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Ensuring accessibility and inclusion in the 1-1-2 emergency line. Mediation between life and death / Garantizando la accesibilidad e inclusión en la línea de emergencias 1-1-2. Mediación entre la vida y la muerte

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Abstract: In a Europe without borders, there is a quintessential emergency hotline that serves its citizens when their lives are at risk: 1-1-2. The Valencian Community (Spain) receives many visitors each year who, together with the migrant population, make use of this free public service in several languages. The main aim of this paper is to revise the legal framework that regulates the linguistic provisions in the Emergency Call Reception Centre (ECRC) to determine how accessibility and inclusion are guaranteed for speakers of foreign languages. In an attempt to analyse this reality, the aims of this descriptive and qualitative study are twofold. On the one hand, it examines the most common types of incidents received during the year 2021 (in English, French, and German); and, on the other hand, it focuses on how these calls are managed to ensure effective communication between the visitors that come from other countries and the authorities in the Valencian region. In short, it presents an effective model of urgent attention through a team of specialised operators, called MILICITES, who have a high command of foreign languages.

Keywords: Emergency; Mediation; Public Service Interpreting; Telephone Interpreting

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Resumen: En una Europa sin fronteras, existe un teléfono de emergencias por excelencia que atiende a sus ciudadanos cuando su vida corre peligro: 1·1·2. La Comunidad Valenciana (España) recibe cada año un gran número de visitantes que, junto con la población migrante, hacen uso de este servicio público gratuito en varios idiomas. El objetivo principal de esta investigación es revisar la legislación que regula los servicios lingüísticos en el centro de recepción de llamadas de emergencia para determinar cómo se garantiza la accesibilidad y la inclusión de los hablantes de lenguas extranjeras. En un intento de aproximarse a esta realidad, este estudio descriptivo y cualitativo tiene dos objetivos. Por un lado, examina los tipos de incidentes más comunes asociados al total de las peticiones recibidas a lo largo del año 2021 (notificados en inglés, francés y alemán) y, por otro, se centra en cómo se gestionan estas llamadas para garantizar los flujos de comunicación entre los visitantes provenientes de otros países y las autoridades de la región valenciana. En definitiva, se presenta de un modelo efectivo de atención urgente mediante un equipo de operadores especializados, llamados MILICITAS, quienes cuentan con un alto dominio de idiomas extranjeros.

Palabras clave: Emergencia; Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos; Interpretación Telefónica; Mediación.

1. Introduction

In the broad social and migratory context of the early twenty-first century, Public Service Interpreting (PSI) responds to the need to find solutions to communication problems between public institutions and individuals who do not speak the official languages of their host countries (Abril, 2006). Given the globalised nature of the modern world, governments and administrative bodies have begun to understand the importance of ensuring equitable access to vital services like healthcare, legal aid, and social programs. This is where Public Service Interpreting and Translation (henceforth PSIT) becomes vital as it allows international citizens to use the public services that are offered by the institutions of each nation.

The creation of the European Union and its subsequent language policies (OJEC, 1958; OJEC, 2000, Articles 21 and 22; OJEU, 2012a, Article 3; OJEU, 2012b, Articles 24, 165.1 and 165.2) have sought to facilitate communication and cooperation between different population groups. Over the years, efforts have been made to take linguistic diversity into account to facilitate access to and inclusion within public services. A clear example of this is the creation of the pan-European emergency telephone number “1·1·2”, which was conceived as a plurilingual service to preserve the most basic right of all: the right to life.

In the specific context of the 1·1·2 number, two disciplines are at work simultaneously. On the one hand, (liaison) telephone interpreting is used, which is the only feasible option for a service that is provided by telephone (Foulquié-Rubio et al., 2018). On the other hand, interlinguistic and intercultural mediation plays a key role because “translators and interpreters act as social agents who create bridges and help to construct or convey meaning, (...) sometimes across modalities in cross-modal communication” - that is, from spoken to written language or vice versa - “and sometimes from one language to another (cross-linguistic mediation)” (North et al., 2020, p. 91).

This study focuses on the emergency telephone line that operates on the east coast of Spain: the 1·1·2 Comunitat Valenciana. A geographical region that is subject to a significant influx of both migrants and tourists, several languages are used in its Emergency Call Reception Centre (hereafter ECRC) to interact with the users who require immediate medical assistance, police intervention or fire and rescue services. Since its inception in 1999, 1·1·2 workers have dealt with calls in the two co-official languages of the region, Valencian and Spanish, as well as in English, French, and German. In fact, in 2021 alone, a total of 15,373

incidents were reported in these three non-official languages. The skill of the interpreters-mediators at the ECRC to assist a broad range of citizens, who sometimes find themselves in life-threatening situations, is unquestionable and yet it needs to be more widely acknowledged.

By highlighting the valuable service that these language professionals provide for the Valencian government (Generalitat Valenciana), this paper will hopefully contribute to emergency services interpreting becoming more recognized as a professional sector. To do so, there will be a brief review of the European and national legislation that regulates this public service and its language requirements. Subsequently, the paper will focus on the different types of requests and incidents that are received daily by 1-1-2 staff, as well as the mechanisms that are used to ensure effective communication between foreign callers and the authorities in the Valencian region.

Overall, this paper will identify the main organisational traits of this multilingual public service and the fundamental role that it plays in promoting accessibility and inclusion for all citizens, despite language barriers.

2. The European emergency 1-1-2 number and the Valencian emergency call centre

The European Emergency Number Association (EENA), an organisation of emergency services representatives that was founded in 1999, defines the 1-1-2 number as

the common European emergency number that can be dialled free of charge, 24/7 from any phone anywhere in the following European countries: all EU Member-States, Albania, Georgia, Moldova, Iceland, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Liechtenstein, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. (EENA, 2022)

In a frontier-free Europe where the mobility of its citizens is legally enshrined and, on the increase, the Council of the European Union decided to introduce a single European emergency number “in order to improve the level of protection and security of citizens travelling in the Union” (OJEU, 2018, p. 321/91). The 1-1-2 number is easy to remember, which is a crucial factor when considering the often-critical circumstances in which its services will be called upon.

The 1-1-2 number was first standardised across Europe for emergency services following a recommendation by the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) in 1972 and it was later approved by the Council of the European Union in 1991. As a result, each Member-State of the European Union became required to make the public emergency service number available to all citizens within their borders. Thanks to continuing efforts in that regard, as well as recent technological advances, nowadays Europeans can dial the 1-1-2 number from a landline or mobile phone, even if it is blocked, without a SIM card or out of service. Furthermore, in the event of being located outside the limits of a country with an active 1-1-2 number, emergency calls are forwarded to the closest available ECRC with the intention of better responding to citizens who need help.

This concern for the welfare of people in Europe resulted in an agreement that was signed by the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of the European Union in 2009. Accordingly, the 11th of February was declared the “European 1-1-2 Day” (Council of the European Union, 2009). To promote the existence and proper use of this emergency telephone number, several events (such as conferences, workshops and exhibitions) are held every year across the continent. Not surprisingly, the multiple campaigns

carried out by governments together with the EENA to raise awareness about the 1-1-2 number have made its use increasingly popular in recent years. Nowadays, it has become an indispensable resource for citizens who are experiencing an emergency.

In Spain, the 1991 European Decision was enshrined in Royal Decree 903/1997, which was approved on the 16th of June 1997 by the Spanish Council of Ministers. Concerning access to this service, Article 2.1 of the Decree requires that the 1-1-2 number be used by citizens to request, in cases of urgent need, the assistance of the public services responsible for emergency health care, fire extinction and rescue, and public safety. The same Royal Decree expressly assigned the provision of the public emergency call service to the devolved regional authorities, which have had to establish corresponding ECRCs, as well as the necessary telecommunications networks (Decree 9/2007). This implies that each Spanish regional government must manage its own Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) so that calls made within each territory are resolved within that particular region.

Following the guidelines from the European Commission and Spanish Royal Decree 903/1997, the Valencian government launched the ECRC, 1-1-2 Comunitat Valenciana, on the 21st of June of 1999 within the framework of two main codes (see Generalitat Valenciana, 2010; 2017). This hub was conceived focusing on how to gather and issue information and, consequently, as the key platform for activating the different emergency plans and coordinating diverse emergency services. Perhaps it is for this reason that Gómez-Mascaraque (1999, p. 16) considers such ECRC centres to be “with brains but without eyes”. The focus here is on communication management, with the following aims:

1. To deal with emergency calls to the 1-1-2 number made by any citizen located in the Valencian region, such as those requiring health care, fire extinction or rescue, and public safety.
2. To gather the information needed by the Emergency Response Teams (ERT) so that their work at the scene is as effective as possible. At the same time, 1-1-2 workers, based on the information that they obtain, apply the action guidelines that, depending on the type of emergency in progress, are the most appropriate for its rapid solution.
3. To notify the emergency services that must intervene (and also those that must be informed) by coordinating the most effective response to each incident.
4. To provide a common technological platform for all the public services that actively work in the emergency situations mentioned in point 1 above, establishing a common communications and management tool in an environment where crucial information is transmitted quickly and in a multidirectional way between all the relevant response services.

Finally, in 2002, this crucial public service was reaffirmed by Consideration 36 of Directive 2002/22/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 7th of March, and its subsequent amendments, as the only European emergency telephone number ensuring the safety of all the citizens of the Union.

2.1 Language requirements

The use of the indefinite pronoun “all” implies that communication within the 1-1-2 service must be necessarily multilingual. The first step taken to guarantee the protection, accessibility, and inclusion of all potential users regardless of their native tongue was initially made in the Council Decision 91/396/ECC: “Member States will have to [...] devote efforts to easing difficulties of comprehension which may arise from different language capabilities” (preamble; emphasis added). This idea was reinforced in other texts such as Directive 2002/22/EC, which states that: “Member States should make the necessary organisational arrangements best

suitable to the national organisation of the emergency systems, in order to ensure that calls to this number are adequately answered and handled” (Consideration 36; emphasis added). Finally, after this initial regulatory framework had been reviewed, in 2018, the Directive (EU) 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Consideration 286) also mentioned that:

Member States should ensure that providers of number-based interpersonal communications services provide reliable and accurate access to emergency services, taking into account national specifications and criteria and the capabilities of national PSAPs. Member States should consider the PSAP’s ability to handle emergency communications in *more than one language* (emphasis added).

The requirements regarding language services in the Valencian region were agreed upon within Law 13/2010 of the 23rd of November to finally guarantee the consolidation of the Mediterranean emergency response services in second and foreign languages:

[...] the emergency telephone service *1·1·2 Comunitat Valenciana* is to be provided not only in the two official languages of the region, but also *in the main languages of the European Union*, in compliance with the Decision of the Council of the European Communities of 29 July 1991. (Law 13/2010, Article 49.2; emphasis added)

Following this brief review, it is possible to assert that an interest in incorporating multilingual call handling to guarantee citizens’ access to this essential public service received attention, for the first time, in 1991, due to the Council Decision and subsequently, within European, national, and regional emergency ordinances. Wisely and responsibly, the Valencian region attempted to incorporate European guidelines, which resulted in a service that is provided in five different languages. To put this into perspective, during the year 2021, 2.9 million calls were made to the 1·1·2 number. In addition, since the service’s establishment in 1999, a total of 77.5 million inquiries have been received (Generalitat Valenciana, 2022a). These figures clearly demonstrate the importance that the emergency number has within the local area.

3. Methodology

This research is based on the data available at the time of writing and the author’s four-year experience¹ as an English-Spanish telephone interpreter in the 1·1·2 ECRC of the Valencian region in Spain.

Data collection occurred in two stages. Firstly, I carefully reviewed the directives and official statistical reports issued by the European authorities, as well as analysed the significance that the 1·1·2 service has for Valencian society. To define the real context of telephone interpreting in potentially fatal situations, I examined the regional language policies and the potential users of this service together with the number and type of calls received in this Spanish coastal region.

Second, I scrutinised information that I had learnt directly from my professional practice to describe the main features of foreign language call handling processes which is, according to Hernández et al. (2010), the main phenomenon that needs to be analysed. By doing so, I am

¹ The author worked in the Valencian emergency service during the years 2007-2011, where she had to pass a demanding training course for the position, as well as different exams and continuous professional development processes. This experience provided her with a 360-degree vision of the object of the study. Alarcón-García is currently dedicated to research in this field.

better able to identify the concepts and systematise procedures that can be applied to the specific context at hand (Hurtado, 1996).

I implemented a qualitative approach to data collection and processing as this avoids manipulation or stimulation concerning reality (Corbetta, 2007). At the same time, I combined an 'insider's' perspective, while also maintaining a more objective point of view as an external observer (Creswell, 1997; Neuman, 1994).

4. The Valencian 1-1-2 number and foreign-language callers

There is no doubt that the Valencian region has a strong foreign presence, both in terms of the individuals who decide to become residents in one of its 542 towns, especially in southern coastal areas, or the many tourists who choose this location as their holiday destination. When designing the document known as "1-1-2 Comunitat Valenciana Call Handling Process" (Procedimiento de atención de llamadas «1-1-2 Comunitat Valenciana») (Generalitat Valenciana, 2023c), these potential plurilingual users were definitely taken into consideration. As a matter of fact, the local government's commitment to providing such an emergency service can be seen by the fact that, for 365 days a year and twenty-four hours a day, callers in distress can call 1-1-2 operatives who are able to communicate in five different languages.

In addition to complying with European regulations, the Valencian authorities quite rightly anticipated the positive psychological effect that it would have when callers discover that an emergency dispatcher who speaks their language can assist them on the line. Given the high-stakes nature of many calls, the possibility to communicate in a shared language (that is, a language in which users can express themselves) plays a vital role in terms of emergency management, as it contributes to better communication and data provision. After all, it is critical that a person feels protected and safe when living abroad or visiting another country.

Demographic information about both the migrant population and tourists underlines the impact that this service has, a clear endorsement of the need for such a language provision. For example, according to the Spanish Statistical Office (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) (INE, 2022), the total resident population of the Comunitat Valenciana in 2021 was 5,090,839, with 778,655 of them (or 15.4%) being identified as foreign nationals. To anticipate the high user demand for a plurilingual emergency service, Table 1 shows the most representative countries of origin of these citizens in each of the three provinces (Alicante, Castellón, and Valencia) in this Mediterranean coastal region.

	Alicante	Castellón	Valencia
Africa	68,417	20,884	46,557
Belgium	11,362	442	1,209
Bulgaria	8,014	1,126	15,260
Central America/Caribbean	6,526	2,330	17,066
China	9,683	1,429	14,754
France	9,501	1,771	8,738
Germany	14,317	1,114	3,705
Ireland	2,889	121	842
Italy	12,167	2,313	18,688
Morocco	45,989	17,252	27,764
Netherlands	13,857	411	2,317
Norway	5,306	16	184
Pakistan	4,439	1,490	9,402
Poland	3,745	539	2,739

Romania	22,698	36,743	38,277
Russia	17,358	754	5,509
South America	53,772	12,072	70,035
Ukraine	11,639	1,384	9,139
United Kingdom	75,263	1,413	9,478
TOTAL	Alicante	Castellón	Valencia
FOREIGN NATIONALS	384,907	90,777	302,971
SPANISH NATIONALS	1,512,416	499,614	2,300,154

Table 1. Foreign population in the Valencian autonomous region in 2021. Based on INE (2022)

The highest numbers of foreign inhabitants are Romanian (97,718), Moroccan (91,005), and British (86,154). At a provincial level, the most considerable percentage of residents with non-Spanish nationalities can be found in Alicante (49.4%), followed by Valencia (39%), and Castellón (11.6%). Indeed, according to the INE (2022), Alicante is the Spanish province with the third highest number of foreign inhabitants (384,907), after Madrid (945,933) and Barcelona (880,203). Finally, at a micro level, as reported by Barceló Mira and Díaz Zaragoza (2022, p. 33), the towns in this area with the largest percentage of foreigners in 2021 were located mainly on the coast: Alicante (13,2%), Torrevieja (9%), Elche (7,1%), Orihuela (6,8%) and Benidorm (5,4%).

Along with these residents, the Valencian region also receives a significant influx of visitors from different countries around the world throughout the year, especially during the summer season or for the celebration of certain festivities such as the Fallas in Valencia, the Magdalena in Castellón or Las Hogueras in Alicante. This results in an increased number of 1·1·2 calls during these specific dates, which is something that the ECRC needs to be prepared for in terms of human resources. In accordance with the bar chart drawn up by the Valencian Tourism Department (Turisme Comunitat Valenciana, 2021), Figure 1 illustrates that the British and the French were the most frequent travellers to the region in 2021.

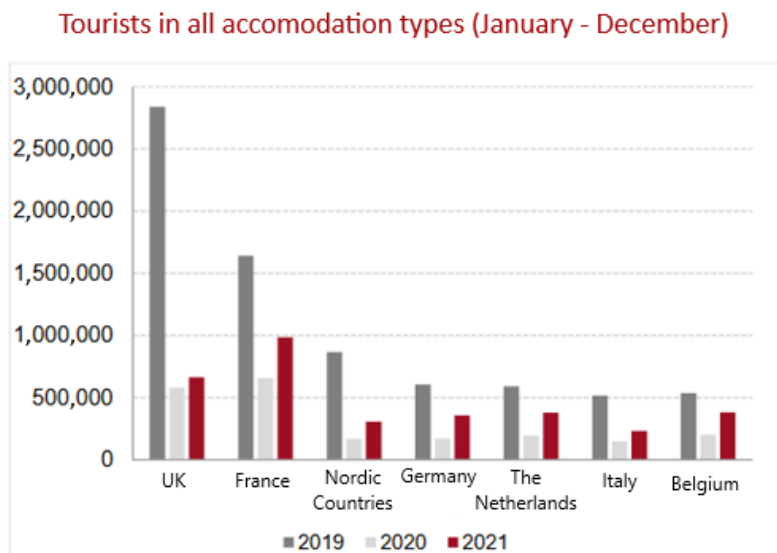


Figure 1. Foreign tourists in the Valencian region, 2019-2021. Source: Turisme Comunitat Valenciana (2021)

With such significant data, it is feasible to believe that the number of emergency calls in foreign languages received by 1·1·2 staff will be directly proportional, especially in Alicante where there is the largest non-Spanish population. Thus, whereas a higher percentage of calls in Romanian, Arabic/French and English can be expected in the case of resident citizens,

tourists are more likely to need an emergency service provision in English, French and German.

In light of this data, 1·1·2 Comunitat Valenciana, in compliance with European and national legal mandates, has always been committed to providing a high level of attention to the language needs of the widest possible spectrum of its population. As a matter of fact, Figure 2 shows that, in line with the Valencian government's "Service Charter" (Carta de servicios) (Generalitat Valenciana, 2022b), English, French and German interpreters were available every day at the ECRC throughout 2021.

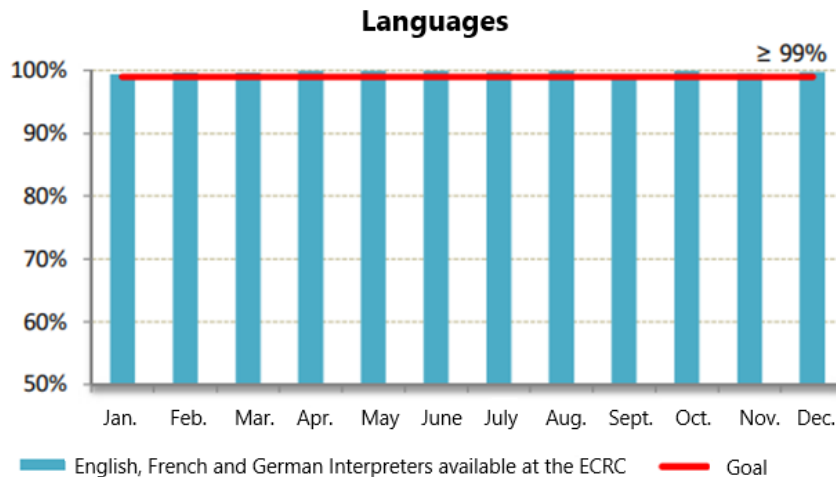


Figure 2. ECRC capacity to handle calls in English, French and German. Source: Generalitat Valenciana (2022b)

To consider the multilingual workload of these interpreters, it is paramount to examine the "1·1·2 Comunitat Valenciana Monthly Statistical Reports" (Informe estadístico mensual) (Generalitat Valenciana, 2022a), which reveals that, in 2021, out of the 2,931,540 incoming calls, 892,734 were for incidents that could be classified as emergencies. Of these, 15,373 were dealt with in foreign languages (Table 2).

2021	Castellón	Valencia	Alicante	Not determined	Total
Incidents in English	229	1,484	10,134	210	12,057
Incidents in French	242	442	1,303	61	2,048
Incidents in German	115	154	949	17	1,235
Incidents in other languages	2	13	12	6	33
Incidents in foreign languages					Total 2021
					15,373

Table 2. Incidents in foreign languages by province in 2021. Based on Generalitat Valenciana (2022a)

Amongst these 15,373 emergency incidents, English accounted for the largest number of calls (12,057 in total), followed by French (2,048) and German (1,235). Another thirty-three incidents were managed in other languages.

These queries represent almost 2% of the total number of incidents managed in 2021. Such a percentage may seem of little consequence, but it is important to put this figure into perspective. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2019, from a total of 3,002,716 incoming calls

to the 1-1-2 number, 62,789 could be categorised within the emergency protocols. Of these, 16,596 were dealt with in English, French and German. As a result, in this year, the percentage of emergencies managed in these languages was 26% (Table 3).

2019	Castellón	Valencia	Alicante	Not determined	Total
Incidents in English	197	1,312	11,443	181	13,133
Incidents in French	233	474	1,294	42	2,043
Incidents in German	78	146	1,151	15	1,390
Incidents in other languages	2	6	20	2	30
Incidents in foreign languages					Total 2019
					16,596

Table 3. Incidents in foreign languages by province in 2019. Based on Generalitat Valenciana (2020)

To explain this significant difference between the number of foreign-language calls in 2019 and 2021, it is important to mention that, in the latter year, there was a massive increase of SARS-CoV-2-related calls, which meant that incidents in Spanish and Valencian increased fourteen times considering 2019. In contrast, emergencies in foreign languages plunged following governmental restrictions on mobility and tourism. While these factors justify the drastic disparity of incidents managed in foreign languages in 2019 and 2021, recently published reports by the Valencian government indicate that incoming 1-1-2 calls have returned to pre-COVID levels. In 2022, they accounted for 26% of the total emergency incidents, whereas in 2023, 27% of calls were in foreign languages (Generalitat Valenciana, 2023a).

5. The Valencian 1-1-2 number: emergency protocols and call management

After closely examining the regulations and demographics related to the 1-1-2 service, I will now explore the multilingual handling processes that are triggered by each call. First, public emergency services understand the term “emergency” as a situation which poses an immediate risk to human life and that requires urgent attention a definition that is in line with the Merriam-Webster dictionary’s (2022) mention of “an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state” that provokes “an urgent need for assistance or relief”. Likewise, the UK Cabinet Office (2022) via the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004, considers an emergency as “an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare; to the environment; or war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to security”.

While every incident call is different, 1-1-2 staff can classify these incidents in a standardised way by following the Valencian government’s “Catalogue of Incident Types” (Catálogo de incidentes) (Generalitat Valenciana, 2023d). Every aspect of emergency management has been pre-planned and protocolised: from the questions used during the telephone conversation to how information is treated and transmitted to the ERT (which should not exceed 180 seconds on average).

These protocols represent a breakthrough in PSIT as they allow the emergency operators to efficiently respond to calls in foreign languages or even to preempt situations in which specific language and cultural knowledge will be required. For this reason, these professionals need to be highly trained and qualified. Interpreter-mediators can prepare for each intervention in advance by means of glossaries and a bank of protocolised questions which are tailored to the possible types of emergencies listed in the “Catalogue of Operational Protocols” (Catálogo

de protocolos operativos) (Generalitat Valenciana, 2023b).

1. Severe accident and ports	11. Natural Phenomena
2. Airport	12. Environment
3. Port	13. Utilities Failure
4. Severe Accident	14. Incidence
5. Dams and Ponds	15. Service
6. Medical	16. Radiological
7. Traffic accident	17. Indefinite
8. Fire	18. Incomplete
9. Public Safety	19. SMS
10. Rescue	20. Victim Services

Table 4. Overview of the catalogue of incident types. Based on Generalitat Valenciana (2023b)

This catalogue (Table 4) is the result of coordinated work between the regional Security Forces and Agencies (Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad) and the Department of Operational Protocols (Departamento de protocolos operativos) of the ECC. The document is thorough and is frequently revised to cover the greatest number of possible life-threatening events. Such attention to detail is carried out to provide the swiftest, most effective, and coordinated response to any emergency request.

With this reference guide in mind, Table 5 illustrates the most common type of incidents that were dealt with in English, the most required language, during the month of December 2021.

2021	Castellón	Valencia	Alicante	Not determined	Total
Medical	11	78	614	3	706
Traffic accident	1	4	17	0	22
Fire	0	0	16	0	16
Public safety	6	30	166	3	205
Rescue	0	1	10	0	11
Environment	0	3	7	0	10
Utilities failure	0	1	5	0	6
Incident	6	4	15	0	25
Service	0	14	60	4	78
Undefined	0	1	14	0	15
Incomplete	0	0	4	3	7

Table 5. Incidents managed in English during December 2021. Based on Generalitat Valenciana (2022a)

Medical emergencies were the most frequent requests (89.82% of the total number of incidents), followed by events related to public safety and social and humanitarian services. As predicted in section 4, Alicante was the province from which most calls were made, given that this area is home to the largest population of English-speaking foreign residents and tourists.

Regarding the communicative dynamics of 1-1-2 interactions, each type of incident has a specific, pre-designed series of questions that guides the telephone conversation with the caller. This is intended to obtain the information required to successfully manage the emergency event in the shortest possible time. The questions are designed in such a way that trained operatives can activate the necessary response agencies. It is imperative, for instance,

to find out if there are victims (and their condition) in a traffic accident, whether there are people trapped in vehicles, or even if there is a risk of fire or danger for the incoming traffic. This will determine the type of emergency vehicles that should be dispatched, and the priority given to each incident to manage public resources appropriately.

The previous context shows that plurilingual emergency call-takers must have a high level of expertise and specialisation. In some recorded instances, they have been required to talk to a foreign citizen through a high-stress emergency procedure, such as clearing an obstruction from another person's throat (Heimlich manoeuvre). In the case of a Spanish-speaking caller, the person would be transferred directly to a medical professional who would guide him/her through the procedure. For a foreign caller, however, the 1-1-2 operative must act as an intermediary who relays advice from a Spanish-speaking medical worker to the non-Spanish-speaking caller at the other end of the line. Alternatively, 1-1-2 staff need to persuade a person to visit a doctor or go to the nearest hospital's emergency department rather than sending an emergency vehicle to them. Table 6 shows some of the incidents that have featured in calls made to Valencia's ECRC.

Medical emergencies and ambulatory care.	Mountain and Maritime Search and Rescue.
Domestic violence and other violent crimes.	Building collapse rescue and evacuation.
Accidents (road, maritime, railway or aeronautical).	Road accident rescue.
Stolen property (thefts, shoplifting, fraud, and robbery).	Chemicals and Dangerous goods.
Homicides and suicides.	Administrative Services (local, private, social).
Terrorism (bombs, threats).	Natural phenomena (earthquakes, rain, wind, snow, storms, storms at sea).
Incidents (industrial: leaks, chemical damage, or mobility: road, maritime, railway, etc.).	Environmental Issues (pollution, endangered species).
An unknown address that needs to be obtained.	Utilities Failure (electric, water, gas, and communications).
Talking to citizens with altered mental states (intoxication, mental illness, etc.), children and the elderly.	Kidnapped and missing people.

Table 6. Settings in emergency mediation and interpreting services. Based on author's own experience as a telephone interpreter at the ECC 1-1-2 Comunitat Valenciana

For the reasons given above, telephone mediation in public emergency services should be one of the most demanding forms of interpreting. Working quickly and calmly, these workers take the necessary details in the caller's preferred language about aspects such as the patient's location and medical condition, details about traffic accidents and specific information about crimes that have just been committed. At the same time, these professionals log this key information onto the computer system in the local language of the ECRC so that the emergency agencies can make appropriate interventions.

An example of a call simulation and incident report is given by Alarcón-García (2023). In this call, an English-speaking gentleman alerts the emergency service about a traffic accident in an urban area. The interpreter on the 1-1-2 line tries to obtain the information in an orderly manner and to confirm the location of the scene to accurately report this incident to the ERT. During this scenario, the operative remains calm while transferring the data that has previously been given orally in English into a written account in Spanish.

As the information given above shows, a 1-1-2 interpreter-mediator in the Valencian region must apply the established protocols whilst also working in a swift and calm manner to manage emergency calls in an efficient and successful way.

6. The Valencian 1-1-2 number: interlinguistic and intercultural communication through emergency telephone mediators

The Valencian ECRC is staffed by qualified personnel who are trained to deal with emergencies daily. In hierarchical order, these workers consist of supervisors, coordinators and call operatives, whose job is to do the following:

Respond to incoming emergency calls by eliciting key information from the caller.

Assess the incident as it is described and classify it according to existing protocols.

Notify the ERT so that the incident can be resolved by the appropriate emergency agencies.

The success of the Valencian ECC 1-1-2 is dependent on the work of accredited, multilingual staff, who are trained to respond to emergency incidents. This elite group of call operatives act as both the voice of public administration to the people with whom they speak and skilful foreign language interpreter-mediators. Given this, I propose that they should be referred to by the acronym MILICITE which, in Spanish, stands for 'Interlinguistic and Intercultural Mediator through Emergency Telephone Interpreting' (*mediador interlingüístico e intercultural a través de la interpretación telefónica en emergencias*).

When managing foreign language calls in what I have referred to elsewhere as a critical public service (Alarcón-García, 2023), the mission of the MILICITE consists of carrying out five fundamental tasks in two interrelated phases. To summarise our research, in the first phase, mediation techniques are used while, in phase two, telephone interpreting (as requested by the ERT) may occur.

In the first stage, the MILICITE performs three tasks. First, he/she conducts a telephone interview with the caller to determine their specific needs. Throughout this conversation, the necessary information is given by the foreign speakers in their chosen language (English, French, or German). Secondly, the operative applies the emergency protocols. Once the callers' needs have been assessed, the incident is typified in line considering the catalogue in effect and the appropriate emergency protocol is applied. Finally, the 1-1-2 worker notifies the relevant emergency service(s) by entering written data in Spanish in the Emergency Communication System (ECS). The information provided must be appropriately classified and summarised and use the appropriate jargon/terminology depending on the bodies involved (such as security forces, health agencies or the fire department). In this way, the emergency responders can decide upon the resources that need to be dispatched.

In stage two, telephone interpreting may be required. MILICITEs must remain available after the first interaction with the caller. Sometimes the police, fire department or paramedics may need further assistance after stage one has been completed, unlike for calls that are answered in Spanish or Valencian. For example, it is possible that once at the scene, paramedics, security bodies or firefighters need to communicate with witnesses or victims who do not speak the local languages. The police may want to take a witness statement, or paramedics might require information about a patient's medical history, any allergies, and medications they are currently being taken. Other situations in which 1-1-2 workers' mediation skills may be needed could also include calls that require the giving of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), or any other situation that entails communication between the patient and a doctor. MILICITEs must also be available online when certain emergency plans require the transfer of the call to other emergency services.

Finally, the MILICITE's intervention is also necessary in non-emergency calls. He/she may refer the user to other institutional telephone numbers and pass on official information. In this case, there is no need for mediation with third parties since MILICITEs are familiar with the

procedures and have sufficient authority to interact with foreign users independently.

As Figure 3 illustrates, in addition to the intercultural and linguistic mediation skills used in the first stage of caller response, steps four and five which involve telephone interpreting skills further differentiate 1-1-2 workers from monolingual emergency dispatchers.

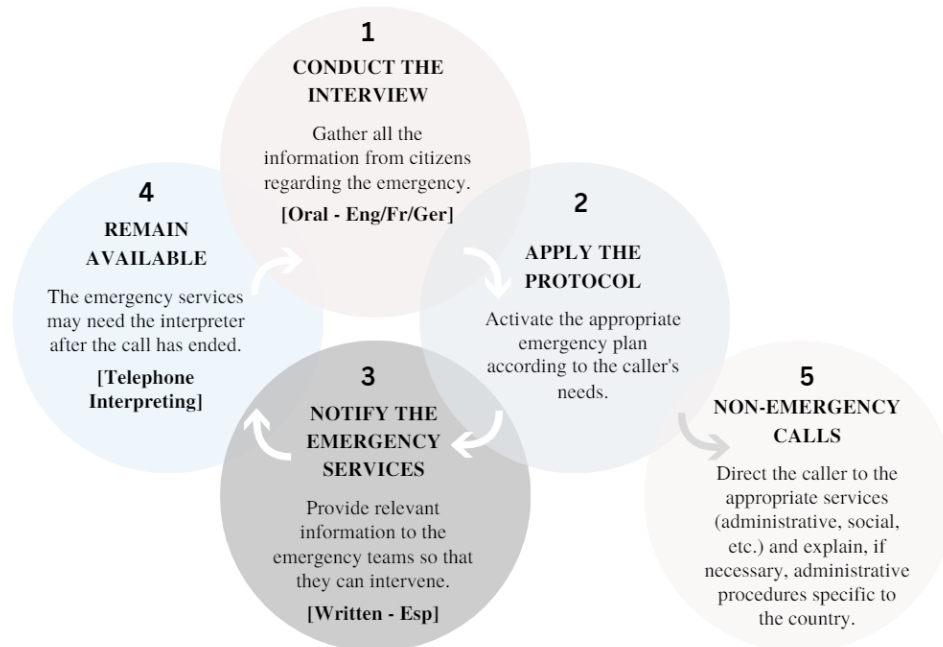


Figure 3. Steps in the management of emergency calls in foreign languages

The vast array of tasks and knowledge required from MILICITEs in emergency contexts helps us to understand the essential function that they perform, not only as social agents who facilitate communication and bridge cultural gaps but also as professionals who manage crisis situations related to health and other circumstances where there is a risk to life.

7. Conclusions

The first part of this descriptive study was an overview of the European, Spanish, and Valencian legislation that applies in public emergencies and their language policies. I explained that, since its conception, 1-1-2 Comunitat Valenciana has always made provisions for the protection and inclusion of all citizens regardless of their native language in accordance with existing European, national, and regional policies. Thus, the current multilingualism plan guarantees equitable access for a wide range of language users to this high-priority service, where effective communication is vital and when human lives could be at stake.

The Valencian 1-1-2 number has established a successful approach to providing life-saving assistance by training a core group of emergency call operators or, as this study has denominated them, MILICITEs, who have a high level of foreign language proficiency. Foreign speakers, therefore, can talk directly to a public service worker, without intermediation by external third parties. This process intrinsically improves the call experience, as well as the quality of the communication which, in turn, has a positive impact on how emergency situations can be resolved.

In the second part of my analysis, I explored the different types of requests and incidents that have been reported by foreign speakers to illustrate how information about emergency

incidents is gathered and processed. According to the data analysed, medical, public safety, and social and humanitarian services are the most frequent problems. Moreover, English is the most used medium of communication, especially in the southern part of the region. Given this, the study showed how MILICITEs are the key to ensuring that foreign individuals have full and equal access to the 1-1-2 public emergency service. Their role is legally ordained as they work in very particular, and sometimes highly stressful, contexts (such as those listed in Table 6 above). These can be medical (such as mediating between patients and doctors or giving first-aid instructions), legal (dealing with restraining orders, possession of weapons or other crimes), related to the police (public safety, threats, and rescues) or social (the protection of minors or giving psychological help).

Given the range of scenarios that can occur during 1-1-2 calls, the management of emergency situations in foreign languages is a highly specialised task. Apart from having linguistic proficiency, call operatives must follow strict protocols to guarantee that adequate attention is given to all citizens to protect their health, safety and, possibly, also their lives.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fundamental role that MILICITEs play as they are vital to allowing foreign nationals accessibility to and inclusion within the Valencian emergency services. However, perhaps because of the uniqueness of their work, together with the fact that, for reasons of security and confidentiality, it is difficult to obtain data from the ECC, their professionalism has not always been addressed in the existing literature on PSIT. Nevertheless, the high level of specialisation that they have and the diverse types of interactions that they successfully manage means that their skills must be more widely recognised in future research studies.

Glossary

ECC – Emergency Coordination Centre
 ECRC – Emergency Call Reception Centre (also PSAP)
 ECS – Emergency Communication System
 EENA – European Emergency Number Association
 ERT – Emergency Response Teams
 INE – Spanish Statistical Office (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística*)
 MILICITE – Interlinguistic and Intercultural Mediator (Mediation) through 1-1-2 Emergency Telephone Interpreting
 PSAP – Public Safety Answering Point
 PSIT – Public Service Interpreting and Translation

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