THE ROLE OF T/I IN WARS AND CONFLICTS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE WAR ON TERROR AND COUNTERTERRORISM. / LA IMPORTANCIA DE LOS T/I EN GUERRAS Y ZONAS DE CONFLICTO: LA GUERRA CONTRA EL TERROR Y EL CONTRATERRORISMO.

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Abstract: Through the analysis of both the difficulties associated with their job and the circumstances in which they operate, this paper shows the relevance of the role performed by war translators and interpreters (T/I) within multilingual conflicts. Aiming to bring the working conditions of such professionals to the spotlight, this article deals with different topics, ranging from translation history to a proposal of specific training designed for war T/I or the issue of deontology and work ethics.

Keywords: Translator/interpreter; Multilingual conflicts; War; Visibility.

Resumen: A través de un análisis tanto de las circunstancias en las que operan como de las dificultades asociadas a su trabajo, en este artículo se expone la importancia de la función que desarrollan los traductores e intérpretes (T/I) de guerra en los conflictos multilingües. Con el objetivo de visibilizar la realidad laboral de dichos profesionales, se abordarán varios temas. En primer lugar, se realiza un recorrido a través de la historia de la traducción. Posteriormente, trataremos la cuestión de la deontología y ética laboral y finalizaremos con una propuesta de formación específica para los T/I de guerra.

Palabras clave: Traductor/intérprete; Conflictos multilingües; Guerra; Visibilidad.

1. Introduction

The average citizen has little or no knowledge of the role of translators and interpreters (T/I), nor have they stopped to think about the countless situations that require their intervention. For many years, the academic world also turned its back on T/I, until globalization revealed them as the key professionals who made the relations between nations and the sharing of information possible. They stopped being agents operating in the shadows and scholars began to reflect about their role, which resulted in the production of thousands of articles, essays and other papers dealing with various aspects of translation and interpreting.

However, out of the academic spheres, T/I remain invisible. Ironically, one of the main reasons of this phenomenon is in fact globalization: as linguistic borders disappear, people

have grown used to be able to access roughly every piece of information in a language that they can understand, which prevents them from even starting to reflect about the process and agents involved in the transposition of languages.

Drawing from this reality of almost complete unawareness of a whole profession, this essay aims at providing a comprehensive explanation of the characteristics of the job carried out by war T/I, as well as the conditions in which they have to do so and the challenges they are to face. We decided to focus on these specific professionals to illustrate a more dramatic example, which would help people realize the transcendence of T/I in areas that may have been unsuspected to them.

This paper follows a very simple, two-part structure: The first one covers the more theoretical part and deals with aspects such as the background of war translation and interpreting, the protection of T/I or the need for specialized training for such professionals, while the second part attempts to provide an unusual example of a worldwide conflict that also requires the mediation of T/I: The fight against terrorism.

2. The role of T/I in wars and conflicts

Translation and interpreting are disciplines as old as languages and can be traced back to the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, war translation and interpreting as we know it today were shaped in the rumbling of the I World War. Although the diverse linguist nature of such a conflict created "a space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations" (Pratt, 2008: 7), it was after the conflict ended when the figure of T/I became more relevant. This was directly related to the creation of the League of Nations, the first intergovernmental organization, which was also the first to have both English and French as official languages. Such a characteristic made it imperative to have an efficient translation and interpreting service, and it was within the framework of such organization where the first conventions about conflict translation and interpreting were set.

In this sense, language holds a vital position in the context of a conflict: it can ignite the violence or be a means of peace negotiation. Drawing from this premise, and considering that international wars are multilingual conflicts, the role of T/I comes clear as "vitally constitutive of the transnational spaces of war and conflict" (Footitt, 2016: 7), directly proportional to the weight of language.

In their role of mediators, the presence of T/I is required through various stages of the conflict, from coordination tasks to the interrogation of prisoners. Nevertheless, T/I have to deal with a myriad of other situations where language barriers need to be overcome, making their role vital for the development and closure of conflicts. Out of the different situations that have been analyzed in the existing literature, we selected the three that will be explained bellow:

1. Previous negotiations. Before the conflict is legitimized by means of an official declaration of war, representatives from both parties usually meet and attempt to negotiate and reach alternatives solutions. This "diplomatic" stage requires the services of T/I to ensure proper communication between the parts, since in these circumstances

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the interpreter is "the only ones at the negotiation table who understand the two languages and cultures" (Baigorri Jalón, 2011: 8).

2. Interactions between military personnel and local civilians. Effective communication between the military and the local population is vital to improve the efficiency of the efforts by all parties engaged. These interactions may take place during the conflict or during pace keeping missions, being especially important in this last aspect, and in most cases, they can only be carried out through interpreters. However, T/I do not only act as "translation machines", they also perform the role of cultural mediators, offering advice and facilitating mutual understanding between the parties. A perfect example of how integrated T/I are in the ensemble of agents present in conflict contexts is the fact that soldiers receive specific training to learn to talk through them, to be able to achieve a fluent, first-person communication (Moreno Bello, 2014).

3. Peacekeeping and peace negotiations. These are operations that aim to provide a safe space where the parties involved in a conflict can discuss and reach a pacific solution. The importance of effective communication in such circumstances is obvious, and here is where T/I intervene, either enabling dialogue between mediators in negotiations that have more media resonance, or between military personnel and civilians directly on the ground. Considering the sensitiveness of the topics discuss in this kind of environments, the decay of the speaking abilities of an individual that stress can induce (Edwards, 2002), and the severe consequences mistranslations can have, interpreters should always be present to ensure proper, clear communication.

2.1 Deontology and work ethics

The importance of this issue is directly associated with the trust that the implied parties need to have in the T/I to achieve a fruitful dialogue; if such trust is not accomplished, the efforts for establishing communication could turn into a source of confrontation. Bearing this in mind, every association or organization that requires or provides T/I services has its own set of rules, although they all include very similar if not identical core lines. For the purposes of this article, we focused on the American Translators Association (ATA) *Code of Ethics and Professional Practice*, which could be considered a paradigm of translation and interpreting ethics code. Such document deals with eight questions (Table 1):

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Question	Description
Accuracy and Impartiality	Maintain the original nuance of the source message Distance from word-to-word translation Neutrality
Confidentiality	Confidentiality of the client's information Respect of the laws
Honesty about their capabilities and qualification	Reject jobs they are not qualified for
Continuation of their education	Keeping up with technology and language changes
Sharing their knowledge	Stay connected with other T/I and share information Participate in online communities Volunteer
Defining in advance the terms of any job	Use of agreement tools is highly recommended Fair and acceptable agreements
Asking for due recognition of their work	Name included in the cover of books or in the list of staff that worked in the program
Resolving conflicts derived from professional interactions	Unlawful behavior may be reported to the ATA

Table 1. ATA Code of Ethics. Source: Adapted from ATA (2010)

These guidelines are to be applied in the activities of any T/I, including of course those working in conflict situations, as we can confirm by comparing this set of rules to the one proposed by Moreno Bello (2014) for conflict interpreting. Moreno Bello, who makes special emphasis on accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality, also develops the idea that T/I would only be entitled to favor one of the parties involved under circumstances of abuse, violence legitimation or distortion of reality. Besides exposing and analyzing the duties of conflict T/I, she also includes five basic rights they should expect and demand: to be protected and to receive support during and after the assignment, to know the limits of the tasks they are to perform, to be briefed about the context of the assignment and to execute their job in proper working conditions. These rights are as important as their duties, and they need to be established to avoid potential professional conflicts or problems of responsibility. However, when it comes to solving an ethical problem, these codes must be considered just as guides, not as bonding rules, because it is impossible that they can adapt to all the different situations that may pose an ethical challenge to the T/I. It should be them who, based on their formation and critical sense, decide the most convenient way to proceed.

2.2 The role of local T/I: Controversial agents

Within the group of T/I, we can distinguish two big categories: professional and unprofessional locally hired T/I (from now on, local T/I). Local T/I are usually native civilians that have a decent knowledge of the pair of languages at issue and are used to facilitate communication between the soldiers and the population (Moreno Bello, 2014). They also act as connection with the local authorities and a source of first-hand information about the culture and customs of a specific war theatre (Alves de Souza, 2015), preventing confrontations derived from cultural clashes.

Despite the fact that local T/I are not as reliable as professionals, due to their unawareness of work ethics and conventions of translation (Moreno Bello, 2014), military forces are often left with no other choice but to recur to them. This is due to a rather bitter reality: few professional T/I are willing to travel to conflict areas, and even if they would,

there might not even exist professional T/I working with the minority languages or dialects in question (Alves de Souza, 2015). All the above considered, we believe that foreign forces that require the T/I's services would do well to invest part of their time and resources in offering some training to these agents, to improve the effectiveness of communication and prevent mistranslations and their consequences.

Another controversial aspect is the issue of loyalty and trust. Frequently, local T/I have to face the distrust of their employers, who fear they might turn against them, and the rejection of their own people, who see them as traitors (Baker, Pérez-González and Simpson, 2011: 39-52). And yet, many are the civilians who still choose to carry out this role, as many Iraqi interpreters did when they cooperated with the US forces to remove Sadam Hussein from power (Inghilleri, 2010).

2.3. T/I protection during and after the conflict

It is rather common for war T/I, particularly locals, to find themselves exposed to the violence, defenseless. In such circumstances, their employers either did not consider they would need to be protected or they simply failed to keep T/I safe. The issue of protection has actually a lot to do with the sometimes-blurred limits of T/I responsibilities: Their role is not always clearly established and so neither is the level of protection they should receive. In consequence, they are not granted a special protection status, like journalists or sanitary personnel (Jourdenais and Mikkelson, 2015). This leaves them with two laws that they can invoke and be protected by: The Responsibility to Protect (UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1674, 2006) and the International Humanitarian Law (Jourdenais and Mikkelson, 2015). The first is aimed at preventing genocides, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, while the second aims at providing protection and assistance to those affected by the conflict. To try and put a remedy to such an irregular position, several international translation and interpreting organizations have been pressing governments and other organs all over the world to issue a regulation that specifically sets up the working conditions for conflict T/I, like the RedT and AIIC did with their joint project, the Open Letters Project.

One of the circumstances where T/I remain more vulnerable is after the conflict in question ends and the foreign forces draw down, because they stop having whatever level of protection their employers were granting them. Every country approaches this situation in a different way, but we considered the performance of both the United States of America and the United Kingdom governments after the war of Afghanistan to be very representative of the typical resolutions issued by the foreign authorities to deal with the situation. Nevertheless, we would like to highlight that none of the strategies proved to be sufficiently effective.

- USA. Their project was called SIV (Special Immigrant Visa), and it was passed by the Congress in 2006 to annually grant 50 visas, although an exception was made during 2007-2008 and 500 visas were granted in that period (U.S. Department of State). According to the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the T/I who wish to apply for these visas must comply with the following 3 requirements: they must had worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces or under Chief of Mission (CMO) authority at the U.S.

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Embassies Baghdad or Kabul, had obtained a written recommendation from either a General or Flag Officer from the unit the T/I supported or from the Chief of Mission of the embassy where they worked. The application process might seem simple to comply with, but the reality is that such a process can last years and involves requirements that "are virtually impossible for some interpreters to meet. They've been unable to gather references from long-departed supervisors or from defunct contractors" (Frail, 2016).

- United Kingdom. In their case, they developed two different programs, which we consider to be more comprehensive: The Redundancy Scheme and the Intimidation Scheme. The first one on "acknowledging the Government's responsibilities to LECs who have lost their employment because of the drawdown of UK forces in Afghanistan" (Defence Committee of the House of Commons, 2018: 12). If the applicants prove that they had been working for the UK for at least a year in the time of their drawdown, they could either receive a payment, funded education within Afghanistan or even the possibility to be relocated in the UK. However, until 2018, the T/I who got granted vises had to pay after five years to extend them indefinitely.

- The Intimidation Scheme, on the other part, provided support to any Locally Employed Civilians whose lives were under threat as a consequence of their collaboration with the UK. Depending on the level of danger they were in, their cases could be classified as green, amber or red, with the last two ones implying relocation within Afghanistan or the UK respectively.

3. T/I in counterterrorism and intelligence: An insight

Drawing from the premise that T/I are required in a myriad of circumstances regarding conflicts, we wanted to conduct a further analysis on a current war or conflict, and that is why we decided to explore the grounds of translation and interpreting related to the war against Islamic terrorism, or the War on Terror.

This conflict pits militant Islam against the West (Smith and Zeigler, 2017) and was triggered by the attacks perpetrated against the Wade Trade Center and the Pentagon in 11 September 2001. After this fatidic date, strategies for national defense and for more effective intelligence procedures were strengthen all over the globe, but specially in the USA. Intelligence agencies were stroke by the reality that the monolingualism and English preeminence that prevailed in the country (Apter, 2005) also affected their language services. Considering that the recently declared war was being waged in Arabic and some other minority languages such as Pashto, the FBI realized that T/I were an essential asset for facing the new threat of Islamic terrorism and that they needed to upgrade their obsolete language services to do so. They promoted big hire campaigns, that lead to the creation of the Language Services Translation Center (LSTC), the aim of which was ensuring that "translation services are available whenever and wherever they are needed" (FBI, 2004: 2).

The creation of the LSTC resulted in a growing demand of T/I who could understand Arabic, Urdu, Pashto and other languages traditionally associated with Islamic terrorism (Robles Torres, 2007). Such a demand increased even more after the publication of an FBI report that revealed the lack of sufficient T/I as one of the reasons why the 11S attacks went undetected (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United Sates, 2010). To

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cope with the rising demand, the Foreign Language Training Program significantly increased its activities and by 2011 they were offering classes of more than 50 languages. Likewise, they also provide specialized training for their new hire linguists, already proficient in the languages they are to work with, but who may lack other skills required by the agency (North, 2012).

The new T/I recruited in the hire campaigns were mostly native speakers, since they had the necessary skills to understand colloquial conversations as well as the cultural and religious references needed to accurately interpret the information (FBI, 2004). They have the tremendous responsibility of delivering into English all the data collected in any language, and the bureau depends on their decisions to be able to recognize plans for potential attacks or, instead, to miss such plans. The information is collected from many sources and contexts, what implies that T/I have to work with written reports, audio and sometimes they have to go out on the field to assist with interviews or takedowns (FBI, 2016). Such diversity makes it imperative for FBI linguists to be multi-disciplinary agents, equally proficient in both translation and interpreting.

4. The need for specialized training

Taking into consideration all the facts exposed above, one easily comes to the realization that providing T/I, both local and professional, with specialized training is fundamental for them to achieve the standards required in a context as tense as a war and respect the core guidelines of the profession. Being so, many professional T/I, who have had some sort of contact with conflict interpreting, have provided some recommendations of the skills that should be expected from these particular T/I.

One of them is Paolo Cappelli, a member of the AICC who analyzed the testimonies of different T/I (Cappelli, 2014). Cappelli proposed to prepare interpreters with trial sessions of interpretation related to disturbing topics, such as violence or torture testimonies. Considering that this kind of testimonies can be shocking, he also suggests that T/I should be provided with psychological guidance, so that they learn to control their emotions.

On the other hand, UNHCR interpreter during the conflict of Kosovo, Marija Todorova, (Beltrán Aniento, 2013), also agreed with the need of specialized training and gave a more detailed explanation of the expertise war T/I should have. She considers that war T/I should be trained in intercultural communication and mediation, as well as in peace negotiation, since they are the bridge between the different cultures involved; religious, cultural and linguistic features should be perfectly familiar to the T&I, for they are highly sensitive topics and the use of a word in an incorrect nuance can become a trigger for a conflict (Cappelli, 2014).

Although in general the interpreting and translation international community agreed with these two experts, the academic offerings regarding training of war and conflict T/I is rather scarce. One of the more noticeable existing programs is InZone (2019), a project developed jointly by the University of Geneva and the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross). Such program aims at preparing and improving the skills of interpreters, professional or local, that were already deployed in the field and offers courses that cover from work ethics to consecutive interpreting skills.

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Even though the efforts of InZone and other similar projects are remarkable, they cannot be considered enough. Their target public are interpreters, local or professional, who are already deployed in the field and thus there is still a training gap in terms of academic training as such, prior to the commencement of their field operations. Therefore, we believed that in this paper it was important to suggest a training proposal to highlight the importance of specialized training in this field. In this sense, the main focus of our proposal would also be in pure translation and interpreting courses. Such modules would allow students to prepare themselves through trial sessions of interpreting and through translating texts related to conflict. In both cases, students should be working in a realistic war environment, facing stress, disturbing testimonies, linguistic challenges and situations involving discursive violence towards any of the parties involved. Although this approach can be quite hard, it is necessary to prepare future war T/I to the working circumstances they will perform their jobs in.

5. Conclusions

Upon reading the whole paper, one is left to reflect about the work situation of war T/I. When considering the long way that translation and interpreting have come, both since their origins and since their establishment as defined disciplines, it can be quite perplexing to realize how much there is still to do in every level regarding such activities. It seems unbelievable that the international community, which absolutely relies on T/I to stay connected, appears to disregard the significance of recognizing the labor of all those men and women who risk their lives every day to allow communication between nations at war. Nevertheless, and although it is an important matter, recognition is the less of their problems. In a world where there currently are 37 ongoing armed conflicts, involving military forces from various countries and various languages, the role played by T/I reveals itself as a key one. However, besides being relegated to the shadows, these vital agents find themselves operating in hostile environments where, despite what one could think, the limits and conventions of their job are truly blurred, and they are constantly exposed to labor abuse.

Although they are particularly mistreated, war T/I are not the only ones who get bypassed, and to change this reality and claim their rightful position, I think it is up to all translators and interpreters, no matter their area of specialization, to come together and support each other's demands so that they can claim their rightful position in the public eye.

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