

## **GLOBALIZING WORLD AND INTERPRETERS: NEW DO'S AND DON'TS WITHIN DIVERSE PROFESSIONAL CONTEXTS**

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### **Abstract**

The paper explores societal needs and meets the community requirements in terms of interlingual, intercultural communication at the age of increasing migration. The paper strives to understand new challenges and needs regarding the interpreters' work in socially sensitive contexts, including asylum procedures, court proceedings, healthcare services, refugee camps, etc. The paper combined desk and field research to identify those emerging do's and don'ts that interpreters face while working in the contemporary world that is known for its hectic, tense, controversial nature. The paper followed the comparative methodology to explore theoretical materials and interpreters' opinion regarding troubles and challenges they faced through their professional.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to process the qualitative analysis data.

The paper explored scholars' opinions and interpreters' views on the issues of training content and current interpreting practices.

Particular emphasis was laid on the interpreting activities in the context of migration crisis to identify the concept of emergency interpreting. The concept rests on the evidence gathered from interpreters who worked on the frontlines of the national and international agencies that are in charge to handle refugee and asylum seekers' issues.

Modern technologies that might help interpreters in emergency situations have been touched upon, as well.

The research findings confirmed the hypothesis about the need for renewed interdisciplinary background to help interpreters be ready to work for the globalised world that features industry and academy integration, new high-tech industries advance, alarming migration, political and cultural diversity, conflict zones increasing spots.

The research has been conducted within the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia participation in the 5-100 nation-wide projects.

**Keywords:** Globalization, interpreter's profession, education, language cross-cultural mediation, code of ethics, emergency interpreting.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Interpreting in the Third Millennium means interpreting at the age of globalization. It has a tremendous impact on the interpreter's status and profession. Globalization is characterized by ever intensifying political, social, economic, industry integration beyond the national frontiers. Rapid change in social and cultural landscape at national and international levels has led to skyrocketing multiculturalism of contemporary communities. Moreover, the modern world is affected by increasing number of conflict zones and migration. Therefore there is an increasing demand for interpreters in conflict zones and on major migration routes.

Within the above, interpreters are expected to act as mediators among various stakeholders in rather diverse contexts, including official international events, business and industry settings, academic, legal, healthcare areas, emergency situations, as well.

The above leads to the research hypothesis that interpreters need some kind of up-to-date interdisciplinary background to be able to respond to societal needs and meet the community requirements in terms of interlingual, intercultural communication in diverse fields of mankind activities.

The research goal was to identify those emerging do's and don'ts that interpreters face while working in the contemporary world that is known for its hectic, tense, controversial nature.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology stood on the comparative background to combine theoretical studies and empirical activities. The first stage of the analysis included the analysis of white papers for interpreters, comparison of the requirements set forth for professional interpreters, working in various fields, interpreter's training, etc. regarding the periods of the 20th and the 21st centuries.

The second stage of research laid particular focus of interpreters' narratives and their evidence regarding troubles and challenges they faced through their professional activities in two above mentioned different periods. The research used the open source data collected through blogs, published research information and on-line surveys through translators and interpreters on-line communities. Totally over 50 retired interpreters and over 150 current interpreters working in different areas kindly agreed to take part in the surveys. Their personal data should be kept confidential due to security reasons.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used to process the qualitative analysis data.

The research materials included official documents regarding interpreter's profession, official web-sites of the agencies and professionals that engage in interpreting services provision for the public, memoirs and interviews of the distinguished interpreters of the past century and evidence from those interpreters who foster the pathway towards stronger respect for the profession and its standards. The paper also explored current practices of interpreters and other professionals who should tackle language barriers in the emergency situations.

## **3 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Academics and policy makers and scholars consistently promote the importance of quality assurance in interpreting service provision within public contexts (Hetherington, 2012). University community representatives focus on challenges for interpreting in new social contexts (Garzone, Viezzi 2002, Schöffner et al 2013), study quality in interpreting and its prerequisites (Kalina, 2002), underline the importance of developing new tools for Interpreting assessment (Lee 2009), explore curricula for university-based interpreters' certification (Mikkelsen, 2013), compare the respective practices across countries (Turner, 2008, Vermeiren et al 2009).

The interpreting Industry also strives to outline and follow the relevant professional standards. There are international and national white papers on interpreters' professional standards across the world. The following documents can be mentioned as examples:

- ISO 13611 on Interpreting – Guidelines for community interpreting that were officially released in 2014 (ISO, 2014),
- the US national standard on Language Interpretation Services (ASTM 2007),
- the white paper issued by the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. On Interpreting in the public sector (NOU 2014),

- the professional standards for Public Service Interpreters in the UK (NRPSI 2015), the requirements for freelance community interpreters in Canada (PWGSC 2014), etc.

Interpreters' professional associations also provide their response to the interpreter's activities changing context and the new requirements they set forth (Stejskal, 2005).

Both Academia and Industry view the integration of linguistic, communicative, psychological, cross cultural aspects as a critical instrument for interpreting quality provision.

Nonetheless, through the desk research the latest developments came to light regarding the interpreting practice in the second decade of the third millennium. They concern the increasing migration crisis that affects various countries and continents. International agencies (see, for instance IOM), NGOs (see, for instance TWB), professionals who work in the relevant field (interpreting on the frontlines of crisis, providing interpretation services, supervising the above ones) mention that the recent years have witnessed a disastrous migrant crises in terms of the amount of population affected and traumas experienced. The above stakeholders specify that one of the issues that have been less tackled by now concerns language barriers and language mediation challenges (Armstrong 2016, Balogh, Salaets 2015, Goldsmith 2015, Surace 2016, Tanzeem 2015). Those who work in the fields underline that these issues must be considered for systemic on-going solutions as lack of language service leads to the human rights violation (Alloush 2016, Faes 2015, Gordon 2015). Stakeholders mention lack of interpreters on the front lines of migration itineraries, their little understanding of the specific tasks related to emergency situations, unusual language pairs, etc.

International professional organizations in the field of translation and interpretation also take into account the mentioned challenge. Special guidelines have been issued by interpreters' professional associations (Conflict Zone Field Guide... 2012, In Zone 2013).

Empirical studies of interpreting practice in wartime, conflict zones and emergency situations reveals that the situation is changing across history.

Regarding the interpreting realities in Finland During the Second World War, P. Kujamäki underlines the role of accidental interpreters and points out that their "language skills equaled interpreting skills and there was no training before or during the engagement; the only real prerequisite for the job was the superficially evaluated command of the two languages in question" (Kujamäki 2016).

Referring to the interpreting in the Second World War Nazi camps, M. Tryuk specifies that "the ethical norms for interpreting that are generally accepted today were not applicable to the concentration camps back then, as there were neither norms nor standards of any kind applicable in such circumstances". The scholar further explains that "the interpreter found him- or herself in the heart of a crisis which had a direct impact on their life and that of their fellow prisoners" that.... clearly defies the notion of impartiality or neutrality in the execution of their job" (Tryuk 2016:139).

Scholars underline a really challenging situation in wartime zones when interpreters' professional identity, ideology and ethics confront connotations related to their national identity and ideology and "have to violate professional ethics in order to follow situation ethics, and situation ethics varies with their identities and ideologies" (Li, Tian, Huang 2016:162). On grounds of the interpreters' experience through China's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1937–1945) the scholars put forward the statement that when working in conflict zones "interpreters may not be faithful to the speaker or loyal to the work provider. In the process of interpreting, interpreters have the imperative to change, correct or amend speech according to situation ethics when it is concerned with national and identity issues (Li, Tian, Huang 2016:183).

Regarding the Russian Federation (including the Soviet Union period) experience in interpreting in wartime and in conflict zones the strong professional approach should be underlined. The job has traditionally been assigned to certified interpreters with specialized training. A higher education institution named the Military University (Moscow-based) has a long standing experience in training interpreters and translators for work in conflict zones and operate within armed forces units. A lot of evidence related to the above professionals' work can be found through websites of military interpreters' communities, online media articles, narratives of military interpreters, see for instance, the site <http://www.clubvi.ru/>. Professionals underline that when working in conflict zones interpreters are expected to follow accuracy and impartiality requirements, interpreters point out that it is important to repeat questions and 'abstain from personal interpretations and inventions in order to avoid misunderstandings.

Special emphasis should be laid on the issues related to local civilians' involvement in interpreting in war and conflict zones.

Regarding interpreting landscapes in Iraq war, the author of the newspaper article underlined the capacity of an Iraq- born interpreter to U.S. troops regarding her contribution to a “constant, stabilizing and calming American presence for Iraqi counterparts”, the interpreter’s help to avoid cultural missteps and craft relationships” (Brough 2015). Nonetheless, journalists mention that civilian interpreters in Iraq have often been subject to killings and threats from extremists and underline the importance of local civilian interpreters’ protection that should be ensured by the international community (Kemsley 2014). On exploring the Afganistan interpreters’ activities at the beginning of the 21st century M. Tălpaş describes multiple roles of the local interpreters:

Interpreters became journalists, translators, language and culture teachers, soldiers, cultural mediators and, in some cases, even friends (Tălpaş 2016:257). In these contexts interpreters face military, social, administrative, logistic and other risks.

Regarding war on the territory of the Former Yugoslavia scholars collected the evidence from the interpreters who worked in the field and came to the conclusion that they were mostly professionals with degree in translation or interpretation. The interviewed interpreters underlined the need for mediation and conflict resolution skills training (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007, Touval, 2002).

The analysis of interpreters’ narratives and personal comments helped to identify the most challenging issues regarding the interpreters’ work in the past and in the emergency situations related to migration crisis and conflict at the age of the global migration and war conflicts in the Third Millennium (see table 1).

The figures aggregated the scholars’ opinions based on the interpreters’ narratives and interpreters’ comments, as well.

Table 1.

Challenging issues in the course of interpretation	Interpreters of the past century wars period	Interpreters in the migration and conflict zones of the third Millennium
Faithful interpretation	100%	100%
Accuracy in interpretation	100%	100%
Ideological fidelity in interpretation	91%	-
Diverse scale of neutrality in different contexts	-	78%
Importance of building trust among all those involved	53%	89%
Building cultural bridges among those involved	51%	83%
Necessity to precise every detail even by constant repetition of questions	43%	78%
Multilingual interpreting services	-	76%
Technological support	-	82%
Mastery of several foreign languages	-	71%
Mediation and conflict resolution skills	-	57%

The table shows that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century interpreters pay specific attention to the issues of neutrality and impartiality, value particular information details, appreciate the necessity to build trust and understanding among parties, underline the importance for interpreters to master more than one foreign language, point out the need for mediation and conflict resolution skills.

The analysis of modern interpreters’ narratives and their personal comments also helped to trace those patterns that interpreters consider as inappropriate regarding emergency situations related to migration crisis and conflict at the age of the global migration and war conflicts in the Third Millennium (see table 2).

Table 2.

Interpreters' Don'ts in the course of interpretation	Percentage of interpreters who pointed out the issue
Omissions of facts	100%
Omissions of obscene language	100%
Omissions of rude words	53%
Involvement in the political issues discussion through the interpretation	89%
Involvement in the cultural preferences and bias discussion through the interpretation	81%
Making statements or asking questions on officials' behalf	92%
Accepting tasks not related to translating/interpreting	88%
Overcoming the limits of the interpreters' role	76%
Overcoming impartiality and acting as a friend for refugees	67%
Disclosing interpreter's personal data, life experience, etc.	61%
Overcoming impartiality and acting as a friend for local civilians	13%
Demonstrating direct hospitality for emergency refugees	38%
Contracting or volunteering locals with no interpreting certification as interpreters	87%

The overall situation discovered and pictured above confirms that it is of current importance revisit the overall interpreters' training (Moser-Mercer et al 2014, Salaets 2015).

Particular focus should be laid on emerging language fabric and training tools and methods, including simulation and real case-studies (Bancroft 2013, Berk-Seligson 2017). Special attention should be paid to mobile computer assisted translation to emergency translation and interpretation (WTS 2015).

Moreover, training volunteer translators and interpreters also requires further discussion (Huda 2015).

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The research findings confirmed the hypothesis about the need for renewed interdisciplinary background to help interpreters be ready to work for the globalised world that features industry and academy integration, new high-tech industries advance, alarming migration, political and cultural diversity, conflict zones increasing spots.

The research results proved that the above characteristics of the contemporary civilization influence the interpreter's profession, its Don'ts that emerge due to current contexts and realities. The research findings lay grounds for up-to-date changes in the interpreter's training curriculum.

Revisiting the interpreter's training curriculum implies context-oriented, inquiry-based, case-focused training that also focuses on emergency interpreting skills issues and interpreters' abilities to integrate culturally relevant psychology knowledge ICT tools.

Further research is required to explore issues related to interpreters' activities in the emergency situations, crisis and conflict zones.

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