreters' narratives and language service providers' comments on their agencies official sites also confirms (see the third factor) that migration itineraries shape specific geo-ethnicity angle of interpreting and communicative process infrastructure as the specific working language pairs that vary in different regions imply specific patterns of interpersonal communication among those involved in interaction (refugees, interpreters, local authorities at the border crossing points). Similar implications were made earlier with respect to immigrant neighboring communities communication in Los Angeles (Kim et al., 2006).

Regarding the cluster on the need to specify standard settings for interpreter's work with refugees at the border-crossing points, language support providers identified the following standard situations:

- registration procedure (collecting and recording the refugee's personal data of Interview with the refugee/forced migrant/asylum seeker to identify his/her status in compliance with the parameters for the relevant status accepted definition) (0.991); the factor was mentioned by 99% of the interpreters;

- interview with a refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker to determine the need for his/her resettlement in a third country (0.861); the factor was mentioned by 86% of the interpreters;

- interviews with refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker to collect information about the risks they encountered, and the required measures regarding administrative/legal/medical assistance and protection (0.752); the factor was mentioned by 75% of the interpreters;
- consultations and / or conversations with doctors or psychologists to identify the physical and psychological conditions of refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker (0.691); the factor was mentioned by 69% of the interpreters;
- interviews to identify the facts of violence or torture experienced by refugee/forced migrant/asylum seeker with the view to obtain additional information about the psychological and/or physical consequences of abuse experienced (0.538); the factor was mentioned by 54% of the interpreters.

The interpreters' opinions did not correlate with their origin ($p > 0,03$). Nonetheless, the discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant ($\lambda = 0,211$, $\chi^2 = 4,05$, $p < 0,01$) the professional status of interpreters: the last two factors were specified by certified specialists, volunteers did not mention these factors.

This situation correlates with statements promoted by M.A. Bancroft (2017), who lays particular focus on trauma-informed interpreting and underlines the importance of interpreters' needs to be aware of the relevant contexts, their specifics, and specific skills required for language service providers regarding the issues under study.

Thus, taking into account the above cluster data it is timely to for training institutions to consider extra linguistic aspects of interpreter's training with special emphasis on psychology, pedagogy, communication tools.

As far as the degree and efficiency of interaction between hosting country officials, refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker, and interpreter are concerned, the language service providers mentioned the following factors that might complicate their activities: differences in gender (0.991, the factor was mentioned by 99% of the interpreters), in religion (0.988, the factor was mentioned by 98% of the interpreters), in political convictions (0.878, the factor was mentioned by 87% of the interpreters), in social status (0.791, the factor was mentioned by 79% of the interpreters), in age (0.434, the factor was mentioned by 43% of the interpreters).

The discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant ($\lambda = 0,197$, $\chi^2 = 3,01$, $p < 0,001$) the origin of the language service providers and their professional status (certified interpreter/volunteer ($\lambda = 0,113$, $\chi^2 = 3,05$, $p < 0,001$)).

Regarding the cluster on the most typical language difficulties, interpreters mentioned the following factors:

1st factor - the speaker uses slang, dialect, coinages that are specific for particular territories or sub communities, the speaker does not clearly pronounce the words (0.997); the item was mentioned by 99% of the interpreters;

2nd factor - the speaker's speech is not logically structured (0.871); the item was mentioned by 81% of the interpreters;

3rd factor – the interpreter understands the meaning of words that the speaker uses, but cannot render the general meaning of the utterance due to culturally-bound hidden meanings, allusions, metaphors, etc. (0.736); the item was mentioned by 73% of the interpreters;

4th factor - the speaker uses an excessive number of pronouns, the use of which makes it difficult to understand the subjects of meaning (0.419); the item was mentioned by 42% of the interpreters;

5th factor - the speaker uses language units that are culturally unacceptable or even offensive in the target language (0.398); the item was mentioned by 39% of the interpreters;

6th factor - the speaker is emotionally unstable, cries, etc. (0.281); the item was mentioned by 28% of the interpreters.

The language service providers' opinions did not correlate with their origin ($p > 0.03$).

The discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant the professional's/volunteer's status ($\lambda = 0,243$, $\chi^2 = 4,015$, $p < 0,001$).

Similar results were obtained when the cluster on necessary extra linguistic knowledge became subject to investigation, language service providers mentioned the following factors:

1st factor - administrative and legal knowledge (knowledge of international documents and procedures that determine the status, rights and responsibilities; knowledge of administrative and legal procedures in the host country, ability to use the conceptual apparatus of relevant subject areas) (0.946); the item was mentioned by 94% of the interpreters;

2nd factor - sociocultural knowledge (basic information of historical, geographical, administrative, political, socio-cultural, religious character concerning the regions from which they come) (0.866); the item was mentioned by 86% of the interpreters;

3rd factor - psychological and communication skills (techniques for establishing and maintaining psychological contact with the interlocutor) (0.686); the item was mentioned by 68% of the interpreters;

4th factor - ability to maintain impartiality and neutrality in the translation process (0.469); the item was mentioned by 47% of the interpreters;

5th factor - awareness of interpreter's responsibilities with regard to the procedure of interaction with the parties and topics confidentiality (0.357); the item was mentioned by 36% of the interpreters.

The discriminant analysis identified as statistically significant the professional's/volunteer's status ($\lambda = 0,243$, $\chi^2 = 4,015$, $p < 0,001$).

It is critical to bear in mind that migration crisis has led to mass non-professional language service providers engagement in refugees' support. Scholars argue that this new trend causes rethinking of such traditional issues as interpreter's loyalty, impartiality, and confidentiality as novices in the interpreting can experience psychological and ethical difficulties due to Diversity-Sensitive Discourses in varied refugee settings (Brander de la Iglesia, 2017; Cáceres Würsig, 2017; Rosario Martín Ruano, 2017). Scholars also express concerns about the overall de-professionalization of public service interpreting in the context of emergencies (Tipton, 2017; Gentile, 2017).

The present research confirms previous concern regarding the specific interpreting settings related to the national border crossing zones that are subject to refugee move. The above require rethinking of training models for those who come to the frontlines of language service provision.

5. Conclusion

The research findings lay ground for preliminary recommendations regarding language service provision to refugee migrants. It is necessary to bear in mind that refugees need this service and relevant aid right when they cross the border of the hosting/transit country. Thus, local administration (the local border divisions, police, health care services and temporary accommodation service providers) should provide refugees' access to interpreters' service and arrange the interpreters' presence, taking into account the most required language pairs for communication.

The research findings confirmed the hypothesis that the escalating refugee influx has caused the new challenges to the interpreters who face new needs in specific emerging professional settings. The research revealed that the above situation requires specific attention in terms of interpreter's training that should be tailored to the relevant settings. The desk and field analysis made it possible to consider constituent components of interpreter's bespoke training for refugee crisis settings.

The interdisciplinary study of relevant sources and case-based needs analysis of language service providers' narratives paved the ways to identify specific areas, topics and features of interpreter's training for work with refugees in the zones of their forced migration itineraries.

The Academia and Industry should start cooperate to launch special CPD courses /modules in the university curricula regarding specifics of interpreters' work with forced migrants/refugees; special attention should be paid to refugee minors-focused training of interpreters.

The above CPD course or university training modules should cover the following issues: interpreting through refugees' registration procedure, techniques for interpreting interviews with a refugees for diverse purposes, including information about risks and abuse they might have encountered with; required measures regarding administrative/legal/medical assistance; interpreters' interaction with doctors or psychologists to identify physical and psychological conditions of refugee/ forced migrant/asylum seeker. Moreover, interpreters should be trained to overcome specific language difficulties they might face.

Further, training modules require the inclusion of administrative and legal information on international documents and procedures that determine the refugees' status, rights and responsibilities; information on administrative and legal procedures regarding refugees' settlement in the host country. The training course should also include basic information of historical, geographical, administrative, political, socio-cultural, religious character concerning the regions of major refugee flows.

Interpreters should be taught psychological and communication techniques for establishing and maintaining psychological contact with the interlocutor. Special emphasis should be laid on developing interpreters' ability to maintain impartiality and neutrality in the communication process. Finally, interpreters' awareness of specifics regarding interaction with minors should be raised, as well.

The research findings enhance Academia data and confirm scholars' arguments for the importance of further research in the field to map diverse scenarios and patterns of behavior of those who work in the contexts under study.

This, in turn, maps the way towards structuring a comprehensive concept of didactic dimensions to help the hosting/transit country authorities comply with the international rules of individual's language rights protection within the refugees' mass forced move across Europe.

All the above mentioned allows the Academia to argue for the development of Didactics for language rights provision in the context of refugee escalating migration in the third Millennium.

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Prof. Anastasia A. Atabekova, Dr. Sc.
Law Institute, Foreign Languages Department
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia - RUDN University
6 Miklukho Maklay st., 117198, Moscow,
Russia
aaatabekova@gmail.com, Atabekova_aa@pfur.ru

Assoc. Prof. Valentina V. Stepanova, PhD
Law Institute, Foreign Languages Department
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia - RUDN University
6 Miklukho Maklay st., 117198, Moscow, Russia
stepanova_vv@pfur.ru

Assoc. Prof. Natalia N. Udina, PhD
Law Institute, Foreign Languages Department
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia - RUDN University
6 Miklukho Maklay st., 117198, Moscow,
Russia
udina_nn@pfur.ru

Assoc. Prof. Olga G. Gorbatenko, PhD
Law Institute, Foreign Languages Department
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia - RUDN University
6 Miklukho Maklay st., 117198, Moscow,
Russia
gorbatenko_og@pfur.ru

Prof. Tatyana V. Shoustikova, Dr. Sc.
Faculty for Pre-University Training
Department of Russian Language №2
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia - RUDN University
6 Miklukho Maklay st., 117198, Moscow,
Russia
shoustikova@yandex.ru