

TOWARDS THE SPECIALIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE INTERPRETERS IN THE AREA OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE. RESEARCH, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONALIZATION¹

Carmen Toledano Buendía

ctoledan@ull.edu.es
Universidad de La Laguna

María Isabel Abril Martí

miabril@ugr.es
Universidad de Granada

Maribel del Pozo Triviño

mdelpozo@uvigo.es
Universidad de Vigo

Laura Aguilera Ávila

laguiler@ull.edu.es
Universidad de La Laguna

Abstract

In recent years the academic and scientific community has shown increased interest in the field of Public Service Translation and Interpreting. Research in this area has clearly demonstrated the importance of training and professionalization to ensure the provision of top quality language mediation services. Interpreting in the field of

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gender-based violence is no exception. Providing language mediation to foreign victims of gender-based violence, in different contexts and stages of assistance, involves specific features which would seem to require further specialized training for the public service interpreters involved.

This paper intends to provide an overview of such specific needs for specialized training, analyze the experience of other countries in this area, and outline possible ways to achieve the necessary specialization from the standpoint of research, training and professional practice.

Resumen

El creciente interés académico y científico que en los últimos años se ha prestado a la traducción/interpretación para los servicios públicos parece haber puesto de manifiesto de manera incuestionable la importancia que tiene la formación y la profesionalización de los/las intérpretes para poder asegurar una prestación de servicios de mediación lingüística con todas las garantías de calidad.

La interpretación en el ámbito de la violencia de género no es una excepción. Las peculiaridades que puede presentar la mediación lingüística con víctimas extranjeras de violencia de género en los diferentes contextos y fases de intervención parecen requerir una especialización adicional dentro de la interpretación para los servicios públicos.

En este trabajo buscamos aproximarnos de manera general a esas necesidades específicas de especialización, estudiar las experiencias existentes en este campo en otros países y esbozar las posibles actuaciones que podrían llevarse a cabo para alcanzarla desde un punto de vista investigador, formativo y profesional.

Keywords: Public Service Translation/Interpreting. Language mediation. Gender-based violence. Training. Professionalization.

Palabras clave: Traducción/Interpretación en los servicios públicos. Mediación lingüística. Violencia de género. Formación. Profesionalización.

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1. Introduction

Unlike countries such as Australia, United States, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom, in Spain there has been no comprehensive response to the communication difficulties that arise between the country's foreign population and public services. Too often –almost on a regular basis one could say– the language mediation problems appearing in different areas of public service (police, schools, hospitals, social services and local authorities, the courts, etc.) due to the foreign population's limited command of Spanish, or another of Spain's official languages, are dealt with in an impromptu manner. Sometimes a person employed in another section of the institution who has a certain proficiency in the language in question is called in to help, sometimes volunteers try to provide assistance, and at times it is even the people accompanying the user of the service (sometimes children or family members involved in the conflict being addressed), etc. who are asked to interpret. These are the findings of several papers that have examined the situation, such as Ortega Herráez (2010); Ortega, Abril & Martín (2009); Del Pozo & Gómez (2012) and Raga & Valero (2006). In addition, studies examining the language mediation services provided by non-professional interpreters have confirmed the existence of serious deficiencies in the communication processes derived from these habits (Pöllabauer 2008, Schweda-Nicholson 1989, Pöchlacker 2000, Pöchlacker & Kadric 1999, Sánchez-Reyes & Martín Casado 2005).

These deficiencies hinder and can even prevent equal access to and enjoyment of public services, they can jeopardize the health and well-being of the person using the service and they result in a poor use of the resources that institutions offer to citizens (Abraham & Fiola 2006; Abril & Martín 2011; Bischoff 2003; Bowen 2010; Cambridge 1999; De Luna 2010; Díaz 2009, Flores et al. 2003; Jacobs et al. 2003; Kelly & Bancroft 2007; Ortega Herráez 2010; Sánchez-Reyes & Martín Casado 2005).

This problem can be found in all areas of public service interpreting but it takes on particular importance in the specific case of mediation in situations of gender-based violence, where issues such as imprecision, lack of neutrality

or breaches of confidentiality by the person interpreting can have deadly consequences (Polzin 2007: 23).

Although further research in this field is needed to be able to formulate a solid curricular proposal, it is our belief that interpretation for victims of gender-based violence requires specific training because this type of interpreting has numerous features not addressed in general public service interpreting courses. These aspects include, for example, the rights of the victims and legislation regarding gender-based violence, the cycle of violence, emotional stress management, etc. (Hale 2011).

2. Women from other countries, gender-based violence and language barriers

Immigrant women face a specific set of problems because they bring together two conditions that give rise to discrimination: gender and provenance. This places them in a situation that is more precarious than that of Spanish women, on the one hand, and than that of immigrant men, on the other, as they have fewer options to improve their situation, fewer opportunities for education and fewer channels for participation. This disadvantaged position leads to greater vulnerability and to an acute lack of protection in cases of domestic violence (Amnesty International 2007). The nation-wide survey on violence against women (*Macroencuesta de Violencia Contra la Mujer*), which is conducted by the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS) in collaboration with the government, states, in its 2011 edition, that gender-based violence affects twice as many foreign women as it does Spanish women.” According to this report, 10.1% of Spanish women have experienced gender-based violence at some point in their lives and 2.8% have experienced it some time during the year 2010, compared to 20.9% and 5.8%, respectively, in the case of foreign-born women.

The percentage of foreign victims of this type of violence is hardly negligible. According to the report on deaths caused by gender-based violence prepared by the Consejo General del Poder Judicial (General Council of the Judiciary), the number of women killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2011 was 62. Of them 40 (65%) were of Spanish nationality and 22 (35%) were foreigners; these figures become especially relevant when taking into account that foreign women represent only 11.5% of the total female population in Spain (2011: 15-17). Of the women killed, 74% had not filed any reports of abuse with the authorities.

Looking at the nationality of the women who reported abuse, in the first quarter of 2013, 67% of the women were of Spanish nationality, compared to

33% who were of a different nationality. These proportions are similar to the data of previous quarters. It is also interesting to note the difference in the percentage of women who decide not to follow through with the proceedings (regardless of the duty to investigate the matter that the authorities have). Overall, in 12.01% of the cases the victim chooses not to continue with the proceedings. Of them 59% correspond to Spanish women while 41% correspond to foreign women.²

Foreign victims of gender violence find themselves in a situation of particular vulnerability and lack of protection as a consequence of a number of factors, which can be as diverse as a precarious work situation and administrative status, the absence of family and social networks, limited knowledge of their rights and the difficulty to obtain information about them. All of these aspects, combined with the fear they feel, make it very difficult to escape from the circle of violence they live in. In addition to these factors in many cases there is the further difficulty of not knowing the language of the host community, yet another obstacle that aggravates their feeling of isolation and helplessness and that can even dissuade them from seeking help and taking legal action: “language access plays a central role in the ability of survivors to progress in their journeys to safety” (Huelgo et al. 2006: 5).

Language barriers also limit the ability of government bodies to reach out and inform possible users of the services available and they complicate the provision of care and assistance. These are the findings of a survey conducted in the Red de Intervención Especializada en Violencia de Género (Gender Violence Intervention Network), on the island of Tenerife, about language mediation, by the Gender Violence Unit of the Tenerife Council (2011). According to the professionals surveyed, in addition to the difficulties the language barrier can cause in the provision of services in the different areas of intervention (information, assessment, psychosocial evaluation/assistance, legal aid, etc.), the professionals often have trouble convincing victims of the usefulness of the service, of the importance of continuing to use the service (getting them “hooked” on the service), and of the risks related to returning to the aggressor. The professionals surveyed assert that the availability of

2. Statistics published by the Observatorio contra la Violencia Doméstica y de Género (Observatory against Domestic and Gender Violence) and the Consejo General del Poder Judicial (General Council of the Judiciary). Available at http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/upload_images/File/DOC1373452998_4T%202012-Violencia%20sobre%20la%20Mujer.pdf. These statistics do not provide detailed information regarding the country of origin of these women, so it is not possible to determine who the potential users of interpreting services might be.

quality language services would motivate other victims to report their situation (Toledano & Fernández 2012).

3. The language rights of victims and international instruments to protect these rights

The importance of language mediation in assisting foreign women who are victims of gender violence and do not speak the language of the community in which they live has gone largely unnoticed by governmental bodies and services in many countries, including Spain. Evidence of this, for example, can be found in the fact that Spanish Law 1/2004 regarding Measures for Comprehensive Protection Against Gender Violence (*Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género*, BOE, 2004) fails to include the right of women immigrants to language mediation because not knowing the language is not considered a difficulty in gaining access to the services provided for in this Law. As a result it is common to find that in practice language services are provided by non-professionals (Molina Gutiérrez 2006).

However, the European Union has made this issue one of its top priorities through its Criminal Justice Program and more specifically through the Daphne III program. Also worthy of mention is Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA (DOUE, 2012). This Directive pays special attention to, among others, victims of gender violence and their right to hear and be heard, and also to have access free-of-charge to support services and to translation and interpreting during the various stages of the criminal proceedings. Another particularity of this new regulation is that family members of a person who dies as a result of a criminal act are also deemed victims. This is highly relevant in the case of gender-based violence in Spain.

Outside of Europe there is also growing interest in the peculiarities of linguistic and cultural mediation in assistance connected to gender-based violence and there is no shortage of examples of the creation of didactic resources, such as those by the U.S. National Center for State Courts (*Access to Justice: Limited English Proficiency LEP and Access to Protection Orders*),³ and the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (*Resource Guide for*

3. <http://www.ncsc.org/microsites/access-to-justice/home/Topics/LEP-Self-Represented-Litigants.aspx>

Advocates & Attorneys on Interpretation Services for Domestic Violence Victims),⁴ or the materials published by Australia's Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural New South Wales (*Using Interpreters in Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Matters*),⁵ to cite just a few.

Australia also implemented, from October 2010 to November 2011, a far-reaching project entitled "Breaking through the language barrier: Empowering refugee and immigrant women to combat domestic and family violence through cultural and language training." It was headed by Dr. Sandra Hale, one of the world's most highly-respected researchers in the field of public service interpreting, and it received governmental funding through the authorities of New South Wales (NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Domestic and Family Violence Grant Scheme). The project was created in response to a common problem in societies that receive immigrants: the lack of professional interpreters for communities whose languages are not sufficiently represented in existing language services, which means that communication needs end up being covered by non-professionals, often members of the communities themselves, because they are the only persons available. The project began with an in-depth analysis of existing needs and resources and continued with a two-faceted program of cultural and language training: one facet was a basic training session (one day long) in issues related to women's rights and gender violence; the other facet was a 40-hour specialized training program in interpreting in contexts of domestic violence (Hale 2011).

Special mention must also go to a pilot project implemented in the late 1990s to provide specialized interpreters to two Domestic Violence Courts and to the Women's College Hospital, in Toronto, Canada (Abraham & Oda 2000). This project would soon be complemented by another one consisting of further training for interpreters working with programs developed for perpetrators of domestic violence who are mandated by the court to participate in education and counseling programs (Oda & Joyette 2003). At this time, the province of Ontario has a program called LIS (Language Interpreters Service), the purpose of which is to make interpreters available to public service providers so that they can communicate with clients who have limited English or French proficiency and are victims of domestic violence, sexual violence or human trafficking. This service is also available for persons who are hard of hearing or deaf. The interpreting service is funded by the provincial

4. <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/domesticviolence/dvresources/docs/InterpretationResourceGuide.pdf>

5. http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/publications/documents/interpreters_domestic_violence

government and is available to public service providers such as police, health care, legal services, etc. through agencies that for the most part are non-profit organizations. These agencies have the obligation to train the interpreters following a program designed by the government.

4. Justification of the necessity of specific training for professional interpreters

As discussed in previous paragraphs, interpreting in contexts of intervention with victims of gender violence is a complex practice that brings together a wide variety of material, human and intellectual elements coming from diverse knowledge and praxis areas –including, at least, sociology, psychology, medicine, anthropology, law and language–, which, in addition, must be coordinated and balanced so as to provide comprehensive assistance to the victim. The presence of the interpreter may be required at different stages and in different services and resources and for encounters with different communication purposes, expectations, necessities and dynamics. This complicates the task of the interpreter and makes it necessary to define a specialized professional profile as well as a series of action protocols.

Aspects that can be problematic and present dilemmas for public service interpreters are magnified in cases of gender violence and can lead to the failure of the victim assistance process. During the implementation of the Canadian and Australian projects described above, a series of shortcomings were identified in the intervention of non-professional interpreters, along with the expectations of the service agents interviewed, and these were incorporated into the training programs as specific skills necessary to language and cultural mediation in the contexts of gender violence (cf. Abraham & Oda 2000, Hale 2011). One example would be the capacity to verbalize obscene and offensive vocabulary when interpreting the events recounted by victims and aggressors. It is worth explaining that, in certain cultures, a woman using vocabulary of this type, even when reproducing somebody else's story, is socially unacceptable and doing so can affect her reputation, especially if the community to which she belongs is small.

Similarly, the interpreter must have in-depth knowledge of specific issues such as the concept of gender violence, the way to respond to violence, the role of gender in male-dominated societies, etc.; in short, socio-cultural questions that may condition communication strategies, the sense of relevance or accuracy in the transmission of information... and even the attitude of the speakers. Finally, ethical questions such as confidentiality and impartiality were pointed out as being absolutely indispensable in training programs of

this type. The breach of confidentiality by an interpreter can affect the victim's personal safety, while "over-intervention" by an interpreter who advises the victim to solve her problems at home or who deems her to be at fault only increases the victim's defenselessness.

Language mediation in contexts such as these requires the presence of professional interpreters who have been trained not just in public service translating and interpreting, but who have also received specialized training that enables them to be effective in the wide array of encounters that take place during the domestic violence intervention process and to work with the team of specialists who deal with this extremely serious social issue.

As part of this specific profile the aforementioned project for the Domestic Violence Courts of Toronto included among the training program's target skills: knowing the various intervention programs and action protocols, understanding how the services work and what the role of the service agent is, and also being familiar with the kinds of documentation regularly used. Training in the theoretical aspects of gender, sensitivity with regard to the situation of victims and empathy were also among the contents covered (Abraham & Oda 2000).

As for the training program in New South Wales, this one included theoretical content about the role of women in Australia, women's rights and the international legal framework aimed at protecting women from violence, the concept of gender violence and how the Australian system assists victims of domestic violence. The section of the course that focused on interpreting itself consisted of interpreting techniques, ethical issues and information about the public service areas most directly related to victim assistance, that is, health care and legal services.

Last of all, language mediation is often required in encounters that are highly charged emotionally and that involve people who have been traumatized, which heightens the complexity of the communication and of the interpreting process. In relation to this emotional element, Huelgo et al. (2006: 6) recommend that, to ensure professional preparedness, practice and support must be given to these professionals to enable them to work in very delicate situations and to interpret truly traumatic experiences and statements:

It is not only survivors who are traumatized by their experiences. Court interpreters who hear and relay the horrific experiences of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault or child abuse may experience vicarious or secondary trauma. Without adequate training and supervisory support, this work can take too heavy a toll, to the point of impeding an interpreter's ability to keep performing such an essential job. Therefore, court interpreters need

comprehensive training in sensitivity to these difficult issues as well as a clear supervisory channel for professional development and support.

It should be noted that specialization is considered essential for professionals and agents who work in the field of assistance for victims of gender violence. In fact it was expressly recognized in the following terms by the Group of Experts in Domestic and Gender Violence of the Consejo General del Poder Judicial in its 2011 report on problems related to the application of the above mentioned Spanish Law 1/2004 regarding Measures for Comprehensive Protection Against Gender Violence (*Ley Orgánica 1/2004*):

It is our understanding that the training of lawyers in this field must be specific, uniform and ongoing, and that this type of training should be considered as obligatory for lawyers as it is for the rest of the professionals intervening in processes of this type, and it should also cover the specificities derived from situations of disability and social exclusion that sometimes affect the victims (foreign women without a residence permit, women linked to sexual exploitation or who face another type of social exclusion...) (2011: 28).⁶

However, in Spain not only is this recommendation totally ignored in the case of the interpreters participating in these processes but the solutions put in place to overcome language barriers tend to be improvised, with individuals not qualified for this activity and even family members of the victims themselves being asked to serve as interpreters.

5. Lines of action in research, training and professional practice

Considering this situation of non-professionalization and, worse still, of negligence and disregard for language mediation –a vital link in the chain of assistance and intervention with foreign victims– we must ask ourselves what steps can be taken from the academic sphere in an attempt to change it.

In situations of deprofessionalism such as the one characterizing translating and interpreting in Spain's public services, universities can perform the very important task of educating and “normalizing” the discipline and practice of interpretation. This normalization...

not in the sense of making what happens in it normal but rather subjecting it to norms, will guarantee professionalism and in return this professionalism will guarantee the very existence of the discipline. [...] Education provides knowledge and skills; it also deepens understanding, reinforces standards and leads to consensus. Universities can and should take on the responsibility of coalescing all these activities. They relate as much to reflective practice

6. Our translation.

and self criticism as to raising the profile of trained professionals. Both of these factors are essential to achieving the level of professionalism in which norms are rooted (Toledano Buendía 2010).

Work can be done from within the University in three broad areas of action: research, training and professional practice. While these three areas are distinct, they must also be connected. Unfortunately, as pointed out by Hale (2007: 197), in the field of public service translation and interpreting this interconnection is still weak, and there remains much to be done in terms of transferring research findings to professional practice. The relations among research, training and professional practice are reciprocally necessary, if we hope to achieve the efficacy of the service, the recognition and professionalization of the activity, the quality of teaching and the consolidation of its areas of research.

5.1. Lines of action in research

In the research sphere, public service translation and interpreting in contexts of gender violence is a field that remains practically untouched. To date we have found no studies that specifically examine the practice of interpreting and translating within the comprehensive assistance provided to victims of gender violence, excepting the studies undertaken in relation to the pilot project in Ontario and the New South Wales program and some practical recommendations appearing in the newsletters of professional associations (Huelgo et al. 2006; Polzin 2007).

Although training plays a vital role in all processes leading toward professionalization and specialization, research is a very important previous step upon which training must be based. Actions taken in the area of training must be based on systematic research into the social/occupational context and the epistemological reality that allows scholars to reach an in-depth understanding of different fields of action, of the types of encounters and agents, and of their needs and expectations. This will contribute to better identifying the specificities of the interlinguistic and intercultural communications.

In the case that concerns us here, it would clearly be very pertinent to have a map of the needs related to the provision of interpreting services in the sphere of gender violence –a map that is non-existent at this point, or at the very best, partial– and of potential ways to address such needs. To draw up such a map, researchers must study the demand for public service translation and interpreting in the area of gender violence, who the users of the services are and how frequently such services are used, which languages are involved, the needs to which the services respond, how these needs are currently being

covered and shortcomings detected by agents and users. Afterwards, a second line of research would focus on defining and analyzing the work contexts, the social, cultural and linguistic dynamics arising therein, the expectations of the service agents and professionals and the main interlinguistic and intercultural problems that appear.

These objectives form part of the lines of action established by the project *Speak Out for Support* (SOS-VICS) (JUST/2011/JPEN/2912), led by the University of Vigo⁷ and funded by the European Union through its Criminal Justice program, in its attempt to fill the voids detected with regard to interpreting in contexts of domestic violence. The first phase of the project focused on the compilation and analysis of the communication needs of all the parties involved: victims, the various agents and interpreters (cf. Del Pozo, Vaamonde et al., 2014a y 2014b). After the statistical analysis of the data obtained in this early phase, patterns were established and used to help create the resources contemplated in the second phase, during which different materials for all involved parties (victims, agents and interpreters) were developed. These materials include: a web page offering general information,⁸ multi-lingual information for victims in video and brochure format, a best practices guide for agents (cf. Borja & Del Pozo, 2015), specialized resources for interpreters and the professionals who train them, in the form of a web platform (Abril, 2014) and a book for the training of interpreters (cf. Toledano & Del Pozo, 2015). The third phase of the project is dedicated to disseminating its methods and results. The project is developing innovative methods that are of great social utility for the protection of victims and can be transferred to other countries of the European Union, either through extrapolation of the experiences and lessons learned or through future cross border projects with countries having characteristics similar to those of Spain in terms of gender violence. It should be underlined that assistance to victims and vulnerable persons is one of the priorities of the European Union's action programs, which explains the interest shown in the project.

7. Participating in the project are researchers from the universities of Vigo, La Laguna, Alcalá, Barcelona, Vic, Jaume I, Granada, Alicante and Salamanca, along with external experts such as, among others, Dr. Erik Hertog of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven-Lessius, the Asociación Profesional de Traductores e Intérpretes Judiciales y Jurados (APTJJ), Instituto de Medicina Legal de Galicia (IMELGA), Fundación Academia Europea Yuste, Rede de Mulleres contra os Malos Tratos de Vigo, Fundación Ana Bella, Unidad Orgánica de Violencia de Género del Cabildo de Tenerife and the Asociación Mercedes Machado, as well as numerous judges and public prosecutors.

8. <http://cuautla.uvigo.es/sos-vics/>

The transfer to society of the findings of the different studies, as well as the interdisciplinary collaboration with researchers from other fields and professionals working in different areas of intervention with victims of gender violence during the course of the research is already generating channels of communication and dissemination about the work of interpreters, of their relevance in assisting victims and of the need for professionalization, aspects which are often totally unknown. In this regard, the SOS-VICS project is a model to be followed, not only because of the composition of its multidisciplinary research group comprised of researchers from disciplines like translation and interpreting, psychology, social work, law, sociology, medicine, informatics and statistics, but also because of the ongoing collaboration and interaction among professionals through workshops and panels. This methodology has brought a great deal of mutual enrichment and will no doubt contribute to improving comprehensiveness in the assistance provided to victims.

5.2. *Lines of action in training*

As already mentioned, training is an essential step in the specialization and professionalization of interpreters so as to ensure the provision of quality services. The design of training programs for interpreters specialized in the field of gender violence must be based on the results of previous studies about interpreting needs and the characteristics of work settings. This will make it possible to define the human and professional profile of the interpreter and to identify the skills he/she must develop and the knowledge he/she must have. Similarly, the study of the expectations of those participating in the processes and the needs of each sphere of intervention will make it possible to define the *modus operandi* of the interpreter, delimit his/her function and protocols, and establish the pertinent degrees of visibility depending on the context and expectations. Aspects related to the languages involved, the type of students, their previous training and experience, etc. are additional elements that must be taken into account while designing the training program (how long it lasts, whether it is accredited or not, etc.). In this respect, the collaboration and work of the associations of professional translators/interpreters is of fundamental importance because such groups are an excellent channel for ongoing training and specialization, especially considering that these associations have more flexibility in the design of their training activities and in the admission of participants who speak minority languages and have different qualifications than those from academic. In the SOS-VICS project information of this type was obtained through different field studies that used surveys,

interviews and questionnaires given to all the participants in encounters with foreign victims of gender violence: agents, victims and interpreters.

5.3 Lines of action in professional practice

Finally, taking a more applied approach, the third line of action would be to improve professional practice by developing various resources to support mediation in interlinguistic and intercultural encounters with victims and survivors of gender violence. The application of the results of different studies and theoretical-descriptive research projects could take the form of materials such as glossaries, bibliographic resources, FAQ, action guidelines, compilation of documents and translations, best practice guides for agents, etc. which directly support the practice of interpreting and the task of the different professionals involved in mediation and intervention with victims and survivors who do not speak Spanish or another one of Spain's official languages. The material generated could be useful not only for interpreters and professional associations of interpreters but also for public and private bodies, NGOs, associations of victims and survivors and any other body that works in the area of gender violence.

In the realm of specialized translation there is an example of this type of material, aimed at improving the professional practice of legal translators, in the project JUDGENTT, which is part of the research group Textual Genres for Translation (GENTT) of the Universitat Jaume I.⁹ As for resources designed specifically for interpreting with victims of gender violence, we would highlight the materials developed as part of the SOS-VICS project mentioned above.

6. Conclusions

When women who are victims of gender violence decide to take action to put a stop to the violence they must deal with a number of complications and go through a very difficult stage in which their safety and integrity may be put at risk (trouble grasping and assuming their condition, having to visit different services and go through multiple processes, difficulty accessing accurate information, etc.). In the case of some foreign women the challenge is even

9. <http://www.gentt.uji.es/>. This group has been working since 2000 on the creation of a multilingual electronic encyclopedia of textual genres in the legal, technical and medical fields. The idea behind the project is to facilitate research and serve as a tool for textual, conceptual, terminological and linguistic consultations by specialists and non-specialists.

greater, since they must also overcome the language barrier. The absence of professional interpreters in the process of assisting these women means that on occasions the resources made available by governmental bodies to victims do not reach them or, in the event that such resources do reach them, they do not produce the expected results.

The conclusion that can be drawn is three-fold: not only is the incorporation of specialized translation/interpreting personnel into services related to gender violence absolutely necessary to ensure that all victims receive adequate assistance but, in addition, the absence of such personnel during the assistance process constitutes an infringement of the rights of the victims and, furthermore, results in a waste of the resources that the government puts at their disposal.

However, we must consider that public service interpreting in general and interpreting in the context of gender violence in particular are two fields where there is still much research to be done and ample room for professionalization. In this sense, we believe that further research is needed in connection with the training of interpreters and with professional practice, so as to ensure quality service in this area. This quality service, rendered by professionals with specific training, would reduce the risk of re-victimization of foreign women who suffer gender violence, improve the assistance provided to them and result in a better use of public resources.

To conclude, because gender violence is a social problem that requires a comprehensive response, the university, and other public institutions, must make every effort to find solutions that will improve the conditions of the victims, including those who do not speak one of the country's official languages. Consequently we believe that the university should play a decisive role in research and in training in the area of interpreting for victims of gender violence, a field that still has a long way to go in achieving the necessary level of professionalization.

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BIONOTES

CARMEN TOLEDANO BUENDÍA, Ph.D., is Senior Lecturer at the Department of English Philology at the University of La Laguna (ULL) (Tenerife) and specialist in descriptive translation and interpreting studies. She has extensive experience teaching conference and public service interpreting and in the design and management of specialized courses on interpreting. She is currently the academic director of the *Experto Universitario en Traducción e Interpretación para los Servicios Comunitarios: mediadores lingüísticos* and former academic coordinator of the *Master en Interpretación de Conferencias* (ULL). She is member of the *Fitispos* Research Group, *Comunica* Network (*Observatorio Permanente sobre Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos en España*) and the *Instituto de la Mujer* at the University of La Laguna.

MARÍA ISABEL ABRIL MARTÍ lectures in interpreting at the University of Granada. She holds a Ph.D. from the same University, with a dissertation

on the definition and evolution of public service interpreting (PSI) and the training of interpreters, areas where she has focused her research to date. She is the head of the *GRETI* Research group (Group HUM-737: “Interpreting and the challenges of globalization – Training and the profession”, funded by the Andalusian Regional Authorities), and a member of the *Comunica* Network. She is also assistant coordinator of the *Máster Oficial en Traducción e Interpretación (perfil investigador)* of the University of Granada.

MARIBEL DEL POZO TRIVIÑO has a Ph.D. in Translation and Interpretation from the University of Vigo, Spain, where she is currently working as a lecturer. She was appointed as a sworn English-Spanish translator-interpreter in 1998 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her professional T&I work experience is extensive and covers a wide range of fields. She has a great deal of publications on the different aspects of legal translation and Public Services T&I, and is also currently involved in several research projects on the mentioned subjects. She is a member of the *GENTT* research group (University of Jaume I), the Iberian Association of T&I Scholars (AIETI) and the *Comunica* Network. Besides the above, she is also a founding member of the Galician Professional T&I Association (AGPTI), member of the Catalanian Sworn T&I Association (ATIJC) and of the Professional Legal & Sworn T&I Association (APTIJ).

LAURA AGUILERA ÁVILA lectures at the Social Work and Social Services Department at the University of La Laguna. She holds degrees in Psychology and Social Work, and has focused her research on the field of gender and battered women (Matud, Díaz, Aguilera, Rodríguez y Matud, 2003; Matud, Aguilera, Marrero, Moraza y Carballeira, 2003). She has extensive professional experience, and has worked as a psychologist in a municipal centre for women victims of gender-based violence. Her tasks include assessment, individual and group therapy, encouragement of self-help groups, etc. as part of a multidisciplinary team.