

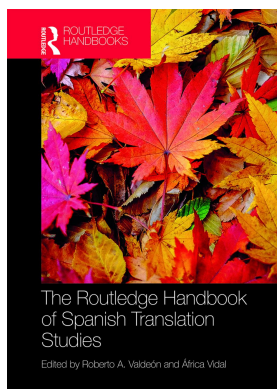
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Roberto A. Valdeón, África Vidal, Javier Muñoz-Basols

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Carmen Valero-Garcés

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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Public service interpreting and translation

Carmen Valero-Garcés

Introduction and definitions

The rise of globalization, the strengthening of multicultural societies, changing borders as a result of war, conflicts or natural disasters, the continuous advances of technology and social networks as well as the increasing political power of economic forces are all key themes of the twenty-first century. Within this panorama, intercultural communication necessarily takes place. Guaranteeing this communication requires the presence of linguistic and cultural intermediaries or ‘translators’ to provide support through the services they offer in a such a diverse world with a large variety of languages and cultures and unprecedented levels of mobility. These intermediaries, also known as the ‘third link’, that enable communication between two speakers who do not share a common language and/or culture have historically been given different names such as *cultural mediator*, *enabler*, *gatekeeper*, *committed bilingual*, or *professional interpreter and/or translator* (Davidson 2000, 379). Generally speaking this third link can be described as a sort of intermediary capable of conveying a text from one language into another in various registers and in different contexts.

Within Translation and Interpreting Studies (TS) there has also been a significant development during the second half of the twentieth century in a field greatly connected with intercultural communication known as Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) or Community Interpreting (and Translation). This chapter will be dedicated to exploring this new emergent field of PSIT within TS.

One of the first problems that we encounter is defining PSIT and its scope. The difficulties in trying to define this field of practice are illustrated by the lack of acceptance of a common name. In English, there are a variety of terms for this intercultural activity: Community Interpreting, Liaison Interpreting, Interpreting in Social Services, Dialogue Interpreting, Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) or even specific names based on the profession: Healthcare Interpreter, Intercultural Health Mediator, Cultural Interpreter, Community Interpreter, Legal Interpreter, or Public Service Interpreter, to name but a few. The two terms most commonly used nowadays are PSIT and Community Interpreting. The latter is the name most commonly used in various pioneer countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, countries to which we also owe a large part of the work found on this subject. The United Kingdom and some other European countries prefer the name Public Service

Interpreting and Translation over Community Interpreting. The main reason for choosing PSIT, according to Corsellis (2003, 271–3), is to avoid confusion with the intense task of translating documents and interpreting into the languages of the European Commission (EU) and the European Community.

Following these criteria, in Spain and in this chapter the increasingly popular name Public Service Interpreting and Translation (PSIT) (*Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos*) is used instead of *Interpretación Social* or *Traducción Comunitaria* that were once preferred.

However in some Spanish-speaking countries where this field is emerging (Argentina, Mexico, Ecuador), the situation is similar to what occurred in Spain during the final decade of the twentieth century (Valero-Garcés 1997, 2008a), in which clear terminology did not exist. In a personal conversation with Kleinert (pers. comm. 3 October 2017), she mentions that in Latin America the term ‘community’ is associated largely with indigenous communities. For their part, institutions like the National Institute of Indigenous Languages use the term *interpretation in indigenous languages*, a term which is not widely accepted due to being considered discriminatory and excluding of foreign languages. Thus, she prefers *public service interpreting* or *interpreting in national languages* when discussing the situation in Mexico, reflecting the campaign there to define them as languages rather than dialects, a term which she considers has a pejorative connotation in the Mexican context. In addition, Kleinert points out that a percentage of the Mexican population is unaware of the fact that there are many languages and that they are all national languages, meaning that to name them as such would therefore contribute to their visibility and increase their prestige.

This opinion is reflected in the recent publication *Estudio de encuesta sobre la Traducción e Interpretación en México* by the Italia Morayta Foundation (2017), in cooperation with Interpret America and *Intérpretes y Traductores en Servicios Públicos y Comunitarios, A.C.* of the first in-depth survey of translation and interpreting in Mexico. This one-hundred-page study includes demographic data, geographic distribution of interpreting activity, education levels, and salaries of translators and interpreters from across Mexico. The top six languages reported are firstly Spanish and English; the third is Nahuatl, followed by Mexican Sign Language (*Lengua de Señas Mexicana*, LSM), Maya and French. As for translators, the top four target languages after Spanish and English are French, Nahuatl, Maya and Tzeltal (a language spoken in the highlands of Chiapas State) (Vaughn Holcomb 2017).

Lea Martin, at the first International Congress on Translation, Interpretation and Cognition, which took place at the University of Aconcagua, Mendoza (31 August – 1 September 2017), presented an article entitled “Interpretación comunitaria en Argentina” (Community interpreting in Argentina), although in personal conversation by email she used *interpretación en los servicios públicos* (public service interpreting) or *interpretación comunitaria* (community interpreting) interchangeably in Spanish, while she preferred *community interpreting* in English.

PSIT was one of the first forms of intercultural communication to take place historically; for example, in the encounters between the Romans and Iberians, and between the Spanish ‘conquistadores’ and the Amerindians, this form of communication was fundamental. According to Wadensjö (1998, 33), who has provided one of the first definitions of the term, PSIT refers to a type of interpreting that takes place in the public services to facilitate communication between staff and those who utilize a given service. Mikkelsen (2014, 19) offers a much broader definition and considers PSIT to be an activity that facilitates equal access to legal services, healthcare, education and social services for certain groups of people belonging to cultural or linguistic minorities who generally have lower levels of education and income and

are often unfamiliar with, or unaccustomed to, the new social reality in the country in which they find themselves. Generally speaking, PSIT can be defined as a form of communication that takes place in any multicultural society where speakers of different languages must communicate directly with one another and where those who know both languages must act as intermediaries.

However, there is still no general agreement on the scope of this activity. PSIT was born from the need to provide this service by institutions in the public sector. Thus, Ozolins rightfully pointed out that PSIT is an ‘institution-driven’ activity (Ozolins 2000, 32), which has come to mean that the development of this activity is affected by the institutions, governments or societal characteristics of their individual countries, in which each has its own laws; consequently, the professionalization of the activity is usually affected by institutional decisions. This is certainly the case in Spain and in other southern European countries, where, contrary to the situation in Sweden, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States, PSIT is still not fully professionalized, and, in some areas (e.g. mental health services), the activity is virtually unknown, as in most Latin American countries.

Historical perspective and review

Ever since PSIT became the focus of academic and research activity in 1995, following the First Critical Link Conference in Canada, and then in 1997 in Spain with the publication of the first article on PSIT (Valero-Garcés 1997, 267–77), publishing in this area has significantly increased. During these two decades, the increasing number of publications has indicated its evolution, as will be shown in this chapter.

The literature shows that the evolution in Spain is similar to that in Italy and other southern EU countries, as described in the articles from the International Conferences on PSIT held at the University of Alcalá in 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014 and 2017.¹ The following books, published in the early twenty-first century, are also noteworthy examples of the evolution of PSIT in Spain: *Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos. Contextualización, actualidad y futuro* (Public Service Translating and Interpreting; Contextualization, Present and Future) (2003), *Discursos (Dis)Con/Cordantes: Modos y formas de comunicación y convivencia* ((Dis)Con/Cordant Speeches: Communicative Forms and Ways of Living Together) (2003), *Retos del siglo XXI en comunicación intercultural: Mapa lingüístico y cultural de España en los comienzos del siglo XXI* (Twenty-first Century Challenges in Intercultural Communication. A Linguistic and Cultural Map of Spain for the Early Twenty-first Century) (1st edition 2006, 2nd edition 2011) and *Formas de mediación intercultural. Traducción e interpretación en los servicios públicos: Conceptos, datos, situaciones y práctica* (Communicating Across Cultures. A Coursebook on Interpreting and Translating in Public Services and Institutions, 1st edition 2006, 2nd edition 2008). The last one has been revised and translated into Romanian (2012), English (2014), Chinese (2014), Russian (2014) and Arabic (2015).

Research shows that the main challenges in the first stages of this profession/activity in Spain were the following: a lack of awareness about intercultural communication; linguistic and cultural barriers between the Spanish population and the ‘newcomers’ (African, Asian and East European migrants) whose languages and cultures were unfamiliar; restricted access and use of communication technology (ITC); a lack of recognition of the translator’s and interpreter’s role(s); few coordinated institutional initiatives; poor quality control of available resources; insufficient interdisciplinary studies; and difficulty accessing empirical research, among other challenges (Valero-Garcés 2008b).

A close look at the profile of these intermediaries, who are responsible for communicating with people who do not speak the same language, as well as at the materials available in other languages will help us to understand the evolution of PSIT in Spain since the migration phenomenon started to affect the country at the end of the twentieth century.

As in most countries, there are official and recognized figures in Spain in the field of PSIT, such as the *traductor jurado*, or sworn translator, a professional who earns recognition after passing the examination held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or after obtaining a degree in Interpreting and Translation and meeting all the relevant requirements (*Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE)*, 21 marzo 1997 (Official State Gazette, 21 March 1997)). There are also translators and interpreters for the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior who are considered to be qualified after passing an exam. Finally, the third ‘official’ figure that works in the PSIT field and has obtained recognition in Spain is the ‘hired’ translator/ interpreter who works in state offices and in other public services. This position is becoming increasingly important as a result of the often-unexpected arrival of individuals who speak languages virtually unknown in Spain and with whom communication must be established. This role was established by the Ministry of the Interior pursuant to Royal Decree 638/2000, dated 11 May 2000, and is recognized and used by the government and other institutions.

There is no specific training requirement with respect to the work the translators and interpreters must perform. Before 2008 or thereabouts, the government occasionally hired workers on a temporary basis through a collaborative agreement with the then-labelled INEM (*Instituto Nacional del Empleo* (National Institute of Employment), now known as SEPE – *Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal* (State Employment Public Service)), depending on what services were required and the level of demand. When there was no one available on the list to serve as an intermediary, individuals were hired whose only qualification was knowing Spanish and the other language well enough to help resolve the conflict. Since 2008, the general policy of the European Commission as well as in most other countries is to outsource management of translation and interpreting services to private companies (Ortega and Foulquié 2008, 125).

One of the greatest challenges faced in this field was (and still is) the vast number of languages that require PSIT services, as well as the impossibility of providing language-specific training and education in all these languages, particularly those of limited diffusion (e.g. some less-spoken African and Asian languages and dialects). This situation has given rise to some complaints, mainly in the legal sector (De Luna 2009, 2011), relating to the qualifications held by the interpreters contracted and the actual quality of the interpretation. Moreover, low rates of pay are causing many experienced and qualified interpreters and translators to reject working for the government. As a consequence, and with the aim of meeting the requirements, there has been a lowering of the required minimum qualifications, which stems from the excuse, or reality, that there would otherwise be no qualified interpreters available (Benhaddou 2012, 93–5).

As García Beyaert (2015, 53) highlights:

(. . .) outsourced management by a private company has not proved ideal, but policy-makers have shown little sensitivity. Despite criticism of the lack of guarantees for quality in the original contract (which focused on language ability and devoted little attention to interpreting), the requirement for competence in interpreting completely disappeared from the new request for tenders in 2012.

Nonetheless, bridging the gap between the right to an interpreter and the actual availability of interpreters is still work in progress worldwide. This situation has also given rise to the

proliferation of non-language-specific programmes available to interpreters of any language, although there is a lack of language-specific practice materials, with a few exceptions such as the group FITISPos, which has organized and managed the MA in Intercultural Communication and Public Service Interpreting and Translation, offered in ten language pairs at the University of Alcalá since 2006.²

There have also been various other initiatives carried out by members of the *Red Comunica* network, in their respective centres, such as the group Miras at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Alfaqueque group at the University of Salamanca, and CRIT at Jaume I University. *Red Comunica*³ is a network composed of research groups from all over Spain, and it is undoubtedly the driving force behind PSIT research, involving increasing activity in both training and research.

Despite these difficulties, PSIT is undoubtedly a growing market, although it may not be considered as prestigious as other forms of interpreting such as conference interpreting or interpreting for international or commercial organizations (Gentile 2014, 195). Nonetheless, this has sparked debate over important topics such as training, the interpreter's role in practice, and the recognition of interpreting as a profession. It has also led to the incorporation of new forms of communication, such as the use of remote interpreting in numerous settings, especially in healthcare and educational settings (Murgu and Jiménez 2011; Díaz García 2011; Helguera Gallego et al. 2011, 58–75). In addition, specific efforts have been made in an attempt to develop national standards for the profession, such as the publication of the *Libro Blanco de la Traducción y la Interpretación Institucional* (White Paper on Institutional Translation and Interpreting) in 2011,⁴ as well as the emergence of associations like APTIJ (*Asociación Profesional de Traductores e Intérpretes Judiciales y Jurados*), AFIPTIPS (*Asociación de Formadores, Investigadores y Profesionales de la Traducción e Interpretación en los Servicios Públicos*) and ENPSIT (European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation). This all serves to demonstrate that the first steps towards national accreditation systems are being taken in compliance with recommendations made by the EU following Directiva 2010/64 on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings (Le Bot 2016).

Spain, as a Member State of the EU, has an obligation to incorporate this European Directive into its domestic law. Organic Law 5/2015 (*La Ley Orgánica 5/2015*), dated 27 April 2015, was adopted in order to apply EU Directiva 2010/64, concerning the right to interpretation and to translation in criminal proceedings, and the EU Directiva 2012/29, dated 22 May 2012, concerning the right to information in criminal proceedings.⁵ The creation of a National Register of certified translators and interpreters in the legal and/or police field, while still under discussion and is an attempt to meet that obligation, as its name indicates.⁶

Therefore, this is a historic moment in which two main factors converge: the need to change legislation to bring it in line with Directiva 2010/64 and the need to implement measures to ensure compliance with new mandates. The collection of articles included in *MonTi 7* (2015) (Blasco and Del Pozo 2015) offers a good review of the current status of legal interpretation in Spain from the point of view of legislation and service provision. The authors draw attention to the measures that Spain should take to ensure that court and police interpretations are carried out in a way that guarantees fair and due process. These measures include the training of interpreters and legal operators, the creation of accreditation systems and records, as well as the consolidation of the professional profile of interpreters.

In general, this research reveals a certain evolution – that a country that was once considered to be monolingual and monocultural has received a great number of migrants with diverse languages and cultures in a very short time period (1995–2007) and within a reduced

geographic area (i.e. the main urban centres, such as Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and the south of Spain due to the proximity to Africa, place of origin of many immigrants).

In short, after twenty years of development of PSIT in Spain (1997–2017), certain conclusions and considerations that may influence its future are listed below:

- 1 PSIT is still a new field compared to conference interpreting and still seen as the ‘poor cousin’, but some progress has been made in terms of recognition and training.
- 2 Discussion about the need for training still continues, but this is not just limited to translators and interpreters. Other agents that play a significant role in communication in PSIT contexts, such as service providers (public officials, attorneys, physicians, administrators, police officers), are being included in the debate.
- 3 Considerations regarding PSIT in different settings and applying different labels (legal, medical, administrative) have been discussed in some fora, but the experience of many professionals who practice PSIT suggest that progress is made at different levels and speeds (e.g. T&I in the legal field is more developed than T&I in the healthcare area).
- 4 Translation has largely been neglected in PSIT although there is no public service within which the written text does not play a role (informed consents, school reports, airline tickets, social services pamphlets, etc.). However, there is an increasing interest in this area as seen in the articles included in *FITISPos International Journal* (volume 2), 2015.⁷
- 5 Increasing interest is also observed on the part of academics and researchers at conferences and meetings, as opposed to delegates and representatives of diverse communities, and those actually practising PSIT. Such a tendency could lead to an imbalance in terms of development in the field, even though it does broaden the options for training and research.
- 6 There is a trend of consolidation as demonstrated by the courses, seminars and workshops organized by a handful of enthusiastic volunteers, PSIT practitioners and trainers at local level as well as by the more solid structures which provide examples of good practice. Some examples are *Global E-Party in PSIT*, an online activity using social media organized by the research group FITISPoS since 2012, or *Jornades sobre Traducció I Interpretació en els Servis Públics*, organized by the research group Miras since 2014, as well as EU support and participation in the workshop ‘Best practices, challenges and new horizons’ as part of the 6th International Conference on PSIT (March 2017, University of Alcalá)⁸
- 7 Going beyond local experiences to other national and even transnational ones with the creation of non-profit associations that have continued to fight for the recognition of PSIT (e.g. ENPSIT) is also a significant step.
- 8 Increasing use of technology such as remote interpreting (Helguera Gallego et al. 2011, 58–75) and an increased number of initiatives that make greater use of this technology (*Universal Doctor Project* or *Migralingua*) offer good initiatives for the future. The support on the part of the administration for some of these actions (e.g. partially financing projects on development of apps or e-learning materials (such as a MOOC in PSIT)⁹ which often save time and money may be a good sign for future development.

With respect to PSIT in Latin America, the status of translation and interpreting is still in the development stage, with hardly any research being carried out from the point of view of Translation Studies, and even less relating to interpreting with linguistic combinations that include Native Amerindian languages, a topic directly related to PSIT as per the focus of the present chapter. According to Kleinert and Stallaert (2017) in some countries where the

indigenous languages have now died out (such as Cuba, for example) this is not even a topic of research, and in other countries, recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity is something incredibly new, particularly from the point of view of translation, interpretation and mediation. While there may be efforts to develop legislation and recognizing this diversity in the law, in everyday life neglect and discrimination are common.

The study by Berk-Seligson (2008), describing the situation in Ecuador, and the work carried out by Kleinert (2016) and Kleiner and Stallaert (2017) in Mexico are practically the only studies addressing PSIT (see the following). In all other Latin American countries, PSIT is only developed in legal contexts, e.g. in Argentina. According to personal conversations with members of the *Colegio de Traductores Públicos de Argentina* (Institute of Public Translators in Argentina, July 2017), this is due to the fact that the country does not receive many non-Spanish-speaking immigrants, unlike the situation in Spain. There are cases in the justice field where public translators act as translation experts. The trials in which this usually occurs are most frequently related to economic, financial and political matters, such as investments, public debt, money laundering, and so forth. As well as holding the title of public translator, the expert must register every year with the courts and take a refresher course. On the other hand, indigenous-language interpreters are registered with the courts and are called when necessary. They act as required, given that there is no university education in those languages.

In addition, these sources have also indicated that those responsible for the *Colegio de Traductores Públicos* in Buenos Aires are working on a project to develop courses on the basics of legal interpreting at the University of Buenos Aires. These courses are aimed at Amerindian or minority-language interpreters before they sign up with the courts. The *Asociación Argentina de Traductores e Intérpretes* (AATI) (Argentinian Association of Translators and Interpreters) also provides training sessions to interpreters of indigenous languages.

In the previously cited work, Lea Martin (2017), a lecturer in the degree *Traductorado Público* (public translator) at the University of Aconcagua and at the National University of Cuyo, in Mendoza (located almost 1,000 km southwest of Buenos Aires, in the Andes), presents a complementary but different vision, and mentions the need for training and accreditation in public service interpreting. According to Martin, although Argentina is not a country with high numbers of non-Spanish-speaking immigrants, there are large communities of Asians and indigenous people, and furthermore, in recent years the government has become a signatory to various conventions which involve a commitment to take in refugees, mainly Syrians. They all use public services and public translators or conference interpreters who are available but are not suitably prepared for this kind of task, given that there is no kind of training for interpreters working in public services.

Other studies focused on the linguistic policies relating to indigenous languages, but few on the actual practice of translation and interpreting (e.g. in Peru, Luna García 2016).

Research issues and methods

In 2004, Sandra Hale (2004, xv) wrote:

Much of what is being written or said on the topic (to professionalize legal interpreting) is of a very prescriptive or anecdotal nature, rarely based on empirical evidence. There is no real translation of research in the field of legal interpreting, although a body of research has increased in the last twenty years, with the majority of data based linguistic research being carried out in Spanish-English.

Although she was writing about interpreting in a legal setting, this could be applied to some extent to PSIT as well. As Hale indicates, Spanish is a fundamental language when talking about research in PSIT. The scope and importance of Spanish is twofold, and goes beyond Spanish-speaking countries in which Spanish is the official language. In countries such as Australia, Canada or the US, Spanish has been, and still is, an important minority or immigrant language that has produced the most literature with respect to the linguistic combination English-Spanish. In these countries, PSIT is most commonly known as ‘community interpreting and translation’, and as we have already mentioned, is where this specialization is most developed. The extensive list of publications includes, for example, works by Angelelli (2008) (US), Hale (2004, 2007) (Australia), or Sasso and Malli (2014) (Canada). In this chapter, however, I will focus on Spain and Latin America.

As previously mentioned, the first contact with PSIT in Spain was at the 3rd Conference on Translation, held in 1997 at the University of Alcalá (UAH). It was during this conference that the paper entitled ‘TISP ¿de qué me hablas? ¿una nueva especialización en los Estudios de Traducción?’ (PSIT: What are you talking about? A New Specialization in Translation Studies?) (Valero-Garcés 1997, 267–77) was presented and later published. However, some years passed before interest extended to this emerging specialization. The aforementioned publications and the following comments are a good reflection of the state of PSIT in Spain in the first decade of this century, which include the following:

- 1 Late integration of PSIT in the academic world.
- 2 The background of researchers and professionals, many of them coming from disciplines such as the social sciences, social work or law, have received scant linguistic preparation and have leaned more towards cultural studies.
- 3 Difficulties have been encountered in compiling a corpus of authentic data, given the setting in which this work is usually carried out (hospitals, police stations, courts, government offices) and the characteristics of the participants whose information is often protected (illegal immigrants, refugees, children).
- 4 Along with this lack of research came the fact that the results obtained from the existing research did little to influence the work in practice (Angelelli 2008, 165).

Nonetheless, since the creation of the *Red Comunica* in 2005, PSIT has slowly been gaining respect both in the academic and research fields. A look at the different research groups that make up *Red Comunica* (Alfaqueque, CRIT, FITISPoS, GRETI, Miras) and their activities in PSIT provides some evidence, e.g. the consolidation of international conferences, the increased number of publications, and the establishment of different types of postgraduate training programmes or continuing education courses, seminars and workshops are signs of increasing visibility.

The growing number of publications and empirical research on the analysis of interpreter discourses or translated texts for a specific community show that defining the scope of PSIT is a complex and difficult task. This complexity can also be seen in the large variety of issues and research methods that follow.

In line with the publications in more advanced countries, a large body of research has been dedicated to analyzing the role(s) of the translator and/or interpreter. This issue has given rise to different approaches and practices, ranging from adhering to strict linguistic transfer all the way to mediation (also called “advocacy”), or to the view that the service user should belong to the minority group (see Valero-Garcés 2003a; CRIT 2014). Existing literature in countries where Spanish-speaking populations are significant (e.g. the United States and the

United Kingdom) also tends to deal with the effects of interpreters/mediators who interpret from Spanish into English and vice versa. This tendency is also seen in Spain. It is interesting to note that some researchers, especially those working with non-Western groups, report increased uses of interpreters as well as different forms of intercultural mediation (Ilie 2014; Jaime Pérez 2014; Jiménez Hortelano 2014; Ilie, Pérez, and Vitalaru 2014). Other studies have delved into larger communities currently living in Spain, such as Chinese (Vargas-Urpi 2014), Romanian (Ilie 2014) and Arabic (El-Madkouri 2008, 2014). A common issue is the conflicts that arise due to miscommunication and the need for enhanced interpersonal communication (or intercultural interaction).

In legal settings, the roles of interpreters during any type of exchange or form of communication, as well as their ethical behaviour and professional status, have also been addressed (Ortega Herráez 2006; Ortega Herráez and Iliescu 2015, 37–62). The publications from the International Conferences on PSIT held in Alcalá de Henares (Valero-Garcés ed. 2002, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2017) provide examples of the research issues in Spain,¹⁰ including the necessary division between mediating and interpreting, translation quality, the interpreter's role(s), as well as discussions of codes of ethics and any inherent dilemmas, like the use of ad hoc interpreters.

A growing body of research has also shown the impact of interpreting in inherently stressful and sometimes traumatic settings such as domestic violence (Bodzer 2014; Toledano Buendía and del Pozo Triviño 2015), asylum and refugee situations (León Pinilla and Conseil 2014), mental health situations (Echauri 2016) and communicating in prisons (Martínez-Gómez 2011; Baixauli 2014; Valero-Garcés 2017). The main trends emphasize the need for further specialized research, the lack of a connection between research and practice, and the problem of difficult access to the labour market.

Doctoral research in PSIT has also expanded since the publication of the doctoral theses by Ortega Herráez (2006) and Abril Martí (2006). These have been followed by more than a dozen doctoral theses, according to data from the *Red Comunica* network, and another dozen are currently underway. Some of the topics covered by recent dissertations show the vitality and complexity of PSIT, such as PSIT in the media (El Islam Sidi Bah 2015; Cedillo Corrochano 2017), in conflict zones (Persaud 2016; Moreno Bello 2017) and in mental health settings (Echauri 2016), to name but a few. This illustrates the diversity of topics covered by PSIT, something which could be indicative of the future of this field.

With regards to PSIT research in Latin American, as already mentioned, it is very limited. Berk-Seligson (2008) has studied how the Quechua of Ecuador, along with other indigenous peoples of Latin America, have been struggling to attain the right to use their ancestral language and their traditional ways of administering justice in an effort to gain greater autonomy in a variety of sociopolitical spheres of life. Based on interviews with ninety-three Ecuadorians, including judges, magistrates, lawyers, justices of the peace, interpreters, translators, and local and national political leaders, the study found ideological differences on this subject. However, both the state and Quechua judicial authorities appear to be largely in agreement as regards the use of ad hoc interpreters/translators to meet the judicial needs of Ecuador's indigenous population. Although both agree on the need for the professionalization of interpreters and translators, neither consider it a priority.

On the other hand, Kleinert (2016) and Kleinert and Stallaert (2015), who have studied the situation in Mexico, point out that the professionalization of community interpreting in Mexico is slowly taking shape and shows great vitality. Through research based on data collected in the states of Veracruz, Puebla and Oaxaca with interpreters trained during 2011 and 2012, they reflect on the development and configuration of this field in the area of indigenous

interpreters training in criminal justice. Kleinert and Stallaert (2015, 243) also point out that the study was also able to gather information about the employability of trained interpreters whose linguistic combinations include indigenous languages. There is optimism regarding the growing awareness on the part of users, as well as translators and interpreters, regarding their rights when communicating with the government (Kleinert and Stallaert 2015, 245).

In Spain, Ortega Herráez and Iliescu (2015, 36) have stressed the evolution in Interpreting Studies, from the initial focus on conference interpreting to the current boom in community interpreting. They observe a shift from what they call ‘traditional’ insights in PSIT, such as discourse transfer processes, communicative situation specificities, contextual constraints (in the late twentieth century) towards other more relevant issues to the early twenty-first century, such as “the necessary division between mediating and interpreting, quality, the interpreter’s role, codes of ethics and dilemmas, including the one on the employment of ad hoc interpreters” (2015, 36).

Regarding research methods, variety is again a characteristic of the interdisciplinary nature of research in PSIT. The main characteristics are:

- 1 Rather than large-scale studies, a plethora of smaller questionnaire-based surveys are being produced, often categorized as case studies (Ortega Herráez and Iliescu 2015, 45). This could be considered an indicator of some of the difficulties that researchers face due to a lack of collaboration or confidence between the parties involved (Valero-Garcés 2013).
- 2 A range of various discourse approaches are usually adopted, which often focus on authentic (‘primary’) data.
- 3 Observational research is more common than experimental research. In addition, deductive approaches are more common than inductive ones (Lázaro 2012).
- 4 Researchers tend to use a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods or make use of different qualitative methods, often referred to as a ‘triangulation’ of methods, involving questionnaire-based surveys that analyse authentic recordings from a descriptive viewpoint (Vargas-Urpi 2011, 86).
- 5 Finally, it is important to mention the contribution of postgraduate pilot studies conducted by students who are often members of specific communities (e.g. Chinese, Arabic). They aim to develop multilingual corpora and databases in certain linguistic combinations and specific fields where there is a lack of material. Their contribution is also significant in studies dedicated to obtaining deeper knowledge of ethnic minorities and their culture, as a way to gain a first-hand understanding of their specific problems or degree of adaptation. Future contributions in this direction are expected.

All in all, as Hale (2007, 204) points out, such a diversity of topics and methods is not necessarily a negative characteristic: “By taking a multidisciplinary approach, a new paradigm is created, whereby only the methodologies that are useful to the aims of community interpreting research from different disciplines and methodologies are adopted”.

Future directions

Research in PSIT is becoming one of the most fruitful areas of study within TS. The growing interest in Spain and other countries where the Spanish language is an object of study serves as proof of this. In Spain, the extensive list of studies that have been published by the *Red Comunicativa* network,¹¹ the series of conferences and seminars held every three years at the University

of Alcalá since 2002,¹² and the launching in 2014 of *FITISPos International Journal*, a yearly multilingual double-blind peer review and free-access online journal, are all examples of the recent efforts and developments in this field which may be indicators that this level of activity will continue.

It is also worth mentioning the contribution of the *Red Comunica* members to EU research projects (Agora, EULITA, SOS-VICS, QUALETRA, Building Mutual Trust),¹³ which have made substantial contributions in the following areas: educational (manuals, teaching resources of different types), professional (position reports, recommendations, good practice guidelines) and even political (action plans, legislation, etc.). Ultimately, these results have allowed EU authorities to gain further understanding of the professional reality of legal and judicial interpreting in the member states, as well as develop specific legislation (Directiva 2010/64). Thanks to these projects, professional interpreters and translators, trainers and the authorities themselves have more resources at their disposal, a trend that hopefully will continue in the next few years. In some cases, the continuity of these projects (LITSearch, Justisigns), as well as cooperative and network-style research, requires support for their continuing existence and growth.

As regards research on training, the article by Ortega Herráez and Iliescu (2015, 46) already mentioned and the collection of articles and materials from the international conference on *Training, Testing, and Accreditation in PSIT* (Valero-Garcés 2015) are good sources of information concerning the advances and challenges in this sector. A brief overview of its contents shows general changes in attitudes with regards to how certain elements affecting interpreting training and practices are perceived, including the roles of interpreters, quality assessment of interpreting, and growing technological influences, as well as the need to increase interest in translation. These changes have been reflected in theoretical and methodological orientations and will no doubt continue to be expanded in the future.

In turn, the attractiveness of employment as a PSIT will hopefully provide more incentives for improving training, and the profession will finally be able to break the ‘vicious cycle’ described by Vargas-Urpi (2011, 82) where low prestige leads to low pay, which leads to little incentive for training, and thus to a lack of training, and the negative cycle perpetuates itself.

The tendency towards more specific approaches to PSIT in sub-areas such as health or legal settings will likely take place. This tendency is already seen in countries where PSIT is more developed, such as Australia and Canada, where healthcare interpreting has made great advances in gaining attention and court interpreting is highly recognized as a profession. As Sasso and Malli (2014) indicate, if policy recognition is what is desired, then perhaps fragmenting the field is an alternative approach. However, they also warn about the impact that this fragmentation may have on PSIT versus the advantage of standing together and potentially becoming stronger as a profession. Evidence has shown that, as a unified body, significant milestones have been achieved, such as the publication of the first international standard for community interpreting – ISO norm: *Interpreting: Guidelines for community interpreting*.¹⁴ However, the differences between countries are so extensive that PSIT could evolve in many potentially diverse directions.

In conclusion, and based on the preceding considerations, PSIT research could focus on:

- Studying the boundaries between professions that are already considered well established (conference interpreting) and professions that are in the process of becoming so (PSIT), and where the limits are becoming blurred and the differences are starting to fade.
- Continuing with the debate over prestige and how each group is recognized by other professionals and by society as a whole. As interpreters seemed to take more active and

visible approaches than was expected, attention could be focused on the extent to which such roles would interfere with legal operators' decision-making, procedural strategies and/or market needs.

- Searching for models of good practice when facing the increasing demand for interpreters, based on recognizing that quality indeed impacts equal access to justice and a fair trial.
- Exploring non-professional interpreting both in research and training beyond mainstream institutions, to include groups of interpreting practitioners whose positions have been, or still are, rather peripheral (be they professional, ad hoc, novice, volunteer and/or activist), but who perform an active role in society.
- Merging different disciplines and methodological approaches for the purpose of research and training, leading to a higher degree of multi-disciplinarity.
- Incorporating technology to facilitate more interactive and collaborative roles not only as interpreters and translators, but also as participants in communicative events as mediators in conflict areas or emergency situations, escort interpreters in business meetings, members of teams developing technology related to translation and interpreting, as well as for those in other related tasks.

These are a few examples of the wide range of opportunities that PSIT has to offer students and future researchers as well as those who work with languages or are interested in cross-cultural communication.

PSIT is undoubtedly a significant mode of intercultural communication and an emergent specialized area in Translation and Interpreting Studies. The information presented in these pages will hopefully assist in sparking research interest in, and consequently contributing to, the growing professionalization of interpreting which, although it has existed for thousands of years, has become a profession recognized by the general public only recently.

Recommended reading

Grupo CRIT. 2014. *La práctica de la mediación interlingüística e intercultural en el ámbito sanitario*. Granada: Comares.

This book offers an objective approach to the professional reality of intercultural and interlingual healthcare mediators (*mediadores interlingüísticos e interculturales sanitarios (MILICS)*). It uses a theoretical framework and multidisciplinary methodology based on various scientific fields and defends an integrated and harmonious view of communication.

Raga Gimeno, Francisco, and Valero-Garcés, Carmen, eds. 2012 [2006]. "Retos del siglo XXI en comunicación intercultural: nuevo mapa lingüístico y cultural de España." *Resla*, Número Extraordinario 1.

This book presents an overview of PSIT and its development in Spain at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Valero-Garcés, Carmen. 2008. *Formas de mediación intercultural e interpretación en los servicios públicos. Conceptos, datos, situaciones y práctica*. Granada: Comares, 2nd edc. (1st edc. 2006). Also translated into Romanian (2012), Chinese (2014), Russian (2014) and Arabic (2015).

A textbook which addresses the complex task of interpreting and translating through reflection and practice.

Valero-Garcés, Carmen. 2014. *Communicating Across Cultures. A Coursebook on Interpreting and Translating in Public Services and Institutions*. Lanham, New York: University Press of America.

An adaptation of the Spanish textbook *Formas de mediación intercultural e interpretación en los servicios públicos*, which addresses the complex task of interpreting and translating through reflection and practice in PSIT.

Notes

- 1 See <http://www3.uah.es/master-tisp-uah/publicaciones-tisp-grupo-fitispos/>
- 2 See <http://www3.uah.es/master-tisp-uah/>
- 3 <http://red-comunica.blogspot.com/>
- 4 www.ritap.es/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/libro_blanco_traducccion_vfinal_es.pdf
- 5 See www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2015-4605.
- 6 See www.aptij.es/img/not/docs/Queja_web.pdf.
- 7 See http://www3.uah.es/fitispos_ij/OJS/ojs-2.4.5/index.php/fitispos/issue/view/3
- 8 <http://tisp2017.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Best-Practices-UE-2017-en-25feb17.pdf>
- 9 www.youtube.com/watch?v=UsK0tM-M2gE
- 10 See <http://www3.uah.es/master-tisp-uah/publicaciones-tisp-grupo-fitispos/>
- 11 See *Red Comunica*: <http://red-comunica.blogspot.com.es/>
- 12 <http://www3.uah.es/master-tisp-uah/publicaciones-tisp-grupo-fitispos/>
- 13 See www.eulita.eu/
- 14 www.iso.org/standard/54082.html

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