Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Communication and language management in third sector organisations supporting refugees

María Jiménez-Andrés

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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Departament de Traducció i d'Interpretació i d'Estudis de l'Asia Oriental
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Doctorat en Traducció i Estudis Interculturals
PhD in Translation and Intercultural Studies

Communication and language management in third sector organisations supporting refugees

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2022

To all my teachers

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Pilar Orero and Dr Blanca Arias for their support in the last three years. Thank you, Pilar, for giving me the space to find my own path and for ensuring that I stay on it. I am very grateful for the opportunity that you gave me and the trust you placed in me since the first day. Thank you, Blanca, for your invaluable feedback and guidance. I always felt you had my back and for that I am thankful.

I would like to thank the TransMedia Catalonia Research Group for welcoming me and providing me with the environment and resources to complete this thesis. Special thanks go to Pau Pamplona for his continuous support and to Dr Belén Agulló for her invaluable advice in the last three years. Thank you also to the REBUILD team, especially the teams at OMNES and CIDAS, for their help during data-collection.

A mis padres y a mi hermana por apoyarme en todos mis proyectos y decisiones, por muy disparatados que parecieran.

Thank you to the University Saint Joseph of Beyrouth for welcoming me and to everyone I met in Lebanon for making my stay so special and life changing. Thanks to the people of Lebanon for teaching me resilience, generosity, and strength.

Thank you to Sue Bleasdale and Anna Kyprianou from Middlesex University for giving me the opportunity to take time off to complete a PhD. To my colleagues, Dr Kailin Wu and and Dr Rui Su, and my teacher Dr Khaled Omran, for encouraging me to pursue a career in academia.

Thank you to my friends Sheila, Lina, Irene, Marta, Wiktoria and Dr Alice Johnson. Thank you for being there for me during challenging times, for guiding me and putting things into perspective when it all felt too overwhelming.

Gracias a Mallorca y sus gentes. Por acogerme y sostenerme, y por darme el espacio para crecer a nivel profesional y personal.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the research participants for their time and for sharing with me their experiences. This thesis would not have been possible without you.

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[1] This thesis by publications is written in English and Spanish. For this reason, names of tables and figures can appear in both languages.

Abbreviation and acronym glossary

AD	Audio Description
AIDA	Asylum Information Database
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
EC	European Commission
ELE	Español Lengua Extranjera
EU	European Union
LSP	Local Service Provider
MCER	Marco Común de Referencia Europeo
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONG	Organización No Gubernamental
PSO	Public Sector Organisation
TIC	Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación
T&I	Traducción e Interpretación
TSO	Third Sector Organisation
TWB	Translators without Borders
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of people in displacement has reached an all-time high. In 2020 more than 80 million people were in displacement (UNHCR, 2020). Conflict in certain parts of the world as well as political and socioeconomic factors motivate people to leave their country and look for better living conditions. In Europe, recent migration waves have resulted in a humanitarian crisis, propitiated by the inability of host countries to manage the arrival of large numbers of refugees.

In the receiving countries, third sector organisations manage the hosting of asylum-seekers and migrants. For administrative purposes and political reasons, different terminology is used to refer to people who move to another country. In this PhD thesis, the decision has been made to not separate them into different categories. However, to adhere to the terminology employed in the literature, and to inform readers that the studies included here include all migrants, the following terms are used: asylum seekers, displaced persons, migrants, people from refugee backgrounds, people in displacement, refugees, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. As users of third sector organisations, they are referred to as beneficiaries or services users. Irrespective of the terminology used, in all instances the terms refer to people from other countries that, regardless of their administrative status:

a) move to Europe in search of safety or dignified living conditions;

b) have different levels of proficiency of the host country languages.

The aim of this study is to investigate how third sector organisations manage communication and language diversity. Their service users, i.e., refugees, are a diverse group with a variety of linguistic, cultural, and communicative needs. According to the literature, one of the main challenges that these organisations face is communicating effectively in the delivery of services and information (Federici & O'Brien, 2019;

Moreno-Rivero, 2018; Translators without Borders, 2017; Translators without Borders & Save the Children, 2017). Meeting the language needs of such a diverse group poses a challenge for these organisations where the budget is for humanitarian needs. Language barriers are not considered first aid (Translators without Borders, 2017). The way these organisations can go about bridging the communication gap is through translation, interpreting, and further access services.

This PhD thesis also explores how these organisations manage language diversity in digital environments. In many contexts, communication is now established online instead of face to face. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, these organisations carried out most of their work face to face and their digital presence was limited (Caceres et al., 2019). However, the restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus obliged these organisations to move their service provision online. The move to online platforms requires organisations to consider the digital barrier, in addition to the language needs of their service users.

This PhD thesis has been funded by the European project REBUILD[2] (grant agreement ID: 822215). REBUILD is a H2020 project that aims to create information and communication technologies (ICTs) for third sector organisations that work with refugee communities in European countries. Part of the research objectives of this thesis are shared with the REBUILD project, i.e., to investigate how third sector organisations can provide accessible information and services to their service users via ICT. To answer that question, a better understanding is needed of the communication practices and needs of these organisations and their service users.

The main goal of REBUILD is to build a tool to aid communication, and this doctoral thesis contributes to that project objective. One of REBUILD's requirements is that the ICT tool be accessible to as wide a population as possible. In this case, the accessibility requirements are related to the different spoken languages, levels of literacy, cultural preferences, and digital skills. Both the PhD thesis and the REBUILD project involved

[2] For more information, see: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx

end-users from the onset, in order to understand their communication and digital needs so that successful communication can be established during service provision.

Within this context, this PhD is presented as a compendium of publications. It adopts a case study approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data elicited from interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and document analysis. This methodology allows for the exploration of a phenomenon in a specific context and the factors and links that influence that phenomenon (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014).

The next sections present the research questions and the theoretical framework. This is followed by the methodology used in the research, and a summary of the studies conducted.

1.2. Research questions

This PhD thesis addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. How do refugees access integration-related information in the host countries?

RQ2. How do organisations supporting refugees in host countries communicate and interact with their service users?

RQ3. Is current integration-related content accessible?

These research questions are developed in separate publications. While some questions are directly addressed in a specific publication, others stand at a higher level of abstraction and are developed across the full thesis. The study presented in Chapter 2 addresses the first research question. The second research question is looked at from different angles in chapters 3, 4, and 5. The focus shifts from the refugees—and how they access information—to the sources and third sector organisations. Chapters 3 and 4 also explore how communication practices changed during lockdown and post-lockdown as a result of the mobility restrictions and social distancing measures imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The third research question is articulated throughout the PhD thesis and is also addressed in the publication included as

Annex 1. The study in Annex 1 investigates how research conducted with refugee communities was adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3. Theoretical framework

This thesis is multidisciplinary as a point of departure. It is grounded primarily in the fields of community translation and interpreting, and also in accessibility studies. In addition, it incorporates ideas from crisis translation and foreign language teaching and learning perspectives.

The following sections briefly introduce the stakeholders in this study and discuss the central concepts that this PhD thesis borrows from the aforementioned fields.

1.3.1 Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders are third sector organisations supporting refugees, its staff and volunteers, and refugees themselves. The next sections describe the work of third sector organisations and the issues that arise in their interaction with refugees. The order of mention of stakeholders does not indicate order of importance.

The term “third sector” is used to refer to “different kinds of organisations such as charities, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), self-help groups, social enterprises, networks, and clubs, to name a few, that do not fall into the state or market categories” (Corry, 2010, p. 11). A shared characteristic of organisations in the third sector is that they work towards a specific cause and help a specific community. However, along with the diversity in their legal frameworks, organisations in the third sector differ in many other aspects: the cause they support, the communities that they work with, their size, scope, and overall functioning. It is for these reasons that they cannot be treated as a coherent whole even though they fall within the same sector (Corry, 2010). The agreed-upon common denominator is that they pursue social or community goals, and that the majority involve volunteers in their day-to-day operations (Ridley-Duff et al., 2008).

In this PhD thesis, the focus lies on third sector organisations that support refugee and migrant communities in European countries. These organisations provide humanitarian

and development assistance to the communities they serve, and seek to impact global political decisions (Tesseur, 2018). In Europe, these organisations manage the national reception programmes of asylum seekers and migrants. National reception programmes vary in length and service provision, but the majority include accommodation, food provision, legal advice, medical assistance, therapy, and other integration-related support services. These organisations also offer host language courses, which are generally run by volunteers, who are not necessarily language professionals (Gómez Díez, 2020).

Another common feature of these organisations is their dependency on external funding to operate. Funding is typically granted by national governments, international organisations, and donors. The reliance on external funding to function impacts in their financial stability **(**Pym, 2008; Rico Pérez, 2019; Tesseur, 2018**).** Reports on the national reception systems show that most of these organisations struggle to meet the demand of their services due to the increasing number of applications (Asylum Information Database, 2018).

However, it can be argued that third sector organisations are not making use of all the resources at their disposal. According to reports conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic (Caceres et al., 2019; Caralt et al., 2017), the third sector was one of the last industries to adopt digital technologies. As is known from other industries, the adoption of digital tools can help organisations improve their capacity-building infrastructure.

The second stakeholder in this PhD thesis are the refugees themselves. Refugee and migrant communities are known to employ information and communication technologies before, during, and after their migratory journey (AbuJarour et al. 2019; Barros, 2017; Brunwasser, 2015). In this light, researchers and scholars advocate for the adoption of technological solutions to communicate with their service users and make their work more efficient and sustainable (AbuJarour et al., 2019; Bosin, Petrini, & Pozzebon, 2019; Federici & O'Brien, 2019; Souza Sales & Silva, 2015). Given the ubiquity of digital tools, a move to digital platforms would allow the organisations to provide support to a wider audience, including those who live in remote areas or are

unable to travel to the premises for financial, psychological, domestic, or work-related reasons.

People from countries experiencing war, oppression, or economic scarcity move to Europe in search for better living conditions. Far from representing a homogeneous group, people from refugee and migrant backgrounds are very diverse. The different spoken languages, cultural aspects, and the different levels of literacy, educational and digital skills play a role in their communication needs and content preferences (Miquel López, 1995; WPP, 2017). Anticipating and catering to refugees' communication needs in the provision of services is a prerequisite to ensure they can access information and services.

While certain service users do not experience communication barriers, i.e., some have sufficient knowledge of the host country language or are native speakers of it, others lack the language competence to communicate in the host country language. For some, staff at the organisations are the first contact in the host country. As a result of the communication barrier, some service users have difficulties or cannot access support services at these organisations. These differences in access are important because they can lead to discrimination based on language (Piler, 2017; Uekusa, 2019). Failure to provide access to asylum reception programs obstructs the right to seek asylum, a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and one that signing countries must uphold (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, 2021). That is why a primary responsibility for organisations is to bridge the communication barrier between the staff and the users in the provision of information and services. Previous research into these organisations has consistently highlighted language barriers as a recurrent issue (Federici & O'Brien, 2019; Moreno-Rivero, 2018; Tesseur, 2019). Furthermore, reports have demonstrated that asylum seekers at national borders face difficulties in accessing not only information, but also the asylum process itself (Asylum Information Database, 2018). Language issues, as well as the limited presence of NGOs at the borders and high numbers of arrivals, are central

aspects contributing to the difficulties in accessing information and the asylum process (ibid).

Translation, interpreting, and accessibility become a necessity at these organisations to bridge the communication barrier and to deliver accessible services and information. Language and accessibility practices are governed by the language policies of the organisations. The next sections provide an overview of the literature on language policy and translation, interpreting, and accessibility in refugee contexts.

1.3.2. Language policy

This PhD thesis centres around the communicative practices between organisations and their service users. Interaction occurs during the delivery of information and support services related to accommodation, food and essential supplies, and in language classes and other training sessions. Interaction also takes place in more formal settings, such as sessions with specialists, i.e., therapy sessions, psychological interviews, doctor visits, asylum and police interviews, as well as when applying for public services.

The analysis of the communication practices of organisations entails the study of organisations' language policies. In the field of translation studies, language policies involve translation policy. The decision of what is translated constitutes the language policy of an organisation. Meylaerts argues that "there is no *language*[3] policy without translation policy" (p. 744). For translation scholars, the relationship between the two is clear; however, translation in language policy research in other fields is underexamined (Diaz Fouces, 2002; González Núñez, 2016; Meylaerts, 2011; Tesseur, 2015). This PhD thesis understands that translation policy is included in language policy.

Meylaerts defines language policy as "a set of legal rules that regulate language use for purposes of education and communication" (2011, p. 744). This definition supposes that organisations and institutions record their language policies in policy documents.

[3] Original emphasis.

However, this condition is not always fulfilled. With that understanding and based on Spolsky's (2004) definition of language policy, González Núñez (2013) broadens the understanding of translation policy to include not only the explicit written policies, but also the implicit policies, i.e., the actual practices in an organisation.

Echoing González Núñez's (2013) understanding of language policy, this thesis draws on Spolsky's (2004, p.5) conceptualisation, which encompasses three aspects: language practices, languages beliefs, and language management. Rather than focusing on the explicit policies, the focus lies on real language policies, i.e., what actually takes place in terms of languages practices. In this PhD thesis, attention is given to the concrete practices at the organisations, rather than what may be outlined in policy documents. In addition to the fact that official language policies may not exist, research into language policy acknowledges the difficulties in identifying the boundaries between the three aspects of language policy, which can often be blurred (Spolsky, 2005; Tesseur, 2015).

This PhD thesis looks at language and translation policies by exploring what is translated and interpreted and by whom, in what contexts and into which languages. How language issues are tackled within online as well as face-to-face contexts is also examined.

1.3.2.1. Translation and interpreting in humanitarian contexts

Translation and interpreting in humanitarian contexts have received growing attention in recent years, in part motivated by the increase in the refugee arrivals to Europe and the media coverage of the Syrian war of 2012 and the resulting humanitarian crisis. Research in translation and interpreting in humanitarian contexts is grounded in several subfields within translation studies, namely community translation, public sector translation and interpreting, volunteer interpreting and non-professional interpreting and translation.

Research into the translation and interpreting practices that took place in community settings started to flourish from the 1990s onwards (Wadensjö, 1998). Since then, this

type of translation and interpreting has received various denominations on account of the diverse conceptualisations and stakeholders involved in it (ibid). As will become apparent from what follows, there is a great deal of terminological discrepancy in the terms used when referring to this type of translation and interpreting (D'Hayer, 2012). However, it could be argued that all refer to a comparable genre of translation and interpreting. In this PhD thesis, the term favoured is "translation and interpreting in humanitarian contexts" as it encompasses both public service translation and interpreting and crisis translation, and it is more specific on the context and target population of this study.

Wadensjö (1998) defined community interpreting as that "which takes place in the public service sphere to facilitate communication between officials and lay people: at police departments, immigration departments, social welfare centres, medical and mental health offices, schools, and other institutions" (p. 43). This type of interpreting also includes the provision of on-sight translation of official and personal documents (Hertog, 2010, p. 49). According to Hertog (ibid), it is not the mode of interpreting or the strategies that differentiate this type of interpreting from others, but the setting and the working arrangements. Indeed, another common feature of this type of translation and interpreting is that it remains low-paid and holds a lower status than other types of translation and interpreting (D'Hayer, 2021; Wadensjö, 1998).

Other scholars refer to this subfield of translation and interpreting as translation and interpreting in the public sector or public service settings (De Pedro Ricoy et al., 2009; Valero Garcés & Mancho Barés, 2002). While this denomination is more comprehensive as it also incorporates translation, it concentrates on the practices in the public sector, overlooking similar practices with the same communities in other contexts, i.e., third sector organisations.

Intercultural mediation (also referred to as cultural mediation) is another term favoured in certain countries for interpreting in these contexts (Amato & Garwood, 2011). The roles and professional recognition of cultural mediators and how their responsibilities and skills differ from that of interpreters continues to be debated in academic spheres

(Amato & Garwood, 2011; Arumí Ribas, Gil-Bardají & Vargas-Urpí, 2011; Pokorn & Juznič, 2020; Taviano, 2019). While some scholars argue that their roles and skills are distinctively different, many academic voices contend that there are no strong grounds to distinguish between the two in certain settings, such as healthcare, given that both act as communication facilitators (Vargas-Urpí, 2014). In this PhD, no differentiation is made between these roles. The term “cultural mediation” has been used only when reporting the statements of the participants of the study.

Another strand of research that looks at the practices in third sector organisations is non-professional interpreting and translation (NPIT). In these organisations, as well as in other humanitarian contexts, it is not uncommon for volunteers to take on the role of interpreters. In 2012, the first international conference on non-professional interpreting and translation was organised as a first step in the acknowledgement of NPIT as an area of research. Since then, scholars in the field have shed light on these practices, the agents involved, and its contexts. Their mapping of non-professional interpreting and translation practices concludes that these occur both ad hoc and on a regular basis, in formal and in informal settings, in the private and public sectors, and are carried out by non-professional interpreters and child brokers[4], and by professionally trained interpreters and translators who work on a volunteering basis[5] (Antonini et al. 2017; Vargas-Urpí et al, 2021).

None of the cited avenues of research centre their work around translation and interpreting practices in the third sector in particular: they tend to focus on the public sector or explore volunteer translation and interpreting at large. Third sector organisations have gained prominence in today’s globalised society, both in the local communities that they serve and in the international sphere. However, these

[4] Children as language brokers are defined as children “who interpret and translate between culturally and linguistically different people and mediate interactions in a variety of situations including those found at home and school” (Tse, 1996, p. 226).

[5] Please refer to work by Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche (2018) and Moser-Mercer et al. (2014) for research on the work of professional interpreters; for the work of cultural mediators, refer to Miklavcic & LeBlanc (2014), Moreno-Rivero (2018), and Rudvin & Tomassini (2008); and to Vargas-Urpí et al. (2021) and Banas et al. (2017) for interpreting by family members. For volunteer interpreting, please refer to Aguilar-Solano (2015), Al-Shehari (2019), Cadwell et al. (2019), Hassemer (2020), and Taibi (2011).

organisations have received attention from translation and interpreting scholars only recently. Authors such as Tesseur (2018, 2019), Delgado Luchner (2018), Federici & O'Brien (2019), Rico Pérez (2019), and Tipton (2017), to name a few, have drawn attention to the multilingual needs of these organisations and the translation and interpreting practices that they adopt. O'Brien and Federici (2019), have worked towards the establishment of a "catalyst" research area (p. 138), coined "crisis translation" (O'Brien, 2019, p. 138) that aims to develop

> a holistic, multidisciplinary and comprehensive understanding of the role of communication in multilingual crisis situations, so as to better address the necessity for accommodating language needs in crisis situations, thus lessening the impact of the language barrier in cascading crises.

As became apparent in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, a crisis can erupt at any moment and in any place. Access to information during a time of crisis can be lifesaving, more so for vulnerable communities such as refugees that may have more difficulties finding information in a language they understand. In Federici and O'Brien (2019), scholars reflect on the role of translation for risk reduction in cascading crises and posit the notion of language access as a human right in crisis settings. The volume serves as a foundation for the emergence of crisis translation as a field of study. Topics that are considered and that are relevant for the present study include the unfulfilled potential of translation technologies in humanitarian contexts (Rico Pérez, 2019) and the adoption of Universal Design principles as an approach that would advantage people with disabilities and multilingual audiences in crisis situations (Rodríguez Vázquez & Torres del Rey, 2019). Accessibility services, easy-to-read and/or plain language initiatives and translation technologies are postulated as instruments that can provide appropriate access to language in these contexts (ibid).

Key findings that emerge from research into the translation and interpreting practices in third sector organisations include (O'Brien & Federici, 2019; Tesseur, 2018):

a) a lack of attention and planning of translation and interpreting needs;

b) a deficiency of resources for communication needs, which include translation and interpreting;

c) a lack of understanding of the time required to produce translated materials by staff;

d) the use of written, oral, and multimodal communication channels with different audiences;

e) the urgency to identify best practices and recommendations to reverse inequalities and ensure access to information.

Much research has focused on large international NGOs from the so-called Global North (Tesseur, 2018), and they provide a valuable foundation on which to ground subsequent studies in the topic. The present PhD thesis responds to calls for further research on the translation and interpreting needs of these organisations with the aim that language issues be considered as a key element in the capacity-building strategies of third sector organisations (Tesseur, 2018). The consideration of language issues also encompasses matters of accessibility. The next section briefly introduces the field of accessibility and postulates that adopting accessibility principles in the delivery of information and support services would benefit people from refugee backgrounds.

1.3.2.2. Accessibility

Accessibility is an evolving concept (Llop in Arias-Badia et al., forthcoming). For Llop, who is a user, activist and expert on accessibility, accessibility today “is basically the ability to do things in a normal manner, with a reasonable amount of effort” (p.7). If a person must exert more effort than others to perform the same task, this task is inaccessible. When these tasks involve administrative processes, it leads to inequality and, ultimately, to discrimination of those who cannot perform the task with as much ease as others (ibid).

In the field of translation, and more specifically, in audiovisual translation, media accessibility has become a discipline in its own right and has developed a "set of theories, practices, services and technologies and instruments providing access to audiovisual content to people that cannot, or cannot properly, access that content in its original form" (Greco, 2016, based on Szarkowska et al., 2013). Initially conceived as an exclusive service for limited group of users, namely, people with disabilities, there is now a call for a change in this perception, which could lead to mainstreaming access services (Jankowska, 2019, p. 246). Researchers in the field of media accessibility posit that accessibility services can also facilitate access to information and communication to the elderly, migrants, and linguistic minorities (Bernabé Caro, 2020; Di Giovanni, 2018; Gambier 2003; Greco, 2016; Matausch & Nietzio, 2012; Snyder 2020; Walczak 2016).

Research has demonstrated that linguistic, digital, and literacy barriers prevent newly arrived migrants and refugees from accessing that information (Federici & O'Brien, 2019; Translators without Borders, 2017). Therefore, applying accessibility principles to communications with refugees would facilitate their access to information and aid their participation in new societies. In the field of crisis translation, Rodríguez Vázquez & Torres del Rey (2019) examine the notions of disability and accessibility and advocate for multilingual accessibility to prevent or mitigate cascading effects. The authors claim that adopting accessibility standards to create crisis-related information can reduce the vulnerabilities of those who are "functionally, linguistically and culturally disabled in a disaster environment" (p.107).

In third sector organisations, accessibility approaches to the creation of content and the delivery of services would remove some of the current barriers to communication and access to information and services. Some of the services that would make their content and services more accessible are interlingual and intralingual subtitles, enhanced subtitles, spoken audio, text-to-speech and speech-to-text, slow reproduction, easy-to-understand language, and pictograms. The interest of this PhD thesis is in exploring whether and how third sector organisations are employing accessibility services in

communication with refugees. The analysis of the contexts and needs of stakeholders would serve as a basis to offer suggestions as to how organisations can make their services and information more accessible.

Having introduced the key notions of the fields of translation studies in which this thesis has its foundation, the next section presents the methodology adopted. Then, it outlines the empirical studies conducted and their relationship to the different publications presented in the following chapters.

1.4 Methodology

The methodology of the published works that make up this PhD thesis is described in the chapters corresponding to each publication. However, a brief rationale of the overarching methodology is included here.

Based on Saldanha and O'Brien's (2014) classification of research in translation and interpreting, this PhD thesis falls into three categories: participant-oriented, product-oriented, and context-oriented. First, it relies on the contribution of participants in most methods employed for gathering the data. This participant-oriented approach views research as a "collaborative process between the researcher and the people who are invited to participate in it" (p. 150).

Secondly, the analysis of materials treats the data as a product. This product-oriented research allowed the mapping of the occurrence of a certain feature across a number of texts selected according to a specific set of criteria.

Thirdly, it is context-oriented, in that it looks at the external factors affecting the work (or absence thereof) of translators and interpreters, and the contexts in which their work is needed. In context-oriented research, the researcher "exercises no control over the events [the study] focuses on and requires the examination of a wide range of sources" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 207). Within the context-oriented classification, the research methodology falls into the category of a case study. The investigation revolves

around a particular phenomenon or unit of analysis. Case studies are open-ended and flexible, allowing for modifications as the research progresses.

The present PhD thesis is a case study with a multiple case study format. Gillham, (2000, p. 1) defines a case as “a unit of human activity embedded in the real world; which can only be studied or understood in context; which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw”. However, rather than focusing on one case, it has multiple cases of analysis. In this thesis, the unit of analysis that is explored across a number of cases is a process: communication practices with refugees, investigated across a number of third sector organisations. What emerges from this type of case study is a richer picture of “cumulative evidence about a single phenomenon” (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2014, p. 212).

The different contexts and stakeholders involved in the process call for a variety of tools to develop a fuller understanding of the topic of exploration. In this study, the tools that are used to collect data are: questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, and analysis of teaching materials. The flexibility of case study research to draw from a wide range of source data makes it a suitable method to inform context-oriented research in translation studies (Saldanha & O’Brien, 2014).

The flexibility and adaptability of case study research also allows for modifications as the research progresses. This feature of the method has been key to the successful completion of this study. The COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in early 2020 inevitably affected and shaped the implementation of research. Specifically, the effect of the pandemic has been twofold: first, the restrictions imposed directly influenced the unit of analysis, i.e., communication practices. The changes in communication practices as a result of the pandemic motivated the studies presented in chapters 3 and 4. Secondly, the mobility restrictions and social distancing measures required that data be collected online instead of in person. Data for chapters 3, 4, and the study presented in Annex 1 was collected online.

As discussed, this study data draws from different sources of data and uses a variety of data collection instruments. Using different instruments and sources helps to shed light on the different aspects of the case study (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). Edley and Litosseliti (2010, p. 157) describe interviews and focus groups as mechanisms by which one party (i.e., the interviewer) can extract vital information from another (i.e., the interviewee or participant). They provide advantaged access to a person's thoughts and opinions, which makes them a good tool to gather the translation beliefs of staff at the organisations. Both tools offer insights into participants views and what they believe they do; though it may not be what they think or really do (Edley & Litosseliti, 2010; Gillham, 2000). Rather than taking participants' accounts at face value, the dialogue offers the opportunity to discuss issues at length and discern what participants mean. Focus groups allow for involving more participants and can also be used as a way of brainstorming and generating new ideas (Edley & Litosseliti, 2010, p. 170). These conversations can be useful as a way to find out how information and services can be made more accessible to refugees.

Questionnaires can be "used to collect background information on research participants; to collect data on facts, opinions, attitudes, behaviour, etc., or to combine the collection of both" (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014, p. 154). In this study, questionnaires are used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on the communication, translation, research, and accessibility practices of staff and researchers in their interactions with refugees. Questionnaires allow for the collection of data from a wider sample, saving time and resources, and also for the collection of data remotely, which was a requirement for data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the analysis of materials is carried out with a descriptive and evaluative purpose in mind. In this study, host country language learning materials used by third sector organisations are examined and contrasted. The following section provides a succinct outline of each study and the methodologies used in each of them.

1.4.1 Empirical studies included in this PhD thesis

To respond to the research questions presented in section 1.1, five empirical studies were conducted. What follows is a brief introduction of these studies and the methodology used for each of them. An overview of the studies conducted is presented in Table 1.

Jiménez-Andrés, M. (2021). Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions. *FITISPos International Journal,* 8(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270

This article investigates the information-seeking practices of refugees, and the challenges that they encounter when accessing integration-related information in the host countries. The emphasis lies on the linguistic barrier that may hinder their access to information, and their use of ICTs to access information and asylum-related procedures and services. The results of nine focus groups conducted in Greece, Italy, and Spain with 41 participants with refugee backgrounds are presented. The findings from the focus groups shed light on the difficulties that refugees experience to find reliable, accessible information. The main areas discussed in the results are their offline/analogue and online practices/strategies of obtaining information, as well as the accessibility of the information and technologies employed for these purposes. This study brings to the fore the inaccessibility of asylum-related information and procedures, and the reliance of refugees on NGOs and peers to manage their migratory project.

Three empirical studies were conducted to address the question of how third sector organisations interact with their service users, and how issues of multilingualism, literacy and digital access and skills are dealt with. Third sector organisations interact with refugees in different settings: face to face in organisations' offices, language classrooms, points of arrivals, healthcare centres, and remotely, by phone and online. These three studies explore the communication practices in such settings by means of questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups with staff in third sector organisations,

public administrations, and host country language teachers. These three studies respond to the second and third research questions.

Jiménez-Andrés, M. (2021). La accesibilidad lingüística como servicio en la atención de usuarios en las entidades del tercer sector. *MAGAzin. Revista De Germanística Intercultural*, (28). https://doi.org/10.12795/mAGAzin.2020.i28.04

This article focuses on the linguistic accessibility of third sector organisations. The study presents the findings of a qualitative study conducted with five third sector organisations working in Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The article briefly reviews the regulations in terms of linguistic accessibility of third sector organisations in the four target countries. Then, the findings of interviews conducted with staff in different positions at the organisations are presented. The study discusses the multiplicity of communication practices that these organisations adopt to respond to the multilingual needs of their service users. This study is presented in Chapter 3.

Jiménez-Andrés, M. & Orero, P. (forthcoming). Digital multilingual practices in third sector organisations: beyond the pandemic. In F. Federici & S. O'Brien (Eds.), *Translation in Times of Cascading Crisis*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

This article maps the multilingual and digital practices of third sector organisations. The study complements the results of questionnaires distributed to public and third sector organisations, with data from the interviews from Study 3 that focus on their digital multilingual practices. The findings present the responses of the organisations to the COVID-19 pandemic regarding their digital and multilingual practices and reflects on their multilingual solutions in digital communication. This study is presented in Chapter 4.

Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Arias-Badia, B. (2021). El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: Análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes. *Lengua Y migración*, *13*(1). https://doi.org/10.37536/LYM.13.1.2021.1368

This article looks at multilingual and multimodal communication with refugees, specifically the use of images, in the language classroom. To that end, four open access manuals designed for refugees are analysed. The results of the analysis are complemented with the findings from a focus group conducted with three language teachers working with refugee communities. This study illustrates the nature of the images used and the approaches to their application in the language classroom. This article is presented in Chapter 5.

Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Alemam, N. (2021). Researching Displaced Persons during COVID-19: Catering for Users' Specific Needs in Media Accessibility Projects. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation, 4(2),* 23-41. https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v4i2.2021.174

This article gathers the experiences of researchers conducting research with refugees during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was motivated by the changes in the interaction resulting from the mobility and social gathering restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. It provides a framework for accessible, safeguarded research with refugee communities and other vulnerable groups. This study is presented in Chapter 6.

The following chapters consist of the five publications of the studies conducted for this PhD thesis. Chapter 7 presents and discusses the conclusions drawn from the studies conducted and the implications of the results. It also establishes the contribution of this thesis to the fields in which it is framed, namely crisis translation, community interpreting and accessibility studies, and suggests further lines of research. The bibliography and annexes are found after Chapter 6.

All publications are presented in this PhD thesis as accepted for publication; no changes were introduced, with the exception of the font, and the table and figure numbers which were adapted to make this thesis a unified document. A copy of the published articles is included in Annex 1. In addition to the published articles as an annex, the following annexes can be found at the end of the document:

Annex 2: Ethical committee documentation

2.1. REBUILD project's approved and signed ethical procedure

2.2. Written informed consent form

2.3. Information sheet for participating in the focus groups (for refugees)

2.4. Information sheet for participating in the questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

2.5. Information sheet for participating in the interviews (for third sector organisations)

2.6. Online consent form and information sheet for participating in the qualitative questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

Annex 3 - Questionnaires [not included in the chapters]

3.1. Focus group questionnaire

3.2. Third sector organisations' questionnaire

3.3. Interview guide

Chapter	Title of the publication	Methods and participants	Time of the study	Publisher or journal and indexation
Chapter 2	Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions.	Focus groups with refugees (41)	April and May 2019	FITISPos International Journal Indexed in ERIHPLUS, Latindex, MIAR, Dialnet, CIRC and PKP Index
Chapter 3	La accesibilidad lingüística como servicio en la atención de usuarios en las entidades del tercer sector.	Interviews with staff in third sector organisations (n.7)	May 2020	mAGAzin. Revista de Germanística Intercultural Indexed in Dialnet, Latindex, CNEAI, ANECA, DULCINEA, CIRC, DICE, MIAR, RESH
Chapter 4	Digital multilingual practices in third sector organisations: beyond the pandemic.	Interviews (I) and questionnaires (Q) with staff (n.7) in third sector organisations (n. 53)	Questionnaires: June and July 2019 Interviews: May 2020	Included in SPI ranking
Chapter 5	El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: Análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes.	Analysis of 4 learning and teaching materials Focus group with host country language teachers (n.3)	January – June 2019	Lengua y Migración Indexed in SJR: Q3 ERIHPlus Emerging Sources Citation Index Linguistic Bibliography MLA - Modern Language Association Database DIALNET
Annex	Researching displaced persons during COVID-19: catering for users' specific needs in media accessibility projects.	Questionnaires to researchers and research assistants (n.6)	December 2020	Journal of Audiovisual Translation Indexed in the Directory of Open Acces Journals

Table 1. Summary of the studies conducted for this thesis.

Chapter 2. Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions

Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions

El acceso a la información de los refugiados en entornos digitales y presenciales: resultados a partir de grupos focales

Abstract: In today's migration processes, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are increasingly important for refugee experiences and mobilities (Gillespie, Osseiran and Cheesman, 2016). In this light, there is a call by institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016a; 2020a) and researchers in the field of refugee integration (AbuJarour et al., 2019) for initiatives employing ICT to cater for refugees' need for information and communication. This article discusses some information seeking practices of asylum seekers and refugees, in online and offline environments. The data was gathered by means of nine focus group discussions with refugee communities in Greece, Italy, and Spain, involving a total of 41 participants of 13 different nationalities. Issues relating to the languages and the accessibility of the information that is available to them are discussed. The results of this research will inform the subsequent phases of REBUILD, a project funded by European Commission whose aim is the creation of a user-centred ICT-tool to promote refugee and migrant integration in Europe.

Keywords: Accessibility; Information seeking practices; Language barriers**;** Translation and interpreting.

Resumen: En los procesos migratorios actuales, las TIC son cada vez más importantes para las experiencias y movilidades de los refugiados (Gillespie, Osseiran y Cheesman, 2016). En este sentido, instituciones como el Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados (2016a; 2020a) e investigadores en el campo de la integración de los refugiados (AbuJarour *et al.*, 2019) llaman al diseño de iniciativas que empleen las TIC para atender las necesidades de información y comunicación. Este artículo analiza el acceso a la información de los refugiados en entornos *online* y *offline*. Los datos se recopilaron mediante nueve grupos de discusión con comunidades de refugiados en Grecia, Italia y España, en los que participaron un total de 41 participantes de 13 nacionalidades diferentes. Se abordan temas relacionados con los idiomas y la accesibilidad de la información de la que disponen. Los resultados de esta investigación orientarán las siguientes fases de REBUILD, un proyecto financiado por la Comisión Europea cuyo objetivo es la creación de una herramienta TIC para promover la integración de refugiados y migrantes en Europa.

Palabras clave: Accesibilidad; Barreras lingüísticas; Prácticas de información; Traducción e interpretación.

2.1. Introduction

By the end of 2019, there were 78.9 million displaced people worldwide, of which over 33 million were refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2020b). While the reasons for migration remain constant over the years (i.e. conflict, discrimination, violence, economic and environmental factors), the environment in which migrations take place is changing rapidly due to technological advancements. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has progressively become a key player in international migration work, especially for refugee experiences and mobilities (Gillespie, Osseiran and Cheesman, 2018). In this light, institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016a; 2020a) and researchers in the field of refugee integration (AbuJarour et al., 2019) call for initiatives employing ICT to cater for the refugees' need for information and communication while in transit and in host countries.

In the host countries, NGOs hold a key role in the reception and integration of displaced communities. These organisations provide access to information and services to linguistically and culturally diverse groups; thus, Translation and Interpreting (T&I) is usually required in that provision. Previous studies in T&I in these contexts (O'Brien, 2016; Valero-Garcés and Tipton, 2017; Tesseur, 2018) have mapped the T&I practices in such organisations and showed that these practices remain lacking. Against this background, the aim of this study is to gather some experiences of asylum seekers and refugees regarding their information seeking practices in three European countries: Greece, Italy, and Spain.

The article starts with a presentation of the specialised literature on the process of asylum and integration in host countries, and the role of NGOs, T&I and technology in it. Then, it outlines the methodology adopted. The final sections present and discuss the results of the focus group discussions, concentrating on refugee sources of information in offline and online environments.

2.1. Research context

This study is framed within the context of the European project REBUILD.[6] This project aims at the development of an accessible ICT tool that supports the integration of refugees in their host communities in Greece, Italy, and Spain. The project is currently ongoing (Jan 2019-Dec 2021).

Prior to the development of the tool, research actions were conducted to understand the needs and requirements of the target users. The project adopted a user-centric approach; that is, involving asylum-seekers and migrants as well as NGOs and other local service providers in the creation of the tool. Through complementary methodologies, the target users identified the system requirements and supported the research team in the design of the tool.

This paper was motivated by the first research action in the project, conducted between January and April 2019. The aim was to gain insights into how refugees and asylum seekers –the target users of the tool– use ICT in their daily lives. Given the heterogeneity of the refugee population (WPP, 2017), more information was required beyond standard demographics, i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, legal status, level of education, linguistic skills, digital literacy and media preferences. By means of focus groups with refugees and asylum seekers, the research team gathered valuable information about asylum seekers and refugee information seeking practices as well as the role that ICT plays in the process. The results of the focus groups conducted in the three target countries are presented and discussed in this paper. The results of another research action involving NGOs and other local service providers are discussed in Arias-Badia and Jiménez-Andrés (2021). The study examines how organisations supporting refugees bridge the linguistic barriers, their T&I practices and their use of technology to facilitate communication.

6 The REBUILD project website can be accessed at https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx.

2.2. Literature review

This section provides an overview of the literature on the topic. Specifically, this section discusses the process of asylum, the role that NGOs and translation and interpreting play in it, and the growing role of technology in migration.

2.2.1. The role of NGOs and Translation and Interpreting in the Reception and Integration systems

NGOs and public bodies are the first contact points of asylum-seekers, and those in charge of the reception programmes in the host countries. The complex Reception and Integration systems of asylum in Europe vary across countries and even within a country, since national regulations change frequently. For example, in Spain, the *Programa de Acogida* is updated regularly, as can be observed in the Migration portal7. Furthermore, some responsibilities lie in the central government while others in the regional governments (ibid). The changing environment makes it difficult not only for NGOs supporting asylum-seekers, but also for asylum-seekers to understand and be up to date with the services that they are entitled to provide and receive, as well as with the legal procedures to obtain refugee status.

In addition to the legal complications, linguistic and cultural barriers play a part in information seeking practices. Asylum-seekers are a heterogenous group (WPP, 2017) and hence meeting their linguistic needs is a challenge for NGOs and international organisations supporting them in the host countries. Indeed, a primary concern for these organisations is the communication barrier between the organisation and its beneficiaries (Moreno-Rivero, 2018). To bridge the communication gap, NGOs resort to different practices: some of these involve linguistic professionals and others, volunteers.

7 Spanish Government Migration Portal:
http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/Subvenciones/anos_anteriores/area_integracion/index.html

Previous studies have looked at these practices, which can take the form of interpreting (Moser-Mercer, Kherbiche and Class, 2014; Delgado Luchner and Kherbiche, 2018); cultural mediation (Rudvin and Tomassini, 2008; Miklavcic and LeBlanc, 2014; Moreno-Rivero, 2018); and volunteer interpreting (Aguilar-Solano, 2015; Al-Shehari, 2020; Cadwell, Bollig and Ried, 2020; Hassemer, 2020). T&I practices are required at various stages of the reception process, i.e. asylum interviews with police officers, filling the application form for asylum, and the counselling sessions with psychologists.

While there has been an increase in the awareness of the importance of T&I in this context, there is still a lot to be done to meet the linguistic needs of NGO beneficiaries (Hertog, 2010; Tesseur, 2018). These practices are controlled by budget changes and pressures, political contexts, and the changing needs of the recipient population. In the Spanish context, the situation has worsened considerably in the last decade as the budget for T&I has drastically decreased (Valero-Garcés and Tipton, 2017). The current Welcome and Integration Handbook stipulates that only the documents that are needed for the asylum application are to be translated (Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020). As for interpreting, it should only be offered when “indispensable” (p. 31).

A lack in the provision of linguistic support for asylum seekers has many negative consequences. In addition to misinformation and confusion, it can lead to a drop-out of the use of their services (Arias-Badia and Jiménez-Andrés, 2021), to an accentuation of their current vulnerabilities or to re-traumatisation (Gardiner and Walker, 2019; Miller et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Technology for the dissemination of information

In light of the above, NGOs could take advantage of new technologies to compensate for the lack of financial and human resources. Indeed, researchers in the field of T&I in these contexts encourage the adoption of technologies to support multilingual communication processes (Federici and O’Brien, 2020). Yet, most of these organisations have not yet gone digital. A recent report by Caceres et al. (2019) has brought to the fore the deficient digital practices of NGOs, with only younger charities

being more digitally active. For displaced communities, studies and practice show that ICT plays a fundamental role in the process of migration. Refugees *en route* or settling in host countries can sometimes prioritise ICT over food or shelter to communicate with family and friends, get assistance during their journey, and obtain information about the route or services in the area (Brunwasser, 2015; Barros, 2017). Furthermore, ICTs have been identified as useful tools for the integration of refugees and migrants into host countries (Frouws et al., 2016; UNHCR, 2016a; WPP, 2017). As a result, studies on ICT adoption by refugee communities have started to emerge, demonstrating the potential of ICT for integration (Frouws et al., 2016; Mason and Buchmann, 2016; GSMA, 2017; Marić, 2017; AbuJarour et al., 2019). In addition to research studies, there have been multiple initiatives fostering the integration of refugees by means of ICT. Some successful examples are Ankommen (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018), Apps4Refs (Fundació Acsar, 2018), and RefAid (RefAid, 2019). These tools are still available across Europe.

Governments also make the asylum regulations publicly available through official websites. Because the language and information contained is often very complex, the UNHCR has developed a comprehensive, multilingual help page with information on the asylum regulations per country8. Not all countries have provided this information to the UNHCR and each country is in charge of providing this information in other languages. For example, Greece has its information in eight languages (Arabic, English, French, Greek, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian and Urdu); Spain, in four (Arabic, English, Spanish and French); whereas Italy does not have a help page on this website.

Despite their many advantages, online environments pose new challenges due to the inaccessibility of digital content and interfaces (United Nations, 2020). Accessibility is herein understood in its universalistic account (Greco, 2018), concerning the elimination of barriers that hinder the access to information, be they linguistic, educational or cognitive. O'Brien et al. (2018) distinguish two levels of accessibility of information: (i) if it is translated into languages that the recipient can read or hear, and

8 See: https://help.unhcr.org/

(ii) if people with special needs can actually consume that information. The above-mentioned report of Caceres et al. (2019) indicates that only 51% of charities in the UK have accessibility procedures built into their websites. Making information accessible and redundant, that is, in various languages and formats, is a requirement to ensure that information is usable by linguistically and functionally diverse communities (UNHCR, 2018; Rodríguez-Vázquez and Torres-del-Rey, 2020).

2.3. Methodology

The data used for this study has been gathered from nine focus group discussions conducted for the REBUILD project. The focus group discussions consisted of a list of guiding questions that enquired on their views on technology for integration, their use of ICT, their current sources of information, and their recommendations on the design of apps for refugees. The questions included in the interview can be found in Appendix 1.

The study was approved by the ethical committee at the researchers' university and followed ethical recommendations as described in Orero et al. (2018). Furthermore, special considerations were taken in the planning and execution of the focus group discussions due to the vulnerable situation in which asylum-seekers and refugees find themselves (Gibbs, 2007; Eklöf et al., 2017; Sandvik et al., 2017). These considerations were mindful of cultural differences, of the 'do no harm' imperative in humanitarian actions and of the dramatic experiences that participants have lived. These included: anonymisation, data minimisation (the principle of limiting data collection to only what is required to fulfil a specific purpose and to observe EU Directive GRDP2018), the thorough explanation of the purpose of the study, and the nature and implications of their participation in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and their participation in it. Participants were informed of the ethical issues and the safe environment in which the discussion was taking place. Participation in the study was voluntary and consent forms were signed. Consent forms were available in various languages and were also orally translated to some participants.

Seven focus groups discussions were conducted face-to-face in Italy, Greece and Spain in April and May 2019 in four cities: Bologna (Italy), Kilkis (Greece), Barcelona and Palma de Majorca (Spain), the cities where the project partners are based. Two additional sessions were conducted online with participants residing in Rome and Rimini, Italy. The sessions had an average duration of 2 hours. In total, 41 participants took part in the focus groups discussions. Participants were distributed across focus groups by their spoken languages and current places of residence. Details on the nationality and number of participants in each focus group can be found in Table 2.

Focus group identifier	**Location**	**Participants**	**Countries of origin of participants**
FG1	Kilkis	9	Afghanistan
FG2	Bologna	6	Cuba, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia
tFG3	Online (participants residing in Rome)	3	Afghanistan, Cameroon and Somalia
FG4	Kilkis	6	Iran
FG5	Kilkis	5	Iraq and Syria (Kurdish)
FG6	Barcelona	6	Iran, Iraq and Syria
FG7	Palma	1	Nigeria
FG8	Online (participants residing in Rimini)	1	Nigeria
FG9	Bologna	4	Cameroon, Benin and Gambia
Total	9	41	13 countries

Table 2. Focus group details. Source: Own elaboration

Focus groups discussions were led by the principal researcher in Spain and online, and by experienced staff working in two NGOs: OMNES[9] in Greece, and CIDAS[10] in Italy. In each session there was one moderator and one notetaker and, when necessary, cultural mediators and/or interpreters. All three moderators worked regularly with refugee communities and two worked with the community of participants that they interviewed. In most cases, the sessions were multilingual, as participants were encouraged to be free in how they expressed themselves and in the languages that they felt more comfortable. Translanguaging (Vogel and García, 2017) was a defining feature of FG6 and FG7, in which participants and moderator spoke English, Spanish and Catalan, depending on the topic of conversation or if they were quoting someone who spoke a certain language. Table 3 summarises the languages spoken in each focus group.

Focus group identifier	Language(s)	Interpreters
FG1	English	Dari ↔ English
FG2	English, French, Italian, Spanish	No
FG3	English and French	No
FG4	English	English ↔Farsi
FG5	English	English ↔Kurmanji
FG6	Catalan, English, Spanish	No
FG7	Catalan, English, Spanish	No
FG8	English	No
FG9	English, Italian and French	No

Table 3. Languages of the focus groups. Source: Own elaboration

9 See: http://www.omnes.gr/
10 See: https://www.cidas.coop/

Three focus groups were audio recorded with the permission of participants. In the other six, notes were taken by notetakers and the moderators. The principal researcher provided guidelines to moderators for the notetaking to ensure consistency. The notes were anonymised, and participants were identified by colours. The resulting notes and transcripts were in four languages –English, Spanish, Italian, and Greek–, and the moderators and notetakers translated the notes into English for the principal researcher.

Interview notes were coded and manually analysed by the principal researcher using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The approach to coding was inductive as the codes derived from the data (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). The researcher engaged with the entire data set and coded interesting features of the data set systematically. Codes were checked against each other and back to the original data set until they were coherent, consistent and distinctive. The different codes were sorted into potential themes. The themes were reviewed to ensure they formed a coherent pattern.

2.3.1. Focus group participants

Participants were contacted and recruited via three project partners: CIDAS, OMNES and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona[11](UAB). The objective was to have a heterogeneous sample in terms of gender, origin, age, educational background and presumed ICT use. In terms of their administrative situation at the time of the study, the majority of participants were asylum-seekers, refugees and a small number were refugees on a student visa. Participants completed a short, anonymous, demographic questionnaire in order to obtain more details on their socio-biographical background. The results of this questionnaire are displayed in Table 4.

The heterogeneity of participants reflected the diversity and complexity of the refugee communities in Europe, with participants from 13 countries. The most represented

11 Recruitment was facilitated by Fundació Autònoma Solidària at UAB.

countries were Afghanistan and Syria. As for their host country, half of the participants resided in Greece and the other half in Spain and Italy at the time of the study.

Other data collected were age, level of formal education, and time spent in the host country. In terms of their age, two thirds of participants were below 34 years old. Regarding the self-reported gender of participants, 23 were male and 18 female. 30 participants had completed high school or above, and 13 held a university degree. The majority had lived in the country for less than three years.

Parameters	**No. Of participants**	**Parameters**	**No. Of participants**
Host country		Gender	
Greece	20	Female	18
Italy	13	Male	23
Spain	7	Nationality	
Ages		Afghanistan	9
18-24	13	Benin	1
25-34	13	Cameroon	2
35-44	10	Cuba	1
45-54	3	Gambia	2
No answer	1	Ghana	1
Level of formal education		Iran	7
Secondary school or below	28	Iraq	4

University degree	13	Ivory Coast	1
Time in host country		Morocco	1
<1 year	7	Nigeria	3
2-3 years	14	Somalia	2
4-6 years	4	Syria	6
+6 years	3	Somalia	2
No answer	1	Syria	6

Table 4. Demographic data of participants n=41. Source: Own elaboration

2.4. Results

This section presents and discusses the results of the focus group discussions with asylum-seekers and refugees. For the purposes of this paper, the analysis has focused on the data regarding their access to information and the linguistic matters affecting their access to information. In the presentation of the findings, a selection of participants' quotes is provided for two reasons: first, to grant refugee's voices a prominent role in the paper; second, to account for the refugee's 'plurality of voices' (Jones, 2019, p. 8). The quotes have been taken verbatim from the focus groups notes. Linguistic inaccuracies in the quotes have not been corrected and they are regarded as a natural feature of multilingual research.

2.4.1. Offline contexts: Information through NGOs and peers

Staff in the organisations in charge of refugee reception systems were identified as one of the most significant informants. In addition to NGO staff, participants often resorted to peers for information. The following examples of participants' accounts confirmed this practice:

> Red Cross tells me everything (Participant in FG7).

> I am not using websites. I am getting informed by experienced friends and NGO personal (Participant in FG4).

> As soon as I arrived, I trusted the cooperative where I was welcomed, I asked the operators everything and I didn't need to look for information on my smartphone. For example, when I had to go for the first time to a place, I was accompanied so I didn't worry about figuring out where it was (Participant in FG9)

> Most of us get informed from others who have been here longer […] You would only use technology when there is nobody else to check with (Participant in FG8).

Some participants admitted preferring accessing information in person due to a lack of experience using ICT:

> I am not experienced [with ICT]. I was living in Iran and I was using a simple Nokia, I had no experience of devices. Now I started using them. (Participant in FG1).

> We don't know how to use technologies. (Participant in FG1).

There were only three instances in which participants mentioned interpreters during the focus groups. These were all gathered in the Greek focus groups, while in the Spanish and Italian focus groups there was no mention of interpreters. These accounts acknowledge the presence and role of the interpreters in the Greek context and could be an indication of a lack thereof in the Spanish and Italian contexts.

> With the phone credits, I only phone the interpreters or other organizations for support. I use the EMO and the Messenger app for communicating with my family (Participant in FG1).

> When Interpreter read the consent form to us, we understood (Participant in FG5).

> [I think organisations should] use the elder refugees as interpreters, we should connect with all information, we cannot trust sites etc. They share different explanations and information (Participant in FG4).

2.4.2. Online contexts: the internet as a source of information and the accessibility of technology

For most participants, the internet was a crucial source of information, either by Google searches, social media groups, and government or refugee websites. Other activities that participants reported carrying out by means of their phone was consuming media content (on free platforms), engaging in social media, learning languages and, above all, talking to friends and family through apps such as WhatsApp and EMO. Mobile phones were seen as a fundamental tool in the everyday lives of participants in their host countries, but also to access information regarding their asylum applications:

> As a refugee, as a foreigner here, your phone is your window to the world (Participant in FG6).

> Email is useful, for example, I got my asylum decision through an e-mail. This was a good point. I use technology not for services like Facebook, but for the UNHCR website (Participant in FG1).

Some participants shared their precautions when retrieving online information, as they recognised that online information is not always reliable. Hacking was also raised as a problem for them in online environments. These two issues were seen as a downside of the use of ICT.

> It is better to search information in governmental sites. I do not trust other websites or fake channels (Participant in FG4).

> We are trying many websites but a lot of lies (Participant in FG4).

> Websites are not trustful. I consult pages on Facebook, I am sure they are 100% reliable. They are managed by volunteers and non-profit. I trust the groups because they want to do good things (Participant in FG5).

> If there are no hackers, [technology] is good (Participant in FG4).

Furthermore, some participants preferred accessing information and services online to access them in person. These participants claimed to have received different treatment from the part of NGOs. These participants trusted that ICTs could offer them trustworthy, non-discriminatory information and services.

> [I am informed by] my peers. But that is not official information. I may get misinformed. I actually have. I am a refugee. The system is not well-established. The organisations don't give the same solutions to all refugees. The organisation that is supporting my case, for example, is not well-established. They give one thing to one refugee and then another thing to the other. And it is the same case (other participants agree) (Participant in FG6).

> We have other organisations here (Cruz Roja, ACCEM, CEAR), each person has a different organisation and it is going to affect the quality of the life that they have. For example, I was with Red Cross and I know another person that was with ACCEM, they gave him home (accommodation) but I didn't get it. How should I handle that? I was three months on the streets. Government is supporting you, but I was on the streets (Participant in FG6).

For ICT development purposes, participants were asked how they would prefer to have the information provided, i.e. written or spoken form, the latter in video or audio format. The majority favoured spoken, specifically in video format, as they considered it would make it available to a wider audience i.e. literates and non-literates, and it would be easier to understand. Participants also suggested incorporating voice recognition software, so that users with low literacy skills can find information easily on the app. Participants had not downloaded any apps specifically designed for refugees, and only two participants (in FG2 and FG7) had used a website that supported refugees in finding accommodation, namely Refugees Welcome.

2.4.3. Misinformation

Many of the participants' narrations revealed their difficulties to access reliable, official information. The most recurrent struggle was finding information online about asylum processes, regulations and the status of their application. Participants also raised the need to have information on children's rights, access to health services and legal issues. The quotes below exemplify these points:

> We need something like a website or an app to explain to migrants how to get for example *Tarjeta Roja*[12], because nothing is explained. And refugees are doing groups on Facebook in Germany and Holland to tell you how to do something, but that does not exist officially. We need trustworthy information [...] Nobody knows anything (Participant in FG6).

> The organisation monitoring my case has lawyers and informed me that my interview is in one year. My friend visited a private lawyer instead and his interview is in five months. How is that possible? We need information about legal issues (Participant in FG4).

2.4.4. Linguistic issues in the access of information

It became apparent from participants' accounts that much of the information available was inaccessible to them. Indeed, the linguistic barrier was consistently reported across all communities as one of the main obstacles for integration, for the search and reception of information and for ICT use.

> The problem is always the language (Participant in FG2).

> For me the main problem when I came here was the language (Participant in FG6).

There was an emphasis on how little information on asylum processes is available in other languages. For example, websites are available only in the local languages (Spanish, Catalan, Italian and Greek), which are usually not understood by refugees. The information on regulations and requirements also includes specialised terminology. One participant explained that he was unable to communicate with civil servants working in the public administrations:

> This problem [not having information] can be solved if you go to the government to ask for a paperwork but here in Spain, especially in Spain, nobody speaks English so there is no way to get anything official (Participant in FG6).

In addition, participants complained that even when some websites were translated, they were only partially translated and key information was missing. In Spain, this

[12] *Tarjeta Roja* ('Red Card') is the common name for the identification card issued to those who seek asylum in Spain.

deficiency is widespread and not limited to information on immigration procedures, as it can be observed by checking governmental websites. For speakers of minority languages, this issue is not limited to official websites, but applies also to other information sources.

> Not many applications are offering translations into Kurdish. We need it (Participant in FG5).

Another dominant message coming from research participants was that illiteracy can also be a barrier to accessing information online:

> I am a Kurdish-Kurmanji speaker. I am not from Syria and so I had no rights to education there, so I do not know how to read and write in Kurmanji either (Participant in FG5).

> I cannot use anything because I am illiterate. Since I was in Afghanistan, I didn't have the opportunity to study due to culture and location issues (Participant in FG1).

2.5. Discussion and recommendations

In this paper, the focus has been on how refugees and asylum seekers access information in the host countries. The results indicate that the internet is one of the main sources of information. However, asylum regulations and the services provided change often and suddenly, but online websites are not updated and translated at the same speed (Ghandour-Demiri, 2017). Accessibility issues as well as the complex and often unofficial nature of the information provided complicate their access to up-to-date, factual information.

In addition, participants consistently felt misinformed and they did not always trust the information that they found online. Linguistic barriers as well as lack of digital skills have been identified as obstacles in the access of information online, especially for speakers of minority languages. These results are in line with previous studies on the area (Hannides et al. 2016; WPP, 2017). Further, they support Piller (2017) claims on the seeming legitimacy of linguistic discrimination, as opposed to religious (or other types of discrimination) which are widely prohibited.

Refugees also rely on NGOs to find out information about the services that they are entitled to, and to receive updates on their asylum applications. This fact makes social workers gatekeepers of information and in the provision of social services, with the implications that arise from this circumstance: gatekeepers can either be facilitators or controllers of the access to services. Indeed, gatekeepers have been reported to provide different services to migrants in similar circumstances in Spain (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012) and to maintain control over access in Germany (Rolke, Wenner and Razum, 2019). Having official information accessible in ICT could be a way to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers can obtain information through other channels.

Receiving information from peers was another recurrent practice. Peers are considered a valuable asset for educating, protecting and empowering refugees (UNHCR, 2016b). However, peer-to-peer information is an informal and ad-hoc practice at present. A recommendation is that NGOs or public administrations oversee and support these practices to ensure that the information provided is accurate and promotes integration. Actually, one participant favoured the involvement of refugees who have been in the country longer. NGOs and public administration could adapt the increasingly prevalent mentorship programmes13 that match locals with newly arrived communities, by matching already integrated refugees with asylum-seekers.

For ICT development purposes, the study revealed that for the information to be accessible, the provision of information should be multimodal and multilingual. When asked what their preferred format was, the majority favoured spoken, specifically audio-visual content with subtitles, as they considered it would make it available to a wider audience. In contrast, written format was preferred by some, who then reported using Google Translate to read the information in their language. This confirms previous research that states that refugees prefer having information in written, even low-literates, as it allows them to refer back to the information when needed and can be presented to government authorities (Ghandour-Demiri, 2017). In light of this, the use

13 For more information on mentorship programmes, see: http://mentoriasocial.org/

of easy-to-read language could prove beneficial in these contexts. Previous studies have shown that not only people with disabilities can benefit from easy-to-read language, but also migrants, people with low levels of formal education, people with severe social problems, and the elderly (Matausch, Peböck and Pühretmair, 2012) as well as persons with reading and learning difficulties (Caro and Orero, 2019), which applies to speakers of other languages.

2.6. Conclusions

This study has analysed the information seeking practices in online and offline environments by asylum seekers and refugees in three European countries: Greece, Italy, and Spain. The internet, NGOs staff and peers have been identified as the main sources of information. This study also suggests that asylum seekers and refugees struggle to find official, comprehensive information on their rights and asylum regulations.

Participants consistently shared their difficulties in finding official, accessible information online on which they could rely. This resulted in a dependency on NGOs to access services, which can perpetuate the role of NGOs as gatekeepers. Despite the potential of ICT to facilitate communication with linguistically and functionally diverse communities, these technologies could further accentuate inequalities if accessibility is not brought into focus. According to users' feedback, the design of ICT tools for refugees should: (1) include official, comprehensive information on asylum processes by country; (2) be accessible, that is, available in different languages and formats, i.e. written, video with subtitles and visual, through images and pictograms; (3) ensure that it is designed to avoid discrimination and the stereotyping of refugees.

The results from this study will be used for the development of an ICT-tool to support the integration process of refugees in Italy, Greece and Spain. In line with user-centred key principles (Gulliksen et al, 2003), the findings can be used as a resource to help inform developers of the target-user profiles, their needs and communication practices with the home and host society. Furthermore, the insights gathered open up bigger

questions about how the current asylum programmes operate, and on whether they are perpetuating the vulnerability of refugee communities due to the complex and changing nature of asylum regulations in European countries. It is hoped that this article can contribute to raise awareness on the information needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in European countries, and on the importance of language, translation, interpreting and accessibility in the provision of that information.

2.7. Acknowledgements

This research is part of the article-based PhD thesis of the author conducted in the Department of Translation and Interpreting in the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) within the PhD program in Translation and Intercultural Studies. This research has been partially funded by the H2020 project REBUILD, under Grant Agreement 82215. The Commission's support for this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views of the author only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein. The author is member of TransMedia Catalonia Research group, funded by the SGR funding scheme (2017SGR113).

The author would like to thank Giula Foresti, Giorgia Jerace, Mancho Sangbong from CIDAS, Dimitris Demertzis and Christos Gkelinos from OMNES and Laura Ribas, and Blanca Arias-Badia, Pilar Orero, and Pau Pamplona from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona for their invaluable work and support during the focus groups.

With special thanks to the participants of the focus groups for their time.

Glossary

Asylum seeker – An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker (UNHCR, 2005)

ICT – Information Communication Technologies

Refugee – A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for by international or regional instruments, under UNHCR's mandate, and/or in national legislation (UNHCR, 2005)

T&I – Translation and Interpreting

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Appendix 1. Focus group questions

a. How would you see technology supporting you (refugees and migrants) in the integration process?

b. Can you tell us about how and for what purposes do you and other members of your community use your phone?

c. What use do you make of apps and websites?

d. How do you find information about the services that you need? If you do so online, how do you use and trust that information?

e. We are working to create an app or platform that will provide information about services and support for migrants and refugees, what are your thoughts and recommendations on these?

f. We are going to show you now an app that has been designed for refugees and migrants. Can you navigate through it and tell us what you think about

Chapter 3. Linguistic accessibility in service delivery: a case study on five third sector organisations

La accesibilidad lingüística en la atención al usuario: un estudio de caso sobre cinco entidades del tercer sector[14]

Resumen

La accesibilidad lingüística es un requisito básico para las entidades asisten a personas desplazadas. Este artículo analiza las prácticas de accesibilidad lingüística de cinco entidades del tercer sector en cuatro países: Grecia, Italia, España y Reino Unido. Después de repasar brevemente las normativas de los cuatro países, se presentan los resultados de entrevistas en profundidad con el personal de las ONG que atienden a refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Los resultados muestran la pluralidad de las prácticas multilingües, multimodales y digitales en estas entidades y los retos de comunicación a los que se enfrentan las entidades en la gestión del sistema estatales de acogida.

Palabras clave: accesibilidad lingüística, barreras lingüísticas, interpretación, ONG, refugiados.

Abstract

Linguistic accessibility is essential for the organisations assisting refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. This article analyses the linguistic accessibility of third sector organizations in four countries: Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. This article briefly reviews the national regulations on linguistic accessibility in asylum contexts in the four target countries. Then, the results of in-depth interviews with NGO staff assisting refugees and asylum seekers are presented. The results reveal the

[14] Esta investigación forma parte del proyecto REBUILD financiado por el programa Horizonte 2020 de la Comisión Europea. El apoyo de la Comisión Europea en esta publicación no constituye un apoyo de su contenido, el cual refleja únicamente la perspectiva de la autora, y no puede responsabilizarse a la Comisión del uso que se dé a la información aquí recogida. La autora es miembro del grupo consolidado TransMedia Catalonia. Este artículo es parte de la tesis doctoral de María Jiménez en Traducción y Estudios interculturales en el Departamento de Traducción e Interpretación y de Estudios de Asia Oriental de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

diversity of multilingual, multimodal, and digital communication practices among these organisations, and the communication challenges that they face in refugee reception programmes.

Keywords: linguistic accessibility, linguistic barriers, interpreting, NGOs, refug

3.1. Introducción

El incremento de poblaciones desplazadas que llegan a Europa ha puesto de manifiesto las necesidades comunicativas de un grupo heterogéneo en lo que se refiere a lenguas, la cultura y la educación. Una recepción e integración adecuadas reside, en primera instancia, en el acceso a la información. Para los solicitantes de asilo, la accesibilidad lingüística es esencial para poder entender los derechos y obligaciones del país de llegada. En este estudio, entendemos accesibilidad lingüística como la superación de las barreras lingüísticas que impiden una comunicación efectiva.

Una comunicación efectiva es un requisito básico para las organizaciones receptoras de este grupo de personas desplazadas. Estas organizaciones, que conforman el llamado el tercer sector, afrontan una gran demanda de servicios que no se corresponde con la financiación que reciben para atender las necesidades. Esto conlleva priorizar ciertas actividades y solucionar situaciones de comunicación de diversas maneras, no todas profesionales.

Esta investigación forma parte de REBUILD15, un proyecto europeo financiado por el marco Horizonte 2020. El proyecto está actualmente en curso (enero 2019 a diciembre 2021). El objetivo del proyecto es fomentar la integración de migrantes y refugiados en los países de acogida mediante el uso de la tecnología. Para ello, se está desarrollando una herramienta tecnológica que facilitará la comunicación entre las partes y digitalizará procesos que en este momento se llevan a cabo de manera manual. La herramienta está destinada a entidades del sector público y del tercer sector que

15 Para más información sobre el proyecto REBUILD, consulte su página web: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx

asisten a migrantes y refugiados, así como a estos como usuarios finales, en Grecia, Italia y España. Para el desarrollo de la herramienta, se han llevado a cabo distintas actividades de investigación (cuestionarios, grupos focales, entrevistas y talleres de co-creación) que han aportado datos relevantes sobre las necesidades de los usuarios (entidades del tercer sector y personas migrantes y refugiadas) y los requisitos de la herramienta. El presente estudio se enmarca en tales actividades de investigación.

El artículo presenta en primer lugar estudios recientes sobre la accesibilidad lingüística en organizaciones del tercer sector y las normativas de los cuatro países en materia de accesibilidad lingüística para entidades encargadas de los programas de asilo. A continuación, se presenta la metodología de este estudio cualitativo llevado a cabo con cinco entidades del tercer sector en cuatro países europeos: España, Grecia, Italia y Reino Unido. De las cinco entidades, dos son participantes del proyecto REBUILD y las tres restantes se eligieron por tener un perfil comparable a las entidades del proyecto. Se incluyó una entidad de un país fuera del foco de REBUILD, con base en Reino Unido, por un lado, para comparar sus prácticas con las de entidades de los países de la Unión Europea y, por otro, por el peso internacional de su lengua oficial. Tras la metodología, se muestran los resultados de las entrevistas en profundidad con el personal de ONG que ayudan a los refugiados y solicitantes de asilo para así explorar a fondo la accesibilidad lingüística y otros retos de comunicación que afrontan en la gestión del sistema de acogida. En el último apartado, se reflexiona sobre las prácticas de las entidades entrevistadas y la necesidad de crear consciencia entre las entidades que atienden a migrantes y refugiados sobre la importancia de la accesibilidad de la información.

3.2. Las barreras lingüísticas en las entidades del tercer sector

Las entidades del tercer sector (ONG, entidades sin ánimo de lucro, asociaciones y otras organizaciones independientes) trabajan a diario con personas de perfiles distintos. Por tanto, es fundamental que, en la prestación de servicios, se cubran las necesidades comunicativas de unas comunidades tan diversas, no solo para satisfacer las necesidades de las personas a las que atienden, sino también para cumplir las

directivas de la UE en materia de accesibilidad. En el contexto de este estudio, nos referimos a las necesidades lingüísticas, funcionales, culturales, de alfabetización y digitales de los migrantes y refugiados, que a menudo dependen de las organizaciones que los apoyan. La accesibilidad en todos los casos puede ayudar a eliminar las barreras lingüísticas, digitales y de alfabetización de las comunidades que corren el riesgo de ser excluidas socialmente debido a sus vulnerabilidades actuales (Alonso, 2007).

Las ONG, las organizaciones internacionales y otros actores en el ámbito de la ayuda humanitaria han identificado las barreras lingüísticas como uno de los principales problemas a la hora de desempeñar su trabajo con migrantes y refugiados (Moreno-Rivero, 2018). Estas barreras, así como el papel que desempeñan la traducción y el multilingüismo en el sector humanitario, son algunos de los temas en los que se han centrado algunos estudios recientes en Traducción e Interpretación (Delgado Luchner y Kherbiche, 2018; Federici y O'Brien, 2020; Foulquié-Rubio y Sánchez-Pedreño Sánchez, 2019; Rico Pérez, 2020; Sánchez Ramos y Rico Pérez, 2020; Tesseur, 2018).

En estas entidades, las prácticas de traducción e interpretación son complejas y se gestionan de forma diferente en cada organización y zona de contacto (Delgado Luchner, 2018). Cuando se trata de las prácticas de comunicación multilingüe entre las ONG y sus usuarios, la mayoría de los intercambios son orales. Así lo demuestran los estudios recientes sobre las prácticas de comunicación oral en estos contextos, como la interpretación (Delgado Luchner y Kherbiche, 2018 B; Moser-Mercer et al., 2014), la mediación cultural (Miklavcic y LeBlanc, 2014; Moreno-Rivero, 2018; Rudvin y Tomassini, 2008), la interpretación con voluntarios (Aguilar-Solano, 2015; Al-Shehari, 2020; Cadwell, Bollig y Ried, 2020; Hassemer, 2020). También se ha puesto de manifiesto el uso de la multimodalidad en la comunicación con refugiados a saber, imágenes, videos, audios y pictogramas (Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés, 2021).

Estos estudios muestran la pluralidad de prácticas y perfiles de quienes facilitan la comunicación en organizaciones del tercer sector, que van desde mediadores

culturales a intérpretes profesionales, semiprofesionales y no profesionales (Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés, 2021; Delgado Luchner, 2018; Wadensjö, 2009). Además de la pluralidad de prácticas comunicativas, estos estudios también han puesto de relieve la falta de financiación y planificación de los servicios lingüísticos en estas organizaciones (Pym, 2008; Rico-Perez, 2020; Tesseur, 2018). Como apuntan estos autores, la falta de planificación y financiación da lugar a prácticas de interpretación y traducción informales, no profesionales y *ad hoc*, lo que podría repercutir en la calidad de los servicios prestados.

3.2.1. La accesibilidad lingüística durante el proceso de asilo

En Europa, los gobiernos centrales son los encargados de financiar y gestionar los programas de acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Debido a que los solicitantes provienen de países de origen distintos, es necesario contar con servicios de traducción e interpretación en las diferentes fases de acogida. En los siguientes apartados resumimos sucintamente lo que recogen los programas y normativas de asilo sobre traducción e interpretación de los cuatro países en los que se ubican las entidades analizadas en este estudio, con el objetivo de obtener una visión general sobre la situación a nivel normativo. Además, como complemento a las disposiciones estatales, incluimos las observaciones de los informes de la Asylum Information Database16 (AIDA) sobre la provisión de servicios de interpretación en cada país.

España

En España, la responsabilidad de administrar el programa de acogida recae en la Oficina de Asilo y Refugio del Ministerio de Interior. Este, a su vez, financia a ciertas ONG que están presentes en las diferentes comunidades autónomas y establece unas pautas para la acogida e integración de los solicitantes de asilo en el Manual de

16 La AIDA es una base de datos gestionada por el Consejo Europeo de Refugiados y Exiliados (ECRE) que contiene información sobre procedimientos de asilo, condiciones de recepción, detención y contenido de protección internacional en 23 países.

Gestión (Ministerio del Interior, 2020). En cuanto a los servicios de traducción e interpretación, el programa de acogida estipula que «se proporcionará un intérprete en sesiones grupales de acogida y cuando resulte indispensable para dar cumplimiento al itinerario previsto» (Ministerio del Interior, 2020, p. 32). Además, la última versión del Manual para de Gestión para entidades de acogida recoge que se ha de «asegurar el acceso a la información de todas las personas con necesidades particulares de acogida» (ibid). A pesar de estas provisiones, el informe de la AIDA de España (2020c, p. 40) evidencia la falta de intérpretes en el proceso de asilo y las dificultades que las entidades experimentan con los intérpretes actuales, en su mayoría debidos a la escasa formación y bajos conocimientos sobre los procesos de asilo de los intérpretes.

Grecia

En Grecia, la ley recoge que sean intérpretes titulados los que asistan a los solicitantes durante todo el proceso de solicitud de asilo (UNHCR, 2020). Además, según el Artículo 43(3) de la Ley 4636/2019 de Protección Internacional griega, para la provisión de información durante el proceso de acogida, se ha de contar con la ayuda de un intérprete si el solicitante no entiende la información que se le está proporcionando (AIDAa, 2020). Por otro lado, los asistentes sociales encargados del procesamiento de solicitudes de asilo reciben una formación sobre el trabajo con intérpretes (p.30). En el informe de la AIDA sobre Grecia se denuncia la falta de intérpretes de manera sistemática a lo largo del informe, no solo durante la primera acogida, sino en la mayor parte de las interacciones entre los servicios de asistencia y los solicitantes de asilo (pp. 23, 59, 98 y 107). Debido a la falta de intérpretes, son organizaciones externas como Frontex las que se encargan de ciertos procedimientos como la identificación y verificación de la nacionalidad de los solicitantes (AIDAa, 2020, p.43), a pesar de que esta responsabilidad recaiga en las autoridades griegas.

Italia

En Italia, los mediadores lingüísticos y culturales proporcionan asistencia durante la solicitud de asilo, según está estipulado en el Artículo 3(1) PD 21/2015. Según AIDA

(AIDAb, 2020) se informa a los solicitantes de su derecho a la información y del acceso a servicios con la asistencia de un intérprete. La ley también estipula que estos intérpretes hayan recibido formación previa. Sin embargo, según expone la AIDA (2020b), no solo los intérpretes no reciben formación especializada, sino que la falta de intérpretes y mediadores hace que no siempre sea posible la asistencia de un intérprete en el acceso a los servicios (pp. 21 y 6).

Reino Unido

En Reino Unido, el Ministerio del Interior proporciona los servicios de interpretación durante las entrevistas de solicitud de asilo (AIDAd, 2020). Después de la entrevista y mientras se resuelve la solicitud, el Ministerio contrata a empresas para proporcionar alojamiento temporal a aquellos que esperan la resolución de su solicitud de asilo. En cuanto a los servicios de traducción e interpretación que ofrecen estas empresas, se incluye la provisión de traducción e interpretación «cuando sea necesario para comunicarse con el solicitante de asilo» (Home Office, p. 13). Migrant Help, una organización independiente del gobierno encargada de la ayuda y guía en los procesos de asilo también ofrece servicios de traducción e interpretación. En sus fichas informativas, Migrant Help pide a los solicitantes que no acudan con amigos o familiares, sino que sean ellos directamente los que contacten con Migrant Help, ya que disponen de intérpretes para todos los idiomas. También pueden proporcionar la información directamente en el idioma del solicitante.

En cambio, el informe AIDA sobre Reino Unido advierte del impacto que tienen los problemas de interpretación en la resolución de las solicitudes y la falta de información de los solicitantes sobre el papel del intérprete (2020, p. 25). Además, se denuncia que, debido al poco tiempo que se adjudica a cada entrevista, en ocasiones los intérpretes no tienen tiempo de interpretar todo lo que se dice en la entrevista (p. 97).

Como se observa, las legislaciones de los cuatro países recogen la figura y el papel del intérprete para asegurar la accesibilidad lingüística. Sin embargo, los informes de AIDA demuestran las deficiencias de los cuatro países en la provisión de traducción e

interpretación. En este contexto plural y complejo, nos proponemos explorar las prácticas comunicativas y la accesibilidad lingüística en cinco organizaciones que dan apoyo a solicitantes de asilo y refugiados en los cuatro países europeos señalados. En el siguiente apartado se presentan los objetivos y el contexto del estudio, las preguntas de investigación y la metodología aplicada para la investigación.

3.3. El estudio

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de unas entrevistas en profundidad en el marco del proyecto REBUILD. Como se ha apuntado en la Introducción, el objetivo del proyecto es la creación de herramientas tecnológicas que faciliten la integración de los migrantes en los países de acogida. A lo largo del proyecto se prevén distintas actividades de investigación —grupos focales, cuestionarios, entrevistas— que aporten información relevante para el desarrollo de las tecnologías.

El objetivo de las entrevistas que aquí nos ocupan era comprender las prácticas de comunicación actuales en estas entidades, así como las barreras que impiden en el acceso a la información y los servicios por parte de sus usuarios, en este caso migrantes y refugiados. Las entrevistas se realizaron a empleados con distintos roles en cinco ONG para recabar información cualitativa sobre estas prácticas. Las ONG no sólo son uno de los usuarios objetivo del proyecto REBUILD sino que son los primeros en proporcionar información a migrantes y refugiados en los países de acogida al encargarse de gestionar los programas de acogida. Las preguntas planteadas en las entrevistas respondían al estado de la cuestión de acuerdo con la bibliografía especializada consultada. La lista completa de preguntas se incluye en anexo. Las preguntas estaban organizadas en tres bloques, a saber: a) su uso de tecnologías de la información y comunicación (TIC), b) traducción e interpretación, y c) las prácticas comunicativas durante la pandemia de la COVID-19. Para este artículo, se han analizado las respuestas del bloque 2, en particular las relacionadas con las siguientes tres cuestiones: (1) las prácticas comunicativas con las personas a las que atienden y sus necesidades lingüísticas, (2) el uso de lenguas extranjeras y, (3) la participación de intérpretes y el empleo de herramientas de traducción.

3.3.1. Entrevistas en profundidad con personal de ONG

Entre mayo y septiembre de 2020 se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad con personal de ONG en cuatro países: España, Grecia, Italia y Reino Unido. En la selección de las entidades y los participantes de las entrevistas, el objetivo era elegir «casos ricos en información [...], aquellos de los que se puede aprender mucho sobre las cuestiones de importancia central para el propósito de la investigación» (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Para este estudio, se traducía, por una parte, en entidades con usuarios de diversos países de procedencia y, por otra, en entidades que recurrieran a profesionales lingüísticos de distintos perfiles, con el fin de investigar sus prácticas actuales para comunicarse con sus usuarios.

En total, se entrevistó al personal de cinco entidades. Dos de las entidades son miembros del consorcio de REBUILD. Las tres entidades restantes forman parte de la red de entidades del proyecto y su selección se hizo en base al perfil de sus usuarios (refugiados y solicitantes de asilo) y su ámbito de actuación (primera o segunda acogida[17]). Si bien el Reino Unido no es un país participante en el proyecto REBUILD, consideramos que las contribuciones de esta entidad enriquecerían los resultados de este estudio.

Los entrevistados ocupaban diferentes cargos en las ONG en las que trabajaban: trabajadores sociales, enfermeros, psicólogas y encargados. La tabla 5 detalla las organizaciones y su ámbito geográfico, los entrevistados, y los destinatarios de sus servicios. Se han anonimizado los datos para cumplir con los requisitos de ética del proyecto y el reglamento europeo de protección de datos.

17 Las organizaciones de primera acogida cubren las necesidades básicas de los solicitantes de asilo durante los primeros seis a doce meses de su llegada al país de acogida. Estas incluyen alojamiento, asistencia jurídica, apoyo psicológico, clases de idiomas, y traducción e interpretación. Las organizaciones son financiadas por los gobiernos centrales de cada país. Para más información, visite http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/Subvenciones/anos_anteriores/area_integracion/2016/sociosanitaria_cetis/manuales_comunes_gestion/documentos/Manual_de_Gestion_Sistema_acogida_2016.pdf

Código de la organización	**Puesto del participante**	**Código del participante**	**Ubicación de la entidad**	**Perfil del usuario**	**Área de intervención de la ONG**
Organización A	Fundador	MANAG1	España	Migrantes, solicitantes de asilo y refugiados	Apoyo al empleo y a la iniciativa empresarial
Organización B*	Trabajadora social	SW1	Italia	Solicitantes de asilo	Primera acogida
Organización C*	Coordinador del centro	MANAG2	Grecia	Solicitantes de asilo	Segunda acogida
	Enfermero	NUR1			
Organización D	Jefa de operaciones	MANAG3	Reino Unido	Solicitantes de asilo y refugiados	Asesoramiento e información, formación y talleres, banco de alimentos, grupo de mujeres y hombres, club de deberes, clases de ESOL, asesoramiento jurídico, orientación y apoyo emocional.
	Trabajador social	SW2			
Organización E	Psicóloga	PSY1	España	Solicitantes de asilo	Primer programa de recepción

Table 5. Detalles de las entidades que participaron en las entrevistas. Las organizaciones marcadas con un asterisco (*) son miembros del consorcio de REBUILD.

3.3.2. Metodología de trabajo

Las entrevistas fueron llevadas a cabo por la autora. Estas duraron entre 25 y 55 minutos y se realizaron de forma virtual utilizando una plataforma de videoconferencia. No fue posible realizar las entrevistas de manera presencial debido a las restricciones impuestas por la situación de pandemia de la COVID-19.

Las entrevistas fueron transcritas por la autora. Después de la transcripción, se codificaron y analizaron los datos de las entrevistas manualmente mediante un análisis temático siguiendo las pautas de Braun y Clarke (2006). El enfoque de la codificación fue inductivo, es decir, los códigos se extrajeron de los datos (Saldanha y O'Brien, 2014). En la codificación inductiva, los códigos o temas están estrechamente relacionados con los datos recopilados y no están sujetos a los intereses teóricos del investigador. La autora analizó todos los datos y codificó la información relevante para el estudio de manera sistemática. Los códigos se verificaron entre sí y con el conjunto original de datos hasta que fueron coherentes, consistentes y distintivos. Tras la codificación de los datos, los códigos identificados se agruparon por temas. Por último, se revisaron los temas para garantizar que formaban un patrón coherente.

3.4. Resultados

Esta sección presenta los resultados de las entrevistas con personal de las ONG. Los resultados se exponen de acuerdo con los códigos identificados y los temas del presente artículo: los perfiles de las entidades y las prácticas comunicativas con los usuarios. Para ilustrar los resultados, se presentan citas sacadas de las entrevistas. Estas citas son testimonios directos de los entrevistados. Las entrevistas con las organizaciones C y D (participantes MANAG2, NUR1 y MAGAG3 y SW2, respectivamente) fueron llevadas a cabo en inglés. Las citas que aquí se presentan han sido traducidas por la autora.

3.4.1. Los perfiles de las entidades

Como puede observarse en la tabla 5, las organizaciones entrevistadas son diversas en cuanto al ámbito de intervención, el perfil de sus usuarios y el ámbito geográfico en el que desarrollan su actividad. Esta heterogeneidad se manifiesta en una variedad de prácticas de trabajo, necesidades de sus usuarios y servicios prestados en las distintas entidades.

Los datos de las entrevistas parecen indicar que el enfoque o modelo de integración que adoptan las entidades repercute en sus prácticas comunicativas. Al abordar la cuestión de la comunicación con las personas a las que atienden, los participantes de tres entidades hicieron referencia a sus enfoques de integración para justificar sus prácticas comunicativas. En estas tres entidades (Organizaciones B, C y D), es un requisito indispensable comunicarse con sus usuarios en un idioma que estos entiendan y en el que se puedan comunicar.

Estas tres organizaciones habían adoptado un enfoque basados en los derechos humanos (Wilson, 2018, p.2) que concibe los programas de integración como proyectos “holísticos” (MANAG3 y NUR1) e individualizados (SW1). La participante SW1 incidió en el empeño de la entidad por «respetar el derecho de los individuos a la identidad lingüística» (SW1). Las otras dos entidades (Organización A y E) no hicieron mención a su enfoque de integración durante la entrevista. Estas dos se comunican por defecto en los idiomas locales.

A pesar de los diferentes perfiles de las entidades, los datos de las entrevistas ponen de manifiesto la pesada carga de trabajo que sufren los participantes, la cual se ha visto multiplicada a raíz de la pandemia. Para algunos, este factor repercute en la calidad de los servicios que prestan y en su interacción con los usuarios. La escasez de recursos y la creciente demanda de sus servicios son un denominador común de cuatro de las cinco organizaciones.

> Para nosotros, el mayor cambio [desde la COVID] es que ahora tenemos que trabajar 24h al día y estar siempre en línea, conectados a todas estas plataformas, y comunicar todos los problemas a nuestros compañeros... Nuestra vida... ha cambiado completamente desde el primer día.
>
> (MANAG2)

> Pienso que la comunicación se ve… se ve...afectada por, y tiro un poco para casa, por el estrés de los trabajadores. O sea, que hay mucha gente que está muy saturada y que pierden un poco el mundo de vista y empiezan a atender a la gente como si fuera una especie de cadena...
>
> (PSY1)

3.4.2. Las prácticas comunicativas con sus usuarios

Para dudas, consultas o para la recepción de los servicios, la práctica habitual es que los usuarios visiten las oficinas de las entidades. Si el usuario y el personal hablan el mismo idioma, algunas consultas se resuelven por teléfono.

Para la comunicación a distancia, WhatsApp es la plataforma predominante en todas las organizaciones. Según los participantes en la entrevista, WhatsApp ofrece a los usuarios una plataforma conocida y fácil de usar que no requiere una gran cantidad de datos. La versatilidad de la herramienta es otra razón de su uso extendido. El participante NUR1 subrayó las razones de la prevalencia de esta aplicación: “Nuestra herramienta diaria es WhatsApp por dos razones. Porque puede admitir mensajes de texto orales y porque la gente siempre tiene megabytes para comunicarse a través de WhatsApp”. Otra participante explicó que en su organización el uso de esta herramienta obedecía a razones los perfiles profesionales de los usuarios:

> Los otros perfiles profesionales, yo te diría WhatsApp a saco, sobre todo con toda la gente que no dominaba catalán y castellano, ellos te pedían por favor que les escribieran por WhatsApp porque esto iba directamente al traductor de Google.
>
> (PSY1)

Sin embargo, al uso de WhatsApp en este contexto se le atribuyen efectos adversos, como la dificultad de desconectar y la invasión de los espacios privados del personal de la ONG (debido a que la mayoría de ellos utiliza sus teléfonos personales), así como los riesgos asociados con compartir documentación personal y confidencial a través de esta herramienta. En efecto, el Centro Criptológico Nacional lista hasta once, entre ellos, el intercambio de datos entre WhatsApp y Facebook, el secuestro de cuentas y la difusión de información sensible durante la conexión inicial (CCN, 2016). Por lo que se refiere a la comunicación a través del correo electrónico, los datos de las entrevistas apuntan a que su uso en las organizaciones entrevistadas está en declive. Los participantes explicaron que los usuarios están menos acostumbrados a esta herramienta y que, además, no ofrece una comunicación inmediata ni oral.

3.4.3. El uso de idiomas en la comunicación con los usuarios

De los datos de las entrevistas se desprende la disparidad en el uso de idiomas en la comunicación con las personas a las que prestan servicios en las distintas entidades. Como se ha señalado anteriormente, cada organización adopta unas prácticas diferentes: unas se comunican en los idiomas autóctonos (organizaciones A y E), y otras a través de mediadores lingüísticos, ya sean intérpretes formados (organización C), intérpretes voluntarios no formados (organización C) o mediadores culturales (organización B). Los siguientes apartados detallan el uso de idiomas en las organizaciones consultadas.

3.4.3.1. Comunicación en las lenguas autóctonas

Las dos organizaciones españolas (organizaciones A y E) se comunican con los usuarios en las lenguas locales. Una de estas dos organizaciones se muestra satisfecha con su sistema y era la única organización que disponía de un presupuesto para traducción que no tenía previsto utilizar.

> Porque no... No me aporta... No me aporta nada traducir...algo que podría traducir todo el Trello al árabe...pero si luego no lo puedo explicar en árabe, no me aporta. Tenemos todo el material en castellano y catalán, y con eso es...suficiente.
>
> (MANAG1)

Para esta organización, hablar el idioma o idiomas locales es un requisito para el acceso a sus servicios. Para llegar a los usuarios que tenían bajos niveles de los idiomas locales, su enfoque era el uso de lenguaje fácil de comprender, al que el participante se refiere como «lenguaje tranquilo» y «lenguaje de la calle». Esta organización comunica sus servicios mediante carteles que difunden por WhatsApp en los idiomas oficiales del territorio. Según el participante MANAG1, la decisión de no traducir sus carteles a otras lenguas radica en su percepción de que el mensaje es sencillo: «Este cartel normalmente lo hacemos en catalán, pero porque no tiene mucha historia».

Para la participante de la organización E, este sistema tiene «carencias» y son comunes los malentendidos al interactuar con los usuarios. Como solución a la falta de comprensión, los usuarios que no hablan los idiomas locales piden al personal de la ONG que les envíen un mensaje en WhatsApp para traducirlo con el traductor de Google, como pone de manifiesto la siguiente cita de la participante PSY1:

> Carencias de malentendidos, un montón. O sea, sobre todo con las personas que no hablaban castellano, eh...entendían pues...las cosas mal, ¿no? Porque a la hora de traducir, pues no les traducía bien... Y también la...o sea, a nivel por ejemplo de la inmediatez, es decir, no todo el mundo responde a los mensajes, a veces tienes que comunicar cosas con un poquito de urgencia... Si las comunicas por WhatsApp puede ser que esa persona no lo esté viendo a tiempo...y hablar por teléfono era complicado porque entonces no te entendían.
>
> (PSY1)

Según la participante, hasta hace unos cuatro años, esta organización trabajaba con intérpretes para asuntos importantes y para las entrevistas con los psicólogos. Sin embargo, la participante denuncia que los intérpretes no tenían formación profesional, lo que causaba problemas durante las entrevistas. Por ejemplo, el intérprete a menudo añadía comentarios propios a la conversación.

> No eran... o sea, ellas cobraban, era un trabajo, pero no eran personas formadas como intérpretes. Eran personas que eran originarias de esos países, que tenían un buen nivel del idioma, y trabajaban como intérpretes, pero no tenían una formación en esto y eso también generaba problemas. Porque al no tener una formación específica, pues a veces, sucedía que pues se metían en la conversación, daban su opinión, algo no les parecía bien y te lo decían, había como algunas carencias a nivel de profesionalidad.
>
> (PSY1)

En la actualidad, el uso de intérpretes se ha reducido a mínimos debido a los recortes en el presupuesto de los últimos años y a un aumento en la burocracia. La participante PSYC1 afirmó que, desde hace alrededor de un año, se exige al personal que justifique el uso de los intérpretes mediante la elaboración de un informe que exponga las razones por las que se necesita de interpretación. Como resultado, la comunicación

con las personas a las que prestan servicios se efectúa a menudo en las lenguas autóctonas.

3.4.3.2. Comunicación en lenguas extranjeras

Las organizaciones B, C y D se comunican con los usuarios en lenguas extranjeras. Así, estas tres entidades cuentan con intérpretes y personal plurilingüe. Además de garantizar una comunicación efectiva, la comunicación en lenguas extranjeras les permite establecer vínculos de confianza con las personas a las que atienden (SW1). A continuación, se describen los perfiles profesionales de los interpretes en estas tres organizaciones.

La organización B cuenta con mediadores interculturales con formación que reciben una remuneración por servicio prestado. Debido al gran volumen de trabajo, la organización también emplea a un coordinador que se encarga de gestionar las tareas de mediación intercultural. La participante se mostraba satisfecha de la «amplia base de datos con mediadores por combinación de idiomas, territorio y disponibilidad» de su organización (SW1). La participante hizo hincapié en la importancia que otorga la entidad a disponer de mediadores para todos los idiomas y dialectos que hablan sus usuarios. Asimismo, subrayó el papel fundamental que los mediadores ejercen en todas las interacciones entre el personal de la ONG y los usuarios. La entidad, por tanto, se esfuerza en conseguir financiación para la mediación cultural, no sólo para garantizar una comunicación efectiva con las personas a las que prestan servicios, sino también para respetar su identidad lingüística, pilar en el que se basa el enfoque de integración de la entidad:

> Para nosotros para la identidad de la persona es parte fundamental de la integración, que vamos a construir con ellos. O sea, si tú no le permites expresarse en su idioma, como ya te dije, tú no estás construyendo una línea de integración individualizada […] Todas las personas son diferentes, tienen experiencias e historias diferentes y sobre todo en el caso de los migrantes tú tienes que relacionarte bastante también con el pasado de la persona. Cuando una persona llega aquí no es como un libro vacío. Es un libro lleno de cosas y

> tú tienes que conocer estas cosas. Porque tú estás manejando con la existencia de esta persona.
>
> (SW1)

La Organización D recurre a intérpretes voluntarios no formados, los cuales son, en su mayoría, antiguos usuarios de la organización. En palabras del participante, su práctica es la de «encontrar una persona que hable el idioma» (SW2). Para la organización, este sistema también beneficia a sus antiguos usuarios ya que el voluntariado les ayuda a «desarrollar la confianza en sí mismos y su sentimiento de pertenencia» (MANAG3). Tal como en la organización B, la participante MANAG3 se mostraba satisfecha de su base de datos de intérpretes voluntarios. Los voluntarios no reciben ninguna formación en traducción e interpretación para desempeñar las actividades, pero sí se les pide un certificado de antecedentes penales. Para conversaciones breves, la organización recurre a los voluntarios para interpretaciones telefónicas. Asimismo, el personal de la ONG habla algunas de las lenguas maternas de los usuarios (en concreto, farsi, árabe y dari, lengua oficial de Afganistán), lo que, según reconocen, facilita su acceso a los servicios. Las interpretaciones ad-hoc del personal de la ONG son, como resultado, una práctica habitual en esta organización. Para justificar su uso de lenguas extranjeras, el participante SW2 hizo alusión a los trastornos emocionales que pueden derivar de una falta de comunicación, los cuales se suman a los que ya sufren a causa del proceso migratorio:

> Como cuando quieren solicitar el apoyo de la NASS18, solo tenemos que decirles: necesitamos un extracto de cuenta bancaria, necesitamos esto... y esto pues... aumenta un poco su ansiedad porque no entienden realmente lo que está pasando a veces. Pero la mayoría de las veces tratamos de explicarlo y porque nuestros clientes adultos, que tienen más dificultades de comprensión,

18 La NASS es el Servicio Nacional de Apoyo al Asilo de Reino Unido (National Asylum Support Service, por sus siglas en inglés) que se encarga de gestionar y conceder las ayudas a los solicitantes de asilo que no disponen de medios económicos. Más información en https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/99032/2847-support-asylum-seekers.pdf

> saben que tenemos personal que habla farsi y dari y, pues, vienen más [que los clientes que hablan otros idiomas].
>
> (SW2)

En contrapartida, la Organización C trabaja con intérpretes formados que desempeñan su trabajo de forma remunerada. Los intérpretes son miembros de la comunidad de refugiados y han recibido formación de Traducción e Interpretación a través de otra ONG. En este caso, los intérpretes trabajan en la organización a jornada completa y son el primer punto de contacto para los usuarios. Esta primera interacción con los intérpretes se considera «el paso más importante» en la prestación de sus servicios, y su trabajo se describe como «esencial» (NUR1). El participante NUR1 subrayó que los nueve intérpretes soportan una gran carga de trabajo y que su labor "mediadora" en la entidad conlleva ciertos riesgos ya que «siempre están en el medio». La siguiente cita ejemplifica tales consideraciones:

> En algunos casos puede haber tensión, pero en su mayoría las relaciones son buenas, para cualquier cosa que necesiten los usuarios, nuestros traductores actúan como la primera ola... son los primeros en recibir todas las solicitudes, y también para los trabajadores de OMNES, son las primeras personas con la que se contactaría para recibir información, así que siempre están en el medio. Esto crea a veces algo de tensión, pero no se han reportado u ocurrido problemas significativos.
>
> (NUR1)

Los participantes también comentaron que los intérpretes en cuya combinación de lenguas se incluye el griego asumen una carga de trabajo mucho más elevada que el resto, puesto que se trata de la lengua oficial del país. En esta organización, los nueve intérpretes en plantilla dan apoyo lingüístico a alrededor de 620 usuarios, tanto a nivel de traducción como de interpretación. Por ejemplo, los intérpretes acompañan a los usuarios a hospitales y centros de salud. En este contexto, un problema recurrente al que se enfrentan tanto intérpretes como usuarios es la negativa de los profesionales

de la salud a trabajar con intérpretes. A menudo los sanitarios se niegan a participar en las interpretaciones telefónicas, lo que ha dado pie a hospitalizaciones de pacientes que desconocían las razones de la hospitalización o enfermedad:

> Incluso, imagínate, hemos tenido casos en los que los pacientes no saben por qué han sido hospitalizados. [...] Pueden llamarme hoy para darme el parte de un usuario nuestro, y me pueden decir: «Ok, es NUR1, vale, es de la Organización C, le doy el parte». Al día siguiente pueden decirme: «No, no puedo darte ninguna información por teléfono». En otros casos, el intérprete llama para pedir información sobre el estado de salud del paciente y también se niegan, e insisten en que vayamos allí a pedir información.
>
> (NUR1)

A esta negativa se añade la exigencia de algunos sanitarios de que un empleado griego de la entidad esté presente durante la interpretación. Por otra parte, puesto que no todos intérpretes en plantilla tienen como lengua de trabajo el griego, se ha convertido en una práctica habitual utilizar el inglés como lengua pivote. Así, el empleado de la ONG interpreta del griego al inglés, y el intérprete del inglés al idioma de los usuarios. En estos casos, el personal de la ONG señala que utilizan un «lenguaje fácil» (MANAG2) al interpretar del griego al inglés para evitar errores.

3.5. Discusión

Las entrevistas con el personal de las ONG han puesto de manifiesto la heterogeneidad de las prácticas comunicativas en las organizaciones del tercer sector. La traducción e interpretación adopta muchas formas, si bien ninguna de ellas parece ajustarse a la disciplina profesional impartida en las universidades europeas. Estos resultados están en consonancia con la bibliografía especializada en el ámbito de la interpretación comunitaria y la traducción en contextos de crisis (Delgado Luchner, 2018; Foulquié-Rubio y Sánchez-Pedreño Sánchez, 2019; Rico Pérez, 2020; Tesseur, 2019; Wadensjö, 2009).

La sensación general que se desprende de las entrevistas es la heterogeneidad de las prácticas comunicativas en entidades del tercer sector que atienden a migrantes y refugiados, a pesar de la correspondencia entre sus necesidades de comunicación y ámbitos de trabajo. Estos resultados están en consonancia con el estudio de Delgado Luchner (2018) que revela la complejidad de las prácticas traducción e interpretación en estos contextos y la distinta gestión por parte de las entidades del tercer sector.

Del mismo modo, se observa una deficiencia en la prestación de servicios lingüísticos en dos de las cinco entidades, que no contemplan la incorporación de intérpretes en sus programas de acogida, aún cuando una de ellas contaba con presupuesto para ello. Estos datos contrastan con las obligaciones que recogen las normativas presentados en la sección 2.1.

Sorprende que ninguna de las organizaciones trabaje con intérpretes formados profesionalmente, a excepción de una organización que forma a antiguos usuarios a través de otra ONG. Como futura vía de estudio, sería interesante conocer más datos sobre la formación que proporciona la ONG como, por ejemplo, su duración, contenidos y evaluación, para poder compararla con la formación universitaria de intérpretes en estos países europeos. Por su parte, la organización italiana no cuenta con intérpretes, pero sí con mediadores culturales, por lo que cumple con la normativa italiana de accesibilidad lingüística durante el proceso de asilo. No obstante, la formación y figura de los mediadores culturales en Italia está «lejos de ser reconocidas en términos profesionales» (Taviano, 2012, p. 23) y sigue creando debate entre los académicos e investigadores de traducción e interpretación (Amato y Garwood, 2011).

A pesar de no contar con intérpretes formados, en general, el personal de las ONG estaba satisfecho con el trabajo de intérpretes y mediadores culturales, independientemente de su formación. Solo una participante manifestó tener problemas de comunicación por culpa de la falta de profesionalidad de los intérpretes. En el contexto griego se expuso el uso del inglés como lengua pivote. Como O'Brien et al. (2017) advierten, sería importante investigar más a fondo la calidad de la interpretación y los factores que influyen en la misma cuando se emplea una lengua pivote.

Otro dato interesante es el rechazo de los profesionales de la salud a participar en las interpretaciones en Grecia, ya sea por teléfono o en persona, si el personal de la ONG no está presente. Si bien desconocemos las razones de esta negativa, podemos remitirnos a lo que apuntan Federici y O'Brien (2020, p.12), sobre la posibilidad de que la credibilidad de la profesión se haya visto disminuida por el trabajo de intérpretes no profesionales que trabajan más allá de sus capacidades. Al mismo tiempo, deberían estudiarse las consecuencias que tienen este rechazo en el trabajo de los intérpretes, su confianza en su trabajo y su satisfacción por la profesión. En cuanto a la interpretación telefónica, en el actual contexto de la pandemia producida por la COVID-19, la interpretación a distancia cobra gran importancia y es esencial para asegurar el acceso a la información. Además de la interpretación telefónica, los resultados demuestran el potencial de la tecnología para garantizar la accesibilidad de la información por permitir la comunicación multimodal. Identificamos aquí la necesidad de crear herramientas digitales que faciliten esta comunicación accesible y multimodal que sean aptas para estos contextos, como se está haciendo en el proyecto REBUILD.

Otra práctica que se ha identificado para conseguir una comunicación efectiva es el uso del Lenguaje Fácil. El lenguaje fácil de comprender se define como «aquel que contribuye a hacer el contenido o la información accesibles al máximo número de personas posible» (Arias-Badia y Fernández Torné, 2020, pág. 298). Si bien se recomienda esta práctica con fines de accesibilidad —con este fin se han elaborado directrices y recomendaciones de buenas prácticas como, por ejemplo, AENOR (2018)—, nos preguntamos si se ha adoptado el lenguaje fácil teniendo en cuenta esta finalidad y directrices, o bien como recurso ad-hoc e informal cuando el personal de las ONG y los usuarios no hablan el mismo idioma. De hecho, ninguno de los dos participantes que hicieron mención de esta práctica utilizaron el término Lenguaje Fácil, Lenguaje Sencillo o Lectura Fácil, sino que se refirieron a esta práctica como «lenguaje tranquilo», «lenguaje de la calle» o «vocabulario sencillo».

Por lo que se refiere a la contratación de profesionales con perfil lingüístico en las entidades, observamos que no está extendida entre las entidades estudiadas a pesar

de las apremiantes necesidades de comunicación en lenguas extranjeras en el desempeño de su trabajo. Dos organizaciones contaban con una persona a cargo de los mediadores lingüísticos (ya fueran voluntarios o mediadores culturales capacitados). No obstante, ninguna de ellas había recibido formación en lenguas. Si bien tres de las cinco entidades observamos una concienciación sobre la importancia de las lenguas, esta concienciación no incluye todavía contar con profesionales lingüísticos.

3.6. Conclusión

Este estudio ha puesto de manifiesto la pluralidad de prácticas comunicativas en estas entidades, en su mayoría, llevadas a cabo por no profesionales de traducción e interpretación. La accesibilidad lingüística es, sin duda, una tarea pendiente en el tercer sector, sobre todo en España, donde los recortes han diezmado el presupuesto para traducción e interpretación y donde actualmente no hay alternativa viable a la falta de intérpretes y de financiación en estas entidades. Estos resultados contribuyen a los estudios emergentes sobre el papel de la traducción y las prácticas multilingües en el sector humanitario (Cadwell y O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner, 2018; Federici y O'Brien, 2020; Tesseur, 2018).

Los movimientos migratorios no cesan, pero sí cambia el contexto en el que se producen y los países de procedencia de aquellos que migran. El uso y desarrollo de tecnologías que faciliten la comunicación y las tareas que llevan a cabo estas entidades puede ayudar a la gestión y hacer accesible la información a personas que en este momento no tienen acceso a ella. Esta accesibilidad de la información se hace más importante en contextos de crisis, como la reciente pandemia producida por la COVID. En estas circunstancias, el acceso a la información puede salvar vidas.

Teniendo en cuenta las conclusiones que aquí se presentan, y de acuerdo con lo que señala Drugan (2020, p. 62), recomendamos que se fomente la colaboración entre profesionales de traducción e interpretación y organizaciones del tercer sector para mejorar las prácticas comunicativas en estas entidades. Por ejemplo, se podrían llevar

a cabo campañas de sensibilización por parte de especialistas en traducción e interpretación sobre la importancia de la lengua, la traducción e interpretación y la accesibilidad en estos contextos. Además, las TIC y las tecnologías de traducción son herramientas útiles en estos contextos cuyo uso está extendido en nuestras sociedades. Como apunta este estudio, el uso de la tecnología en estas entidades es hoy muy limitado, por lo que proyectos como REBUILD son relevantes y necesarios para equiparar el desarrollo tecnológico de las entidades del tercer sector al de otras industrias. Estos tiempos de cambios en los que nos encontramos pueden convertirse en una oportunidad idónea para que estas organizaciones adopten soluciones tecnológicas que faciliten la comunicación con sus usuarios y hagan su trabajo más eficiente.

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Anexo. Guion de preguntas de las entrevistas

1. El uso de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC)

¿Cómo es la comunicación con sus beneficiarios en el día a día?

¿Utilizan las TIC para comunicarse con ellos?

¿Qué TIC utiliza? ¿Cumplen estas su función? ¿Hay alguna tecnología que les gustaría disponer?

¿Cómo promocionan sus servicios entre la población destinataria?

¿Están satisfechos con sus prácticas actuales?

¿Qué opinan sus compañeros sobre el uso de la tecnología en su ámbito de trabajo?

Si su organización hace un uso limitado de la tecnología, ¿cuáles son las razones?

¿Qué consideraciones éticas tienen en cuneta antes de utilizar las TIC?

¿Hay alguna tecnología que hayan dejado de utilizar? ¿Cuáles fueron las razones?

2. Traducción

¿Cómo se comunican con los beneficiarios que no hablan el/los idioma/s locales?

¿Utilizan tecnologías de la traducción?

¿Se incluye la traducción en los presupuestos de comunicación?

¿Cuenta con personal bilingüe o trilingüe? ¿Se tiene en cuenta el dominio de lenguas extranjeras en la contratación de personal?

¿Utiliza glosarios o aplicaciones cuando no tiene una lengua en común con sus beneficiaros?

3. Preguntas relacionadas con los efectos de la pandemia

¿Tenía su entidad un protocolo establecido para situaciones de este tipo?

Si no es así, ¿qué protocolos se establecieron?

¿Cómo se comunican ahora con los beneficiarios? ¿Qué pasa con los beneficiarios que no hablan el/los idioma/s locales?

¿Han pasado sus servicios a plataformas virtuales y cómo ha sido la recepción por parte de los beneficiarios?

¿Considera su organización mantener algunos de estos servicios en línea después de la pandemia?

¿Cuáles han sido los principales retos a los que se han enfrentado al ofrecer sus servicios de manera virtual?

Chapter 4. Digital multilingual practices in third sector organisations: beyond the pandemic

Digital Multilingual Practices in Third-Sector Organizations: Beyond the Pandemic

4.1. Introduction

Daily and bidirectional interaction with beneficiaries is essential for workers in the third sector and COVID-19 has added unprecedented communication barriers. Face-to-face interactions have been replaced by online platforms. New layers were added to the existing issues of communication determined by language and culture barriers: state-of-the-art hardware, an internet connection, and IT skills. In this chapter the term Third Sector Organizations (TSOs) refers to non-profit organizations that carry out work with displaced people, defined by Tesseur (2018) as associations, hybrid organizations, or other. More specifically, the research in this chapter has been carried out with small and medium-size organizations who work locally supporting displaced populations.

The non-profit nature of TSOs means that a delicate balancing act between financial and human resources is required. The current situation in Europe regarding the growing numbers of displaced people has a direct impact on the demand for their services. In this context, TSOs are encouraged to find technological solutions to complement and help to enhance their lean resources (Federici & O'Brien, 2020). Information Communication Technology (ICT) has many benefits such as the increased speed of information dissemination, allowing for user customisation towards tailored interactions with different networks (Souza Sales & Rosa da Silva, 2015), and the enablement of equitable, accessible communications (International Telecommunication Union, 2020; Orero, forthcoming), which foster the provision of information for people in rural communities, and for speakers of other languages, through translation technologies (AbuJarour et al., 2019).

This chapter looks at the multilingual practices of public-sector organizations (PSOs), which also provide services to displaced communities, and small and medium-sized TSOs, and their digitalization, as well as the affordances of accessibility to ensure effective communication for all citizens — prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The choice of focusing on small-sized TSOs is justified by their more limited access to technological solutions and resources (Caceres et al., 2019), which adds further complexity to their communication strategies. After a short introduction focused on the multilingual practices of the sector, the chapter discusses and analyses the findings emerging from two actions surveying PSOs and TSOs in European countries. The first project collected data on providing services to displaced communities regarding their uses of technology and translation practices in Italy, Greece, and Spain. The answers from fifty-three responses to a questionnaire will be analysed. Then, the chapter will focus on the data collected from six in-depth interviews with staff at a TSO assisting refugees and asylum-seekers to further explore multilingual, multimodal, and digital communicative practices and their challenges in the implementation of digital technologies.

These research actions are framed within the REBUILD project. The project aims at developing ICT tools to facilitate access to services to refugees in Greece, Italy and Spain. This tool also supports the management procedures of organizations working with displaced people in European countries. This study, as part of the REBUILD project, served as a needs analysis of small and medium organizations regarding their digital and multilingual provision.

4.2. Multilingual Practices in Third Sector Organizations

According to a UN report (Narasimhan & Balasubramanian, 2020), communication has been pushed to its limit during the COVID-19 pandemic, in all daily contexts. This is a step beyond the general ‘underestimation’ of the multicultural and multilingual nature of emergencies and crisis (Federici, 2016: 2). Existing and new communication platforms have been used to resume activity under a new lockdown condition: everything from visiting the doctor, to attending school, to interacting with public administrations. However, online communication poses new challenges due to the inaccessibility of digital content and interfaces (UN, 2020), especially – but not exclusively – for people with disabilities. Establishing barrier-free communication with culturally and linguistically diverse communities is critical during a crisis (Federici,

2016). ICT has the potential to facilitate communication due to its instantaneity, affordability and its widespread use, including within displaced communities (AbuJanour et al., 2019; Frouws et al., 2016). Furthermore, the UN Agenda 2030 has recognized that ICT can 'accelerate human progress, bridge the digital divide and develop knowledge societies' (UN, 2015).

Communication barriers have been identified as a primary concern for NGOs, international organizations, and other actors in the field of humanitarian aid work with heterogeneous groups (Federici, 2016; Moreno-Rivero, 2018). The issue of language barriers and the role played by translation and multilingualism in the humanitarian sector are some of the recent issues to receive attention among translation scholars (Federici, 2016; Federici & O'Brien, 2020; Rico Pérez, 2020; Tesseur, 2018). Indeed, a growing number of studies have materialized in the emerging research area coined as 'crisis translation' (Cadwell & O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner, 2018; O'Brien et al., 2017; O'Brien, 2019). O'Brien and Federici (2019: 130) define crisis translation as 'linguistic and cultural transfer from one language into another, be it through oral, signing, written and multimodal channels […] that takes place before, during and after any emergency or disaster'. TSOs working with displaced communities operate in a crisis setting, which COVID-19 has aggravated.

Multilingualism practices are complex and managed differently in each public and third-sector organization and each organization's contact zone (O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner, 2018). When it comes to multilingual communication practices between a local TSO and its culturally and linguistically diverse beneficiaries, the majority of the exchanges are oral. Some studies have viewed these oral communication practices as interpreting (O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018; Moser-Mercer, Kherbiche & Class, 2014), cultural mediation (Miklavcic & LeBlanc, 2014; Moreno-Rivero, 2018; Rudvin & Tomassini, 2008) and volunteer interpreting (Aguilar-Solano, 2015; Al-Shehari, 2020; Cadwell, Bollig & Ried, 2020; Hassemer, 2020). These studies have revealed the multiplicity of practices, profiles, and backgrounds of those facilitating communication, including professional, semi-professional, and non-

professional language mediators and translation practitioners (Delgado Luchner, 2018; Wadensjö, 2009). Studies have also identified a lack of funding and planning for linguistic services as common denominators among such organizations, leading to informal and ad-hoc interpretation and translation practices, which has a direct impact on the quality of the service (Pym, 2008; Federici, 2016; O'Brien, 2016; Tesseur, 2018; Rico Pérez, 2020).

In practice, translations and interpretations are carried out by both professional and non-professional translators and interpreters, but also by expatriate staff interpreters or members of the beneficiary community who may or may not receive an incentive for their services (Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018). In some cases, family members take part in the process of interpreting, a practice that is strongly discouraged, especially when involving minors (Antonini, 2015; Strang & Ager, 2010). Written translations tend to be produced for the most widely spoken languages, and for topics dealing with administration or health. The result is a gap in understanding among the majority who speak minority languages, have learning difficulties, and those with literacy issues (O'Brien, 2016; Rico Pérez, 2020; Translators without Borders, 2019. Some people may fall into all three categories, making them particularly vulnerable.

Studies in 'crisis translation' have brought to the fore the key role that languages and effective communication play before, during and after a crisis, and how a lack of robust and accessible communication systems can worsen its effects. In most European countries, information is nowadays freely available thanks to the vast array of technologies. Still, linguistic, digital and literacy barriers remain in place for certain communities, especially newly arrived migrants and refugees (Federici & O'Brien, 2020). Both oral and written communication need to arrive at the intended recipient to avoid exclusion. In the case of migrants or displaced populations, profiling their needs goes beyond language proficiency. Therefore, producing information in many formats and channels is the way to reach the diverse target population. Indeed, the UNHCR (2018) recommends the use of languages, formats, and media that are contextually

appropriate and accessible for all groups in a community to ensure secure, effective communication with all, including children and persons with disabilities.

4.3. Digitalization of the third and public sector and accessibility

ICT can achieve results at a scale, speed, quality, accuracy and cost that was unimaginable just a decade ago, with add-ons such as the new real-time automatic subtitling on communication platforms. For organizations in the third sector, ICT can make the dissemination of information easier and faster, granting more autonomy to individuals and facilitating tailored interaction with their networks i.e. beneficiaries, donors, other divisions, or organizations (Souza Sales & Rosa da Silva, 2015). Furthermore, ICTs can reach wider populations as they do not impose geographical restrictions. Indeed, their potential to achieve equitable, accessible communications for everyone is widely recognized (AbuJarour et al., 2019; National Disability Authority, 2020; Orero, forthcoming; International Telecommunication Union, 2020).

The adoption of digital technologies is not even across industries. The move from face-to-face, oral, and written communications to digital has not been uniform among sectors and members of society. For the third and public sectors, digitalization has only recently started to occur. In the UK, 44 per cent of charities (a total of 87,000) lack basic digital skills, and 13 per cent have shown no digital activity in 2019 (Caceres et al., 2019). In Spain, 50 per cent of TSOs report using technology in their programmes and services. When it comes to communication processes, this percentage goes up to 83 per cent (Caralt, Carreras and Sureda, 2017). In Italy, 39 per cent of organizations argue that the nature of their activities is incompatible with the use of digital tools, against 61 per cent which state that their organizations carry out part of their activities using technology (Italia non profit, 2020). No data was found on the use of digital tools by TSOs in the Greek context. However, a recent report indicates that Greece's performance in terms of digitalization throughout the economy is below the EU average (VVA and WIK-Consult, July 2019).

In the public sector, while the provision of digital public services is improving, the use of ICT falls short, and it is far from being accessible to all citizens. In the context of this study, this relates to the linguistic, functional, cultural, literacy and digital needs of migrants and refugees, who are often dependent on the organizations that support them. These organizations may become 'gatekeepers', regulating their access to information (Translators without Borders, , 2017: 15), or excluding them from it (Anssari-Naim, 2020). Thus, accessibility can be of benefit to people with disabilities but also to displaced communities — who may also be disabled, the elderly and learners of other languages, among other target groups. In all cases, accessibility can aid breaking the linguistic, digital and literacy barriers for communities who risk social exclusion due to their current vulnerabilities (Alonso, 2007).

Given the extended use of ICT among refugees and migrant communities, TSOs and PSOs can take advantage of the multiple capacities of ICT to foster effective communication (O'Brien, 2016; Gillespie, Osseiran and Cheesman, 2018; Marić, 2017; WPP, 2017). Despite their potential, the use of ICT is not widespread *(*AbuJarour et al., 2019; Caceres et al., 2019). Equally, translation technologies have only tentatively reached the multilingual environments of NGOs along the humanitarian aid chain (Rico-Pérez, 2020). Some examples of existing ICT tools in these contexts are RefAid in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Greece, Slovenia, Italy, and Bulgaria (RefAid, 2019) and Ankommen in Germany (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2016), both developed and used by public institutions supporting refugee communities. Some other initiatives have been developed by refugees themselves, such as the BureauCrazy app to assist with German bureaucracy (Oltermann, 2016) and the use of Facebook and online groups to coordinate activities and initiatives (AbuJanour et al., 2019). The use of downloadable glossaries and language apps has also proven effective in Greece, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Mozambique (Tesseur, 2019), where NGO staff rely on these technologies to communicate with refugees.

Regarding translation technologies, the use of machine translation (MT) in TSOs is relatively new and its use is often limited to translations produced for donors and official

publications (O'Brien, 2016; Hunt et al., 2019, Rico Pérez, 2020). Unsurprisingly, Google Translate is a tool often employed in certain contexts (Cadwell and O'Brien, 2016; Footitt, Crack and Tesseur, 2018; Moreno-Rivero, 2018), as it is free and readily available. A more customised example worth mentioning is the platform Kató, an initiative developed by Translators without Borders. In this platform, 26,000 professional translators offer language services using translation technologies such as machine translation, translation memory and quality assurance tools. Although MT poses challenges and has shortcomings, i.e. insufficient quality, required revision by a professional, and potential bias (Hunt et al., 2019), these tools have the advantage of being prompt, accessible and readily available in times of crises.

In this context, this chapter aims to define the role that technology plays in PSOs and TSOs and the digital, multilingual solutions offered by these organizations to bridge the communication gap. The study combines quantitative data of fifty-three organizations working with displaced communities in Greece, Italy, and Spain; with qualitative data of six organizations in Greece, Italy, Spain and the UK. The following section details how the study was carried out.

4.4. The study

The objective of this study was to gather information prior to the development of the ICT-based solution for the project REBUILD. For the development of the tool, it was important to understand the existing communication practices in these organizations, and the potential barriers faced in the access of the services by their beneficiaries, in this case migrants and refugees. To collect data the team used questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaires were administered to understand the organizations' technological and multilingual practices. Then, in-depth interviews were conducted with the TSO staff to better grasp these practices and the communicative needs of migrants and refugees.

4.4.1. Questionnaires with third and public sector organizations

Within the framework of the REBUILD project, a structured questionnaire was designed to map the service provision for migrants and refugees by public and third sector institutions in Greece, Italy, Spain, and the UK, and to understand the technological and multilingual practices. The questionnaire combined open and closed questions and was administered to a total of fifty-three organizations between June and July 2019. The organizations ranged from public and governmental organizations to NGOs, associations, cooperatives, and unions working with displaced communities. These organizations work with displaced communities in various stages of the integration process.

Table 6 presents the number and type of organizations that filled the questionnaire by country. For this study, the analysis focused on the questions related to the use of ICT, and online and offline multilingual and multimodal practices in their daily interactions with beneficiaries. Their close-ended responses were analysed using descriptive statistics; the short open-ended responses were analysed qualitatively.

	Greece	**Italy**	**Spain**	**Total**
Non-profit organisations	7	7	5	18
Private	1	15	2	19
Public body	8	3	5	16
Total	**16**	**25**	**12**	**53**

Table 6. Number of LSPs by type per country (Arias-Badia and Jiménez-Andrés, 2021, p. 341)

4.4.2. In-depth Interviews with Third Sector Organizations

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a better understanding of the ICT and multilingual practices of these types of organizations in order to expand further on the findings of the questionnaires (Creswell and Creswell, 2017; Mears, 2012). The interviews provided a space where opinions were (re)constituted rather than reported and were taken as indicative of this particular social phenomenon (Edley and Litosseliti, 2010).

Six in-depth interviews were conducted with TSO staff between May and September 2020. In the selection of the organizations and participants for the interviews, the aim was to choose 'information-rich cases… those from which one can learn a great deal about the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 2002: 230). For this study, that meant organizations which have implemented ICT-tools in their interactions with beneficiaries, and organizations which have not yet done so. The aim was to investigate the reason for the lack of use of ICT in their current practices in order to tackle any communication issues with beneficiaries. The interviewees held various positions at the TSOs in which they worked: social workers, nurses, psychologists and managers. Table 7 provides further details about the interviews, the participants and the organizations in which they worked.

Organisation Code	Role of the participant(s)	Participant code	Location	Target beneficiaries	Area of intervention of the TSO
Organisation A	Founder	MANAG1	Spain	Migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees	Employment and entrepreneurship support
Organisation B	Social worker	SW1	Italy	Asylum seekers	First reception
Organisation C	Centre Coordinator	MANAG2	Greece	Asylum seekers	Second reception
	Nurse	NUR1			
Organisation D	Operations Manager	MANAG3	UK	Asylum-seekers and refugees	Advice and information, training and workshops, emergency food support, women's and men's group, homework club, ESOL classes, legal advice, counselling and emotional support.
	Social worker	SW2			
Organisation E	Psychologist	PSY1	Spain	Asylum seekers	First reception and mentorship programme

Table 7. Details of the organisations interviewed (translated from Jiménez-Andrés, 2021)

The interviews contained questions regarding the type of work they carry out, their use of technology and ICT, the linguistic needs of their beneficiaries, and their strategies to ensure effective communication with beneficiaries. The interviews lasted between twenty-five and fifty-five minutes and were conducted virtually using a video call platform. Face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak. Interviews were transcribed by the principal researcher. Following the transcription, the interview data was coded and manually analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The approach to coding was inductive, as were the codes derived from the data (Saldanha & O'Brien, 2014). The codes were

checked against each other and the original data set until they were coherent, consistent and distinctive.

4.5. Results

This section presents the results of the two research actions presented above in relation to the identified codes and topics of concern, i.e. multilingual practices and use of technology for communication.

4.5.1. Questionnaire results

There are three types of organizations that support displaced populations in Europe: TSOs, private organizations, and public bodies. Regardless of their organizational nature, the majority of organizations admitted lacking the resources to meet the demand for their services by displaced communities. Unsurprisingly, the linguistic practices and services were scarce overall, as can be observed in Table 8.

A total of 22 organizations in Italy (88 per cent of Italian organizations studied) reported offering cultural mediation, versus five per cent of Greek and four per cent of Spanish organizations. Only seven per cent of organizations in the three countries reported carrying out interpreting. While this could be an indication that cultural mediation is more extensive in Italy than in the other two countries, it could also indicate a use of different terminology for this type of language transfer. Indeed, a lack of awareness of the differences between the two roles by those outside of the academic and professional domain of translation has been raised by O'Brien and Federici (2019).

The most prevalent linguistic service was language courses, with more than half of the organizations offering Italian, Greek, English and Spanish classes. Translation services were less widespread, with only three per cent of the organizations offering such a service. As for the availability of documentation and any other content in other languages, only 30 per cent of organizations had their documents translated.

	Greece **n. (%)**	**Italy** **n. (%)**	**Spain** **n. (%)**	**Total** **n. (%)**
Cultural mediation	5 (31%)	22 (88%)	4 (33%)	31 (58%)
Interpreting	2 (12%)	1 (4%)	1 (8%)	4 (7%)
Language courses	10 (62%)	13 (52%)	7 (58%)	30 (56%)
Translation	0	2 (8%)	0	2 (16%)
Content in different languages	1 (6%)	13 (52%)	2 (16%)	16 (30%)

Table 8. Linguistic services offered by organisations per country (adapted from Arias-Badia & Jiménez Andrés, 2021, p. 343).

The open-ended questions allowed organizations to share other relevant information regarding their multilingual and digital practices. A significant number of organizations raised the issue that linguistic barriers were an obstacle for beneficiaries when accessing their services, and that this often resulted in them dropping out of their programmes or services. Furthermore, a large number of organizations recognized the need to improve their multilingual practices to be able to support their beneficiaries effectively. For example, many organizations shared their aspiration to have their materials, brochures and documentation translated into different languages. In terms of their use of technology, most organizations acknowledged the inadequacy of their current digital practices, both internally and externally. In this sense, only 41 per cent of organizations started using ICT externally, which was generally limited to a website that was not always updated, or the use of WhatsApp or email with beneficiaries. However, the majority favoured an increase in their adoption of digital tools. The tools that the organizations called for included: a centralized system of support services (to know if beneficiaries have previously received support and what kind, and to have direct

channels of communication with other organizations), a tool for efficient archiving of documentation, multilingual interactive kiosks for providing information to beneficiaries, a tool to give appointments and updates to beneficiaries, and a platform for delivering online sessions and training.

4.5.2. Interview results

The results of the interview data are presented below. They are separated into two sections. The first section focuses on the participants' replies concerning the written translations and the use of translation technologies. The second section analyses the replies that discuss the changes brought about by COVID-19.

4.5.2.1. Written translations and the use of translation technologies

The accessibility of written information is a complex issue. Literacy and reading skills play an important role in understanding a written text, as does the writing style of the information that is presented. For instance, people who arrive in Greece may be fluent in their native language and English, or other languages, and still not able to interpret any local information using the Greek alphabet.

The interview data shows that some of the organizations' documentation is available in other languages, especially the documents that need the signature of beneficiaries. The exception is Organization A, which had a budget of two thousand euros for translation that they did not plan to spend on translation and interpreting. MANAG1 claimed that translating their information would not add value to the work they did with their beneficiaries. The profile of the translator is different in each of the other organizations. In Organization D, volunteers are in charge of the translation and interpretating. Organization E works with certified translators for the translation of official documentation and for interpretating in exceptional circumstances. Organization B works regularly with trained cultural mediators, but every day translations are performed by the TSO staff. Certified translators are contracted for official documents. Organization C employs nine trained interpreters, the majority of which were former beneficiaries who had received interpreting training from another TSO. The interpreters

are also in charge of producing all written translations. In certain instances, the interpreters are asked to produce two translations: one in the beneficiaries' languages and another in English, as MANAG2 explained:

In sensitive situations, such as medical or legal cases, the interpreters also sign all of the written translations that they provide so as not to have any issues. For example, if an oral or written translation of a prescription from a Greek doctor that is written in Greek is required, they translate it into their native language and into a language that we understand (usually English), to ensure that a proper interpretation has been given.

A more detailed account of the profile of the linguists and the oral communication practices at these organizations is discussed in Jiménez-Andrés (2021).

In the participants' replies, the mention of translation technologies was almost non-existent. Only two organizations resorted to Google Translate when necessary: for one it was the standard practice with beneficiaries who did not speak the local languages (Organization E), and for the other, it was the last resort when they could not find a volunteer interpreter (Organization D). The other organizations did not use any translation technologies, nor did they plan to use any in the near future. In fact, using translation technologies was seen negatively by most organizations. As MANAG2 explained: 'No, we avoid these apps and these machines because, as you know better, they don't provide the correct translation'.

In general, organizations did not use any glossaries or other multilingual resources, with the exception of some published materials in the beneficiaries' languages. As SW2 explained: 'Sometimes we use content that is already written, for example the COVID-19 [information] that is translated or stuff that is in different languages, so we do trust them, and people seem to use them'.

4.5.2.2. Changes during COVID-19

COVID-19 brought sudden and drastic changes to the way TSOs worked. The most obvious was the shift from face-to-face interaction to online communication. None of

the organizations had an emergency or risk reduction plan for a crisis. They were not equipped and ready to work remotely, and all organizations underwent a similar process in the face of COVID-19 restrictions. This process started with a period of around two weeks when they stopped their service provision to develop a new strategy and carry out a needs assessment. The second stage was to secure the provision of a digital infrastructure, followed by training for beneficiaries. In the final stage – after two to three weeks –organizations had moved the majority of their services online. Their translation and interpreting practices did not change during COVID-19. There were no efforts dedicated to producing written translations, nor did the organizations engage with more interpreters to ensure effective online communication with their beneficiaries.

The beneficiaries' lack of digital infrastructure, both in terms of electronic devices, internet access, and low digital skills were the main challenges that organizations faced in their move to online service provision. Some organizations applied for funding to acquire electronic devices to distribute among their beneficiaries (Organization B). Others asked for donations of tablets, smart phones, and old computers (Organization D). As for the digital training, it had to be done in most cases over the phone, which was 'time-consuming' (MANAG3) and not always fruitful. This prevented the beneficiaries from accessing the services. Often, staff at the organizations also required an adaptation period and training for the new systems. As MANAG3 explained:

> The other thing is that some of our, let's say, clients, women, they live alone, they are alone, they don't have anyone at home. And what we do, I mean, either on the phone, or sometimes we go to their houses, to teach them how to use Zoom, we practise with them, everything works well, but the next day, when they click, somehow it does not work.

Participants acknowledged the benefits of digitalization and their late adoption of basic technological tools. While they recognized that for the nature of their work, face-to-face interaction is 'very important' (SW1), participants admitted that the current system was more efficient. For example, some procedures or queries could be solved over the phone and did not require a visit to the organization's premises. Paper forms were

replaced by electronic forms, which saved space, paper and could be easily stored and accessed. Going forward, all organizations planned to implement a blended system. In addition to the increased efficiency, participants found other benefits of offering digital services, as SW2 outlined:

> There are two aspects: physical and also personal. So in physical level, the distance, all of that, all the stress, they cannot come, they cannot pay the money, they don't know the place, they can't find it, they live far away... so this we covered. And the personal, it looks like some people couldn't cope with the big groups or being in presence, but now, behind the screen they feel comfortable.

Offering online sessions allowed the beneficiaries who had difficulties travelling to the premises to attend. Besides, the digital spaces were seen by some beneficiaries as a safe space, in which they could exert a sense of control that they lacked in other areas of their lives. Here's SW2 again:

> We can see that some people that never came anymore, like they used to come, and now they did a comeback in the live session, maybe because of the flexibility that they have control and we know emotionally, when we experience trauma, or when life is tough to you, you cannot control your life, life is controlling you, so I think there is something with having back the control...

While organizations were wary of the success of moving their services to digital spaces, it soon transpired that the new system had multiple benefits, both for the organization and their beneficiaries. As MANAG3 put it:

> This is very important because at the beginning of lockdown we didn't know how things will work but it is really, really good. Some ... I always say that this COVID-19 although it is very, very negative, but it brought very positive aspects as well, kind of more opportunities, how to work specially to use the social media and for our client-group to learn more and also the opportunity that we taught them how to use [technology] ... it is amazing, yeah. I think we got used to this now and we don't want to go back to the office.

In the selection of the platforms for the delivery of their online services, organizations opted for platforms known to their beneficiaries (i.e. WhatsApp and Instagram Live), user-friendly and accessible to their beneficiaries. Those which did not require a download (such as Linkello, which works with a link on a browser) were also favoured. In some cases, organizations initially adopted the use of a platform which then had to be abandoned due to technical issues on the part of beneficiaries.

In terms of ethical considerations prior to the adoption of online platforms, organizations were concerned about the sharing of personal data or documentation via instant messaging, a practice that was generally avoided, though sometimes inevitable: ‘Sometimes it is the only way’ (NUR1). Furthermore, some organizations decided not to use WhatsApp for group calls as the numbers of all participants are made visible; nor did they use Skype, as the minimum age required to use it is eighteen and, according to one participant, ‘it can be breached, it is not very safe’ (SW2). Only one organization had developed a safeguarding policy since their move to online platforms (Organization D).

4.6. Discussion

Data from the fifty-three surveys helped to map PSOs and TSOs’ multilingual and digital practices. The six interviews with TSO staff illustrated the multiplicity of communication practices and approaches adopted by these organizations. Translation and interpreting are managed almost casually, rarely foreseen, and never considered as a fundamental aspect of communication. Although translation and interpreting take various forms, they are an essential part of the effective functioning of these organizations. It is striking that none of the organizations worked with professionally- trained translators. Only two of the organizations worked with trained linguists: cultural mediators, whose training and status in Italy are ‘far from being fully recognized in professional terms’ (Taviano, 2020: 23; also Taviano, 2021) and whose role continues to create debate among academics in Translation Studies (Amato & Garwood, 2011). Some trained interpreters in Organization D were former beneficiaries who had received brief training in interpreting through another TSO. These results are in line with the existing literature in the field of

community interpreting and crisis translation (O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner, 2018; Foulquié-Rubio & Sanchez-Pedreño Sanchez, 2019; Rico Pérez, 2020; Tesseur, 2019; Wadensjö, 2009).

In general, organizations did not resort to existing linguistic resources, either on paper or in digital formats, such as glossaries, dictionaries or translation technologies, with the exception of Google Translate. Despite their multilingual needs, organizations showed reluctance to accept the need for translation technologies. This caution, or hesitation, is not due to a lack of financial resources, as some tools are open source, but to insufficient knowledge of the use and benefits of IT in general. Similarly, it was evident from the interview data there were no quality control mechanisms in place for the translations and interpretations that were being carried out. However, two participants shared how interpreters' work was, at times, inadequate due to lack of training. Two organizations had a person in charge of the linguistic mediators — either volunteers or trained cultural mediators — but neither had a linguistic background. A lack of awareness of accessibility was also apparent, as interviewed participants did not make any reference to it when asked about their communication practices, or how they met the diverse communication needs of their beneficiaries.

Another salient point was the funding allocated to translation and interpreting. While research and practice show that translation and interpreting are often not taken into account when planning projects (Tesseur, 2018: 13), three of the organizations in the study had included them in their funding applications. Despite this, one of the three organizations had decided not to use the allocated translation budget, based on the assumption that it would not improve their service provision.

The drastic changes to their digital practices demonstrate these organizations have the capacity to adapt to new realities and meet pressing needs As the questionnaire results show, organizations admitted that their digital adoption prior to COVID-19 was insufficient. Earlier technological modernization could have prevented the discontinuation of their services for the initial weeks of lockdown and the consequences that this discontinuation may have caused for beneficiaries. Further to the exploration

of what these consequences were, it would be worth investigating how the beneficiaries experienced the move to online platforms, and how accessible the information was that was provided to them regarding new regulations, prohibitions and COVID-19-related health information. Finally, ICT-tools specially designed for displaced communities, such as Refugeye and Open Spain were not used by these organizations. As the interview data demonstrates, the majority of these organizations had only adopted technological solutions due to the mobility restrictions of COVID-19.

4.7. Conclusion

The body of research exploring the uses of ICT in the third and public sectors is limited, and studies with a focus on these technologies to facilitate communication with migrant communities are much needed. COVID-19 has widened the population profile labelled as vulnerable with a direct impact on human and financial resources. As O'Brien and Federici (2019: 138) contend, crisis translation aims at 'reducing vulnerabilities and providing efficient communication that would reduce costs if/when a crisis erupts'. In the case of COVID-19, this study has demonstrated that the organizations' efforts have focused on establishing remote communication, while T&I needs have remained once more in the background. In this regard, and in line with Drugan (2020: 62), there is an opportunity for T&I specialists to raise awareness among these organizations on the importance of language, T&I services, and accessibility. Some actions that organizations could take to work towards capacity-building in accessible communication are: a) producing their content in a variety of formats and languages; b) establishing short-term or long-term collaborations between translation specialists and TSOs and PSOs - these could include staff training on communication needs in multilingual crisis situations; c) ad-hoc consultancy provision by translation specialists; d) conducting communication needs analysis for organizations. In view of organizations' communication needs, it may be of interest to engage with media accessibility specialists towards concrete solutions.

This study contributes to the emerging work on the role that translation and multilingual practices play in the humanitarian sector (Cadwell & O'Brien, 2016; Delgado Luchner,

2018; Federici & O'Brien, 2020; Tesseur, 2018). Further, it reports on the impact of ICT on the provision of accessible information, considering that most communication today has a digital element to it. Once more, the importance of T&I professionals to engage and raise awareness of language rights and the benefits of T&I for these organizations and their beneficiaries is crucial.

These times of change can be an opportunity for these organizations to embrace technological solutions which facilitate communication with their beneficiaries and make their work more effective. The results from this study will be used for the development of the REBUILD ICT-tool to facilitate the access of migrants and refugees to services available to them in TSOs and PSOs. As for ICT developers, it has become apparent that working alongside these organizations is fundamental in order to create tools that meet the technical, linguistic and ethical needs of their beneficiaries.

4.8. Acknowledgements

This research is part of the article-based PhD thesis of the first author conducted in the Department of Translation and Interpretation in the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) within the PhD programme in Translation and Intercultural Studies. This research has been partially funded by the H2020 projects REBUILD (GA 82215) and SO-CLOSE (GA 870939). The authors are members of the TransMedia Catalonia Research Group (2017SGR113). Special thanks are extended to the participants of the interviews for their time.

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Chapter 5. The use of images in the foreign language classroom for refugees: an analysis of materials and teachers' perspectives

El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes

Resumen: La formación en lenguas es uno de los servicios en los que ONG y organismos públicos de todos los países de Europa se vuelcan en el contexto de la acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Este artículo examina el aula de enseñanza de idiomas a estos estudiantes a partir de los resultados de dos actividades de investigación: un análisis de cuatro materiales de enseñanza de español para personas migrantes y un grupo focal con docentes que trabajan con el grupo destinatario. La heterogeneidad del alumnado, en especial en cuanto a los niveles de alfabetización, motiva el interés por desarrollar materiales didácticos con un importante componente visual. El énfasis del estudio recae en analizar el papel que desempeñan las imágenes en la comunicación en el aula. Nos proponemos describir en qué se traduce el componente visual en el aula y cómo lo abordan las editoriales y organizaciones que desarrollan materiales.

Palabras clave: comunicación visual, ELE, migración, ONG, recursos didácticos.

Abstract: The role played by language learning in the context of asylum seeker and refugee integration has attracted considerable attention among third sector organisations and public administrations. This article explores the language classroom with refugees and asylum-seekers from the results of two complementary research activities: the analysis of four open-access teaching resources for migrants available online; and a focus group with teachers working with the target group. The emphasis of the study is on the role played by images in classroom communication. The use of visual materials is proposed for the instruction of highly diverse student groups such as the ones described here. This paper aims to report on how this translates in the

classroom and how it is addressed by publishers and other organisations developing teaching materials.

Key words: visual communication, language teaching, migration, NGO, teaching resources.

5.1. Introducción

La formación en lenguas es uno de los servicios en los que ONG y organismos públicos de todos los países de Europa se vuelcan en el contexto de la acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. El reto específico que supone enseñar lenguas a este colectivo es su alto grado de heterogeneidad en cuanto a la motivación de los estudiantes, su grado de alfabetización, procedencia y necesidades comunicativas más específicas (Miquel López 1995). Este artículo presenta un estado de la cuestión sobre la enseñanza de lenguas a estos estudiantes, así como resultados de dos actividades de investigación: un análisis de materiales de ELE diseñados específicamente para personas migrantes y un grupo focal con tres docentes que trabajan con refugiados.

El análisis de materiales se centra en cuatro propuestas de libre acceso y disponibles en línea: dos materiales propuestos por el Ayuntamiento de Barcelona para los primeros pasos en la formación en lenguas, *Hablamos* (Espai d'Inclusió i Formació Casc Antic 2008) y *Oralpha* (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018), y dos materiales previos diseñados por entidades sin ánimo de lucro, *Aprendiendo un idioma para trabajar* (Santillana 2002), y *Manual de español para inmigrantes: ¿Cómo se dice…?* (Fundación Montemadrid 2006).

Complementamos el análisis de materiales con el de un grupo focal llevado a cabo con tres profesores que trabajan con este colectivo. Los resultados revelan cómo abordan estos profesores las dificultades de comunicación que surgen en el aula, con énfasis en las estrategias multilingües y en el papel que desempeña la comunicación multimodal (por ejemplo, a partir de imágenes o vídeos explicativos) en la labor docente. Se trata, así pues, de una investigación de tipo cualitativo que pretende

proporcionar un testimonio actualizado de las prácticas docentes con este grupo destinatario.

La investigación presentada en este trabajo se enmarca en el proyecto europeo REBUILD[2]. Dicho proyecto tiene por objetivo el desarrollo de tecnologías que faciliten la comunicación entre las personas solicitantes de asilo y refugiados, las instituciones y los proveedores de servicios, con el fin de fomentar su integración social. En el proyecto, que se concentra en los países europeos de entrada de migrantes y refugiados (Grecia, Italia y España), colaboran diversas instituciones europeas, entre ellas, la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Una de las tareas a nuestro cargo en dicho proyecto es la creación de pictogramas que puedan suplir las carencias lingüísticas de los usuarios en el uso de la herramienta. Así, en este trabajo nos ocupamos de profundizar sobre el uso de la imagen en los materiales didácticos empleados con el grupo meta del proyecto, así como de la perspectiva que sobre ello tienen sus docentes de lengua, en tanto que mediadores expertos en la comunicación con el grupo meta.

5.2. Marco teórico: la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados

En este apartado presentamos el estado actual de la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados en España, el grupo destinatario, y los objetivos de la enseñanza de lenguas a este colectivo. Por otro lado, revisamos las características generales de los recursos didácticos que se emplean en este tipo de cursos, centrándonos en el uso de imágenes, la alfabetización visual y las pautas de diseño de materiales.

Los cursos de español como lengua extranjera a migrantes y refugiados nacen como respuesta al incremento de los flujos migratorios en España. Estos cursos, que comienzan a impartirse en la última década de los 90, comenzaron adaptando las clases de ELE a las necesidades de esta comunidad a nivel lingüístico, sociocultural y de comunicación (García 1999). En el año 2004, El Manifiesto de Santander marcó el punto de partida para la "organización, normalización, regulación y evaluación" de la

enseñanza del español a inmigrantes y refugiados (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2005).

De entre los objetivos específicos de estos cursos, destacan proporcionar al alumno migrante los recursos comunicativos necesarios para que pueda relacionarse en los distintos ámbitos de manera eficiente, así como favorecer la comprensión de la lengua y cultura españolas para su integración en la sociedad (Isabel Sanz e Instituto Cervantes 2005). Además, se hace hincapié en la necesidad de diseñar cursos específicos según los intereses, formación y experiencia profesional de los estudiantes migrantes y refugiados (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2005).

Se puede observar que el foco se pone, así pues, en desarrollar la competencia comunicativa. El enfoque comunicativo, reflejado en actividades que estimulan un “uso genuino del lenguaje para fines comunicativos” (Howatt y Widdowson 2004: 345), es desde los años 90 del siglo XX el recomendado para el aula de ELE para refugiados, entre otros motivos, por su capacidad para adaptarse a las necesidades del alumno (Beghadid 2003: 119).

Hoy, muchas de las propuestas orientadas a regularizar la enseñanza de ELE a personas migrantes no han llegado todavía a las aulas, por lo general, por la falta de recursos de las entidades que organizan cursos para este colectivo y las limitaciones económicas del alumnado. Así, las encargadas de implementar y desarrollar programas de ELE para refugiados han pasado a ser entidades del tercer sector, así como, en menor medida, ciertos centros educativos públicos de adultos y universidades públicas (Aguirre García de la Noceda 2014; Romera 2016). Las clases de lengua son el servicio lingüístico que más ofrecen estas entidades, por encima de servicios de traducción, interpretación o mediación cultural (Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés 2021). Debido a su carácter gratuito, los cursos suelen ser impartidos por voluntarios no siempre profesionales en la enseñanza de ELE, trabajadores sociales u otros empleados de ONG. En cuanto a los materiales que se emplean, la mayoría son impresiones de materiales en línea y fotocopias en blanco y negro, debido a las dificultades económicas a las que podría enfrentarse el alumnado si tuvieran que

adquirir un manual en venta en el mercado (Yáñez García 2020: 34). Si bien la mayoría de las organizaciones que apoyan a migrantes y refugiados ofrecen cursos de español para extranjeros, dicha oferta es insuficiente para satisfacer la demanda de estos cursos, tanto en lo referente a las horas lectivas por curso como de diferentes niveles (Gómez Díez 2020: 70). El estudio de Gómez Díez (2020: 73) también pone de manifiesto la insuficiencia de medios de los que disponen las entidades para el desarrollo de los cursos.

5.2.1. Grupo destinatario

Una de las características principales de este grupo es su heterogeneidad, debido a la distinta procedencia geográfica, lenguas maternas, segundas o incluso terceras lenguas, formación, variedad cultural y religiosa, sexo, edad y estilos de aprendizaje de las personas refugiadas. Así, entre los refugiados y migrantes podemos encontrar tanto a personas muy formadas como a personas no alfabetizadas, es decir, con distintos niveles de conocimiento de los códigos de lectura y escritura (Miquel López 1995; *The Government and Public Sector Practice* 2017).

Esta heterogeneidad del colectivo se verá reflejada también en las aulas de español. Si bien supondrá un reto en la labor educativa, especialmente para un profesorado no profesional o poco experimentado, el desconocimiento de los códigos de lectoescritura no ha de ser un problema a la hora de aprender una segunda lengua. Como apuntaba Miquel López (1995: 248), el aprendizaje se puede conseguir adaptando las técnicas a las habilidades y características cognitivas del alumnado, de las cuales disponen como hablantes de otras lenguas.

5.2.2. Manuales de aprendizaje de lenguas para personas migrantes

La utilización de material especializado y destinado al alumnado destinatario cobra particular importancia dadas las características y heterogeneidad a distintos niveles del grupo. Como ya hemos mencionado, algunos alumnos pueden no conocer los códigos de lectoescritura, que muchos materiales de ELE presuponen, o plantear actividades o cuestiones culturales completamente ajenas para el alumno. Así, existen

métodos que combinan la alfabetización con el aprendizaje del idioma, mientras que otros consideran la oralidad como paso previo a la alfabetización.

Independientemente de su perspectiva sobre la alfabetización, estos métodos presentan numerosas ventajas, tales como su distanciamiento del etnocentrismo o "occidentecentrismo", la introducción de nociones sociolingüísticas y culturales, y su amplia variedad de recursos, como imágenes, documentación, dibujos o fotografías, entre otros (Miquel López 1995: 251-252). Sobre el tipo de actividades que presentan, se recomienda que sean variadas y breves, con objetivos comunicativos concretos y que prioricen el trabajo en grupo por encima del individual (Villalba Martínez y Hernández García 2000).

Existe una gran variedad de manuales destinados a migrantes y refugiados, la mayor parte de los cuales se publicaron entre 1990 y 2010. Además de las editoriales, a menudo son las propias organizaciones que imparten los cursos las que desarrollan sus propios materiales por cuestiones de coste, relevancia de los contenidos y prácticas de los profesores (Ruiz Fajardo 2008).

5.2.3. Las imágenes en la enseñanza de lenguas y alfabetización visual

En las últimas décadas, los libros de texto han experimentado un aumento en el empleo de recursos visuales, propiciados por la evolución del diseño gráfico y el aumento de la cultura contemporánea de la dependencia de la comunicación visual. Al incremento y la mejora de la calidad de los elementos visuales, se suma la incorporación de recursos semióticos más modernos, como el color, las fotografías, los planos o los pictogramas (Abio y Dias 2015). Los elementos visuales favorecen la transmisión de significados y la motivación del aprendizaje de la lengua (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2003). El componente visual tiene muchas ventajas pedagógicas, tales como la presentación y la potencialmente mayor claridad de los materiales, la jerarquía en los contenidos y la facilidad en la lectura (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Entre los elementos visuales que propician la accesibilidad de los materiales destacan el camino de lectura y el uso del color (Ellis y Ellis 1987). El camino de lectura debe

ser fácil de seguir para que el alumno pueda entender sin dificultad las relaciones entre textos, ejercicios e imágenes (ibid: 91). En cuanto al uso del color, los autores recomiendan que este sea coherente y con una clara intención, y advierten que el color tiene la capacidad de llevar la atención del lector a los contenidos a color, independientemente de su condición (ibid: 93). El contraste del color es esencial para garantizar la legibilidad del documento, por lo que se aconseja seguir las pautas de accesibilidad en el diseño de materiales tanto digitales como en papel. Así, para garantizar una buena legibilidad del documento para personas con problemas de visión, y en situaciones de mucha luz o con pantallas con poco contraste o brillo, se recomienda recurrir a un contraste de luminosidad suficiente entre el fondo y el color del texto, y se desaconseja utilizar únicamente el color para transmitir información (Universidad de Alicante 2019).

El uso de imágenes en los materiales de ELE tiene un claro fin comunicativo. Estos elementos visuales cobran una gran importancia por su papel sustitutivo o complementario de la comunicación escrita, en especial cuando se emplean con alumnado no alfabetizado. La alfabetización visual es una competencia necesaria, pero a menudo desatendida, para la adecuada interpretación de los elementos visuales.

La alfabetización visual se define como la capacidad de interpretar textos visuales (Debes 1968). A pesar de que vivimos en una era de alta orientación visual, la alfabetización visual en la educación formal no está programada y se enseña arbitraria y esporádicamente en el aula (Níkleva y Pejović 2015).

En general, los textos visuales no se consideran sustitutos de los verbales, sino que tienen una función de complementación (Alba Paredes y García Romero 2018). En los materiales de ELE, donde el uso de imágenes está extendido, se suelen usar como complemento del contenido escrito o para embellecer los materiales; rara vez de manera independiente. En el aula, los recursos visuales se utilizan con asiduidad para reforzar los contenidos, fomentar la comprensión y la retención y, a su vez, ayudar a los alumnos a comunicarse con el mundo que les rodea (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Otra ventaja

de los recursos visuales es que facilitan la transmisión de contenidos culturales, especialmente a aprendientes de culturas muy distantes (Sánchez Benítez 2009).

En este sentido, es importante destacar que la alfabetización visual no es universal y que las diferencias culturales son una variable predominante a la hora de medir la comprensión de un símbolo (Avgerinou y Pettersson 2011; Encabo Fernández y Jerez Martínez 2013). Por eso, aunque las imágenes contribuyen a la transmisión de contenidos culturales, las explicaciones y aclaraciones de los profesores de ELE son necesarias para la correcta interpretación de las imágenes y el aprendizaje de los contenidos culturales asociados a ellas.

5.3. Marco metodológico

Tal como anticipábamos en la introducción, este trabajo presenta los resultados de dos actividades de investigación complementarias: un análisis de cuatro materiales didácticos y un grupo focal con tres profesores de lenguas que han trabajado directamente con personas refugiadas. En este apartado exponemos la metodología empleada en ambas actividades de investigación.

5.3.1. Materiales de investigación

La selección de los materiales analizados —a saber, *Aprendiendo un idioma para trabajar* (Santillana Formación 2002), *Manual de alfabetización para inmigrantes* (Fundación Montemadrid 2006), *Hablamos* (Espai d'Inclusió i Formació Casc Antic 2008) y *Oralpha* (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018)— responde a los dos criterios siguientes: por un lado, se trata de materiales sobre los que tenemos constancia de que son utilizados con personas refugiadas y, de hecho, fueron concebidos para ser utilizados con estudiantes migrantes; por otro, son materiales de libre acceso, lo cual nos hace suponer que, como mínimo a medio plazo, van a seguir utilizándose en contextos de clases gratuitas para facilitar la inmersión de los migrantes. Se trata, igualmente, de materiales comparables en tanto

que todos son de iniciación a la lengua española (nivel A1 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia (MCER)).

El grupo focal se llevó a cabo en Barcelona el 4 de enero de 2019 y tuvo una duración de 45 minutos. Fue dinamizado por una facilitadora y se organizó en un espacio elegido por los participantes, para que pudieran sentirse a gusto para tratar con comodidad los temas propuestos. El perfil demográfico y datos básicos de formación y desempeño profesional de los participantes se describen a continuación; se atribuye a cada participante una letra con la que nos referiremos a ellos también en el apartado 5.

Participante A: Hombre de 27 años, graduado en Estudios Ingleses y Franceses y máster en Estudios de Traducción. Doctorando en Traducción y Estudios Interculturales. Se dedica a la investigación y la docencia universitarias.

Participante B: Mujer de 31 años, licenciada en Humanidades y máster en Estudios de Traducción. Su ocupación principal es la docencia en la enseñanza secundaria.

Participante C: Mujer de 30 años, licenciada en Traducción e Interpretación y en Educación, y máster en Estudios de Traducción y en Interpretación de conferencias. Su ocupación principal es la docencia en la enseñanza primaria.

5.3.2. Análisis de datos

En el análisis de materiales adoptamos un enfoque principalmente cualitativo, si bien en algunos casos aportamos información cuantitativa sobre el uso de imágenes en materiales empleados con estudiantes refugiados.

En el análisis nos fijamos concretamente en la presencia y objetivo de las imágenes que estos contienen. Así, el análisis se ha guiado por las siguientes preguntas de investigación: 1) ¿cuántas imágenes hay en los materiales?; 2) ¿qué tipo de imágenes se incluyen en los mismos?; 3) ¿cuál es el formato de estas imágenes?; 4) ¿qué función cumplen las imágenes en los materiales?

Partiendo de un análisis contrastivo entre los cuatro materiales, pretendemos llegar a conclusiones sobre qué elementos se perciben como más susceptibles de representación con imágenes por parte de los creadores de materiales, y qué función parecen desempeñar las imágenes en la enseñanza de ELE a personas refugiadas, entre otras cuestiones. El análisis se ha llevado a cabo a través de un etiquetado manual de los materiales: para responder algunas de las preguntas de investigación planteadas se ha etiquetado el material completo. En otros casos, sin embargo, hemos tomado una muestra normalizada para contrastar los resultados de los cuatro materiales, tal como especificamos más abajo en la presentación de resultados.

El objetivo del grupo focal era recabar información de primera mano de los profesores que trabajan con personas refugiadas en cuanto al uso de estrategias multilingües y de imágenes en el aula. Nos interesaba especialmente que, ya fuesen voluntarios o trabajadores con contrato laboral, se tratase de personas expertas en lenguas, capaces de reflexionar sobre los temas propuestos (su formación puede consultarse en el apartado 3.1). En concreto, el grupo focal se estructuró en tres grandes bloques: perfil de los participantes, donde les preguntamos por sus estudiantes, por su vinculación con la enseñanza de lenguas y su formación específica; materiales docentes empleados; y uso de imágenes en el aula. Las preguntas concretas para cada uno de estos bloques se pactaron con el equipo que trabaja en el proyecto REBUILD en la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona y pueden consultarse en el anexo de este trabajo. Durante la sesión con la facilitadora algunas preguntas cobraron más importancia que otras, por lo que nuestra síntesis de resultados en este artículo no sigue estrictamente el guion elaborado previamente, sino que se basa en las observaciones más relevantes del grupo focal. Los datos obtenidos en este grupo focal fueron anonimizados y la actividad cumplió con los procedimientos éticos actuales tal como los describen Orero *et al*. (2018).

5.4. Resultados del análisis de materiales

En este apartado se presentan los resultados del análisis llevado a cabo de los cuatro materiales citados en el apartado anterior. Ofrecemos información en cuanto a la

presencia de contenido visual en los materiales, su formato, los elementos que representan y su vinculación con la cultura de inmersión de los estudiantes, así como sobre la función que dichas imágenes ejercen en los materiales didácticos.

5.4.1. Propósito de las imágenes

Los cuatro materiales declaran su marcado carácter visual en sus guías didácticas. *Hablamos* lo incluye como una de sus características principales, con el objetivo de hacerlo accesible tanto para alumnado alfabetizado como para el no alfabetizado. Por su parte, el manual *Cómo se dice* manifiesta utilizar la imagen como "soporte principal para facilitar la comprensión y activar la memoria auditiva, dando importancia al manejo de significados" (Fundación Montemadrid 2006: 7).

El método *Oralpha* adecúa "los métodos antiguos a la nueva situación" mediante la sustitución de las palabras generadas por imágenes o dibujos (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018: 9). Este método describe el desarrollo de la unidad y los ejercicios en el *Libro del profesorado*, permitiendo así que el *Manual del alumno* esté compuesto fundamentalmente por imágenes (*íbid*). La Figura 1 muestra un ejemplo de actividad de este método.

Finalmente, el método *Aprendiendo un idioma* presenta de forma visual el campo semántico de cada unidad al principio de esta. También incluye ejercicios cuyo objetivo es la descodificación de pictogramas asociados al ámbito laboral y personal.

Figura 1. Libro del alumno del manual *Oralpha* (p. 63).

5.4.2. Presencia de imágenes

El análisis cuantitativo de las imágenes en las cuatro primeras unidades de cada manual confirma el carácter visual de los cuatro materiales analizados, tal como exponen en sus guías didácticas. Dado que las unidades de los distintos manuales difieren en extensión, la cuantificación de las imágenes por unidad no produciría resultados comparativos. Por tanto, se ha calculado la media de imágenes por página y por unidad de los materiales en las cuatro primeras unidades (Tabla 9). Este cálculo revela que tres de los manuales, *Aprendiendo un idioma*, *Oralpha* y *Hablamos*, tienen cuatro imágenes de media por página. El manual *Cómo se dice* contiene aproximadamente la mitad de imágenes por página y, por tanto, podría considerarse el manual menos visual de los cuatro.

Manual	**Nº páginas en las primeras 4 unidades**	**Nº de imágenes**	**Media de imágenes por página**
Aprendiendo un idioma	84	370	4,4
Cómo se dice	105	243	2,3
Hablamos	41	168	4,1
Oralpha	334	1487	4,4

Tabla 9. Cómputo de páginas e imágenes por manual en las cuatro primeras unidades.

5.4.3. Tipo y formato de las imágenes

En lo que se refiere al color, dos de los manuales han sido diseñados en blanco y negro (*Aprendiendo un idioma* y *Oralpha)* y dos de ellos en color (*Hablamos* y *Cómo se dice*). Los dos manuales en color se caracterizan por la presencia de colores muy vivos, como verdes claros, rojos, naranjas o amarillos. Por tratarse de materiales disponibles en línea que a priori podrían ser empleados desde un dispositivo móvil, se testó la accesibilidad de los colores seleccionados con herramientas digitales (Lea Verou, s.f.). Aunque el manual opta por colores vivos, el análisis demostró que las ratios de color resultantes son demasiado bajas e incumplen las pautas de accesibilidad, que estipula que las ratios sean superiores a 5 (Universidad de Alicante 2019).

En cuanto al tipo y estilo de imagen, en los manuales predominan los dibujos similares al dibujo animado y, en menor medida, se observan fotografías, mapas y, en uno de

ellos, pictogramas (*Aprendiendo un idioma*). Las Figuras 2-5 muestran ejemplos de la representación de personas en los cuatro manuales. En cuanto a las dimensiones, se incluyen imágenes de todos los tamaños, desde muy pequeñas, como los pictogramas (1x1 cm), hasta imágenes que ocupan toda una página (12x15 cm). Como vemos en las figuras, los manuales representan una sociedad plural y se alejan del etnocentrismo que suele caracterizar los materiales de ELE generales.

Figura 2. Personajes *Hablamos* (p. 5). Original a color.

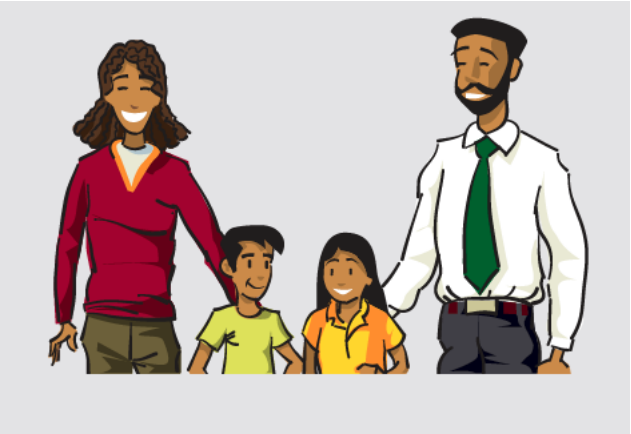

Figura 3. Personajes *Oralpha* (p. 63). Original a color.

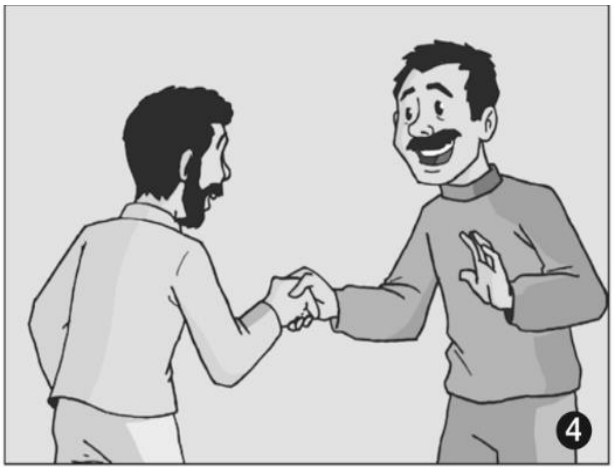

Figura 4. Personajes *Oralpha* (p. 7).

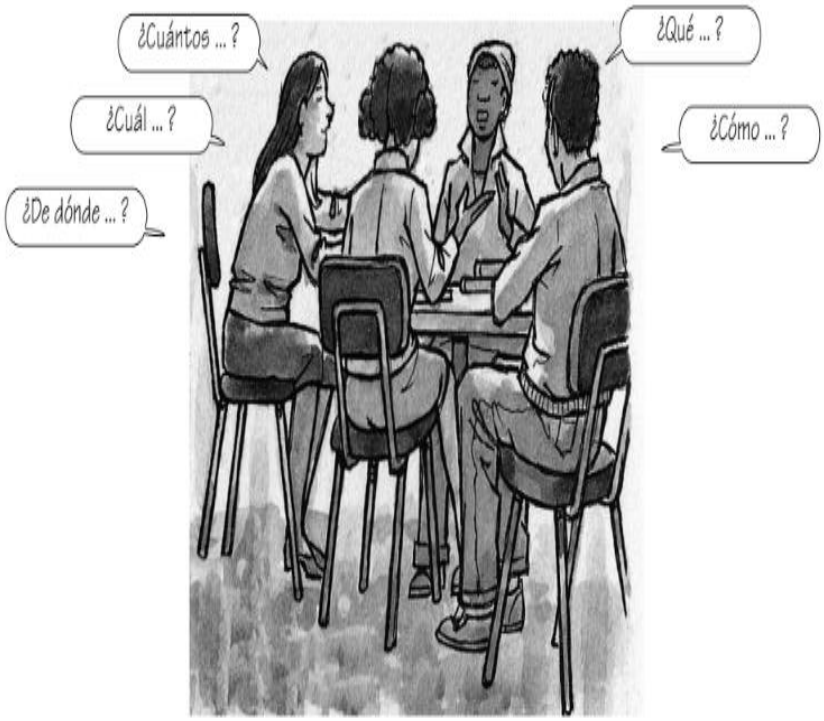

Figura 5. Personajes *Aprendiendo un idioma* (p. 9).

5.4.4. Posición de las imágenes

Dos de los manuales analizados (*Aprendiendo un idioma* y *Oralpha*) tienen un camino de lectura muy claro, que permite al receptor discernir entre contenido más o menos importante y ver una progresión clara en las actividades. Estos dos manuales se caracterizan por tener una estructura cuadriculada y un margen de página de al menos 1,5 cm en la mayoría de sus páginas, lo que crea una sensación de armonía en los contenidos.

Los otros dos manuales (*Hablamos y Cómo se dice*) tienen un camino de lectura menos claro, ya que la jerarquía entre contenidos está menos marcada. Por ejemplo, una imagen grande en la parte inferior de la página hace que la atención vaya a esa imagen en lugar de al inicio de la página, donde se encuentra el primer ejercicio (Figura 6). Además, estos dos manuales presentan un margen de página más fino, que permite que se incluya más contenido por página, pero que dificulta la discriminación entre actividades o bloques.

Unidad 4

5. Completa con: *estoy, tengo* y *me duele*.

1. _____ mucho calor. ¿Puedes abrir la ventana?
2. No quiero comer porque_____ la barriga.
3. Voy al médico porque_____ fiebre.
4. _____ mareada. Tengo que sentarme.
5. _____ resfriado porque en Barcelona hace mucho frío.
6. Hoy _____ muy cansada y _____ el cuello.

6. Ahora cada uno de vosotros se levanta y se toca una parte del cuerpo. Los demás tienen que decir dónde le duele. Luego os levantáis uno a uno y decís una parte del cuerpo. Los demás tienen que tocarse esta parte.

7. Aquí tienes algunos de los remedios que usamos cuando estamos enfermos y algunas pruebas médicas. Relaciona cada palabra con el dibujo.

1. La pomada 2. El supositorio 3. La inyección 4. El esparadrapo 5. El yodo 6. El jarabe 7. La tirita 8. El algodón 9. La pastilla 10. El análisis de sangre 11. La radiografía

41

Figura 6. Página del manual *Hablamos* con una imagen al final de la página (p. 41). Original a color.

5.4.5. Contenido de las imágenes

Para analizar el contenido de las imágenes, se seleccionaron los cuatro referentes más prevalentes: personas, objetos, lugares y pictogramas. La cuantificación de estos referentes pone de manifiesto que la mayoría de las imágenes representan objetos, seguido por personas y, finalmente, lugares (Figura 7). Es así en todos los materiales, a excepción del manual *Aprendiendo un idioma*, que contiene en primer lugar objetos y en segundo, pictogramas.

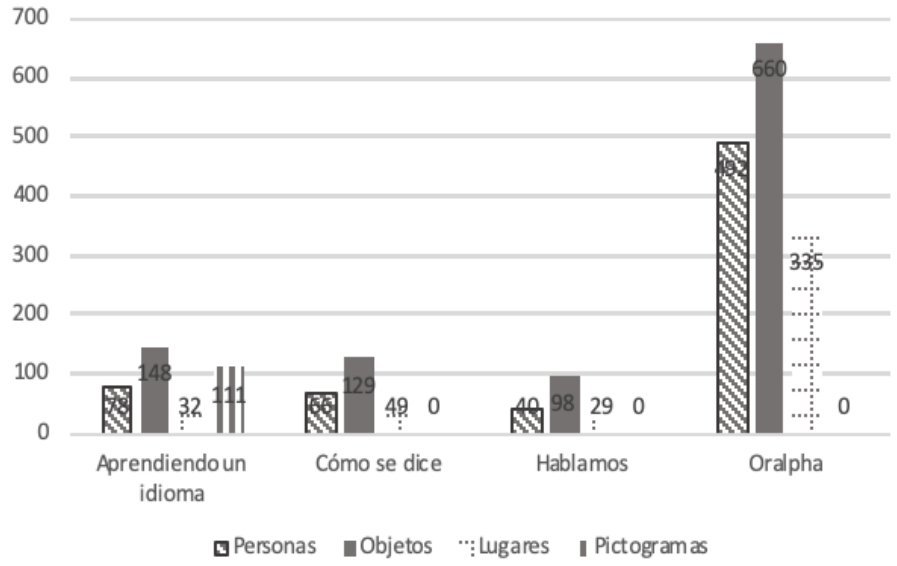

Figura 7. Relación de imágenes y su referente por material en los primeros cuatro temas de cada uno.

Por otro lado, se observa que los manuales introducen paulatinamente aspectos característicos de la cultura española. Por ejemplo, el manual *Cómo se dice* incluye una actividad al final de cada unidad con información útil sobre la vida en España, acompañada de una imagen ilustrativa. Un ejemplo es la Lección 4, *Vamos de bares*, que expone la importancia de los bares para la cultura española (Figura 8). En este sentido, cabe destacar que los manuales *Oralpha* y *Hablamos* se centran en el contexto de la ciudad de Barcelona, es decir, que son más específicos en su localización, mientras que *Cómo se dice* y *Aprendiendo un idioma* no presentan una

región concreta de España y, por tanto, podrían considerarse adecuados para su uso en cualquier parte del territorio.

Figura 8. Presentación de aspectos culturales en el manual Cómo se dice (p. 22). Original a color.

5.5. Resultados del grupo focal

En este apartado se presentan los resultados del grupo focal. Ofrecemos información en cuanto al perfil de los participantes, materiales docentes empleados y uso de imágenes en el aula.

5.5.1. Perfil de los participantes de una clase de lengua a personas refugiadas: docentes y estudiantes

Los tres participantes del grupo focal son personas con formación especializada en lenguas. Como es habitual en el profesorado que trabaja con refugiados, se dedican o se han dedicado a la enseñanza de lenguas a tiempo parcial. Dos son voluntarios en asociaciones sin ánimo de lucro (denominados, de acuerdo con lo especificado en el apartado 3, participantes A y B) y la tercera recibe remuneración por su trabajo en una institución pública (participante C).

En los tres casos, los docentes han impartido clase de lengua para fines generales en cursos introductorios (niveles A1-A2 del MCER). El número de estudiantes por clase varía en cada sesión, a veces en gran medida, debido en parte a las condiciones de vida inestables de los alumnos: en el caso del participante A, el número varía fácilmente entre uno y ocho estudiantes de una semana para otra; en el caso de la participante B, el grupo oscila entre los 12 y los 15 estudiantes; y en el caso de la participante C, las clases suelen contar con entre 10 y 12 asistentes. En todos los cursos que han impartido, las clases están formadas por alumnos de distinta procedencia: en las clases del participante A, los países de procedencia mayoritarios de los estudiantes son Arabia Saudí, Marruecos, Pakistán, Rusia y Ucrania; en las clases de la participante B, los estudiantes son de Georgia y de distintos países del norte de África; y en las clases de la participante C, los estudiantes son mayoritariamente procedentes de Afganistán y Siria, y en menor medida, de Irak. Todos han impartido clase a adultos; la participante C también a menores no acompañados.

El nivel de formación de los estudiantes adultos varía enormemente de unos a otros: desde personas sin alfabetizar o personas con dificultades de lectura hasta personas con estudios superiores, incluso a nivel de doctorado, hablantes de otras lenguas extranjeras y con más facilidad para adquirir una nueva lengua, por haber trabajado las estrategias de aprendizaje anteriormente (el participante A comenta: “Aunque no tengan ninguna noción de español, facilita mucho las cosas poderles decir ‘Esto es un complemento directo’”). En el caso de los menores, la mayoría contaba con formación a nivel elemental, aunque algunos no conocían los códigos de lectoescritura.

También se observa gran variedad en cuanto al tiempo que los estudiantes llevan en el país de acogida: el participante A explica que tiene alumnos recién llegados la semana anterior y otros que llevan más de dos años en España. En este sentido, los tres participantes recalcan que el nivel de lengua del alumnado no es directamente proporcional al tiempo que llevan en el país de acogida.

5.5.2. Materiales didácticos y estrategias para la comunicación en el aula

Dada la variada procedencia de los estudiantes, en el aula se recurre en ocasiones al multilingüismo para facilitar la comunicación. Incluso hay alumnos que, si conocen más lenguas que los demás, adoptan el papel de intérpretes durante la clase. El participante A explica que el ruso es la lengua puente para todos los estudiantes de Europa del este, ya que todos ellos hablan o entienden ruso: se ayudan entre sí y a él le transmiten el mensaje en inglés los que conocen esta lengua. En el caso de los estudiantes africanos, se emplea, cuando es posible, la lengua de colonia de los estudiantes (especialmente, el francés). A menudo les pregunta cómo se dicen las palabras que van aprendiendo en sus distintos idiomas. La misma situación se daba en el aula de la participante B. La participante C no tenía la opción de recurrir al multilingüismo con los menores, que solo hablaban farsi o pastún. En los grupos de adultos, el inglés, el francés y el árabe eran las lenguas comunes en el aula, lo cual facilitaba en gran medida la transmisión de la información.

En cuanto a los materiales empleados, el participante A usa *¿Hablamos?*, uno de los manuales analizados en este trabajo. Afirma que este material le ayuda mucho porque, al tratarse de un manual impulsado por el ayuntamiento de la ciudad donde imparte clases, los ejercicios aluden a referentes reales y cercanos. Por ejemplo, cuando se aprende el vocabulario relacionado con la comida, aparece el mercado de La Boquería de Barcelona. Cree que el hecho de que sea un material de enfoque más local favorece la implicación de los estudiantes. Igualmente, valora muy positivamente el hecho de que el libro adopte una perspectiva muy inclusiva en cuanto a cuestiones de género, lo cual es especialmente relevante con su grupo de estudiantes, ya que la asociación en la que se imparten estas clases de español está especializada en migración, asilo y diversidad LGTBI. Sin embargo, explica que se trata de un material muy básico, y para cubrir las necesidades heterogéneas del grupo-clase a menudo lo ha tenido que complementar con materiales de elaboración propia (como artículos para ejercicios de lectura).

La participante B contaba con materiales de elaboración propia de la Cruz Roja, similares a los analizados en este trabajo, fotocopiados en blanco y negro. Las clases se centraban en los ejercicios de comunicación oral e incidían en temas que pudieran ser de especial utilidad para los estudiantes, como procesos para obtener documentación o visitas al médico. En su caso, no podía añadir materiales propios por normativa de la entidad: al tratarse de un trabajo coordinado de distintos profesores voluntarios, se hacía necesario seguir el orden marcado por las unidades de los materiales estrictamente.

Por su parte, la participante C comenta que sus materiales son también proporcionados por la entidad pública en la que trabaja. Sobre ellos, afirma que tienen un alto contenido visual y en el que, además de tener por objetivo la enseñanza de la gramática, se pone el foco sobre la cultura del país de acogida.

5.5.3. Uso de imágenes en el aula

Por lo general, los docentes creen que los materiales didácticos de los que disponían cubrían visualmente el léxico básico esperable para un nivel de iniciación. La participante C explica que el componente visual era determinante en el caso de la docencia a menores no acompañados, dada la carencia de una lengua común y los distintos niveles de formación del alumnado. Así, era habitual que ella dibujara objetos en la pizarra para facilitar la adquisición de léxico nuevo; el inconveniente que encontraba es que dibujar es un proceso lento. Igualmente, explica que el mayor desafío era explicar la gramática visualmente —intentaba, por ejemplo, representar los pronombres por medio de dibujos esquemáticos, pero no siempre con éxito; otro reto era la representación gráfica de conceptos abstractos, como pasado y futuro, que intentaba representar por medio de flechas—. Los alumnos recurrían a los dibujos de la pizarra para hacer preguntas (“Señalaban a la pizarra y decían: ‘¿Eso es eso o es eso?’”). Ante esta explicación, los participantes A y B afirman que su situación era muy similar.

El participante A añade que en el aula es frecuente el uso de dispositivos móviles para facilitar la comunicación: los alumnos buscan imágenes en motores de búsqueda y se las muestran. Este método es especialmente útil para mostrar referentes muy locales, ya sean de los países de procedencia de los estudiantes o del país de acogida.

En cuanto al tipo de imágenes empleadas en el aula, los tres participantes explican que generalmente han recurrido a imágenes estáticas. El participante A emplea vídeos cuando acuden a clase estudiantes con un nivel de lengua más avanzado. En concreto, habla del recurso ofrecido por la Agencia EFE: noticias para estudiantes de español[3]. Por medio de los vídeos que acompañan a estas noticias, los estudiantes tienen acceso a los referentes visuales básicos de la noticia.

Sus comentarios en este sentido cobran gran relevancia en el contexto del proyecto de investigación REBUILD. Son expertos que tienen conocimiento sobre dónde pueden surgir las dificultades de comprensión en la comunicación, así como sobre el empleo de elementos visuales para afrontar estas dificultades.

5.6. Discusión

El análisis de materiales ha confirmado la recurrencia de las imágenes en los manuales estudiados. Como hemos mencionado en el apartado 2, la alfabetización visual del alumnado va a tener un papel fundamental a la hora de interpretar y hacer uso de los manuales, a pesar de que esta competencia no se trabaje formalmente en el aula.

Hemos mostrado, sin embargo, que potenciar el componente visual en materiales para niveles de lengua iniciales no conlleva que la comunicación material-alumno sea exclusivamente visual. En efecto, tres de los cuatro materiales dependen del código escrito para expresar el enunciado de los ejercicios. Solo el manual *Oralpha* se apoya exclusivamente en pictogramas para dar instrucciones sobre el desarrollo de la actividad, con lo que permite que el alumno realice el ejercicio a su ritmo y sin la explicación del formador. Asimismo, en algunos casos las imágenes no parecen tener un objetivo comunicativo específico, sino que se presentan como un complemento paratextual.

El análisis también ha demostrado que los manuales difieren en el color, estilo, tamaño y tipo de imagen que presentan. El color tiene una gran importancia en el diseño de materiales para resaltar información, motivar al receptor y agrupar contenido, entre otros (Leavitt y Shneiderman 2006). Con todo, dos manuales han sido diseñados en blanco y negro. El manual *Oralpha* expone en su guía didáctica que se ha evitado usar el color para permitir la correcta visualización de las imágenes a las entidades sin ánimo de lucro que no pueden imprimir a color. Deducimos que el otro material diseñado en escala de grises ha optado por este formato por la misma razón, ya que también ha sido elaborado para una ONG. Esta elección corrobora la falta de recursos de las instituciones encargadas de la enseñanza de lenguas a colectivos vulnerables que mencionábamos en la revisión bibliográfica, confirmada durante el grupo focal con profesores.

De los dos materiales diseñados a color, cabe preguntarse si la elección de los colores ha sido aleatoria o motivada. El color no debe emplearse solo para atraer al receptor o hacer los materiales más atractivos, sino que su uso debe ser motivado y tener en cuenta factores como la accesibilidad (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Los materiales analizados son coherentes en el uso del color dentro del manual; sin embargo, la elección de los colores no ha sido la adecuada teniendo en cuenta criterios de accesibilidad. Así, se han empleado colores vivos y con poco contraste entre el texto o la imagen y el fondo, que no invitan a la lectura y los hacen menos accesibles, en especial para el potencial alumnado con discapacidad visual (Leavitt y Shneiderman, 2006; Universidad de Alicante 2019).

De igual modo, hemos tenido en cuenta la distribución de las imágenes en las páginas de los manuales. Como se ha mencionado en el apartado 2, que haya una relación clara y un orden en los contenidos facilita la comprensión de estos. La Norma UNE de Lectura fácil (UNE 153101: 2018 EX) propone una serie de pautas y recomendaciones para la elaboración de documentos. Entre ellas, aconseja la utilización de márgenes amplios para facilitar la comprensión de la información. El análisis pone de manifiesto la accesibilidad de dos de los materiales en este sentido: *Aprendiendo un idioma* y

Oralpha tienen un camino de lectura claro y usan un amplio margen. En los otros dos materiales, la posición y distribución de los contenidos no favorece la lectura y el discernimiento entre contenidos. Consideramos que facilitar la lectura y el discernimiento entre contenidos es primordial a la hora de desarrollar materiales para este colectivo que, a diferencia de, por ejemplo, un alumnado europeo, puede no haber estado expuesto con anterioridad a este tipo de materiales.

En cuanto al tipo de imágenes, la prevalencia de imágenes que representan objetos podría explicarse por la necesidad de adquisición del vocabulario que designa el entorno del hablante, como así lo establece el MCER. En el nivel A1 del mismo, se indica que el aprendiente podrá "presentarse a sí mismo y a otros, pedir y dar información personal básica sobre su domicilio, sus pertenencias y las personas que conoce" (Instituto Cervantes 2002: 26). De entre los considerados objetos, se incluyen también fotografías o réplicas de documentos y otros elementos propios de su nueva realidad (como son facturas, solicitudes de diversos trámites y documentos de identidad) y contexto sociocultural (fotos de fiestas locales y lugares de gran importancia como escuelas, centros médicos y estaciones). Observamos aquí el empleo de la mímesis, que permite al alumno relacionar lo estudiado en el aula con su realidad fuera de ella (Ellis y Ellis 1987). El grupo focal ha confirmado que las actividades en el aula se centran en imitar situaciones a las que se enfrentarán los estudiantes, como la presentación o solicitud de documentación.

El grupo focal con profesores ha puesto de manifiesto que las imágenes de los manuales de que disponen cubren el léxico básico, pero de momento son insuficientes para dar cuenta de conceptos gramaticales como los tiempos verbales. Su experiencia coincide con la idea de que los textos visuales se han diseñado para complementar al lenguaje verbal, no sustituirlo (Jerez Martínez 2014). Esta aparente limitación de la comunicación visual perjudica, sobre todo, a alumnos no alfabetizados o de primeros niveles, que deberán interpretar la imagen sin un apoyo textual.

Tal como han manifestado los profesores, los estudiantes ya emplean proactivamente las imágenes (dibujando, señalando o buscando en motores de búsqueda los

referentes que les interesan) en la comunicación en el aula. Esto indica el potencial de desarrollar herramientas específicas que faciliten dicha comunicación visual y aborden desafíos específicos, como la representación de conceptos gramaticales abstractos.

De igual modo, los profesores resaltan la importancia de la inclusión de referentes de la cultura de acogida, algo que sí se ha observado en los cuatro manuales analizados. La introducción de elementos de la ciudad o región en la que se desarrollen los cursos favorecen el conocimiento de su entorno y así la integración de los estudiantes en la comunidad de acogida. Por otro lado, a pesar del uso de distintos manuales, los distintos contextos y la heterogeneidad del alumnado, las observaciones de los profesores sobre la importancia y el uso prevalente de elementos visuales en el aula muestran patrones generales en cuanto a los desafíos y respuestas al establecer una comunicación efectiva en el aula de ELE para refugiados.

5.7. Conclusiones

En el contexto de la comunicación visual con migrantes y refugiados, este trabajo busca aportar algunos resultados sobre su uso actual en el aula, así como sobre su efectividad y posibles carencias. Los resultados obtenidos arrojan luz sobre los desafíos relacionados con la comunicación visual que deberán abordarse al diseñar la aplicación desarrollada en el marco del proyecto REBUILD para facilitar la comunicación con este colectivo.

Los resultados del análisis de materiales y el grupo focal con profesores han puesto de manifiesto el uso extendido de imágenes para la comunicación en el aula de ELE con refugiados. Las imágenes cobran especial relevancia con alumnado con el que no se tiene una lengua puente a la que acudir en casos de falta de comprensión. Sin embargo, el estudio demuestra las limitaciones de las imágenes sin soporte verbal a la hora de transmitir información. En el futuro, consideramos que enriquecería los resultados de este estudio la investigación de los niveles de comprensión e interpretación de las imágenes por parte del alumnado y sus actitudes hacia las mismas.

Finalmente, se considera importante conocer y estudiar los materiales a los que está expuesto el grupo destinatario, no solo para identificar las áreas de mayor relevancia, sino para elaborar un material visual que se alinee con el material que el usuario está acostumbrado a ver. En este sentido, como línea futura cabe explorar la implementación de contenido visual no-estático: los materiales y las prácticas docentes actuales no parecen prestar importancia a dichos contenidos, a pesar de constituir una parte importante del contenido al que todos nos vemos expuestos hoy como usuarios.

Notas

[1] Esta investigación forma parte del proyecto REBUILD financiado por el programa H2020 de la Comisión Europea (GA Nº 822215). El apoyo de la Comisión Europea en esta publicación no constituye un apoyo de su contenido, el cual refleja únicamente la perspectiva de las autoras, y no puede responsabilizarse a la Comisión del uso que se dé a la información aquí recogida. Las autoras son miembros del grupo TransMedia Catalonia (SGR2017SGR113). Este artículo forma parte de la tesis doctoral en Traducción y Estudios Interculturales de María Jiménez-Andrés en el Departamento de Traducción, Interpretación y Estudios de Asia Oriental de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

[2] Página web del proyecto REBUILD: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx.

[3] Noticias para estudiantes de español de la Agencia EFE: https://www.practicaespanol.com/.

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ANEXO

GUION DE PREGUNTAS PARA EL GRUPO FOCAL

Bloque 1. Perfil de los participantes de la clase de ELE. Vinculación de los participantes en el grupo focal con la enseñanza de lengua extranjera para refugiados

- Formación:
- Centro donde la imparte:
- Ciudad y país:
- Vinculación: Contrato a tiempo completo / Contrato a tiempo parcial / Voluntariado.
- Fecha de inicio de la colaboración docente:
- Motivo del inicio de la colaboración docente:
- Fecha de finalización de la colaboración docente:
- Motivo de la finalización de la colaboración docente:
- Número total o aproximado de profesores del centro:
- Número total o aproximado de estudiantes del centro y a su cargo:
- Tipo de clase de lengua (para fines específicos, etc.):
- Perfil del alumnado: ¿Adultos/menores? ¿Imparte clases a refugiados exclusivamente o su aula incorpora a otros estudiantes? ¿Conoce el nivel de formación de su alumnado? ¿Qué lenguas maternas o aprendidas hablan sus alumnos?

Bloque 2. Materiales docentes, estrategias multilingües y competencia cultural

- ¿Qué materiales docentes utiliza? (fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por el centro, fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por el profesor, fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por terceros, libro, etc.)
- Referencia bibliográfica de los materiales (en el caso de materiales elaborados por terceros).

- ¿Utiliza alguna lengua distinta de la lengua de enseñanza en el aula? ¿Cuál y en qué situación?
- ¿Ha recibido formación específica para trabajar como docente con el colectivo de refugiados?
- ¿Cree que este tipo de formación es necesaria?

Bloque 3. Uso de las imágenes en el aula

- Del 1 al 5, en general, ¿cuán importante cree que es usar imágenes para transmitir contenido en el aula de lengua extranjera?
- ¿Cree que las imágenes son especialmente importantes en el caso de la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué tipo de imágenes usa en el aula (pictogramas dibujados en la pizarra, ilustraciones del libro de texto, …)?
- ¿Siente una necesidad de imágenes que ahora no tiene disponibles para transmitir ciertos contenidos? ¿De qué tipo?
- ¿Cómo cree que podría cubrirse esa necesidad?
- ¿Utilizan los estudiantes las imágenes para comunicarse con usted? En caso afirmativo, ¿qué tipo de imágenes emplean?
- ¿Sabe si los estudiantes utilizan las imágenes para comunicarse entre sí (en el caso de grupos donde los estudiantes tengan distintas lenguas maternas)?
- [Presentación de herramientas de generación automática de pictogramas a los participantes] ¿Cómo cree que podría implementarse una herramienta como esta en el aula? ¿Le sería útil como docente? ¿Cree que les sería útil a los estudiantes?
- ¿Se le ocurren otras herramientas que podrían desarrollarse para este fin comunicativo?

¿Tiene algún otro comentario que quiera compartir con nosotros?

Chapter 6. Researching Displaced Persons During COVID-19: Catering for Users' Specific Needs in Media Accessibility Projects

Researching Displaced Persons During COVID-19: Catering for Users' Specific Needs in Media Accessibility Projects

Abstract

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created additional barriers to human interactions. For those conducting research with displaced persons, the barriers posed by COVID-19 add up to the existing linguistic, cultural, geographical and ethical obstacles that this type of research involves. In most cases, researchers have resorted to technological solutions to bridge the communication gap caused by the pandemic. However, the heterogeneous profiles and disadvantaged circumstances of displaced persons require further considerations and planning. This paper examines the experiences of researchers conducting research with displaced persons during COVID. It outlines the special considerations taken and provides recommendations for those conducting research in similar contexts. The communities that engaged in this research were based in Greece, Italy, Lebanon and Spain. While the focus of the study is displaced persons, the insights presented can be of benefit to those conducting research with other vulnerable groups.

Key words: accessibility, asylum-seekers, COVID-19, data collection, refugees, research.

6. 1. Introduction

The restrictions imposed to control the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) have created additional barriers to human interactions in most countries. For those conducting research with displaced persons, the barriers posed by COVID-19 add up to the existing linguistic, cultural, geographical and ethical obstacles that this type of research involves.

In this paper, we present the considerations taken and the implications that arose from conducting research with displaced persons during COVID-19 (April to December 2020). The key purpose of this research is to uncover limitations and offer recommendations for empirical research with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic, including those regarding accessibility, and to map the practices of those conducting research with these persons during these challenging times. This model

could be applied beyond the pandemic as it is adaptable to other research contexts, testing environments, diverse audiences, and disciplines.

In this article, the term *displaced persons* refers to all people subject to non-voluntary migration, regardless of their current administrative status, i.e., those currently seeking asylum, those under subsidiary protection, undocumented migrants, refugees, and any person in need of international protection. This term is used by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to encompass refugees, internally displaced people, asylum-seekers and those under temporary protection (WHO, 2021).

This study is framed within the field of media accessibility studies. Media accessibility studies were born to cater for the access needs of people with disabilities or impairments, through the provision and research of subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing and audio description (AD) for the blind and visually impaired (Greco, 2016; Orero, 2004). More recently in the field of media accessibility, attention has been drawn to secondary or extended audiences that would benefit from accessibility services (Greco, 2018; Jankowska, 2019). For example, the elderly may benefit from AD and dubbing (Ellis, 2016; Jankowska, 2019), and learners of foreign languages or those watching screens in a noisy environment from subtitles (Romero-Fresco, 2013). We posit that displaced persons can also benefit from accessibility services when they arrive in a new country and may not speak or read the host country's language. Research has demonstrated that linguistic, digital and literacy barriers prevent newly arrived migrants and refugees to access that information (Federici & O'Brien, 2020; Translators without Borders, 2017). Indeed, the universalist definition of media accessibility works towards providing access to media products, services and environments to those who would not be able to access them otherwise (Greco, 2016; Szarkowska et al., 2013). Access to information related to regulations on asylum and migration, and access to any support services in the host country is key for displaced persons. This condition is, however, not always met. Applying accessibility principles to communications with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) would facilitate their access to information and aid their participation in new societies.

The study presented herein is framed within a larger study, REBUILD[19], on the creation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools for displaced communities. The next section provides more information on this international project. Among other responsibilities, the role of TransMedia Catalonia in REBUILD is ensuring that the ICT tool is accessible for as wide an audience as possible. The project was ongoing during the COVID-19 outbreak and a number of research activities were carried out following mobility and social restrictions that impacted the way the data was gathered. Like REBUILD, other European projects involve research with migrant populations. Because of the challenges that the restrictions posed to the research of REBUILD, we set to examine how similar projects faced those challenges and what accessibility considerations were adopted when conducting research with displaced populations. The results of that investigation are presented in this article.

This article is structured by first outlining the background and the research context. This is followed by an overview of the methodology. Finally, the findings are reviewed and discussed along with the provision of recommendations for conducting further research under similar circumstances. The insights gained and the reflections of the authors along with those of other researchers and NGO personnel involved in this type of research are also discussed.

6. 2. Background

This paper reports on the considerations taken and the experiences of researchers and NGO personnel when conducting research with displaced persons during the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, we report on the research conducted in three contexts: two H2020 projects, namely, REBUILD and SO-CLOSE, based in Greece, Italy and Spain, and on research carried out on the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Lebanon. The following paragraphs provide an overview of these three research projects. While none

[19] The REBUILD project website can be accessed at https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx

of these projects focus specifically on accessibility, it is a requirement in all three initiatives given the diverse needs of their target groups.

The REBUILD project is a H2020 project, the aim of which is to create ICT tools to support asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant communities. These ICT tools are designed following co-creation and user-centred methodologies to ensure that the tools meet the requirements and needs of its end-users. Another requisite is that the tools and the information contained therein are accessible for as wide a population as possible. This project is currently ongoing (January 2019 to December 2021). During the COVID pandemic, two research actions were conducted: in-depth, online interviews with NGOs staff; and online and face-to-face questionnaires with asylum-seekers, migrants and refugees. The REBUILD project targets displaced communities and service providers in Greece, Italy and Spain. Due to their geographical location, these three countries are often the entry-point for migrants and asylum-seekers from Africa and the Middle East into Europe.

SO-CLOSE[20] is another H2020 project of three years (January 2020 – December 2022), created to contribute to social cohesion and fight refugee marginalization and exclusion through the mediation of innovative digital and artistic tools. The first two research activities of the project were conducted during 2020. The first activity aimed to find a methodology and tool to gather information from the target group in order to inform the subsequent phases of the project. The second activity aimed at developing the co-creative methodology and tools to gather information from the target group, users, cultural institutions and academics. For these two research activities, the project conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (September to December 2020). SO-CLOSE follows a universal design approach and adds social accessibility to the accessibility agenda.

[20] SO-CLOSE project website can be accessed at https://so-close.eu/

The World Food Programme[21] (WFP) is a UN initiative whose objective is the end of hunger and the attainment of food security and nutrition by 2030. Though not exclusively, WFP supports refugee families in Lebanon by providing them with cash assistance to buy food. The programme also helps vulnerable families to meet their essential needs through long term initiatives. Lebanon has the world's highest refugee presence per capita; it is estimated that 25% of the population is made up of refugees (World Food Programme, 2021). In 2020, WFP conducted a series of multi-purpose cash assistance studies with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The accessibility of the methods and tools used for data collection in this project was a condition to ensure equal participation by all within the target community in the study.

Research for the three studies presented above involved engaging with heterogeneous groups under special circumstances propitiated by COVID-19. Thus, a number of considerations had to be taken prior to developing the methodology and collecting data. Such considerations include the accessibility of the research tools, materials, and activities. The next section presents specialised literature on the implications that research with displaced persons entails, and the recommendations for such research during COVID-19, including accessibility recommendations, by two international organisations conducting research in social and humanitarian projects and experts in the field of accessibility.

6. 2.1. Methodological and Accessibility Considerations When Researching Displaced Persons

Research with vulnerable groups involves a series of special considerations. Displaced persons are considered vulnerable because they have typically experienced life-changing upheaval, danger, loss and fear, and face enormous adjustments to life in a new environment (UNHCR & IDC, 2016). In the host country, the majority also face linguistic, cultural and legal barriers. Some are also survivors of trauma and torture, due to experiences in their home country or the migration journey itself, which can be

[21] The World Food Programme's website can be accessed at https://www.wfp.org/

traumatic and involve torture and violence, including gender-based violence. Other vulnerabilities factor being stateless, a victim of trafficking, disabled, an unaccompanied or separated child, a pregnant or nursing mother, addicted to substances and/or elderly (UNHCR & IDC, 2016, p. 22). In some cases, one person can experience more than one of these circumstances, which translates to double or multiple vulnerabilities. Mental health issues are also more prevalent among displaced persons. Indeed, a recent study has shown that Syrian refugees can be over ten times more likely than the general population to develop post-traumatic stress and other disorders (Peconga & Høgh Thøgersen, 2020). Furthermore, while some individuals resettle with ease, others risk prolonged and indefinite detention (UNHCR & IDC, 2016). Lack of accommodation and other essential necessities and overcrowding in refugee camps or other asylum centres are recurring issues for newly arrived asylum-seekers (Peconga & Høgh Thøgersen, 2020).

As a result, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants need specific safeguards in terms of research ethics (European Commission, 2020). Some of these special considerations include data minimisation (the principle of limiting data collection to only what is required to fulfil a specific purpose as per the EU GDPR Directive 2018), careful consideration of the data that is collected, the justification of all interactions with participants and the assurance that participants fully understand the implications of participating in the study (European Commission, 2020). Regarding informed consent, the European Commission suggests adopting less formalised procedures than in traditional research, such as including a cultural insider in the process, working with a recognised NGO or using oral consent (European Commission, 2020). The EC (2020) states that for oral consent, the knowledge and approval of a competent Research Ethics Committee is required (p. 3). Written consent involves complex and legal information that is difficult to translate into other languages. Signing consent forms could also jeopardise the participants' anonymity (European Commission, 2020). The research should also add value to the lives of the people that are being researched, who ought to be recognised as subjects in the process and not simply sources of data (Hugman, 2005, 2010). In this regard, Pittaway, Bartolomei and Hugman (2010) claim

that in the case of research with displaced persons, the notion that research data belong to the researcher and the institution should be contested.

Other recommendations include involving individuals from migrant or refugee backgrounds in the research to mitigate potential risks and power differences (European Commission, 2020; Pittaway et al., 2010) or, more preferably, using refugee interviewers (Temple & Moran, 2006). To preserve the anonymity of participants, it is recommended that participants be invited to use a pseudonym and to also avoid recording the sessions unless it is necessary (Temple & Moran, 2006). Indeed, voice has become a focal point for supervisory authorities, and it is considered one of the most sensitive and dangerous aspects of personal data to be exploited in our current data era (Mediartis, 2020).

The many regions and countries of origin of refugees require that research with refugees be multilingual. In this regard, it is necessary to involve translators and interpreters to overcome the linguistic barriers. Translation and interpreting are indeed fundamental in creating relationships and opportunities for communication and exchange. In addition to facilitating effective communication, linguistic mediation, ideally through professional interpreters, could neutralise negative impacts and strengthen relationships among researchers and participants (Hunt et al., 2019; Pittaway et al., 2010). However, the provision of translation and interpreting is still deficient in NGOs and public service providers supporting migrants and refugees (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021).

Finally, taking into account disability-related considerations alongside linguistic and cultural barriers to participation in research enables the "most invisible," and often under-researched demographic of displaced persons, to engage in research (Harris & Roberts, 2006, p. 157). Harris and Roberts's study provides practical measures on research with disabled refugees, the challenges faced, and how these were overcome in their qualitative study. These included producing materials in a variety of languages and formats, choosing venues that do not pose social and physical barriers to participation, engaging with disabled refugee organisations and, above all, flexibility

and inventive approaches to overcome the barriers and issues that are likely to arise during the research process (Harris & Roberts, 2006). For example, consent forms should be translated into the languages of the participants given the complexity of legal jargon that these usually employ. In some cases, the consent forms may have to be read out loud to illiterate participants, or to persons who cannot read different alphabets. Easy to read consent forms and other research materials could also benefit the engagement of certain participants as they facilitate comprehension especially for persons with reading and learning difficulties (Arias-Badia & Fernandez-Torné, 2020; Bernabé Caro & Orero, 2019). As recommended by experts on accessibility studies (Romero-Fresco, 2013; Orero et al., 2018), taking accessibility into account from the beginning of the design process, in this case, the research design process, allows for the requirements to be identified as research is being designed.

Due to various restrictions and other health-related constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, additional considerations are required when conducting research with displaced persons. The next section outlines the recommendations provided by two international organisations for research conducted with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.2.2. Considerations When Researching Displaced Persons During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The previous section details the considerations that research with displaced persons deserves. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed additional challenges, driving researchers to modify their approaches to data collection. Because of the vulnerability of the target community, research with displaced people during the COVID 19 pandemic requires careful thought. This section will look at two recently produced guidance notes that outline a series of recommendations for research during the COVID-19 crisis with displaced persons, as well as the opportunities that the new context can afford. The guidance notes were produced by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Glow Consultants (2020), and CartONG (2020).

The Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Glow Consultants produced a guidance note as a part of the Humanitarian Horizons research program, aimed at adding unique value to humanitarian action by generating evidence and creating a conversation for change. The note is intended for researchers and operational actors as a guide on how to adjust to remote data collection. The directions given in the guide are technically drawn and provide key takeaways from their past collaborations with a range of humanitarian agencies (HAG & Glow, 2020). The second guidance note discussed below was published with the support of the French Development Agency and a Non-Governmental Organization CartONG, specializing in Information Management. The document has a parallel focus, and its key purpose is to answer their partners' questions regarding collecting data during the COVID-19 crisis (CartONG, 2020).

6. 2.2.1. Recommendations

HAG and Glow (2020) provide a comprehensive guide on data gathering and remote monitoring methods and tools during the COVID-19 crisis. Their approach is underpinned by the following criteria: reducing risk, simplicity and rigour (p. 4). Their key recommendations are: (1) limiting the amount of data that actors are willing to collect by prioritizing sites and targeting communities; (2) ensuring that the remote tools used are appropriate for targeted communities (certain displaced communities may lack internet access, and using online platforms would not be advised in such cases); (3) collaborating with others who work in the research field to share the benefits of the already collected data and prevent the recollection of data that have already been collected by other trusted researchers. In this way, actors can overcome the challenge of travelling restrictions (HAG & Glow, 2020). Indeed, sharing the experiences of other researchers is the essence of the present paper.

CartONG's guidance note (2020) provides a summary of generic recommendations applicable to data collection management in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The list includes (1) avoiding "risky" data collection for teams and participants, (2) sharing your data as much as possible to limit unnecessary data collection and (3) integrating a data protection component into our new tools (p. 2). Additionally, the note provides a

list of technological alternatives to data collection and the exchange of information with displaced persons. The alternatives to survey-type data collection were divided into two groups. The first one is the interviewer administering a questionnaire via phone call or using CATI software. The interviewer asks questions over the phone and records them using a computer interface such as Microsoft Excel or Google sheet. Alternatively, the interviewer can use CATI software, which takes care of the call administration. Unlike the first group, the second group specifies alternative ways in which the interviewee can self-administer the questionnaire, including SMS, USSD, mobile web, or SVI/IVR. The interviewee receives a simple structured SMS and sends back the answers as the survey proceeds. USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) is also used to send text messages and it is considered a faster alternative to the regular SMS since the answers are recorded right away on a web platform. Thirdly, an organisation may share a link with the interviewee so that they may complete the questionnaire directly via their mobile. Lastly, the final remote alternative to survey-type data collection was using an Interactive voice response (IVR) in which the respondent uses keys on their smartphone to answer pre-recorded survey questions (CartONG, 2020).

The choice of one technology over others should be based on the needs of the participants. For example, if a participant is blind or illiterate, phone interviewing will be the most appropriate. However, if the interviewer and interviewee do not speak the same language, or a participant does not have a high level of the language of the study, sending either a written or a translated version of the questionnaire would allow this person to participate in the study. While these guidelines have been drafted for collecting data from displaced persons, they also present useful tools for research in other contexts.

6. 2.2.2. Challenges and Opportunities

Among the drawbacks, HAG & Glow (2020) report that while data collection was challenging, some opportunities arose throughout this process. First, it bolstered researchers' skills to remotely collect data and access communities during lockdowns. Secondly, it entailed coordination with partners who had access to vulnerable groups

and displaced communities, resulting in an increase in data implementation and in the expansion of networks. Travel restrictions lessened access to destinations considered high-risk. This limitation reduced face-to-face interactions with interviewees, which resulted in a lack of in-depth interviews. Finally, the continuous need to respond to the emergencies posed by COVID-19 increased the workload for the organizations. As a result, these organisations had less time and resources to collect data safely and with the necessary rigour.

Researchers also faced additional challenges when conducting their studies resulting from the necessity to employ online data collection methods (CartONG, 2020). First, a large number of participants did not have access to the planned alternatives, such as a telephone or internet access. Even though some of the targeted groups owned telephones, these owners were proportionally more likely to be young men. Therefore, accessing certain ages and genders was difficult. The fact that some communities may not trust technology, considering it a spying tool, forced the researchers to work on these negative perceptions before collecting data in order to overcome the challenge of inherent bias. Furthermore, the bias of illiteracy appeared when using technology for data gathering because it required written exchanges. Analysing the data collected using alternative methods required a certain degree of reservation and an acknowledgement of the identified biases (CartONG,2020).

6. 3. The study

This study involves data gathered from three larger projects: REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and a third-party independent study on the WFP. These three studies conducted research with displaced persons in 2020. To gather the experiences and insights of the researchers involved in these activities, a qualitative questionnaire was designed and administered in order to form an overall picture of the topic under study. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents and the research activities that they conducted in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The following subsections outline the specific research activities conducted in each project.

The qualitative questionnaire was designed by the authors and administered to researchers from REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and WFP in December 2020. The questionnaire aimed to gather their experiences, insights and reflections on conducting research with displaced persons during COVID. The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions enquiring about the ways in which they had adapted their research in light of COVID-19 and their insights on the research process. Their methodological recommendations for future research with displaced persons under similar circumstances were also collected. The questionnaire can be found in Annex 1.

The qualitative data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved reading the questionnaire responses iteratively and identifying repeating themes. Then, the themes were coded or tagged. Once coding was completed, the codes were checked against each other and back to the original data set to ensure they were coherent and comprehensive. This process generated a thematic "map" of the analysis. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented in Section 4.

Respondent	Project	Country of data collection	Research activities
Respondent 1	REBUILD	Spain	Qualitative interviews and comprehensibility tests
Respondent 2	WPF	Lebanon	Multi-purpose cash assistance studies
Respondent 3	REBUILD	Greece	Comprehensibility tests AND online and phone questionnaires
Respondent 4	REBUILD	Italy	Comprehensibility tests AND online and phone questionnaires
Respondent 5	SO-CLOSE	Spain	Semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups

Table 9. Outline of the respondents and research activities conducted during the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Author's own elaboration

6. 3.1. Research for REBUILD

Five qualitative interviews were conducted with NGO staff during May and June 2020 in the framework of the REBUILD project. The objective of the interviews was to map the digital and multilingual practices of third sector organisations working with refugee communities. More information on the study and its results can be found in Jiménez-Andrés (2021). Because the interviews were conducted either during or shortly after the first lockdown (March – May 2020), the participants shared information relevant to this study on the ways in which they had adapted their work to the new situation and their new modes of interaction with their beneficiaries.

In addition to the qualitative interviews, comprehensibility tests were administered to migrants and refugees in May 2020. These comprehensibility tests were part of the evaluation of the visual communication of the REBUILD app. In total, 31 participants completed the tests. The participants resided in Greece, Italy and Spain and their countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Morocco, Ukraine and Venezuela. The tests were conducted online using Google Forms, and in print (face-to-face). Lastly, online and phone questionnaires were administered to potential end-users to gather data that would train the artificial intelligence in the technological tool.

6.3.2. Research for SO-CLOSE

To gather information during the initial stages of the project, fieldwork was conducted with all major stakeholders: refugee and asylum seeker communities, policymakers, cultural institutions, NGOs and academics. In total, 197 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted across the following four EU member states: Italy, Spain, Poland, and Greece. The individual interviews were conducted online and face-to-face, depending on the availability, location and needs/profile of the participants. Following the interviews, a series of focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders to delve deeper into the data gathered during the interviews. These were also

conducted online and face-to-face, following the same criteria as the focus groups. The focus groups involved between four and six participants.

6.3.3. Research for the UN's World Food Programme

The WFP commissioned independent research on WPF's multi-purpose cash assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. To that end, a number of research studies were conducted with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic. These were (1) multi-sectoral impact studies of the multi-purpose cash (MPC), (2) accountability studies of affected populations, (3) value for money studies, and (4) user journey studies. The overall purpose of such studies was to propose recommendations to improve the WFP's multi-purpose cash programme.

6.4. Researching Displaced Persons During COVID-19: Insights and Recommendations

The thematic analysis of the qualitative questionnaires reveals three key areas that deserve consideration when researching displaced persons during a pandemic or in circumstances similar to those created by COVID-19. An overview of these can be found in Table 2. They are presented and discussed in the following subsections in relation to extant research.

Categories	Recommendations
Methodological recommendations	Limit data collection to essential data: consider using data from secondary sources and contemplate involving fewer participants than initially anticipated if possible
	Adopt innovative and creative approaches
	For face-to-face data collection, prepare for unexpected circumstances (change in restrictions, participants being infected or having to isolate, among others)
	Make data collection activities brief
	Avoid group data collection methods (such as focus groups)
	Acknowledge the limitations of the sampling strategy

Translation, interpreting, and accessibility	For remote data collection, ensure the forms are as accessible as possible (easy to fill in, using easy to read words, and available in various languages and formats)
	Engage interpreters and cultural mediators in the data collection exercises
	Ensure that interpreters can conduct phone interpretation with the means available
Other considerations	Invest time building trust with participants remotely
	Examine whether or not your participants have a negative perception of technology
	Take the data collection interaction as an opportunity to support the participants and raise awareness of the pandemic

Table 10. Recommendations for data collection during the COVID-19 crisis. Source: Author's own elaboration.

6.4.1. Methodological Considerations

Above all, planning and executing research during COVID-19 required innovation and creativity (Respondents 1 and 2). For the REBUILD project, the comprehensibility tests were originally planned face-to-face with groups of ten to fifteen participants. Due to the restrictions to mobility and group gathering, they were subsequently conducted in different formats, face-to-face both individually and in small groups, and remotely with participants who could take them autonomously. Overall, more time was invested in planning and designing the data collection activities (Respondents 1 and 4).

Following the guidelines provided by HAG & Glow (2020) and CartONG (2020), prior to the start of data collection, researchers in the REBUILD team pondered whether the data collection was necessary. This recommendation is relevant not only during a pandemic – it is a general recommendation by the European Commission for conducting research with displaced persons (European Commission, 2020). The recommendation from the EC to limit data collection to essential data had been observed when the study was designed, but the team reassessed what data was critical for the project to continue and what data could be collected from secondary sources.

Hence, the team limited data collection to essential and critical data for the implementation of the project and halved the number of participants per study to reduce risks for staff, partners and participants.

In line with the recommendations by HAG & Glow (2020), Respondent 1 suggested that using data from secondary sources may be the most responsible and effective way to ensure the study goes forward. Restrictions can be imposed from one day to the next and valuable time may have been misspent on designing a data collection activity that could not take place due to a change in the restrictions. Besides, other researchers may have already collected similar data or be planning to do so in the near future. Connecting and sharing data with other researchers and projects carrying out similar studies could allow researchers to use the data that others have already collected or plan to collect.

An important consideration is to keep data collection activities brief in the cases where they are necessary (Respondent 2). Asylum-seekers and refugees in some contexts receive multiple calls from organisations that support them—UNHCR, NGOs, and associations—and spend a lot of time taking part in research, which can lead to research fatigue (Respondent 2). Because of this, it is recommended to keep the interactions with the participants to a minimum. It is important to take into account that, in some cases, the team in charge of the data collection is the same one that is supporting the displaced community. During the first months of lockdown and the restrictions that followed, the workload for these teams multiplied, especially during the first weeks of lockdown when they had to move all their services to online platforms (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). Researchers must be mindful of their increased efforts and workload when designing the methodology and selecting data collection tools for their study (Respondent 1).

In some cases, researchers were unable to travel to the field to collect the data. Those in the field (i.e., social workers, enumerators) were trained remotely to collect data on the premises (Respondents 2 and 4). This involved having regular meetings and providing a step-by-step guide to those gathering the data on how to do so adequately

and safely. Due to the current circumstances, the possibility of having various data collection phases or activities was not recommended or, in some cases, feasible. Hence, anticipating potential complications was necessary so that data could be collected regardless of any unforeseen circumstances (Respondent 1). For example, the participants invited to the study might not be able to attend because they tested positive or had been in contact with somebody who tested positive.

In other cases, data collection was carried out remotely, with no research team in the field. In such cases, data collection tools needed to be self-explanatory and accessible (Respondent 1). In the REBUILD project, the comprehensibility tests were conducted both face-to-face and online. The test was translated into the languages spoken by the participants and sent as a link to those who had an internet connection and a smartphone or computer. For those without devices or non-literate persons, one-to-one or small group sessions were planned in open spaces and the tests were printed and conducted face-to-face. In this regard, the team ensured that completing the form online would not have undesirable effects on participants, such as consuming a lot of data or having to deal with a form which would be overly difficult to fill in (Respondent 1). Online data collection activities allowed for the fact that some participants have little data allowance on their phones, which they might be using for other, more pressing, purposes (Respondent 3). For example, the questionnaire was conducted using a free, easy to fill online survey tool. The questionnaire contained text only (i.e., background pictures were avoided) to ensure that it consumed as little data as possible.

Regarding data collection tools, group interviews and focus groups were replaced by individual or small-group tools (Respondents 1 and 2). For example, in the WFP, focus groups were substituted by individual phone interviews. In the REBUILD project, for the face-to-face comprehensibility tests with small groups, the research team was mindful of whom to recruit, avoiding involving participants who were more vulnerable to COVID such as the elderly, immunocompromised participants, or those with pre-existing medical conditions (Respondent 3). The recruitment of participants was also affected by the restrictions to movement imposed by COVID-19. As a result, in the three projects

detailed in this article, the participants who were involved in face-to-face data collection activities resided in the same municipality as the researchers or in the areas where the researchers could travel to. Both limitations to recruitment were acknowledged in the reporting of the results, as the sampling method prevented researchers from having the diverse sample that was initially planned.

6.4.2. Translation, Interpreting and Accessibility

As introduced in the previous section, the accessibility of the data-gathering tool enabled participants to take part in the studies autonomously (Respondent 1 and 3). Accessibility is understood here as making the data gathering tool accessible to as many participants as possible: be they people with disabilities, speakers of other languages, non-literates or low literates, those using mobile devices or those with slow networks. The accessibility of the tool should be taken into consideration at the design stage (Web Accessibility Initiative, 2021). Some accessibility recommendations include delivering content in various formats, making content easy to understand, minimising distractions and using elements that are familiar to the participants (MDN Web Docs, 2021; Web Accessibility Initiative, 2021). For research purposes, a recommendation is to make questionnaires as easy to complete as possible.

For data gathered over the phone, phone interpretation was required with participants that speak other languages (Respondent 3). In the REBUILD project, part of the data was gathered via phone from participants who could not visit the organisations' premises nor fill the questionnaire independently. For participants who spoke other languages, interpreters were involved in the data gathering. This type of interpreting requires a three-way telephone conversation; a practice that had not been adopted in this organisation before. This required additional planning and training of the interpreters involved. In this organisation, the interpreters are refugees that have received training in translation and interpreting from another NGO. Furthermore, the interpreting was not supported by any specialised equipment or software. As a result, the team experienced some initial complications when conducting this data gathering exercise (Respondent 3). Because conducting a pilot study with potential users may

not be a possibility during the COVID-19 crisis, a recommendation is to pilot a collection activity internally to anticipate any complications before data collection starts.

It is also recommended to engage with interpreters or cultural mediators and to inform participants about the research and the implications of taking part in the study before the data-gathering exercise, especially for face-to-face interactions (Respondent 5). In other circumstances, this can be done on the same day as the data gathering activity. However, due to the health risks associated with COVID-19, informing potential participants about the purpose of the research, its implications and the conditions under which the research will take place before the activity is vital so that participants can make an informed decision about their participation in the study. In the REBUILD project, translators, interpreters and/or bilingual interviewers and researchers supported all data collection activities. In the research activities concerning this article, the research team talked to the participants taking part in face-to-face data collection by phone prior to the data collection exercise (Respondents 1, 3 and 4).

6.4.3. Other Considerations: Trust, Technology and Support to the Participants

Other considerations raised by participants concerned the relationships between researchers and participants, the use of technology, and the provision of non-research related support to participants.

In terms of the relationships between researchers and participants, two respondents raised their concerns about the difficulties of building trust with participants remotely (Respondents 2 and 5). Respondents explained that they found it more challenging to create a safe space for participants to speak openly given that the discussions were held over the phone. Similarly, it is important to note that, in the case of online data gathering, some asylum-seekers and refugees have developed mistrust towards the Internet. As stated by CartONG (2020), it is recommended that attention be paid to the negative view of these tools prior to data collection. Engaging interpreters and cultural mediators in the study can also build more trust with participants (Hunt et al., 2019; Pittaway et al., 2010).

With regards to technology, an ICT tool that is widely used is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is popular because it is easy to use, affordable and allows for multimodal messaging (text, voice, video, image). For organisations supporting displaced persons in Europe, it is often the default ICT tool for communication with its beneficiaries (Arias-Badia & Jiménez-Andrés, 2021; Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). However, its suitability is contested as sharing confidential information via WhatsApp does not comply with the European GDPR and US HIPAA Act of data protection (John, 2018; Masoni & Guelfi, 2020). While these organisations do not favour its use, they often do not have a viable alternative for communication with beneficiaries (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). Respondent 2 recognised that they had no other way to send the consent forms. Researchers are advised to find alternative tools to interact with their participants, and share and collect data with each other, especially if the participants are considered vulnerable.

Finally, given the context in which the data collection is taking place, researchers must anticipate that the data collection exchange can be an opportunity for displaced communities to discuss any issues or questions that they may have due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent 2 recommended having a service map at hand in case participants need to be directed towards a service provider to receive support. The data collection exercise is also an opportunity to inform and raise awareness on the pandemic; the researchers and teams involved in data collection are therefore encouraged to share important messages regarding hygiene practices and transmission prevention during data collection (CartONG, 2020). Research activities ought to be responsive to needs of the researched participants, and ultimately empower the community, more so when working with vulnerable groups.

6.5. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected field research across the world, hindering data collection activities for many scientific projects. As a result of COVID-19 related restrictions, researchers have had to reformulate their research methodologies, shifting to alternative methods of data collection. This paper has examined researchers' experiences and insights during 2020 and offers recommendations for conducting

studies with displaced persons during 2020, the year that the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. This model has already been successfully replicated in the H2020 funded project TRACTION[22] which had to test inmates at a prison in Portugal.

Drawing on the results of an online qualitative questionnaire, this study has gathered the considerations and alternative methods of data collection employed by researchers in three projects: REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and WFP. Underpinning these considerations and recommendations is an awareness of the vulnerability of the target community. The key recommendations include limiting activities and data collection to critical data, adopting creative approaches and favouring individual versus group data collection methods. Alternative methods of data collection frequently require the use of technology, which may not be suitable for certain communities. In this regard, researchers shed light on the importance of making online tools for data collection as accessible as possible, by including easy-to-understand content in multiple languages and formats. Engaging interpreters and cultural mediators throughout the process has also proven essential to establish effective communication with participants and build trust in the study. Finally, researchers are encouraged to consider the data collection activities as an opportunity to spread awareness of the pandemic among the participants of the study.

Due to the uncertainty of the duration of COVID-19, innovation and creativity will play a vital role in the research conducted during the pandemic. It is hoped that this study can support other researchers in conducting safe and rigorous research with displaced persons for the duration of the health crisis.

6.7. Acknowledgement

This study is part of the article-based PhD thesis of María Jiménez-Andrés in the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) within the PhD program in Translation and Intercultural Studies. This research has been partially funded by the H2020 project REBUILD, under Grant Agreement

[22] TRACTION project website can be accessed at https://www.traction-project.eu/

822215. The Commission's support for this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views of the authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein. María Jiménez-Andrés is member of TransMedia Catalonia, an SGR research group funded by "Secretaria d'Universitats I Recerca del Departament d'Empresa I Coneixement de la Generalitat de Catalunya" (2017SGR113).

With special thanks to the respondents of the questionnaire for their time.

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Annex 1. Qualitative Questionnaire

1. How was research during COVID different from the previous research you undertook with displaced populations?

2. What special considerations did you take prior to undertaking research?

3. If you had to conduct more research now, what would you do differently? Is there something that did not work?

4. Is there anything else that you would like to share on this topic?

5. What recommendations will you give to people doing research during COVID with displaced populations?

About Your Project

In which country did you do the research?

What project do you work on?

Can you briefly describe what type of research did you carry out and what was the purpose?

Chapter 7. Discussion and conclusions

This concluding chapter discusses the most significant findings of this thesis as well as their implications and the limitations of the study. It also suggests areas for possible future research emerging from these conclusions.

The aim of this study was to gain better insight into the communication and mediation practices, as well as the management of language diversity, of third sector organisations working with refugees. As defined in the Introduction, in this thesis the term “third sector organisation” (TSO) refers to nongovernmental organisations and other organisations that do not fall within the market or private classifications which support refugees in European countries. A qualitative case-study approach was used to explore the subject, drawing from sources of data such as interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, and the analysis of classroom language learning materials. The study focused on TSOs operating in four countries: Italy, Greece, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The main question that this dissertation aimed to answer was to what extent are the communication practices of third sector organisations supporting refugees accessible for their service users. To respond to that question, the following questions were posed:

1. How do organisations supporting refugees in host countries communicate and interact with their service users?

2. How do refugees access and grasp integration-related information in the host countries?

3. Is current integration-related content and services accessible?

The next sections summarise the insights that were gained through the research conducted for this thesis. Section 7.1 examines the communication practices of TSOs before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 7.2 explores how TSOs manage language diversity. Section 7.3 responds to the second research question, delving into refugees’ sources of information and the factors influencing access to services and information. Section 7.4 reflects on the accessibility of the information and services

provided by TSOs and offers recommendations on how TSOs can facilitate access to information and services to their refugee service users.

7.1. Communication practices of TSOs with their service users

This question was addressed in chapters 2, 3, and 4. The discussion was based on the analysis of data from in-depth interviews with TSO staff and questionnaires. The discussion revolved around the online and face-to-face communication practices at TSOs with their service users.

7.1.1. Face-to-face communication at TSOs

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, interactions between staff and service users at these organisations routinely took place at the organisations' premises. Service users were required to visit the organisations' premises to receive services and information, i.e., appointments, meetings with social workers, classes, and legal consultations, among others.

For the most part, the exchanges between staff and service users were oral. In some cases, when interlocutors do not share a language, exchanges were multimodal (oral to visual or oral to written). These included the filling out of written documents such as forms, personal data management forms (consent forms) and delivering information brochures, using images and other visual or audio-visual information to convey meaning, and exchanges mediated by machine translation tools.

Communication in foreign languages was found to be a requisite to achieve successful communication at TSOs. A significant number of service users lacked the language competence to communicate with TSO staff in the local languages. While some service users may be native speakers of the host country language (as it is the case with Venezuelans in Spain) or have an adequate command of the host country language, others do not, especially those who are new to the host country. For some, the TSO staff were their first contacts in the host country.

However, communication in foreign languages at TSOs is not guaranteed. Broadly speaking, TSO staff have professional backgrounds in health, social, and legal fields. For employment at TSOs, speaking foreign languages has not been a requirement. While there are some exceptions, staff at TSOs did not typically have a command of foreign languages. Language teachers, who are often engaged on a volunteer basis, are the only professionals at TSOs who have a linguistic background.

As a result, staff had to resort to other strategies to bridge the communication gap. These included involving colleagues who spoke the language, employing visual support such as pictograms or images, or handing translated brochures or forms to service users. The use of free, open-source machine translation tools, such as Google Translate, which the authors anticipated would be widespread, was infrequent. Interpreter-mediated practices at TSOs, which were common, will be explored in section 7.2.1.

7.1.2. Remote communication at TSOs

The data shows that remote communication at TSOs prior to March 2020 was close to non-existent. Prior to the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interactions between TSOs and service users took place face to face at the TSO premises. Pandemic mobility restrictions forced many to communicate using digital, virtual, and remote means, and this digitalisation of communication was novel for many TSOs, who had not had to communicate remotely to this extent before. From March 2020, communication with service users began to be established remotely, online or via telephone. Interactions are now maintained via WhatsApp, phone calls, social media platforms, and video-conferencing software. The data demonstrated that WhatsApp is employed extensively among TSOs for communication with their service users. The app’s multimodality, or the interplay between verbal and non-verbal modes of communication, is one of the reasons for its adoption. App users can send communications in the form of visual photos or videos, audio recordings, written text

messages, and file attachments. The app is also user-friendly, accessible, and both service users and TSO staff are familiar with it. The data showed that people who cannot read or write use the audio feature. Those with low levels of competence in the host country language reproduce messages several times or copy written messages in Google Translate so that they can read them in their languages and vice versa.

The issue of how they dealt with language diversity in the delivery of online services was not raised by most of the organisations during the interviews. During the initial weeks that followed lockdown, the organisations put all their efforts into transferring all services online. Staff did not allude to the existence of interpreter-mediated communication to facilitate access to online services during the COVID-19 pandemic. While COVID-19 brought about many changes to the organisations' communication processes, the management of language diversity continued to be given a backseat. The exception was the organisation based in Greece, which reported conducting three-way telephone interpreting.

7.2. TSO management of language diversity

This question was addressed in chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5. The discussion was based on the analysis of data from in-depth interviews with TSO staff, questionnaires, a focus group with language teachers, and an analysis of learning materials.

The analysis of the data provided insights on the communication and language practices of third sector organisations with their service users. The results indicate that the organisations examined in this study did not have explicit language or translation policies. According to Spolsky (2004, pp. 8, 217), however, real language policies are what takes place within an organisation, rather than what is outlined in a policy document. The study of an organisation's language use in daily practice can give a view into its de facto language policies (ibid).

Language practices at the organisations studied were influenced by the beliefs of management teams on the importance of languages, translation, and interpreting. The study presented in chapters 3 and 4 showed that language diversity was run differently

at each organisation. The two main ways in which organisations dealt with language diversity were (1) offering courses on the host country languages, and (2) translation and interpreting. While teaching the host country languages to service users was a primary issue in all organisations, what was translated and by whom varied according to the views of management towards translation and their available funds. It was found that for some organisations translation and interpreting was a priority, while for others, translation and interpreting did not hold such a prominent position. The next two sections delve deeper into the translation and interpreting practices of organisations, and the teaching of host country languages. These practices are also summarised in Figure 9.

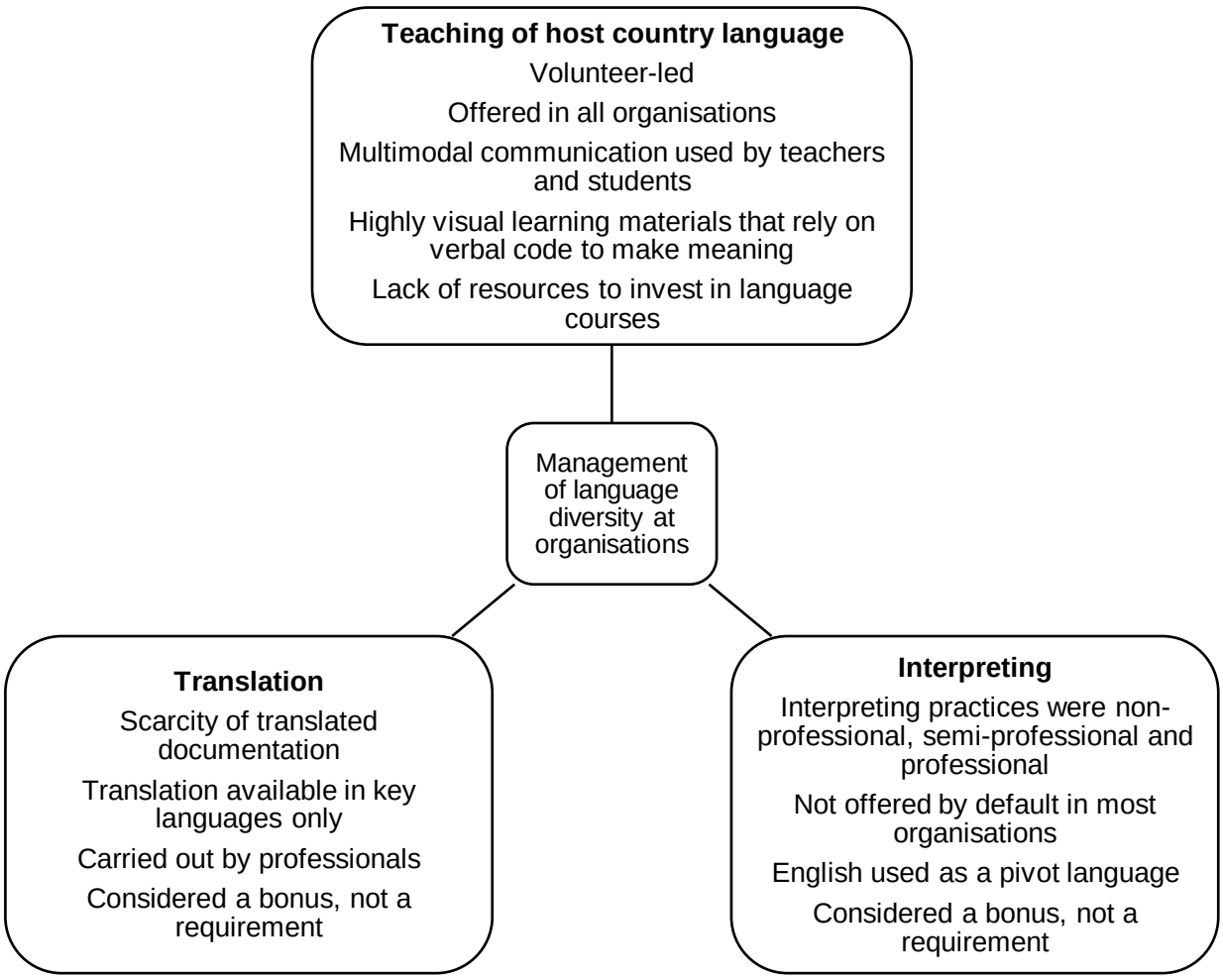

Figure 9. Management of language diversity at organisations.

7.2.1. Translation and interpreting

The data demonstrated that translation and interpreting in the TSOs examined in this study remains a peripheral issue, casually managed and whose value is underestimated by organisations. The data illustrates that the majority of organisations carried out some form of translation and interpreting. Nonetheless, it was not sufficient to meet the organisations' communication needs.

The questionnaire data presented in Chapter 6, which reviews data collected from 53 organisations, revealed that, in general, staff at the organisations recognised the key role of translation and interpreting to establish effective communication with their service users. However, staff's responses highlighted the issue of a lack of translation and interpreting. For staff, the lack of translation and interpreting was at the core of the communication issues at the organisations.

Despite the fact that most organisations attributed the lack of translation and interpreting to their limited funding, the beliefs of management towards these practices are considered to be central to their deficiency. Chapter 3 analysed the translation and interpreting practices at five TSOs. Regarding funding, two of the organisations secured funding specifically for professional linguistic mediation (be it in the form of translators, interpreters, or cultural mediators). Another organisation resorted to volunteers for interpreting, and another only had interpreters in exceptional circumstances. One of these organisations had funding for translation that they did not plan to spend. As stated by the manager of the organisation, translating would not add any value to their integration programmes.

According to TSO staff, the material translated was scarce. Staff consistently reported that more content should be available in other languages. While there is no single rule on what organisations decide to translate, application and registration forms, along with other legal documents, are viewed as important content to translate. At certain organisations, official documents such as forms were the only documents translated. The materials that were translated were available in so-called *majority* languages:

English, French or Arabic. Speakers of so-called *minority languages* were at a disadvantage when compared to speakers of French or English. For example, translations into Kurdish and Farsi were rarely available.

This choice has implications beyond communicative difficulties or misunderstandings. By translating content to certain languages only (or by not translating at all), organisations are implicitly deciding who has access to services and information. This circumstance amounts to discrimination on a linguistic basis. Piler (2017, p. 103) discusses how linguistic discrimination is seen as perfectly legitimate in some modern states while other types of discrimination are widely prohibited.

As discussed above, despite the deficiency in the provision of translations, organisations did not resort to volunteers to translate their content. Volunteers are part of the TSO ecosystem, especially in humanitarian contexts (Betts & Bloom, 2014). The TSOs studied here engaged volunteers in their programmes and services, i.e., education programmes, food provision, and recreational activities, among others. Nonetheless, volunteer translation was not widespread. Overall, professional translators were employed to carry out translations. In contrast with the results of other studies in the field (Tesseur, 2015), translation was not seen as an activity that can be carried out by merely anyone who has sufficient knowledge of the source and target languages.

While this study does not advocate for volunteer translation and interpreting, it recognises that this practice oftentimes can be a viable and inexpensive solution to the communication issues of the organisations. The underlying factors surrounding the organisations' decision not to engage in volunteer translation are, therefore, worth exploring. This choice is believed to be an illustration of their translation views, that is, a lack of awareness of the contribution that translation and interpreting can make to (1) the organisations' impact; (2) users' access to services, integration, and satisfaction; and (3) increased efficiency in the organisations' work. The next section expands on the language practices at the organisations studied.

With regards to interpreting, the practices at the TSOs explored range from professional, to semi-professional and non-professional; these are either on a paid or on a volunteer basis. Broadly speaking, interpreting was ad hoc, available on demand and typically reserved for exchanges with health professionals or authorities, i.e., police officers, hospital visits, psychological evaluations. A recurrent practice at the organisations was turning to colleagues, friends, family members, and other service users to act as ad hoc interpreters.

Only one organisation organised volunteers for interpreting. The data shed that interpreting-mediated communication is common practice yet non-systematic at the organisations studied; that is, it is not a provision offered by default. This data is in line with other research in the field of community interpreting (Arumí Ribas et al., 2011; Leon Pinilla et al., 2016).

The Greek organisation presented in chapters 3 and 4 deserves special attention. The organisation differs from the others in their approach to service provision. The organisation adopts a user-centred model that takes into consideration the accessibility needs of service users. In this organisation, the interpreters, who work in-house, are the first point of contact with service users. Interpreters provide information and refer service users to other staff at the organisation to receive the required support. Individuals performing this role (called “interpreters” at the organisation) also carry out interpretations when needed, be it at the organisation’s premises or in other locations, i.e., hospitals. This model, which was unique to this organisation, is an example of how service provision and information can be made more accessible to service users with diverse needs.

The use of English as a pivot language was a recurrent practice at this organisation when an interpreter with Greek as a working language was not available. The use of pivot languages in asylum contexts has been previously reported in the literature (Shlesinger, 2010; UNHCR, 2017), however, in this case, the actors involved were not two interpreters but an interpreter and a TSO staff member. Furthermore, when using English as a pivot language, staff reported using “simple language”, i.e., what is

referred to in accessibility as easy-to-understand language, to make it easier for interpreters to understand. These practices, while far from ideal, are seen as an ad hoc solution to ensure access to information and services to service users who would not be able to access them otherwise.

7.2.2. Teaching of the host country language

Language courses are one the most prevalent linguistic support tools that organisations offer to their service users. The questionnaire data indicated that more than 56% of organisations that took part in the study offered language courses. These included host country language(s) courses, English as a foreign language, and literacy courses. Offering courses on the host country language is a key element of TSO language policies.

More resources tend to be employed to facilitate language comprehension in the language learning classroom setting. This may be because the linguistic background and formal training of language teachers helps to equip them with a range of resources to bridge the communication gap. Multimodal communication is a common ad hoc solution between TSO staff and service users, but it is in the language classroom where multimodality is exploited and more systematically employed. Students develop their visual literacy and multimodal communicative competence in class (Royce, 2002), a skill that students can employ to facilitate comprehension beyond the classroom.

The analysis of materials and focus groups with language teachers presented in Chapter 5 showed the complementary nature of the visual and written text. In the materials, meaning is co-created by complementing visual and verbal modes. The materials did not rely solely on visual communication to make meaning; instead, images were complemented with the verbal code in certain cases such as activity statements. However, the high visual component of the materials facilitates understanding of classroom activities and enables the acquisition of new vocabulary.

In addition to the visual content of classroom materials, teachers and students used drawings on the board and searched for images on the web. Teachers tended not to

use audiovisual content such as videos, despite the increasing prevalence of audiovisual media on the internet, thanks to platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, among others. Other solutions that teachers employ in class include asking students to interpret or translate for other students, use a pivot language to translate into students' languages and the use of online machine translation tools and dictionaries.

Finally, it is important to note some of the constraints that accompany language courses in TSOs. The meagre resources that these organisations operate with affect the delivery of language courses. For example, having access to projectors, computers, and other technologies is rare. Materials tend to be photocopies in black and white. Language classes are usually run by volunteers, who do not necessarily have previous training and experience. At TSOs, teaching is seen as an activity that can be carried out by anyone who is native in the local language.

7.3. Refugees' access to information and services in the host countries

The question of how service users access information and services in the host countries was addressed in Chapter 2. The discussion was based on the analysis of data from focus group discussions with refugees. The analysis of the data revealed that refugees experience difficulties accessing and understanding integration-related information. Accuracy and accessibility were found to be key factors in the provision of information to refugees. The study revealed that the current sources of information did not meet these criteria, leading to misinformation, a sense of confusion and, ultimately, a dependence on TSOs for accessing services.

7.3.1. Sources of information

The focus group data indicates that the main sources of information for refugees are their peers, TSO staff, and the internet. Focus group participants reported having more trust in information that they received from their peers, stating that they felt that their peers had more experience and their information would be more reliable. Staff at TSO are one of the first points of contact of refugees when they arrive at the host country,

as well as being knowledgeable on administrative processes and support services available to refugees. The internet is readily available, and it is a tool that it is extensively used for daily tasks and communication.

However, the information provided by these sources tend to not meet the required criteria to be usable by service users: accuracy and accessibility. Information from peers is accessible yet its accuracy cannot be assured; information found online can be accessible or reliable, but it is rarely both. Some is produced by peers. For example, Facebook groups and forums may be accessible in terms of language and format, but the information contained therein is often inaccurate. However, broadly speaking, refugees considered the information from peers trustworthy. For their part, TSOs tended to provide reliable information; however, it was not always accessible.

The next section delves into the factors affecting the inaccessibility of the information provided by TSOs. Among the factors that contribute to the difficulty in providing accurate information are (1) the changing nature of asylum regulations in host countries and support services to which service users are entitled to, and (2) the different statuses of service users, upon which their entitled services depend.

7.3.2. Factors influencing access

The three main factors affecting the accessibility of information are the language barrier, literacy levels, and digital skills of service users.

Language barriers were identified as the main obstacle when accessing and understanding integration-related information. These results are in line with previous studies in third sector organisations that place language barriers as a central issue in humanitarian settings (Federici, 2016; León Pinilla et al., 2016; Moreno-Rivero, 2018). Service users who do not speak the host country languages experience difficulties in accessing information and services due to the fact that there is very little information available in other languages and TSO staff oftentimes do not have a command of foreign languages.

Literacy levels of service users also impact access to information and services. Information presented in written format is not accessible to those with lower levels of literacy and to speakers of languages that employ different alphabets. Issues of literacy also have implications in the provision of online services and integration-related information. The data revealed that people with low levels of literacy use smartphones regularly, especially apps that are highly visual and user-friendly such as YouTube and WhatsApp. However, they rarely use the internet for searching information regarding migration-related information and support services. Content provided in written format online is not accessible to all users, especially those with lower literacy levels.

Digital skills and access to the internet and tech devices were also factors affecting how service users access information. The data illustrated the stark digital divide among service users. At a time when an increasing number of procedures and services were being moved online, the data revealed that many lacked the technical skills and access to internet devices and bandwidth in order to use the internet to seek information or to perform tasks such as booking appointments with TSOs.

The data also revealed that those who do use the internet to seek information experience difficulties in finding and understanding certain information. The complexity of the language and the specialised terminology used tends to limit the accessibility of much integration-related information, especially that which is related to asylum applications and similar bureaucratic procedures. Refugees' difficulties in finding official sources of information online and the fact that these official governmental websites used specialised, complex terminology and language hinders access. The fact that oftentimes official websites are not translated into users' languages exacerbates these accessibility difficulties.

In sum, the data indicates that accurate information was (1) difficult to find, (2) presented in specialised and complex language, and (3) not available in other languages and formats. As a result, those who do not speak the host country languages or have limited literacy or digital access often turn to peers or staff at TSOs when seeking integration-related information.

In light of the above, the next section provides suggestions on how to facilitate access to service and make information more accessible in TSOs that work with refugees. The reasons why refugees are considered vulnerable and the specific safeguards that should be put in place when working with persons in displacement were discussed in Chapter 6.

7.4. Concluding remarks on accessibility: how TSOs can make their services and information more accessible

The previous sections have shed light on service users' difficulties in accessing TSO services and information. Issues related to the current inaccessible practices of TSOs and their management of language diversity have also been raised. Based on the discussion above, this section will present some recommendations on how these organisations could make their content and service provision more accessible. The recommendations address the language practice deficiencies that were identified from the data. A summary of these recommendations can be found in Table 11.

Adoption of universal design and accessibility principles when designing programmes and creating content: • **Creation of content in different formats: audiovisual, visual, audio.** • **Translation of content into different languages.** • **Production of easy-to-understand versions of key documents**
Recruitment or collaboration with professionals with expertise in translation and technology
Engagement of former or already/more settled service users in reception programmes
Adoption of translation technologies and post-edition of machine-generated translation
Creation of accessible and fit-for-purpose technologies
Complementing face-to-face service provision with online service provision

Table 11. Summary of recommendations on how TSOs can make their services and information more accessible

It is worth acknowledging the complex context in which TSOs operate. Organisations face increasing demands for their services, but with scant resource availability and changing and unpredictable language needs. In such a setting, it can be challenging to try to respond to the various needs of a diverse profile of service users. Yet, there are several initiatives that organisations can introduce to provide access to a wider audience.

A first recommendation is the adoption of universal design and accessibility principles when developing integration programmes, which include processes, communication practices, and creation of content. Universal design intends to make products and environments accessible and usable to all people, without the need for adaptation or specialised design (The Centre for Universal Design, 2008). Currently, organisations attempt to adapt their existing services and content so that their diverse service users can access them, which takes more time and effort. As per Universal Design Theory, the design of a product or service needs to consider the needs of the users from the outset (Oncins & Orero, 2021; Szarkowska et al., 2016). Considering the needs of users at the design stage simplifies the process of making content and products more accessible.

The creation of content in different formats is another way organisations can make their content more accessible. Currently, most of the content is available in written mode, and only partially translated. Multilingual content in audio or audiovisual format that can be played at the TSO premises or shared online to service users would make information accessible to a wider audience. The use of pictograms at the TSO premises to convey simple, essential information is another method that can be adopted to bridge the communication gap, as well as producing easy-to-understand versions of key materials. The use of easy-to-understand language is a way in which organisations can maximise the accessibility of communication (Maaß, 2019). In fact, the data showed that two organisations used easy-to-understand language, while unaware of its formal recognition as a method to provide barrier-free information in the field of accessibility.

In all cases, the content produced can be reused and it will save the costs and time spent on sourcing interpreters. Furthermore, Pym (2018) argues that professional interpreting and translation cannot be generalized as the ideal communication solution. His research concluded that, in certain contexts, refugee communities prefer the use of machine translation and existing content to the information from certified interpreters (Pym, 2020). Other mediation solutions, like the ones proposed in this section, may be more effective in certain circumstances.

The absence of staff with technical and linguistic backgrounds at TSOs is one reason why language and accessibility are not considered in the delivery of TSO programmes and services. In general, TSOs employ staff that specialise in social work, health, or legal fields. The diverse languages spoken by the service users and the increasingly important role of technology in TSOs justifies the employment of professionals with multilingual and technical expertise. Having permanent staff with such experience and expertise would ensure that technology and accessibility figure more prominently in these organisations. Collaborations through ad hoc consultancy could also make valuable improvements in these areas.

The contribution in social capital that integrated refugees can lend to the organisation and to service users is another resource that is not fully exploited. For example, the Greek organisation has made their services and information more accessible by engaging integrated refugees in their programmes. Similar initiatives have also been adopted in other refugee contexts. For example, the Cairo Community Interpreter Project (CCIP)[23] in Egypt is an interpreter training programme for refugees in transit. Johnson's (2021) study on CCIP practices highlighted the value of refugees as actors in promoting interpreting professional practices and the impact of allowing refugees to work.

Another way to engage integrated refugees is through mentorship programmes. Mentorship programmes also facilitate access to services and information to service

[23] For more information, see: https://sites.google.com/aucegypt.edu/ccip/

users, typically pairing a local citizen with a newly arrived person. One of the suggestions that arose from the focus group discussions with service users was the pairing of newly arrived service users with those who have been in the host country longer. Such mentorship programmes would not only help bridge the language barrier but would also provide useful information on administrative processes and the access to services.

In terms of the use of technologies, three key conclusions were drawn. The first one is the lack of engagement of the organisations with translation technologies. By effectively employing translation technologies and post-edition, organisations could make their information and services more accessible. The second is the need for the creation of technologies that are accessible and fit-for-purpose for TSOs. WhatsApp provides an accessible, user-friendly platform for communication; however, its use involves ethical, legal, and personal implications. These implications highlight the value of projects such as REBUILD that bring together multidisciplinary teams to develop technologies that meet the needs of TSOs. Thirdly, while organisations should continue to develop their digital practices, the provision of online services should not substitute in-person service provision. Replacing face-to-face for online service provision would not guarantee equal opportunity and access to services.

7.5. Summary of main contributions, limitations, and further research

This section outlines the main contributions of this thesis, its limitations, and suggests lines for further research.

7.5.1. Main contributions

This study aimed to contribute to translation and intercultural studies, and specifically, to the investigation of crisis translation, accessible communication, and community interpreting and translation. The insights gained shed light on the management of language diversity online and face to face at these organisations and the challenges

that they encounter when catering for users of diverse needs. The analysis focused on the views of TSO staff, the practices of these organisations, classroom learning materials, and the experiences of the service users.

The results of this study demonstrated that translation and interpreting remain casual in management, and are rarely considered a fundamental aspect of communication. Accessibility resources have not been effectively integrated in the delivery of services at TSOs. As a result, service users experience difficulties to access information and available services at TSOs. These findings shed light on the practices of these organisations and help understand their needs so that these can be met. This responds to calls made by scholars in the field of Translation Studies (O'Brien & Federici, 2019; Tesseur, 2018) and TSO staff themselves (Crack, 2014; Tesseur, 2015).

This study has combined data from the various stakeholders and sources in TSOs: (1) staff, whose role ranged from managers to psychologists, (2) service users, and (3) volunteers, i.e., language teachers, and (4) the materials employed in class. The insights gained from such diverse participants and sources have afforded a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon at hand. In addition, this study aims to contribute to pragmatic humanities, an approach to humanities research that aims at researching and creating practical solutions (Jankowska, 2019, p. 246).

The role of TSOs in today's complex societies is not to be underestimated. The support TSOs lend to refugees is continued and relentless in spite of their scant resources, multiple priorities, and changing environments. The backseat that translation, interpreting, and accessibility takes in TSOs is understood when a deeper examination of their reality and day-to-day work is conducted. Yet, it is believed that there are easy-to-implement actions that can make significant improvements to their current practices. It is hoped that the findings of this thesis can be used as a resource by these organisations to facilitate access to services to their culturally and linguistically diverse service users.

7.5.2. Limitations

The aim of this study was to gain insight into language diversity management and communication practices at NGOs working with refugees in Europe. The study gathered data from a wide range of organisations and sources and delved deeper into the analysis of five specific organisations. The limitations of such data set need to be recognised. The focus on these particular organisations prevents making inferences or generalising the results to the larger group.

Data was collected via interviews with staff at the organisations, which only give access to people's thoughts and opinions. However, observation at the organisations was not conducted. Conducting observation at these organisations and a systematic analysis of the user-targeted content would have enriched the results and provided a fuller picture. Time constraints, as the organisations were based in four different countries, made the collection of more data impossible.

This thesis has concentrated on data from TSO staff and teachers, service users, and language learning materials. The work and insights of translators and interpreters were deliberately not considered. While their input would be valuable when analysing the multilingual practices at TSOs, there is extensive literature on the field of community interpreting that focuses on the work of interpreters and translators (see Arumí Ribas et al., 2011; León Pinilla et al., 2016; Arumí Ribas & Vargas-Urpí, 2017; Sánchez Pérez, 2019; Valero Garcés, 2011; Valero Garcés & Mancho Barés, 2002). Furthermore, in essence, their role is to provide access to information and services. Data from other agents involved was prioritised for this study, since the focus of the study was to understand the practices of TSOs and the rationale behind their choice of practices.

Finally, it is important to recognise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the design and implementation of this study's data collection process. The restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the virus affected communication processes worldwide, including communications between TSOs and the refugees they support. The studies presented in chapters 5 and 6 were motivated by the changes that the COVID-19 restrictions

brought about. Reformulating the initial research plan to adapt to the new reality was required considering the changes in communication processes globally.

7.5.3. Further research

The present study should be considered as a case study that has provided insights into language management practices at these organisations and into how the adoption of accessibility principles can be of benefit to their service users. In this section, three possible areas of future research are proposed.

Firstly, further research could start by exploring more of such contexts in other European countries. Conducting first-hand observations in these organisations would give access to the exploration of the actual practices, rather than inferences of the data gathered or views of the participants. Valuable data would be gathered from observing interpreter-mediated interactions and non-interpreter mediated interactions (between staff and service users).

Secondly, conducting reception-oriented studies that measure the understandability and impact of organisations' content and interactions between staff and service users would provide valuable, quantifiable data on the specific communication issues and their recurrence. In addition to reception studies, data extracted from an analysis of the content produced by these organisations, i.e., translated documents and brochures, videos, or websites, would be valuable in an attempt to improve their accessibility.

Thirdly, the interview data indicated that one organisation engaged in child language brokering, the practice of involving minors, often a family member, in the interpretations (Crafter, 2018). While it was not the scope of this thesis to explore child language brokering, the interview data exposed this practice, corroborating previous literature on the field regarding the invisibility of child brokers (Crafter, 2021; Vargas-Urpí & Arumí Ribas, 2021). According to the authors, child language brokering practices tend to be made invisible or remain relatively covert. The fact that child language brokering was

not explicitly raised during the interviews confirms the lack of attention that this practice receives. Further research on child language brokering in TSOs supporting refugees would help to gain a better understanding of these practices in these contexts and their impact on child interpreters and on the agency of adult refugees.

Finally, this study has shed light on the user-centred, innovative approach of the Greek organisation studied. In view of this, a single case study on their language management practices and inner functioning would allow for a systematisation of their work and the benefits of such a model. Their practices would serve as an example to other organisations undertaking similar work.

Looking forward, it is hoped that TSOs supporting refugees recognise the value of accessibility, translation and interpreting to the point that these services are implemented into integration programmes by default. For TSOs, facilitating access to services and information would not only be of benefit to their service users, but it would also make their work more effective and impactful.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Published articles

1.1. Jimenez-Andres, M. (2021).
Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions. *FITISPos-International Journal, 8*(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270

1.2. Jiménez-Andrés, M. (2021). La accesibilidad lingüística como servicio en la atención de usuarios en las entidades del tercer sector. *MAGAzin. Revista De Germanística Intercultural*, (28). https://doi.org/10.12795/mAGAzin.2020.i28.04

1.3. Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Arias-Badia, B. (2021). El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: Análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes. *Lengua Y migración*, *13*(1). https://doi.org/10.37536/LYM.13.1.2021.1368

1.4. Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Alemam, N. (2021). Researching Displaced Persons during COVID-19: catering for users' specific needs in Media Accessibility projects. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation, 4(2),* 23-41. https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v4i2.2021.174

1.1. Jimenez-Andres, M. (2021).

Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions. *FITISPos-International Journal, 8*(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270

FITISPOS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, VOL 8, 1 (2021) DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270 ISSN: 2341-3778

REFUGEE ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN ONLINE AND OFFLINE ENVIRONMENTS: RESULTS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS / EL ACCESO A LA INFORMACIÓN DE LOS REFUGIADOS EN ENTORNOS DIGITALES Y PRESENCIALES: RESULTADOS A PARTIR DE GRUPOS FOCALES

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Abstract: In today's migration processes, Information Communication Technologies (ICT) are increasingly important for refugee experiences and mobilities (Gillespie, Osseiran and Cheesman, 2016). In this light, there is a call by institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016a; 2020a) and researchers in the field of refugee integration (AbuJarour et al, 2019) for initiatives employing ICT to cater for refugees' need for information and communication. This article discusses some information seeking practices of asylum seekers and refugees, in online and offline environments. The data was gathered by means of nine focus group discussions with refugee communities in Greece, Italy, and Spain, involving a total of 41 participants of 13 different nationalities. Issues relating to the languages and the accessibility of the information that is available to them are discussed. The results of this research will inform the subsequent phases of REBUILD, a project funded by European Commission whose aim is the creation of a user-centred ICT-tool to promote refugee and migrant integration in Europe.

Keywords: Accessibility; Information seeking practices; Language barriers**;** Translation and interpreting.

Resumen: En los procesos migratorios actuales, las TIC son cada vez más importantes para las experiencias y movilidades de los refugiados (Gillespie, Osseiran y Cheesman, 2016). En este sentido, instituciones como el Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados (2016a; 2020a) e investigadores en el campo de la integración de los refugiados (AbuJarour *et al.*, 2019) llaman al diseño de iniciativas que empleen las TIC para atender las necesidades de información y comunicación. Este artículo analiza el acceso a la información de los refugiados en entornos *online* y *offline*. Los datos se recopilaron mediante nueve grupos de discusión con comunidades de refugiados en Grecia, Italia y España, en los que participaron un total de 41 participantes de 13 nacionalidades diferentes. Se abordan temas relacionados con los idiomas y la accesibilidad de la información de la que disponen. Los resultados de esta investigación orientarán las siguientes fases de REBUILD, un proyecto financiado por la Comisión Europea cuyo objetivo es la creación de una herramienta TIC para promover la integración de refugiados y migrantes en Europa.

Palabras clave: Accesibilidad; Barreras lingüísticas; Prácticas de información; Traducción e interpretación.

FITISPOS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, VOL 8, 1 (2021) DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270 ISSN: 2341-3778

1. Introduction

By the end of 2019, there were 78.9 million displaced people worldwide, of which over 33 million were refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2020b). While the reasons for migration remain constant over the years (i.e. conflict, discrimination, violence, economic and environmental factors), the environment in which migrations take place is changing rapidly due to technological advancements. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has progressively become a key player in international migration work, especially for refugee experiences and mobilities (Gillespie, Osseiran and Cheesman, 2018). In this light, institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2016a; 2020a) and researchers in the field of refugee integration (AbuJarour et al., 2019) call for initiatives employing ICT to cater for the refugees' need for information and communication while in transit and in host countries.

In the host countries, NGOs hold a key role in the reception and integration of displaced communities. These organisations provide access to information and services to linguistically and culturally diverse groups; thus, Translation and Interpreting (T&I) is usually required in that provision. Previous studies in T&I in these contexts (O'Brien, 2016; Valero-Garcés and Tipton, 2017; Tesseur, 2018) have mapped the T&I practices in such organisations and showed that these practices remain lacking. Against this background, the aim of this study is to gather some experiences of asylum seekers and refugees regarding their information seeking practices in three European countries: Greece, Italy, and Spain.

The article starts with a presentation of the specialised literature on the process of asylum and integration in host countries, and the role of NGOs, T&I and technology in it. Then, it outlines the methodology adopted. The final sections present and discuss the results of the focus group discussions, concentrating on refugee sources of information in offline and online environments.

2. Research context

This study is framed within the context of the European project REBUILD.[1] This project aims at the development of an accessible ICT tool that supports the integration of refugees in their host communities in Greece, Italy, and Spain. The project is currently ongoing (Jan 2019-Dec 2021).

Prior to the development of the tool, research actions were conducted to understand the needs and requirements of the target users. The project adopted a user-centric approach; that is, involving asylum-seekers and migrants as well as NGOs and other local service providers in the creation of the tool. Through complementary methodologies, the target users identified the system requirements and supported the research team in the design of the tool.

This paper was motivated by the first research action in the project, conducted between January and April 2019. The aim was to gain insights into how refugees and asylum seekers – the target users of the tool– use ICT in their daily lives. Given the heterogeneity of the refugee population (WPP, 2017), more information was required beyond standard demographics, i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, legal status, level of education, linguistic skills, digital literacy and media preferences. By means of focus groups with refugees and asylum seekers, the research team gathered valuable information about asylum seekers and refugee information seeking practices as well as the role that ICT plays in the process. The results of the focus groups

[1] The REBUILD project website can be accessed here.

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conducted in the three target countries are presented and discussed in this paper. The results of another research action involving NGOs and other local service providers are discussed in Arias-Badia and Jiménez-Andrés (2021). The study examines how organisations supporting refugees bridge the linguistic barriers, their T&I practices and their use of technology to facilitate communication.

3. Literature review

This section provides an overview of the literature on the topic. Specifically, this section discusses the process of asylum, the role that NGOs and translation and interpreting play in it, and the growing role of technology in migration.

3.1 The role of NGOs and Translation and Interpreting in the Reception and Integration systems

NGOs and public bodies are the first contact points of asylum-seekers, and those in charge of the reception programmes in the host countries. The complex Reception and Integration systems of asylum in Europe vary across countries and even within a country, since national regulations change frequently. For example, in Spain, the *Programa de Acogida* is updated regularly, as can be observed in the Migration portal[2]. Furthermore, some responsibilities lie in the central government while others in the regional governments (ibid). The changing environment makes it difficult not only for NGOs supporting asylum-seekers, but also for asylum-seekers to understand and be up to date with the services that they are entitled to provide and receive, as well as with the legal procedures to obtain refugee status.

In addition to the legal complications, linguistic and cultural barriers play a part in information seeking practices. Asylum-seekers are a heterogenous group (WPP, 2017) and hence meeting their linguistic needs is a challenge for NGOs and international organisations supporting them in the host countries. Indeed, a primary concern for these organisations is the communication barrier between the organisation and its beneficiaries (Moreno-Rivero, 2018). To bridge the communication gap, NGOs resort to different practices: some of these involve linguistic professionals and others, volunteers.

Previous studies have looked at these practices, which can take the form of interpreting (Moser-Mercer, Kherbiche and Class, 2014; Delgado Luchner and Kherbiche, 2018); cultural mediation (Rudvin and Tomassini, 2008; Miklavcic and LeBlanc, 2014; Moreno-Rivero, 2018); and volunteer interpreting (Aguilar-Solano, 2015; Al-Shehari, 2020; Cadwell, Bollig and Ried, 2020; Hassemer, 2020). T&I practices are required at various stages of the reception process, i.e. asylum interviews with police officers, filling the application form for asylum, and the counselling sessions with psychologists.

While there has been an increase in the awareness of the importance of T&I in this context, there is still a lot to be done to meet the linguistic needs of NGO beneficiaries (Hertog, 2010; Tesseur, 2018). These practices are controlled by budget changes and pressures, political contexts, and the changing needs of the recipient population. In the Spanish context, the situation has worsened considerably in the last decade as the budget for T&I has drastically decreased (Valero-Garcés and Tipton, 2017). The current Welcome and Integration Handbook stipulates that only the documents that are needed for the asylum application are to be translated

[2] Spanish Government Migration Portal: http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/Subvenciones/anos_anteriores/area_integracion/index.html

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(Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020). As for interpreting, it should only be offered when "indispensable" (p. 31).

A lack in the provision of linguistic support for asylum seekers has many negative consequences. In addition to misinformation and confusion, it can lead to a drop-out of the use of their services (Arias-Badia and Jiménez-Andrés, 2021), to an accentuation of their current vulnerabilities or to re-traumatisation (Gardiner and Walker, 2019; Miller et al., 2019).

3.2 Technology for the dissemination of information

In light of the above, NGOs could take advantage of new technologies to compensate for the lack of financial and human resources. Indeed, researchers in the field of T&I in these contexts encourage the adoption of technologies to support multilingual communication processes (Federici and O'Brien, 2020). Yet, most of these organisations have not yet gone digital. A recent report by Caceres et al. (2019) has brought to the fore the deficient digital practices of NGOs, with only younger charities being more digitally active. For displaced communities, studies and practice show that ICT plays a fundamental role in the process of migration. Refugees *en route* or settling in host countries can sometimes prioritise ICT over food or shelter to communicate with family and friends, get assistance during their journey, and obtain information about the route or services in the area (Brunwasser, 2015; Barros, 2017). Furthermore, ICTs have been identified as useful tools for the integration of refugees and migrants into host countries (Frouws et al., 2016; UNHCR, 2016a; WPP, 2017). As a result, studies on ICT adoption by refugee communities have started to emerge, demonstrating the potential of ICT for integration (Frouws et al., 2016; Mason and Buchmann, 2016; GSMA, 2017; Marić, 2017; AbuJarour et al., 2019). In addition to research studies, there have been multiple initiatives fostering the integration of refugees by means of ICT. Some successful examples are Ankommen (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, 2018), Apps4Refs (Fundació Acsar, 2018), and RefAid (RefAid, 2019). These tools are still available across Europe.

Governments also make the asylum regulations publicly available through official websites. Because the language and information contained is often very complex, the UNHCR has developed a comprehensive, multilingual help page with information on the asylum regulations per country[3]. Not all countries have provided this information to the UNHCR and each country is in charge of providing this information in other languages. For example, Greece has its information in eight languages (Arabic, English, French, Greek, Kurdish, Turkish, Persian and Urdu); Spain, in four (Arabic, English, Spanish and French); whereas Italy does not have a help page on this website.

Despite their many advantages, online environments pose new challenges due to the inaccessibility of digital content and interfaces (United Nations, 2020). Accessibility is herein understood in its universalistic account (Greco, 2018), concerning the elimination of barriers that hinder the access to information, be they linguistic, educational or cognitive. O'Brien et al. (2018) distinguish two levels of accessibility of information: (i) if it is translated into languages that the recipient can read or hear, and (ii) if people with special needs can actually consume that information. The above-mentioned report of Caceres et al. (2019) indicates that only 51% of charities in the UK have accessibility procedures built into their websites. Making information accessible and redundant, that is, in various languages and formats, is a requirement to ensure that information is usable by linguistically and functionally diverse communities (UNHCR, 2018; Rodríguez-Vázquez and Torres-del-Rey, 2020).

[3] See https://help.unhcr.org/.

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4. Methodology

The data used for this study has been gathered from nine focus group discussions conducted for the REBUILD project. The focus group discussions consisted of a list of guiding questions that enquired on their views on technology for integration, their use of ICT, their current sources of information, and their recommendations on the design of apps for refugees. The questions included in the interview can be found in Appendix 1.

The study was approved by the ethical committee at the researchers' university and followed ethical recommendations as described in Orero et al. (2018). Furthermore, special considerations were taken in the planning and execution of the focus group discussions due to the vulnerable situation in which asylum-seekers and refugees find themselves (Gibbs, 2007; Eklöf et al., 2017; Sandvik et al., 2017). These considerations were mindful of cultural differences, of the 'do no harm' imperative in humanitarian actions and of the dramatic experiences that participants have lived. These included: anonymisation, data minimisation (the principle of limiting data collection to only what is required to fulfil a specific purpose and to observe EU Directive GRDP2018), the thorough explanation of the purpose of the study, and the nature and implications of their participation in the study. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and their participation in it. Participants were informed of the ethical issues and the safe environment in which the discussion was taking place. Participation in the study was voluntary and consent forms were signed. Consent forms were available in various languages and were also orally translated to some participants.

Seven focus groups discussions were conducted face-to-face in Italy, Greece and Spain in April and May 2019 in four cities: Bologna (Italy), Kilkis (Greece), Barcelona and Palma de Majorca (Spain), the cities where the project partners are based. Two additional sessions were conducted online with participants residing in Rome and Rimini, Italy. The sessions had an average duration of 2 hours. In total, 41 participants took part in the focus groups discussions. Participants were distributed across focus groups by their spoken languages and current places of residence. Details on the nationality and number of participants in each focus group can be found in Table 1.

Focus group identifier	Location	Participants	Countries of origin of participants
FG1	Kilkis	9	Afghanistan
FG2	Bologna	6	Cuba, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia
FG3	Online (participants residing in Rome)	3	Afghanistan, Cameroon and Somalia
FG4	Kilkis	6	Iran
FG5	Kilkis	5	Iraq and Syria (Kurdish)
FG6	Barcelona	6	Iran, Iraq and Syria
FG7	Palma	1	Nigeria
FG8	Online (participants residing in Rimini)	1	Nigeria
FG9	Bologna	4	Cameroon, Benin and Gambia
Total	**9**	**41**	**13 countries**

Table 1. Focus group details. Source: Own elaboration

Focus groups discussions were led by the principal researcher in Spain and online, and by experienced staff working in two NGOs: OMNES[4] in Greece, and CIDAS[5] in Italy. In each

[4] http://www.omnes.gr/.
[5] https://www.cidas.coop/.

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session there was one moderator and one notetaker and, when necessary, cultural mediators and/or interpreters. All three moderators worked regularly with refugee communities and two worked with the community of participants that they interviewed. In most cases, the sessions were multilingual, as participants were encouraged to be free in how they expressed themselves and in the languages that they felt more comfortable. Translanguaging (Vogel and García, 2017) was a defining feature of FG6 and FG7, in which participants and moderator spoke English, Spanish and Catalan, depending on the topic of conversation or if they were quoting someone who spoke a certain language. Table 2 summarises the languages spoken in each focus group.

Focus group identifier	**Language(s)**	**Interpreters**
FG1	English	Dari English
FG2	English, French, Italian, Spanish	No
FG3	English and French	No
FG4	English	English Farsi
FG5	English	English Kurmanji
FG6	Catalan, English, Spanish	No
FG7	Catalan, English, Spanish	No
FG8	English	No
FG9	English, Italian and French	No

Table 2. Languages of the focus groups. Source Own elaboration

Three focus groups were audio recorded with the permission of participants. In the other six, notes were taken by notetakers and the moderators. The principal researcher provided guidelines to moderators for the notetaking to ensure consistency. The notes were anonymised, and participants were identified by colours. The resulting notes and transcripts were in four languages –English, Spanish, Italian, and Greek–, and the moderators and notetakers translated the notes into English for the principal researcher.

Interview notes were coded and manually analysed by the principal researcher using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The approach to coding was inductive as the codes derived from the data (Saldanha and O'Brien, 2014). The researcher engaged with the entire data set and coded interesting features of the data set systematically. Codes were checked against each other and back to the original data set until they were coherent, consistent and distinctive. The different codes were sorted into potential themes. The themes were reviewed to ensure they formed a coherent pattern.

4.1 Focus group participants

Participants were contacted and recruited via three project partners: CIDAS, OMNES and Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona[6](UAB). The objective was to have a heterogeneous sample in terms of gender, origin, age, educational background and presumed ICT use. In terms of their administrative situation at the time of the study, the majority of participants were asylum-seekers, refugees and a small number were refugees on a student visa. Participants completed a short, anonymous, demographic questionnaire in order to obtain more details on their socio-biographical background. The results of this questionnaire are displayed in Table 3.

[6] Recruitment was facilitated by Fundació Autònoma Solidària at UAB.

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The heterogeneity of participants reflected the diversity and complexity of the refugee communities in Europe, with participants from 13 countries. The most represented countries were Afghanistan and Syria. As for their host country, half of the participants resided in Greece and the other half in Spain and Italy at the time of the study.

Other data collected were age, level of formal education, and time spent in the host country. In terms of their age, two thirds of participants were below 34 years old. Regarding the self-reported gender of participants, 23 were male and 18 female. 30 participants had completed high school or above, and 13 held a university degree. The majority had lived in the country for less than three years.

Parameters	No. Of participants	Parameters	No. Of participants
Host country		**Gender**	
Greece	20	Female	18
Italy	13	Male	23
Spain	7	**Nationality**	
Ages		Afghanistan	9
18-24	13	Benin	1
25-34	13	Cameroon	2
35-44	10	Cuba	1
45-54	3	Gambia	2
No answer	1	Ghana	1
Level of formal education		Iran	7
Secondary school or below	28	Iraq	4
University degree	13	Ivory Coast	1
Time in host country		Morocco	1
<1 year	7	Nigeria	3
2-3 years	14	Somalia	2
4-6 years	4	Syria	6
+6 years	3	Somalia	2
No answer	1	Syria	6

Table 3. Demographic data of participants n=41. Source: Own elaboration.

5. Results

This section presents and discusses the results of the focus group discussions with asylum-seekers and refugees. For the purposes of this paper, the analysis has focused on the data regarding their access to information and the linguistic matters affecting their access to information. In the presentation of the findings, a selection of participants' quotes is provided for two reasons: first, to grant refugee's voices a prominent role in the paper; second, to account for the refugee's 'plurality of voices' (Jones, 2019, p. 8). The quotes have been taken verbatim from the focus groups notes. Linguistic inaccuracies in the quotes have not been corrected and they are regarded as a natural feature of multilingual research.

5.1. Offline contexts: Information through NGOs and peers

Staff in the organisations in charge of refugee reception systems were identified as one of the most significant informants. In addition to NGO staff, participants often resorted to peers for information. The following examples of participants' accounts confirmed this practice:

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> Red Cross tells me everything (Participant in FG7).
>
> I am not using websites. I am getting informed by experienced friends and NGO personal (Participant in FG4).
>
> As soon as I arrived, I trusted the cooperative where I was welcomed, I asked the operators everything and I didn't need to look for information on my smartphone. For example, when I had to go for the first time to a place, I was accompanied so I didn't worry about figuring out where it was (Participant in FG9)
>
> Most of us get informed from others who have been here longer […] You would only use technology when there is nobody else to check with (Participant in FG8).

Some participants admitted preferring accessing information in person due to a lack of experience using ICT:

> I am not experienced [with ICT]. I was living in Iran and I was using a simple Nokia, I had no experience of devices. Now I started using them. (Participant in FG1).
>
> We don't know how to use technologies. (Participant in FG1).

There were only three instances in which participants mentioned interpreters during the focus groups. These were all gathered in the Greek focus groups, while in the Spanish and Italian focus groups there was no mention of interpreters. These accounts acknowledge the presence and role of the interpreters in the Greek context and could be an indication of a lack thereof in the Spanish and Italian contexts.

> With the phone credits, I only phone the interpreters or other organizations for support. I use the EMO and the Messenger app for communicating with my family (Participant in FG1).
>
> When Interpreter read the consent form to us, we understood (Participant in FG5).
>
> [I think organisations should] use the elder refugees as interpreters, we should connect with all information, we cannot trust sites etc. They share different explanations and information (Participant in FG4).

5.2. Online contexts: the internet as a source of information and the accessibility of technology

For most participants, the internet was a crucial source of information, either by Google searches, social media groups, and government or refugee websites. Other activities that participants reported carrying out by means of their phone was consuming media content (on free platforms), engaging in social media, learning languages and, above all, talking to friends and family through apps such as WhatsApp and EMO. Mobile phones were seen as a fundamental tool in the everyday lives of participants in their host countries, but also to access information regarding their asylum applications:

> As a refugee, as a foreigner here, your phone is your window to the world (Participant in FG6).
>
> Email is useful, for example, I got my asylum decision through an e-mail. This was a good point. I use technology not for services like Facebook, but for the UNHCR website (Participant in FG1).

Some participants shared their precautions when retrieving online information, as they recognised that online information is not always reliable. Hacking was also raised as a problem for them in online environments. These two issues were seen as a downside of the use of ICT.

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> It is better to search information in governmental sites. I do not trust other websites or fake channels (Participant in FG4).
>
> We are trying many websites but a lot of lies (Participant in FG4).
>
> Websites are not trustful. I consult pages on Facebook, I am sure they are 100% reliable. They are managed by volunteers and non-profit. I trust the groups because they want to do good things (Participant in FG5).
>
> If there are no hackers, [technology] is good (Participant in FG4).

Furthermore, some participants preferred accessing information and services online to access them in person. These participants claimed to have received different treatment from the part of NGOs. These participants trusted that ICTs could offer them trustworthy, non-discriminatory information and services.

> [I am informed by] my peers. But that is not official information. I may get misinformed. I actually have. I am a refugee. The system is not well-established. The organisations don't give the same solutions to all refugees. The organisation that is supporting my case, for example, is not well-established. They give one thing to one refugee and then another thing to the other. And it is the same case (other participants agree) (Participant in FG6).
>
> We have other organisations here (Cruz Roja, ACCEM, CEAR), each person has a different organisation and it is going to affect the quality of the life that they have. For example, I was with Red Cross and I know another person that was with ACCEM, they gave him home (accommodation) but I didn't get it. How should I handle that? I was three months on the streets. Government is supporting you, but I was on the streets (Participant in FG6).

For ICT development purposes, participants were asked how they would prefer to have the information provided, i.e. written or spoken form, the latter in video or audio format. The majority favoured spoken, specifically in video format, as they considered it would make it available to a wider audience i.e. literates and non-literates, and it would be easier to understand. Participants also suggested incorporating voice recognition software, so that users with low literacy skills can find information easily on the app. Participants had not downloaded any apps specifically designed for refugees, and only two participants (in FG2 and FG7) had used a website that supported refugees in finding accommodation, namely Refugees Welcome.

5.3. Misinformation

Many of the participants' narrations revealed their difficulties to access reliable, official information. The most recurrent struggle was finding information online about asylum processes, regulations and the status of their application. Participants also raised the need to have information on children's rights, access to health services and legal issues. The quotes below exemplify these points:

> We need something like a website or an app to explain to migrants how to get for example *Tarjeta Roja*[7], because nothing is explained. And refugees are doing groups on Facebook in Germany and Holland to tell you how to do something, but that does not exist officially. We need trustworthy information [...] Nobody knows anything (Participant in FG6).

[7] *Tarjeta Roja* ('Red Card') is the common name for the identification card issued to those who seek asylum in Spain.

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> The organisation monitoring my case has lawyers and informed me that my interview is in one year. My friend visited a private lawyer instead and his interview is in five months. How is that possible? We need information about legal issues (Participant in FG4).

5.4. Linguistic issues in the access of information

It became apparent from participants' accounts that much of the information available was inaccessible to them. Indeed, the linguistic barrier was consistently reported across all communities as one of the main obstacles for integration, for the search and reception of information and for ICT use.

> The problem is always the language (Participant in FG2).

> For me the main problem when I came here was the language (Participant in FG6).

There was an emphasis on how little information on asylum processes is available in other languages. For example, websites are available only in the local languages (Spanish, Catalan, Italian and Greek), which are usually not understood by refugees. The information on regulations and requirements also includes specialised terminology. One participant explained that he was unable to communicate with civil servants working in the public administrations:

> This problem [not having information] can be solved if you go to the government to ask for a paperwork but here in Spain, especially in Spain, nobody speaks English so there is no way to get anything official (Participant in FG6).

In addition, participants complained that even when some websites were translated, they were only partially translated and key information was missing. In Spain, this deficiency is widespread and not limited to information on immigration procedures, as it can be observed by checking governmental websites. For speakers of minority languages, this issue is not limited to official websites, but applies also to other information sources.

> Not many applications are offering translations into Kurdish. We need it (Participant in FG5).

Another dominant message coming from research participants was that illiteracy can also be a barrier to accessing information online:

> I am a Kurdish-Kurmanji speaker. I am not from Syria and so I had no rights to education there, so I do not know how to read and write in Kurmanji either (Participant in FG5).

> I cannot use anything because I am illiterate. Since I was in Afghanistan, I didn't have the opportunity to study due to culture and location issues (Participant in FG1).

6. Discussion and recommendations

In this paper, the focus has been on how refugees and asylum seekers access information in the host countries. The results indicate that the internet is one of the main sources of information. However, asylum regulations and the services provided change often and suddenly, but online websites are not updated and translated at the same speed (Ghandour-Demiri, 2017). Accessibility issues as well as the complex and often unofficial nature of the information provided complicate their access to up-to-date, factual information.

In addition, participants consistently felt misinformed and they did not always trust the information that they found online. Linguistic barriers as well as lack of digital skills have been

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identified as obstacles in the access of information online, especially for speakers of minority languages. These results are in line with previous studies on the area (Hannides et al. 2016; WPP, 2017). Further, they support Piller (2017) claims on the seeming legitimacy of linguistic discrimination, as opposed to religious (or other types of discrimination) which are widely prohibited.

Refugees also rely on NGOs to find out information about the services that they are entitled to, and to receive updates on their asylum applications. This fact makes social workers gatekeepers of information and in the provision of social services, with the implications that arise from this circumstance: gatekeepers can either be facilitators or controllers of the access to services. Indeed, gatekeepers have been reported to provide different services to migrants in similar circumstances in Spain (Rogozen-Soltar, 2012) and to maintain control over access in Germany (Rolke, Wenner and Razum, 2019). Having official information accessible in ICT could be a way to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers can obtain information through other channels.

Receiving information from peers was another recurrent practice. Peers are considered a valuable asset for educating, protecting and empowering refugees (UNHCR, 2016b). However, peer-to-peer information is an informal and ad-hoc practice at present. A recommendation is that NGOs or public administrations oversee and support these practices to ensure that the information provided is accurate and promotes integration. Actually, one participant favoured the involvement of refugees who have been in the country longer. NGOs and public administration could adapt the increasingly prevalent mentorship programmes[8] that match locals with newly arrived communities, by matching already integrated refugees with asylum-seekers.

For ICT development purposes, the study revealed that for the information to be accessible, the provision of information should be multimodal and multilingual. When asked what their preferred format was, the majority favoured spoken, specifically audio-visual content with subtitles, as they considered it would make it available to a wider audience. In contrast, written format was preferred by some, who then reported using Google Translate to read the information in their language. This confirms previous research that states that refugees prefer having information in written, even low-literates, as it allows them to refer back to the information when needed and can be presented to government authorities (Ghandour-Demiri, 2017). In light of this, the use of easy-to-read language could prove beneficial in these contexts. Previous studies have shown that not only people with disabilities can benefit from easy-to-read language, but also migrants, people with low levels of formal education, people with severe social problems, and the elderly (Matausch, Peböck and Pühretmair, 2012) as well as persons with reading and learning difficulties (Caro and Orero, 2019), which applies to speakers of other languages.

7. Conclusions

This study has analysed the information seeking practices in online and offline environments by asylum seekers and refugees in three European countries: Greece, Italy, and Spain. The internet, NGOs staff and peers have been identified as the main sources of information. This study also suggests that asylum seekers and refugees struggle to find official, comprehensive information on their rights and asylum regulations.

[8] For more information on mentorship programmes, see http://mentoriasocial.org/.

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Participants consistently shared their difficulties in finding official, accessible information online on which they could rely. This resulted in a dependency on NGOs to access services, which can perpetuate the role of NGOs as gatekeepers. Despite the potential of ICT to facilitate communication with linguistically and functionally diverse communities, these technologies could further accentuate inequalities if accessibility is not brought into focus. According to users' feedback, the design of ICT tools for refugees should: (1) include official, comprehensive information on asylum processes by country; (2) be accessible, that is, available in different languages and formats, i.e. written, video with subtitles and visual, through images and pictograms; (3) ensure that it is designed to avoid discrimination and the stereotyping of refugees.

The results from this study will be used for the development of an ICT-tool to support the integration process of refugees in Italy, Greece and Spain. In line with user-centred key principles (Gulliksen et al, 2003), the findings can be used as a resource to help inform developers of the target-user profiles, their needs and communication practices with the home and host society. Furthermore, the insights gathered open up bigger questions about how the current asylum programmes operate, and on whether they are perpetuating the vulnerability of refugee communities due to the complex and changing nature of asylum regulations in European countries. It is hoped that this article can contribute to raise awareness on the information needs of asylum-seekers and refugees in European countries, and on the importance of language, translation, interpreting and accessibility in the provision of that information.

Acknowledgements

This research is part of the article-based PhD thesis of the author conducted in the Department of Translation and Interpreting in the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) within the PhD program in Translation and Intercultural Studies. This research has been partially funded by the H2020 project REBUILD, under Grant Agreement 82215. The Commission's support for this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views of the author only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein. The author is member of TransMedia Catalonia Research group, funded by the SGR funding scheme (2017SGR113).

The author would like to thank Giula Foresti, Giorgia Jerace, Mancho Sangbong from CIDAS, Dimitris Demertzis and Christos Gkelinos from OMNES and Laura Ribas, and Blanca Arias-Badia, Pilar Orero, and Pau Pamplona from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona for their invaluable work and support during the focus groups.
With special thanks to the participants of the focus groups for their time.

Glossary

Asylum seeker – An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker (UNHCR, 2005)
ICT – Information Communication Technologies
Refugee – A person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for by international or regional instruments, under UNHCR's mandate, and/or in national legislation (UNHCR, 2005)
T&I – Translation and Interpreting
UN – United Nations

FITISPOS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, VOL 8, 1 (2021) DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270 ISSN: 2341-3778

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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FITISPOS INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL, VOL 8, 1 (2021) DOI: https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270 ISSN: 2341-3778

Appendix 1. Focus group questions

a. How would you see technology supporting you (refugees and migrants) in the integration process?
b. Can you tell us about how and for what purposes do you and other members of your community use your phone?
c. What use do you make of apps and websites?
d. How do you find information about the services that you need? If you do so online, how do you use and trust that information?
e. We are working to create an app or platform that will provide information about services and support for migrants and refugees, what are your thoughts and recommendations on these?
f. We are going to show you now an app that has been designed for refugees and migrants. Can you navigate through it and tell us what you think about it?

Date of reception/Fecha de recepción: 02/12/2020
Date of acceptance/Fecha de aceptación: 21/01/2021

How to cite this article?/ ¿Cómo citar este artículo?
Jimenez Andres, M. (2021) Refugee access to information in online and offline environments: results from focus group discussions. *FITISPos-International Journal, 8*(1), 79-95. https://doi.org/10.37536/FITISPos-IJ.2021.8.1.270

1.2. Jiménez-Andrés, M. (2021). La accesibilidad lingüística como servicio en la atención de usuarios en las entidades del tercer sector. *MAGAzin. Revista De Germanística Intercultural*, (28). https://doi.org/10.12795/mAGAzin.2020.i28.04

Wissenschaftiche Artikel/Artículos Científicos

La accesibilidad lingüística en la atención al usuario: un estudio de caso sobre cinco entidades del tercer sector[1]

Linguistic accessibility in service delivery: a case study on five third sector organisations

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Recibido: 5/12/2020
Aceptado: 15/02/2021
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.12795/mAGAzin.2020.i28.04

Introducción

El incremento de poblaciones desplazadas que llegan a Europa ha puesto de manifiesto las necesidades comunicativas de un grupo heterogéneo en lo que se refiere a lenguas, la cultura y la educación. Una recepción e integración adecuadas reside, en primera instancia, en el acceso a la información. Para los solicitantes de asilo, la accesibilidad lingüística es esencial para poder entender los derechos y obligaciones del país de llegada. En este estudio, entendemos accesibilidad lingüística como la superación de las barreras lingüísticas que impiden una comunicación efectiva.

La comunicación efectiva es un requisito básico para las organizaciones receptoras de este grupo de personas desplazadas. Estas organizaciones, que conforman el llamado el tercer sector, afrontan una gran demanda de servicios que no se corresponde con la financiación que reciben para atender las necesidades. Esto conlleva priorizar ciertas actividades y solucionar situaciones de comunicación de diversas maneras, no todas profesionales.

Esta investigación forma parte de REBUILD[2], un proyecto europeo financiado por el marco Horizonte 2020. El proyecto está actualmente en curso (enero 2019 a diciembre 2021). El objetivo del proyecto es fomentar la integración de migrantes y refugiados en los países de acogida mediante el uso de la tecnología. Para ello, se está desarrollando una herramienta tecnológica que facilitará la comunicación entre las partes y digitalizará procesos que en este momento se llevan a cabo de manera manual. La herramienta está destinada a entidades del sector público y del tercer sector que asisten a migrantes y refugiados, así como a estos como usuarios finales, en Grecia, Italia y España. Para el desarrollo de la herramienta, se han llevado a cabo distintas actividades de investigación (cuestionarios, grupos focales, entrevistas y talleres de co-creación) que han aportado datos relevantes sobre las necesidades de los usuarios (entidades del tercer sector y personas migrantes y refugiadas) y los requisitos de la herramienta. El presente estudio se enmarca en tales actividades de investigación.

(1) Esta investigación forma parte del proyecto REBUILD financiado por el programa Horizonte 2020 de la Comisión Europea. El apoyo de la Comisión Europea en esta publicación no constituye un apoyo de su contenido, el cual refleja únicamente la perspectiva de la autora, y no puede responsabilizarse a la Comisión del uso que se dé a la información aquí recogida. La autora es miembro del grupo consolidado TransMedia Catalonia. Este artículo es parte de la tesis doctoral de María Jiménez en Traducción y Estudios interculturales en el Departamento de Traducción e Interpretación y de Estudios de Asia Oriental de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
(2) Para más información sobre el proyecto REBUILD, consulte su página web: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx

Resumen:
La accesibilidad lingüística es un requisito básico para las entidades que asisten a personas desplazadas. Este artículo analiza las prácticas de accesibilidad lingüística de cinco entidades del tercer sector en cuatro países: Grecia, Italia, España y Reino Unido. Después de repasar brevemente las normativas de los cuatro países, se presentan los resultados de entrevistas en profundidad con el personal de las ONG que atienden a refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Los resultados muestran la pluralidad de las prácticas multilingües, multimodales y digitales en estas entidades y los retos de comunicación a los que se enfrentan las entidades en la gestión del sistema estatales de acogida.

Palabras clave: accesibilidad lingüística, barreras lingüísticas, interpretación, ONG, refugiados

Abstract:
Linguistic accessibility is essential for the organisations assisting refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. This article analyses the linguistic accessibility of third sector organizations in four countries: Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. This article briefly reviews the national regulations on linguistic accessibility in asylum contexts in the four target countries. Then, the results of in-depth interviews with NGO staff assisting refugees and asylum seekers are presented. The results reveal the diversity of multilingual, multimodal, and digital communication practices among these organisations, and the communication challenges that they face in refugee reception programmes.

Keywords: linguistic accessibility, linguistic barriers, interpreting, NGOs, refugees

Este artículo presenta en primer lugar estudios recientes sobre la accesibilidad lingüística en organizaciones del tercer sector y las normativas nacionales en materia de accesibilidad lingüística para entidades encargadas de los programas de asilo. A continuación, se presenta la metodología de este estudio cualitativo llevado a cabo con cinco entidades del tercer sector en cuatro países europeos: España, Grecia, Italia y Reino Unido. De las cinco entidades, dos son participantes del proyecto REBUILD y las tres restantes se eligieron por tener un perfil comparable a las entidades del proyecto. Se incluyó una entidad de un país fuera del foco de REBUILD, con base en Reino Unido, por un lado, para comparar sus prácticas con las de entidades de los países de la Unión Europea y, por otro, por el peso internacional de su lengua oficial. Tras la metodología, se muestran los resultados de las entrevistas en profundidad con el personal de ONG que ayudan a los refugiados y solicitantes de asilo para así explorar a fondo la accesibilidad lingüística y otros retos de comunicación que afrontan en la gestión del sistema de acogida. En el último apartado, se reflexiona sobre las prácticas de las entidades entrevistadas y la necesidad de crear consciencia entre las entidades que atienden a migrantes y refugiados sobre la importancia de la accesibilidad de la información.

2. Las barreras lingüísticas en las entidades del tercer sector

Las entidades del tercer sector (ONG, entidades sin ánimo de lucro, asociaciones y otras organizaciones independientes) trabajan a diario con personas de perfiles distintos. Por tanto, es fundamental que, en la prestación de servicios, se cubran las necesidades comunicativas de unas comunidades tan diversas, no solo para satisfacer las necesidades de las personas a las que atienden, sino también para cumplir las directivas de la UE en materia de accesibilidad. En el contexto de este estudio, nos referimos a las necesidades lingüísticas, funcionales, culturales, de alfabetización y digitales de los migrantes y refugiados, que a menudo dependen de las organizaciones que los apoyan. La accesibilidad en todos los casos puede ayudar a eliminar las barreras lingüísticas, digitales y de alfabetización de las comunidades que corren el riesgo de ser excluidas socialmente debido a sus vulnerabilidades actuales (Alonso, 2007).

Las ONG, las organizaciones internacionales y otros actores en el ámbito de la ayuda humanitaria han identificado las barreras lingüísticas como uno de los principales problemas a la hora de desempeñar su trabajo con migrantes y refugiados (Moreno-Rivero, 2018). Estas barreras, así como el papel que desempeñan la traducción y el multilingüismo en el sector humanitario, son algunos de los temas en los que se han centrado estudios recientes en Traducción e Interpretación (Delgado Luchner y Kherbiche 2018; Tesseur 2018; Foulquié-Rubio y Sánchez-Pedreño Sánchez 2019; Federici y O'Brien 2020; Rico Pérez 2020; Sánchez Ramos y Rico Pérez 2020).

En estas entidades, las prácticas de traducción e interpretación son complejas y se gestionan de forma diferente en cada organización y zona de contacto (Delgado Luchner 2018). Cuando se trata de las prácticas de comunicación multilingüe entre las ONG y sus usuarios, la mayoría de los intercambios son orales. Así lo demuestran los estudios sobre las prácticas de comunicación oral en estos contextos, como la interpretación (Delgado Luchner y Kherbiche 2018b; Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2014), la mediación cultural (Rudvin y Tomassini 2008; Miklavcic y LeBlanc 2014; Moreno-Rivero 2018) y la interpretación con voluntarios (Aguilar-Solano 2015; Al-Shehari 2020; Cadwell, Bollig y Ried 2020; Hassemer 2020). También se ha puesto de manifiesto el uso de la multimodalidad en la comunicación con refugiados, a saber, imágenes, videos, audios y pictogramas (Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés 2021).

Estos estudios muestran la pluralidad de prácticas y perfiles de quienes facilitan la comunicación en organizaciones del tercer sector, que van desde mediadores culturales a intérpretes profesionales, semiprofesionales y no profesionales (Wadensjö 2009; Delgado Luchner 2018; Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés 2021). Además de la pluralidad de prácticas comunicativas, estos estudios también han puesto de relieve la falta de financiación y planificación de los servicios lingüísticos en estas organizaciones (Pym 2008; Tesseur 2018; Rico-Pérez 2020). Como apuntan estos autores, la falta de planificación y financiación da lugar a prácticas de interpretación y traducción informales, no profesionales y *ad hoc*, lo que podría repercutir en la calidad de los servicios prestados.

2.1. La accesibilidad lingüística durante el proceso de asilo

En Europa, los gobiernos centrales son los encargados de financiar y gestionar los programas de acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Debido a que los solicitantes provienen de países de origen distintos, es necesario contar con servicios de traducción e interpretación en las diferentes fases de acogida. En los siguientes apartados resumimos sucintamente lo que recogen los programas y normativas de asilo sobre traducción e interpretación de los cuatro países en los que se ubican las entidades analizadas en este estudio, con el objetivo de obtener una visión general sobre la situación a nivel normativo. Además, como complemento a las disposiciones estatales, incluimos las observaciones de los informes de la Asylum Information Database[3] (AIDA) sobre la provisión de servicios de interpretación en cada país.

España

En España, la responsabilidad de administrar el programa de acogida recae en la Oficina de Asilo y Refugio del Ministerio de Interior. Este, a su vez, financia a ciertas ONG que están presentes en las diferentes comunidades autónomas y establece unas pautas para la acogida e integración de los solicitantes de asilo en el Manual de Gestión (Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones 2020). En cuanto a los servicios de traducción e interpretación, el programa de acogida estipula que «se proporcionará un intérprete en sesiones grupales de acogida y cuando resulte indispensable para dar cumplimiento al itinerario previsto» (Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones 2020: 32). Además, la ultima versión del Manual de Gestión para entidades de acogida recoge que se ha de «asegurar el acceso a la información de todas las personas con necesidades particulares de acogida» (*ibid*). A pesar de estas provisiones, el informe de la AIDA de España (2020c: 40)evidencia la falta de intérpretes en el proceso de asilo y las dificultades que las entidades experimentan con los intérpretes actuales, en su mayoría debidos a la escasa formación y bajos conocimientos sobre los procesos de asilo.

Grecia

En Grecia, la ley recoge que sean intérpretes titulados los que asistan a los solicitantes durante todo el proceso de solicitud de asilo (UNHCR 2020). Además, según el Artículo 43(3) de la Ley 4636/2019 de Protección Internacional griega, para la provisión de información durante el proceso de acogida se ha de contar con la ayuda de un intérprete si el solicitante no entiende la información que se le está proporcionando (AIDA 2020a). Por otro lado, los asistentes sociales encargados del procesamiento de solicitudes de asilo reciben una formación sobre el trabajo con intérpretes (AIDA 2020a: 30). En el informe de la AIDA sobre Grecia se denuncia la falta de intérpretes de manera sistemática a lo largo del informe, no solo durante la primera acogida, sino en la mayor parte de las interacciones entre los servicios de asistencia y los solicitantes de asilo (AIDA 2020a: 53, 59, 98 y 107). Debido a la falta de intérpretes, son organizaciones externas como Frontex las que se encargan de ciertos procedimientos como la identificación y verificación de la nacionalidad de los solicitantes (AIDA 2020a: 43), a pesar de que esta responsabilidad recaiga en las autoridades griegas.

(3) La AIDA es una base de datos gestionada por el Consejo Europeo de Refugiados y Exiliados (ECRE) que contiene información sobre procedimientos de asilo, condiciones de recepción, detención y contenido de protección internacional en 23 países.

Italia

En Italia, los mediadores lingüísticos y culturales proporcionan asistencia durante la solicitud de asilo, según está estipulado en el Artículo 3(1) PD 21/2015. Según la AIDA (AIDA 2020b) se informa a los solicitantes de su derecho a la información y del acceso a servicios con la asistencia de un intérprete. La ley también estipula que estos intérpretes hayan recibido formación previa. Sin embargo, según expone la AIDA (2020b), no solo los intérpretes no reciben formación especializada, sino que la falta de intérpretes y mediadores hace que no siempre sea posible la asistencia de un intérprete en el acceso a los servicios (AIDA 2020b: 21 y 6).

Reino Unido

En Reino Unido, el Ministerio del Interior proporciona los servicios de interpretación durante las entrevistas de solicitud de asilo (AIDA 2020d). Después de la entrevista y mientras se resuelve la solicitud, el Ministerio contrata a empresas para proporcionar alojamiento temporal a aquellos que esperan la resolución de su solicitud de asilo. En cuanto a los servicios de traducción e interpretación que ofrecen estas empresas, se incluye la provisión de traducción e interpretación «cuando sea necesario para comunicarse con el solicitante de asilo» (Home Office s.f.: 13). Migrant Help, una organización independiente del gobierno encargada de la ayuda y guía en los procesos de asilo, también ofrece servicios de traducción e interpretación. En sus fichas informativas, Migrant Help pide a los solicitantes que no acudan con amigos o familiares, sino que sean ellos directamente los que contacten con Migrant Help, ya que disponen de intérpretes para todos los idiomas. También pueden proporcionar la información directamente en el idioma del solicitante.

En cambio, el informe de la AIDA sobre Reino Unido advierte del impacto que tienen los problemas de interpretación en la resolución de las solicitudes y la falta de información de los solicitantes sobre el papel del intérprete (AIDA 2020d: 25). Además, se denuncia que, debido al poco tiempo que se adjudica a cada entrevista, en ocasiones los intérpretes no tienen tiempo de interpretar todo lo que se dice en la entrevista (AIDA 2020d: 97).

Como se observa, las legislaciones de los cuatro países recogen la figura y el papel del intérprete para asegurar la accesibilidad lingüística. Sin embargo, los informes de la AIDA demuestran las deficiencias de los cuatro países en la provisión de traducción e interpretación. En este contexto plural y complejo, nos proponemos explorar las prácticas comunicativas y la accesibilidad lingüística en cinco organizaciones que dan apoyo a solicitantes de asilo y refugiados en los cuatro países europeos señalados. En el siguiente apartado se presentan los objetivos y el contexto del estudio, las preguntas de investigación y la metodología aplicada para la investigación.

3. El estudio

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de unas entrevistas en profundidad en el marco del proyecto REBUILD. Como se ha apuntado en la introducción de este trabajo,, el objetivo del proyecto es la creación de herramientas tecnológicas que faciliten la integración de los migrantes en los países de acogida. A lo largo del proyecto se prevén distintas actividades de investigación —grupos focales, cuestionarios, entrevistas— que aporten información relevante para el desarrollo de las tecnologías.

El objetivo de las entrevistas que aquí nos ocupan era comprender las prácticas de comunicación actuales en estas entidades, así como las barreras que impiden en el acceso a la información y los servicios por parte de sus usuarios, en este caso migrantes y refugiados. Las entrevistas se realizaron a empleados con distintos roles en cinco ONG para recabar información cualitativa sobre estas prácticas. Las ONG no sólo son uno de los usuarios objetivo del proyecto REBUILD sino que son los primeros en proporcionar información a migrantes y refugiados en los países de acogida al encargarse de gestionar los programas de acogida. Las preguntas planteadas en las entrevistas respondían al estado de la cuestión de acuerdo con la bibliografía especializada consultada. La lista completa de preguntas se incluye en anexo. Las preguntas estaban organizadas en tres bloques, a saber: a) su uso de tecnologías de la información y comunicación (TIC), b) traducción e interpretación, y c) las prácticas comunicativas durante la pandemia de la COVID-19. Para este artículo, se han analizado las respuestas del bloque 2, en particular las relacionadas con las siguientes tres cuestiones: (1) las prácticas comunicativas con las personas a las que atienden y sus necesidades lingüísticas, (2) el uso de lenguas extranjeras y, (3) la participación de intérpretes y el empleo de herramientas de traducción.

3.1. Entrevistas en profundidad con personal de ONG

Entre mayo y septiembre de 2020 se realizaron entrevistas en profundidad con personal de ONG en cuatro países: España, Grecia, Italia y Reino Unido. En la selección de las entidades y los participantes de las entrevistas, el objetivo era elegir «casos ricos en información [...], aquellos de los que se puede aprender mucho sobre las cuestiones de importancia central para el propósito de la investigación» (Patton 2002: 230). Para este estudio, se traducía, por una parte, en entidades con usuarios de diversos países de procedencia y, por otra, en entidades que recurrieran a profesionales lingüísticos de distintos perfiles, con el fin de investigar sus prácticas actuales en la comunicación con sus usuarios.

En total, se entrevistó al personal de cinco entidades. Dos de las entidades son miembros del consorcio de REBUILD. Las tres entidades restantes forman parte de la red de entidades del proyecto y su selección se hizo en base al perfil de sus usuarios (refugiados y solicitantes de asilo) y su ámbito de actuación (primera o segunda acogida[4]). Si bien el Reino Unido no es un país participante en el proyecto REBUILD, consideramos que las contribuciones de esta entidad enriquecerían los resultados de este estudio.

Los entrevistados ocupaban diferentes cargos en las ONG en las que trabajaban: trabajadores sociales, enfermeros, psicólogas y encargados. La tabla 1 detalla las organizaciones y su ámbito geográfico, los entrevistados, y los destinatarios de sus servicios. Se han anonimizado los datos para cumplir con los requisitos de ética del proyecto y el reglamento europeo de protección de datos.

Código de la organización	Puesto del participante	Código del participante	Ubicación de la entidad	Perfil del usuario	Área de intervención de la ONG
Organización A	Fundador	MANAG1	España	Migrantes, solicitantes de asilo y refugiados	Apoyo al empleo y a la iniciativa empresarial
Organización B*	Trabajadora social	SW1	Italia	Solicitantes de asilo	Primera acogida
Organización C*	Coordinador del centro	MANAG2	Grecia	Solicitantes de asilo	Segunda acogida
	Enfermero	NUR1			
Organización D	Jefa de operaciones	MANAG3	Reino Unido	Solicitantes de asilo y refugiados	Asesoramiento e información, formación y talleres, banco de alimentos, grupo de mujeres y hombres, club de deberes, clases de ESOL, asesoramiento jurídico, orientación y apoyo emocional.
	Trabajador social	SW2			
Organización E	Psicóloga	PSY1	España	Solicitantes de asilo	Primer programa de recepción

Tabla 1. Detalles de las entidades que participaron en las entrevistas. Las organizaciones marcadas con un asterisco (*) son miembros del consorcio de REBUILD.

(4) Las organizaciones de primera acogida cubren las necesidades básicas de los solicitantes de asilo durante los primeros seis a doce meses de su llegada al país de acogida. Estas incluyen alojamiento, asistencia jurídica, apoyo psicológico, clases de idiomas, y traducción e interpretación. Las organizaciones son financiadas por los gobiernos centrales de cada país. Para más información, visite: http://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/Subvenciones/anos_anteriores/area_integracion/2016/sociosanitaria_cetis/manuales_comunes_gestion/documentos/Manual_de_Gestion_Sistema_acogida_2016.pdf

3.2. Metodología de trabajo

Las entrevistas se llevaron a cabo por la autora. Estas duraron entre 25 y 55 minutos y se realizaron de forma virtual utilizando una plataforma de videoconferencia. No fue posible realizar las entrevistas de manera presencial debido a las restricciones impuestas por la situación de pandemia de la COVID-19.

Las entrevistas fueron transcritas por la autora. Después de la transcripción, se codificaron y analizaron los datos de las entrevistas manualmente mediante un análisis temático siguiendo las pautas de Braun y Clarke (2006). El enfoque de la codificación fue inductivo, es decir, los códigos se extrajeron de los datos (Saldanha y O'Brien, 2014). En la codificación inductiva, los códigos o temas están estrechamente relacionados con los datos recopilados y no están sujetos a los intereses teóricos del investigador. La autora analizó todos los datos y codificó la información relevante para el estudio de manera sistemática. Los códigos se verificaron entre sí y con el conjunto original de datos hasta que fueron coherentes, consistentes y distintivos. Tras la codificación de los datos, los códigos identificados se agruparon por temas. Por último, se revisaron los temas para garantizar que formaban un patrón coherente.

4. Resultados

Esta sección presenta los resultados de las entrevistas con personal de las ONG. Los resultados se exponen de acuerdo con los códigos identificados y los temas del presente artículo: los perfiles de las entidades y las prácticas comunicativas con los usuarios. Para ilustrar los resultados, se presentan citas sacadas de las entrevistas. Estas citas son testimonios directos de los entrevistados. Las entrevistas con las organizaciones C y D (participantes MANAG2, NUR1 y MAGAG3 y SW2, respectivamente) fueron llevadas a cabo en inglés. Las citas que aquí se presentan han sido traducidas por la autora.

4.1. Los perfiles de las entidades

Como puede observarse en la tabla 2, las organizaciones entrevistadas son diversas en cuanto al ámbito de intervención, el perfil de sus usuarios y el ámbito geográfico en el que desarrollan su actividad. Esta heterogeneidad se manifiesta en una variedad de prácticas de trabajo, necesidades de sus usuarios y servicios prestados en las distintas entidades.

Los datos de las entrevistas parecen indicar que el enfoque o modelo de integración que adoptan las entidades repercute en sus prácticas comunicativas. Al abordar la cuestión de la comunicación con las personas a las que atienden, los participantes de tres entidades hicieron referencia a sus enfoques de integración para justificar sus prácticas comunicativas. En estas tres entidades (Organizaciones B, C y D), es un requisito indispensable comunicarse con sus usuarios en un idioma que estos entiendan y en el que se puedan comunicar.

Estas tres organizaciones habían adoptado un enfoque basados en los derechos humanos (Wilson 2018: 2) que concibe los programas de integración como proyectos «holísticos» (MANAG3 y NUR1) e individualizados (SW1). La participante SW1 incidió en el empeño de la entidad por «respetar el derecho de los individuos a la identidad lingüística» (SW1). Las otras dos entidades (Organización A y E) no hicieron mención a su enfoque de integración durante la entrevista. Estas dos se comunican por defecto en los idiomas locales.

A pesar de los diferentes perfiles de las entidades, los datos de las entrevistas ponen de manifiesto la pesada carga de trabajo que sufren los participantes, la cual se ha visto multiplicada a raíz de la pandemia. Para algunos, este factor repercute en la calidad de los servicios que prestan y en su interacción con los usuarios. La escasez de recursos y la creciente demanda de sus servicios son un denominador común de cuatro de las cinco organizaciones.

> Para nosotros, el mayor cambio [desde la COVID] es que ahora tenemos que trabajar 24h al día y estar siempre en línea, conectados a todas estas plataformas, y comunicar todos los problemas a nuestros compañeros... Nuestra vida... ha cambiado completamente desde el primer día. (MANAG2)

> Pienso que la comunicación se ve… se ve...afectada por, y tiro un poco para casa, por el estrés de los trabajadores. O sea, que hay mucha gente que está muy saturada y que pierden un poco el mundo de vista y empiezan a atender a la gente como si fuera una especie de cadena... (PSY1)

4.2. Las prácticas comunicativas con sus usuarios

Para dudas, consultas o para la recepción de los servicios, la práctica habitual es que los usuarios visiten las oficinas de las entidades. Si el usuario y el personal hablan el mismo idioma, algunas consultas se resuelven por teléfono.

Para la comunicación a distancia, WhatsApp es la plataforma predominante en todas las organizaciones. Según los participantes en la entrevista, WhatsApp ofrece a los usuarios una plataforma conocida y fácil de usar que no requiere una gran cantidad de datos. La versatilidad de la herramienta es otra razón de su uso extendido. El participante NUR1 subrayó las razones de la prevalencia de esta aplicación: «Nuestra herramienta diaria es WhatsApp por dos razones. Porque puede admitir mensajes de texto orales y porque la gente siempre tiene megabytes para comunicarse a través de WhatsApp». Otra participante explicó que en su organización el uso de esta herramienta obedecía a razones los perfiles profesionales de los usuarios:

> Los otros perfiles profesionales, yo te diría WhatsApp a saco, sobre todo con toda la gente que no dominaba catalán y castellano, ellos te pedían por favor que les escribieran por WhatsApp porque esto iba directamente al traductor de Google.
> (PSY1)

Sin embargo, al uso de WhatsApp en este contexto se le atribuyen efectos adversos, como la dificultad de desconectar y la invasión de los espacios privados del personal de la ONG (debido a que la mayoría de ellos utiliza sus teléfonos personales), así como los riesgos asociados con compartir documentación personal y confidencial a través de esta herramienta. En efecto, el Centro Criptológico Nacional lista hasta once, entre ellos, el intercambio de datos entre WhatsApp y Facebook, el secuestro de cuentas y la difusión de información confidencial durante la conexión inicial (CCN, 2016). Por lo que se refiere a la comunicación a través del correo electrónico, los datos de las entrevistas apuntan a que su uso en las organizaciones entrevistadas está en declive. Los participantes explicaron que los usuarios están menos acostumbrados a esta herramienta y que, además, no ofrece una comunicación inmediata ni oral.

4.3. El uso de idiomas en la comunicación con los usuarios

De los datos de las entrevistas se desprende la disparidad en el uso de idiomas en la comunicación con las personas a las que prestan servicios en las distintas entidades. Como se ha señalado anteriormente, cada organización adopta unas prácticas diferentes: unas se comunican en los idiomas autóctonos (organizaciones A y E), y otras a través de mediadores lingüísticos, ya sean intérpretes formados (organización C), intérpretes voluntarios no formados (organización C) o mediadores culturales (organización B). Los siguientes apartados detallan el uso de idiomas en las organizaciones consultadas.

4.3.1. Comunicación en las lenguas autóctonas

Las dos organizaciones españolas (organizaciones A y E) se comunican con los usuarios en las lenguas locales. Una de estas dos organizaciones se muestra satisfecha con su sistema y era la única organización que disponía de un presupuesto para traducción que no tenía previsto utilizar.

> Porque no... No me aporta... No me aporta nada traducir...algo que podría traducir todo el Trello al árabe...pero si luego no lo puedo explicar en árabe, no me aporta. Tenemos todo el material en castellano y catalán, y con eso es...suficiente. (MANAG1)

Para esta organización, hablar el idioma o idiomas locales es un requisito para el acceso a sus servicios. Para llegar a los usuarios que tenían bajos niveles de los idiomas locales, su enfoque era el uso de lenguaje fácil de comprender, al que el participante se refiere como «lenguaje tranquilo» y «lenguaje de la calle». Esta organización comunica sus servicios mediante carteles que difunden por WhatsApp en los idiomas oficiales del territorio. Según el participante MANAG1, la decisión de no traducir sus carteles a otras lenguas radica en su

percepción de que el mensaje es sencillo: «Este cartel normalmente lo hacemos en catalán, pero porque no tiene mucha historia».

Para la participante de la organización E, este sistema tiene «carencias» y son comunes los malentendidos al interactuar con los usuarios. Como solución a la falta de comprensión, los usuarios que no hablan los idiomas locales piden al personal de la ONG que les envíen un mensaje en WhatsApp para traducirlo con el traductor de Google, como pone de manifiesto la siguiente cita de la participante PSY1:

> Carencias de malentendidos, un montón. O sea, sobre todo con las personas que no hablaban castellano, eh... entendían pues...las cosas mal, ¿no? Porque a la hora de traducir, pues no les traducía bien... Y también la...o sea, a nivel por ejemplo de la inmediatez, es decir, no todo el mundo responde a los mensajes, a veces tienes que comunicar cosas con un poquito de urgencia... Si las comunicas por WhatsApp puede ser que esa persona no lo esté viendo a tiempo...y hablar por teléfono era complicado porque entonces no te entendían. (PSY1)

Según la participante, hasta hace unos cuatro años, esta organización trabajaba con intérpretes para asuntos importantes y para las entrevistas con los psicólogos. Sin embargo, la participante denuncia que los intérpretes no tenían formación profesional, lo que causaba problemas durante las entrevistas. Por ejemplo, el intérprete a menudo añadía comentarios propios a la conversación.

> No eran... o sea, ellas cobraban, era un trabajo, pero no eran personas formadas como intérpretes. Eran personas que eran originarias de esos países, que tenían un buen nivel del idioma, y trabajaban como intérpretes, pero no tenían una formación en esto y eso también generaba problemas. Porque al no tener una formación específica, pues a veces, sucedía que pues se metían en la conversación, daban su opinión, algo no les parecía bien y te lo decían, había como algunas carencias a nivel de profesionalidad. (PSY1)

En la actualidad, el uso de intérpretes se ha reducido a mínimos debido a los recortes en el presupuesto de los últimos años y a un aumento en la burocracia. La participante PSY1 afirmó que, desde hace alrededor de un año, se exige al personal que justifique el uso de los intérpretes mediante la elaboración de un informe que exponga las razones por las que se necesita de interpretación. Como resultado, la comunicación con las personas a las que prestan servicios se efectúa a menudo en las lenguas autóctonas.

4.3.2. Comunicación en lenguas extranjeras

Las organizaciones B, C y D se comunican con los usuarios en lenguas extranjeras. Así, estas tres entidades cuentan con intérpretes y personal plurilingüe. Además de garantizar una comunicación efectiva, la comunicación en lenguas extranjeras les permite establecer vínculos de confianza con las personas a las que atienden (SW1). A continuación, se describen los perfiles profesionales de los interpretes en estas tres organizaciones.

La organización B cuenta con mediadores interculturales con formación que reciben una remuneración por servicio prestado. Debido al gran volumen de trabajo, la organización también emplea a un coordinador que se encarga de gestionar las tareas de mediación intercultural. La participante se mostraba satisfecha de la «amplia base de datos con mediadores por combinación de idiomas, territorio y disponibilidad» de su organización (SW1). La participante hizo hincapié en la importancia que otorga la entidad a disponer de mediadores para todos los idiomas y dialectos que hablan sus usuarios. Asimismo, subrayó el papel fundamental que los mediadores ejercen en todas las interacciones entre el personal de la ONG y los usuarios. La entidad, por tanto, se esfuerza en conseguir financiación para la mediación cultural, no sólo para garantizar una comunicación efectiva con las personas a las que prestan servicios, sino también para respetar su identidad lingüística, pilar en el que se basa el enfoque de integración de la entidad:

> Para nosotros para la identidad de la persona es parte fundamental de la integración, que vamos a construir con ellos. O sea, si tú no le permites expresarse en su idioma, como ya te dije, tú no estás construyendo una línea de integración individualizada […] Todas las personas son diferentes, tienen experiencias e historias diferentes

> y sobre todo en el caso de los migrantes tú tienes que relacionarte bastante también con el pasado de la persona. Cuando una persona llega aquí no es como un libro vacío. Es un libro lleno de cosas y tú tienes que conocer estas cosas. Porque tú estás manejando con la existencia de esta persona. (SW1)

La Organización D recurre a intérpretes voluntarios no formados, los cuales son, en su mayoría, antiguos usuarios de la organización. En palabras del participante, su práctica es la de «encontrar una persona que hable el idioma» (SW2). Para la organización, este sistema también beneficia a sus antiguos usuarios ya que el voluntariado les ayuda a «desarrollar la confianza en sí mismos y su sentimiento de pertenencia» (MANAG3). Tal como en la organización B, la participante MANAG3 se mostraba satisfecha de su base de datos de intérpretes voluntarios. Los voluntarios no reciben ninguna formación en traducción e interpretación para desempeñar las actividades, pero sí se les pide un certificado de antecedentes penales. Para conversaciones breves, la organización recurre a los voluntarios para interpretaciones telefónicas. Asimismo, el personal de la ONG habla algunas de las lenguas maternas de los usuarios (en concreto, farsi, árabe y dari, lengua oficial de Afganistán), lo que, según reconocen, facilita su acceso a los servicios. Las interpretaciones *ad-hoc* del personal de la ONG son, como resultado, una práctica habitual en esta organización. Para justificar su uso de lenguas extranjeras, el participante SW2 hizo alusión a los trastornos emocionales que pueden derivar de una falta de comunicación, los cuales se suman a los que ya sufren a causa del proceso migratorio:

> Como cuando quieren solicitar el apoyo de la NASS[5], solo tenemos que decirles: necesitamos un extracto de cuenta bancaria, necesitamos esto... y esto pues... aumenta un poco su ansiedad porque no entienden realmente lo que está pasando a veces. Pero la mayoría de las veces tratamos de explicarlo y porque nuestros clientes adultos, que tienen más dificultades de comprensión, saben que tenemos personal que habla farsi y dari y, pues, vienen más [que los clientes que hablan otros idiomas]. (SW2)

En contrapartida, la Organización C trabaja con intérpretes formados que desempeñan su trabajo de forma remunerada. Los intérpretes son miembros de la comunidad de refugiados y han recibido formación de Traducción e Interpretación a través de otra ONG. En este caso, los intérpretes trabajan en la organización a jornada completa y son el primer punto de contacto para los usuarios. Esta primera interacción con los intérpretes se considera «el paso más importante» en la prestación de sus servicios, y su trabajo se describe como «esencial» (NUR1). El participante NUR1 subrayó que los nueve intérpretes soportan una gran carga de trabajo y que su labor "mediadora" en la entidad conlleva ciertos riesgos ya que «siempre están en el medio». La siguiente cita ejemplifica tales consideraciones:

> En algunos casos puede haber tensión, pero en su mayoría las relaciones son buenas, para cualquier cosa que necesiten los usuarios, nuestros traductores actúan como la primera ola... son los primeros en recibir todas las solicitudes, y también para los trabajadores de la entidad, son las primeras personas con la que se contactaría para recibir información, así que siempre están en el medio. Esto crea a veces algo de tensión, pero no se han reportado u ocurrido problemas significativos. (NUR1)

Los participantes también comentaron que los intérpretes en cuya combinación de lenguas se incluye el griego asumen una carga de trabajo mucho más elevada que el resto, puesto que se trata de la lengua oficial del país. En esta organización, los nueve intérpretes en plantilla dan apoyo lingüístico a alrededor de 620 usuarios, tanto a nivel de traducción como de interpretación. Por ejemplo, los intérpretes acompañan a los usuarios a hospitales y centros de salud. En este contexto, un problema recurrente al que se enfrentan tanto intérpretes como usuarios es la negativa de los profesionales de la salud a trabajar con intérpretes. A menudo los sanitarios se niegan a participar en las interpretaciones telefónicas, lo que ha dado pie a hospitalizaciones de pacientes que desconocían las razones de la hospitalización o enfermedad:

> Incluso, imagínate, hemos tenido casos en los que los pacientes no saben por qué han sido hospitalizados. [...]

(5) La NASS es el Servicio Nacional de Apoyo al Asilo de Reino Unido (National Asylum Support Service, por sus siglas en inglés) que se encarga de gestionar y conceder las ayudas a los solicitantes de asilo que no disponen de medios económicos. Más información en https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/99032/2847-support-asylum-seekers.pdf

> Pueden llamarme hoy para darme el parte de un usuario nuestro, y me pueden decir: «Ok, es NUR1, vale, es de la Organización C, le doy el parte». Al día siguiente pueden decirme: «No, no puedo darte ninguna información por teléfono». En otros casos, el intérprete llama para pedir información sobre el estado de salud del paciente y también se niegan, e insisten en que vayamos allí a pedir información. (NUR1)

A esta negativa se añade la exigencia de algunos sanitarios de que un empleado griego de la entidad esté presente durante la interpretación. Por otra parte, puesto que no todos intérpretes en plantilla tienen como lengua de trabajo el griego, se ha convertido en una práctica habitual utilizar el inglés como lengua pivote. Así, el empleado de la ONG interpreta del griego al inglés, y el intérprete del inglés al idioma de los usuarios. En estos casos, el personal de la ONG señala que utilizan un «lenguaje fácil» (MANAG2) al interpretar del griego al inglés para evitar errores.

5. Discusión

Las entrevistas con el personal de las ONG han puesto de manifiesto la heterogeneidad de las prácticas comunicativas en las organizaciones del tercer sector. La traducción e interpretación adopta muchas formas, si bien ninguna de ellas parece ajustarse a la disciplina profesional impartida en las universidades europeas. Estos resultados están en consonancia con la bibliografía especializada en el ámbito de la interpretación comunitaria y la traducción en contextos de crisis (Wadensjö 2009; Delgado Luchner 2018; Tesseur 2019; Foulquié-Rubio y Sánchez-Pedreño Sánchez 2019; Rico Pérez 2020), que revelan la complejidad de las prácticas de traducción e interpretación en estos contextos y la distinta gestión por parte de las entidades del tercer sector.

Del mismo modo, se observa una deficiencia en la prestación de servicios lingüísticos en dos de las cinco entidades, que no contemplan la incorporación de intérpretes en sus programas de acogida, aún cuando una de ellas contaba con presupuesto para ello. Estos datos contrastan con las obligaciones que recogen las normativas presentados en la sección 2.1.

Sorprende que ninguna de las organizaciones trabaje con intérpretes formados profesionalmente, a excepción de una organización que forma a antiguos usuarios a través de otra ONG. Como futura vía de estudio, sería interesante conocer más datos sobre la formación que proporciona la ONG como, por ejemplo, su duración, contenidos y evaluación, para poder compararla con la formación universitaria de intérpretes en estos países europeos. Por su parte, la organización italiana no cuenta con intérpretes, pero sí con mediadores culturales, por lo que cumple con la normativa italiana de accesibilidad lingüística durante el proceso de asilo. No obstante, la formación y figura de los mediadores culturales en Italia está «lejos de ser reconocidas en términos profesionales» (Taviano 2012: 23) y sigue creando debate entre los académicos e investigadores de traducción e interpretación (Amato y Garwood, 2011).

A pesar de no contar con intérpretes formados, en general, el personal de las ONG estaba satisfecho con el trabajo de intérpretes y mediadores culturales, independientemente de su formación. Solo una participante manifestó tener problemas de comunicación por culpa de la falta de profesionalidad de los intérpretes. En el contexto griego se expuso el uso del inglés como lengua pivote. Como O'Brien *et al.* (2017) advierten, sería importante investigar más a fondo la calidad de la interpretación y los factores que influyen en la misma cuando se emplea una lengua pivote.

Otro dato interesante es el rechazo de los profesionales de la salud a participar en las interpretaciones en Grecia, ya sea por teléfono o en persona, si el personal de la ONG no está presente. Si bien desconocemos las razones de esta negativa, podemos remitirnos a lo que apuntan Federici y O'Brien (2020: 12), sobre la posibilidad de que la credibilidad de la profesión se haya visto disminuida por el trabajo de intérpretes no profesionales que trabajan más allá de sus capacidades. Al mismo tiempo, deberían estudiarse las consecuencias que tienen este rechazo en el trabajo de los intérpretes, su confianza en su trabajo y su satisfacción por la profesión. En cuanto a la interpretación telefónica, en el actual contexto de la pandemia producida por la COVID-19, la interpretación a distancia cobra gran importancia y es esencial para asegurar el acceso a la información. Además de la interpretación telefónica, los resultados demuestran el potencial de la tecnología para garantizar

la accesibilidad de la información por permitir la comunicación multimodal. Identificamos aquí la necesidad de crear herramientas digitales que faciliten esta comunicación accesible y multimodal que sean aptas para estos contextos, como se está haciendo en el proyecto REBUILD.

Otra práctica que se ha identificado para conseguir una comunicación efectiva es el uso del Lenguaje Fácil. El lenguaje fácil de comprender se define como «aquel que contribuye a hacer el contenido o la información accesibles al máximo número de personas posible» ((Arias-Badia y Fernández Torné 2020: 298). Si bien se recomienda esta práctica con fines de accesibilidad —con este fin se han elaborado directrices y recomendaciones de buenas prácticas como, por ejemplo, AENOR (2018)—, nos preguntamos si se ha adoptado el lenguaje fácil teniendo en cuenta esta finalidad y directrices, o bien como recurso *ad-hoc* e informal cuando el personal de las ONG y los usuarios no hablan el mismo idioma. De hecho, ninguno de los dos participantes que hicieron mención de esta práctica utilizaron el término Lenguaje Fácil, Lenguaje Sencillo o Lectura Fácil, sino que se refirieron a esta práctica como «lenguaje tranquilo», «lenguaje de la calle» o «vocabulario sencillo».

Por lo que se refiere a la contratación de profesionales con perfil lingüístico en las entidades, observamos que no está extendida entre las entidades estudiadas a pesar de las apremiantes necesidades de comunicación en lenguas extranjeras en el desempeño de su trabajo. Dos organizaciones contaban con una persona a cargo de los mediadores lingüísticos (ya fueran voluntarios o mediadores culturales capacitados). No obstante, ninguna de ellas había recibido formación en lenguas. Si bien tres de las cinco entidades observamos una concienciación sobre la importancia de las lenguas, esta concienciación no incluye todavía contar con profesionales lingüísticos.

6. Conclusión

Este estudio ha puesto de manifiesto la pluralidad de prácticas comunicativas en estas entidades, en su mayoría, llevadas a cabo por no profesionales de traducción e interpretación. La accesibilidad lingüística es, sin duda, una tarea pendiente en el tercer sector, sobre todo en España, donde los recortes han diezmado el presupuesto para traducción e interpretación y donde actualmente no hay alternativa viable a la falta de intérpretes y de financiación en estas entidades. Estos resultados contribuyen a los estudios emergentes sobre el papel de la traducción y las prácticas multilingües en el sector humanitario (Cadwell y O'Brien 2016; Delgado Luchner 2018; Tesseur 2018; Federici y O'Brien 2020).

Los movimientos migratorios no cesan, pero sí cambia el contexto en el que se producen y los países de procedencia de aquellos que migran. El uso y desarrollo de tecnologías que faciliten la comunicación y las tareas que llevan a cabo estas entidades puede ayudar a la gestión y hacer accesible la información a personas que en este momento no tienen acceso a ella. Esta accesibilidad de la información se hace más importante en contextos de crisis, como la reciente pandemia producida por la COVID. En estas circunstancias, el acceso a la información puede salvar vidas.

Teniendo en cuenta las conclusiones que aquí se presentan, y de acuerdo con lo que señala Drugan (2020: 62), recomendamos que se fomente la colaboración entre profesionales de traducción e interpretación y organizaciones del tercer sector para mejorar las prácticas comunicativas en estas entidades. Por ejemplo, se podrían llevar a cabo campañas de sensibilización por parte de especialistas en traducción e interpretación sobre la importancia de la lengua, la traducción e interpretación y la accesibilidad en estos contextos. Además, las TIC y las tecnologías de traducción son herramientas útiles en estos contextos cuyo uso está extendido en nuestras sociedades. Como apunta este estudio, el uso de la tecnología en estas entidades es hoy muy limitado, por lo que proyectos como REBUILD son relevantes y necesarios para equiparar el desarrollo tecnológico de las entidades del tercer sector al de otras industrias. Estos tiempos de cambios en los que nos encontramos pueden convertirse en una oportunidad idónea para que estas organizaciones adopten soluciones tecnológicas que faciliten la comunicación con sus usuarios y hagan su trabajo más eficiente.

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Anexo. Guion de preguntas de las entrevistas

1. El uso de Tecnologías de la Información y Comunicación (TIC)

¿Cómo es la comunicación con sus beneficiarios en el día a día?
¿Utilizan las TIC para comunicarse con ellos?
¿Qué TIC utiliza? ¿Cumplen estas su función? ¿Hay alguna tecnología que les gustaría disponer?
¿Cómo promocionan sus servicios entre la población destinataria?
¿Están satisfechos con sus prácticas actuales?
¿Qué opinan sus compañeros sobre el uso de la tecnología en su ámbito de trabajo?
Si su organización hace un uso limitado de la tecnología, ¿cuáles son las razones?
¿Qué consideraciones éticas tienen en cuneta antes de utilizar las TIC?
¿Hay alguna tecnología que hayan dejado de utilizar? ¿Cuáles fueron las razones?

2. Traducción

¿Cómo se comunican con los beneficiarios que no hablan el/los idioma/s locales?
¿Utilizan tecnologías de la traducción?
¿Se incluye la traducción en los presupuestos de comunicación?
¿Cuenta con personal bilingüe o trilingüe? ¿Se tiene en cuenta el dominio de lenguas extranjeras en la contratación de personal?
¿Utiliza glosarios o aplicaciones cuando no tiene una lengua en común con sus beneficiaros?

3. Preguntas relacionadas con los efectos de la pandemia

¿Tenía su entidad un protocolo establecido para situaciones de este tipo?
Si no es así, ¿qué protocolos se establecieron?
¿Cómo se comunican ahora con los beneficiarios? ¿Qué pasa con los beneficiarios que no hablan el/los idioma/s locales?
¿Han pasado sus servicios a plataformas virtuales y cómo ha sido la recepción por parte de los beneficiarios?
¿Considera su organización mantener algunos de estos servicios en línea después de la pandemia?
¿Cuáles han sido los principales retos a los que se han enfrentado al ofrecer sus servicios de manera virtual?

1.3. Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Arias-Badia, B. (2021). El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: Análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes. *Lengua Y migración*, *13*(1). https://doi.org/10.37536/LYM.13.1.2021.1368

El uso de imágenes en el aula de lengua extranjera para personas refugiadas: análisis de materiales y perspectiva de los docentes

María Jiménez-Andrés y Blanca Arias-Badia

La formación en lenguas es uno de los servicios en los que ONG y organismos públicos de todos los países de Europa se vuelcan en el contexto de la acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. Este artículo examina el aula de enseñanza de idiomas a estos estudiantes a partir de los resultados de dos actividades de investigación: un análisis de cuatro materiales de enseñanza de español para personas migrantes y un grupo focal con docentes que trabajan con el grupo destinatario. La heterogeneidad del alumnado, en especial en cuanto a los niveles de alfabetización, motiva el interés por desarrollar materiales didácticos con un importante componente visual. El énfasis del estudio recae en analizar el papel que desempeñan las imágenes en la comunicación en el aula. Nos proponemos describir en qué se traduce el componente visual en el aula y cómo lo abordan las editoriales y organizaciones que desarrollan materiales.

Palabras clave: Comunicación visual, ELE, migración, ONG, recursos didácticos.

The use of images in the foreign language classroom for refugees: an analysis of materials and teachers' perspectives. The role played by language learning in the context of asylum seeker and refugee integration has attracted considerable attention among third sector organisations and public administrations. This article explores the language classroom with refugees and asylum-seekers from the results of two complementary research activities: the analysis of four open-access teaching resources for migrants available online; and a focus group with teachers working with the target group. The emphasis of the study is on the role played by images in classroom communication. The use of visual materials is proposed for the instruction of highly diverse student groups such as the ones described here. This paper aims to report on how this translates in the classroom and how it is addressed by publishers and other organisations developing teaching materials.

Keywords: Visual communication, language teaching, migration.

Lengua y migración / Language and Migration 13:1 (2021), 133-156
Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

1. Introducción[1]

La formación en lenguas es uno de los servicios en los que ONG y organismos públicos de todos los países de Europa se vuelcan en el contexto de la acogida de refugiados y solicitantes de asilo. El reto específico que supone enseñar lenguas a este colectivo es su alto grado de heterogeneidad en cuanto a la motivación de los estudiantes, su grado de alfabetización, procedencia y necesidades comunicativas más específicas (Miquel López 1995). Este artículo presenta un estado de la cuestión sobre la enseñanza de lenguas a estos estudiantes, así como resultados de dos actividades de investigación: un análisis de materiales de ELE diseñados específicamente para personas migrantes y un grupo focal con tres docentes que trabajan con refugiados.

El análisis de materiales se centra en cuatro propuestas de libre acceso y disponibles en línea: dos materiales propuestos por el Ayuntamiento de Barcelona para los primeros pasos en la formación en lenguas, *Hablamos* (Espai d'Inclusió i Formació Casc Antic 2008) y *Oralpha* (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018), y dos materiales previos diseñados por entidades sin ánimo de lucro, *Aprendiendo un idioma para trabajar* (Santillana 2002), y *Manual de español para inmigrantes: ¿Cómo se dice…?* (Fundación Montemadrid 2006).

Complementamos el análisis de materiales con el de un grupo focal llevado a cabo con tres profesores que trabajan con este colectivo. Los resultados revelan cómo abordan estos profesores las dificultades de comunicación que surgen en el aula, con énfasis en las estrategias multilingües y en el papel que desempeña la comunicación multimodal (por ejemplo, a partir de imágenes o vídeos explicativos) en la labor docente. Se trata, así pues, de una investigación de tipo cualitativo que pretende proporcionar un testimonio actualizado de las prácticas docentes con este grupo destinatario.

La investigación presentada en este trabajo se enmarca en el proyecto europeo REBUILD[2]. Dicho proyecto tiene por objetivo el desarrollo de tecnologías que faciliten la comunicación entre las personas solicitantes de asilo y refugiados, las instituciones y los proveedores de servicios, con el fin de fomentar su integración social. En el proyecto, que se concentra en los países europeos de entrada de migrantes y refugiados (Grecia, Italia y España), colaboran diversas instituciones europeas, entre ellas, la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Una de las tareas a nuestro cargo en dicho proyecto es la creación de pictogramas que puedan suplir las carencias lingüísticas de los usuarios en el uso de la herramienta. Así, en este trabajo nos ocupamos de profundizar sobre el uso de la imagen en los materiales didácticos empleados con el grupo meta del proyecto, así como de la perspectiva que sobre ello tienen sus docentes de lengua, en tanto que mediadores expertos en la comunicación con el grupo meta.

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Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

2. Marco teórico: la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados

En este apartado presentamos el estado actual de la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados en España, el grupo destinatario, y los objetivos de la enseñanza de lenguas a este colectivo. Por otro lado, revisamos las características generales de los recursos didácticos que se emplean en este tipo de cursos, centrándonos en el uso de imágenes, la alfabetización visual y las pautas de diseño de materiales.

Los cursos de español como lengua extranjera a migrantes y refugiados nacen como respuesta al incremento de los flujos migratorios en España. Estos cursos, que comienzan a impartirse en la última década de los 90, comenzaron adaptando las clases de ELE a las necesidades de esta comunidad a nivel lingüístico, sociocultural y de comunicación (García 1999). En el año 2004, El Manifiesto de Santander marcó el punto de partida para la "organización, normalización, regulación y evaluación" de la enseñanza del español a inmigrantes y refugiados (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2005).

De entre los objetivos específicos de estos cursos, destacan proporcionar al alumno migrante los recursos comunicativos necesarios para que pueda relacionarse en los distintos ámbitos de manera eficiente, así como favorecer la comprensión de la lengua y cultura españolas para su integración en la sociedad (Isabel Sanz e Instituto Cervantes 2005). Además, se hace hincapié en la necesidad de diseñar cursos específicos según los intereses, formación y experiencia profesional de los estudiantes migrantes y refugiados (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2005).

Se puede observar que el foco se pone, así pues, en desarrollar la competencia comunicativa. El enfoque comunicativo, reflejado en actividades que estimulan un "uso genuino del lenguaje para fines comunicativos" (Howatt y Widdowson 2004: 345), es desde los años 90 del siglo XX el recomendado para el aula de ELE para refugiados, entre otros motivos, por su capacidad para adaptarse a las necesidades del alumno (Beghadid 2003: 119).

Hoy, muchas de las propuestas orientadas a regularizar la enseñanza de ELE a personas migrantes no han llegado todavía a las aulas, por lo general, por la falta de recursos de las entidades que organizan cursos para este colectivo y las limitaciones económicas del alumnado. Así, las encargadas de implementar y desarrollar programas de ELE para refugiados han pasado a ser entidades del tercer sector, así como, en menor medida, ciertos centros educativos públicos de adultos y universidades públicas (Aguirre García de la Noceda 2014; Romera 2016). Las clases de lengua son el servicio lingüístico que más ofrecen estas entidades, por encima de

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Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

servicios de traducción, interpretación o mediación cultural (Arias-Badia y Jiménez-Andrés 2021). Debido a su carácter gratuito, los cursos suelen ser impartidos por voluntarios no siempre profesionales en la enseñanza de ELE, trabajadores sociales u otros empleados de ONG. En cuanto a los materiales que se emplean, la mayoría son impresiones de materiales en línea y fotocopias en blanco y negro, debido a las dificultades económicas a las que podría enfrentarse el alumnado si tuvieran que adquirir un manual en venta en el mercado (Yáñez García 2020: 34). Si bien la mayoría de las organizaciones que apoyan a migrantes y refugiados ofrecen cursos de español para extranjeros, dicha oferta es insuficiente para satisfacer la demanda de estos cursos, tanto en lo referente a las horas lectivas por curso como de diferentes niveles (Gómez Díez 2020: 70). El estudio de Gómez Díez (2020: 73) también pone de manifiesto la insuficiencia de medios de los que disponen las entidades para el desarrollo de los cursos.

2.1. Grupo destinatario

Una de las características principales de este grupo es su heterogeneidad, debido a la distinta procedencia geográfica, lenguas maternas, segundas o incluso terceras lenguas, formación, variedad cultural y religiosa, sexo, edad y estilos de aprendizaje de las personas refugiadas. Así, entre los refugiados y migrantes podemos encontrar tanto a personas muy formadas como a personas no alfabetizadas, es decir, con distintos niveles de conocimiento de los códigos de lectura y escritura (Miquel López 1995; *The Government and Public Sector Practice* 2017).

Esta heterogeneidad del colectivo se verá reflejada también en las aulas de español. Si bien supondrá un reto en la labor educativa, especialmente para un profesorado no profesional o poco experimentado, el desconocimiento de los códigos de lectoescritura no ha de ser un problema a la hora de aprender una segunda lengua. Como apuntaba Miquel López (1995: 248), el aprendizaje se puede conseguir adaptando las técnicas a las habilidades y características cognitivas del alumnado, de las cuales disponen como hablantes de otras lenguas.

2.2. Manuales de aprendizaje de lenguas para personas migrantes

La utilización de material especializado y destinado al alumnado destinatario cobra particular importancia dadas las características y heterogeneidad a distintos niveles del grupo. Como ya hemos mencionado, algunos alumnos pueden no conocer los códigos de lectoescritura, que muchos materiales de ELE presuponen, o plantear actividades o cuestiones cultu-

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Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

rales completamente ajenas para el alumno. Así, existen métodos que combinan la alfabetización con el aprendizaje del idioma, mientras que otros consideran la oralidad como paso previo a la alfabetización.

Independientemente de su perspectiva sobre la alfabetización, estos métodos presentan numerosas ventajas, tales como su distanciamiento del etnocentrismo o "occidentecentrismo", la introducción de nociones sociolingüísticas y culturales, y su amplia variedad de recursos, como imágenes, documentación, dibujos o fotografías, entre otros (Miquel López 1995: 251-252). Sobre el tipo de actividades que presentan, se recomienda que sean variadas y breves, con objetivos comunicativos concretos y que prioricen el trabajo en grupo por encima del individual (Villalba Martínez y Hernández García 2000).

Existe una gran variedad de manuales destinados a migrantes y refugiados, la mayor parte de los cuales se publicaron entre 1990 y 2010. Además de las editoriales, a menudo son las propias organizaciones que imparten los cursos las que desarrollan sus propios materiales por cuestiones de coste, relevancia de los contenidos y prácticas de los profesores (Ruiz Fajardo 2008).

2.3. Las imágenes en la enseñanza de lenguas y la alfabetización visual

En las últimas décadas, los libros de texto han experimentado un aumento en el empleo de recursos visuales, propiciados por la evolución del diseño gráfico y el aumento de la cultura contemporánea de la dependencia de la comunicación visual. Al incremento y la mejora de la calidad de los elementos visuales, se suma la incorporación de recursos semióticos más modernos, como el color, las fotografías, los planos o los pictogramas (Abio y Dias 2015). Los elementos visuales favorecen la transmisión de significados y la motivación del aprendizaje de la lengua (Hernández García y Villalba Martínez 2003). El componente visual tiene muchas ventajas pedagógicas, tales como la presentación y la potencialmente mayor claridad de los materiales, la jerarquía en los contenidos y la facilidad en la lectura (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Entre los elementos visuales que propician la accesibilidad de los materiales destacan el camino de lectura y el uso del color (Ellis y Ellis 1987). El camino de lectura debe ser fácil de seguir para que el alumno pueda entender sin dificultad las relaciones entre textos, ejercicios e imágenes (ibid: 91). En cuanto al uso del color, los autores recomiendan que este sea coherente y con una clara intención, y advierten que el color tiene la capacidad de llevar la atención del lector a los contenidos a color, independientemente de su condición (ibid: 93). El contraste del color es esencial para garantizar la legibilidad del documento, por lo que se

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aconseja seguir las pautas de accesibilidad en el diseño de materiales tanto digitales como en papel. Así, para garantizar una buena legibilidad del documento para personas con problemas de visión, y en situaciones de mucha luz o con pantallas con poco contraste o brillo, se recomienda recurrir a un contraste de luminosidad suficiente entre el fondo y el color del texto, y se desaconseja utilizar únicamente el color para transmitir información (Universidad de Alicante 2019).

El uso de imágenes en los materiales de ELE tiene un claro fin comunicativo. Estos elementos visuales cobran una gran importancia por su papel sustitutivo o complementario de la comunicación escrita, en especial cuando se emplean con alumnado no alfabetizado. La alfabetización visual es una competencia necesaria, pero a menudo desatendida, para la adecuada interpretación de los elementos visuales.

La alfabetización visual se define como la capacidad de interpretar textos visuales (Debes 1968). A pesar de que vivimos en una era de alta orientación visual, la alfabetización visual en la educación formal no está programada y se enseña arbitraria y esporádicamente en el aula (Níkleva y Pejović 2015).

En general, los textos visuales no se consideran sustitutos de los verbales, sino que tienen una función de complementación (Alba Paredes y García Romero 2018). En los materiales de ELE, donde el uso de imágenes está extendido, se suelen usar como complemento del contenido escrito o para embellecer los materiales; rara vez de manera independiente. En el aula, los recursos visuales se utilizan con asiduidad para reforzar los contenidos, fomentar la comprensión y la retención y, a su vez, ayudar a los alumnos a comunicarse con el mundo que les rodea (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Otra ventaja de los recursos visuales es que facilitan la transmisión de contenidos culturales, especialmente a aprendientes de culturas muy distantes (Sánchez Benítez 2009).

En este sentido, es importante destacar que la alfabetización visual no es universal y que las diferencias culturales son una variable predominante a la hora de medir la comprensión de un símbolo (Avgerinou y Pettersson 2011; Encabo Fernández y Jerez Martínez 2013). Por eso, aunque las imágenes contribuyen a la transmisión de contenidos culturales, las explicaciones y aclaraciones de los profesores de ELE son necesarias para la correcta interpretación de las imágenes y el aprendizaje de los contenidos culturales asociados a ellas.

3. Marco metodológico

Tal como anticipábamos en la introducción, este trabajo presenta los resultados de dos actividades de investigación complementarias: un análisis de cuatro materiales didácticos y un grupo focal con tres profesores de lenguas

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que han trabajado directamente con personas refugiadas. En este apartado exponemos la metodología empleada en ambas actividades de investigación.

3.1. Materiales de investigación

La selección de los materiales analizados —a saber, *Aprendiendo un idioma para trabajar* (Santillana Formación 2002), *Manual de alfabetización para inmigrantes* (Fundación Montemadrid 2006), *Hablamos* (Espai d'Inclusió i Formació Casc Antic 2008) y *Oralpha* (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018)— responde a los dos criterios siguientes: por un lado, se trata de materiales sobre los que tenemos constancia de que son utilizados con personas refugiadas y, de hecho, fueron concebidos para ser utilizados con estudiantes migrantes; por otro, son materiales de libre acceso, lo cual nos hace suponer que, como mínimo a medio plazo, van a seguir utilizándose en contextos de clases gratuitas para facilitar la inmersión de los migrantes. Se trata, igualmente, de materiales comparables en tanto que todos son de iniciación a la lengua española (nivel A1 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia (MCER)).

El grupo focal se llevó a cabo en Barcelona el 4 de enero de 2019 y tuvo una duración de 45 minutos. Fue dinamizado por una facilitadora y se organizó en un espacio elegido por los participantes, para que pudieran sentirse a gusto para tratar con comodidad los temas propuestos. El perfil demográfico y datos básicos de formación y desempeño profesional de los participantes se describen a continuación; se atribuye a cada participante una letra con la que nos referiremos a ellos también en el apartado 5.

Participante A: Hombre de 27 años, graduado en Estudios Ingleses y Franceses y máster en Estudios de Traducción. Doctorando en Traducción y Estudios Interculturales. Se dedica a la investigación y la docencia universitarias.

Participante B: Mujer de 31 años, licenciada en Humanidades y máster en Estudios de Traducción. Su ocupación principal es la docencia en la enseñanza secundaria.

Participante C: Mujer de 30 años, licenciada en Traducción e Interpretación y en Educación, y máster en Estudios de Traducción y en Interpretación de conferencias. Su ocupación principal es la docencia en la enseñanza primaria.

3.2. Análisis de datos

En el análisis de materiales adoptamos un enfoque principalmente cualitativo, si bien en algunos casos aportamos información cuantitativa

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sobre el uso de imágenes en materiales empleados con estudiantes refugiados.

En el análisis nos fijamos concretamente en la presencia y objetivo de las imágenes que estos contienen. Así, el análisis se ha guiado por las siguientes preguntas de investigación: 1) ¿cuántas imágenes hay en los materiales?; 2) ¿qué tipo de imágenes se incluyen en los mismos?; 3) ¿cuál es el formato de estas imágenes?; 4) ¿qué función cumplen las imágenes en los materiales?

Partiendo de un análisis contrastivo entre los cuatro materiales, pretendemos llegar a conclusiones sobre qué elementos se perciben como más susceptibles de representación con imágenes por parte de los creadores de materiales, y qué función parecen desempeñar las imágenes en la enseñanza de ELE a personas refugiadas, entre otras cuestiones. El análisis se ha llevado a cabo a través de un etiquetado manual de los materiales. Para responder algunas de las preguntas de investigación planteadas se ha etiquetado el material completo. En otros casos, sin embargo, hemos tomado una muestra normalizada para contrastar los resultados de los cuatro materiales, tal como especificamos más abajo en la presentación de resultados.

El objetivo del grupo focal era recabar información de primera mano de los profesores que trabajan con personas refugiadas en cuanto al uso de estrategias multilingües y de imágenes en el aula. Nos interesaba especialmente que, ya fuesen voluntarios o trabajadores con contrato laboral, se tratase de personas expertas en lenguas, capaces de reflexionar sobre los temas propuestos (su formación puede consultarse en el apartado 3.1). En concreto, el grupo focal se estructuró en tres grandes bloques: perfil de los participantes, donde les preguntamos por sus estudiantes, por su vinculación con la enseñanza de lenguas y su formación específica; materiales docentes empleados; y uso de imágenes en el aula. Las preguntas concretas para cada uno de estos bloques se pactaron con el equipo que trabaja en el proyecto REBUILD en la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona y pueden consultarse en el anexo de este trabajo. Durante la sesión con la facilitadora algunas preguntas cobraron más importancia que otras, por lo que nuestra síntesis de resultados en este artículo no sigue estrictamente el guion elaborado previamente, sino que se basa en las observaciones más relevantes del grupo focal. Los datos obtenidos en este grupo focal fueron anonimizados y la actividad cumplió con los procedimientos éticos actuales tal como los describen Orero *et al.* (2018).

4. Resultados del análisis de materiales

En este apartado se presentan los resultados del análisis llevado a cabo de los cuatro materiales citados en el apartado anterior. Ofrecemos información en cuanto a la presencia de contenido visual en los materia-

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les, su formato, los elementos que representan y su vinculación con la cultura de inmersión de los estudiantes, así como sobre la función que dichas imágenes ejercen en los materiales didácticos.

4.1. Propósito de las imágenes

Los cuatro materiales declaran su marcado carácter visual en sus guías didácticas. *Hablamos* lo incluye como una de sus características principales, con el objetivo de hacerlo accesible tanto para alumnado alfabetizado como para el no alfabetizado. Por su parte, el manual *Cómo se dice* manifiesta utilizar la imagen como "soporte principal para facilitar la comprensión y activar la memoria auditiva, dando importancia al manejo de significados" (Fundación Montemadrid 2006: 7).

Figura 1. *Libro del alumno del manual Oralpha (p. 63)*

El método *Oralpha* adecúa "los métodos antiguos a la nueva situación" mediante la sustitución de las palabras generadas por imágenes o

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dibujos (Associació Comissió de Formació y Ajuntament de Barcelona 2018: 9). Este método describe el desarrollo de la unidad y los ejercicios en el *Libro del profesorado*, permitiendo así que el *Manual del alumno* esté compuesto fundamentalmente por imágenes (*íbid*). La Figura 1 muestra un ejemplo de actividad de este método.

Finalmente, el método *Aprendiendo un idioma* presenta de forma visual el campo semántico de cada unidad al principio de esta. También incluye ejercicios cuyo objetivo es la descodificación de pictogramas asociados al ámbito laboral y personal.

4.2. Presencia de imágenes

El análisis cuantitativo de las imágenes en las cuatro primeras unidades de cada manual confirma el carácter visual de los cuatro materiales analizados, tal como exponen en sus guías didácticas. Dado que las unidades de los distintos manuales difieren en extensión, la cuantificación de las imágenes por unidad no produciría resultados comparativos. Por tanto, se ha calculado la media de imágenes por página y por unidad de los materiales en las cuatro primeras unidades (Tabla 1). Este cálculo revela que tres de los manuales, *Aprendiendo un idioma*, *Oralpha* y *Hablamos*, tienen cuatro imágenes de media por página. El manual *Cómo se dice* contiene aproximadamente la mitad de imágenes por página y, por tanto, podría considerarse el manual menos visual de los cuatro.

Manual	Nº páginas en las primeras 4 unidades	Nº de imágenes	Media de imágenes por página
Aprendiendo un idioma	84	370	4,4
Cómo se dice	105	243	2,3
Hablamos	41	168	4,1
Oralpha	334	1487	4,4

Tabla 1. *Cómputo de páginas e imágenes por manual en las cuatro primeras unidades*

4.3. Tipo y formato de las imágenes

En lo que se refiere al color, dos de los manuales han sido diseñados en blanco y negro (*Aprendiendo un idioma* y *Oralpha)* y dos de ellos en

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color (*Hablamos* y *Cómo se dice*). Los dos manuales en color se caracterizan por la presencia de colores muy vivos, como verdes claros, rojos, naranjas o amarillos. Por tratarse de materiales disponibles en línea que a priori podrían ser empleados desde un dispositivo móvil, se testó la accesibilidad de los colores seleccionados con herramientas digitales (Lea Verou, s.f.). Aunque el manual opta por colores vivos, el análisis demostró que las ratios de color resultantes son demasiado bajas e incumplen las pautas de accesibilidad, que estipula que las ratios sean superiores a 5 (Universidad de Alicante 2019).

En cuanto al tipo y estilo de imagen, en los manuales predominan los dibujos similares al dibujo animado y, en menor medida, se observan fotografías, mapas y, en uno de ellos, pictogramas (*Aprendiendo un idioma*). Las Figuras 2-5 muestran ejemplos de la representación de personas en los cuatro manuales. En cuanto a las dimensiones, se incluyen imágenes de todos los tamaños, desde muy pequeñas, como los pictogramas (1x1 cm), hasta imágenes que ocupan toda una página (12x15 cm). Como vemos en las figuras, los manuales representan una sociedad plural y se alejan del etnocentrismo que suele caracterizar los materiales de ELE generales.

Figura 2. *Personajes* Hablamos *(p. 5). Original a color*

Figura 3. *Libro del alumno del manual* Oralpha *(p. 63)*

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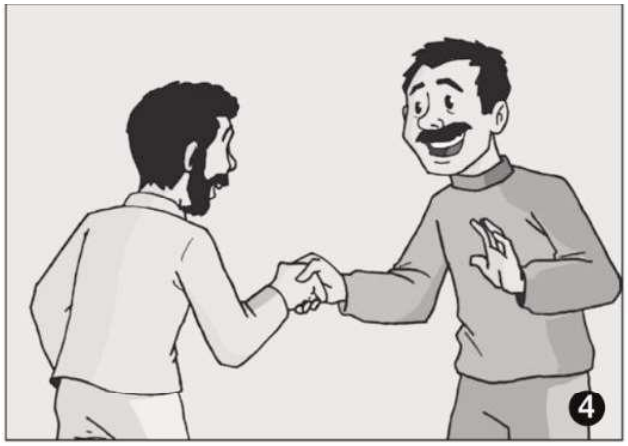

Figura 4. *Personajes* Oralpha *(p. 7)*

Figura 5. *Personajes* Aprendiendo un idioma *(p. 9)*

4.4. Posición de las imágenes

Dos de los manuales analizados (*Aprendiendo un idioma* y *Oralpha*) tienen un camino de lectura muy claro, que permite al receptor discernir entre contenido más o menos importante y ver una progresión clara en las actividades. Estos dos manuales se caracterizan por tener una estructura cuadriculada y un margen de página de al menos 1,5 cm en la mayoría de sus páginas, lo que crea una sensación de armonía en los contenidos.

Los otros dos manuales (*Hablamos y Cómo se dice*) tienen un cami-

no de lectura menos claro, ya que la jerarquía entre contenidos está menos marcada. Por ejemplo, una imagen grande en la parte inferior de la página hace que la atención vaya a esa imagen en lugar de al inicio de la página, donde se encuentra el primer ejercicio (Figura 6). Además, estos dos manuales presentan un margen de página más fino, que permite que se incluya más contenido por página, pero que dificulta la discriminación entre actividades o bloques.

Unidad 4

5. Completa con: *estoy, tengo y me duele.*

1. _____ mucho calor. ¿Puedes abrir la ventana?
2. No quiero comer porque_____ la barriga.
3. Voy al médico porque_____ fiebre.
4. _____ mareada. Tengo que sentarme.
5. _____ resfriado porque en Barcelona hace mucho frío.
6. Hoy _____ muy cansada y _____ el cuello.

6. Ahora cada uno de vosotros se levanta y se toca una parte del cuerpo. Los demás tienen que decir dónde le duele. Luego os levantáis uno a uno y decís una parte del cuerpo. Los demás tienen que tocarse esta parte.

7. Aquí tienes algunos de los remedios que usamos cuando estamos enfermos y algunas pruebas médicas. Relaciona cada palabra con el dibujo.

1. La pomada 2. El supositorio 3. La inyección 4. El esparadrapo 5. El yodo 6. El jarabe 7. La tirita 8. El algodón 9. La pastilla 10. El análisis de sangre 11. La radiografía

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Figura 6. *Página del manual* Hablamos *con una imagen al final de la página (p. 41). Original a color*

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4.5. Contenido de las imágenes

Para analizar el contenido de las imágenes, se seleccionaron los cuatro referentes más prevalentes: personas, objetos, lugares y pictogramas. La cuantificación de estos referentes pone de manifiesto que la mayoría de las imágenes representan objetos, seguido por personas y, finalmente, lugares (Figura 7). Es así en todos los materiales, a excepción del manual *Aprendiendo un idioma*, que contiene en primer lugar objetos y en segundo, pictogramas.

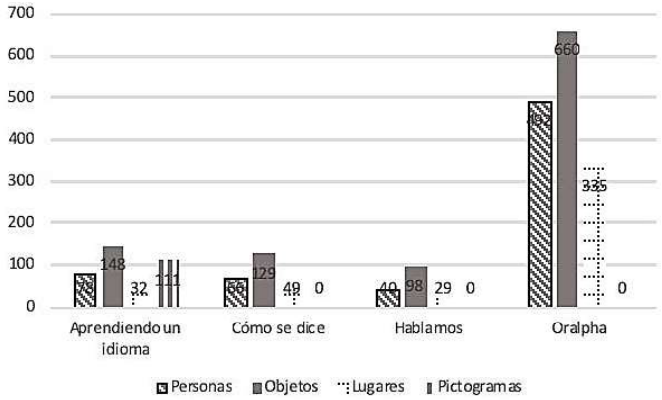

Figura 7. *Relación de imágenes y su referente por material en los primeros cuatro temas de cada uno*

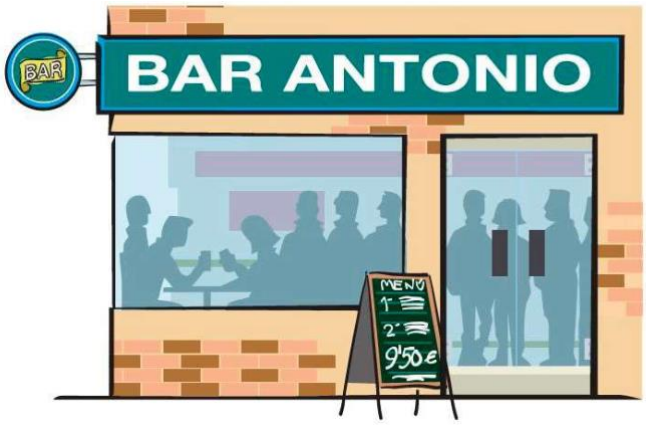

Figura 8. *Presentación de aspectos culturales en el manual* Cómo se dice *(p. 22). Original a color*

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Por otro lado, se observa que los manuales introducen paulatinamente aspectos característicos de la cultura española. Por ejemplo, el manual *Cómo se dice* incluye una actividad al final de cada unidad con información útil sobre la vida en España, acompañada de una imagen ilustrativa. Un ejemplo es la Lección 4, *Vamos de bares*, que expone la importancia de los bares para la cultura española (Figura 8). En este sentido, cabe destacar que los manuales *Oralpha* y *Hablamos* se centran en el contexto de la ciudad de Barcelona, es decir, que son más específicos en su localización, mientras que *Cómo se dice* y *Aprendiendo un idioma* no presentan una región concreta de España y, por tanto, podrían considerarse adecuados para su uso en cualquier parte del territorio.

5. Resultados del grupo focal

En este apartado se presentan los resultados del grupo focal. Ofrecemos información en cuanto al perfil de los participantes, materiales docentes empleados y uso de imágenes en el aula.

5.1. Perfil de los participantes de una clase de lengua a personas refugiadas: docentes y estudiantes

Los tres participantes del grupo focal son personas con formación especializada en lenguas. Como es habitual en el profesorado que trabaja con refugiados, se dedican o se han dedicado a la enseñanza de lenguas a tiempo parcial. Dos son voluntarios en asociaciones sin ánimo de lucro (denominados, de acuerdo con lo especificado en el apartado 3, participantes A y B) y la tercera recibe remuneración por su trabajo en una institución pública (participante C).

En los tres casos, los docentes han impartido clase de lengua para fines generales en cursos introductorios (niveles A1-A2 del MCER). El número de estudiantes por clase varía en cada sesión, a veces en gran medida, debido en parte a las condiciones de vida inestables de los alumnos: en el caso del participante A, el número varía fácilmente entre uno y ocho estudiantes de una semana para otra; en el caso de la participante B, el grupo oscila entre los 12 y los 15 estudiantes; y en el caso de la participante C, las clases suelen contar con entre 10 y 12 asistentes. En todos los cursos que han impartido, las clases están formadas por alumnos de distinta procedencia: en las clases del participante A, los países de procedencia mayoritarios de los estudiantes son Arabia Saudí, Marruecos, Pakistán, Rusia y Ucrania; en las clases de la participante B, los estudiantes son de Georgia y de distintos países del norte de África;

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y en las clases de la participante C, los estudiantes son mayoritariamente procedentes de Afganistán y Siria, y en menor medida, de Irak. Todos han impartido clase a adultos; la participante C también a menores no acompañados.

El nivel de formación de los estudiantes adultos varía enormemente de unos a otros: desde personas sin alfabetizar o personas con dificultades de lectura hasta personas con estudios superiores, incluso a nivel de doctorado, hablantes de otras lenguas extranjeras y con más facilidad para adquirir una nueva lengua, por haber trabajado las estrategias de aprendizaje anteriormente (el participante A comenta: "Aunque no tengan ninguna noción de español, facilita mucho las cosas poderles decir 'Esto es un complemento directo'"). En el caso de los menores, la mayoría contaba con formación a nivel elemental, aunque algunos no conocían los códigos de lectoescritura.

También se observa gran variedad en cuanto al tiempo que los estudiantes llevan en el país de acogida: el participante A explica que tiene alumnos recién llegados la semana anterior y otros que llevan más de dos años en España. En este sentido, los tres participantes recalcan que el nivel de lengua del alumnado no es directamente proporcional al tiempo que llevan en el país de acogida.

5.2. Materiales didácticos y estrategias para la comunicación en el aula

Dada la variada procedencia de los estudiantes, en el aula se recurre en ocasiones al multilingüismo para facilitar la comunicación. Incluso hay alumnos que, si conocen más lenguas que los demás, adoptan el papel de intérpretes durante la clase. El participante A explica que el ruso es la lengua puente para todos los estudiantes de Europa del este, ya que todos ellos hablan o entienden ruso: se ayudan entre sí y a él le transmiten el mensaje en inglés los que conocen esta lengua. En el caso de los estudiantes africanos, se emplea, cuando es posible, la lengua de colonia de los estudiantes (especialmente, el francés). A menudo les pregunta cómo se dicen las palabras que van aprendiendo en sus distintos idiomas. La misma situación se daba en el aula de la participante B. La participante C no tenía la opción de recurrir al multilingüismo con los menores, que solo hablaban farsi o pastún. En los grupos de adultos, el inglés, el francés y el árabe eran las lenguas comunes en el aula, lo cual facilitaba en gran medida la transmisión de la información.

En cuanto a los materiales empleados, el participante A usa *¿Hablamos?*, uno de los manuales analizados en este trabajo. Afirma que este material le ayuda mucho porque, al tratarse de un manual

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impulsado por el ayuntamiento de la ciudad donde imparte clases, los ejercicios aluden a referentes reales y cercanos. Por ejemplo, cuando se aprende el vocabulario relacionado con la comida, aparece el mercado de La Boquería de Barcelona. Cree que el hecho de que sea un material de enfoque más local favorece la implicación de los estudiantes. Igualmente, valora muy positivamente el hecho de que el libro adopte una perspectiva muy inclusiva en cuanto a cuestiones de género, lo cual es especialmente relevante con su grupo de estudiantes, ya que la asociación en la que se imparten estas clases de español está especializada en migración, asilo y diversidad LGTBI. Sin embargo, explica que se trata de un material muy básico, y para cubrir las necesidades heterogéneas del grupo-clase a menudo lo ha tenido que complementar con materiales de elaboración propia (como artículos para ejercicios de lectura).

La participante B contaba con materiales de elaboración propia de la Cruz Roja, similares a los analizados en este trabajo, fotocopiados en blanco y negro. Las clases se centraban en los ejercicios de comunicación oral e incidían en temas que pudieran ser de especial utilidad para los estudiantes, como procesos para obtener documentación o visitas al médico. En su caso, no podía añadir materiales propios por normativa de la entidad: al tratarse de un trabajo coordinado de distintos profesores voluntarios, se hacía necesario seguir el orden marcado por las unidades de los materiales estrictamente.

Por su parte, la participante C comenta que sus materiales son también proporcionados por la entidad pública en la que trabaja. Sobre ellos, afirma que tienen un alto contenido visual y en el que, además de tener por objetivo la enseñanza de la gramática, se pone el foco sobre la cultura del país de acogida.

5.3. Uso de imágenes en el aula

Por lo general, los docentes creen que los materiales didácticos de los que disponían cubrían visualmente el léxico básico esperable para un nivel de iniciación. La participante C explica que el componente visual era determinante en el caso de la docencia a menores no acompañados, dada la carencia de una lengua común y los distintos niveles de formación del alumnado. Así, era habitual que ella dibujara objetos en la pizarra para facilitar la adquisición de léxico nuevo; el inconveniente que encontraba es que dibujar es un proceso lento. Igualmente, explica que el mayor desafío era explicar la gramática visualmente —intentaba, por ejemplo, representar los pronombres por medio de dibujos esquemáticos, pero no siempre con éxito; otro reto era la representación gráfica de conceptos abstractos, como pasado y futuro, que intentaba representar por medio de flechas—. Los alumnos recurrían a los dibujos de la piza-

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rra para hacer preguntas ("Señalaban a la pizarra y decían: '¿Eso es eso o es eso?'"). Ante esta explicación, los participantes A y B afirman que su situación era muy similar.

El participante A añade que en el aula es frecuente el uso de dispositivos móviles para facilitar la comunicación: los alumnos buscan imágenes en motores de búsqueda y se las muestran. Este método es especialmente útil para mostrar referentes muy locales, ya sean de los países de procedencia de los estudiantes o del país de acogida.

En cuanto al tipo de imágenes empleadas en el aula, los tres participantes explican que generalmente han recurrido a imágenes estáticas. El participante A emplea vídeos cuando acuden a clase estudiantes con un nivel de lengua más avanzado. En concreto, habla del recurso ofrecido por la Agencia EFE: noticias para estudiantes de español[3]. Por medio de los vídeos que acompañan a estas noticias, los estudiantes tienen acceso a los referentes visuales básicos de la noticia.

Sus comentarios en este sentido cobran gran relevancia en el contexto del proyecto de investigación REBUILD. Son expertos que tienen conocimiento sobre dónde pueden surgir las dificultades de comprensión en la comunicación, así como sobre el empleo de elementos visuales para afrontar estas dificultades.

6. Discusión

El análisis de materiales ha confirmado la recurrencia de las imágenes en los manuales estudiados. Como hemos mencionado en el apartado 2, la alfabetización visual del alumnado va a tener un papel fundamental a la hora de interpretar y hacer uso de los manuales, a pesar de que esta competencia no se trabaje formalmente en el aula.

Hemos mostrado, sin embargo, que potenciar el componente visual en materiales para niveles de lengua iniciales no conlleva que la comunicación material-alumno sea exclusivamente visual. En efecto, tres de los cuatro materiales dependen del código escrito para expresar el enunciado de los ejercicios. Solo el manual *Oralpha* se apoya exclusivamente en pictogramas para dar instrucciones sobre el desarrollo de la actividad, con lo que permite que el alumno realice el ejercicio a su ritmo y sin la explicación del formador. Asimismo, en algunos casos las imágenes no parecen tener un objetivo comunicativo específico, sino que se presentan como un complemento paratextual.

El análisis también ha demostrado que los manuales difieren en el color, estilo, tamaño y tipo de imagen que presentan. El color tiene una gran importancia en el diseño de materiales para resaltar información, motivar al receptor y agrupar contenido, entre otros (Leavitt y

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Shneiderman 2006). Con todo, dos manuales han sido diseñados en blanco y negro. El manual *Oralpha* expone en su guía didáctica que se ha evitado usar el color para permitir la correcta visualización de las imágenes a las entidades sin ánimo de lucro que no pueden imprimir a color. Deducimos que el otro material diseñado en escala de grises ha optado por este formato por la misma razón, ya que también ha sido elaborado para una ONG. Esta elección corrobora la falta de recursos de las instituciones encargadas de la enseñanza de lenguas a colectivos vulnerables que mencionábamos en la revisión bibliográfica, confirmada durante el grupo focal con profesores.

De los dos materiales diseñados a color, cabe preguntarse si la elección de los colores ha sido aleatoria o motivada. El color no debe emplearse solo para atraer al receptor o hacer los materiales más atractivos, sino que su uso debe ser motivado y tener en cuenta factores como la accesibilidad (Ellis y Ellis 1987). Los materiales analizados son coherentes en el uso del color dentro del manual; sin embargo, la elección de los colores no ha sido la adecuada teniendo en cuenta criterios de accesibilidad. Así, se han empleado colores vivos y con poco contraste entre el texto o la imagen y el fondo, que no invitan a la lectura y los hacen menos accesibles, en especial para el potencial alumnado con discapacidad visual (Leavitt y Shneiderman 2006; Universidad de Alicante 2019).

De igual modo, hemos tenido en cuenta la distribución de las imágenes en las páginas de los manuales. Como se ha mencionado en el apartado 2, que haya una relación clara y un orden en los contenidos facilita la comprensión de estos. La Norma UNE de Lectura fácil (UNE 153101: 2018 EX) propone una serie de pautas y recomendaciones para la elaboración de documentos. Entre ellas, aconseja la utilización de márgenes amplios para facilitar la comprensión de la información. El análisis pone de manifiesto la accesibilidad de dos de los materiales en este sentido: *Aprendiendo un idioma* y *Oralpha* tienen un camino de lectura claro y usan un amplio margen. En los otros dos materiales, la posición y distribución de los contenidos no favorece la lectura y el discernimiento entre contenidos. Consideramos que facilitar la lectura y el discernimiento entre contenidos es primordial a la hora de desarrollar materiales para este colectivo que, a diferencia de, por ejemplo, un alumnado europeo, puede no haber estado expuesto con anterioridad a este tipo de materiales.

En cuanto al tipo de imágenes, la prevalencia de imágenes que representan objetos podría explicarse por la necesidad de adquisición del vocabulario que designa el entorno del hablante, como así lo establece el MCER. En el nivel A1 del mismo, se indica que el aprendiente podrá "presentarse a sí mismo y a otros, pedir y dar información personal básica sobre su domicilio, sus pertenencias y las personas que conoce"

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(Instituto Cervantes 2002: 26). De entre los considerados objetos, se incluyen también fotografías o réplicas de documentos y otros elementos propios de su nueva realidad (como son facturas, solicitudes de diversos trámites y documentos de identidad) y contexto sociocultural (fotos de fiestas locales y lugares de gran importancia como escuelas, centros médicos y estaciones). Observamos aquí el empleo de la mímesis, que permite al alumno relacionar lo estudiado en el aula con su realidad fuera de ella (Ellis y Ellis 1987). El grupo focal ha confirmado que las actividades en el aula se centran en imitar situaciones a las que se enfrentarán los estudiantes, como la presentación o solicitud de documentación.

El grupo focal con profesores ha puesto de manifiesto que las imágenes de los manuales de que disponen cubren el léxico básico, pero de momento son insuficientes para dar cuenta de conceptos gramaticales como los tiempos verbales. Su experiencia coincide con la idea de que los textos visuales se han diseñado para complementar al lenguaje verbal, no sustituirlo (Jerez Martínez 2014). Esta aparente limitación de la comunicación visual perjudica, sobre todo, a alumnos no alfabetizados o de primeros niveles, que deberán interpretar la imagen sin un apoyo textual.

Tal como han manifestado los profesores, los estudiantes ya emplean proactivamente las imágenes (dibujando, señalando o buscando en motores de búsqueda los referentes que les interesan) en la comunicación en el aula. Esto indica el potencial de desarrollar herramientas específicas que faciliten dicha comunicación visual y aborden desafíos específicos, como la representación de conceptos gramaticales abstractos.

De igual modo, los profesores resaltan la importancia de la inclusión de referentes de la cultura de acogida, algo que sí se ha observado en los cuatro manuales analizados. La introducción de elementos de la ciudad o región en la que se desarrollen los cursos favorecen el conocimiento de su entorno y así la integración de los estudiantes en la comunidad de acogida. Por otro lado, a pesar del uso de distintos manuales, los distintos contextos y la heterogeneidad del alumnado, las observaciones de los profesores sobre la importancia y el uso prevalente de elementos visuales en el aula muestran patrones generales en cuanto a los desafíos y respuestas al establecer una comunicación efectiva en el aula de ELE para refugiados.

7. Conclusiones

En el contexto de la comunicación visual con migrantes y refugiados, este trabajo busca aportar algunos resultados sobre su uso actual en el

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aula, así como sobre su efectividad y posibles carencias. Los resultados obtenidos arrojan luz sobre los desafíos relacionados con la comunicación visual que deberán abordarse al diseñar la aplicación desarrollada en el marco del proyecto REBUILD para facilitar la comunicación con este colectivo.

Los resultados del análisis de materiales y el grupo focal con profesores han puesto de manifiesto el uso extendido de imágenes para la comunicación en el aula de ELE con refugiados. Las imágenes cobran especial relevancia con alumnado con el que no se tiene una lengua puente a la que acudir en casos de falta de comprensión. Sin embargo, el estudio demuestra las limitaciones de las imágenes sin soporte verbal a la hora de transmitir información. En el futuro, consideramos que enriquecería los resultados de este estudio la investigación de los niveles de comprensión e interpretación de las imágenes por parte del alumnado y sus actitudes hacia las mismas.

Finalmente, se considera importante conocer y estudiar los materiales a los que está expuesto el grupo destinatario, no solo para identificar las áreas de mayor relevancia, sino para elaborar un material visual que se alinee con el material que el usuario está acostumbrado a ver. En este sentido, como línea futura cabe explorar la implementación de contenido visual no-estático: los materiales y las prácticas docentes actuales no parecen prestar importancia a dichos contenidos, a pesar de constituir una parte importante del contenido al que todos nos vemos expuestos hoy como usuarios.

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Recepción: 25/05/2020; Aceptación: 11/03/2021

Notas

[1] Esta investigación forma parte del proyecto REBUILD financiado por el programa H2020 de la Comisión Europea (GA Nº 822215). El apoyo de la Comisión Europea en esta publicación no constituye un apoyo de su contenido, el cual refleja únicamente la perspectiva de las autoras, y no puede responsabilizarse a la Comisión del uso que se dé a la información aquí recogida. Las autoras son miembros del grupo TransMedia Catalonia (SGR2017SGR113). Este artículo forma parte de la tesis doctoral en Traducción y Estudios Interculturales de María Jiménez-Andrés en el Departamento de Traducción, Interpretación y Estudios de Asia Oriental de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

[2] Página web del proyecto REBUILD: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/default.aspx.

[3] Noticias para estudiantes de español de la Agencia EFE: https://www.practicaespanol.com/.

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Lengua y migración / Language and Migration 13:1 (2021), 133-156
Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

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Anexo
Guión de preguntas para el grupo focal

Bloque 1. Perfil de los participantes de la clase de ELE. Vinculación de los participantes en el grupo focal con la enseñanza de lengua extranjera para refugiados

- Formación:
- Centro donde la imparte:
- Ciudad y país:
- Vinculación: Contrato a tiempo completo / Contrato a tiempo parcial / Voluntariado.
- Fecha de inicio de la colaboración docente:
- Motivo del inicio de la colaboración docente:
- Fecha de finalización de la colaboración docente:
- Motivo de la finalización de la colaboración docente:
- Número total o aproximado de profesores del centro:
- Número total o aproximado de estudiantes del centro y a su cargo:
- Tipo de clase de lengua (para fines específicos, etc.):

Lengua y migración / Language and Migration 13:1 (2021), 133-156
Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

- Perfil del alumnado: ¿Adultos/menores? ¿Imparte clases a refugiados exclusivamente o su aula incorpora a otros estudiantes? ¿Conoce el nivel de formación de su alumnado? ¿Qué lenguas maternas o aprendidas hablan sus alumnos?

Bloque 2. Materiales docentes, estrategias multilingües y competencia cultural

- ¿Qué materiales docentes utiliza? (fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por el centro, fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por el profesor, fichas/fotocopias elaboradas por terceros, libro,…)
- Referencia bibliográfica de los materiales (en el caso de materiales elaborados por terceros).
- ¿Utiliza alguna lengua distinta de la lengua de enseñanza en el aula? ¿Cuál y en qué situación?
- ¿Ha recibido formación específica para trabajar como docente con el colectivo de refugiados?
- ¿Cree que este tipo de formación es necesaria?

Bloque 3. Uso de las imágenes en el aula

- Del 1 al 5, en general, ¿cuán importante cree que es usar imágenes para transmitir contenido en el aula de lengua extranjera?
- ¿Cree que las imágenes son especialmente importantes en el caso de la enseñanza de lenguas a refugiados? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Qué tipo de imágenes usa en el aula (pictogramas dibujados en la pizarra, ilustraciones del libro de texto, …)?
- ¿Siente una necesidad de imágenes que ahora no tiene disponibles para transmitir ciertos contenidos? ¿De qué tipo?
- ¿Cómo cree que podría cubrirse esa necesidad?
- ¿Utilizan los estudiantes las imágenes para comunicarse con usted? En caso afirmativo, ¿qué tipo de imágenes emplean?
- ¿Sabe si los estudiantes utilizan las imágenes para comunicarse entre sí (en el caso de grupos donde los estudiantes tengan distintas lenguas maternas?
- [Presentación de herramientas de generación automática de pictogramas a los participantes] ¿Cómo cree que podría implementarse una herramienta como esta en el aula? ¿Le sería útil como docente? ¿Cree que les sería útil a los estudiantes?
- ¿Se le ocurren otras herramientas que podrían desarrollarse para este fin comunicativo?

¿Tiene algún otro comentario que quiera compartir con nosotros?

Lengua y migración / Language and Migration 13:1 (2021), 133-156
Edición impresa: ISSN 1889-5425. Edición en línea: ISSN 2660-7166. © Universidad de Alcalá

1.4. Jiménez-Andrés, M., & Alemam, N. (2021). Researching Displaced Persons during COVID-19: catering for users' specific needs in Media Accessibility projects. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation, 4(2),* 23-41. https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v4i2.2021.174

Journal of Audiovisual Translation

Citation: Jiménez-Andrés, M. & N. Alemam (2021). Researching Displaced Persons during COVID-19: catering for users' specific needs in Media Accessibility projects. *Journal of Audiovisual Translation, 4*(2), 23–41.
https://doi.org/10.47476/jat.v4i2.2021.174

Editor(s): P. Orero & D. Hernández Falagán

Received: January 15, 2021

Accepted: May 28, 2021

Published: October 30, 2021

Acknowledgement: This special issue is related to the H2020 grant no. 825585 HELIOS A Context-aware Distributed Social Networking Framework.

This study is part of the article-based PhD thesis of María Jiménez-Andrés in the Department of Translation and Interpreting at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) within the PhD program in Translation and Intercultural Studies. This research has been partially funded by the H2020 project REBUILD, under Grant Agreement 822215. The Commission's support for this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflects the views of the authors only, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein. María Jiménez-Andrés is member of TransMedia Catalonia, an SGR research group funded by "Secretaria d'Universitats I Recerca del Departament d'Empresa I Coneixement de la Generalitat de Catalunya" (2017SGR113).

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Researching Displaced Persons During COVID-19: Catering for Users' Specific Needsin Media Accessibility Projects

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Abstract

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created additional barriers to human interactions. For those conducting research with displaced persons, the barriers posed by COVID-19 add up to the existing linguistic, cultural, geographical and ethical obstacles that this type of research involves. In most cases, researchers have resorted to technological solutions to bridge the communication gap caused by the pandemic. However, the heterogeneous profiles and disadvantaged circumstances of displaced persons require further considerations and planning. This paper examines the experiences of researchers conducting research with displaced persons during COVID. It outlines the special considerations taken and provides recommendations for those conducting research in similar contexts. The communities that engaged in this research were based in Greece, Poland, Italy, Lebanon and Spain. While the focus of the study is displaced persons, the insights presented can be of benefit to those conducting research with other vulnerable groups.

Key words: accessibility, asylum-seekers, COVID-19, data collection, interpreting, refugees, research.

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1. Introduction

The restrictions imposed to control the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) have created additional barriers to human interactions in most countries. For those conducting research with displaced persons, the barriers posed by COVID-19 add up to the existing linguistic, cultural, geographical and ethical obstacles that this type of research involves.

In this paper, we present the considerations taken and the implications that arose from conducting research with displaced persons during COVID-19 (April to December 2020). The key purpose of this research is to uncover limitations and offer recommendations for empirical research with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic, including those regarding accessibility, and to map the practices of those conducting research with these persons during these challenging times. This model could be applied beyond the pandemic as it is adaptable to other research contexts, testing environments, diverse audiences, and disciplines.

In this article, the term *displaced persons* refers to all people subject to non-voluntary migration, regardless of their current administrative status, i.e., those currently seeking asylum, those under subsidiary protection, undocumented migrants, refugees, and any person in need of international protection. This term is used by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to encompass refugees, internally displaced people, asylum-seekers and those under temporary protection (WHO, 2021).

This study is framed within the field of media accessibility studies. Media accessibility studies were born to cater for the access needs of people with disabilities or impairments, through the provision and research of subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing and audio description (AD) for the blind and visually impaired (Greco, 2016; Orero, 2004). More recently in the field of media accessibility, attention has been drawn to secondary or extended audiences that would benefit from accessibility services (Greco, 2018; Jankowska, 2019). For example, the elderly may benefit from AD and dubbing (Ellis, 2016; Jankowska, 2019), and learners of foreign languages or those watching screens in a noisy environment from subtitles (Romero-Fresco, 2013). We posit that displaced persons can also benefit from accessibility services when they arrive in a new country and may not speak or read the host country's language. Research has demonstrated that linguistic, digital and literacy barriers prevent newly arrived migrants and refugees to access that information (Federici & O'Brien, 2020; Translators Without Borders, 2017). Indeed, the universalist definition of media accessibility works towards providing access to media products, services and environments to those who would not be able to access them otherwise (Greco, 2016; Szarkowska et al., 2013). Access to information related to regulations on asylum and migration, and access to any support services in the host country is key for displaced persons. This condition is, however, not always met. Applying accessibility principles to communications with culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD) would facilitate their access to information and aid their participation in new societies.

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The study presented herein is framed within a larger study, REBUILD[1], on the creation of Information Communication Technology (ICT) tools for displaced communities. The next section provides more information on this international project. Among other responsibilities, the role of TransMedia Catalonia in REBUILD is ensuring that the ICT tool is accessible for as wide an audience as possible. The project was ongoing during the COVID-19 outbreak and a number of research activities were carried out following mobility and social restrictions that impacted the way the data was gathered. Like REBUILD, other European projects involve research with migrant populations. Because of the challenges that the restrictions posed to the research of REBUILD, we set to examine how similar projects faced those challenges and what accessibility considerations were adopted when conducting research with displaced populations. The results of that investigation are presented in this article.

This article is structured by first outlining the background and the research context. This is followed by an overview of the methodology. Finally, the findings are reviewed and discussed along with the provision of recommendations for conducting further research under similar circumstances. The insights gained and the reflections of the authors along with those of other researchers and NGO personnel involved in this type of research are also discussed.

2. Background

This paper reports on the considerations taken and the experiences of researchers and NGO personnel when conducting research with displaced persons during the COVID-19 crisis. Specifically, we report on the research conducted in three contexts: two H2020 projects, namely, REBUILD and SO-CLOSE, based in Greece, Italy and Spain, and on research carried out on the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Lebanon. The following paragraphs provide an overview of these three research projects. While none of these projects focus specifically on accessibility, it is a requirement in all three initiatives given the diverse needs of their target groups.

The REBUILD project is a H2020 project, the aim of which is to create ICT tools to support asylum-seekers, refugees and migrant communities. These ICT tools are designed following co-creation and user-centred methodologies to ensure that the tools meet the requirements and needs of its end-users. Another requisite is that the tools and the information contained therein are accessible for as wide a population as possible. This project is currently ongoing (January 2019 to December 2021). During the COVID pandemic, two research actions were conducted: in-depth, online interviews with NGOs staff; and online and face-to-face questionnaires with asylum-seekers, migrants and refugees. The REBUILD project targets displaced communities and service providers in Greece, Italy and Spain. Due to their geographical location, these three countries are often the entry-point for migrants and asylum-seekers from Africa and the Middle East into Europe.

[1] REBUILD project website can be accessed here.

SO-CLOSE[2] is another H2020 project of three years (January 2020 – December 2022), created to contribute to social cohesion and fight refugee marginalization and exclusion through innovative digital and artistic tools. The first two research activities of the project were conducted during 2020. The first activity aimed to find a methodology and tool to gather information from the target group in order to inform the subsequent phases of the project. The second activity aimed at developing the co-creative methodology and tools to gather information from the target group, users, cultural institutions and academics. For these two research activities, the project conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups during the COVID-19 pandemic (September to December 2020). SO-CLOSE follows a universal design approach and adds social accessibility to the accessibility agenda.

The World Food Programme[3] (WFP) is a UN initiative whose objective is the end of hunger and the attainment of food security and nutrition by 2030. Though not exclusively, WFP supports refugee families in Lebanon by providing them with cash assistance to buy food. The programme also helps vulnerable families to meet their essential needs through long term initiatives. Lebanon has the world's highest refugee presence per capita; it is estimated that 25% of the population is made up of refugees (World Food Programme, 2021). In 2020, WFP conducted a series of multi-purpose cash assistance studies with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The accessibility of the methods and tools used for data collection in this project was a condition to ensure equal participation by all within the target community in the study.

Research for the three studies presented above involved engaging with heterogeneous groups under special circumstances propitiated by COVID-19. Thus, a number of considerations had to be taken prior to developing the methodology and collecting data. Such considerations include the accessibility of the research tools, materials, and activities. The next section presents specialised literature on the implications that research with displaced persons entails, and the recommendations for such research during COVID-19, including accessibility recommendations, by two international organisations conducting research in social and humanitarian projects and experts in the field of accessibility.

2.1. Methodological and Accessibility Considerations When Researching Displaced Persons

Research with vulnerable groups involves a series of special considerations. Displaced persons are considered vulnerable because they have typically experienced life-changing upheaval, danger, loss and fear, and face enormous adjustments to life in a new environment (UNHCR & IDC, 2016). In the host country, the majority also face linguistic, cultural and legal barriers. Some are also survivors of trauma and torture, due to experiences in their home country or the migration journey itself, which can be traumatic and involve torture and violence, including gender-based violence. Other vulnerabilities factor being stateless, a victim of trafficking, disabled, an unaccompanied or separated

[2] SO-CLOSE project website can be accessed here.
[3] The World Food Programme's website can be accessed here.

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child, a pregnant or nursing mother, addicted to substances and/or elderly (UNHCR & IDC, 2016, p. 22). In some cases, one person can experience more than one of these circumstances, which translates to double or multiple vulnerabilities. Mental health issues are also more prevalent among displaced persons. Indeed, a recent study has shown that Syrian refugees can be over ten times more likely than the general population to develop post-traumatic stress and other disorders (Peconga & Høgh Thøgersen, 2020). Furthermore, while some individuals resettle with ease, others risk prolonged and indefinite detention (UNHCR & IDC, 2016). Lack of accommodation and other essential necessities and overcrowding in refugee camps or other asylum centres are recurring issues for newly arrived asylum-seekers (Peconga & Høgh Thøgersen, 2020).

As a result, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants need specific safeguards in terms of research ethics (European Commission, 2020). Some of these special considerations include data minimisation (the principle of limiting data collection to only what is required to fulfil a specific purpose as per the EU GDPR Directive 2018), careful consideration of the data that is collected, the justification of all interactions with participants and the assurance that participants fully understand the implications of participating in the study (European Commission, 2020). Regarding informed consent, the European Commission suggests adopting less formalised procedures than in traditional research, such as including a cultural insider in the process, working with a recognised NGO or using oral consent (European Commission, 2020). The EC (2020) states that for oral consent, the knowledge and approval of a competent Research Ethics Committee is required (p. 3). Written consent involves complex and legal information that is difficult to translate into other languages. Signing consent forms could also jeopardise the participants' anonymity (European Commission, 2020). The research should also add value to the lives of the people that are being researched, who ought to be recognised as subjects in the process and not simply sources of data (Hugman, 2005, 2010). In this regard, Pittaway, Bartolomei and Hugman (2010) claim that in the case of research with displaced persons, the notion that research data belong to the researcher and the institution should be contested.

Other recommendations include involving individuals from migrant or refugee backgrounds in the research to mitigate potential risks and power differences (European Commission, 2020; Pittaway et al., 2010) or, more preferably, using refugee interviewers (Temple & Moran, 2006). To preserve the anonymity of participants, it is recommended that participants be invited to use a pseudonym and to also avoid recording the sessions unless it is necessary (Temple & Moran, 2006). Indeed, voice has become a focal point for supervisory authorities, and it is considered one of the most sensitive and dangerous aspects of personal data to be exploited in our current data era (Mediartis, 2020).

The many regions and countries of origin of refugees require that research with refugees be multilingual. In this regard, it is necessary to involve translators and interpreters to overcome the linguistic barriers. Translation and interpreting are indeed fundamental in creating relationships and opportunities for communication and exchange. In addition to facilitating effective communication, linguistic mediation, ideally through professional interpreters, could neutralise negative impacts and strengthen relationships among researchers and participants (Hunt et al., 2019; Pittaway et al.,

2010). However, the provision of translation and interpreting is still deficient in NGOs and public service providers supporting migrants and refugees (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021).

Finally, taking into account disability-related considerations alongside linguistic and cultural barriers to participation in research enables the "most invisible," and often under-researched demographic of displaced persons, to engage in research (Harris & Roberts, 2006, p. 157). Harris and Roberts's study provides practical measures on research with disabled refugees, the challenges faced, and how these were overcome in their qualitative study. These included producing materials in a variety of languages and formats, choosing venues that do not pose social and physical barriers to participation, engaging with disabled refugee organisations and, above all, flexibility and inventive approaches to overcome the barriers and issues that are likely to arise during the research process (Harris & Roberts, 2006). For example, consent forms should be translated into the languages of the participants given the complexity of legal jargon that these usually employ. In some cases, the consent forms may have to be read out loud to illiterate participants, or to persons who cannot read different alphabets. Easy to read consent forms and other research materials could also benefit the engagement of certain participants as they facilitate comprehension especially for persons with reading and learning difficulties (Arias-Badia & Fernandez-Torné, 2020; Bernabé Caro & Orero, 2019). As recommended by experts on accessibility studies (Romero-Fresco, 2013; Orero et al., 2018), taking accessibility into account from the beginning of the design process, in this case, the research design process, allows for the requirements to be identified as research is being designed.

Due to various restrictions and other health-related constraints posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, additional considerations are required when conducting research with displaced persons. The next section outlines the recommendations provided by two international organisations for research conducted with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2. Considerations When Researching Displaced Persons During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The previous section details the considerations that research with displaced persons deserves. The COVID-19 pandemic has posed additional challenges, driving researchers to modify their approaches to data collection. Because of the vulnerability of the target community, research with displaced people during the COVID 19 pandemic requires careful thought. This section will look at two recently produced guidance notes that outline a series of recommendations for research during the COVID-19 crisis with displaced persons, as well as the opportunities that the new context can afford. The guidance notes were produced by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Glow Consultants (2020), and CartONG (2020).

The Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Glow Consultants produced a guidance note as a part of the Humanitarian Horizons research program, aimed at adding unique value to humanitarian action by generating evidence and creating a conversation for change. The note is intended for researchers and operational actors as a guide on how to adjust to remote data collection. The

directions given in the guide are technically drawn and provide key takeaways from their past collaborations with a range of humanitarian agencies (HAG & Glow, 2020). The second guidance note discussed below was published with the support of the French Development Agency and a Non-Governmental Organization CartONG, specializing in Information Management. The document has a parallel focus, and its key purpose is to answer their partners' questions regarding collecting data during the COVID-19 crisis (CartONG, 2020).

2.2.1. Recommendations

HAG and Glow (2020) provide a comprehensive guide on data gathering and remote monitoring methods and tools during the COVID-19 crisis. Their approach is underpinned by the following criteria: reducing risk, simplicity and rigour (p. 4). Their key recommendations are: (1) limiting the amount of data that actors are willing to collect by prioritizing sites and targeting communities; (2) ensuring that the remote tools used are appropriate for targeted communities (certain displaced communities may lack internet access, and using online platforms would not be advised in such cases); (3) collaborating with others who work in the research field to share the benefits of the already collected data and prevent the recollection of data that have already been collected by other trusted researchers. In this way, actors can overcome the challenge of travelling restrictions (HAG & Glow, 2020). Indeed, sharing the experiences of other researchers is the essence of the present paper.

CartONG's guidance note (2020) provides a summary of generic recommendations applicable to data collection management in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. The list includes (1) avoiding "risky" data collection for teams and participants, (2) sharing your data as much as possible to limit unnecessary data collection and (3) integrating a data protection component into our new tools (p. 2). Additionally, the note provides a list of technological alternatives to data collection and the exchange of information with displaced persons. The alternatives to survey-type data collection were divided into two groups. The first one is the interviewer administering a questionnaire via phone call or using CATI software. The interviewer asks questions over the phone and records them using a computer interface such as Microsoft Excel or Google sheet. Alternatively, the interviewer can use CATI software, which takes care of the call administration. Unlike the first group, the second group specifies alternative ways in which the interviewee can self-administer the questionnaire, including SMS, USSD, mobile web, or SVI/IVR. The interviewee receives a simple structured SMS and sends back the answers as the survey proceeds. USSD (Unstructured Supplementary Service Data) is also used to send text messages and it is considered a faster alternative to the regular SMS since the answers are recorded right away on a web platform. Thirdly, an organisation may share a link with the interviewee so that they may complete the questionnaire directly via their mobile. Lastly, the final remote alternative to survey-type data collection was using an Interactive voice response (IVR) in which the respondent uses keys on their smartphone to answer pre-recorded survey questions (CartONG, 2020).

The choice of one technology over others should be based on the needs of the participants. For example, if a participant is blind or illiterate, phone interviewing will be the most appropriate. However, if the interviewer and interviewee do not speak the same language, or a participant does not have a high level of the language of the study, sending either a written or a translated version of the questionnaire would allow this person to participate in the study. While these guidelines have been drafted for collecting data from displaced persons, they also present useful tools for research in other contexts.

2.2.2. Challenges and Opportunities

Among the drawbacks, HAG & Glow (2020) report that while data collection was challenging, some opportunities arose throughout this process. First, it bolstered researchers' skills to remotely collect data and access communities during lockdowns. Secondly, it entailed coordination with partners who had access to vulnerable groups and displaced communities, resulting in an increase in data implementation and in the expansion of networks. Travel restrictions lessened access to destinations considered high-risk. This limitation reduced face-to-face interactions with interviewees, which resulted in a lack of in-depth interviews. Finally, the continuous need to respond to the emergencies posed by COVID-19 increased the workload for the organizations. As a result, these organisations had less time and resources to collect data safely and with the necessary rigour.

Researchers also faced additional challenges when conducting their studies resulting from the necessity to employ online data collection methods (CartONG, 2020). First, a large number of participants did not have access to the planned alternatives, such as a telephone or internet access. Even though some of the targeted groups owned telephones, these owners were proportionally more likely to be young men. Therefore, accessing certain ages and genders was difficult. The fact that some communities may not trust technology, considering it a spying tool, forced the researchers to work on these negative perceptions before collecting data in order to overcome the challenge of inherent bias. Furthermore, the bias of illiteracy appeared when using technology for data gathering because it required written exchanges. Analysing the data collected using alternative methods required a certain degree of reservation and an acknowledgement of the identified biases (CartONG,2020).

3. The study

This study involves data gathered from three larger projects: REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and a third-party independent study on the WFP. These three studies conducted research with displaced persons in 2020. To gather the experiences and insights of the researchers involved in these activities, a qualitative questionnaire was designed and administered in order to form an overall picture of the topic under study. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents and the research activities that

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they conducted in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The following subsections outline the specific research activities conducted in each project.

The qualitative questionnaire was designed by the authors and administered to researchers from REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and WFP in December 2020. The questionnaire aimed to gather their experiences, insights and reflections on conducting research with displaced persons during COVID. The questionnaire consisted of five open-ended questions enquiring about the ways in which they had adapted their research in light of COVID-19 and their insights on the research process. Their methodological recommendations for future research with displaced persons under similar circumstances were also collected. The questionnaire can be found in Annex 1.

The qualitative data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved reading the questionnaire responses iteratively and identifying repeating themes. Then, the themes were coded or tagged. Once coding was completed, the codes were checked against each other and back to the original data set to ensure they were coherent and comprehensive. This process generated a thematic "map" of the analysis. The findings of the thematic analysis are presented in Section 4.

Table 1.

Outline of the respondents and research activities conducted during the Covid-19 crisis

Respondent	Project	Country of data collection	Research activities
Respondent 1	REBUILD	Spain	Qualitative interviews and comprehensibility tests
Respondent 2	WPF	Lebanon	Multi-purpose cash assistance studies
Respondent 3	REBUILD	Greece	Comprehensibility tests AND online and phone questionnaires
Respondent 4	REBUILD	Italy	Comprehensibility tests AND online and phone questionnaires
Respondent 5	SO-CLOSE	Spain	Semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3.1. Research for REBUILD

Five qualitative interviews were conducted with NGO staff during May and June 2020 in the framework of the REBUILD project. The objective of the interviews was to map the digital and multilingual practices of third sector organisations working with refugee communities. More information on the study and its results can be found in Jiménez-Andrés (2021). Because the interviews were conducted either during or shortly after the first lockdown (March – May 2020), the participants shared information relevant to this study on the ways in which they had adapted their work to the new situation and their new modes of interaction with their beneficiaries.

In addition to the qualitative interviews, comprehensibility tests were administered to migrants and refugees in May 2020. These comprehensibility tests were part of the evaluation of the visual communication of the REBUILD app. In total, 31 participants completed the tests. The participants resided in Greece, Italy and Spain and their countries of origin were Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Morocco, Ukraine and Venezuela. The tests were conducted online using Google Forms, and in print (face-to-face). Lastly, online and phone questionnaires were administered to potential end-users to gather data that would train the artificial intelligence in the technological tool.

3.2. Research for SO-CLOSE

To gather information during the initial stages of the project, fieldwork was conducted with all major stakeholders: refugee and asylum seeker communities, policymakers, cultural institutions, NGOs and academics. In total, 197 semi-structured individual interviews were conducted across the following four EU member states: Italy, Spain, Poland, and Greece. The individual interviews were conducted online and face-to-face, depending on the availability, location and needs/profile of the participants. Following the interviews, a series of focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders to delve deeper into the data gathered during the interviews. These were also conducted online and face-to-face, following the same criteria as the focus groups. The focus groups involved between four and six participants.

3.3. Research for the UN's World Food Programme

The WFP commissioned independent research on WPF's multi-purpose cash assistance to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. To that end, a number of research studies were conducted with displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic. These were (1) multi-sectoral impact studies of the multi-purpose cash (MPC), (2) accountability studies of affected populations, (3) value for money studies, and (4) user journey studies. The overall purpose of such studies was to propose recommendations to improve the WFP's multi-purpose cash programme.

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4. Researching Displaced Persons During COVID-19: Insights and Recommendations

The thematic analysis of the qualitative questionnaires reveals three key areas that deserve consideration when researching displaced persons during a pandemic or in circumstances similar to those created by COVID-19. An overview of these can be found in Table 2. They are presented and discussed in the following subsections in relation to extant research.

Table 2.

Recommendations for data collection during the COVID-19 crisis

Categories	Recommendations
Methodological recommendations	Limit data collection to essential data: consider using data from secondary sources and contemplate involving fewer participants than initially anticipated if possible Adopt innovative and creative approaches For face-to-face data collection, prepare for unexpected circumstances (change in restrictions, participants being infected or having to isolate, among others) Make data collection activities brief Avoid group data collection methods (such as focus groups) Acknowledge the limitations of the sampling strategy
Translation, interpreting, and accessibility	For remote data collection, ensure the forms are as accessible as possible (easy to fill in, using easy to read words, and available in various languages and formats) Engage interpreters and cultural mediators in the data collection exercises Ensure that interpreters can conduct phone interpretation with the means available
Other considerations	Invest time building trust with participants remotely Examine whether or not your participants have a negative perception of technology Take the data collection interaction as an opportunity to support the participants and raise awareness of the pandemic

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

4.1. Methodological Considerations

Above all, planning and executing research during COVID-19 required innovation and creativity (Respondents 1 and 2). For the REBUILD project, the comprehensibility tests were originally planned face-to-face with groups of ten to fifteen participants. Due to the restrictions to mobility and group gathering, they were subsequently conducted in different formats, face-to-face both individually and in small groups, and remotely with participants who could take them autonomously. Overall, more time was invested in planning and designing the data collection activities (Respondents 1 and 4).

Following the guidelines provided by HAG & Glow (2020) and CartONG (2020), prior to the start of data collection, researchers in the REBUILD team pondered whether the data collection was necessary. This recommendation is relevant not only during a pandemic – it is a general recommendation by the European Commission for conducting research with displaced persons (European Commission, 2020). The recommendation from the EC to limit data collection to essential data had been observed when the study was designed, but the team reassessed what data was critical for the project to continue and what data could be collected from secondary sources. Hence, the team limited data collection to essential and critical data for the implementation of the project and halved the number of participants per study to reduce risks for staff, partners and participants.

In line with the recommendations by HAG & Glow (2020), Respondent 1 suggested that using data from secondary sources may be the most responsible and effective way to ensure the study goes forward. Restrictions can be imposed from one day to the next and valuable time may have been misspent on designing a data collection activity that could not take place due to a change in the restrictions. Besides, other researchers may have already collected similar data or be planning to do so in the near future. Connecting and sharing data with other researchers and projects carrying out similar studies could allow researchers to use the data that others have already collected or plan to collect.

An important consideration is to keep data collection activities brief in the cases where they are necessary (Respondent 2). Asylum-seekers and refugees in some contexts receive multiple calls from organisations that support them—UNHCR, NGOs, and associations—and spend a lot of time taking part in research, which can lead to research fatigue (Respondent 2). Because of this, it is recommended to keep the interactions with the participants to a minimum. It is important to take into account that, in some cases, the team in charge of the data collection is the same one that is supporting the displaced community. During the first months of lockdown and the restrictions that followed, the workload for these teams multiplied, especially during the first weeks of lockdown when they had to move all their services to online platforms (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). Researchers must be mindful of their increased efforts and workload when designing the methodology and selecting data collection tools for their study (Respondent 1).

In some cases, researchers were unable to travel to the field to collect the data. Those in the field (i.e., social workers, enumerators) were trained remotely to collect data on the premises

(Respondents 2 and 4). This involved having regular meetings and providing a step-by-step guide to those gathering the data on how to do so adequately and safely. Due to the current circumstances, the possibility of having various data collection phases or activities was not recommended or, in some cases, feasible. Hence, anticipating potential complications was necessary so that data could be collected regardless of any unforeseen circumstances (Respondent 1). For example, the participants invited to the study might not be able to attend because they tested positive or had been in contact with somebody who tested positive.

In other cases, data collection was carried out remotely, with no research team in the field. In such cases, data collection tools needed to be self-explanatory and accessible (Respondent 1). In the REBUILD project, the comprehensibility tests were conducted both face-to-face and online. The test was translated into the languages spoken by the participants and sent as a link to those who had an internet connection and a smartphone or computer. For those without devices or non-literate persons, one-to-one or small group sessions were planned in open spaces and the tests were printed and conducted face-to-face. In this regard, the team ensured that completing the form online would not have undesirable effects on participants, such as consuming a lot of data or having to deal with a form which would be overly difficult to fill in (Respondent 1). Online data collection activities allowed for the fact that some participants have little data allowance on their phones, which they might be using for other, more pressing, purposes (Respondent 3). For example, the questionnaire was conducted using a free, easy to fill online survey tool. The questionnaire contained text only (i.e., background pictures were avoided) to ensure that it consumed as little data as possible.

Regarding data collection tools, group interviews and focus groups were replaced by individual or small-group tools (Respondents 1 and 2). For example, in the WFP, focus groups were substituted by individual phone interviews. In the REBUILD project, for the face-to-face comprehensibility tests with small groups, the research team was mindful of whom to recruit, avoiding involving participants who were more vulnerable to COVID such as the elderly, immunocompromised participants, or those with pre-existing medical conditions (Respondent 3). The recruitment of participants was also affected by the restrictions to movement imposed by COVID-19. As a result, in the three projects detailed in this article, the participants who were involved in face-to-face data collection activities resided in the same municipality as the researchers or in the areas where the researchers could travel to. Both limitations to recruitment were acknowledged in the reporting of the results, as the sampling method prevented researchers from having the diverse sample that was initially planned.

4.2. Translation, Interpreting and Accessibility

As introduced in the previous section, the accessibility of the data-gathering tool enabled participants to take part in the studies autonomously (Respondent 1 and 3). Accessibility is understood here as making the data gathering tool accessible to as many participants as possible: be they people with disabilities, speakers of other languages, non-literates or low literates, those using mobile devices or those with slow networks. The accessibility of the tool should be taken into consideration at the

design stage (Web Accessibility Initiative, 2021). Some accessibility recommendations include delivering content in various formats, making content easy to understand, minimising distractions and using elements that are familiar to the participants (MDN Web Docs, 2021; Web Accessibility Initiative, 2021). For research purposes, a recommendation is to make questionnaires as easy to complete as possible.

For data gathered over the phone, phone interpretation was required with participants that speak other languages (Respondent 3). In the REBUILD project, part of the data was gathered via phone from participants who could not visit the organisations' premises nor fill the questionnaire independently. For participants who spoke other languages, interpreters were involved in the data gathering. This type of interpreting requires a three-way telephone conversation; a practice that had not been adopted in this organisation before. This required additional planning and training of the interpreters involved. In this organisation, the interpreters are refugees that have received training in translation and interpreting from another NGO. Furthermore, the interpreting was not supported by any specialised equipment or software. As a result, the team experienced some initial complications when conducting this data gathering exercise (Respondent 3). Because conducting a pilot study with potential users may not be a possibility during the COVID-19 crisis, a recommendation is to pilot a collection activity internally to anticipate any complications before data collection starts.

It is also recommended to engage with interpreters or cultural mediators and to inform participants about the research and the implications of taking part in the study before the data-gathering exercise, especially for face-to-face interactions (Respondent 5). In other circumstances, this can be done on the same day as the data gathering activity. However, due to the health risks associated with COVID-19, informing potential participants about the purpose of the research, its implications and the conditions under which the research will take place before the activity is vital so that participants can make an informed decision about their participation in the study. In the REBUILD project, translators, interpreters and/or bilingual interviewers and researchers supported all data collection activities. In the research activities concerning this article, the research team talked to the participants taking part in face-to-face data collection by phone prior to the data collection exercise (Respondents 1, 3 and 4).

4.3. Other Considerations: Trust, Technology and Support to the Participants

Other considerations raised by participants concerned the relationships between researchers and participants, the use of technology, and the provision of non-research related support to participants.

In terms of the relationships between researchers and participants, two respondents raised their concerns about the difficulties of building trust with participants remotely (Respondents 2 and 5). Respondents explained that they found it more challenging to create a safe space for participants to speak openly given that the discussions were held over the phone. Similarly, it is important to note

that, in the case of online data gathering, some asylum-seekers and refugees have developed mistrust towards the Internet. As stated by CartONG (2020), it is recommended that attention be paid to the negative view of these tools prior to data collection. Engaging interpreters and cultural mediators in the study can also build more trust with participants (Hunt et al., 2019; Pittaway et al., 2010).

With regards to technology, an ICT tool that is widely used is WhatsApp. WhatsApp is popular because it is easy to use, affordable and allows for multimodal messaging (text, voice, video, image). For organisations supporting displaced persons in Europe, it is often the default ICT tool for communication with its beneficiaries (Arias-Badia & Jiménez-Andrés, 2021; Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). However, its suitability is contested as sharing confidential information via WhatsApp does not comply with the European GDPR and US HIPAA Act of data protection (Bernadette, 2018; Masoni & Guelfi, 2020). While these organisations do not favour its use, they often do not have a viable alternative for communication with beneficiaries (Jiménez-Andrés, 2021). Respondent 2 recognised that they had no other way to send the consent forms. Researchers are advised to find alternative tools to interact with their participants, and share and collect data with each other, especially if the participants are considered vulnerable.

Finally, given the context in which the data collection is taking place, researchers must anticipate that the data collection exchange can be an opportunity for displaced communities to discuss any issues or questions that they may have due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent 2 recommended having a service map at hand in case participants need to be directed towards a service provider to receive support. The data collection exercise is also an opportunity to inform and raise awareness on the pandemic; the researchers and teams involved in data collection are therefore encouraged to share important messages regarding hygiene practices and transmission prevention during data collection (CartONG, 2020). Research activities ought to be responsive to needs of the researched participants, and ultimately empower the community, more so when working with vulnerable groups.

5. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected field research across the world, hindering data collection activities for many scientific projects. As a result of COVID-19 related restrictions, researchers have had to reformulate their research methodologies, shifting to alternative methods of data collection. This paper has examined researchers' experiences and insights during 2020 and offers recommendations for conducting studies with displaced persons during 2020, the year that the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. This model has already been successfully replicated in the H2020 funded project TRACTION[4] which had to test inmates at a prison in Portugal.

[4] TRACTION project website can be accessed here.

Drawing on the results of an online qualitative questionnaire, this study has gathered the considerations and alternative methods of data collection employed by researchers in three projects: REBUILD, SO-CLOSE and WFP. Underpinning these considerations and recommendations is an awareness of the vulnerability of the target community. The key recommendations include limiting activities and data collection to critical data, adopting creative approaches and favouring individual versus group data collection methods. Alternative methods of data collection frequently require the use of technology, which may not be suitable for certain communities. In this regard, researchers shed light on the importance of making online tools for data collection as accessible as possible, by including easy-to-understand content in multiple languages and formats. Engaging interpreters and cultural mediators throughout the process has also proven essential to establish effective communication with participants and build trust in the study. Finally, researchers are encouraged to consider the data collection activities as an opportunity to spread awareness of the pandemic among the participants of the study.

Due to the uncertainty of the duration of COVID-19, innovation and creativity will play a vital role in the research conducted during the pandemic. It is hoped that this study can support other researchers in conducting safe and rigorous research with displaced persons for the duration of the health crisis.

Acknowledgement

With special thanks to the respondents of the questionnaire for their time.

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Annex 1. Qualitative Questionnaire

1. How was research during COVID different from the previous research you undertook with displaced populations?
2. What special considerations did you take prior to undertaking research?
3. If you had to conduct more research now, what would you do differently? Is there something that did not work?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to share on this topic?
5. What recommendations will you give to people doing research during COVID with displaced populations?

About Your Project

In which country did you do the research?

What project do you work on?

Can you briefly describe what type of research did you carry out and what was the purpose?

Annex 2: Ethical committee documentation

2.1. REBUILD Project's ethical procedure approved and signed

2.2. Written informed consent form

2.3. Information sheet for participating in the focus groups (for refugees)

2.4. Information sheet for participating in the questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

2.5. Information sheet for participating in the interviews (for third sector organisations)

2.6. Online consent form and information sheet for participating in the qualitative questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

2.1. REBUILD Project’s ethical procedure approved and signed

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Vicerectorat d'Investigació

Comisión de Ética en la Experimentación Animal y Humana (CEEAH)

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)

La Comisión de Ética en la Experimentación Animal y Humana (CEEAH) de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, reunida el día **29-03-2019**, acuerda informar favorablemente el proyecto con número de referéncia **CEEAH 4387** y que tiene por título **"REBUILD"** presentado por **Pilar Orero Clavero**

Elaborado:	**Aprovado:**
Nombre: Nuria Perez Pastor Cargo: Secretària de la CEEA de la UAB Fecha:	Nombre: José Luis Molina González Cargo: President de la CEEAH de la UAB Fecha:

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2.2. Written informed consent form

REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and

life rebuilding guidance

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822215

CONSENT FORM

All information that you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and it will only be used for the purposes of this study. The session may be audio recorded but the recordings will only be used for the purposes of this study. After you sign this consent form, no further personal data will be collected that permits your identification.

This consent will be kept in a safe place by the principal investigators at UAB and will be destroyed five years after the investigation finishes. It will not be shared with anyone outside UAB working on this project. The data analysed and the entire data base will be available to other interested researchers through open data repositories. This data will be anonymised.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary, and there is no economic compensation. There is no penalty for not participating and there are no risks of any kind in your participation. You can discontinue your involvement in the study at any time without prior justification. This shall have no repercussions or negative consequences of any sort.

REBUILD is a European project led by UNINETTUNO(Italy). The ethical adviser responsible of ethical procedures is Pilar Orero. You can contact her to ask for more information about the project and the project results. Besides, you can exercise your rights recognized by the European Regulation on the Protection of Personal Data on the data file of this project by contacting the researcher responsible for this project, Dr Pilar Orero, with your request and a photocopy of your ID (form ARCO is attached):

Dra. Pilar Orero (pilar.orero@uab.cat), Dept. de Traducció i Interpretació i Estudis de l'Àsia Oriental. Campus UAB, Plaça del Coneixement, MRA/126. 08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)

I authorize

- the audio recording of the session
- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of my responses
- the use of my answers for purposes of scientific dissemination

If you are willing to participate, please confirm the following statements by signing at the end of this document.

- I have read and understood the information given for this research or have had the information read to me,
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.
- I consent to take part in the research sessions and I received a copy of this consent.

_____

Name of the participant Date Signature

_____

Name of the researcher Date Signature

Application of access to rectification, cancelation, opposition, and personal data portability (Optional)

You are taking part in a research project named «*REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance*».

According to the UE regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and the European Council dated 27 April 2016 regarding Data Protection (GRPD), and the organic Law15/1999, from 13 December, of personal data protection, and its normative. The personal data gathered in this study will be part of a data file under

the responsibility of *TransMedia Catalonia* (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) with the sole objective of performing the abovementioned research.

In the future to exercise your access rights, rectify, cancel, oppose and control the portability of the person responsible for the data file, please fill in this form and give it to any of the responsible researchers responsible for the study, together with a photocopy of your ID card or any other means of identification available to you.

INFORMATION OF THE DATA FILE RESPONSIBLE

Dr Pilar Orero (pilar.orero@uab.cat), Dept. de Traducció i Interpretació i Estudis de l'Àsia Oriental. Campus UAB, Plaça del Coneixement, Edifici MRA, Oficina 126. 08193 Bellaterra, Spain.

INFORMATION OF THE PERSON/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I, _____, over 18 and with the address _____ City_____ Province _____ Zip _____ with passport or ID card no. _____, of which I attach a photocopy, through this letter I want to take on board the personal data protection regarding the data gathered by the study for «*HELIOS – A Context-aware Distributed Social Networking Framework*», according to the personal data protection Organic Law 15/1999, of December 13th and its related laws thereafter.

I REQUEST (please choose the option/s)

☐ That the right of **access** to my data be facilitated to me, within a maximum period of one month from the collection of this request, and the information relative to my person relative to the cited study

☐ To agree to **rectify** the personal data on which the right is exercised, within ten days after receipt of this request, and to notify me in writing of the result of the rectification practiced.

☐ To agree to the **erasure** of the personal data on which the right is exercised, within ten days from receipt of this request, and to be notified in writing to me result of the cancellation practiced.

☐ That the **restriction of processing** should be agreed that my personal data on which the right is exercised are included in the aforementioned registry within ten days after receipt of this request and that I am notified in writing of the result of the rectification practiced.

 That it is **avoided** to share my personal data with third parties, as long as they are not duly completely and irreversibly anonymised.

Place / date

Signature

2.3. Information sheet for participating in the focus groups (for refugees)

REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance	
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822215	

INFORMATION SHEET

Project: REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

Main researcher: Alessandro Cafforio

Ethical adviser: Pilar Orero

We would like to invite you to take part in a focus group for a research study. The purpose of this study is the development of a technological tool that will improve communication and the management procedures of the local authorities.

The aim of the focus groups is to get feedback on the impact of culture in the use of technology. This will allow us to identify the needs of diverse audiences and research how the quality of experience and the quality of the service can be improved. It will also help towards drafting requirements to design the technologies from a user-centered approach.

During the focus group you will be asked to provide some demographic data. Then, you will be asked more questions and give your opinion on various aspects. The data collected from you will be aggregated with the data from other participants and it will be used to produce a report on cultural markers and to inform project developments. This report will be published and will be available for all participants.

During the session notes will be taken to gather the feedback and comments. At the end of the session these comments and feedback will be read aloud for you to approve. These will be considered the result of the focus group. Please ask as many questions as needed to clarify the procedure.

If you encounter any type of discomfort you can stop at any time without prior justification.

Now please read the consent form.

2.4. Information sheet for participating in the questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance	
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822215	

INFORMATION SHEET

Project: REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

Main researcher: Maria Amata Garito

Ethical adviser: Pilar Orero

We would like to invite you to an interview for a research study. The purpose of this study is the development of technological tools that will help integrate refugees and migrants and improve communication and the management procedures of the local authorities in relation to the integration of migrants.

The objective of the interview is to understand how your organization uses Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and solves any communication issues with its beneficiaries. Your answers will allow us to design the toolbox as close as possible to the needs and expectations of migrants and refugees.

In the interview you will be asked to provide some information about the nature of your organisation and your beneficiaries. Afterwards, you will be asked questions about the organisation's uses of ICT and the current practices to solve any communication issues with its beneficiaries.

The answers you provide will be aggregated with those of the other participants and will be used to produce a scientific article and to inform the developments of the project. The article will be published online and will be available for all participants of the interview.

If you encounter any type of discomfort you can stop at any time without prior justification.

Now please read the consent form.

2.5. Information sheet for participating in the interviews (for third sector organisations)

REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance	
This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822215	

INFORMATION SHEET

Project: REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

Main researcher: Maria Amata Garito

Ethical adviser: Pilar Orero

We would like to invite you to answer a questionnaire for a research study. The purpose of this study is the development of technological tools that will help integrate refugees and migrants and improve communication and the management procedures of the local authorities in relation to the integration of migrants.

The objective of the questionnaire is to carry out an analysis of the needs and expectations of migrants regarding their integration in the new country of residence, in order to implement the technological development of the tools in the most coherent way possible with the information provided through the questionnaire.

In the questionnaire you will be asked to provide some demographic data, such as your nationality and country of residence. Afterwards, you will be asked questions about your previous experiences in education and work, your relationship with public services and bureaucracy. Then, some questions about current affairs (family status, work, access to services, expectations, wishes).

The answers you provide will be aggregated with those of the other participants and will be used to produce a needs report and to inform the developments of the project. This report will be published online and will be available for all participants of the Questionnaire.

If you encounter any type of discomfort you can stop at any time without prior justification.

Now please read the consent form.

2.6. Online consent form and information sheet for participating in the qualitative questionnaires (for third sector organisations)

Researching during COVID-19: displaced populations

This questionnaire aims to gather information about your experience on testing during COVID with displaced populations.

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* Required

Information on the study

Project: REBUILD ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

Main researcher: Maria Amata Garito
Ethical adviser: Pilar Orero

We would like to invite you to answer a few questions for a research study. The purpose of this study is the development of technological tools that will help integrate refugees and migrants and improve communication and the management procedures of the local authorities in relation to the integration of migrants.

The objective of these questions is gather your insights and experiences on testing during COVID with displaced populations.

The questionnaire consists of 4 questions regarding the process of testing during COVID, the issues encountered and the lessons learnt from the testing that you carried out. Then we will ask you in which project you work at and in which country you are based.

The answers you provide will be aggregated with those of the other participants and will be used to produce journal article and to inform the developments of the project. This report will be published online and will be available for all participants of the questionnaire.

If you encounter any type of discomfort you can stop at any time without prior

justification. Now please read the consent form.

Consent form

The purpose of this study is the development of technological tools that will help integrate refugees and migrants and improve communication and the management procedures of the local authorities in relation to the integration of migrants.

The information you provide in the questionnaire are anonymous and they will be used in the project. All information that you give will be treated in the strictest confidence and it will only be used for the purposes of this study. After you sign this consent form, no further personal data will be collected that permits your identification.

This consent will be kept in a safe place by the principal investigators at UAB and will be destroyed five years after the investigation finishes. It will not be shared with anyone outside UAB working on this project. The data analysed and the entire data base will be available to other interested researchers through open data repositories. This data will be anonymised.

Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary, and there is no economic compensation. There is no penalty for not participating and there are no risks of any kind in your participation. You can discontinue your involvement in the study at any time

without prior justification. This shall have no repercussions or negative consequences of any sort.

REBUILD is a European project led by UNINETUNNO (Italy). The ethical adviser responsible of ethical procedures is Pilar Orero. You can contact her to ask for more information about the project and the project results. Besides, you can exercise your rights recognized by the European Regulation on the Protection of Personal Data on the data file of this project by contacting the researcher responsible for this project, Dr Pilar Orero, with your request and a photocopy of your ID (form ARCO is attached):

Dra. Pilar Orero (pilar.orero@uab.cat), Dept. de Traducció i Interpretació i Estudis de l'Àsia Oriental. Campus UAB, Plaça del Coneixement, MRA/126. 08193 Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)

Your experience of undertaking research during COVID with displaced populations

These are the four questions that you will be asked (we give this to you now so that organise your answers):

1. How was research during COVID different from the previous research you undertook with displaced populations?
2. What special considerations did you take prior to conducting the research?
3. If you had to conduct more research now, what will you do differently? What do you think worked?
4. What recommendations will you give to people doing research during COVID with displaced populations?

Annex 3 - Questionnaires [not included in the chapters]

3.1. Focus group questionnaire

3.2. Third sector organisations' questionnaire

3.3. Interview guide

3.1. Focus group questionnaire

Pre-questionnaire survey

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this study. During today's session, we will be asking you questions on your use of web and mobile technology and your preferences on various apps and websites. This questionnaire is intended to provide us with some demographic information about the participants. You do not have to complete this questionnaire if you do not want to. The information you provide is confidential and anonymous.

Q1. Age: What is your age?

18-24 years old.

25-34 years old.

35-44 years old.

45-54 years old.

55-64 years old.

65-74 years old.

Prefer not to answer

Q2. Country of origin?

_____

Prefer not to answer

Q3. Country of residence

_____

Prefer not to answer

Q4. Length of stay in that country

_____

Prefer not to answer

Q5. Education.

No schooling completed
Primary School
High School
Trade/technical/vocational training
Bachelor’s degree
Master’s degree
Doctorate degree

Other:
Prefer not to answer

3.2. Third sector organisations' questionnaire

Re_Build ICT-enabled integration facilitator and life rebuilding guidance

This project has received funding from the *European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme* under grant agreement No 822215

Organization/Institution identification[24]

Organization / Institution type:

- ☐ Local Public Body/Entity
- ☐ NGO
- ☐ Private organization

Full Name of the Institution: Caritas Internationalis

Website: https://www.caritasmallorca.org/

Reception Phase the Organization/Institution is involved in (if applicable)**:**

- ☐ First assistance
- ☐ First Reception
- ☐ Second Reception (if applicable)
- ☐ Integration

Services for migrant/refugees/asylum seekers provided or managed by the organization/institution:

- ☐ [1] Legal Services (Information about rights and duties according to their status, Residence permits; Freedom of movement within the Members States / Travel Documents)
- ☐ [2] Access to Employment (including access to procedures for recognition of qualifications)
- ☐ [3] Access to Education / Training
- ☐ [4] Healthcare
- ☐ [5] Accommodation / Housing
- ☐ [6] Living Conditions (Maintaining family unity, Access to integration facilities, Social Welfare)

[24] This annex includes the questions that were analysed for my PhD thesis. The full questionnaire and project report can be found here: https://www.rebuildeurope.eu/en/en/p16_rebuildactivities.aspx#act2

Training programs related to interculturalism, and cultural sensitivity provided to the organization staff, if any

Q1.5. Are there variables not directly depending upon the service provision that affect the capacity to provide the service? Such as: number of requests, paucity of resources, availability of professionals, etc.

Q1.7. In your experience, what are the most complicated steps to face for users attempting to use this service? Where users typically "drop out" from the process?

Q1.8. How does your organization/institution usually help users to overcome these difficulties?

Q1.10. How does your organization manage cultural and linguistic issues in the provision of these services? (documents and forms available in multiple languages and language/cultural mediators supporting users during the processn digital / web based information in multiple languagesn etc.)

Q1.11. Taking into consideration your experience in the field, what are the major needs expressed by migrants (indepentedently of a particular category)?

Q2.1. Which kind of service is your organisations providing for supporting the access of migrants/refugees to the labour market?

- □ Job search support
- □ CV writing / Job profiling
- □ Professional training courses search
- □ Internships search

- □ Request for the unemployment certificate/registration at Employment Centres
- □ Administrative support for employment
- □ Business start-upn access to financing and microcredit
- □ Recognition of study titles
- □ Professional qualifications/certifications recognition
- □ Empowerment / Career path building
- □ Other (please specify) _____

Q2.11. In your experience, what are the most complicated steps to face for users attempting to have their

qualifications recognised?

Q3.1.a. Which kind of support service is your organization providing?

- □ Administrative support (documents, procedures)
- □ Translations of existing documents
- □ Preparatory courses for admission
- □ Support in recognition of study titles
- □ Other (please specify) _____

Q3.1.c. In your experience, what are the most complicated steps to face for users attempting to use this

service? Where users typically "drop out" the process? Apart from the possible problems you recalled, do

you consider an alternative approach for people that drop out due to the fact that they are not able to read

and write even in their mother tongue?

Q3.1.d. How does your organization/institution usually help users to overcome these difficulties?

Q3.2. Does your organization directly provide migrants and refugees training or educational programs?

Please specify:

- □ Language training
- □ Preparation for driver license exams
- □ Afterschool homework support for students
- □ Vocational/Professional Training

- □ Civic education
- □ Specific competence-centered projects
- □ Creative expression programs for social and emotional skills
- □ Other (please specify) _____

Q4.2. Please mark the health service actually provided by your organization

- □ Direct medical assistance
- □ Cultural mediator support for medical services (interaction with doctors)
- □ Information and orientation for accessing National H. System
- □ Medication supply
- □ Psychological assessment/support
- □ Referral to external entities
- □ Gender-specific services
- □ Other (please specify)_____

Q4.7. In your experience, what are the most complicated steps to face for users attempting to access to

medical care /healthcare services?

ICT – Closing questions

CQ1. Which kind of (currently unavailable) information about individuals accessing to your services could

be useful to improve the effectiveness of the service provision?

CQ2. Are there existing ICT-supported processes in your organization? Did the digitalization impact

positively on service effectiveness?

CQ3. In your opinion, which are the services or processes in your organization that can be improved

through digital technologies?

CQ4. REBUILD has the ambition to develop an application able both to provide support for accessing to

service for migrants/refugees, and to gather and elaborate data and information, providing knowledge in

form of charts, statistics, infographics for public administration and service providers.

In your opinion, which information coming from REBUILD could be the most relevant for your organization?

3.3. Interview guide

Type of organisation:

Services the organisation offers:

Profile of beneficiaries:

Information Communication Technologies

- How do you communicate with your beneficiaries?
- Do you use any ICT to communicate with them?
- How do you promote your services among the target population?
- What ICT do you use? Are they serving you? Is there a technology would you like to have?
- Do you have any problem with the current practices?
- How do your colleagues/leadership feel about using technology?
- If there is a low use in your organisation, what are the reasons?
- What ethical considerations do you have before using ICT?
- Any technologies you used that you stop using? What were the reasons?

Translation

- What do you do with beneficiaries that do not speak the same language?
- Do you use any translation technologies?
- Is translation included in communication budgets?
- Is your staff bilingual? Do you hire staff that speak other languages?
- Do you use any glossaries or apps where there is no language you both speak?

Pandemic

- Did you have any processes set in place for such situations?
- If not, what systems did you set in place?
- How did you communicate with beneficiaries? What about beneficiaries who did not speak the local languages?
- Did you set in place any online/virtual services and how was the reception from beneficiaries?

- Do you consider keeping some of these systems post-pandemic?
- What are/were the major challenges you face when implementing this type of online services?