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PUBLIC SERVICE USERS, PROVIDERS AND INTERPRETER-MEDIATORS IN CATALONIA: PROFILES, CONFLUENCES AND DIVERGENCIES

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to publish the principal objectives, methodology and results of the project *Traducció i Immigració: la formació de traductors i intèrprets per als serveis públics, noves solucions per a noves realitats (Translation and Immigration: the training of public service translators and interpreters, new solutions for new scenarios)*. The overall objective of the project, which was carried out between 2009-10, was to assemble and analyse a significant corpus of empirical data on the state of Public Service Interpreting and Translating (PSTI) in Catalonia from the perspective of the three agents participating in the communicative interaction: (a) the mediator-translator-interpreter (MTI), (b) the public services end-user and (c) the front-line public services provider. From the data obtained – both quantitative and qualitative – we were able not only to define the professional profile and practice of the public services translator and interpreter in Catalonia, but also to obtain a large quantity of objective information about the needs and preferences of the end-users and providers of public services, namely: the difficulties they encounter in their communication exchanges; the kind of mediation the two groups prefer; which foreign languages are most in demand; and the specific characteristics involved in each field of intervention.

Key words: translation, interpretation, mediation, immigration, public services, training.

1. Introduction

Communication between individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been a major concern for all peoples throughout history. Nowadays, particularly as a result of immigration in this globalised world, many languages and cultures coincide in the same social space. This in turn has underlined the need for specific solutions to facilitate communication between individuals and social groups within a given society, in order to guarantee mutual coexistence and enrichment.

As in other EU countries, Spain, and more specifically Catalonia, has become a host country for immigrants in recent years, a fact which has put Spanish and Catalan society to the test, not only in terms of social services provision but also regarding their attitudes towards the other. The newly-arrived citizens, like the autochthonous population, are users of a wide range of services: social, government administration, health, legal or education. Communication between the service providers working in these institutions and immigrant service users often

proves difficult, mainly due to language and cultural barriers. The need for communication between various language communities has prompted the emergence of a new professional job profile, that of the public service translator-interpreter, a profession which consists of not only facilitating communication but also making it effective.

Catalonia currently finds itself in a situation in which there is a lack of specialised courses on public service translation and interpreting (PSTI).¹ For universities, more specifically faculties / departments of translation and interpreting, the urgent need to respond to this demand is becoming more and more evident. In turn, this has led to greater importance being given to this mode of translation and interpreting in the new undergraduate and official Masters degrees in Translation and Interpreting. However, in our view, it is only through in-depth applied research in this area that training programmes can be designed to supply tangible solutions to the existing social demand.

2. Previous Studies

Although it is a relatively new field, PSTI research has proved to be a very productive area in recent years, as is evident from the substantial number of articles, monographs and conferences on this topic. Due to space limitations, in this article we will only refer to questionnaire-based studies, given that they coincide with our own study as regards methodological design.²

The questionnaire-based quantitative approach to studying PSTI has been adopted by several authors with different end purposes in mind, (Pöschhacker 2000a and 2000b; Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez 2008; Ortega Herráez, *et al* 2009; Kale and Syed 2009; Hsieh and Hong 2010; Requena Cadena 2010, among others). However, few studies to date have included the point of view of all three agents involved in this communication context, namely, interpreters, public service providers and public service end users. Until now, the views of public service end users has been given less prominence, almost certainly due to the difficulties involved in gaining access to immigrant communities who do not share the main languages used in the Western academic world. As the questionnaires used in this study were translated and distributed in the first languages of the immigrant communities concerned, we were able to include data reflecting the end user perspective.

Along these lines, the only one of the above-mentioned studies to include all three perspectives in mediated interaction is the FITISPos Group study conducted in Spain (Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez 2008), which can therefore be considered a direct forerunner to the study presented in this article. The FITISPos questionnaires (Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez 2008: 273-5) served as a point of reference for those subsequently developed by the Miras research group. However, the main difference between our research and that carried out by the FITISPos Group is that the latter focused exclusively on analysing communication problems in the sphere of the health services, whereas the study presented here is not focused on any one public service area in particular, but rather works on the basis of covering all the public services and providing a general appraisal of the communication problems that arise. Although this was our initial objective, it should also be noted that the majority of the responses to our questionnaires by public service providers come from professionals working in education (teachers and immigrant pupil support tutors) across Catalonia). It should therefore be noted that the research by the Miras Group constitutes a new approach to a relatively unexplored area: interpreting in the sphere of education.³

¹ This abbreviation for “Public Service Translation and Interpreting” is used throughout this article.

² For further information on the PSTI situation in Catalonia, see Ugarte (2006); Vargas-Urpi (2009a and 2010); Burdeus (2010); Linguamón (2010); and Arumí, *et al* (2011). Noteworthy publications from the perspective of the Spanish State are the publications by Valero Garcés (2002, 2008, 2011); Valero Garcés and Mancho Barés (2005); and Abril Martí (2006). Finally, for an overview of PSTI worldwide, see Hale (2007); Wandesjö, Englund-Dimitrova and Nilsson (2007); Corsellis (2009); and Hale, Ozolins and Stern (2009).

³ At the time of writing this article, few studies related to PSTI have focused on the sphere of education (Vargas-Urpi, 2009a: 48; 98), particularly if compared with studies on PSTI in the sphere of health and legal services. One possible explanation for this research vacuum is that this issue has been studied from the perspective of intercultural

From among the conclusions drawn from these survey-based studies, it should be pointed out that many confirm the fact that those working in public services encounter communication problems when attending users from an immigrant background (Pöchhacker 2000a: 118; Mesa 2000: 73; Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez 2008: 259-60, Kale and Syed 2009), and therefore coincide in the need for efficient interpreting services to overcome these language barriers.

We would now like to turn to the role of interpreters and the tasks and functions they take on. The study by Pöchhacker (2000b: 55), carried out in the sphere of health care services, reveals that interpreters take on various tasks such as alerting to misunderstandings, filling out forms, clarifying issues that crop up directly, explaining specific terms or simplifying the language used. Along similar lines, the study by the Greti Group (Ortega Herráez *et al* 2009: 163) notes differences between the interpreters who work in the health and social services, who are more likely to act as intercultural mediators, and those who work with the police and the law courts, who are more conscious of the limitations of the interpreter's role.

Finally, turning to the view of the public service end users, Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez (2008: 261) point out the wide variety of solutions used by public service users to overcome their communication problems, while Edwards *et al.* (2005), by means of an interview-based study, stress the importance for users to feel reassured by the interpreters.

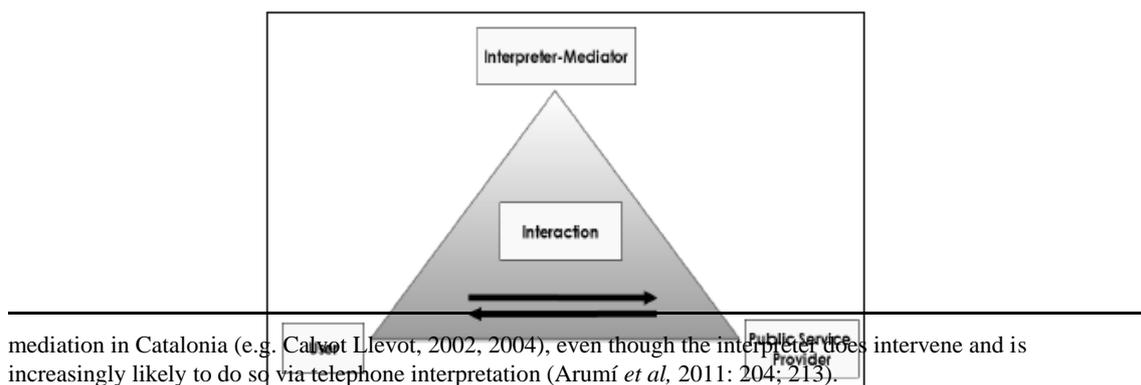
3. Study Objectives

Given the lack of specific training and clear guidelines about how public services translators and interpreters should act, and bearing in mind that imprecise translations and interpretations can deprive minorities of their rights, this study works from the basis of the following three main objectives:

1. Compile significant corpus of data based on questionnaires which encompass three perspectives: translators-interpreters, public service end users and public administration.
2. Analyse the corpus obtained in order to define the profile of public services translators-interpreters in Catalonia; obtain objective information about the number of services users, the most commonly used languages, and the communication problems that arise.
3. Determine what prior training practising professionals currently receive before working in this field, summarise the main difficulties they encounter, classify the different tasks involved in their work and describe the working methods they employ.

4. Methodology

As regards the methodology used, as mentioned earlier in reference to previous studies, one of the most interesting contributions in this study is having been able to gather data from all three agents participating in this communicative interaction, as illustrated in Graph 1.



mediation in Catalonia (e.g. Calvo Llevot, 2002, 2004), even though the interpreter does intervene and is increasingly likely to do so via telephone interpretation (Arumí *et al*, 2011: 204; 213).

Graph 1. Public services mediated communication.

Data from these three perspectives provides a wealth of information, because it allows the voices of all the participants to be heard. We were able to include a total of seventy translators-interpreters, the majority spread across various Catalan regional demarcations; sixty public service end users, mainly from Adult Training Centres in Barcelona and the Metropolitan area; and finally sixty public administration professionals⁴ from various agents. These range from Education Department heads covering Catalonia, who facilitated access to some of the Catalan schools that work with interpreters through their LIC (Linguistic, Intercultural and Social Cohesion) coordinators and consultants, to a number of health care centres in Barcelona: Bellvitge Hospital and the Tropical Medicine Department at the Drassanes Primary Health Care Centre.⁵

The questionnaires used for this study include both closed and open questions which were translated into seven languages in the case of those administered to service end users: Spanish, English, French, Chinese, Arabic, Russian and Romanian.

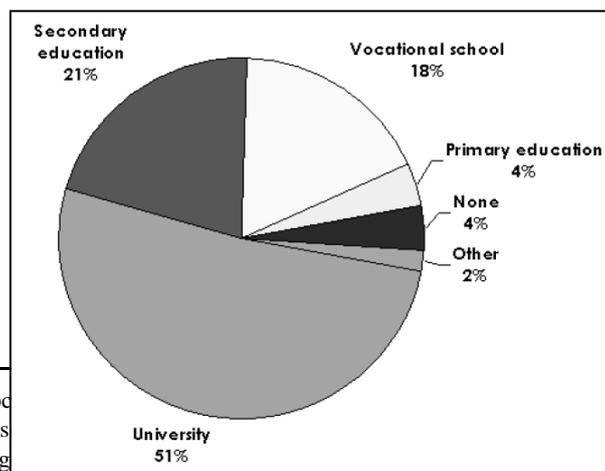
The percentages given here are calculated over the total number of returned questionnaires, that is, the number of participants in this study sample, and where questionnaires were returned unanswered, these have not been subtracted from the total. In the case of multiple-choice questions, those interviewed were given the option of choosing as many answers as they wished.

A qualitative method was chosen to analyse the open questions in the questionnaire, which consisted of analysing the discourse. This allowed us to draw up categories as a basis for distinguishing and defining the responses.

5. Results from the mediator-translator-interpreter (MTI) questionnaires⁶

As regards the MTI age profile, 45.1 per cent were aged between thirty and forty, 27.4 per cent between twenty and thirty, 17.6 per cent between forty and fifty, 3.9 per cent older than fifty and 1.9 per cent younger than twenty. In terms of gender breakdown, 76.4 per cent of those surveyed are women, and 19 per cent men.

Graph 2 below gives a breakdown of the formal education of the MTIs in our sample.



⁴ In this study we have focused on public service end users (e.g. doctors, nurses, etc.). We have left aside for future research studying

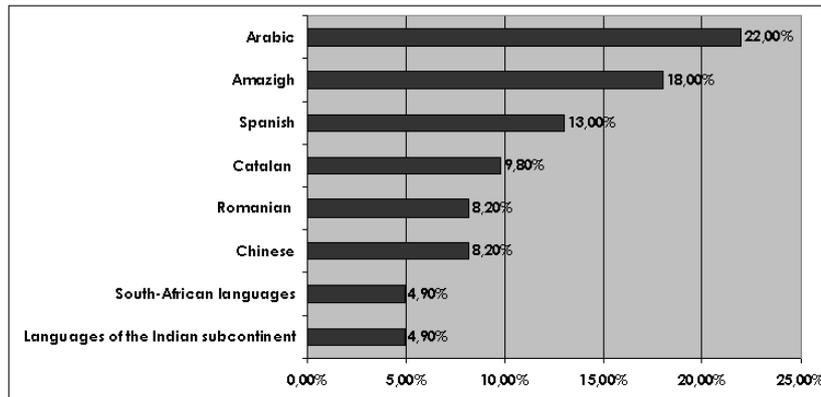
contact with public service end users (e.g. hospital directors, primary and secondary school heads; immigration policy managers; service area managers, etc.).

⁵ While we are aware that this is not a body of homogeneous data as regards covering the whole of Catalonia, we do believe this to be a first in-depth descriptive approach to the current state of public service translation and interpreting in Catalonia.

⁶ MTI is used throughout this article to refer to a public services mediator-translator-interpreter workers.

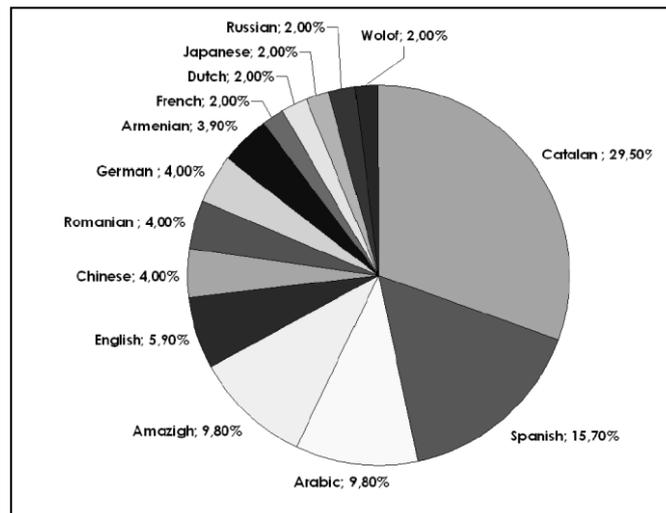
Graph 2. Formal education for the MTI sample

Graph 3 details the first languages of those in our sample, bearing in mind that some of them have more than one first language. In many cases these include two or more depending on their country of origin, or Catalan or Spanish in the case of second generation immigrants.



Graph 3. MTI first languages in the study sample

The first working language of the MTIs interviewed is shown in Graph 4.

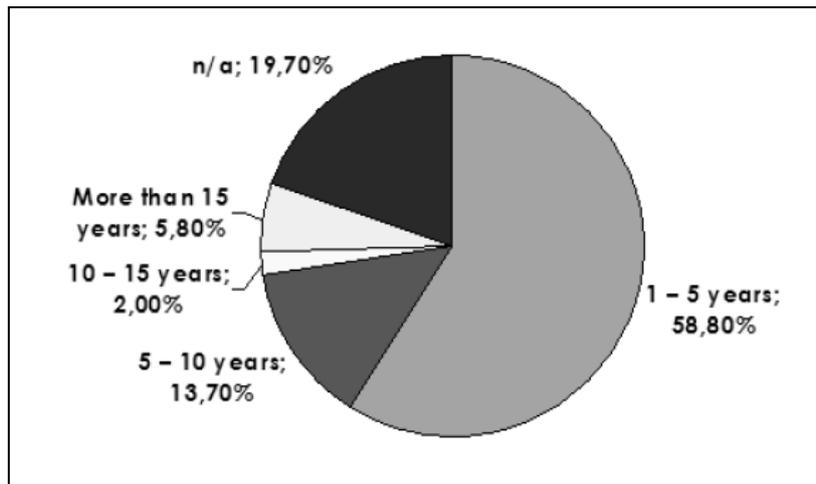


Graph 4. First working language of MTIs in the study sample

As regards the second working language, Catalan and Spanish are once again those which rate highest (35.5 per cent and 36.6 per cent, respectively). 60.6 per cent of the MTIs polled have a third working language and 11.5 per cent state that they work with four languages.

68.6 per cent of the MTIs state that they have had specific mediation and/or translation and interpreting training, although only 10 per cent of those polled answer that they have been given exclusive specific training in translation and interpreting, all of whom state that these were introductory courses.

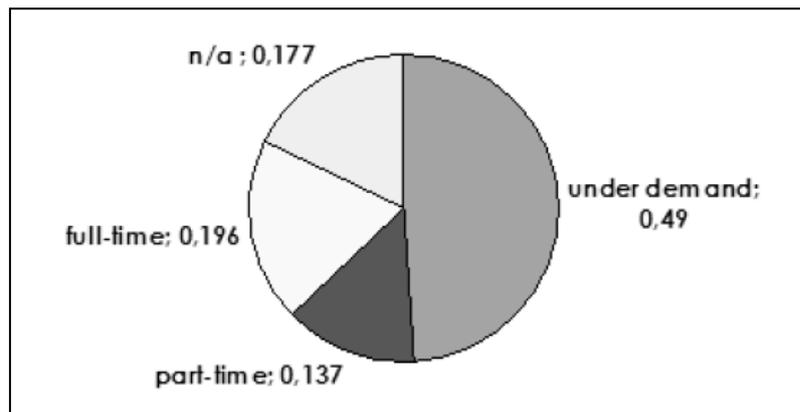
Graph 5 below shows the years of public service interpreting experience for our sample.



Graph 5. Years of public service interpreting experience

As regards institutions, bodies and other organisations where MTIs work or have worked, public institutions account for 66.7 per cent, private companies 35.3 per cent, foundations 21.6 per cent, NGOs 17.6 per cent and Cooperatives 9.8 per cent, while 30 per cent checked the “Others” option.

Graph 6 shows the type of PSTI contractual arrangements for our sample.



Graph 6. Type of PSTI work contract

33.3 per cent of the MTIs surveyed work freelance, 31.4 per cent have a contract of employment, and 19.6 per cent have a work experience contract. 80.9 per cent report that they work or have worked voluntarily as an MTI, the vast majority stating that this has been out of solidarity or for altruistic reasons.

Turning to the basic competences that a public service MTI should have, 87.8 per cent of those interviewed rated mastery of the working languages, 76.9 per cent conveying the message, 75.5 per cent knowledge of both cultures, 75.5 per cent confidentiality and translating faithfully, and 55.1 per cent knowledge of the public service in question.

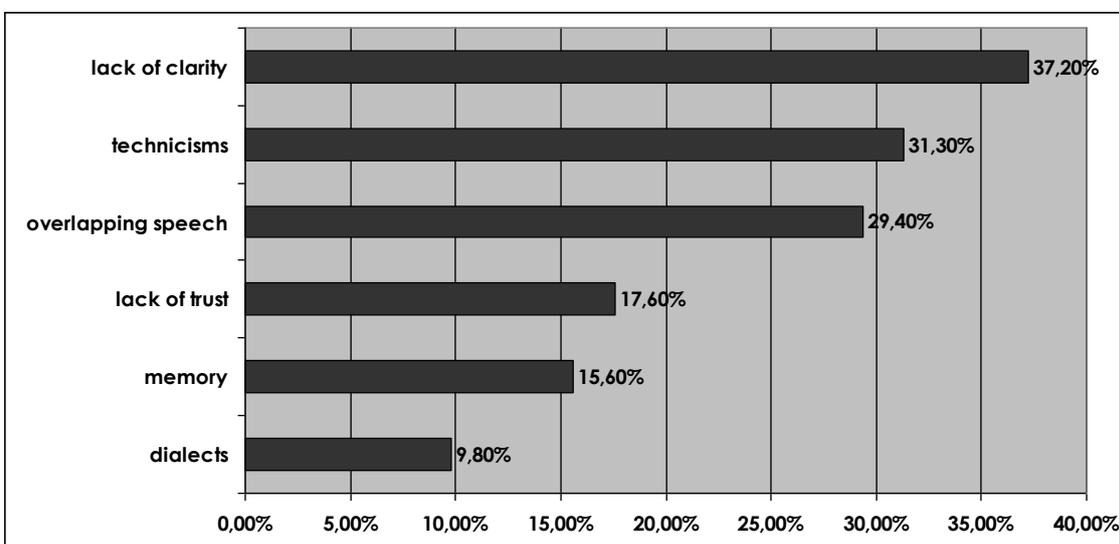
The vast majority of those interviewed (95.9 per cent) state that they work on a face-to-face basis. Nevertheless, 20 per cent of those interviewed also checked other options, namely, via telephone, email or written texts.

As regards the techniques most commonly used, we first have interpreting after a few phrases have been uttered (76.4 per cent), as opposed to only 19.6 per cent who interpret after long utterances. Another technique listed is whispering (31.3 per cent). The vast majority of those interviewed (84.3 per cent) use the third person as opposed to only 11.7 per cent who use the first person. This study revealed the MTIs rarely take notes, which is one of the main techniques used in the majority of interpreting modes (consecutive, liaison and bilateral interpreting).

Answers to the question of whether the public service provider usually addresses the MTI directly or the service user break down into three categories: 43.5 per cent state “it depends on the case”, 27.7 per cent state that the service providers choose them as interlocutor, and 21.5 per cent point out that the service providers usually address the user directly, bypassing the MTI.

On the same issue, when the MTIs were asked whom the service users usually address in a mediated session, 39.2 per cent say “it depends on the case”; 39.2 per cent point out that the service end users tend to choose them as interlocutors and, finally, only 11.7 per cent state that the users address the service providers directly.

In Graph 7, which reflects the difficulties encountered by interpreters, we can see that lack of clarity on the part of the interlocutors ranks the highest.



Graph 7. Difficulties encountered by interpreters

58.8 per cent of the MTIs believe that the profession is well paid in the public services, while 29.4 per cent disagree. The former view may come as a surprise, considering the great difference in salaries compared to interpreters who work in other areas such as conference interpreting, liaison interpreting in the business world, or legal / sworn translation and interpreting.⁷

96 per cent of our sample state that the main reasons why they enjoy working in this profession are: (1) empathy towards or identifying with the situation of newly arrived immigrants; (2) the desire to feel useful; (3) the opportunity to help those in need, (4) personal satisfaction; (5) professional vocation; (6) working directly with people; (7) recognition of their

⁷ For a comparison of rates see Vargas-Urpi, 2010.

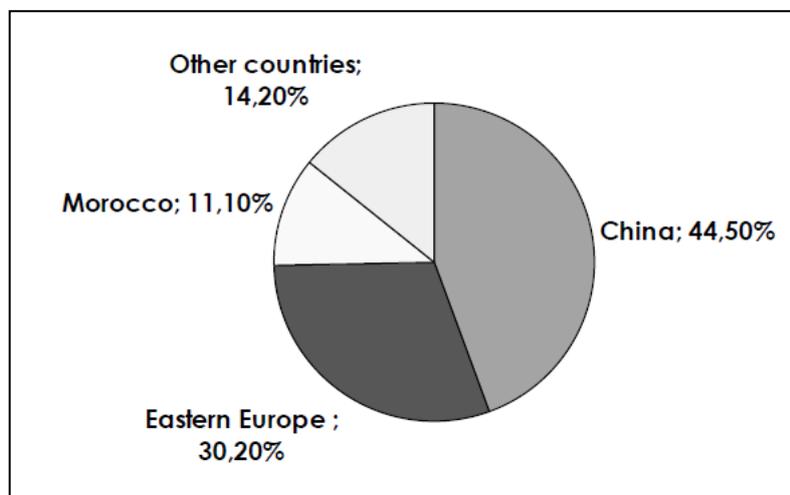
work by the service providers or users; (8) the fact that this is a dynamic job which allows them to develop personally and professionally.

Responses to the question about what they would like to improve in public service mediation-translation-interpreting can be summarised as follows: (1) increase the time of the mediated sessions; (2) MTI salaries; (3) training; (4) creating MTI networks to improve communication between professionals; (5) the information given to the MTIs for each case; (6) public recognition of their work; (7) follow-up and evaluation of the sessions; (7) better working conditions; (8) more public awareness and information about the profession; (9) better coordination between the public services and those working in the different areas of local government.

6. Results of the questionnaires addressed to public service end users

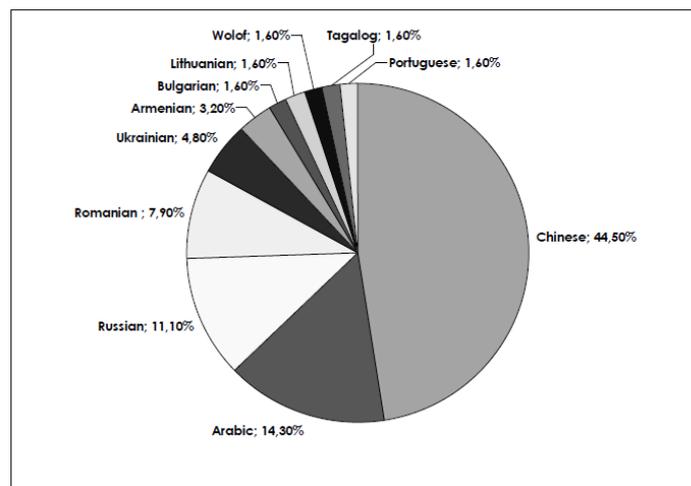
The responses by the public service end users to our questionnaires reflect a fairly balanced breakdown according to gender: 50.8 per cent are men and 49.2 per cent are women. As regards their age profile, 45.8 per cent are between twenty and thirty, 27.1 per cent between thirty and forty and finally 12.7 per cent between eighteen and twenty. One third have no children (33.3 per cent), and of the remainder, 35 per cent have children between the age of one and twenty-two, and 31.7 per cent have babies. The highest number of children per respondent recorded in this sample is three.

Graph 8 gives a breakdown of their country of origin.



Graph 8. Service users: country of origin

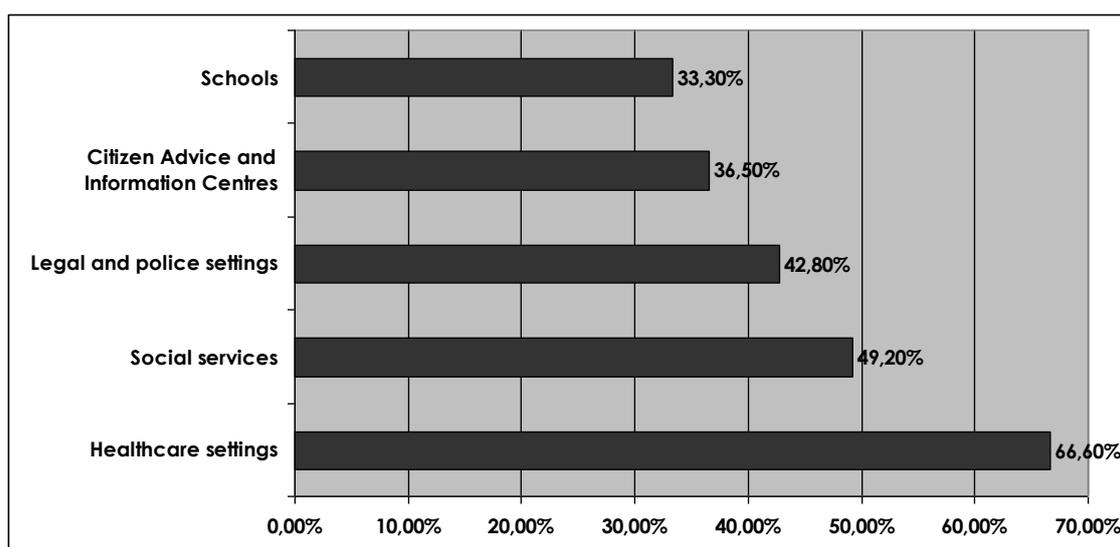
As regards their first language, 44.5 per cent checked Chinese and one or other of its dialects (Cantonese and the Qingtian and Fujian dialects), while 14.3 per cent stated Arabic in one or other of its vernacular variants (namely, Hassaniyya, Algerian Arabic, and Darija), in addition to the languages shown in Graph 9 below.



Graph 9. First languages of the service end users interviewed

As regards the length of time they have been living in Catalonia, the majority arrived in the last five years (96 per cent), and the average is between two to three years with 2007-8 being the years when most emigrated to Catalonia.

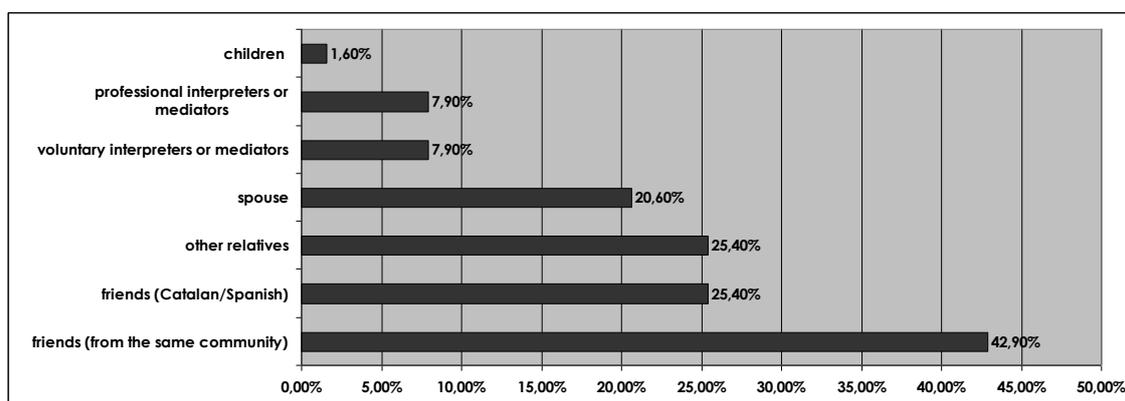
The vast majority of public service users interviewed (85.7 per cent) regularly or occasionally experience communication problems in their dealings with the public services. Graph 10 shows the public service areas where the users state they encounter the most communication problems.



Graph 10. Areas of public services where most communication problems occur

The majority of end users in our sample (73 per cent) state that in their dealings with public service staff they make themselves understood using a simplified form of Spanish. 44.4 per cent also resort to help from other family members and / or friends who know Spanish or Catalan, while 25.4 per cent make or have made themselves understood on occasions with the help of an MTI. 17.5 per cent communicate via gestures, 14.3 per cent using English and 9.5 per cent by means of drawings or written notes. Only 7.9 per cent make regular use of computerised bilingual material and, finally, 6.3 per cent use other languages, principally Catalan, Chinese and Arabic.

Graph 11 below gives a profile breakdown of the person who accompanies them in the cases of service end users from our sample who rely on a third person to facilitate communication.



Graph 11. What is the relationship of the third person who accompanies you to an interview with public service providers?

In the responses to the question about when they feel most comfortable communicating with public service staff, more than half of the users (54 per cent) prefer to express themselves in their own words, even though they have limited language skills in Spanish or Catalan. Similarly, when asked about using telephone interpretation, 65.1 per cent state that they have never used it. In contrast 28.6 per cent state they have, particularly in hospitals and health care centres.

As regards their ideal professional MTI profile, 49.2 per cent said that they prefer those who share their own first language, 30.2 per cent favour an MTI from the host country who has learned their language, and 7.9 per cent have no preference.

The users were also asked their opinion about how public service interpreting-mediation could be improved. The answers to the open questions can be grouped into the following three categories: 1.) Greater professionalization of the service; 2.) Extending the service; 3.) Greater proficiency in the host country language.

When users were asked if they felt that on any occasion an MTI had favoured one or other party in the mediation, close to half of those interviewed (42 per cent) believe that the MTI always maintained an impartial role.

7. Results from the questionnaires addressed to front line public service staff

The sample consisted mainly of public service staff working in education centres and local government bodies related to education (90.7 per cent). The remaining 9.3 per cent of the sample cover staff working in hospitals and health care centres.

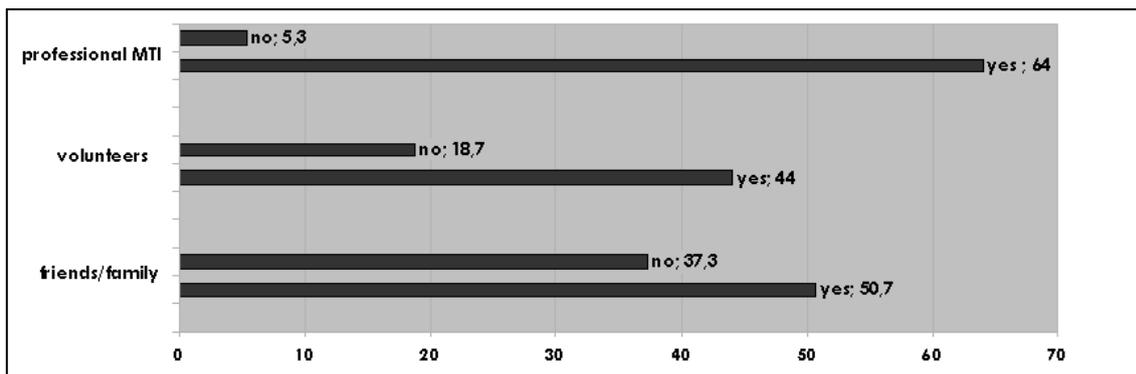
All the sample public service staff were born in Spain. The majority (69.4 per cent) fall within the age range thirty - fifty, and 90.7 per cent of those interviewed have been working professionally for more than five years. 90.7 per cent believe that there has been an increase in the number of public service end users who do not have an adequate level in the official languages in Catalonia (Catalan and Spanish), and 78.1 per cent state that they have difficulty communicating with these users.

The language barrier problem is clearly underlined as the principal cause of difficulties experienced by almost all public service providers in our sample (94.7 per cent) when speaking to end users. Alternatively, 46.7 per cent point out cultural differences as a source of communication problems.

Suggested improvements to communication problems, according to front line public service workers, can be classified into four main categories: a) access to a better mediation-interpretation service, that is more dynamic and flexible than the present service, b) availability of a greater number of well-trained MTIs c) creation of an MTI corps to work in official centres, either at a centre level (especially in the case of hospitals), or at a territorial level in order to cope with the demands made on all the public services, d) establishment of a telephone or internet mediation-interpretation service and automatic translation facilities, even though they envisage that users may have difficulties accessing and making use of this technology.

When it comes to overcoming communication problems, the most common strategy encountered by service workers is the strategy of using third parties. Next in order is employing a simplified version of the official languages, i.e. Catalan or Spanish.

Generally speaking, those interviewed state that they are satisfied with the mediated sessions, with no major differences in the study data with regard to whether the mediators are professionals, voluntary workers, family members or friends. However, the vast majority of those interviewed (84 per cent) point out that they have never had a negative experience as a result of a poor interpretation by an MTI.



□ Graph 13. Perceived degree of translation accuracy given as a percentage

On the subject of impartiality, when asked if the MTI has favoured one or other party during an interview, a clear majority (74.7 per cent) answered that the MTI has always remained neutral.

30.7 per cent from our sample state that on the odd occasion they had not been able to find an MTI for the user's language. When asked to specify which languages were involved on such occasions, the public service providers highlighted Chinese (eight responses), African languages such as el Bambara or Fula (five responses), languages of the Indian subcontinent such as Bengali (two responses), Punjabi (two responses) and Urdu (two responses), languages from Eastern Europe (Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Russian) and, in one case, Armenian.

A clear majority state that MTIs provided them with explanations about the user's country of origin culture, either systematically (28 per cent), or on a more sporadic basis (49.3 per cent). The survey data allow us to confirm that, thanks to their competence in cultural matters, MTIs have a positive impact on quality of the public service provided.

8. Conclusions

One of the impressions clearly revealed throughout this study is that public service interpreting is still in its infancy and is undergoing a process of consolidation as a practice and a service in Catalonia.⁸ As with all developing professions, at the outset the shortcomings are apparent in day-to-day working situations, and this is reflected in the responses of those interviewed in our study. The results of this study convincingly confirm one of our initial hypotheses: generally speaking, the immigrant population of Catalonia encounter communication problems in their dealings with the public services and the figure of the MTI could make up for this shortcoming. Furthermore, this is in line with the results from other questionnaires in previous studies such as those by Pöchhacker (2000a); Mesa (2000); Valero Garcés and Lázaro Gutiérrez (2008) and Kale and Syed (2009).

After analysing and cross-referencing the data obtained from the three agents who take part in interactive mediation, we have come to the following seven conclusions:

1. The **lack of specific training** appears explicitly or implicitly as a *leitmotiv*, in all three parts of this study:⁹

a) The majority of the MTIs from our study sample had not taken any kind of specific PSTI course at the time this study was conducted. This is also reflected in the responses to

⁸ Concerning the state of public service interpreting in other countries around the world, see Chapter 3 of the book by Abril-Martí (2006).

⁹ In order to meet this demand, the Miras Group has launched in 2011- 12 the First Specialized Course in Public Service Interpreting in Catalonia, offering for the first time holistic training in Public Service Interpreting (PSI) in Catalonia http://pagines.uab.cat/formacio_isp_catalunya/

questions on professional working practice: very few use note-taking as a technique when interpreting and only a small percentage of this sample (11.7 per cent) make use of the first person when interpreting, even though this is the option most recommended in training courses.

b) As regards the public service end users, many express doubts about whether their message has been conveyed “faithfully” and “completely” by those who accompany them to public service interviews (who are not always professional interpreters), while the majority are usually satisfied with the job done by the MTI.

c) In the responses by public services providers, the degree of satisfaction is higher in the case of interpreting by user family members and friends, which could well reinforce the impression that MTIs still need to improve working practices. Comments like these mean that again we need to reflect on the need for training, assessment and accreditation of those who work as mediators-interpreters to optimise the development of this profession.

2. **Access to MIT professionals** is uneven, in that the scope of these services at present is still limited. This fact is reflected in the responses from all three perspectives:

a) Half of the MTIs in our sample state that they only work sporadically, 13.7 per cent work part time and only 19.6 per cent are able to work full time. It is surprising that there are not more interpreters with full-time contracts, particularly when one takes into account the vast scope of the public services (health, education, social services, and law courts) in Catalonia. Unfortunately, the adjective “precarious” recurs a great deal when talking about MIT working conditions.

b) Only 7.9 per cent of the sample public service users have had access to professional MTIs on one or more occasions, while the remainder usually turn to friends, relatives or voluntary workers. The reason for this preference to overcome communication problems is more likely due to its being an easier option than the result of a more objective choice.

c) The responses from the public service providers contrast with those of the service users: 60 per cent of those interviewed state having had recourse to MTI professionals, even though they often combine this option with the help of the users’ relatives or friends, where the figure is higher (78.7 per cent). The combination of both solutions is understandable if one allows for the fact that the majority of those interviewed are from the sphere of education, where the Catalan Department for Education limits mediated interviews with professional interpreters to only one session per family per year.

3. Alongside the previous point, the **lack of definition of the role of the interpreter** is also evident, particularly in the responses from this group. By way of example, 47 per cent of the MTIs note that their profile “is not clearly defined” and admit to having to perform a wide range of tasks.

4. Whatever the case, although this profession is only just beginning to develop in Catalonia and many users are able to communicate through interpreters for the first time, it should be stressed that **the vast majority of users are satisfied and give positive feedback about the work MITs do**. Similarly, the majority of the comments from the service providers about the work done by the MTIs are generally positive and highlight qualities such as professionalism, objectivity, impartiality and the ability to convey complementary information.

5. It is also important to underline the fact that having recourse to MTIs does not diminish **the wish of many users to be able to communicate on their own** when dealing with the public services (54 per cent). In addition, a large majority of those interviewed (74.7 per cent of public service providers and 73 per cent of public service users) make use of a simplified version of the official languages (Catalan or Spanish) in order to communicate. Taken together, these two considerations point to an inherent human desire to be linguistically self-sufficient, people naturally tending whenever possible to look for ways to express themselves quickly with their own voice. This contradicts the view of those who believe that this type of service engenders dependence by end users and hinders their linguistic inclusion.

6. In both the responses by the interpreters and public service users, one can observe an increasing presence of **telephone interpretation** as an alternative to direct front-line services. Considering the Catalan context and the fact that telephone interpretation is a growing area in

many public service areas (health, education, local councils), it is possible this practice is already more widespread at the moment than at the time these data were collected.

7. Our research into the sectors covered has revealed a need **to optimise the organisation of the translation, interpreting and mediation services**. Those interviewed stressed the need to hire more MTIs, facilitate access to interpreting and mediation services and put in place assessment and accreditation systems to guarantee better training of professionals in this field.

All of these results show that, regardless of whatever immigration policy has been adopted or is desirable, the need to provide professional translation, interpreting and mediation services in public administration is justified by its ultimate objective: to make the principle of equality of access to resources a reality and thus establish the foundations of a future cohesive society.

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