1 Introduction

For two decades now, translation and interpreting in conflict zones and in crisis situations have received considerable attention in scientific literature. However, despite growing interest and up-to-date research on the historical trajectories of the subject, more studies are needed on the ethical implications of multicultural and multilingual communication in conflict or crisis situations.

Ethical considerations are traditionally associated with questions of neutrality, identity, loyalty and the different roles of professional translators and interpreters that influence the linguistic mediator’s position. These are outlined in professional codes of conduct. Distinctive ethical issues associated with translation and interpreting are increasingly identified with reference to non-professional, civilian, volunteer or citizen translators and interpreters who lack adequate training relevant to this particular field and encounter numerous linguistic and cultural challenges. The issue of poor-quality translation or interpreting produced by untrained linguistic mediators is closely examined by researchers from the ethical viewpoint (Cambridge 1999). Therefore, new training models using technological aids that support communication are being developed for non-professional translators and interpreters in response to real-life actual situations (Federici and Al Sharou 2018). Also, in a situation of conflict or crisis, ethical implications of linguistic mediation arise if the issue of language, free access to information and means of communication is ignored by national or international entities in a humanitarian or disaster setting.

In this chapter, I will be using the word “conflict” to refer to situations of armed or ideological confrontation between countries, armies, parties or groups of people, in which a translator or an interpreter is involved and when their job or their life is at risk. In such a situation, an assignment’s ethical implications depend on a series of factors, such as the level of professionalism of the linguistic mediator, knowledge of the languages that are needed in a particular situation, the cultural dimension and, last but not least, the social and physical environment in which the translators or interpreters work (Snellman 2016, 266). As defined by Baker (2006, 166), a conflict is “a situation in which two or more parties seek to undermine each other because they have incompatible goals, competing interests, or fundamentally different values.” This approach goes beyond the comprehension of conflict understood as a metaphor for the tension and resistance
which are inevitably present in any intercultural communication (Salama-Carr 2007, 10) and has specific implications are far as ethical issues are concerned.

In a crisis situation, linguistic mediation takes place between individuals and specific bodies, non-governmental organizations or institutions involved in rescue or humanitarian operations (O’Brien 2016). According to Federici (2018, 487–488), translation linked with operations in crisis or disaster relief following natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, hurricanes, disease outbreaks, mass migrations, etc.) remains a pivotal issue for humanitarian actions. Even though crisis is a threatening condition that requires urgent action and is characterized by fast evolution and a high rate of uncertainty (Pescaroli 2014, 86), access to information, as well as the means of communication, constitutes a basic human right. All people have a fundamental right to generate, access, acquire, transmit and benefit from information during a crisis, and the right to information exists at every phase of a crisis, regardless of the geographical location, political, cultural or operational context or its severity. The role of communication and translation in a crisis is of key importance for populations facing disasters, and the ethical issues of linguistic mediation affect, above all, the role of non-professional and untrained mediators (Moser-Mercer, Kherbiche, and Clas 2014; Cadwell and O’Brien 2016; INTERACT).

2 Historical trajectory

Language brokering in conflict zones or in crisis situations has been present throughout history. Translators and interpreters have been necessary during conflict or crisis situations: during wars, in prisoner-of-war and concentration camps, during conquest and colonization, in countries under foreign occupation, during migration crises and in any emergency or disaster situation. There is a high demand for their services in refugee camps or in disaster zones where there are incidents involving mass casualties. In situations of conflict and crisis, language mediation is a crucial and complex activity which remains largely undocumented and unknown to the general public. When one side of the conflict does not speak the language of the other, some type of language brokering is necessary, and it is undeniable that the need for and importance of any reliable language brokers, professional translators and interpreters or ad hoc appointed bilinguals are of primary importance.

In conflict or crisis situations, the challenge for translators and interpreters exceeds linguistic and cultural issues. It also involves ethical judgments and requires conceptualization of ethics of translation and interpreting which goes beyond the prescriptive nature of codes of professional conduct for translators and interpreters. Translators and interpreters are not always able to simply “objectively” interpret between two parties who wish to understand each other. Indeed, it may happen that the two parties do not wish to engage in mutual understanding at all. Sometimes an interpreter or a translator must convey information which is offensive, immoral, brutal, stripped of all human dignity and outside the boundary of any law. At times, the stories interpreters and translators have to communicate in another language are somewhat “embellished” or even invented (Todorova 2016). It also happens that language mediators are considered by one of the sides as “communicative detectives” used by employers to prevent the stories of refugees or victims from being told and listened to (Jacquemet 2010, 142). Nonetheless, without translators or interpreters, communication between opposite or adverse parties would often be impossible; so, the need for and importance of translators and interpreters is undeniable. It is noteworthy that in some situations, e.g. during wars, both sides of the conflict do not wish to engage in a two-way communication, and interpreters may not wish to assist one of the sides. It may often happen that translators or interpreters undertake their tasks without full awareness of the consequences of their actions for the persons they interpret for or for themselves. It has also been documented
that the translator or the interpreter is held accountable for his or her actions and may be accused of committing a criminal offense and put on trial years after performing the job (Guo Ting 2015; Lan 2016; Takeda 2016).

From the very beginning, it has been the presence of interpreters and translators, both professionals and civilians, in war zones that has prompted researchers to analyze their identities, their motivations and also the potential risks resulting from their choices as well as the need for physical and mental protection of the providers of linguistic brokering (Allen 2012; Kahane 2007; Moerman 2005). Due to the intensity of armed conflicts or emergency situations and the growing visibility of translators and interpreters involved, scholars have been looking into various aspects of the role and position of translators and interpreters in different historical periods and in different cultural environments, ranging from the conquest of Latin America (e.g. D’Amore, Gallegos, and Zimányi 2016; Cáceres Würsig 2017), colonization (e.g. Chang 2016), 16th-century conflicts to World War I (e.g. Cowley 2016; Heimburger 2012; Svoljšak 2012), the Spanish Civil War (e.g. Baigorri Jalón 2011, 2012), World War II in Europe (e.g. Gómez Amich 2016), on battlegrounds (e.g. Kujamäki 2012, 2016a and 2016b), in Nazi concentration camps, (e.g. Tryuk 2011, 2015, 2016; Wolf 2013; Wolf 2016), in the Far East (e.g. Lan 2016; Takeda 2009, 2016), the Korean War (e.g. Ping Li, Tian, and Huang 2016; Wang and Xu 2016) and Sino-Japanese war (e.g. Guo Ting 2015) to contemporary wars in Iraq (e.g. Palmer 2007; Guidère 2008; Baker 2010b; Inghilleri 2010, 2012), Afghanistan and the Balkans (e.g. Snellman 2016; Stahuljak 2010a; Tălpaș 2016; Todorova 2016, 2017; Dragovic-Drouet 2007; Baker C. 2010). The role and fate of local interpreters left behind after the withdrawal from recent scenes of war is also largely commented on in various press accounts (Frail 2016; Mathieu 2018; Andlauer and Müller 2019).

All the aforementioned studies put forward the issues of the neutrality of linguistic mediators as it is established in the professional codes of conduct or ethics. As the codes and professional standards do not cover all the aspects, dimensions, constraints and expectations of neutrality during an armed conflict, researchers stressed the need to adjust existing guidelines to that specific military context. The analyses conducted in different settings and historical periods suggest also that, at a conceptual level, the principles of neutrality, trust, loyalty and identity of linguistic mediators, professionals or amateur civilians, which are closely intertwined, need to be redefined according to the changing situations. Moreover, in studies devoted to wartime (e.g. Rafael 2010; Stahuljak 2010a, 2010b) translation is described as an instrument of power and manipulation, where there is no place for neutrality of the translator or interpreter. The gap between the principles of neutrality, objectivity, impartiality, invisibility or trustworthiness which are contained in ethical and professional codes of conduct and a real-life job in a situation of armed conflict has been recognized and is the object of research in translation and interpreting studies (Snellman 2016).

The principle of neutrality, so effectively hidden under the veil of ethical codes, has today become one of the key issues of both theoretical and empirical research within translation and interpreting studies in crisis and conflict-related situations (Inghilleri 2010, 192). Apart from neutrality, one of the questions extensively discussed in the literature on ethical dilemmas is the principle of invisibility of the translator or interpreter (Angelelli 2004; Todorova 2016; Tryuk 2015). In numerous papers, scholars have not only recognized the visibility of the interpreter but also demonstrated the interpreter’s agency. Another issue put forward by researchers in the field is the question of trustworthiness, which is also an important characteristic of interpreting and translation in a crisis situation (Todorova 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the foreground topic which is problematized by numerous scholars is the neutrality of the interpreter or the translator in a conflict or crisis situation (Snellman 2016; Todorova 2016; Tryuk 2015). This principle refers to not taking sides in a conflict or remaining
outside a conflict, despite the fact that the translator actually has a side or is a side in the conflict him- or herself. While some scholars try to relativize neutrality as a notion by maintaining that translators and interpreters should strive to encourage all parties to the conflict to tell their story, others argue that not only is neutrality impossible, but in fact it is the opposite of neutrality that occurs in the real world. The view of a translator as an always-neutral mediator has been contested in TS research. Inghilleri (2010), Jacquemet (2010), Stahuljak (2010a, 2010b) and Pöllabauer (2004) provide many examples of the (mis)use of interpreters and translators in preventing refugees’ stories being told, in controlling the flow of the interaction between an interviewer and the interviewee during a refugee status determination or in passing judgement on the cases. In his study on neutrality of military interpreters, Snellman (2016) concludes, “interpreters are human beings who are subject to the influence of personal, social and institutional factors and whose neutrality is shaped in their interactions with their clients” (265). Nonetheless, linguistic mediators in a conflict or crisis situation can play pivotal roles in an unequal communication between sides of the conflict, as put forward by Cronin (2002):

The role of interpreters throughout history has been crucially determined by the prevailing hierarchical constitution of power and the position of interpreters in it. In this respect, if you and your people are seriously disadvantaged by the hierarchy, the most ethical position can be to be utterly “unfaithful” in interpreting, in the name of another fidelity, a fidelity of resistance.

(58–59)

Stahuljak (2010a), who studied interpreting in contemporary war zones, agrees with the previous statement, adding that during an armed conflict,

[the only ethical position may be then to disrupt or undermine the “neutral” arbiter, a practice that Cronin . . . labels “translation as resistance” and describes as “the ways in which originals can be manipulated, invented or substituted, or the status of the original subverted in order to frustrate the intelligence-gathering activities of the Imperial Agent”.

(407)

Also, according to Guidère (2008, 174) who addresses ethical issues in translation and interpreting in an armed conflict, language mediators should re-examine their idea of social and political neutrality. For this author, there is no such thing as a neutral translation, as all translations reflect intellectual engagement, ideological choice, lexical selection or communicational orientation of the translator (127). In this sense, in a war, interpreting and translating is first and foremost an “ethical profession.”

Among many other scholars, Baker and Maier (2011) argue that the ethical norms of neutrality and non-engagement, as expressed in numerous codes of conduct and taught in many training programmes, can leave many practitioners with a sense of unease and disorientation. They stress, “the ethos of neutrality often blinds them to the consequences of their actions” (3). In such a situation, the only ethical conduct a translator or an interpreter can adopt is that of accountability or responsibility (3).

After the recent wars at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Balkans, a new line of investigation has appeared concerning the role of an interpreter or a translator in a situation of military conflict or in hostile environments when the outcomes of language mediation can be a matter of life or death. At present, the emergence of situations, such as mass migration for example, makes it possible to problematize new intercultural relations between
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civilian or military professional translators and/or untrained language brokers on the one hand, and war victims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers on the other (Bulut and Kurultay 2001; Cadwell and O’Brien 2016; O’Brien and Cadwell 2017).

3 Core issues and topics
Key issues in the development of translation and interpreting in conflict or crisis from an ethical perspective were elaborated in the seminal works by Baker (2006) and Baker (2010). Adopting a narrative perspective, the author focused on two main issues. The first one was to analyze how translators and interpreters are narrated by other participants in the war zone, including military personnel, war correspondents, media and local populations. The second issue was to understand how translators and interpreters participate in elaborating public narratives of the conflict in which they are taking part as language brokers.

Since then, the subject of wars, colonization, ethnic cleansing, peacekeeping missions, peace negotiations, migration and domestic violence has generated a significant body of research on ethics within translation and interpreting studies.

3.1 Translating and interpreting in armed conflicts
For over two decades now, several conferences and publications have focused on interpreting and translation in situations of violent conflicts and wars, with a special emphasis put on the ethical dimensions of the job, particularly on issues of power, trust, conflict, loyalty, visibility and identity of translators and interpreters. The volume edited by Salama-Carr (2007) marked an important step in the conceptualization of the ethical dimensions of translation and interpreting in situations of crisis or conflict. This commendable book brings together the key issues ranging from the problematics of neutrality and loyalty expected of frontline or local translators and interpreters (or fixers) during the more recent wars in Iraq and in former Yugoslavia (2007; Dragovic-Drouet 2007), the relations between translation and memory in conveying and interpreting facts and testimonies through translation (Kuhiwczak 2007), ideology and censorship in producing mistranslations called “negative mediation” (Valdeón 2007; Chan 2007), conflict awareness and the role/s played by translators in conveying models of behaviour (Calzada Pérez 2007), translators’ and interpreters’ role on the front lines during the 19th-century Opium Wars between Britain and China (Wong 2007), and questions concerning the visibility, rights and responsibilities of war translators (Maier 2007).

The principles of neutrality and impartiality of linguistic mediators during past and recent armed conflicts in different parts of the world, including the legal and humanitarian contexts, constitute the pivotal topic discussed in Translation and Violent Conflict, a special issue of The Translator edited by Inghilleri and Harding (2010). The articles in this issue explore the overlapping themes of mediation, agency and ethics in relation to translators and interpreters as they negotiate the political, social, cultural and linguistic factors which converge in situations of armed conflict. For example, Inghilleri (2010), in her paper based on direct observation of the war in Iraq, draws attention to the fact that during war or conflict, interpreters are inclined to exercise ethical judgement with respect to the war within the framework of specific war ethics. As a consequence, they function more as agents and conduits for the military institutions they serve rather than as neutral mediators. In some cases, they become actors in a conflict which they sustain morally and instrumentally. Beebee (2010), in his essay based on examples from history, contemporary events and fictional and non-fictional writings, develops the idea that due to the nature of their profession, translators and interpreters cannot be neutral in situations of conflict as
they do not belong fully to any of the languages they are translating into and from. The concept *homo sacer* (or an outlaw, as put forth by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben 1998) is used to explain the impossibility for a translator to remain neutral and invisible.

### 3.2 Training of professional and non-professional translators and interpreters

The questions of technological, social, political and professional developments in translation and interpreting that are to be explored from the ethical standpoint are also addressed in *Ethics and the Curriculum: Critical Perspectives*, a special issue of the *Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, edited by Baker and Maier (2011). One of the issues discussed in the volume is the nature of relationships that emerge between military personnel and civilian interpreters recruited locally in situations of armed conflict, with specific reference to the war in Iraq. The norms of invisibility, neutrality and confidentiality contained in codes of ethical conduct are challenged in many situations of war and conflict where ad hoc appointed language mediators are involved. As put forward by the editors of the volume, new ethical standards, such as accountability in the job of translators and interpreters, emerge in such situations as

> the conduct of translators and interpreters is . . . scrutinized by the media, especially in the context of recent wars in Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan. For translators and interpreters, accountability means that they are increasingly held responsible for the consequence of their behaviour and therefore have to reflect carefully about how their decisions, both textual and non-textual, impact the lives of others.

*(Baker and Maier 2011, 3)*

The articles presented in the volume call for an altered view of the relationship between learning and training of professional and non-professional translators and interpreters. For example, Tipton (2011) explores the possibility of training civilian, locally recruited people with knowledge of the languages needed who are contracted to work with military personnel. She focuses on ethical, cultural and professional issues linked with this particular group of language brokers who, in a situation of conflict, depend on the military personnel who, in turn, depend on interpreters in their missions. Floros (2011) discusses the issue of ethical responsibility on the part of the translator while translating politically sensitive texts. Particular stress is put on the practices that emerge in the context of translator training. Finally, Drugan and Megone (2011) present a systematic approach to incorporating questions of ethics into the translation and interpreting curriculum. The authors argue that ethics must not be considered as a topic separate from practice but should be incorporated and embedded in the training, which can provide a number of case studies to be discussed during the training (see also Chapter 22 “Ethics in translator and interpreter education” and Chapter 23 “Ethics of translator and interpreter education” in this volume). It can also lead to discussions on the limits of the ethical principle of confidentiality or circumstances which warrant the refusal to provide the service by both professional translators and ad hoc appointed language brokers.

### 3.3 Development of the code of ethics for war translators and interpreters

Detailed case studies on the use of languages and the roles of language mediators during wars, in military alliances, in invasions, in occupied countries, in the aftermath of conflicts and in the intelligence community are exposed in two volumes edited by Footitt and Kelly (2012a and
The cases presented cover periods from the 18th century and the Napoleonic campaigns against Britain to World War I and II and the recent armed conflicts in the Balkans. The chapters of the volumes present the past and present conflicts and wars in Ireland, Britain, France, Finland, Slovenia, Korea, Cyprus and Bosnia–Herzegovina. The volumes discuss key problems in (mis)communication between different sides of the conflicts and wars and the linguistic diversity in the particular historical periods and geographical zones under analysis. The authors deliver an in-depth examination of the roles of military linguists or professional civilian translators on the one hand, and untrained bilinguals, locally employed civilians recruited on site, on the other. At the same time, Footitt and Kelly explore the various ethical implications of translation and interpreting on a battlefield and the delivery of translation services for occupying forces or during interrogations of prisoners. The outstanding role of linguistic brokers in rebuilding societies and relationships after a conflict is also discussed in the two volumes. However, in many cases, it is shown that the unclear positions of translators and interpreters in a war or conflict can place them at a personal risk: they are exposed to danger on a daily basis, and they have no personal protection or guarantee of a professional future after the war or the conflict ends. That is why Fitchett (2012) in her paper proposes the elaboration of guidelines to help and support interpreters, be they military or civilians, in conflict zones. She stresses that such protection should cover issues concerning the definition of rights and obligations which lie with the language mediator and their “client,” the necessity of specific training for professional and, in particular, non-professional or civilian interpreters, and the protection of interpreters both during and after the conflict. Fitchett calls also for appropriate contracting of translators and interpreters, as it is not rare that translators and interpreters are used as “liaisons” or “intelligence” agents without due consideration of the requirements of their tasks and without being afforded adequate protection during their mission and after its completion. As put forward by Fitchett (2012), who problematizes the situation of language mediators during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, it sometimes happens that interpreters and translators are targeted by opponents of the foreign intervention who consider them to be traitors. During the armed conflicts, many language brokers died or were injured while helping the enemy forces. It emerges that the key problem for language brokers is their direct protection during and after wars and in conflict zones.

In 2012, as a result of endeavours undertaken by the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) in this matter, together with The Red T, an American non-profit organization advocating for the protection of translators and interpreters in high-risk settings, and the FIT International Federation of Translators, a Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services was drafted. This guide outlines the basic rights and responsibilities as well as best practices recommended by the three aforementioned organizations and applies to translators and interpreters working as field linguists for the armed forces, as journalists and for NGOs and other organizations in conflict zones and other high-risk settings (Fitchett 2010, 2012, 184; Tryuk 2015, 161). The guide contains recommendations for translators, interpreters and the users of their services concerning ethical issues such as impartiality, confidentiality and accuracy while translating or interpreting. It provides guidelines on how to work with interpreters and translators as far as the positioning, speaking, and checking and control of the translator and interpreter is concerned. It stresses the rights and the obligations of a language mediator in conflict zones, the definition of the role of a translator or interpreter, the limits of the job and working conditions. Finally, it contains also recommendations on how to respect, protect and support translators and interpreters in war zones, assuming that at least the vast majority of interpreters and translators working in conflict zones have not committed any crimes, and therefore deserve our solidarity—regardless of the party they are working for (https://aiic.net/page/3853/aiic-red-t-and-fit-introduce-the-first-conflict-zone-field-guide/lang/1).
Also, in the volume edited by Valero-Garcés (2014), a series of papers by scholars such as Moreno Bello, Rok and Spahic as well as by Capelli, a war interpreter and captain in the Italian army, addresses scenarios of interpreting and translation in war or conflict zones as well as post-war situations (Spahic 2014). Their research, based on direct observations, surveys and questionnaire data from both stakeholders and interpreters, reveals that there is limited knowledge about the exact role and importance of the services interpreters and translators can provide in a war. The authors claim that there exists an ethical dilemma between ideology and the implementation of fundamental tenets of the profession such as accuracy, impartiality and confidentiality. Therefore, the aforementioned authors emphasize the need to develop a new kind of code of ethics that would protect interpreters and translators and help them provide quality services. They also stress the general lack of professional training and, what is more important, the absence of psychological counselling for war or conflict zone interpreters and translators. This can cause significant differences in the quality of services provided by various categories of language specialists: military interpreters and untrained civilian and local interpreters. In her paper, Moreno Bello (2014) points out that in a conflict zone locally hired translators or interpreters tend to develop their own ethical code without reference to any broader professional identity they would be acquainted with during their education. The lack of a particular code of ethics related to the linguistic profession in general leads to the development of their own code of ethics based on practical military professionalism. The author stresses that at the same time, war translators and interpreters are unable to adopt the norms of military professionalism entirely because of their status as civilians, untrained mediators and non-citizens of the employing force. This is why Moreno Bello (2014, 67–68) advocates for a new and specific code of ethics for war translators and interpreters – one which would take into account the data collected through interviews and surveys with soldiers and war interpreters. This new code of ethics could cover the specific needs of war interpreters and would allow them to follow a set of guidelines through which they could tackle the job’s linguistic difficulties and become acquainted with their rights and responsibilities. The objective of such a code of ethics would also be to facilitate the interpreter’s choice between taking an active role in communication or remaining faithful to the content of the message and remaining neutral. The code would also stress the question of protection, specific training which would need to include security and emergency training and the responsibilities of an interpreter related to the neutrality, confidentiality and accuracy on the job. Also Rok (2014) emphasizes that taking into consideration the ambiguous status and contradictory role of war and conflict interpreters, the question of ethics should be in the forefront of the discussion. Her paper discusses the challenges of establishing a set of relevant and practicable ethical guidelines for interpreting in war, conflict and crisis zones which would concern quality issues, limitations in the provision of adequate services due to physical or mental exhaustion, the questions of neutrality and impartiality, accuracy, confidentiality, anonymity and invisibility of the linguistic mediators. Those ethical principles should not be freely applied to the various communicative situations without raising doubts about their adequacy and validity. However, while discussing the necessity of establishing common guidelines for interpreting and translation in conflict or crisis zones, the author ascertains that the greatest obstacle to establishing a professional code of ethics or conduct stems from the contradictory and undefined role of interpreters in a war or in crisis zones. According to this scholar, researchers in the field should first develop a “legal” definition of the concept of neutrality, which would be necessary to provide for basic protection against categorical identification with individual parties of a conflict, thus lessening the burden of ethical dilemmas faced by language mediators (Rok 2014, 78).
3.4 Institutional affiliations and training

The volumes edited by Valero-Garcés (2014) and Valero-Garcés and Tipton (2017) address some of the general questions posed by the previously mentioned scholars and add new perspectives on the struggle to establish coherent responses to the ethical imperatives inherent in the relations between states and institutions, on the one hand, and limited language proficiency speakers, war victims, migrants or refugees on the other. The two volumes draw the reader’s attention to translation and interpreting in the public sector as a source of deep ideological conflict in societies. They also explore interconnections between ideology and ethics and bring some insights into this complex field (see also Chapter 15 “Ethics in public service interpreting” in this volume).

In the chapters of the volume edited by Valero-Garcés and Tipton (2017), we are presented with historical and contemporary perspectives on ideology and ethics in the development of interpreting for state bodies and institutions, e.g. the police, courts, prisons and asylum authorities. The volume also tackles the question of education and training of public service interpreters and translators working with refugees, asylum seekers, trauma survivors and other speakers with limited linguistic proficiency. For example, Brander de la Iglesia (2017), while discussing the consequences of the lack of attention to ethical issues in the training of interpreters and translators in conflict situations with reference to what she calls the “absent curriculum,” raises the question of different stages in deontology which are indisputably related with the dilemmas language specialists must sense, deal with and endure in their job. The author also proposes to develop the concept of the “ethical dilemma” as a starting point for the study of ethics in the training of translators and interpreters. Taking a more practical approach, the issue of codes of ethics in the context of the Spanish prison system is debated in the chapter by Valero-Garcés, who presents a broad overview of national and European legislation concerning linguistic service provision in a prison setting.

4 New debates

Over the past decade, debates on the ethical dimensions of translation and interpreting in situations of crisis and conflict have experienced a thematic expansion into emerging areas of research related to language mediation in crisis-related situations, migration emergency contexts, gender-based conflicts and, last but not least, translator and interpreter education and training.

4.1 Translating and interpreting in the situation of mass migration

The importance of ethical issues in connection to language mediation provided by professionals or non-professional bilinguals in the migration setting in the legal or, most frequently, illegal emergency context is evidenced by a growing number of publications. One of the first scholars to draw attention to the active role of an interpreter in asylum procedure was Barsky (1995, 1996 and 2010). Also Pöllabauer (2004) analyzed the work of interpreters in the asylum procedure in Austria, Inghilleri (2005) looked at the “interpreting habitus” of interpreters within the asylum system in the United Kingdom, whereas Maryns (2006) studied the oral performance of asylum speakers and how their stories are transformed in the Belgium. Gentile (2012) and, more recently, Tipton and Furmanek (2016) place special significance on the role of interpreters during the appeal hearings in front of refugee and asylum tribunals in Australia and the United Kingdom (see also Chapter 15 “Ethics in public service interpreting” in this volume).

Also, Todorova (2016 and 2017) provides an overview of research in the area of interpreting in conflict zones, with special focus on working with refugees. Her studies are supplemented by...
the researcher’s personal experience and that of other professionals working as field interpreters for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Macedonia and Kosovo. In her papers, she argues for the need for conflict mediation awareness and skills in the curricula used for training of UNHCR interpreters.

Another viewpoint on interpreting in a refugee setting is presented in an article by Taronna (2016), who analyzes interviews with a group of language mediators who assisted the newly arrived migrants in Southern Italy. They served as interpreters and played other roles such as advisors and assistants to “the boat people” in claiming and negotiating their rights in the hosting country. Taronna’s research has shown significant differences between the work of translators and interpreters in Southern Italy and the practices in Northern and Southern Europe in general. Her research was also concentrated on the use of English as a lingua franca in the practice of language mediation and on the role this language may play either as a barrier or as a bridge.

Recently, greater attention has been paid to ethical issues in connection with language mediation provided by professionals or non-professional bilinguals in the migration emergency context, as evidenced by a growing number of publications – e.g. in Translation, Ethics and Social Responsibility, special issue of The Translator edited by Drugan and Tipton (2017), which focuses on translation and interpreting of minority and majority languages in the public service context (see also Drugan 2017; Valero-Garcés 2017; Tipton 2008). The authors advocate for bringing ethics into translator and interpreter training, especially for the prospective interpreters who work in legal, medical and social settings which can be related to crises or conflicts. According to the authors, interpreters and translators working in legal, medical and other specialized vulnerable contexts should have formal training in ethics in order to become certified language mediators. They should also subscribe to codes of best practice or ethics which are relevant for their professions. However, even though interpreters and translators rarely have access to this sort of ethical infrastructure, they are still responsible for their services as language mediators. The authors also stress that greater attention should be paid to interpreter training and collaboration with other professionals in different sectors. They also recognize the significance of mutual recognition of duties in professional codes of conduct.

4.2 Gender issues in translating and interpreting

Another area of investigation as regards the ethics of translation and interpreting in a conflict situation involves public service interpreting and translation of encounters dealing with gender-based violence, which is a specific example of a crisis situation. In order to respond to this situation, a European project “Speak Out for Support (SOS-VICS)” has been initiated and funded by the Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom and Security of the European Commission (Hertog 2015). Its aim is to combine the provision of interpreting services in criminal proceedings with a focus on women who have been victims of domestic or gender-based violence. The volumes edited by Del Pozo Triviño, Toledo Buendía, Casado-Neira, and Fernandes Del Pozo (2015) and Toledo Buendía and Del Pozo Triviño (2015) address major questions posed by both scholars and practitioners (police officers, social workers, therapists, doctors and lawyers) who work with interpreters and translators in legal, medical, social and police settings in order to facilitate communication with patients or victims of gender and domestic violence. The two volumes have triggered discussions on ethical standards, training and competences of translators and interpreters. They have also offered guidelines, recommendations and best practices for professionals who work with interpreters (Borja Albi and Triviño 2015). The question of the role of education and training in ethics for translators and interpreters is raised in all of the aforementioned publications (see also Tipton 2017).
4.3 Translation and interpreting in humanitarian crisis zones

The ethical demands faced by interpreters in humanitarian crisis zones have been extensively discussed in a study by Moser-Mercer and Bali (2008). The authors drew attention to the fact that interpreters are often recruited because they “know” both the local language/dialect and English, the language of international relief operations, and not because they have been trained as translators or interpreters. . . . Thus, they lack both essential professional skills to perform adequately as interpreters, as well as the necessary professional ethics to support crisis management and humanitarian efforts in a stressful environment.

While discussing the training needs for language mediators working in conflict, post-conflict and humanitarian settings, Moser-Mercer and Bali (2008) take a close look at the experience of training field interpreters working for humanitarian organizations. As a response to emergency situations in many geographical locations, the Faculty of Interpreting and Translating (FTI) at the University of Geneva launched the project InZone (www.unige.ch/inzone/who-we-are/) with the aim to develop multilingual communication and higher education in communities affected by conflict and crisis. From the very beginning of this project, InZone offered basic training for humanitarian field interpreters which is a blended course, with on-site training in the field followed by virtual training available in a standard desktop and mobile version. This course covers training of basic interpreting skills and professional ethics.

The issues of language mediation during emergencies in disaster response and in training of translators and interpreters in fast-developing crises and dangerous environments is also extensively commented in more recent publications (e.g. Federici 2016). As noted by Federici and Al Sharou (2018), training translators and interpreters to react to a sudden emergency situation constitutes a real challenge. In most cases in a crisis environment, there is no access to professional language mediators and there is an urgent need to employ untrained civilians with some knowledge of languages though with no actual skills or competencies to translate or interpret. The lack of adequate training relevant to this field of activity is emphasized in recent analyses by O’Brien (2016), Federici and Cadwell (2018), Federici and Al Sharou (2018) and Mahasneh and Obeidat (2018), who propose using new technologies such as statistical machine translation tools in training of non-professional and citizen translators and interpreters in crisis-related situations. Such training should also respond to new expectations and ethical issues specific to the situation, among which Federici (2018) mentions the quality assurance of the performance by non-professional language mediators.

5 Conclusion

As noted in the present chapter, the question of ethics has become increasingly relevant for translation and interpreting in conflict and crisis zones. These issues are associated with differences in the services provided in battlefield or in an emergency situation by military translators or interpreters, civilian professionals and bilingual individuals acting as ad hoc appointed linguistic mediators without specific training – which can affect performance from the ethical viewpoint. Military or civilian professionals are bound by professional codes of ethics, whereas the latter group of ad hoc interpreters or translators does not necessarily abide by any code of ethics and can be more easily influenced by external factors, such as compassion or familiarity with one of the parties, etc. Additionally, non-professionals may have limited fluency in one of the two working languages, which in turn may cause misunderstandings, as the messages...
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may not be correctly conveyed and/or important details may be omitted or altered. Therefore, many stakeholders, who have observed the performance of non-professionals, propose special pre-deployment training and psychological counselling in order to guarantee adequate quality under the circumstances. Such training should also include reflections on certain aspects of ethical standards such as impartiality, which is a big issue in any crisis situation when it comes to potential conflict between ideology and ethics in language-brokering by local linguists who do not know (or observe) any professional code of ethics (Capelli 2014, 23).

The ethical considerations in conflict or crisis situations tend to add additional insight into the fact that translators and interpreters are no simple intermediaries but are accountable participants who must assure that what they do is professionally and ethically appropriate in a given socio-cultural context.

The consequences that may arise from the current and future ethical dilemmas faced by numerous language brokers, professionals or civilians, in war or in emergency situations as presented in the chapter, should result in developing a series of training modules offered by professional associations, institutions or NGOs, using new technologies, in order to provide interpreters and translators working in these complex situations with adequate tools to execute the job (Federici and Cadwell 2018; Federici and Al Sharou 2018; Mahasneh and Obeidat 2018).

Related topics in this volume

Professional translator ethics; the ethics of public service interpreting; ethics of volunteering in translation and interpreting; ethics of activist translation and interpreting; ethics in translator and interpreter education; ethics of translator and interpreter education; accessibility and linguistic human rights.

References


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Małgorzata Tryuk


Further reading


A collection of papers on past and contemporary crisis situations which involve the participation of translators and interpreters. The volume sheds light on ethics, ideology, status, neutrality, loyalty and trust, the use of interpreting or translation as a tool of manipulation and power and the role of translators and interpreters in modern and ancient times, past and contemporary wars, intelligence and migration crises.


This volume focuses on the practice of translation and interpreting from a historical and geographical perspective. The papers in the volume address questions of identities and roles of translators and interpreters during conquests, colonization or occupation of foreign territories and discuss the risks faced by interpreters in such situations.


This volume is devoted to the problematics of volunteer translation in different geographic regions, the needs and challenges of crisis translation for NGOs and the use of new technologies, such as machine translation and crowdsourcing in disaster and crisis situations.