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**THE RELEVANCE
OF NON-VERBAL
LANGUAGE IN
INTERPRETATION IN
PUBLIC SERVICES IN
THE POLICE CONTEXT**

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Abstract: Interpreting for Public Services (ISP) in the police context arises from the need to overcome the language barrier between two well-differentiated social groups. Hence, the importance of recognizing these professionals as linguistic and cultural mediators to guarantee reliable communication in highly emotional situations. The ISP profession requires confidentiality and sensitive treatment of information, since confidential data is handled. This work defines the PSI in the police field, the code of ethics of the interpreter and the formal and linguistic difficulties during the development of the interpretation. Likewise, it analyzes the importance of non-verbal language as a mechanism to verify the credibility and aptitude during the police protocol. Since the PSI in the police field is characterized by being an interpersonal communicative exchange within a multilingual and multicultural framework, it is concluded that the non-verbal language of the interlocutors exerts a clear influence on the act of communication.

Keywords: Interpreting in the police context, *non-verbal communication; body language; deontological code; fields of interpretation.*

NON-VERBAL LANGUAGE IN ISP

We tend to think that communication has to do exclusively with the use of the word and the emission of oral articulated sounds or interjections, and we forget the importance of non-verbal language. However, non-verbal communication can reveal even more information than the words themselves. Although on most occasions we are unaware of our non-verbal behavior, our body continuously emits perceptible information about our emotions, purpose and personality. A movement is not necessary to associate it with specific information, even when immobile or in absolute silence, our gestures, our facial

and body expression and our appearance give relevant information about ourselves, being able to even reveal obvious and interesting data depending on the contextual situation in which we find ourselves. For example, in the present work, the bodily and gestural reaction adopted by a detainee during the demonstration of the criminal act committed or of a complainant for sexual abuse when exposing the facts is of special interest. Their gestures, facial expressions and body movements show the degree of certainty, veracity and knowledge of the speaker regarding the information reported. With this example, the idea that non-verbal language develops mainly in the unconscious plane is reinforced and, therefore, although we believe that we are always in control of our non-verbal behavior and emotions, our unconscious continuously and freely manipulates our way of communicating. From there,

But, in addition, non-verbal language provides information about the degree of understanding, acceptance, knowledge, certainty and credibility of the statements made by the speaker. Features that are especially relevant in the field of interpreting for public services, where corporal and gestural expression help to facilitate understanding between the interlocutors and alleviate situations of lack of communication, which arise due to linguistic diversity.

THE FIGURE OF THE INTERPRETER FOR PUBLIC SERVICES

Nowadays, we live in a globalised world, where language barriers are increasingly leading to a lack of communication between speakers. These situations of social miscommunication occur in the fields of tourism, education, health, police and the judiciary. Interpreting for Public Services, known by its acronym ISP, appears precisely

to avoid the language barrier that arises between the staff of public institutions and their users, who do not speak or understand the official language of the country. Hence the need for the figure of the interpreter, who acts as a linguistic and cultural mediator to achieve communication between both parties involved in the communicative process. In the words of authors such as Mikkelsen (1996), Wadensjö (1998) and Pöchhacker (2002), PSI is the interpretation that enables communication between the staff of public services and institutions and their users, who do not know the official language of the country. This suggests that communication is established between two distinct groups: on the one hand, people belonging to a linguistic and cultural minority, most of whom have a low educational and economic level, and who do not know the social reality of the host country, and, on the other hand, public service workers responsible for attending to immigrants, refugees, tourists, students or the sick, usually in critical situations of bewilderment and nervousness in the face of a problem that arises during their stay in the host country. Consequently, there is a party that holds the power and another that is in a situation of inferiority, as it requires the services of the former (Pöllabauer, 2004, 2006).

The figure of the interpreter for public services has been acquiring a certain level of professionalisation, especially in countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States and Switzerland, as they were the first countries to receive a large number of immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the imminent need to overcome the inability to communicate between the staff and users of public services. In the 1990s, the significant growth of immigrants, refugees and political asylum seekers boosts the recognition of the PSI profession in other countries. These

migratory waves contribute to societies coexisting and sharing a great diversity of ethnicities, cultures and languages, which generates linguistic and adaptive problems, as well as political and economic tensions between countries. In this respect, authors such as Álvarez and Vidal (1996), Angelelli (2004), Pöchhacker (2004) and Schäffner (2007) agree that the great demographic and political diversity of today's societies means that interpreting work is directly linked to and influenced by the socio-cultural and political contexts in which it takes place. This way, the ideology and political tendencies in which interpretation is provided are tainted or manipulated by aspects of power, which leads to the violation of one of the basic rules of the code of ethics of all professional interpreters: impartiality. This concept is discussed in the next section of this article and is closely related to non-verbal communication in order to maintain the neutrality of interpreting and avoid possible subjective connotations.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE ISP

MODALITY AND TYPE OF INTERPRETATION

Among the interpretation modalities, the ISP falls within the liaison or bilateral interpreting, as it is the most used modality in the ISP. This type of liaison interpretation is also known as short consecutive (Gentile, 1988), liason (Gentile et al. 1996), or bilateral (De Pedro Ricoy, 2010). This is a consecutive interpretation of the interventions of the interlocutors, in which a bidirectional question-answer protocol is usually established, that is, the interpreter performs a direct and inverse interpretation from and into the two working languages so that the dialogue is fluid. This bidirectionality supposes a high involvement of the interpreter in the communicative act, where non-verbal language (body movement,

facial gestures, silences, etc.) plays a very important role when interpreting, since it reveals the speaker's aptitude with respect to information, as well as his degree of knowledge of the facts or data. Hence, the practice of the PSI generates situations of tension and even frustration, especially due to the delicacy of the issues dealt with that affect the personal life and/or health of the user of the services. Hence, the importance of a good command of the LO and LM by the interpreter, as well as a good knowledge of the cultures involved (Valero-Garcés, 2006). especially due to the delicacy of the issues dealt with that affect the personal life and/or health of the user of the services. Hence, the importance of a good command of the LO and LM by the interpreter, as well as a good knowledge of the cultures involved (Valero-Garcés, 2006). especially due to the delicacy of the issues dealt with that affect the personal life and/or health of the user of the services. Hence, the importance of a good command of the LO and LM by the interpreter, as well as a good knowledge of the cultures involved (Valero-Garcés, 2006).

According to the type of interpretation, the PSI falls within the type of social interpretation, since it enables the relationship of individuals with the public and private services of the host country (Jiménez Ivars, 1999).

SCOPES OF APPLICATION OF THE ISP

The situational context in which the communicative act occurs is extremely important, since it will mark the register of language and the bases of discourse to create structured units and structures are constituted through "coherence relations" (Mann and Thompson, 1988).). Regardless of the characteristics of the discourse, the PSI is characterized by being framed in public environments corresponding to government institutions, councils, town halls, etc., among

which the Courts, the State Security Forces, social and health services, and schools. Therefore, the fields of application of the PSI are grouped into three blocks: a) socio-educational, b) health and c) legal-police.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE ISP

Taking into account the previous points that define and determine the characteristics of the ISP and following the line of the multiple parameter system proposed by Alexieva (1997), the following classification is proposed:

1. Participants	a) <i>Interlocutor major</i>	Public service employee (administrative, police, doctor, social worker...)
	b) <i>Interpreter</i>	Public service user (tourist, immigrant, foreign student)
2. Functions of the participants	a) <i>Interlocutor major</i>	Senders and receivers of the message with different social roles in the communicative act.
	b) <i>Interpreter</i>	Linguistic mediator who facilitates communication and achieves understanding between the parties involved.
3. Communicative context	a) <i>Socio-educational</i>	- Educational centers (schools, institutes). - Social and administrative services.
	b) <i>Sanitary</i>	Hospitals, health centers, emergency services, clinics.
	c) <i>Legal-police</i>	Courts, State security forces and bodies (police stations, citizen service posts...).
4. Development of the communicative act	<i>Interview between interlocutors mediated by an interpreter</i>	Type of interpersonal communication interpreted using the consecutive or bilateral interpretation technique.
5. Text record	a) <i>Public employee</i>	Specialized, organized and normative text (adheres to norms, laws, principles).
	b) <i>User of the public service</i>	Unspecialized, unorganized and open text (spontaneous and natural text).

6. Relationship between the interlocutors	a) <i>Hierarchy of power versus inferiority</i>	Both the public employee, in charge of processing the service requested by the user, and the interpreter, are in a clear position of power compared to the user in a clearly inferior situation.
	b) <i>Cultural differences</i>	Lack of knowledge of the cultural, linguistic and social references by the users of the services.
7. Objective of the PSI	Achieve communication based on the understanding of the parties involved, trying to overcome language barriers and clarifying those details that may be opaque due to cultural differences (linguistic expressions, concepts, customs and gestures typical of a culture, etc.).	

Table 1. Classification of ISP characteristics

PSI IN THE POLICE FIELD

Foreign tourists, exchange students, immigrants and political asylum seekers are the main users of police services in Spain, where the mediation of an interpreter is required. Interpreting before the police authorities is within a legal framework, which recognises the right of all foreign citizens to receive the free assistance of an interpreter in their native language, as stated in the European Convention on Human Rights and in Article 9 of the Statute of the Victims of Crime. Thus, the interpreter participates as a linguistic mediator between the police authorities and the complainant, detainee, immigrant or asylum seeker, with the main tasks being the drafting of complaints, reading and information on the detainee's rights, taking the statement and interview with the paralegal in case of detention, personal interviews for the acceptance or denial of the residence permit, etc.

In Spain, the situation is far from the reality. Despite the fact that legal regulations dictate the right to an interpreter, the figure of the interpreter for public services in police stations is scarce, as the law does not specifically determine that the interpreter

must be a professional with specific training or qualifications. Therefore, on many occasions, the police opt for quick and unprofessional ways such as making use of other family members, friends, companions or even other immigrants, who speak and understand the language of the host country. As a result, the traits of ethics (impartiality and neutrality) and professionalism (linguistic level) are clearly called into question. It is precisely in these communicative situations that non-verbal language becomes particularly visible and noticeable. When dealing with issues that affect the integrity of the person and that generate a high degree of stress and concern, non-verbal language is manifested through position and body movements (kinesics), prolonged silences and throat clearing (prosody), constant facial gesticulation or even the secretion of tears as an emotional response to a situation of suffering and incomprehension.

On other occasions, various methods are used to combat communication problems: freelance interpreters, who are paid by the hour, for specific cases, generally serious criminal acts, where the interpreter's presence is urgently required, or the temporary hiring of interpreters for times of increased workload due to the influx of international tourism in high season, when cases of robbery, theft, fraud or loss among foreign tourists are on the rise.

In 2003, the Ministry of Public Administration announced the first competitive examination for the recruitment of in-house translators and interpreters to provide language services to the National Police and Civil Guard. However, the contractual conditions and characteristics of the positions advertised did not comply with logical requirements in terms of level or quality: multilingual combinations for the same position (English, Russian and

Chinese) and the required qualification was a baccalaureate degree. This highlights the lack of knowledge of the professional profile of the interpreter and of the PSI profession in general (Ortega and Foulquié, 2008).

ISP CODE OF ETHICS

According to the Spanish Association of Translators, Proofreaders and Interpreters (ASETRAD), the social function carried out by translators and interpreters is increasingly universal and necessary, which requires setting a series of ethical standards for their exercise. The Dictionary of the Spanish Language defines Deontology as the “part of ethics that deals with duties, especially those that govern a professional activity”. In addition, the ethical code in the PSI is especially necessary in its own sociocultural relationships, which are established in today’s society, in which there is a clear tendency to overcome the lack of humanity (Del Pozo Treviño, 2013). These ethical codes contribute to protect the professional, guarantee the quality of the service and ensure the well-being of the participants in the communicative act. Following Valero-Garcés (2014), the PSI ethical code must reside in four basic principles:

1. Confidentiality: sensitive and confidential treatment of data.
2. Impartiality: neutral and impartial attitude at all times.
3. Accuracy: fidelity and correctness with respect to the original message.
4. Integrity: the interpreter must know his interpretive abilities before accepting a commission to avoid fatal errors.

Taking into account the principles of the code of ethics and the characterization of the PSI, it is difficult to think that non-verbal language is placed in the background in the PSI, when in fact it occupies the foreground by playing an even more important role in

the act communicative than verbal language itself. Therefore, the relevance of the correct interpretation of non-verbal language in a communicative context is revealed, where pressure, uncertainty and confusion in the face of a new and often hostile situation trigger specific and decisive emotional reactions in the communicative act. And the following classification is proposed:

	SERVICE WORKER (Police or Civil Guard)	SERVICE USER (tourist, immigrant, foreign student)	INTERPRETER
KINESIA	Upright, active, alert body position.	Retracted body position, arms and/or legs crossed. Tics or manias (touching hair, nose, ear, biting upper/lower lip)	Upright, active and relaxed position that allows you to comfortably see the interlocutors.
PROSODY	Loud, confident and serious tone of voice.	Low, unsure, vibrating or shaky tone of voice. Pauses and silences.	Firm, constant, and smooth tone of voice
FACIAL EXPRESSION	Little gesticulation Controlled gestures.	Forced gesticulation. Little or excessive.	Moderate and controlled gesticulation.
EYE CONTACT	Continuous and with normal rhythm of blinking	Scarce and intermittent. Look directed towards the ground. Irregular or no blinking rhythm. Tearing and/or crying.	Alternate as interlocutors intervene. Normal blinking rhythm
MEANING	Seeks to determine a possible lie, doubt, contradiction and insecurity of the user.	It reveals fear, surprise, lies, nervousness, ignorance.	He demonstrates professionalism, control and security in his linguistic work and transmits confidence to both parties.

Table 2: Classification of aspects of non-verbal language and communicative situations typical of the PSI in the police field

CONCLUSIONS

Emotional reactions are something innate of the human being and are constantly manifested after the emission of a message. These reactions reveal the likes or dislikes of the receiver, triggering positive emotions such as surprise, joy, laughter; or negative such as anger, fear or lies. Since PSI in the police field is characterized by being an interpersonal, face-to-face communicative exchange within a multilingual and multicultural framework, in which the linguistic and cultural references of the interlocutors exert a clear influence

on the act of communication, the Non-verbal language is especially important when interpreting the statements of the interlocutors and achieving a full and effective understanding, which reflects reality from verbal and non-verbal details. And to conclude with a sentence, very accurate, especially in the field at hand, from the renowned American political analyst and guru of public opinion, FrankLuntz (2011): "Silence is the tacit admission of wrong behavior." And it is that many times in the silence is the information and the evidence.

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